

BEYOND BEDLAM

THE OPENING afternoon class for Mary Walden's ego-shift was almost over, and Mary was practically certain the teacher would not call on her to recite her assignment, when Carl Blair got it into his mind to try to pass her a dirty note.

Mary knew it would be a screamingly funny Ego-Shifting Room limerick and was about to reach for the note when Mrs. Harris's voice crackled through the room.

"Carl Blair! I believe you have an important message. Surely you will want the whole class to hear it. Come forward, please."

As he made his way before the class, the boy's blush-covered freckles reappeared against his growing pallor. Haltingly and in an agonized monotone, he recited from the note:

*"There was a young hyper named Phil,
Who kept a third head for a thrill.
Said he. It's all right,
I enjoy my plight.
I shift my third out when it's chill."*

The class didn't dare laugh. Their eyes burned down at their laps in shame. Mary managed to throw Carl Blair a compassionate glance as he returned to his seat, but she instantly regretted ever having been kind to him.

"Mary Walden, you seemed uncommonly interested in reading something just now. Perhaps you wouldn't mind reading your assignment to the class"

There it was, and just when the class was almost over.

Mary could have scratched Carl Blair. She clutched her paper grimly and strode to the front.

"Today's assignment in Pharmacy History is, 'Schizophrenia since the Ancient Pre-pharmacy days.' " Mary took enough breath to get into the first paragraph.

"Schizophrenia is where two or more personalities live in the same brain. The ancients of the 20th Century actually looked upon schizophrenia as a disease! Everyone felt it was very shameful to have a schizophrenic person in the family, and, since children lived right with the same parents who had borne them, it was very bad. If you were a schizophrenic child in the 20th Century, you would be locked up behind bars and people would call you—"

Mary blushed and stumbled over the daring word "—crazy".

"The ancients locked up strong ego groups right along with weak ones. Today we would lock up those ancient people."

The class agreed silently.

"But there were more and more schizophrenics to lock up. By 1950 the prisons and hospitals were so full of schizophrenic people that the ancients did not have room left to lock up any more. They were beginning to see that soon everyone would be schizophrenic.

"Of course, in the 20th Century, the schizophrenic people were almost as helpless and 'crazy' as the ancient Modern men. Naturally they did not fight wars and lead the silly life of the Moderns, but without proper drugs they couldn't control their Ego-shiftability. The personalities in a brain would always be fighting each other. One personality would cut the body or hurt it or make it filthy, so that when the other personality took over the body, it would have to suffer. No, the schizophrenic people of the 20th Century were almost as 'crazy' as the ancient Moderns.

"But then the drugs were invented one by one and the schizophrenic people of the 20th Century were freed of their troubles. With the drugs the personalities of each body were able to live side by side in harmony at last. It turned out that many schizophrenic people, called overendowed personalities, simply had so many talents and viewpoints that it took two or more personalities to handle everything.

"The drugs worked so well that the ancients had to let millions of schizophrenic people out from behind the bars of 'crazy' houses. That was the Great Emancipation of the 1990s. From then on, schizophrenic people had trouble only when they criminally didn't take their drugs. Usually, there are two egos in a schizophrenic person—the hyperalter, or prime ego, and the hypoalter, the alternate ego. There often were more than two, but the Medicorps makes us take our drugs so that won't happen to us.

"At last someone realized that if everyone took the new drugs, the great wars would stop. At the World Congress of 1997, laws were passed to make everyone take the drugs.

There were many fights over this because some people wanted to stay Modern and fight wars. The Medicorps was organized and told to kill anyone who wouldn't take their drugs as prescribed. Now the laws are enforced and everybody takes the drugs and the hyperalter and hypoalter are each allowed to have the body for an ego-shift of five days...."

Mary Walden faltered. She looked up at the faces of her classmates, started to turn to Mrs. Harris and felt the sickness growing in her head. Six great waves of crescendo silence washed through her. The silence swept away everything but the terror, which stood in her frail body like a shrieking rock.

Mary heard Mrs. Harris hurry to the shining dispensary along one wall of the classroom and return to stand before her with a swab of antiseptic and a disposable syringe.

Mrs. Harris helped her to a chair. A few minutes after the expert injection, Mary's mind struggled back from its core of silence.

"Mary, dear, I'm sorry. I haven't been watching you closely enough."

"Oh, Mrs. Harris..." Mary's chin trembled. "I hope it never happens again."

"Now, child, we all have to go through these things when we're young. You're just a little slower than the others in acclimatizing to the drugs. You'll be fourteen soon and the medicop assures me you'll be over this sort of thing just as the others are."

Mrs. Harris dismissed the class and when they had all filed from the room, she turned to Mary.

"I think, dear, we should visit the clinic together, don't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Harris." Mary was not frightened now. She was just ashamed to be such a difficult child and so slow to acclimatize to the drugs.

As she and the teacher walked down the long corridor to the clinic, Mary made up her mind to tell the medicop what she thought was wrong. It was not herself. It was her hypoalter, that nasty little Susan Shorrs. Sometimes, when Susan had the body, the things Susan was doing and thinking came to Mary like what the ancients had called *dreams*, and Mary had never liked this secondary ego whom she could never really know. Whatever was wrong, it was Susan's doing. The filthy creature never took care of her hair, it was always so messy when Susan shifted the body to her.

Mrs. Harris waited while Mary went into the clinic.

Mary was glad to find Captain Thiel, the nice medicop, on duty. But she was silent while the X-rays were being taken, and, of course, while he got the blood samples, she concentrated on being brave.

Later, while Captain Thiel looked in her eyes with the bright little light, Mary said calmly, "Do you know my hypoalter, Susan Shorrs?"

The medicop drew back and made some notes on a pad before answering. "Why, yes. She's in here quite often too."

"Does she look like me?"

"Not much. She's a very nice little girl..." He hesitated, visibly fumbling.

Mary blurted, "Tell me truly, what's she like?"

Captain Thiel gave her his nice smile. "Well, I'll tell you a secret if you keep it to yourself."

"Oh, I promise."

He leaned over and whispered in her ear and she liked the clean odour of him. "She's not nearly as pretty as you are."

Mary wanted very badly to put her arms around him and hug him. Instead, wondering if Mrs. Harris, waiting outside, had heard, she drew back self-consciously and said, "Susan is the cause of all this trouble, the nasty little thing."

"Oh now!" the medicop exclaimed. "I don't think so, Mary. She's in trouble, too, you know."

"She still eats sauerkraut." Mary was defiant.

"But what's wrong with that?"

"You told her not to last year because it makes me sick on my shift. But it agrees in buckets with a little pig like her."

The medicop took this seriously. He made a note on the pad. "Mary, you should have complained sooner."

"Do you think my father might not like me because Susan Shorrs is my hypoalter?" she asked abruptly.

"I hardly think so, Mary. After all, he doesn't even know her. He's never on her ego-shift."

"A little bit," Mary said, and was immediately frightened.

Captain Thiel glanced at her sharply. "What do you mean by that, child?"

"Oh, nothing," Mary said hastily. "I just thought maybe he was."

"Let me see your pharmacase," he said rather severely.

Mary slipped the pharmacase off the belt at her waist and handed it to him. Captain Thiel extracted the prescription card from the back and threw it away. He slipped a new card in the taping machine on his desk and punched out a new prescription, which he reinserted in the pharmacase. In the space on the front, he wrote directions for Mary to take the drugs numbered from left to right.

Mary watched his serious face and remembered that he had complimented her about being prettier than Susan. "Captain Thiel, is your hypoalter as handsome as you are?"

The young medicop emptied the remains of the old prescription from the pharmacase and took it to the dispensary in the corner, where he slid it into the filling slot. He seemed unmoved by her question and simply muttered, "Much handsomer."

The machine automatically filled the case from the punched card on its back and he returned it to Mary. "Are you taking your drugs exactly as prescribed? You know there are very strict laws about that, and as soon as you are fourteen, you will be held to them."

Mary nodded solemnly. Great strait-jackets, who didn't know there were laws about taking your drugs?

There was a long pause and Mary knew she was supposed to leave. She wanted, though, to stay with Captain Thiel and talk with him. She wondered how it would be if he were appointed her father.

Mary was not hurt that her shy compliment to him had gone unnoticed. She had only wanted something to talk about.

Finally she said desperately, "Captain Thiel, how is it possible for a body to change as much from one ego-shift to another as it does between Susan and me?"

"There isn't all the change you imagine," he said. "Have you had your first physiology?"

"Yes. I was very good..." Mary saw from his smile that her inadvertent little conceit had trapped her.

"Then, Miss Mary Walden, how do *you* think it is possible?"

Why did teachers and medicops have to be this way? When all you wanted was to have them talk to you, they turned everything around and made you think.

She quoted unhappily from her schoolbook, "The main things in an ego-shift are the two vegetative nervous systems that translate the conditions of either personality to the blood and other organs right from the brain. The vegetative nervous systems change the rate at which the liver burns or stores sugar and the rate at which the kidneys excrete..."

Through the closed door to the other room, Mrs. Harris's voice raised at the visiophone said distinctly, "*But, Mr. Walden...*"

"Reabsorb," corrected Captain Thiel.

"What?" She didn't know what to listen to the medicop or the distant voice of Mrs. Harris.

"It's better to think of the kidneys as reabsorbing salts and nutrients from the filtrated blood."

"Oh."

"*But, Mr. Walden, we can overdo a good thing. The proper amount of neglect is definitely required for full development of some personality types and Mary certainly is one of those....*"

"What about the pituitary gland that's attached to the brain and controls all the other glands during the

shift of egos?" pressed Captain Thiel distractingly.

"But, Mr. Walden, too much neglect at this critical point may cause another personality to split off and we can't have that. Adequate personalities are congenital. A new one now would only rob the present personalities. You are the appointed parent of this child and the Board of Education will enforce your compliance with our diagnosis. . . ."

Mary's mind leaped to a page in one of her childhood storybooks. It was an illustration of a little girl resting beneath a great tree that overhung a brook. There were friendly little wild animals about. Mary could see the page clearly and she thought about it very hard instead of crying.

"Aren't you interested any more, Mary?" Captain Thiel was looking at her strangely.

The agitation in her voice was a surprise. "I have to get home. I have a lot of things to do."

Outside, when Mrs. Harris seemed suddenly to realize that something was wrong, and delicately probed to find out whether her angry voice had been overheard, Mary said calmly and as if it didn't matter, "Was my father home when you called him before?"

"Why—yes, Mary. But you mustn't pay any attention to conversations like that, darling."

You can't force him to like me, she thought to herself, and she was angry with Mrs. Harris because now her father would only dislike her more.

Neither her father nor her mother was home when Mary walked into the evening-darkened apartment. It was the first day of the family shift, and on that day, for many periods now, they had not been home until late.

Mary walked through the empty rooms, turning on lights. She passed up the electrically heated dinner her father had set out for her. Presently she found herself at the storage-room door. She opened it slowly.

After hesitating a while she went in and began an exhausting search for the old storybook with the picture in it.

Finally she knew she could not find it. She stood in the middle of the junk-filled room and began to cry.

The day which ended for Mary Walden in lonely weeping should have been, for Conrad Manz, a pleasant rest day with an hour of rocket racing in the middle of it. Instead, he awakened with a shock to hear his wife actually *talking* while she was *asleep*.

He stood over her bed and made certain that she was asleep. It was as though her mind thought it was somewhere else, doing something else. Vaguely he remembered that the ancients did something called *dreaming* while they slept and the thought made him shiver.

Clara Manz was saying, "Oh, Bill, they'll catch us. We can't pretend any more unless we have drugs. Haven't we any drugs, Bill?"

Then she was silent and lay still. Her breathing was shallow and even in the dawn light her cheeks were deeply flushed against the blonde hair.

Having just awakened, Conrad was on a very low drug level and the incident was unpleasantly disturbing. He picked up his pharmacase from beside his bed and made his way to the bathroom. He took his hypothalamic block and the integration enzymes and returned to the bedroom. Clara was still sleeping.

She had been behaving oddly for some time, but there had never been anything as disturbing as this. He felt that he should call a medicop, but, of course, he didn't want to do anything that extreme. It was probably something with a simple explanation. Clara was a little scatterbrained at times.

Maybe she had forgotten to take her sleeping compound and that was what caused *dreaming*. The very word made his powerful body chill. But if she was neglecting to take any of her drugs and he called in a medicop, it would be serious.

Conrad went into the library and found the *Family Pharmacy*. He switched on a light in the dawn-shrunken room and let his heavy frame into a chair. *A Guide to Better Understanding of Your Family Prescriptions. Official Edition, 2831*. The book was mostly Medicorps propaganda and almost never gave a practical suggestion. If something went wrong, you called a medicop.

Conrad hunted through the book for the section on sleeping compound. It was funny, too, about that name Bill. Conrad went over all the men of their acquaintance with whom Clara had occasional affairs or with whom she was friendly and he couldn't remember a single Bill. In fact, the only man with that name whom he could think of was his own hyperalter, Bill Walden. But that was naturally impossible.

Maybe dreaming was always about imaginary people.

SLEEPING COMPOUND: An official mixture of soporific and hypnotic alkaloids and synthetics. A critical drug; an essential feature in every prescription. Slight deviations in following prescription are unallowable because of the subtle manner in which behaviour may be altered over months or years. The first sleeping compound was announced by Thomas Marshall in 1986. The formula has been modified only twice since then.

There followed a tightly packed description of the chemistry and pharmacology of the various ingredients. Conrad skipped through this.

The importance of Sleeping Compound in the life of every individual and to society is best appreciated when we recall Marshall's words announcing its initial development:

"It is during so-called *normal* sleep that the vicious unconscious mind responsible for wars and other symptoms of unhappiness develops its resources and its hold on our conscious lives.

"In this *normal* sleep the critical faculties of the cortex are paralysed. Meanwhile, the infantile unconscious mind expands misinterpreted experience into the toxic patterns of neurosis and psychosis. The conscious mind takes over at morning, unaware that these infantile motivations have been cleverly woven into its very structure.

"Sleeping Compound will stop this. There is no unconscious activity after taking this harmless drug. We believe the Medicorps should at once initiate measures to acclimatize every child to its use. In these children, as the years go by, infantile patterns unable to work during sleep will fight a losing battle during waking hours with conscious patterns accumulating in the direction of adulthood."

That was all there was—mostly the Medicorps patting its own back for saving humanity. But if you were in trouble and called a medicop, you'd risk getting into real trouble.

Conrad became aware of Clara standing in the doorway.

The flush of her disturbed emotions and the pallor of her fatigue mixed in ragged banners on her cheeks.

Conrad waved the *Family Pharmacy* with a foolish gesture of embarrassment.

"Young lady, have you been neglecting to take your sleeping compound?"

Clara turned utterly pale. "I—I don't understand."

"You were talking in your sleep."

"I—was?"

She came forward so unsteadily that he helped her to a seat. She stared at him. He asked jovially, "Who is this 'Bill' you were so desperately involved with? Have you been having an affair I don't know about? Aren't my friends good enough for you?"

The result of this banter was that she alarmingly began to cry, clutching her robe about her and dropping her blonde head on her knees and sobbing.

Children cried before they were acclimatized to the drugs, but Conrad Manz had never in his life seen an adult cry.

Though he had taken his morning drugs and certain disrupting emotions were already impossible, nevertheless this sight was completely unnerving.

In gasps between her sobs, Clara was saying, "Oh, I can't go back to taking them! But I can't keep this up! I just can't!"

"Clara, darling, I don't know what to say or do. I think we ought to call the Medicorps."

Intensely frightened, she rose and clung to him, begging,

"Oh, no, Conrad, that isn't necessary! It isn't necessary at all. I've only neglected to take my sleeping compound and it won't happen again. All I need is a sleeping compound. Please get my pharmacase for me and it will be all right."

She was so desperate to convince him that Conrad got the pharmacase and a glass of water for her only to appease the white face of fright.

Within a few minutes of taking the sleeping compound, she was calm. As he put her back to bed, she laughed with a lazy indolence.

"Oh, Conrad, you take it so seriously. I only needed a sleeping compound very badly and now I feel fine. I'll sleep all day. It's a rest day, isn't it? Now go race a rocket and stop worrying and thinking about calling the medicops."

But Conrad did not go rocket racing as he had planned.

Clara had been asleep only a few minutes when there was a call on the visiophone; they wanted him at the office. The city of Santa Fe would be completely out of balance within twelve shifts if revised plans were not put into operation immediately. They were to start during the next five days while he would be out of shift. In order to carry on the first day of their next shift, he and the other three traffic managers he worked with would have to come down today and familiarize themselves with the new operations.

There was no getting out of it. His rest day was spoiled.

Conrad resented it all the more because Santa Fe was clear out on the edge of their traffic district and could have been revised out of the Mexican offices just as well. But those boys down there rested all five days of their shift.

Conrad looked in on Clara before he left and found her asleep in the total suspension of proper drug level. The unpleasant memory of her behavior made him squirm, but now that the episode was over, it no longer worried him. It was typical of him that, things having been set straight in the proper manner, he did not think of her again until late in the afternoon.

As early as 1950, the pioneer communications engineer Norbert Wiener had pointed out that there might be a close parallel between disassociation of personalities and the disruption of a communication system. Wiener referred back specifically to the first clear description, by Morton Prince, of multiple personalities existing together in the same human body. Prince had described only individual cases and his observations were not altogether acceptable in Wiener's time.

Nevertheless, in the schizophrenic society of the 29th Century, a major managerial problem was that of balancing the communicating and non-communicating populations in a city.

As far as Conrad and the other traffic men present at the conference were concerned, Santa Fe was a resort and retirement area of 100,000 human bodies, alive and consuming more than they produced every day of the year. Whatever the representatives of the Medicorps and Communications Board worked out, it would mean only slight changes in the types of foodstuffs, entertainment and so forth moving into Santa Fe, and Conrad could have grasped the entire traffic change in ten minutes after the real problem had been settled. But, as usual, he and the other traffic men had to sit through two hours while small wheels from the Medicorps and Communications acted big about rebalancing a city.

For them, Conrad had to admit, Santa Fe was a great deal more complex than 100,000 consuming, moderately producing human bodies. It was 200,000 human personalities, two to each body. Conrad wondered sometimes what they would have done if the three and four personality cases so common back in the 20th and 21st Centuries had been allowed to reproduce. The 200,000 personalities in Santa Fe were difficult enough.

Like all cities, Santa Fe operated in five shifts. A, B, C, D, and E.

Just as it was supposed to be for Conrad in his city, today was rest day for the 20,000 hypoalters on D-shift in Santa Fe. Tonight at around 6.00 P.M. they would all go to shifting rooms and be replaced by their hyperalters, who had different tastes in food and pleasure and took different drugs.

Tomorrow would be rest day for the hypoalters on E-shift and in the evening they would turn things over to their hyperalters.

The next day it would be rest for the A-shift hyperalters and three days after that the D-shift

hyperalters, including Bill Walden, would rest till evening, when Conrad and the D-shift hypoalters everywhere would again have their five-day use of their bodies.

Right now the trouble with Santa Fe's retired population, which worked only for its own maintenance, was that too many elderly people on the D-shift and E-shift had been dying off. This point was brought out by a dapper young department head from Communications.

Conrad groaned when, as he knew would happen, a Medicorps officer promptly set out on an exhaustive demonstration that Medicorps predictions of deaths for Santa Fe had indicated clearly that Communications should have been moving people from D-shift and E-shift into the area.

Actually, it appeared that someone from Communications had blundered and had overloaded the quota of people on A-shift and B-shift moving to Santa Fe. Thus on one rest day there weren't enough people working to keep things going, and later in the week there were so many available workers that they were clogging the city.

None of this was heated exchange or in any way emotional.

It was just interminably, exhaustively logical and boring. Conrad fidgeted through two hours of it, seeing his chance for a rocket race dissolving. When at last the problem of balanced shift-populations for Santa Fe was worked out, it took him and the other traffic men only a few minutes to apply their tables and reschedule traffic to co-ordinate with the population changes.

Disgusted, Conrad walked over to the Tennis Club and had lunch.

There were still two hours of his rest day left when Conrad Manz realized that Bill Walden was again forcing an early shift. Conrad was in the middle of a volley-tennis game and he didn't like having the shift forced so soon. People generally shifted at their appointed regular hour every five days, and a hyperalter was not supposed to use his power to force shift. It was such an unthinkable thing nowadays that there was occasional talk of abolishing the terms hyperalter and hypoalter because they were somewhat disparaging to the hypoalter, and really designated only the antisocial power of the hyperalter to force the shift.

Bill Walden had been cheating two to four hours on Conrad every shift for several periods back. Conrad could have reported it to the Medicorps, but he himself was guilty of a constant misdemeanour about which Bill had not yet complained. Unlike the sedentary Walden, Conrad Manz enjoyed exercise. He overindulged in violent sports and put off sleep, letting Bill Walden make up the fatigue on his shift. That was undoubtedly why the poor old sucker had started cheating a few hours on Conrad's rest day.

Conrad laughed to himself, remembering the time Bill Walden had registered a long list of sports which he wished Conrad to be restrained from rocket racing, deepsea exploration, jet-skiing. It had only given Conrad some ideas he hadn't had before. The Medicorps had refused to enforce the list on the basis that danger and violent exercise were a necessary outlet for Conrad's constitution. Then poor old Bill had written Conrad a note threatening to sue him for any injury resulting from such sports. As if he had a chance against the Medicorps ruling!

Conrad knew it was no use trying to finish the volley-tennis game. He lost interest and couldn't concentrate on what he was doing when Bill started forcing the shift. Conrad shot the ball back at his opponent in a blistering curve impossible to intercept.

"So long," he yelled at the man. "I've got some things to do before my shift ends."

He lounged into the locker rooms and showered, put his clothes and belongings, including his pharmacase, in a shipping carton, addressed them to his own home and dropped them in the mail chute.

He stepped with languid nakedness across, the hall, pressed his identifying wristband to a lock-free and dialed his clothing sizes.

In this way he procured a neatly wrapped, clean shifting costume from the slot. He put it on without bothering to return to his shower room.

He shouted a loud good-bye to no one in particular among the several men and women in the baths and stepped out on to the street.

Conrad felt too good even to be sorry that his shift was over. After all, nothing happened except you came to, five days later, on your next shift. The important thing was the rest day. He had always said the last days of the shift should be a work day; then you would be glad it was over. He guessed the idea was

to rest the body before another personality took over. Well, poor old Bill Walden never got a rested body. He probably slept off the first twelve hours.

Walking unhurriedly through the street crowds, Conrad entered a public shifting station and found an empty room. As he started to open the door, a girl came out of the adjoining booth and Conrad hastily averted his glance. She was still rearranging her hair. There were so many rude people nowadays who didn't seem to care at all about the etiquette of shifting, women particularly. They were always redoing their hair or make-up where a person couldn't help seeing them.

Conrad pressed his identifying wristband to the lock and entered the booth he had picked. The act automatically sent the time and his shift number to Medicorps Headquarters.

Once inside the shifting room, Conrad went to the lavatory and turned on the tap of make-up solvent. In spite of losing two hours of his rest day, he decided to be decent to old Bill, though he was half tempted to leave his make-up on. It was a pretty foul joke, of course, especially on a humourless fellow like poor Walden.

Conrad creamed his face thoroughly and then washed in water and used the automatic dryer. He looked at his strong lined face features in the mirror. They displayed a less distinct expression of his own personality with the make-up gone.

He turned away from the mirror and it was only then that he remembered he hadn't spoken to his wife before shifting.

Well, he couldn't decently call up and let her see him without make-up.

He stepped across to the visiphone and set the machine to deliver his spoken message in type: "Hello, Clara. Sorry I forgot to call you before. Bill Walden is forcing me to shift early again. I hope you're not still upset about that business this morning. Be a good girl and smile at me on the next shift. I love you. Conrad."

For a moment, when the shift came, the body of Conrad Manz stood moronically uninhabited. Then, rapidly, out of the gyri of its brain, the personality of Bill Walden emerged, replacing the slackly powerful attitude of Conrad by the slightly prim preciseness of Bill's bearing.

The face, just now relaxed with readiness for action, was abruptly pulled into an intellectual mask of tension by habitual patterns of conflict in the muscles. There were also acute momentary signs of clash between the vegetative nervous activity characteristic of Bill Walden and the internal homeostasis Conrad Manz had left behind him. The face paled as hypersensitive vascular beds closed under new vegetative volleys.

Bill Walden grasped sight and sound, and the sharp odour of make-up solvent stung his nostrils. He was conscious of only one clamouring, terrifying thought: *They will catch us. It cannot go on much longer without Helen guessing about Clara. She is already angry about Clara delaying the shift, and if she learns from Mary that I am cheating on Conrad's shift . . . Any time now, perhaps this time, when the shift is over, I will be looking into the face of a medicop who is pulling a needle from my arm, and then it'll all be over.*

So far, at least, there was no medicop. Still feeling unreal but anxious not to lose precious moments, Bill took an individualized kit from the wall dispenser and made himself up. He was sparing and subtle in his use of the make-up, unlike the horrible make-up jobs Conrad Manz occasionally left on. Bill rearranged his hair. Conrad always wore it too short for his taste, but you couldn't complain about everything.

Bill sat in a chair to await some of the slower aspects of the shift. He knew that an hour after he left the booth, his basal metabolic rate would be ten points higher. His blood sugar would go down steadily. In the next five days he would lose six to eight pounds, which Conrad would promptly regain.

Just as Bill was about to leave the booth, he remembered to pick up a news summary. He put his wristband to the switch on the telephoto and a freshly printed summary of the last five days in the world fell into the rack. His wristband, of course, called forth one edited for hyperalters on the D-shift.

It did not mention by name any hypoalter on the D-shift.

Should one of them have done something that it was necessary for Bill or other D-shift hyperalters to

know about, it would appear in news summaries called forth by their wristbands but told in such fashion that the personality involved seemed namelessly incidental, while names and pictures of hyperalters and hypoalters on any of the other four shifts naturally were freely used. The purpose was to keep Conrad Manz and all the other hypoalters on the D-shift, one tenth of the total population, non-existent as far as their hyperalters were concerned. This convention made it necessary for photoprint summaries to be on light-sensitive paper that blackened illegibly before six hours were up, so that a man might never stumble on news about his hypoalter.

Bill did not even glance at the news summary. He had picked it up only for appearances. The summaries were essential if you were going to start where you left off on your last shift and have any knowledge of the five intervening days. A man just didn't walk out of a shifting room without one. It was failure to do little things like that that would start them wondering about him.

Bill opened the door of the booth by applying his wristband to the lock and stepped out into the street.

Late afternoon crowds pressed about him. Across the boulevard, a helicopter landing swarmed with clouds of rising commuters. Bill had some trouble figuring out the part of the city Conrad had left him in and walked two blocks before he understood where he was. Then he got into an idle two-place cab, started the motor with his wristband and hurried the little three-wheeler recklessly through the traffic. Clara was probably already waiting and he first had to go home and get dressed.

The thought of Clara waiting for him in the park near her home was a sharp reminder of his strange situation. He was in a world that was literally not supposed to exist for him, for it was the world of his own hypoalter, Conrad Manz.

Undoubtedly, there were people in the traffic up ahead who knew both him and Conrad, people from the other shifts who never mentioned the one to the other except in those guarded, snickering little confidences they couldn't resist telling and you couldn't resist listening to. After all, the most important person in the world was your alter. If he got sick, injured or killed, so would you.

Thus, in moments of intimacy or joviality, an undercover exchange went on. . . . *I'll tell you about your hyperalter if you'll tell me about my hypoalter.* It was orthodox bad manners that left you with shame, and a fear that the other fellow would tell people you seemed to have a pathological interest in your alter and must need a change in your prescription.

But the most flagrant abuser of such morbid little exchanges would have been horrified to learn that right here, in the middle of the daylight traffic, was a man who was using his anti-social shifting power to meet in secret the wife of his own hypoalter!

Bill did not have to wonder what the Medicorps would think. Relations between hyperalters and hypoalters of opposite sex were punishable—drastically punishable.

When he arrived at the apartment. Bill remembered to order a dinner for his daughter Mary. His order, dialled from the day's menu, was delivered to the apartment pneumatically and he set it out over electric warmers. He wanted to write a note to the child, but he started two and threw both in the basket. He couldn't think of anything to say to her.

Staring at the lonely table he was leaving for Mary, Bill felt his guilt overwhelming him. He could stop the behaviour which led to the guilt by taking his drugs as prescribed. They would return him immediately to the sane and ordered conformity of the world. He would no longer have to carry the fear that the Medicorps would discover he was not taking his drugs. He would no longer neglect his appointed child.

He would no longer endanger the very life of Conrad's wife Clara and, of course, his own.

When you took your drugs as prescribed, it was impossible to experience such ancient and primitive emotions as guilt. Even should you miscalculate and do something wrong, the drugs would not allow any such emotional reaction. To be free to experience his guilt over the lonely child who needed him was, for these reasons, a precious thing to Bill. In all the world, this night, he was undoubtedly the only man who could and did feel one of the ancient emotions. People felt shame, not guilt; conceit, not pride; pleasure, not desire. Now that he had stopped taking his drugs as prescribed, Bill realized that the drugs allowed only an impoverished segment of a vivid emotional spectrum.

But however exciting it was to live them, the ancient emotions did not seem to act as deterrents to bad behaviour.

Bill's sense of guilt did not keep him from continuing to neglect Mary. His fear of being caught did not restrain him from breaking every rule of inter-alter law and loving Clara, his own hypoalter's wife.

Bill got dressed as rapidly as possible. He tossed the discarded shifting costume into the return chute. He retouched his make-up, trying to eliminate some of the heavy, inexpressive planes of muscularity which were more typical of Conrad than of himself.

The act reminded him of the shame which his wife Helen had felt when she learned, a few years ago, that her own hypoalter, Clara, and his hypoalter, Conrad, had obtained from the Medicorps a special release to marry. Such rare marriages in which the same bodies lived together on both halves of a shift were something to snicker about. They verged on the antisocial, but could be arranged if the batteries of Medicorps tests could be satisfied.

Perhaps it had been the very intensity of Helen's shame on learning of this marriage, the nauseous display of conformity so typical of his wife, that had first given Bill the idea of seeking out Clara, who had dared convention to make such a peculiar marriage. Over the years, Helen had continued blaming all their troubles on the fact that both egos of himself were living with, and intimate with, both egos of herself.

So Bill had started cutting down on his drugs, the curiosity having become an obsession. What was this other part of Helen like, this Clara who was unconventional enough to want to marry only Bill's own hypoalter, in spite of almost certain public shame?

He had first seen Clara's face when it formed on a visiophone, the first time he had forced Conrad to shift prematurely. It was softer than Helen's. The delicate contours were less purposefully set, gayer.

"Clara Manz?" Bill had sat there staring at the visiophone for several seconds, unable to continue. His great fear that she would immediately report him must have been naked on his face.

He had watched an impish suspicion grow in the tender curve of her lips and her oblique glance from the visiophone.

She did not speak.

"Mrs. Manz," he finally said. "I would like to meet you in the park across from your home."

To this awkward opening he owed the first time he had heard Clara laugh. Her warm, clear laughter, teasing him, tumbled forth like a cloud of gay butterflies.

"Are you afraid to see me here at home because my husband might *walk in on us*?"

Bill had been put completely at ease by this bantering indication that Clara knew who he was and welcomed him as an intriguing diversion. Quite literally, the one person who could not *walk in on them*, as the ancients thought of it, was his own hypoalter, Conrad Manz.

Bill finished retouching his make-up and hurried to leave the apartment. But this time, as he passed the table where Mary's dinner was set out, he decided to write a few words to the child, no matter how empty they sounded to himself.

The note he left explained that he had some early work to do at the microfilm library where he worked.

Just as Bill was leaving the apartment, the visiophone buzzed. In his hurry Bill flipped the switch before he thought.

Too late, his band froze and the implications of this call, an hour before anyone would normally be home, shot a shaft of terror through him.

But it was not the image of a medicop that formed on the screen. The woman introduced herself as Mrs. Harris, one of Mary's teachers.

It was strange that she should have thought he might be home. The shift for children was half a day earlier than for adults, so the parents could have half their rest day free.

This afternoon would be for Mary the first classes of her shift, but the teacher must have guessed something was wrong with the shifting schedules in Mary's family. Or had the child told her?

Mrs. Harris explained rather dramatically that Mary was being neglected. What could he say to her?

That he was a criminal breaking drug regulations in the most flagrant manner? That nothing, not even the child appointed to him, meant more to him than his wife's own hypoalter? Bill finally ended the hopeless and possibly dangerous conversation by turning off the receiver and leaving the apartment.

Bill realized that now, for both him and Clara, the greatest joy had been those first few times together. The enormous threat of a Medicorps retaliation took the pleasure from their contact and they came together desperately because, having tasted this fantastic nonconformity and the new undrugged intimacy, there was no other way for them. Even now as he drove through the traffic towards where she would be waiting, he was not so much concerned with meeting Clara in their fear-poisoned present as with the vivid, aching remembrance of what those meetings once had really been like.

He recalled an evening they had spent lying on the summer lawn of the park, looking out at the haze-dimmed stars. It had been shortly after Clara joined him in cutting down on the drugs, and the clear memory of their quiet laughter so captured his mind now that Bill almost tangled his car in the traffic.

In memory he kissed her again and, as it had been, the newly cut grass mixed with the exciting fragrance of her skin. After the kiss they continued a mock discussion of the ancient word "sin". Bill pretended to be trying to explain the meaning of the word to her, sometimes with definitions that kept them laughing and sometimes with demonstrational kisses that stopped their laughter.

He could remember Clara's face turned to him in the evening light with an outrageous parody of interest. He could hear himself saying, "You see, the ancients would say we are not *sinning* because they would disagree with the medicops that you and Helen are two completely different people, or that Conrad and I are not the same person."

Clara kissed him with an air of tentative experimentation. "Mmm, no. I can't say I care for that interpretation."

"You'd rather be sinning?"

"Definitely."

"Well, if the ancients did agree with the medicops that we are distinct from our alters, Helen and Conrad, then they would say we are sinning—but not for the same reasons the Medicorps would give."

"That," asserted Clara, "is where I get lost. If this sinning business is going to be worth anything at all, it has to be something you can identify."

Bill cut his car out of the main stream of traffic and towards the park, without interrupting his memory.

"Well, darling, I don't want to confuse you, but the medicops would say we are sinning only because you are my wife's hypoalter, and I am your husband's hyperalter—in other words for the very reason the ancients would say we are *not* sinning. Furthermore, if either of us were with anyone else, the medicops would think it was perfectly all right, and so would Conrad and Helen. Provided, of course, I took a hyperalter and you took a hypoalter only."

"Of course," Clara said, and Bill hurried over the gloomy fact.

"The ancients, on the other hand, would say we are sinning because we are making love to someone we are not married to."

"But what's the matter with that? Everybody does it."

"The ancient Moderns didn't. Or, that is, they often did, but..."

Clara brought her full lips hungrily to his. "Darling, I think the ancient Moderns had the right idea, though I don't see how they ever arrived at it."

Bill grinned. "It was just an invention of theirs, along with the wheel and atomic energy."

That evening was long gone by as Bill stopped the little taxi beside the park and left it there for the next user. He walked across the lawns towards the statue where he and Clara always met. The very thought of entering one's own hypoalter's house was so unnerving that Bill brought himself to do it only by first meeting Clara near the statue. As he walked between the trees, Bill could not again capture the spirit of that evening he had been remembering. The Medicorps was too close. It was impossible to laugh that away now.

Bill arrived at the statue, but Clara was not there. He waited impatiently while a livid sunset coagulated between the branches of the great trees. Clara should have been there first. It was easier for

her, because she was leaving her shift, and without doing it prematurely.

The park was like a quiet backwater in the eddying rush of the evening city. Bill felt conspicuous and vulnerable in the gloaming light. Above all, he felt a new loneliness, and he knew that now Clara felt it, too. They needed each other as each had been, before fear had bleached their feeling to white bones of desperation.

They were not taking their drugs as prescribed, and for that they would be horribly punished. That was the only unforgivable *sin* in their world. By committing it, he and Clara had found out what life could be, in the same act that would surely take life from them. Their powerful emotions they had found in abundance simply by refusing to take the drugs, and by being together briefly each fifth day in a dangerous breach of all convention. The closer their discovery and the greater their terror, the more desperately they needed even their terror, and the more impossible became the delight of their first meetings.

Telegraphing bright beads of sound, a night bird skimmed the sunset lawns to the looming statue and skewed around its monolithic base. The bird's piping doubled and then choked off as it veered frantically from Bill. After a while, far off through the park, it released a fading protest of song.

Above Bill, the towering statue of the great Alfred Morris blackened against the sunset. The hollowed granite eyes bore down on him out of an undecipherable dark... the ancient, implacable face of the Medicorps. As if to pronounce a sentence on his present crimes by a magical disclosure of the weight of centuries, a pool of sulphurous light and leaf shadows danced on the painted plaque at the base of the statue:

On this spot in the Gregorian year 1996, Alfred Morris announced to an assembly of war survivors the hypothalamic block. His stirring words were, "The new drug selectively halts at the thalamic brain the upward flow of unconscious stimuli and the downward flow of unconscious motivations. It acts as a screen between the cerebrum and the psychosomatic discharge system. Using hypothalamic block, we will not act emotively, we will initiate acts only from the logical demands of situations."

This announcement and the subsequent wholehearted action of the war-weary people made the taking of hypothalamic block obligatory. This put an end to the powerful play of unconscious mind in the public and private affairs of the ancient world. It ended the great paranoid wars and saved mankind.

In the strange evening light, the letters seemed alive, a centuries-old condemnation of any who might try to go back to the ancient pre-pharmacy days. Of course, it was not really possible to go back. Without drugs, everybody and all society would fall apart.

The ancients had first learned to keep endocrine deviates such as the diabetic alive with drugs. Later they learned with other drugs to "cure" the far more prevalent disease, schizophrenia, that was jamming their hospitals. This big change came when the ancients used these same drugs on everyone to control the private and public irrationality of their time and stop the wars.

In this new, drugged world, the schizophrene thrived better than any, and the world became patterned on him. But, just as the diabetic was still diabetic, the schizophrene was still himself, plus the drugs. Meanwhile, everyone had forgotten what it was the drugs did to you—that the emotions experienced were blurred emotions, that insight was at an isolated level of rationality because the drugs kept true feelings from ever emerging.

How inconceivable it would be to Helen and the other people of this world to live on as little drug as possible . . . to experience the conflicting emotions, the interplay of passion and logic that almost tore you apart! Sober, the ancients called it, and they lived that way most of the time, with only the occasional crude and club-like effects of alcohol or narcotics to relieve their chronic anxiety.

By taking as little hypothalamic block as possible, he and Clara were able to desire their fantastic attachment, to delight in an absolutely illogical situation unheard of in their society.

But the society would judge their refusal to take hypothalamic block in only one sense. The weight of this judgment stood before him in the smouldering words, "*It ended the great paranoid wars and saved mankind.*"

When Clara did appear, she was searching myopically in the wrong vicinity of the statue. He did not call to her at once, letting the sight of her smooth out the tensions in him, convert all the conflicts into this one intense longing to be with her.

Her halting search for him was deeply touching, like that of a tragic little puppet in a darkening dumbshow. He saw suddenly how like puppets the two of them were. They were moved by the strengthening wires of a new life of feeling to batter clumsily at an implacable stage setting that would finally leave them as bits of wood and paper.

Then suddenly in his arms Clara was at the same time hungrily moving and tense with fear of discovery. Little sounds of love and fear choked each other in her throat. Her blonde head pressed tightly into his shoulder and she clung to him with desperation.

She said, "Conrad was disturbed by my tension this morning and made me take a sleeping compound. I've just awakened."

They walked to her home in silence and even in the darkened apartment they used only the primitive monosyllables of apprehensive need. Beyond these mere sounds of compassion, they had long ago said all that could be said.

Because Bill was the hyperalter, he had no fear that Conrad could force a shift on him. When later they lay in darkness, he allowed himself to drift into a brief slumber. Without the sleeping compound, distorted events came and went without reason. Dreaming, the ancients had called it. It was one of the most frightening things that had begun to happen when he first cut down on the drugs. Now, in the few seconds that he dozed, a thousand fragments of incidental knowledge, historical reading and emotional need melded and, in a strange contrast to their present tranquillity, he was dreaming a frightful moment in the 20th Century. *These are the great paranoid wars*, he thought. And it was so because he had thought it.

He searched frantically through the glove compartment of an ancient car. "Wait," he pleaded. "I tell you we have sulphamide-14. We've been taking it regularly as directed. We took a double dose back in Paterson because there were soft-bombs all through that part of Jersey and we didn't know what would be declared Plague Area next."

Now Bill threw things out of his satchel on to the floor and seat of the car, fumbling deeper by the flashlight Clara held. His heart beat thickly with terror. Then he remembered his pharmacase. Oh, why hadn't they remembered sooner about their pharmacases. Bill tore at the belt about his waist. The Medicorps captain stepped back from the door of their car. He jerked his head at the dark form of the corporal standing in the roadway. "Shoot them. Run the car off the embankment before you burn it."

Bill screamed metallically through the speaker of his radiation mask. "Wait. I've found it." He thrust the pharmacase out the door of the car. "This is a pharmacase," he explained. "We keep our drugs in one of these and it's belted to our waist so we are never without them."

The captain of the Medicorps came back. He inspected the pharmacase and the drugs and returned it. "From now on, keep your drugs handy. Take them without fail according to radio instructions. Do you understand?"

Clara's head pressed heavily against Bill's shoulder, and he could hear the tinny sound of her sobbing through the speaker of her mask.

The captain stepped into the road again. "Well have to burn your car. You passed through a Plague Area and it can't be sterilized on this route. About a mile up this road you'll come to a sterilization unit. Stop and have your person and belongings rayed. After that, keep walking, but stick to the road. You'll be shot if you're caught off it."

The road was crowded with fleeing people. Their way was lighted by piles of cadavers writhing in gasoline flames. The Medicorps was everywhere. Those who stumbled, those who coughed, the delirious and their helping partners . . . these were taken to the side of the road, shot and burned. And there was bombing again to the south.

Bill stopped in the middle of the road and looked back. Clara clung to him.

"There is a plague here we haven't any drug for," he said, and realized he was crying. "We are all mad."

Clara was crying too. "Darling, what have you done? Where are the drugs?"

The water of the Hudson hung as it had in the late afternoon, ice crystals in the stratosphere. The high, high sheet flashed and glowed in the new bombing to the south, where multicoloured pillars of flame boiled into the sky. But the muffled crash of the distant bombing was suddenly the steady click of the urgent signal on a bedside visiphone, and Bill was abruptly awake.

Clara was throwing on her robe and moving towards the machine on terror-rigid limbs. With a scrambling motion, Bill got out of the possible view of the machine and crouched at the end of the room.

Distinctly, he could hear the machine say, "Clara Manz?"

"Yes," Clara's voice was a thin treble that could have been a shriek had it continued.

"This is Medicorps Headquarters. A routine check discloses you have delayed your shift two hours. To maintain the statistical record of deviations, please give us a full explanation."

"I . . ." Clara had to swallow before she could talk. "I must have taken too much sleeping compound."

"Mrs. Manz, our records indicate that you have been delaying your shift consistently for several periods now. We made a check of this as a routine follow up on any such deviation, but the discovery is quite serious." There was a harsh silence, a silence that demanded a logical answer. But how could there be a logical answer.

"My hyperalter hasn't complained and I—well, I have just let a bad habit develop. I'll see that it doesn't happen again."

The machine voiced several platitudes about the responsibilities of one personality to another and the duty of all to society before Clara was able to shut it off.

Both of them sat as they were for a long, long time while the tide of terror subsided. When at last they looked at each other across the dim and silent room, both of them knew there could be at least one more time together before they were caught.

Five days later, on the last day of her shift, Mary Walden wrote the address of her appointed father's hypoalter, Conrad Manz, with an indelible pencil on the skin just below her armpit.

During the morning, her father and mother had spoiled the family rest day by quarrelling. It was about Helen's hypoalter delaying so many shifts. Bill did not think it very important, but her mother was angry and threatened to complain to the Medicorps.

The lunch was eaten in silence, except that at one point Bill said, "It seems to me Conrad and Clara Manz are guilty of a peculiar marriage, not us. Yet they seem perfectly happy with it and you're the one who is made unhappy. The woman has probably just developed a habit of taking too much sleeping compound for her rest-day naps. Why don't you drop her a note?"

Helen made only one remark. It was said through her teeth and very softly. "Bill, I would just as soon the child did not realize her relationship to this sordid situation."

Mary cringed over the way Helen disregarded her hearing, the possibility that she might be capable of understanding, or her feelings about being shut out of their mutual world.

After lunch Mary cleared the table, throwing the remains of the meal and the plastiplates into the flash trash disposer.

Her father had retreated to the library room and Helen was getting ready to attend a Citizens' Meeting. Mary heard her mother enter the room to say good-bye while she was wiping the dining table. She knew that Helen was standing well-dressed and a little impatient, just behind her, but she pretended she did not know.

"Darling, I'm leaving now for the Citizens' Meeting."

"Oh. . . yes."

"Be a good girl and don't be late for your shift. You only have an hour now." Helen's patrician face smiled.

"I won't be late."

"Don't pay any attention to the things Bill and I discussed this morning, will you?"

"No."

And she was gone. She did not say good-bye to Bill.

Mary was very conscious of her father in the house. He continued to sit in the library. She walked by the door and she could see him sitting in a chair, staring at the floor. Mary stood in the sun room for a long while. If he had risen from the chair, if he had rustled a page, if he had sighed, she would have heard him.

It grew closer and closer to the time she would have to leave if Susan Shorrs was to catch the first school hours of her shift. Why did children have to shift half a day before adults?

Finally, Mary thought of something to say. She could let him know she was old enough to understand what the quarrel had been about if only it were explained, to her. Mary went into the library and hesitantly sat on the edge of a couch near him. He did not look at her and his face seemed grey in the midday light. Then she knew that he was lonely, too. But a great feeling of tenderness for him went through her.

"Sometimes I think you and Clara Manz must be the only people in the world," she said abruptly, "who aren't so silly about shifting right on the dot. Why, I don't *care* if Susan Shorrs *is* an hour late for classes!"

Those first moments when he seized her in his arms, it seemed her heart would shake loose. It was as though she had uttered some magic formula, one that had abruptly opened the doors to his love. It was only after he had explained to her why he was always late on the first day of the family shift that she knew something was wrong. He *did* tell her, over and over, that he knew she was unhappy and that it was his fault. But he was at the same time soothing her, petting her, as if *he was afraid of her*.

He talked on and on. Gradually, Mary understood in his trembling body, in his perspiring palms, in his pleading eyes, that he was afraid of dying, that he was afraid *she* would kill him with the merest thing she said, with her very presence.

This was not painful to Mary, because, suddenly, something came with ponderous enormity to stand before her: *I would just as soon the child did not realize her relationship to this sordid situation.*

Her relationship. It was some kind of relationship to Conrad and Clara Manz, because those were the people they had been talking about.

The moment her father left the apartment, she went to his desk and took out the file of family records. After she found the address of Conrad Manz, the idea occurred to her to write it on her body. Mary was certain that Susan Shorrs never bathed and she thought this a clever idea. Sometime on Susan's rest day, five days from now, she would try to force the shift and go to see Conrad and Clara Manz. Her plan was simple in execution, but totally vague as to goal.

Mary was already late when she hurried to the children's section of a public shifting station. A Children's Transfer Bus was waiting, and Mary registered on it for Susan Shorrs to be taken to school. After that she found a shifting room and opened it with her wristband. She changed into a shifting costume and sent her own clothes and belongings home.

Children her age did not wear make-up, but Mary always stood at the mirror during the shift. She always tried as hard as she could to see what Susan Shorrs looked like. She giggled over a verse that was scrawled beside the mirror...

Rouge your hair and comb your face;
Many a third head is lost in this place.

... and then the shift came, doubly frightening because of what she knew she was going to do.

Especially if you were a hyperalter like Mary, you were supposed to have some sense of the passage of time while you were out of shift. Of course, you did not know what was going on, but it was as though a more or less accurate chronometer kept running when you went out of shift. Apparently Mary's was highly inaccurate, because, to her horror, she found herself sitting bolt upright in one of Mrs. Harris's classes, not out on the playgrounds, where she had expected Susan Shorrs to be.

Mary was terrified, and the ugly school dress Susan had been wearing accented, by its strangeness,

the seriousness of her premature shift. Children weren't supposed to show much difference from hyperalter to hypoalter, but when she raised her eyes, her fright grew. Children did change. She hardly recognized anyone in the room, though most of them must be the alters of her own classmates. Mrs. Harris was a B-shift and overlapped both Mary and Susan, but otherwise Mary recognized only Carl Blair's hypoalter because of his freckles.

Mary knew she had to get out of there or Mrs. Harris would eventually recognize her. If she left the room quietly, Mrs. Harris would not question her unless she recognized her. It was no use trying to guess how Susan would walk.

Mary stood and went towards the door, glad that it turned her back to Mrs. Harris. It seemed to her that she could feel the teacher's eyes stabbing through her back.

But she walked safely from the room. She dashed down the school corridor and out into the street. So great was her fear of what she was doing that her hypoalter's world actually seemed like a different one.

It was a long way for Mary to walk across town, and when she rang the bell, Conrad Manz was already home from work. He smiled at her and she loved him at once.

"Well, what do you want, young lady?" he asked. Mary couldn't answer him. She just smiled back.

"What's your name, eh?"

Mary went right on smiling, but suddenly he blurred in front of her.

"Here, here! There's nothing to cry about. Come on in and let's see if we can help you. Clara! We have a visitor, a very sentimental visitor."

Mary let him put his big arm around her shoulder and draw her, crying, into the apartment. Then she saw Clara swimming before her, looking like her mother, but. . . no, not at all like her mother.

"Now, see here, chicken, what is it you've come for?" Conrad asked when her crying stopped.

Mary had to stare hard at the floor to be able to say it. "I want to live with you."

Clara was twisting and untwisting a handkerchief. "But, child, we have already had our first baby appointed to us. He'll be with us next shift, and after that I have to bear a baby for someone else to keep. We wouldn't be allowed to take care of you."

"I thought maybe I was your real child." Mary said it helplessly, knowing in advance what the answer would be.

"Darling," Clara soothed, "children don't live with their natural parents. It's neither practical nor civilized. I have had a child conceived and born on my shift, and this baby is my exchange, so you see that you are much too old to be my conception. Whoever your natural parents may be, it is just something on record with the Medicorps Genetic Division and isn't important."

"But you're a special case," Mary pressed. "I thought because it was a special arrangement that you were my real parents." She looked up and she saw that Clara had turned white.

And now Conrad Manz was agitated, too. "What do you mean, we're a special case?" He was staring hard at her.

"Because..." And now for the first time Mary realized how special this case was, how sensitive they would be about it.

He grasped her by the shoulders and turned her so she faced his unblinking eyes. "I said, what do you mean, we're a special case? Clara, what in thirty heads does this kid mean?"

His grip hurt her and she began to cry again. She broke away. "You're the hypoalters of my appointed father and mother. I thought maybe when it was like that, I might be your real child. . . and you might want me. I don't want to be where I am. I want somebody. . ."

Clara was calm now, her sudden fear gone. "But, darling, if you're unhappy where you are, only the Medicorps can reappoint you. Besides, maybe your appointed parents are just having some personal problems right now. Maybe if you tried to understand them, you would see that they really love you."

Conrad's face showed that he did not understand. He spoke with a stiff, quiet voice and without taking his eyes from Mary. "What are you doing here? My own hyperalter's kid in my house, throwing it up to me that I'm married to his wife's hypoalter!"

They did not feel the earth move, as she fearfully did.

They sat there, staring at her, as though they might sit forever while she backed away, out of the apartment, and ran into her collapsing world.

Conrad Manz's rest day fell the day after Bill Walden's kid showed up at his apartment. It was ten days since that strait jacket of a conference on Santa Fe had lost him a chance to blast off a rocket racer. This time, on the practical knowledge that emergency business conferences were seldom called after lunch, Conrad had placed his reservation for a racer in the afternoon. The visit from Mary Walden had upset him every time he thought of it. Since it was his rest day, he had no intention of thinking about it and Conrad's scrupulously drugged mind was capable of just that.

So now, in the lavish coolness of the lounge at the Rocket Club, Conrad sipped his drink contentedly and made no contribution to the gloomy conversation going on around him.

"Look at it this way," the melancholy face of Alberts, a pilot from England, morosely emphasized his tone. "It takes about 10,000 economic units to jack a forty-ton ship up to satellite level and snap it around the course six times. That's just practice for us. On the other hand, an intellectual fellow who spends his spare time at a microfilm library doesn't use up 1,000 units in a year. In fact, his spare-time activity may turn up as units gained. The Economic Board doesn't argue that all pastime should be gainful. They just say rocket racing wastes more economic units than most pilots make on their work days. I tell you the day is almost here when they ban the rockets."

"That's just it," another pilot put in. "There was a time when you could show that rocket races were necessary for better spaceship design. Design has gone way beyond that. From their point of view we just burn up units as fast as other people create them. And it's no use trying to argue for the television shows. The Board can prove people would rather see a jet-skiing meet at a cost of about one-hundredth that of a rocket race."

Conrad Manz grinned into his drink. He had been aware for several minutes that pert little Angela, Alberts' soft-eyed, husky-voiced wife, was trying to catch his eye. But stranded as she was in the buzzing traffic of rockets, she was trying to hail the wrong rescuer. He had about fifteen minutes till the ramp boys would have a ship ready for him. Much as he liked Angela, he wasn't going to miss that race.

Still, he let his grin broaden and, looking up at her, he lied maliciously by nodding. She interpreted this signal as he knew she would. Well, at least he would afford her a graceful exit from the boring conversation.

He got up and went over and took her hand. Her full lips parted a little and she kissed him on the mouth.

Conrad turned to Alberts and interrupted him. "Angela and I would like to spend a little time together. Do you mind?"

Alberts was annoyed at having his train of thought broken and rather snapped out the usual courtesy. "Of course not. I'm glad for both of you."

Conrad looked the group over with a bland stare. "Have you lads ever tried jet-skiing? There's more genuine excitement in ten minutes of it than an hour of rocket racing. Personally, I don't care if the Board does ban the rockets soon. I'll just hop out to the Rocky Mountains on rest days."

Conrad knew perfectly well that if he had made this assertion before asking Alberts for his wife, the man would have found some excuse to have her remain. All the faces present displayed the *aficionado's* disdain for one who has just demonstrated he doesn't *belong*. What the strait-jacket did they think they were—some ancient order of noblemen?

Conrad took Angela's yielding arm and led her serenely away before Alberts could think of anything to detain her.

On the way out of the lounge, she stroked his arm with frank admiration. "I'm so glad you were agreeable. Honestly, Harold could talk rockets till I died."

Conrad bent and kissed her. "Angela, I'm sorry, but this isn't going to be what you think. I have a ship to take off in just a few minutes."

She flared and dug into his arm now. "Oh, Conrad Manz! You . . . you made me believe . . ."

He laughed and grabbed her wrists. "Now, now. I'm neglecting you to fly a rocket, not just to talk about them. I won't let you die."

At last she could not suppress her husky musical laugh. "I found that out the last time you and I were together. Clara and I had a drink the other day at the Citizens' Club. I don't often use dirty language, but I told Clara she must be keeping you in a *strait-jacket* at home."

Conrad frowned, wishing she hadn't brought up the subject. It worried him off and on that something was wrong with Clara, something even worse than that awful *dreaming* business ten days ago. For several shifts now she had been cold, nor was it just a temporary lack of interest in himself, for she was also cold to the men of their acquaintance of whom she was usually quite fond. As for himself, he had had to depend on casual contacts such as Angela. Not that they weren't pleasant, but a man and wife were supposed to maintain a healthy love life between themselves, and it usually meant trouble with the Medicorps when this broke down.

Angela glanced at him. "I didn't think Clara laughed well at my remark. Is something wrong between you?"

"Oh, no," he declared hastily. "Clara is sometimes that way. . . doesn't catch a joke right off."

A page boy approached them where they stood in the rotunda and advised Conrad that his ship was ready.

"Honestly, Angela, I'll make it up, I promise."

"I know you will, darling. And at least I'm grateful you saved me from all those rocket jets in there." Angela raised her lips for a kiss and afterwards, as she pushed him towards the door, her slightly vacant face smiled at him.

Out on the ramp, Conrad found another pilot ready to take off. They made two wagers—first to reach the racing course, and winner in a six-lap heat around the six-hundred-mile hexagonal course.

They fired together and Conrad blasted his ship up on a thunderous column of flame that squeezed him into his seat.

He was good at this and he knew he would win the lift to the course. On the course, though, if his opponent was any good at all, Conrad would probably lose, because he enjoyed slamming the ship around the course in his wasteful, swashbuckling style much more than merely winning the heat.

Conrad kept his drive on till the last possible second and then shot out his nose jets. The ship shuddered up through another hundred miles and came to a lolling halt near the starting buoys. The other pilot gasped when Conrad shouted at him over the intership, "The winner by all thirty heads!"

It was generally assumed that a race up to the course consisted of cutting all jets when you had enough lift, and using the nose brakes only to correct any overshoot. "What did you do, just keep your power on and flip the ship around?" The other racer coasted up to Conrad's level and steadied with a brief forward burst.

They got the automatic signal from the starting buoy and went for the first turn, nose and nose, about half a mile apart. Conrad lost 5,000 yards on the first turn by shoving his power too hard against the starboard steering jets.

It made a pretty picture when a racer hammered its way around a turn that way with a fan of outside jets holding it in place. The other fellow made his turns cleanly, using mostly the driving jets for steering. But that didn't look like much to those who happened to flip on their television while this little heat was in progress. On every turn, Conrad lost a little in space, but not in the eye of the automatic televisior on the buoy marking the turn. As usual, he cut closer to the buoys than regulations allowed, to give the folks a show.

Without the slightest regret, Conrad lost the heat by a full two sides of the hexagon. He congratulated his opponent and watched the fellow let his ship down carefully towards earth on its tail jets. For a while Conrad lolled his ship around near the starting buoy and its probably watching eye, flipping through a series of complicated manoeuvres with the steering jets.

Conrad did not like the grim countenance of outer space. The lifeless, gem-like blaze of cloud upon cloud of stars in the perspectiveless black repelled him. He liked rocket racing only because of the neat

timing necessary, and possibly because the knowledge that he indulged in it scared poor old Bill Walden half to death.

Today the bleak aspect of the Galaxy harried his mind back upon its own problems. A particularly nasty association of Clara with Bill Walden and his snivelling kid kept dogging Conrad's mind and, as soon as stunting had exhausted his excess of fuel, he turned the ship to earth and sent it in with a short, spectacular burst.

Now that he stopped to consider it, Clara's strange behaviour had begun at about the same time that Bill Walden started cheating on the shifts. That kid Mary must have known something was going on, or she would not have done such a disgusting thing as to come to their apartment.

Conrad had let the rocket fall nose-down, until now it was screaming into the upper ionosphere. With no time to spare, he swivelled the ship on its guiding jets and opened the drive blast at the uprushing earth. He had just completed this wrenching manoeuvre when two appalling things happened together.

Conrad suddenly knew, whether as a momentary leak from Bill's mind to his, or as a rapid calculation of his own, that Bill Walden and Clara shared a secret. At the same moment, something tore through his mind like fingers of chill wind. With seven gravities mashing him into the bucket-seat, he grunted curses past thin-stretched lips.

"Great blue psychiatrists! What in thirty strait-jackets is that three-headed fool trying to do, kill us both?"

Conrad just managed to raise his leaden hand and set the plummeting racer for automatic pilot before Bill Walden forced him out of the shift. In his last moment of consciousness, and in the shock of his overwhelming shame, Conrad felt the bitter irony that he could not cut the power and kill Bill Walden.

When Bill Walden became conscious of the thunderous clamour of the braking ship and the awful weight of deceleration into which he had shifted, the core of him froze. He was so terrified that he could not have thought of reshifting even had there been time.

His head rolled on the pad in spite of its weight, and he saw the earth coming at him like a monstrous swatter aimed at a fly. Between his fright and the inhuman gravity, he lost consciousness without ever seeing on the control panel the red warning that saved him: *Automatic Pilot*.

The ship settled itself on the ramp in a mushroom of fire. Bill regained awareness several seconds later. He was too shaken to do anything but sit there for a long time.

When at last he felt capable of moving, he struggled with the door till he found how to open it, and climbed down to the still hot ramp he had landed on. It was at least a mile to the Rocket Club across the barren flat of the field, and he set out on foot. Shortly, however, a truck came speeding across to him.

The driver leaned out. "Hey, Conrad, what's the matter? Why didn't you pull the ship over to the hangars?"

With Conrad's make-up on. Bill felt he could probably get by. "Controls aren't working," he offered noncommittally.

At the club, a place he had never been to before in his life. Bill found an unused helicopter and started it with his wrist band. He flew the machine into town to the landing station nearest his home.

He was doomed, he knew. Conrad certainly would report him for this. He had not intended to force the shift so early or so violently. Perhaps he had not intended to force it at all this time. But there was something in him more powerful than himself... a need to break the shift and be with Clara that now acted almost independently of him and certainly without regard for his safety.

Bill flew his craft carefully through the city traffic, working his way between the widely spaced towers with the uncertain hand of one to whom machines are not an extension of the body. He put the helicopter down at the landing station with some difficulty.

Clara would not be expecting him so early. From his apartment, as soon as he had changed make-up, he visiophoned her. It was strange how long and how carefully they needed to look at each other and how few words they could say.

Afterwards, he seemed calmer and went about getting ready with more efficiency. But when he found himself addressing the package of Conrad's clothes to his home, he chuckled bitterly.

It was when he went back to drop the package in the mail chute that he noticed the storage-room door ajar. He disposed of the package and went over to the door. Then he stood still, listening. He had to stop his own breathing to hear clearly.

Bill tightened himself and opened the door. He flipped on the light and saw Mary. The child sat on the floor in the corner with her knees drawn up against her chest. Between the knees and the chest, the frail wrists were crossed, the hands closed limply like—like those of a foetus. The forehead rested on the knees so that, should the closed eyes stay open, they would be looking at the placid hands.

The sickening sight of the child squeezed down on his heart till the colour drained from his face. He went forward and knelt before her. His dry throat hammered with the words, *what have I done to you*, but he could not speak.

The question of how long she might have been here, he could not bear to think.

He put out his hand, but he did not touch her. A shudder of revulsion shook him and he scrambled to his feet. He hurried back into the apartment with only one thought. He must get someone to help her. Only the Medicorps could take care of a situation like this.

As he stood at the visiophone, he knew that this involuntary act of panic had betrayed all that he had ever thought and done. He had to call the Medicorps. He could not face the result of his own behaviour without them. Like a ghostly after-image, he saw Clara's face on the screen. She was lost, cut off, with only himself to depend on.

A part of him, a place where there were no voices and a great tragedy, had been abruptly shut off. He stood stupidly confused and disturbed about something he couldn't recall.

The emotion in his body suddenly had no referent. He stood like a badly frightened animal while his heart slowed and blood seeped again into whitened parenchymas, while tides of epinephrine burned lower.

Remembering he must hurry, Bill left the apartment. It was an apartment with its storage-room door closed, an apartment without a storage-room.

From the moment that he walked in and took Clara in his arms, he was not worried about being caught. He felt only the great need for her. There seemed only one difference from the first time and it was a good difference, because now Clara was so tense and apprehensive. He felt a new tenderness for her, as one might feel for a child. It seemed to him that there was no end to the well of gentleness and compassion that was suddenly in him. He was mystified by the depth of his feeling. He kissed her again and again and petted her as one might a disturbed child.

Clara said, "Oh Bill, we're doing wrong! Mary was here yesterday!"

Whoever she meant, it had no meaning for him. He said, "It's all right. You mustn't worry."

"She needs you, Bill, and I take you away from her."

Whatever it was she was talking about was utterly unimportant beside the fact that she was not happy herself. He soothed her. "Darling you mustn't worry about it. Let's be happy the way we used to be."

He led her to a couch and they sat together, her head resting on his shoulder.

"Conrad is worried about me. He knows something is wrong. Oh, Bill, if he knew, he'd demand the worst penalty for you."

Bill felt the stone of fear come back in his chest. He thought, too, of Helen, of how intense her shame would be. Medicorps action would be machine-like, logical as a set of equation; they were very likely to take more drastic steps where the complaints would be so strong and no request for leniency forthcoming. Conrad knew now, of course. Bill had felt his hate.

It was nearing the end. Death would come to Bill with electronic fingers. A ghostly probing in his mind and suddenly. . .

Clara's great unhappiness and the way she turned her head into his shoulder to cry forced him to calm the rising panic in himself, and again to caress the fear from her.

Even later, when they lay where the moonlight thrust into the room an impalpable shaft of alabaster, he loved her only as a succour. Carefully, slowly, smoothing out her mind, drawing it away from all the other things, drawing it down into this one thing. Gathering all her mind into her senses and holding it

there. Then quickly taking it away from her in a moaning spasm so that now she was murmuring, murmuring, palely drifting. Sleeping like a loved child.

For a long, long time he watched the white moon cut its arc across their window. He listened with a deep pleasure to her evenly breathing sleep. But slowly he realized that her breath had changed, that the body so close to his was tensing. His heart gave a great bound and tiny moths of horror fluttered along his back. He raised himself and saw that the eyes were open in the silver light. Even through the make-up he saw that they were Helen's eyes.

He did the only thing left for him. He shifted. But in that terrible instant he understood something he had not anticipated. In Helen's eyes there was not only intense shame over shifting into her hypoalter's home; there was not only the disgust with himself for breaking communication codes.

He saw that, as a woman of the 20th Century might have felt, Helen hated Clara as a sexual rival. She hated Clara doubly because he had turned not to some other woman, but to the other part of herself whom she could never know.

As she shifted, Bill knew that the next light he saw would be on the adamant face of the Medicorps.

Major Paul Grey, with two other Medicorps officers, entered the Walden apartment about two hours after Bill left it to meet Clara. Major Grey was angry with himself. Important information on a case of communication breaks and drug refusal could be learned by letting it run its course under observation. But he had not intended Conrad Manz's life to be endangered, and certainly he would not have taken the slightest chance on what they found in the Walden apartment if he had expected it this early.

Major Grey blamed himself for what had happened to Mary Walden. He should have had the machines watching Susan and Mary at the same time that they were relaying wrist-band data for Bill and Conrad and for Helen and Clara to his office.

He had not done this because it was Susan's shift and he had not expected Mary to break it. Now he knew that Helen and Bill Walden had been quarrelling over the fact that Clara was cheating on Helen's shifts, and their conversations had directed the unhappy child's attention to the Manz couple. She had broken shift to meet them. . . looking for a loving father, of course.

Still—things would not have turned out so badly if Captain Thiel, Mary's school officer, had not attributed Susan Shorris' disappearance only to poor drug acclimatization. Captain Thiel had naturally known that Major Grey was in town to prosecute Bill Walden, because the major had called on him to discuss the case. Yet it had not occurred to him, until eighteen hours after Susan's disappearance, that Mary might have forced the shift for some reason associated with her aberrant father.

By the time the captain advised him, Major Grey already knew that Bill had forced the shift on Conrad under desperate circumstances and he had decided to close in. He fully expected to find the father and daughter at the apartment, and now... it sickened him to see the child's demented condition and realize that Bill had left her there.

Major Grey could see at a glance that Mary Walden would not be accessible for days even with the best treatment. He left it to the other two officers to hospitalize the child and set out for the Manz apartment.

He used his master wristband to open the door there, and found a woman standing in the middle of the room, wrapped in a sheet. He knew that this must be Helen Walden. It was odd how ill-fitting Clara Manz's softly sensual make-up seemed, even to a stranger, on the more rigidly composed face before him. He guessed that Helen would wear colour higher on her cheeks and the mouth would be done in severe lines. Certainly the present haughty face struggled with its incongruous make-up as well as the indignity of her dress.

She pulled the sheet tighter about her and said icily, "I will not wear that woman's clothes."

Major Grey introduced himself and asked, "Where is Bill Walden?"

"He shifted! He left me with... Oh, I'm so ashamed!"

Major Grey shared her loathing. There was no way to escape the conditioning of childhood—sex relations between hyperalter and hypoalter were more than outlawed, they were in themselves disgusting. If they were allowed, they could destroy this civilization. Those idealists—they were almost all hypoalters, of course—who wanted the old terminology changed didn't take that into account. Next

thing they'd want children to live with their actual parents!

Major Grey stepped into the bedroom. Through the bathroom door beyond, he could see Conrad Manz changing his make-up.

Conrad turned and eyed him bluntly. "Would you mind staying out of here till I'm finished? I've had about all I can take."

Major Grey shut the door and returned to Helen Walden.

He took a hypothalamic block from his own pharmacase and handed it to her. "Here, you're probably on very low drug levels. You'd better take this." He poured her a glass of pop from a decanter and, while they waited for Conrad, he dialed the nearest shifting station on the visiophone and ordered up an emergency shifting costume for her.

When at last they were both dressed, made up to their satisfaction and drugged to his satisfaction, he had them sit on a couch together across from him. They sat at opposite ends of it, stiff with resentment at each other's presence.

Major Grey said calmly, "You realize that this matter is coming to a Medicorps trial. It will be serious."

Major Grey watched their faces. On hers he saw grim determination. On Conrad's face he saw the heavy movement of alarm. The man loved his wife. That was going to help.

"It is necessary in a case such as this for the Medicorps to weigh your decisions along with the scientific evidence we will accumulate. Unfortunately, the number of laymen directly involved in this case—and not on trial—is only two, due to your peculiar marriage. If the hypoalters, Clara and Conrad, were married to other partners, we might call on as many as six involved persons and obtain a more equitable lay judgment. As it stands, the entire responsibility rests on the two of you."

Helen Walden was primly confident. "I don't see how we can fail to treat the matter with perfect logic. After all, it is not *we* who neglect our drug levels. . . They *were* refusing to take their drugs, weren't they?" she asked, hoping for the worst and certain she was right.

"Yes, this is drug refusal." Major Grey paused while she relished the answer. "But I must correct you in one impression. Your proper drug levels do not assure that you will act logically in this matter. The drugged mind *is* logical. However, its fundamental datum is that the drugs and drugged minds must be protected before everything else." He watched Conrad's face while he added, "Because of this, it is possible for you to arrive logically at a conclusion that. . . death is the required solution." He paused, looking at their white lips. Then he said, "Actually, other, more suitable solutions may be possible."

"But they *were* refusing their drugs," she said. "You talk as if you are defending them. Aren't you a Medicorps prosecutor?"

"I do not prosecute *people* in the ancient 20th Century sense, Mrs. Walden. I prosecute the acts of drug refusal and communication breaks. There is quite a difference."

"Well!" she said almost explosively. "I always knew Bill would get into trouble sooner or later with his wild, antisocial ideas. I never *dreamed* the Medicorps would take *his* side."

Major Grey held his breath, almost certain now that she would walk into the trap. If she did, he could save Clara Manz before the trial.

"After all, they have broken every communication code. They have refused the drugs, a defiance aimed at our very lives. They—"

"Shut up!" It was the first time Conrad Manz had spoken since he sat down. "The Medicorps spent weeks gathering evidence and preparing their recommendations. You haven't seen any of that and you've already made up your mind. How logical is that? It sounds as if you *want* your husband dead. Maybe the poor devil had some reason, after all, for what he did." On the man's face there was the nearest approach to hate that the drugs would allow.

Major Grey let his breath out softly. They were split permanently. She would have to trade him a mild decision on Clara in order to save Bill. And even there, if the subsequent evidence gave any slight hope. Major Grey believed now that he could work on Conrad to hang the lay judgment and let the Medicorps' scientific recommendation go through unmodified.

He let them stew in their cross-purposed silence for a while and then nailed home a disconcerting

fact.

"I think I should remind you that there are a few advantages to having your alter extinguished in the *mnemonic eraser*. A man whose hyperalter has been extinguished must report on his regular shift days to a hospital and be placed for five days in suspended animation. This is not very healthy for the body, but necessary. Otherwise, everyone's natural distaste for his own alter and the understandable wish to spend twice as much time living would generate schemes to have one's alter sucked out by the eraser. That happened extensively back in the 21st Century before the five-day suspension was required. It was also used as a 'cure' for schizophrenia, but it was, of course, only the brutal murder of innocent personalities."

Major Grey smiled grimly to himself. "Now I will have to ask you both to accompany me to the hospital. I will want you, Mrs. Walden, to shift at once to Mrs. Manz. Mr. Manz, you will have to remain under the close observation of an officer until Bill Walden tries to shift back. We have to catch him with an injection to keep him in shift."

The young medicop put the syringe aside and laid his hand on Bill Walden's forehead. He pushed the hair back out of Bill's eyes.

"There, Mr. Walden, you don't have to struggle now." Bill let his breath out in a long sigh. "You've caught me. I can't shift any more, can I?"

"That's right, Mr. Walden. Not unless we want you to."

The young man picked up his medical equipment and stepped aside.

Bill noticed then the Medicorps officer standing in the background. The man was watching as though he contemplated some melancholy distance. "I am Major Grey, Bill. I'm handling your case."

Bill did not answer. He lay staring at the hospital ceiling.

Then he felt his mouth open in a slow grin.

"What's funny?" Major Grey asked mildly.

"Leaving my hypoalter with my wife," Bill answered candidly. It had already ceased to be funny to him, but he saw Major Grey smile in spite of himself.

"They were quite upset when I found them. It must have been some scramble before that." Major Grey came over and sat in the chair vacated by the young man who had just injected Bill. "You know, Bill, we will need a complete analysis of you. We want to do everything we can to save you, but it will require your co-operation."

Bill nodded, feeling his chest tighten. Here it came. Right to the end they would be tearing him apart to find out what made him work.

Major Grey must have sensed Bill's bitter will to resist.

His resonant voice was soft, his face kindly. "We must have your sincere desire to help. We can't force you to do anything."

"Except die," Bill said.

"Maybe helping us get the information that might save your life at the trial isn't worth the trouble to you. But your aberration has seriously disturbed the lives of several people. Don't you think you owe it to them to help us to prevent this sort of thing in the future?" Major Grey ran his hand through his whitening hair. "I thought you would like to know Mary will come through all right. We will begin shortly to acclimatize her to her new appointed parents, who will be visiting her each day. That will accelerate her recovery a great deal. Of course, right now she is still inaccessible."

The brutally clear picture of Mary alone in the storage-room crashed back into Bill's mind. After a while, in such slow stages that the beginning was hardly noticeable, he began to cry. The young medicop injected him with a sleeping compound, but not before Bill knew he would do whatever the Medicorps wanted.

The next day was crowded with battery after battery of tests. The interviews were endless. He was subjected to a hundred artificial situations and every reaction from his blood sugar to the frequency ranges of his voice was measured. They gave him only small amounts of drugs in order to test his reaction to them.

Late in the evening, Major Grey came by and interrupted an officer who was taking an electro-encephalogram for the sixth time after injection of a drug.

"All right, Bill, you have really given us co-operation. But after you've had your dinner, I hope you won't mind if I come to your room and talk with you for a little while."

When Bill finished eating, he waited impatiently in his room for the Medicorps officer. Major Grey came soon after.

He shook his head at the mute question Bill shot at him. "No, Bill. We will not have the results of your tests evaluated until late tomorrow morning. I can't tell you a thing until the trial in any case."

"When will that be?"

"As soon as the evaluation of your tests is in." Major Grey ran his hand over his smooth chin and seemed to sigh.

"Tell me, Bill, how do you feel about your case? How did you get into this situation and what do you think about it now?" The officer sat in the room's only chair and motioned Bill to the cot.

Bill was astonished at his sudden desire to talk about his problem. He had to laugh to cover it up. "I guess I feel as if I am being condemned for trying to stay sober."

Bill used the ancient word with a mock tone of righteousness that he knew the major would understand.

Major Grey smiled. "How do you feel when you're sober?"

Bill searched his face. "The way the ancient Moderns did, I guess. I feel what happens to me the way it happens to me, not the artificial way the drugs let it happen. I think there is a way for us to live without the drugs and really enjoy life. Have you ever cut down on your drugs, Major?"

The officer shook his head.

Bill smiled at him dreamily. "You ought to try it. It's as though a new life has suddenly opened up. Everything looks different to you.

"Look, with an average life span of a hundred years, each of us only lives fifty years and our alter lives the other fifty. Yet even on half-time we experience only about half the living we'd do if we didn't take the drugs. We would be able to feel the loves and hatreds and desires of life. No matter how many mistakes we made, we would be able occasionally to live those intense moments that made the ancients great."

Major Grey said tonelessly. "The ancients were great at killing, cheating and debasing one another. And they were worse sober than *drunk*." This time he did not smile at the word.

Bill understood the implacable logic before him. The logic that had saved man from himself by smothering his spirit. The carefully achieved logic of the drugs that had seized upon the disassociated personality, and engineered it into a smoothly running machine, where there was no unhappiness because there was no great happiness, where there was no crime except failure to take the drugs or cross the alter sex line. Without drugs, he was capable of fury and he felt it now.

"You should see how foolish these communication codes look when you are undrugged. This stupid hide-and-seek of shifting! These two-headed monsters simpering about their artificial morals and their endless prescriptions! They belong in *crazy* houses! What use is there in such a world? If we are all this sick, we should die. . ."

Bill stopped and there was suddenly a ringing silence in the barren little room.

Finally Major Grey said, "I think you can see, Bill, that your desire to live without drugs is incompatible with this society. It would be impossible for us to maintain in you an artificial need for the drugs that would be healthy. Only if we can clearly demonstrate that this aberration is not an inherent part of your personality can we do something medically or psycho-surgically about it."

Bill did not at first see the implication in this. When he did, he thought of Clara rather than of himself, and his voice was shaken. "Is it a localized aberration in Clara?"

Major Grey looked at him levelly. "I have arranged for you to be with Clara Manz a little while in the morning." He stood up and said good night and was gone.

Slowly, as if it hurt him to move, Bill turned off the light and lay on the cot in the semi-dark. After a while he could feel his heart begin to take hold and he started feeling better. It was as though a man who

had thought himself permanently expatriated had been told, "Tomorrow, you walk just over that hill and you will be home."

All through the night he lay awake, alternating between panic and desperate longing in a cycle with which finally he became familiar. At last, as rusty light of dawn reddened his silent room, he fell into a troubled sleep.

He started awake in broad daylight. An orderly was at the door with his breakfast tray. He could not eat, of course. After the orderly left, he hastily changed to a new hospital uniform and washed himself. He redid his make-up with a trembling hand, straightened the bedclothes and then he sat on the edge of the cot.

No one came for him.

The young medicop who had given him the injection that caught him in shift finally entered, and was standing near him before Bill was aware of his presence.

"Good morning, Mr. Walden. How are you feeling?"

Bill's wildly oscillating tensions froze at the point where he could only move helplessly with events and suffer a constant, unchangeable longing.

It was as if in a dream that they moved in silence together down the long corridors of the hospital and took the lift to an upper floor. The medicop opened the door to a room and let Bill enter. Bill heard the door close behind him. Clara did not turn from where she stood looking out the window. Bill did not care that the walls of the chill little room were almost certainly recording every sight and sound.

All his hunger was focused on the back of the girl at the window. The room seemed to ring with his racing blood. But he was slowly aware that something was wrong, and when at last he called her name, his voice broke.

Still without turning, she said in a strained monotone, "I want you to understand that I have consented to this meeting only because Major Grey has assured me it was necessary."

It was a long time before he could speak. "Clara, I need you."

She spun on him. "Have you no shame? You are married to my hyperalter—don't you understand that?" Her face was suddenly wet with tears and the intensity of her shame flamed at him from her cheeks. "How can Conrad ever forgive me for being with his hyperalter and talking about him? Oh, how can I have been so *mad*?"

"They have done something to you," he said, shaking with tension.

Her chin raised at this. She was defiant, he saw, though not towards himself—he no longer existed for her—but towards that part of herself which once had needed him and now no longer existed. "They have cured me," she declared.

"They have cured me of everything but my shame, and they will help me get rid of that as soon as you leave this room."

Bill stared at her before leaving. Out in the corridor, the young medicop did not look him in the face. They went back to Bill's room and the officer left without a word. Bill lay down on his cot.

Presently Major Grey entered the room. He came over to the cot. "I'm sorry it had to be this way. Bill."

Bill's words came tonelessly from his dry throat. "Was it necessary to be cruel?"

"It was necessary to test the result of her psycho-surgery. Also, it will help her over her shame. She might otherwise have retained a seed of fear that she still loved you."

Bill did not feel anything any more. Staring at the ceiling, he knew there was no place left for him in this world and no one in it who needed him. The only person who had really needed him had been Mary, and he could not bear to think of how he had treated her. Now the Medicorps was efficiently curing the child of the hurt he had done her. They had already erased from Clara any need for him she had ever felt.

This seemed funny and he began to laugh. "Everyone is being cured of me."

"Yes, Bill. That is necessary." When Bill went on laughing Maor Grey's voice turned quite sharp. "Come with me. It's time for your trial."

The enormous room in which they held the trial was utterly barren. At the great oaken table around which they all sat, there were three Medicorps officers in addition to Major Grey.

Helen did not speak to Bill when they brought him in.

He was placed on the same side of the table with an officer between them. Two orderlies stood behind Bill's chair. Other than these people, there was no one in the room.

The great windows were high above the floor and displayed only the blissful sky. Now and then Bill saw a flock of pigeons waft aloft on silver-turning wings. Everyone at the table except himself had a copy of his case report and they discussed it with clipped sentences. Between the stone floor and the vaulted ceiling, a subtle echolalia babbled about Bill's problem behind their human talk.

The discussion of the report lulled when Major Grey rapped on the table. He glanced unsmiling from face to face, and his voice hurried the ritualized words: "This is a court of medicine, co-joining the results of medical science and considered lay judgment to arrive at a decision in the case of patient Bill Walden. The patient is hospitalized for a history of drug refusal and communication breaks. We have before us the medical case record of patient Walden. Has everyone present studied this record?"

All at the table nodded.

"Do all present feel competent to pass judgment in this case?"

Again there came the agreement.

Major Grey continued, "It is my duty to advise you, in the presence of the patient, of the profound difference between a trial for simple drug refusal and one in which that aberration is compounded with communication breaks.

"It is true that no other aberration is possible when the drugs are taken as prescribed. After all, the drugs *are* the basis for our schizophrenic society. Nevertheless, simple drug refusal often is a mere matter of physiology, which is easy enough to remedy.

"A far more profound threat to our society is the break in communication. This generally is more deeply motivated in the patient, and is often inaccessible to therapy. Such a patient is driven to emotive explorations which place the various ancient passions, and the infamous art of *historical gesture*, such as 'give me liberty or give me death', above the welfare of society."

Bill watched the birds flash down the sky, a handful of heavenly coin. Never had it seemed to him so good to look at the sky. *If they hospitalize me*, he thought, *I will be content forever to sit and look from windows.*

"Our schizophrenic society," Major Grey was saying, "holds together and runs smoothly because, in each individual, the personality conflicts have been compartmentalized between hyperalter and hypoalter. On the social level, conflicting personalities are kept on opposite shifts and never contact each other. Or they are kept on shifts where contact is possible no more than one or two days out of ten. Bill Walden's break of shift is the type of behaviour designed to reactivate these conflicts, and to generate the destructive passions on which an undrugged mind feeds. Already illness and disrupted lives have resulted."

Major Grey paused and looked directly at Bill. "Exhaustive tests have demonstrated that your entire personality is involved. I might also say that the aberration to live without the drugs and to break communication codes *is* your personality. All these Medicorps officers are agreed on that diagnosis. It remains now for us of the Medicorps to sit with the laymen intimately involved and decide on the action to be taken. The only possible alternatives after that diagnosis are permanent hospitalization or. . . total removal of the personality by mnemonic erasure."

Bill could not speak. He saw Major Grey nod to one of the orderlies and felt the man pushing up his sleeve and injecting his nerveless arm. They were forcing him to shift, he knew, so that Conrad Manz could sit in on the trial and participate.

Helplessly, he watched the great sky blacken and the room dim and disappear.

Major Grey did not avert his face, as did the others, while the shift was in progress. Helen Walden, he saw, was dramatizing her shame at being present during a shift, but the Medicorps officers simply stared at the table. Major Grey watched the face of Conrad Manz take form while the man who was going to be tried faded.

Bill Walden had been without make-up, and as soon as he was sure Manz could hear him. Major

Grey apologized.

"I hope you won't object to this brief interlude in public without make-up. You are present at the trial of Bill Walden."

Conrad Manz nodded and Major Grey waited another full minute for the shift to complete itself before he continued.

"Mr. Manz, during the two days you waited in the hospital for us to catch Walden in shift, I discussed this case quite thoroughly with you, especially as it applied to the case of Clara Manz, on which we were already working.

"You will recall that in the case of your wife, the Medicorps diagnosis was one of a clearly localized aberration. It was quite simple to apply the mnemonic eraser to that small section without disturbing in any way her basic personality. Medicorps agreement was for this procedure and the case did not come to trial, but simply went to operation, because lay agreement was obtained. First yourself and eventually" Major Grey paused and let the memory of Helen's stubborn insistence that Clara die stir in Conrad's mind, "Mrs. Walden agreed with the Medicorps."

Major Grey let the room wait in silence for awhile. "The case of Bill Walden is quite different. The aberration involves the whole personality, and the alternative actions to be taken are permanent hospitalization or total erasure. In this case, I believe that Medicorps opinion will be divided as to proper action and," Major Grey paused again and looked levelly at Conrad Manz, "this may be true, also, of the lay opinion."

"How's that, Major?" demanded the highest ranking Medicorps officer present, a colonel named Hart, a tall, handsome man on whom the military air was a becoming skin. "What do you mean about Medicorps opinion being divided?"

Major Grey answered quietly, "I'm holding out for hospitalization."

Colonel Hart's face reddened. He thrust it forward and straightened his back. "That's preposterous! This is a clear-cut case of a dangerous threat to our society, and we, let me remind you, are *sworn* to protect that society."

Major Grey felt very tired. It was, after all, difficult to understand why he always fought so hard against erasure of these aberrant cases. But he began with quiet determination.

"The threat to society is effectively removed by either of the alternatives, hospitalization or total erasure. I think you can all see from Bill Walden's medical record that his is a well-rounded personality with a remarkable mind. In the environment of the 20th Century, he would have been an outstanding citizen, and possibly, if there had been more like him, our present society would have been better for it.

"Our history has been one of weeding out all personalities that did not fit easily into our drugged society. Today there are so few left that I have handled only one hundred and thirty-six in my entire career. . . ."

Major Grey saw that Helen Walden was tensing in her chair. He realized suddenly that she sensed better than he the effect he was having on the other men.

"We should not forget that each time we erase one of these personalities," he pressed on relentlessly, "society loses irrevocably a certain capacity for change. If we eliminate all personalities who do not fit, we may find ourselves without any minds capable of meeting future change. Our direct ancestors were largely the inmates of mental hospitals. . . we are fortunate *they* were not erased. Conrad Manz," he asked abruptly, "what is your opinion on the case of Bill Walden?"

Helen Walden started, but Conrad Manz shrugged his muscular shoulders. "Oh, hospitalize the three-headed monster!"

Major Grey snapped his eyes directly past Colonel Hart and fastened them on the Medicorps captain. "Your opinion, Captain?"

But Helen Walden was too quick. Before he could rap the table for order, she had her thin words hanging in the echoing room. "Having been Mr. Walden's wife for fifteen years, my sentiments naturally incline me to ask for hospitalization. That is why I may safely say, if Major Grey will pardon me, that the logic of the drugs does not entirely fail us in this situation."

Helen waited while all present got the idea that Major Grey had accused them of being illogical.

"Bill's aberration has led to our daughter's illness. And think how quickly it contaminated Clara Manz! I cannot ask that society any longer expose itself, even to the extent of keeping Bill in the isolation of the hospital, for my purely sentimental reasons.

"As for Major Grey's closing remarks, I cannot see how it is fair to bring my husband to trial as a threat to society, if some future change is expected, in which a man of his behaviour would benefit society. Surely such a change could only be one that would ruin our present world, or Bill would hardly fit it. I would not want to save Bill or anyone else for such a future."

She did not have to say anything further. Both of the other Medicorps officers were now fully roused to their duty. Colonel Hart, of course, "humphed" at the opinions of a woman and cast his with Major Grey. But the fate of Bill Walden was sealed.

Major Grey sat, weary and uneasy, as the creeping little doubts began. In the end, he would be left with the one big stone-heavy doubt. . . could he have gone through with this if he had not been drugged, and how would the logic of the trial look without drugs?

He became aware of the restiveness in the room. They were waiting for him, now that the decision was irrevocable. Without the drugs, he reflected, they might be feeling—what was the ancient word, *guilt*? No, that was what the criminal felt.

Remorse? That would be what they should be feeling. Major Grey wished Helen Walden could be forced to witness the erasure. People did not realize what it was like.

What was it Bill had said? "You should see how foolish these communication codes look when you are undrugged. This stupid hide-and-seek of shifting. . . ."

Well, wasn't that a charge to be *inspected* seriously, if you were taking it seriously enough to kill the man for it? As soon as this case was completed, he would have to return to his city and blot himself out so that his own hyperalter, Ralph Singer, a painter of bad pictures and a useless fool, could waste five more days. To that man he lost half his possible living days. What earthly good was Singer?

Major Grey roused himself and motioned the orderly to inject Conrad Manz, so that Bill Walden would be forced back into shift.

"As soon as I have advised the patient' of our decision, you will all be dismissed. Naturally, I anticipated this decision and have arranged for immediate erasure. After the erasure, Mr. Manz, you will be instructed to appear regularly for suspended animation."

For some reason, the first thing Bill Walden did when he became conscious of his surroundings was to look out the great window for the flock of birds. But they were gone.

Bill looked at Major Grey and said, "What are you going to do?"

The officer ran his hand back through his whitening hair, but he looked at Bill without wavering. "You will be erased."

Bill began to shake his head. "There is something wrong," he said.

"Bill . . ." the major began.

"There is something wrong," Bill repeated hopelessly. "Why must we be split so there is always something missing in each of us? Why must we be stupefied with drugs that keep us from knowing what we should feel? I was trying to live a better life. I did not want to hurt anyone."

"But you *did* hurt others," Major Grey said bluntly. "You would do so again if allowed to function in your own way in this society. Yet it would be insufferable to you to be hospitalized. You would be shut off forever from searching for another Clara Manz. And—there is no one else for you, is there?"

Bill looked up, his eyes cringing as though they stared at death. "No one else?" he asked vacantly. "No one?"

The two orderlies lifted him up by his arms, almost carrying him into the operating room. His feet dragged helplessly.

He made no resistance as they lifted him on to the operating table and strapped him down.

Beside him was the great panel of the mnemonic eraser with its thousand unblinking eyes. The helmet-like prober cabled to this calculator was fastened about his skull, and he could no longer see the professor who was lecturing in the amphitheatre above. But along his body he could see the group of medical students. They were looking at him with great interest, too young not to let the human drama

interfere with their technical education.

The professor, however, droned in a purely objective voice.

"The mnemonic eraser can selectively shunt from the brain any identifiable category of memory, and erase the synaptic patterns associated with its translation into action. Circulating memory is disregarded. The machine only locates and shunts out those energies present as permanent memory. These are there in part as permanently echoing frequencies in closed cytoplasmic systems. These systems are in contact with the rest of the nervous system only during the phenomenon of remembrance. Remembrance occurs when, at all the synapses in a given network 'y', the permanently echoing frequencies are duplicated as transient circulating frequencies.

"The objective in a total operation of the sort before us is to distinguish all the stored permanent frequencies, typical of the personality you wish to extinguish, from the frequencies typical of the other personality present in the brain."

Major Grey's face, very tired, but still wearing a mask of adamant reassurance, came into Bill's vision. "There will be a few moments of drug-induced terror, Bill. That is necessary for the operation. I hope knowing it beforehand will help you ride with it. It will not be for long." He squeezed Bill's shoulder and was gone.

"The trick was learned early in our history, when this type of total operation was more often necessary," the professor continued. "It is really quite simple to extinguish one personality while leaving the other undisturbed. The other personality in the case before us has been drug-immobilized to keep this one from shifting. At the last moment, this personality before us will be drug-stimulated to bring it to the highest possible pitch of total activity. This produces utterly disorganized activity, every involved neuron and synapse being activated simultaneously by the drug. It is then a simple matter for the mnemonic eraser to locate all permanently echoing frequencies involved in this personality and suck them into its receiver."

Bill was suddenly aware that a needle had been thrust into his arm. Then it was as though all the terror, panic and traumatic incidents of his whole life leaped into his mind. All the pleasant experiences and feelings he had ever known were there, too, but were transformed into terror.

A bell was ringing with regular strokes. Across the panel of the mnemonic eraser, the tiny counting lights were alive with movement.

There was in Bill a fright, a demand for survival so great that it could not be felt.

It was actually from an island of complete calm that part of him saw the medical students rising dismayed and white-faced from their seats. It was apart from himself that his body strained to lift some mountain and filled the operating amphitheatre with shrieking echoes. And all the time the thousand eyes of the mnemonic eraser flickered in swift patterns, a silent measure of the cells and circuits of his mind.

Abruptly the tiny red counting lights went off, a red beam glowed with a burr of warning. Someone said, "Now!" The mind of Bill Walden flashed along a wire as electrical energy, and, converted on the control panel into mechanical energy, it spun a small ratchet counter.

"Please sit down," the professor said to the shaken students. "The drug that has kept the other personality immobilized is being counteracted by this next injection. Now that the sickly personality has been dissipated, the healthy one can be brought back rapidly.

"As you are aware, the synapse operates on the binary 'yes-no' choice system of an electronic calculator. All synapses which were involved in the diseased personality have now been reduced to an atypical, uniform threshold. Thus they can be re-educated in new patterns by the healthy personality remaining. . . . There, you see the countenance of the healthy personality appearing."

It was Conrad Manz who looked up at them with a wry grin. He rotated his shoulders to loosen them. "How many of you pushed old Bill Walden around? He left me with some sore muscles. Well, I did that often enough to him. . . ."

Major Grey stood over him, face sick and white with the horror of what he had seen. "According to law, Mr. Manz, you and your wife are entitled to five rest days on your next shift. When they are over, you will, of course, report for suspended animation for what would have been your hyperalter's shift."

Conrad Manz's grin shrank and vanished. "Would have been? Bill is—gone?"

"Yes."

"I never thought I'd miss him." Conrad looked as sick as Major Grey felt. "It makes me feel—I don't know if I can explain it—sort of *amputated*. As though something's wrong with me because everybody else has an alter and I don't. Did the poor son of a strait-jacket suffer much?"

"I'm afraid he did."

Conrad Manz lay still for a moment with his eyes closed and his mouth thin with pity and remorse. "What will happen to Helen?"

"She'll be all right," Major Grey said. "There will be Bill's insurance, naturally, and she won't have much trouble finding another husband. That kind never seems to."

"Five rest days?" Conrad repeated. "Is that what you said?" He sat up and swung his legs off the table, and he was grinning again. "I'll get in a whole shift of jet-skiing! No, wait—I've got a date with the wife of a friend of mine out at the rocket grounds. I'll take Clara out there; she'll like some of the men."

Major Grey nodded abstractedly. "Good idea." He shook hands with Conrad Manz, wished him fun on his rest shift, and left.

Taking a helicopter hack to his city. Major Grey thought of his own hyperalter, Ralph Singer. He'd often wished that the silly fool could be erased. Now he wondered how it would be to have only one personality, and, wondering, realized that Conrad Manz had been right—it *would* be like imputation, the shameful distinction of living in a schizophrenic society with no alter.

No, Bill Walden had been wrong, completely wrong, both about drugs and being split into two personalities. What one made up in pleasure through not taking drugs was more than lost in the suffering of conflict, frustration and hostility. And having an alter—any kind, even one as useless as Singer meant, actually, *not being alone*.

Major Grey parked the helicopter and found a shifting station. He took off his make-up, addressed and mailed his clothes, and waited for the shift to come.

It was a pretty wonderful society he lived in, he realized.

He wouldn't trade it for the kind Bill Walden had wanted.

Nobody in his right mind would.