

## HUMPTY DUMPTY

AND God said to Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them....

Under a stone sky Jeff Cody stood, his hands clasped behind him. He was trying to read the mind of an electronic calculator, and trying to keep his own mind from being read with all the violence in it. He shut down all his barriers around his own desperation, pushing hard upon the one thought he did not dare to face. He held it down, trying to drown it under the surface turmoil of his mind. The calculator had a broad, bland, glassy brow, winking with lights and reflections. Somewhere inside it a thin slice of crystal lay that could wipe human life off the face of the planet. Not Jeff Cody's life, and not the life of his people. But all human, non-telepathic life. The responsibility for the crystal was one man's. Cody's.

Behind him Allenby shifted from one foot to another, his reflection blurring in the shining surface of the calculator's control panel. Cody said without turning,

"But if the Inductor is a failure, then we'll have to-" An image of death and dying formed like a cloud in his thoughts.

He had not said this aloud. Allenby interrupted very quickly, not speaking aloud either, but his thought cutting into Cody's, ending it before the image of destruction could take full shape in Cody's mind.

"No. We've had another set-back. But we'll try again. We'll keep on trying. We may never have to use-that." His mind sketched in the thin crystal in the calculator, with death for most of the race of man locked in it.

"Call it set-back or call it failure," Cody said, in the silence of his mind. "The goal's too high. Nobody knows what makes a man telepathic. Nobody's ever going to induce it with a machine. No Inductor will ever work. You know that."

"I don't know it," Allenby's thought said quietly. "I think it can be done. Jeff, you're under too much pressure."

Cody laughed shortly. "Merriam lasted three months in this job," he said. "Brewster stood it longest-eight months. This is my sixth month. What's the matter? Afraid I'll resign the way Brewster did?"

"No," Allenby said. "But-"

"Okay," Cody interrupted the thought irritably. "Forget it." He felt Allenby's mind touch the edges of his with tentative, uneasy brushing motions. Allenby was a psychologist. And therefore Cody was a little afraid of him. He did not want expert attention brought to bear on him just now. There was something terrifying and yet very tempting down close under the surface of his thoughts, and he did not mean to expose it just yet to anyone. He made an effort of the will and summoned up a shimmer of pleasant images like a smokescreen to puff in Allenby's face. Pine woods with warm rain blowing through them, a quarter of a mile over their heads above the limestone sky. The quiet and clearness of the empty heavens

broken only by the buzz of a helicopter and the soft, continual swish of its vanes. The face of Cody's wife when she was in a good mood and laughing gently.

He felt Allenby's uneasiness tentatively subside. He did not turn as he heard Allenby's feet shift on the floor.

"I'll get back, then," Allenby said without words. "I just wanted to see you when I told you that we'd hit another dead end. Is it all right, Jeff?"

"Fine," Cody said. "I won't keep you."

Allenby went out.

Cody listened while the receding footsteps crossed the room beyond. He heard the door close and lock. He was alone now, physically, though all through the cavern an interlacing play of telepathic thoughts moved continually, touching his own and passing. Even Allenby sent back a vague uneasiness as he moved away. So Cody kept the images of pine woods and clear sky and laughing woman playing over the surface of his mind. But his eyes turned sidewise and without moving his head he saw lying on the edge of a work table within reach of his hand the thing he had not dared to admit into his mind till now. Too many other minds were watching.

What he saw was a knife with a heavy, narrow blade and a sharp point, left by some careless workman. What he thought of was the man before him in this job, and the way Brewster had resigned from it after eight months. Brewster had used a revolver. But a knife was good, too. There is a place inside the collar-bone, near the neck, and consciousness goes out like a blown candle in a matter of seconds if you drive the knife in there. If your burden is too much to bear, as Merriam's was, and Brewster's. And Jeff Cody's.

All around him in the air, like an eyeless, invisible star-

ing, uneasy telepathic minds were swinging around toward him. A ripple of panic was running through the cavern. Something, somewhere, was wrong. But Cody had controlled his surface thoughts skillfully. He had not let himself really see the knife, really think clearly of that spot inside the collarbone, until now.

Now he drew a deep breath and let the wonderful release of the thought flash bright and clear through the cavern. They couldn't stop him. Nobody was near enough. He was free.

"So the Inductor won't work," he said aloud. "So you can't induce telepathy in a human mind. But there's one way to stop telepathy!"

He took one long sidewise step and the knife was in his hand. With two fingers he felt for the ridge of his collarbone, to guide the blade.

"Let the Inductor fail," he thought. "Let the pogrom come. Let the race die. Turn loose Apocalypse. It's not my problem now!"

Generations ago, the Blowup had posed the problem by mutating a sub-species of telepaths. And there had been a time when the Baldies

hoped that eugenics could solve that problem. But not any more. Time was too short.

Even though the telepathic function was carried by a dominant gene, there were too few Baldies. Given enough time and enough intermarriage, the world might become populated entirely by telepaths, but there was not enough time. The only answer was the one which Baldies had been seeking for years now—a mechanical device, an Inductor, which would induce the telepathic power in a non-telepath.

It was theoretically possible. The minds of the greatest scientists on earth lay open to the Baldies. And here in the caves the electronic calculator could solve the problem, given enough data. But this problem it had not completely solved, for there was not enough data, in spite of the treasure of knowledge stolen from hundreds of brilliant, seeking non-Baldy minds.

Still, it was the answer. If every man and woman in the world could become a telepath, simply by wearing a compact mechanical device, the miracle could be worked. The last barriers would go down. The fear and hatred non-telepaths had for Baldies would vanish—not instantly, but it would dissolve little by little in the great sea of interacting minds. The

walls, the difference, would vanish, and with it the fear that relentlessly forced the coming of the pogrom.

But the Inductor was still a theory. The calculator had not yet solved that problem, if it ever would. Instead, it had given the answer to the basic problem in an unexpected way, coldly mechanical and terribly logical. The problem could be solved, the calculator said. Destroy all non-telepathic humans. The method? It searched its vast memory-library and found—Operation Apocalypse.

There was a virus which, by means of certain stimuli, could be mutated into a variant which was air-borne and propagated quickly. It destroyed human neural tissue. There was only one kind of human neural tissue it could not harm. Telepaths were naturally immune to the mutated virus. No Baldy knew what the virus was, or the method of mutation. Only the calculator knew those things, and the inhuman mind of an electronic calculator cannot be read. Somewhere in the great machine was a tiny crystal of barium titanate bearing a series of frozen dots of energy in a binary digit code. And that code held the secret of the deadly virus. If Jeff Cody took three steps forward and sat down in the cushioned operator's chair before the control panel, and if he touched a certain button, a monitor device would examine the electronic pattern of his brain and identify it as surely as fingerprints are identified. Only one man in the world could satisfy the question the monitor would silently ask.

And then a light would begin to glow—somewhere on the control panel, and under it would be a number, and, seeing that number, Cody could make the calculator reveal its secret. Before Cody, Brewster had carried this crushing burden. And before Brewster, Merriam. And after Cody—someone else would have the unendurable responsibility for deciding whether to say: The end of all flesh is come before me... behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

The crash of protesting minds burst by sheer force through the shell of defense Cody had put up around his own as he took up the knife. From all over the busy cavern telepaths stopped in their tracks and hurled their strong, urgent thoughts toward the interlocked center that was Cody.

It was stunning. He had never felt so strong an impact before. He did not mean to falter, but the burden of their protest was almost tangible, almost a thing to stagger under. Even from above-ground he could hear and feel the instant

thrust of down-driving thought. A quarter of a mile above this limestone sky, above the rock and the soil with the pine tree roots clenched downward through it, a hunter in ragged buckskins paused among the trees and sent his own shocked, sympathetic protest dropping toward the cavern. The thought came blurred to Cody by the stone between, and starred with tiny, bright, brainless thoughts of small burrowing things in the soil overhead.

Someone in a helicopter high up in the hot blue sky locked minds with the group Underground, faint and far-off, but as instant as the man in the nearest cave beyond Cody's locked door.

"No, ho," the voices said in his mind. "You can't! You are all of us. You can't. Jeff, you are all of us!"

He knew it was true. The way out was like a deep, dark well, and vertigo pulled him toward it, but he knew that he would be killing his whole race, a little, if he killed himself. Only telepaths can experience death and still live. Each time a telepath dies, all the rest within mind's reach feel the blackness close upon an extinguished mind, and feel their own minds extinguish a little in response.

It happened so fast Cody was still feeling with two fingers along the edge of his collarbone, and the knife was not yet firm in his fist, when the single, interlocking cry of anguished protest from a hundred minds speaking as one closed down upon him. He shut his thoughts and was obdurate. He could fight them off long enough. This would only take a second. The door was locked and physical force was the only thing that could stop him.

But he was uneasy even in this urgent press of voices and action. For Allenby's mind was not speaking with the rest. Why?

Now the knife was firm in his hand. Now he spread his two fingers apart a little to make way for it, knowing the place to strike. Had Brewster felt as he felt, when Brewster stood here six months ago and laid down the unbearable burden of decision? Had it been hard to pull the trigger? Or easy, as it was easy to lift the knife and-

A burst of blinding white light exploded in the middle of his brain. It was like a shooting star that crashed and shattered upon the very texture of the mind itself. In the last winking instant of consciousness Cody thought he had already struck the self-destroying blow and that this was what death looked like from within.

Then he knew that the meteor of impact was Allenby's mind striking his a numbing blow. He felt the knife slip from his hands, he felt his knees

buckle, and he felt nothing more for a very long, an immeasurable time.

When he was aware of himself again Allenby was kneeling beside him on the floor, and the calculator looked up above him glassy and reflecting from an unfamiliar angle, a child's eye view seen with a knee-high vision. The door was unlocked and stood open. Everything looked strange.

Allenby said, "All right, Jeff?"

Cody looked up at him and felt the pent-up and unreleased tension in him boil toward the surface in an outburst of rage so strong that the supporting minds he felt hovering around him drew back as if from fire.

"I'm sorry," Allenby said. "I've only done that twice before in my life. I had to do it, Jeff."

Cody threw aside the hand on his shoulder. Scowling, he drew his feet under him and tried to rise. The room went around him in an unsteady circle.

"Somebody had to be the man," Allenby said. "It was the odds, Jeff. It's hard on you and Merriam and Brewster and those others, but-

Cody made a violent gesture, cutting off the thought.

"All right," Allenby said. "But don't kill yourself, Jeff. Kill somebody else. Kill Jasper Home."

A little burning shock went through Cody's mind. He stood motionless, not even his mind stirring, letting that strange new thought glow in the center of it.

Kill Jasper Home.

Oh, Allenby was a wise man. He was grinning at Cody now, his round, ruddy face tense but beginning to look happy again.

"Feeling better? Action's what you need, Jeff-action, directed activity. All you've been able to do for months is stay put and worry. There are some responsibilities a man can't carry-unless he acts. Well, use your knife on Home, not yourself."

A faint flicker of doubt wavered in Cody's mind.

Allenby said, "Yes, you may fail. He may kill you."

"He won't," Cody said aloud, his voice sounding strange to him.

"He could. You'll have to take the chance. Get him if you can. That's what you want to do, but you haven't really known it. You've got to kill someone. Home's our basic

problem now. He's our real enemy. So kill Home. Not yourself."

Cody nodded without a word.

"Good. We'll locate him for you. And I'll get you a copter. Will you see Lucy

first?"

A little wave of disturbance ran through Cody's mind. Allenby saw it, but he did not let his own mind ripple in response. Quietly the innumerable linking minds of the other telepaths all around them had drawn back, waiting.

"Yes," Cody said. "I'll see Lucy first." He turned toward the door of the cave.

Jasper Home-and what he represented-was the reason why the Baldies could not let even themselves learn the method of Operation Apocalypse and the nature of the deadly selective virus from the calculator. That secret had to be kept from Jasper Home and his fellow paranoids. For then-approach was: Why not kill all the humans? Why not, before they kill us? Why not strike first, and save ourselves?

These were hard questions to answer, and Jasper Home was very adept at putting it to the test. If you could say the group of paranoid telepaths had any leader, then Home was that leader. How much the man knew of the Caves was uncertain. He knew they existed, but not where. He knew some of the things that were going on in it, in spite of the frequency-scrambling Mute helmets every Cave Baldy wore. If he knew about the Inductor, he would-if he could-have dropped an Egg on it with the greatest joy in life and watched the smoke-cloud arise. Certainly he knew the Operation Apocalypse had been planned, for he was doing his best to force the Baldies to release the virus that would destroy all non-telepathic human life.

And he knew the way to force this decision. If-when-a total pogrom started, then the virus and the Apocalypse would be loosed upon the world. Then there would be no choice. When your life depends on killing your enemy, you don't hesitate. But when the enemy is your brother....

That was the difference. To the normal Baldies, the race of non-telepathic humans was a close kin. To the paranoids they were hairy sub-men fit only for extermination. So Jasper Home worked in every way he knew to force trouble to the surface. To precipitate a pogrom. To make sure the Baldies released the virus and destroyed the hairy men.

And Home worked in a decentralized post-Blowup society

founded on fear, a fear that had been very real once. Today, no further move seemed possible. The society wavered between re-contraction and further expansion, and each man, each town, was on guard against all others. For how can you trust another when you do not know his thoughts?

American Gun and Sweetwater, Jensen's Crossing and San-taclare and all the rest, clear across the curve of the continent. Men and women in the towns going about their business, rearing their children, tending their gardens and their stores and their factories. Most of them were normal human beings. Yet in every town the Baldies lived too, rearing their children, tending their stores. Amicably enough for the most part. But not always-not always.

And for weeks now, over most of the nation, had lain a humid, oppressive

heat wave, in which aggressions rose steadily higher. Yet, outside of a few knife-duels, no one dared strike the first blow. Other men were armed too, and every town possessed a cache of atomic Eggs, and could strike back with deadly precision.

The time was more than ripe for a pogrom. So far, no mob had formed. No potential lynchers had agreed on a target.

But the Baldies were a minority.

All that was needed was a precipitating factor-and the paranoids were doing their best to provide that.

Cody glanced up at the cavern's gray stone sky and reached with his key for the lock of his wife's apartment door. With the key already in place, he hesitated, not from indecision this time but because he knew what probably waited inside. There was a furrow between his brows, and all the little lines of his face were pulled tense and held that way by the perpetual tension that held every Baldy from the first moment after he entered the caves.

The stone sky held down and bottled in such a complex maze of thoughts, echoing off the walls and interlacing and interlocking in a babel of confusion. The Cavern of Babel, Cody thought wryly, and turned the key with a gesture of small resolution. Indoors he would exchange one babel for another. The walls would give him a little shelter from the clouds of stale, sullen resentment outside, but there was something inside he liked even less. Yet he knew that he could not leave without seeing Lucy and the baby. . He opened the door. The living room looked bright

enough, with its deep, broad divan-shelf running along three sides, soft, dark mossy green under the shelves of book-spools, colored cushions scattered, the lights on low. An electric fire glowed behind a Gothic interweaving of baffles, like a small cathedral on fire from within. Through the broad window in the fourth wall he could see the lights of the Ralphs' living room next door reflecting on the street, and across the way June and Hugh Barton in their own living room, having a pre-dinner cocktail before their electric fire, It looked pleasant.

But in here all the clear colors and the glow were clouded by the deep miasma of despair which colored all Jeff Cody's wife's days, and had for-how long now? The baby was three months old.

He called, "Lucy?"

No answer. But a deeper wave of misery beat through the apartment, and after a moment he heard the bed creak in the next room. He heard a sigh. Then Lucy's voice, blurred a little, said, "Jeff." There was an instant of silence, and he had already turned toward the kitchen when her voice came again. "Go into the kitchen and bring me a little more whiskey, will you, please?"

"Right away," he said. The whiskey was not going to hurt her much, he thought. Anything that could help her get over the next few months was that much to the good. The next few-? No, the end would come much sooner than that.

"Jeff?" Lucy's voice was querulous.

He took the whiskey into the bedroom. She was lying face up across the bed, her reddish curls hanging, her stocking feet against the wall. Marks of dried tears ran down across her cheek toward her ear, but her lashes were not wet now. In the corner the baby slept in a small cocoon of his own incoherent animal-like thoughts. He was dreaming of warmth and enormous all-enveloping softness that stirred slowly, a dream without shape, all texture and temperament. His light-red curls were no more than a down on his well-shaped head.

Cody looked at Lucy. "How do you feel?" he heard himself asking inanely.

Without moving a muscle she let her eyes roll sidewise so that she was looking at him from under her half-closed lids, a stony, suffering, hating look. An empty water-glass stood on the bedtable within reach of her lax hand. Cody stepped forward, unstopped the bottle and poured a steady amber

stream into the glass. Two inches, three. She was not going to say when. He stopped at three and replaced the bottle.

"You don't have to ask how anybody feels," Lucy said in a dull voice.

"I'm not reading you, Lucy."

She shrugged against the bedspread. "You say."

Looking again at the sleeping baby, Cody did not answer. But Lucy sat up with great suddenness, making the bed groan, startling Cody because the motion had been so spontaneous he had not even caught the anticipation of it in her mind. "He's not yours. He's mine. All mine, my kind, my race. No-" The thought went on, "-no taint in his blood at all. Not a freak. Not a Baldy. A nice, normal, healthy, perfect baby-" She didn't say it aloud, but she didn't have to. She caught at the thought halfway through, and then deliberately let it go on, knowing she might as well have said it aloud. Then she added in a flat voice, "And I suppose you didn't read that."

Silently he held out the whiskey glass to her.

It had been five years now since the Egg dropped on Sequoia. Five years since the cavern colony saw the last daylight they might ever see. And the people herded from Sequoia to the caves had settled down sullenly, resentful or resigned according to their temperaments. They had every comfort of underground living which their captors could provide. They were as content as skilled psychologists could make them, psychologists who could look into their minds and read their needs almost before the needs took shape. But they were captives.

The intermarriages had started within a few months of the captivity. It was one of the large-scale experiments which could have happened only in the caves under such controlled conditions. Partly it was to demonstrate good intent to the captives, to make them feel less isolated.

No telepath really wants to marry a non-telepath. There are among



non-telepaths quite as high a percentage of desirable mates as among Baldies, but to a Baldy, a non-telepathic human is a handicapped person. Like a lovely young girl who has every desirable attribute of mind and body but happens also to be deaf, dumb, and blind. She may communicate in finger-language, but the barrier remains all but insurmountable.

And there is this added factor-around every human who

starts out life with the best of heredity and environment, shadows of the prisonhouse are inevitably, slowly but inexorably closed in by all the problems of living which he fails to solve completely without even realizing it. But not the Baldies. There are always friends to help, there are always minds to lean upon in crises and uncertainties. There is constant check and balance, so that no Baldy suffers from those inward quandaries, those only partly recognized clouds of confusion and bewilderment which fog the happiness of every other human being. In the telepathic mind there are comparatively few un-swept chambers cluttered with old doubts and fears. It makes for a clarity of the personality which no non-telepath quite achieves.

A telepath may become psychotic, of course, but only when subjected to such stresses, over a long period of time, as a non-telepath could endure only briefly without breaking. (The paranoid telepaths were in a different class; heredity was an important factor there.)

So marriage between Baldy and non-telepath is, at best, marriage between an alert, receptive, fully aware being and one murky and confused, handicapped in communication and always, on some level, latently resentful.

But by now almost every marriageable non-telepath in the caverns had been painstakingly courted by and married to a Baldy. They were at the same time, of course, inevitably married to an espionage agent, a willing but not always accepted psychoanalyst, and, most importantly, to the potential parent of other Baldies.

The gene is dominant, which means that the children were almost invariably telepathic. Only when the Baldy spouse possessed one recessive non-telepathic gene as well as one dominant telepathic gene could the child be born a non-telepath.

That was what had happened to Lucy and Jeff Cody....

No human was ever to leave the caves again. No Baldy was to know of the captivity who did not wear the Mute helmet, since if the world ever learned of this captivity, the long-awaited pogrom would touch off automatically. No child of human parents would ever leave, unless it left as an infant in arms, too young to remember or tell the story. But a telepath child was a recruit at birth to the ranks of the captors. The hope had -been that in a generation or two the captives could automatically be blended with the Baldies or taken out of the caves at infancy, so that the colony would once more revert to its original state of a population composed only of telepaths.

That had been the original plan, but growing pressures had already made it

obsolete.

Lucy wiped her mouth on the back of a lightly tanned hand and held out the emptied glass to Cody. She waited a moment while the whiskey burned its way down and spread in a slow, hot coating over the walls of her stomach.

"Take a little," she said. "It helps."

Cody didn't want any, but he tilted a short half-inch into the glass and drank obediently. After a time Lucy gave a short sigh and sat up cross-legged on the bed, shaking the hair back from her eyes.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Irrational."

She laid her hand palm up on the bedspread and Cody closed his own hand over it, smiling unhappily at her.

"I've got an appointment outside," he said. "I'll have to leave in a few minutes, Lucy."

Her look shot wild and unguarded toward the crib in the corner. Her thought, at once blurred and clarified by the release of alcohol, unfurled like a flag. Cody almost winced at the impact of it, but he was even more schooled in discipline than most Baldies, being husband to a non-telepath, and he showed nothing. He only said,

"No. It isn't that. I won't take him until you say so."

She gave him a sudden startled glance.

"It's too late?"

"No," Cody said quickly. "Of course not. He isn't old enough yet to remember-this."

Lucy moved uneasily.

"I don't want to keep him down here. You know I don't. It's bad enough for me, without knowing my own son wouldn't ever-" She shut off the thought of sunlight, blue air, distances. "Not just yet," she said, and pushed her feet over the , edge of the bed. She stood up a little unsteadily. She gave the baby one blind glance and then walked stocking-footed toward the kitchen, bracing herself against the wall now and then. Cody reached automatically toward her mind, then drew back and got up to follow her. She was at the kitchen sink splashing water into a glass. She drank thirstily, her eyes unfocused.

"I have to go," Cody said. "Don't worry, Lucy."

"Some-woman," Lucy said indistinctly over the edge of the glass. "There's-somebody. I know."

"Lucy-"

"One of your kind," Lucy said, and dropped the glass in the sink. It rolled in a bright arc, spilling water.

All he could do was look at her helplessly. There was nothing he could say. He couldn't tell her he was on his way to try to kill Jasper Home. He couldn't tell her about Operation Apocalypse or the Inductor or the position of fearful responsibility he held. He couldn't say, "If we can perfect the Inductor in time, Lucy, you can go free-you and our child." Nor could he say, "I may have to kill you-you and our child and every non-telepath on earth-with Operation Apocalypse."

No, there was nothing he could say.

She drew a wet hand across her face, pushing back her hair, looking up at him blurrily, and then came on uncertain, shoeless feet across the kitchen to lay her cheek on his shoulder and push her arms under his, around his chest.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I'm-crazy. It's hard for you too, Jeff."

"Yes."

"We'll send the baby away next week," she promised. "Then I'll be sane again. I-I hate whiskey. It's just that-"

"I know." He smoothed the hair away from her wet face, tried to find words for the complex waves of love, pity, remorse, terror and pain which filled his mind constantly as long as he was with his wife, or thinking of her. It is curious that telepaths are often almost inarticulate when it is necessary to communicate nuances of feeling in words. They never need to use words, among their own kind.

"Be patient with me, Lucy," he said finally. "There's trouble coming. There isn't much time, and I may fail. I-I'll come home as quickly as I can."

"I know you will, dear. I wish I could do-anything."

He held her.

"I'll bring you something you'll like," he said. "A suprise. I don't know what yet, but something nice. And Lucy, after -next week-if you mean it, we'll move if you want. Find a new apartment over in Cave Seven. You can order new furniture, and we'll-" He scarcely knew what he was saying. Illusion and reality were too confused.

"We'll think of something, dear," she said. "It's all right."

"I'll go, then," he said.

She nodded. "I'll miss you. Hurry back."

Cody shut the grille of the lift behind him and leaned his

head against the steel wall, slumping wearily as he shaped in his mind the code-signal to activate the mechanisms. A preoccupied mind somewhere responded with another segment of the cipher, and a third (someone going by rapidly, late to dinner) tossed in the necessary remaining symbols. Three mental images had to be projected simultaneously to operate the lift. It was a precaution. Escape exits could be operated by telepaths only.

He pushed a slanting door open into a welter of dripping leaves and the sharp, sweet odor of wet pine and rain. A startled rabbit exploded out of the underbrush. Cody shut the camouflaged portal and looked up, squinting against the rain that drove in his face. From somewhere above a voiceless greeting came, a motor hummed and a dark coil rolled smoothly down out of the grayness. Cody set his foot in the stirrup and felt the soft instant upward lift of the basket seat snatching him aloft as he sank into it. The hovering copter received him through a single gaping jaw.

Arn Friedmann did not glance back from the controls. He did not need to. Short, squat, gravely expressionless in face and in manner, he leaned his dark-capped head forward to peer through the rain, his mind detaching enough of itself from attention to the business at hand to send a wordless greeting.

For a moment Cody only leaned back and let the cool, untroubled silence of the open sky wash his mind clean. It was like allowing long-taut muscles to relax at last. The cavern was so filled with closed-down resentments, guilts and fears and tensions that after a while even the air became hard to breathe, for a telepath.

Friedmann had something urgent he wanted to convey. Cody felt the touch of it on the outer edges of his awareness, waiting, letting the newcomer breathe clean air a while. Friedmann's mind hovered as the copter had hovered, patient, abiding the signal.

Under them the pine woods swept backward, tossing, rain-blurred. Water ran down the panes. The motor hummed pleasantly in the coolness. Lucy. Five years now without sight of rain or trees or sky. A lifetime ahead of her without them, or else a quick death, or-the Inductor.

"We've got to have more time," Friedmann's thought came. "If a pogrom starts now, it'll spread. I think the paranoids are counting on that. They've been filtering into the key

towns-the places where riots would be apt to start. Like American Gun. Jasper Home's there."

"Since when?" Cody asked.

"Three weeks or so. And he's been working hard. You know how the paranoids do it. Read a mind and drop a loaded word at the right time, to keep the tension building. Probably Home could start a riot in American Gun any time he liked, by now."

"Not if he'd dead," Cody's thought said, with grim anticipation. He leaned back, watching the mists scud past, thinking of American Gun. It was a gambling town. That was the specialty, anyway, although there was a famous research laboratory in the town, and a master artisan in plastics lived there. But basically men came to American Gun to gamble.

That's what I'll be doing, Cody thought. He watched sunlight dry the rain-drops on the window beside him.

Friedmann left Cody at the outskirts of American Gun and sent the copter

hurrying east. He had an errand of his own in the town of Bleeding Kansas, five hundred miles away. Cody watched the copter lift in a perfectly empty blue sky.

American Gun lay in a great flat half-saucer rimmed by rising hills and cut across and bounded by a broad, slow river. There were a number of distant toothpick figures on the beach, and a variety of boats on the river, transparent plastic canoes and skiffs glinting in the sun. Dark dots against the placid green indicated swimmers. But the wind blowing up from the river was hot.

Cody stood on the lower foothills, looking down over American Gun. A certain calm relaxed him, now that he was moving directly toward a clearly-seen goal. There were in the town perhaps a hundred buildings, few of them large, and none close to the others. Trees flourished, or would have if their leaves had not drooped limply—all but the ones near the river bank. Only children were moving fast. Under a live-oak Cody could see a little party around a spread white rectangle, having a picnic. Against the white cloth he could see the green and red of watermelon.

A small white dog trotted slowly past him, its tongue lolling. It gave him a bored but wary glance. In its mind was a dim image of a frightful, slaving beast somewhat larger than a tiger. With some difficulty Cody identified the Terror as a dachshund whom the small white dog feared.

Somewhat diverted, Cody began to descend the slope to-

ward American Gun. He didn't hurry. The moist, warm air was pleasant against his skin. Unthinking, receptive, for the moment, he let the cross-currents of thought sweep like the sound of a sea through him, while he moved on in half-hypnotic rhythm, focusing on a long Byzantine-style building ahead, and watching it grow larger, step by step.

... There was room enough on earth. And surely there were enemies enough besides other men. Man had been fighting a war ever since he stood upright, and there had never been any armistice declared against the oldest enemy of all, the enemy that burned in the hot blue sky, that hid, rod-shaped, toxic and invisible, in the soil, that ebbed now in the river but could rise and flood, the enemy that went on unknowing and unheeding man, whose ancient power always pounded at the dyke man's intelligence had built.

Enemy and friend at once—this gift of the gods. Without it, without the physical and chemical forces which had built this air, this water, this shallow valley of fertile loam, there would have been no life at all. A fairy gift—this planet. Guard it, keep it, watch it—learn to predict and control it—and it will serve you. Forget it while you fight among yourselves, and the burning sun, the flooding waters, the deadly cold, and the fecund micro-organisms will work as they have always worked, in their old pattern, and in that pattern there is no planned place for man. How like a god!

By now Cody was at the little park before the long Byzantine building. Trees were wilting above the brownish lawns. A shallow rectangular pool held goldfish, who gulped hopefully as they swam to the surface and

flipped down again. The little minds of the fish lay open to Cody, minds thoughtless as so many bright, tiny, steady flames on little birthday candles, as he walked past the pool.

He did not enter the Byzantine building. He had not intended to, physically. Instead, he turned toward one of the shoulder-high pedestals set in irregular rows along the front of the building and stopped before one that was not in use. A few men and women had their heads bowed over the pedestals, peering into eyepieces. Not many. It was too hot, even here in the shade.

Cody bent over the eyepiece of his pedestal, found a coin in his pocket, and pushed it into the slot. The blackness at which he stared turned into a pattern of bright letters: Radio-cobalt. Then a series of number-ranges appeared, one by one. At random Cody pushed the button that indicated

his choice. That started the mechanism. He found himself looking into a magnified Wilson cloud-chamber, streaked with flashing trails of sub-atomic activity. Just above the image a counter ticked off the number of electronic collisions. If his guess had been accurate enough, he might win the jackpot, and prove-

Nothing. Nothing at all. But as Cody's mind began to range, he felt the eager, troubled anticipation of the minds around him, and realized that to win, for most of these others, would prove a great deal.

For, basically, those minds held no confidence at all. Over all of them lay the heavy threat that had shadowed the world since the Blowup and put an irresistible weapon in every hand, a cache of Eggs in every town. Instead of national walls, there was now a wall around each town-and around each individual. Survival still depended on luck- blind chance.

And so the gambling towns, like American Gun, flourished. Here, at the casinos, at the slot-machine, at roulette and craps and chuck-a-luck and faro, men could prove that the blind goddess favored them, and that they were still safe. The social uncertainty was shifted to the mechanical uncertainty of the fall of dice or the spin of a wheel, and personal responsibility was shifted to the hands of the lady the Greeks called Tuche and the Romans, Fortuna.

Cody felt people moving past him, in and out of the casino. To his sensitive mind the hot air seemed to spark. Perhaps that was because of the steadily mounting tension spreading from no source a human could identify and which no human could ignore. But Cody knew the source. Jasper Home had not been in American Gun for weeks without a purpose.

Here, if anywhere, the pogrom could be started.

And here, in American Gun, was the force which had driven Cody helplessly into his dilemma, relentlessly forcing him toward the choice that no man could contemplate for too long without seeking some easier answer. Here was the pressure which had forced his hand to the knife, and the knife to his neck. And here, too, was the man who was responsible.

Jasper Home, Cody thought as the flashing streaks of the cloud-chamber

burned before his eyes. His mind polarized toward that goal with a deadly intentness. Allenby, back in the Caves, had been right. To kill Home, not himself, was the real goal for Cody-because that would risk merely his

own life; it would not mean betrayal of his own people by dropping the responsibility he carried for all of them. The paranoids had been the enemy, from the very beginning. Always they had worked to destroy the acceptance of the Baldies by the rest of mankind. They were the ones who had caused the destruction of Sequoia, and the need to keep humans captives in the Caves. Had that not happened, he would probably have never met Lucy, and she would be happier now, and so would he. Now, no matter how hard both of them might try, there could never be any real answer for them, or for their child. There was no way out. No matter what happened, there were wounds that could never heal.

The earth itself was both enemy and friend. But the paranoids were all enemy, and of them all, Jasper Home was somewhere here in American Gun, within Jeff Cody's reach -a man to be killed, if for no other reason, than because he and his kindred paranoids had made the Baldies killers.

The glittering streaks of light in the cloud-chamber died. The viewer went dark. Cody had won nothing. He slipped another coin into the slot and again watched the electronic bombardment, while his mind ranged and closed in toward his quarry.

Within the Byzantine building a flurry of thoughts whirled like the roulette wheels. This was a gossip center for American Gun. Here, now and then, he caught images which he identified with Home. Gradually he tested these thoughts, like directional antenna, until a picture of Home's habits began to clarify. But other things clarified as well-the mounting pressure of events in the town which no non-tele-path connected with the paranoid's presence. ,

No one in American Gun had shaved for twenty-four hours. Oh, some had-but not many. The Baldies had no need to shave, and, of course, there were humans courageous enough to risk suspicion. In the nearby research laboratories the no-shaving movement had not taken hold. And there were others, but not many, and those with smooth chins often moved in a circle of suspicious glances and left trails of hostile murmurings behind them.

So it might be doubly difficult to kill Home. Violence could be the move that touched off the pogrom-exactly what Cody had hoped to avoid by eliminating the paranoid. That meant Home would have to be killed privately, above all, away from any potential mob leaders who might trigger

a riot. (There were such men in American Gun; Home had found them already. They would be the ones to lead the mob when the time came.)

-he's at the Last Chance.

Cody lifted his head, dazzled for an instant by the deep blue shadow and the white sunlight. His mind mapped a picture of American Gun from the data he had already gathered. The Last Chance would be at the north end of town, near the research laboratories. Home might or might not still be there, but it would be easy to pick up his trail.

Cody skirted the goldfish-pool, past the tiny flickering flames of the small, drifting minds, and took a path leading northward through the town. His thoughts continued to range. Several times he caught the thoughts of other Baldies. Through them he could have located Home instantly and accurately, but they did not wear the Mute helmets, and their minds could have been read in turn by the paranoid. And Home must not be forewarned. Cody reached up to touch the fine-spun skein of filaments hidden beneath his wig. As long as he wore the Mute helmet, Home could not read his mind.

The crowds began to thicken. Rumors went softly flickering past like heat lightning in the sweltering air, gathering corroborative detail as they went. Someone (Cody's mind heard the whisper) had broken the bank at the Gold Horseshoe last night, walked out with two heavy sacks of credits, and carelessly let his wig blow off in the doorway, revealing a hairless head. Yes, the Baldies were casting off the mask now and grabbing up credits in every way they could, preparing for the zero hour when they would take over the nation. ...

Cody walked a little faster. Stray thoughts from the Baldies in American Gun whispered to him. Things are getting out of hand, the word went silently through the air from mind to mind, from anxious group to group, from Baldies going stoically about their business among the humans and showing impassive faces as their minds touched and clung together on the verge of panic. Today mothers had kept their children home, and the family copters were fueled and ready.

Above the crowd, Cody saw the flashing sign of the Last Chance ahead. He moved on, his mind searching for the presence of Home. And in spite of the noiseless tensions straining and wrenching through the hot air, he realized that he felt curiously happy. Everything seemed very easy and

simple now, for the first time in many months. Kill Home. That was all; that was enough. Kill Horne, his mind said, without any of the doubts and unsureness of the last months and years.

He paused outside the old-fashioned photo-electric doors of the Last Chance, searching for his enemy. The rumors blew past him, fresh as if no voice had ever whispered them before. The whispers spoke of the string of freight-copters grounded with a fuel-leak at the edge of town, the repair man working among the cargo who accidentally broke a slat on a crate of oranges. Inside the liner of oranges were- queer-looking rifles-atomic? Three Eggs carefully packed in foam-rubber? Unconscious humans en route to a secret Baldy vivisection lab?

Then an invisible breath seemed to sweep through the hot, still air.

It was the paranoid aura. As, in grand mal, the epileptic attack is presaged by an indefinable feeling of impending disaster, so the physical approach of a paranoid carries before it the shadowy halo pulsing outward from the distorted mind. Cody had felt this before, but each time he knew afresh the same faint shrinking, as though his contact with the bright, hot, green world around him had thinned and snapped for an instant.



He turned slowly and crossed the street, threading past the uneasy, murmuring groups of unshaved men, past their hostile stares. Ahead was a little restaurant-the Copter Vane Eatery. The aura thickened. Cody stopped outside of the door of the restaurant and reached out telepathically.

The rumors flew past him. A man knew a man who had a Baldy neighbor who lost three fingers in a duel a month ago, and today had three fingers growing as good as new, grafted on in a private Baldy hospital. (But Baldies won't duel- never mind that!) They could work miracles in medicine now, but you didn't see them doing it for humans, did you? If they weren't stopped soon, who could tell what might happen next?

Stiff with arrogance, wary with suspicion, the mind of Jasper Horne, within the restaurant, sent out its own murky thoughts too-egotistical, prideful, sensitive, and inflexible. And there was a dim thought stirring in that cloudy mind, like an ember under gray ash, fading and brightening again into half-clarity, which made Cody, at the restaurant's door,

pause and stiffen into immobility for fear that the telepathic paranoid might sense his presence.

Horne had not come to American Gun to start a pogrom.

His real motive was far more deadly. It was-

What?

That was what Cody could not see-yet. He had glimpsed the shadow of a thought, and that glimpse had been enough to flash a sharp warning to his mind, a signal of terrible urgency. Horne's real motive lay deeply buried. But it had to be found out. Cody felt quite certain of that.

He stepped aside, leaned against the wall of the building, and glanced idly around, while from under the Mute helmet his mind probed very delicately and sensitively toward Horne.

Gently . . . gently.

The paranoid was sitting alone in a booth near the back of the restaurant. His thoughts were clouded with repression. And he was concentrating on his lunch, not consciously thinking of the thing which had drifted across the surface of his mind for a triumphant instant. Unless this concept was summoned into consciousness, Cody could not read it without deep probing, which Horne would immediately sense. \_ Yet there was a way. The right cues would summon up the appropriate responses in any mind. But those cues would have to be implanted in Horne's thoughts very delicately, so that they would seem perfectly natural, and his own. Cody looked across the street, beyond the murmuring knots of men, at the Last Chance. Horne had been there half an hour ago. It was a fan: cue. He sent the concept Last Chance softly into Horne's mind.

And that mind flinched warily, searched, found nothing (the Mute helmet guarded Cody), and then the cue summoned up its responses.

Last Chance gambling but I'm the one who's really gambling with them all

of them their lives I can kill them all if in time-the thought-chain broke as videomusic swelled within the restaurant. Horne lifted his fork and began to eat again.

Cody fitted the beat of his thought to the music's beat and sent the message to Horne.

Kill them all kill them all kill them all.

Loose the virus, Home's response came to the stimulus he thought was his own. Pomerance is getting closer every day control the resonance mutate a virus kill them all kill them all KILL THEM ALL!

Cody braced himself against the red rage that poured out from the paranoid.

Pomerance, he thought. Pomerance. Pomerance in the labs, Home thought, and formed a sensory image. Not far away-only two blocks away-were the research laboratories of American Gun, and in them was a man named Pomerance, a biochemist, a non-telepath. He was working on a certain experiment which-if it succeeded- would enable the paranoids to develop a virus as deadly and as specialized as the virus of Operation Apocalypse.

And this was the real reason for Home's presence in American Gun. The pogrom-plan was a cover-up. It was camouflage to deceive the Baldies, while Home went about his real purpose of telepathically following Pomerance's experiments toward the goal of an Operation Apocalypse brought about by the paranoids themselves.

Pomerance was not aiming at such a goal, of course. He was a biochemist; his aim was to develop a more efficient bacteriophage-but the method he would need to develop that could also be applied to far deadlier aims.

Gently Cody manipulated the paranoid's mind. He learned a little more. Pomerance might fail-Home realized that. But in that case, then the pogrom could be set off. It would be better to find and use a human-killing virus, for in a pogrom paranoid lives would be lost too-but there would be a pogrom if no better way offered. Conditions were ripe. Home had built the tension in American Gun; he had located the potential mob-leaders; he could start the pogrom at any time he desired-and that would be the signal for other paranoids across the nation to do the same. That universal pogrom would force the Baldies to release Operation Apocalypse -so the same end would be achieved. But it would be better to wait a little, just a little, following Pomerance's experiments closely. He seemed to be very near his goal.

Too near, Cody thought, his body swaying a little toward the restaurant's door. He was wasting time. Kill Home, kill him now, he told himself-but hesitated still, because there was something else in the paranoid's mind that puzzled him. Too much confidence was built on that twisted, shaky foundation of paranoid personality. There must be some reason for that surprising lack of anxiety.

Cody probed again with careful cues that brushed the other mind lightly. Yes, there was a reason. There was a bomb hidden in Pomerance's

laboratory.

Why?

Home had that information, and Cody gently extracted it. The biochemist must not be allowed to fall alive into the hands of Baldies. The bomb was triggered to explode whenever Home summoned to consciousness a certain complex of symbols-the paranoid's mind shifted quickly away from that dangerous equation-and it would also explode if Home's mind stopped thinking.

That is, if Home died.

Like the pattern of a burglar alarm, an interruption in the flow of current, the radiations emitted constantly by Home's mind sleeping or waking, would break the circuit and set off the alarm-the bomb that would kill Pomerance. Cody saw the location of that bomb very clearly in Home's mental image of the laboratory.

So, if he killed Home, Pomerance would die too. But why was this important to the paranoid?

Cody probed again, and suddenly understood the reason.

Pomerance's research was centered around resonance differential applied to the nucleoproteins that were viruses. But there were other types of nucleoproteins; the telepathic function itself depended on the resonance of nucleoproteins in the human brain. If Pomerance's experiment succeeded, it would mean....

It would mean that telepathy could be induced in a non-telepath!

It was the answer to the problem of the Inductor, the one answer that could solve the universal problem of a world in schism. In the hands of the paranoids, Pomerance's method could destroy all humans. In the hands of the Baldies, it could make all mankind one. It could-

Suddenly Cody knew that Home had discovered his presence.

Instantly Home began to build in his mind the equation" that would set off the bomb in Pomerance's laboratory. Cody's mind leaped into the future. He could kill Home before the paranoid had finished, but if he did that, the other's death would trigger the bomb with equal certainty. Pomerance would die-and that must not be allowed to happen. More than lives depended on the biochemist's survival.

There was no way to stop Home's thoughts except one. Cody's probing into the other's mind had told him a great deal about that proud, inflexible, unsure personality. He now knew

more about Home than the latter himself did. And he had discovered one vital point. Home was not psychotic; he had not lost touch with reality, but, like many paranoids, he had psychopathological symptoms, and one of these was his strong tendency to what Allenby would have called hypnogogic hallucinations-vivid sensory images occurring in the drowsy state just before sleep. And such hallucinations can easily be produced by

hypnosis.

All Cody had to do was to convince Home that he had momentarily been hallucinated. That, and a little more—a good deal more.

At least, Cody had a good insight into what forms such imagery would take for the paranoid, with his strong delusions of persecution and grandeur. So Cody projected the idea that he, representing the Baldies, had come to Home to offer a truce, to make a pact with the paranoids against the humans—exactly the kind of vivid wish-fulfilling fantasy Home must often have experienced. And at the same time he summoned up the mental image of Jasper Home and let Home see h.

That action was natural enough, even within the frame of an hallucination. When you communicate with another, you visualize him in your own mind, in many more dimensions than the purely visual ones. Your impressions of his emotional patterns, his memories, his thoughts, the complex image of his whole personality as you perceive it, is summoned up as a subjective correlative of the objective man with whom you communicate. The burning brightness of that Luciferean image stood clear between the meeting minds, blazingly sharp and vivid, in a way that the murky mind of the paranoid had never known.

The ancient Greeks knew what the mechanism of identification meant—they told the story of Narcissus. And the lure caught Jasper Home, who could identify with no other man than himself, or a god made in his own image. His paranoid egotism reflected itself in that ego-image and was reflected again and so endlessly, while Cody delicately tested and touched the thoughts of the other and watched for the first slackening of consciousness.

At least Home had paused in his mental building of the concept that would destroy Pomerance. The paranoid hesitated, unsure, his grasp of reality telling him that the Baldies could not, would not send an emissary to capitulate, and that therefore his senses, which had warned him of Cody's pres-

ence, had lied. Such panics were not unknown to Home. So he could accept—tentatively—the suggestion that his senses had tricked him.

Very, very gently, still maintaining that dazzling ego-image of Jasper Home like a glittering lure on a baited hook, Cody sent quiet cue-thoughts slipping into the hesitant mind. At first they were obviously true thoughts, true, at least, according to the paranoid's system of belief. They were pleasant, reassuring thoughts. Lulled, Home watched the ego-image which he himself had often summoned up—yet never before so clearly and dazzlingly. Narcissus watched his image in the clear, deep pool of Cody's mind.

So, sitting alone in the restaurant booth, Home let his wariness relax little by little, and Cody's soft assault moved into a new area. The thoughts Cody sent out now were not quite true, but still not false enough to startle the paranoid, who took them for his own thoughts. I've had these hallucinations before. Usually just before going to sleep. I'm having them now. So I must be going to sleep. I am sleepy. My eyelids feel heavy....

The lulling, monotonous thoughts began to submerge Home's consciousness. Gradually the hypnosis grew. Narcissus watched Narcissus....

Sleep, sleep, Cody's mind whispered. You will not waken until I command you. Nothing else will waken you. Sleep deeply-sleep.

The paranoid slept.

Cody began to run along the street as fast as he could. No other Baldy in American Gun was nearer to the research laboratory than he was, and if Pomerance were to be saved, it was his job alone. And he might easily fail. Jasper Home was sitting in hypnotic sleep in a crowded restaurant, and at any moment someone might speak to him or shake him back into consciousness. The hypnosis was not deep. It might hold, or it might break at any moment. In spite of Cody's final suggestions to the paranoid, the latter could be awakened quite easily, and by anyone.

Cody ran on. Suppose he got Pomerance out of the lab in time? Could he get back to the restaurant again before Home wakened?

No, Cody thought, the hypnosis isn't deep enough. It'll be a miracle if Home stays under more than a few minutes. If I can save Pomerance, that will be miracle enough.

But as soon as Home realizes what's happened, he won't wait. He'll start the pogrom. It's all ready, here in American Gun; he's planted the dynamite, and all he has to do is touch the detonator. All right. I can't be sure that what I'm doing is right. I think it is. I can't be sure. If I save Pom-erance, Home will probably start the pogrom before I can get back and kill him. But I can't let Pomerance die; he can solve the problem of the Inductor.

Hurry!

He ran toward a group of long, low buildings. He knew the way; he had seen it in Home's mind. He ran toward one of the buildings, thrust open the door, and was in the laboratory.

A gaunt, gray-haired man in a stained smock turned to stare at him. It was Pomerance; no telepath can ever be mistaken on a question of identity. It was Pomerance-and as Cody realized that, he also realized that two blocks away, in the Copter Vane Eatery, Jasper Home had stirred, wakened, and reached out in sudden panic to touch Pomer-ance's mind.

Instantly Cody was racing down the length of the long laboratory. Beyond Pomerance were floor-length windows opening on hot sunlight, blue sky, and parched brown grass. If they could reach the windows-

It seemed to Cody that he crossed the room in no time at all. No time, and yet another kind of time seemed to draw out endlessly as, in the distant mind of the paranoid, he saw the triggering equation building up that would set off the bomb's mechanism. Now the equation was complete. Now time would stop in one bursting moment of death.

Yet there was time. Cody sent out a wordless call, a summons that rang like a great alarm bell in the minds of every Baldy in American Gun. At the same moment he reached Pomerance and used his own momentum to lift the other man bodily as he plunged toward the windows. Then the floor rose underfoot and the air rushed outward before the first soundless compression wave that moved in front of the explosion.

The window loomed before them, bright, high, patterned with small panes. Cody's shoulder struck, he felt wood and glass shatter without a sound because of the great, white, bursting roar of the explosion, louder than any sound could be.

The blast exploded in a white blindness all around him and beyond shattering glass the void opened up under him.

He was falling with Pomerance through hot, dry outdoor air and darkness, darkness in the full heat of the sun, falling and turning while glass rained down around them and the noise of the explosion went on and on forever....

In front of the Copter Vane Eatery two transients scuffled. Jasper Home, in the crowd, said something under his breath. Another man repeated it, louder. One of the transients flushed darkly. (It was a trigger-phrase as certain to rouse this man's aggressions as the equation that had exploded the bomb.) In a moment a dagger was pulled from its sheath, and a full-fledged duel was in progress in the middle of a noisy circle. The winner was a hairy-faced, hairy-chested man with a partially bald head. His knife-work had been very deft and sure. Too sure, Jasper Home said in a loud whisper. The whispers flew around the circle. Anybody could win a duel if he could read the other man's mind. If They could grow fingers maybe they could grow hair.

Jasper Home said something, exactly the right something, to the potential mob-leader beside him.

The potential mob-leader scowled, swore, and took a step forward. Deftly he tripped the winner from behind as he was sheathing his dagger. The knife flew spinning across the pavement. Three men were on the falling baldhead as he went down. Two of them held him while the third tugged at his tonsure-fringe of hair. It held. The victim bellowed with rage and resisted so strongly that four or five bystanders were sent sprawling. One of them lost his wig....

This was neither sleep nor waking. It was Limbo. He floated in the womb of non-self, the only real privacy a telepath can ever know, and what he wanted was to stay here forever and ever. But he was a telepath. He could not, even in the secret fastness of his own mind, pretend what was not true, for his mind lay quite open—at least to wearers of the Mute helmets like his own.

Yet it was hard to waken. It was hard to force himself, of his own volition, to stoop and pick up whatever burdens might be waiting for him, new and old. If his life could be lived as had been the last minute he remembered, without any indecision or unsureness, but with only the certain need for

physical action (is Pomerance alive, something in his wakening mind asked), then it would be easy indeed to lift

himself up out of this warm, gray silence which was so infinitely restful, without even dreams (but Pomerance?).

And as always, the thought of another made something in Cody brace and lift itself with weary stubbornness. Instantly he was oriented. He did not need to depend on his own sleep-confused senses alone. All through the Caves, and above them, and in copters in midair, was a stirring and a confused sense of urgency and troubled motion, and each mind held one thought under whatever other thoughts might be preoccupying the upper levels of the mind.

The thought was pogrom.

Cody asked one question: Should I have killed Home instead of trying to save Pomerance? But he did not wait for an answer. The decision had been his own, after all. He opened his eyes (knowing in what infirmary bed in what sector of the Caves he lay) and looked up at the round, ruddy face of Allenby.

"Pomerance?" he asked.

"Alive," the psychologist answered wordlessly. "Some of the American Gun Baldies got to you right after the explosion. They had to work fast. Home had set off the pogrom. But they had a fast copter ready, and gave you and Pomerance first aid en route. That was two days ago."

"Two days?"

"Pomerance was unconscious for only a few hours. But we kept you under till now—you needed it. However, I guess you'll live, in case you're wondering."

"How long will any of us live?" Cody's thought whispered.

"Get up and dress," Allenby ordered. "There's work to be done. Here's your clothes. How long? I don't know. The pogrom's been spreading for two days. The paranoids had everything very neatly planned. It looks like a total pogrom this time, Jeff. But we've got Pomerance. And I think we've got the Inductor."

"But Pomerance isn't one of us."

"He's with us, though. Not all humans are anti-Baldy, thank God. As soon as Pomerance understood the situation, he voluntarily offered to help in any way he could. So come along. We're ready to try the Inductor. I wanted you to be there. Can you manage?"

Cody nodded. He was stiff, and quite weak, and there were a good many aches and pains under the sprayed-on plastic bandages, but it felt fine to stand up and walk. He

followed Allenby out into the corridor and along it. The troubled, urgent stirring of innumerable thoughts moved all 'around him. He remembered

Lucy. Not all humans are anti-Baldy. And not all Baldies are anti-human, he added, thinking of what had been done to the humans like Lucy who had been condemned to life imprisonment within the Caves.

"She'll be there-in the lab," Allenby told Cody. "She offered to be one of the subjects. We've got an Inductor jury-rigged according to Pomerance's theory-at least, we started with his theory and went on from there, every scientist among us. It was quite a job. I hope-" The thought of the pogrom shadowed Allenby's mind briefly and was repressed. Cody thought: / shall find time, Cassius, 1 shall find time....

"Yes," the psychologist agreed. "Later, Jeff. Later. The Inductor is our goal right now. Nothing else. You haven't thought of Jasper Home since you woke up, have you?"

Cody realized that he had scarcely done so. Now, as he did, he saw the paranoid leader as something remote and depersonalized, a moving figure in a great complex of action, but no longer the emotion-charged target of his hate.

"I guess I don't feel the need to kill him," Cody agreed. "He's not really important any more. The worst he could do was start the pogrom, and he's done that. I'd kill him if I had the chance, but for a different reason-now." He glanced at Allenby. "Will the Inductor work?" he asked.

"That's what we're going to find out. But it ought to-it ought to," Allenby said, opening a door in the wall of the corridor. Cody followed the psychologist into one of the caverns which had been made into an experimental laboratory.

There was a great deal going on in the cave, but Cody was not distracted by external sense-impressions; he turned immediately toward where Lucy was standing, the baby in her arms. He went toward her quickly. He reached out to her mind and then checked himself. There was, perhaps, too much he did not want to know, now or ever.

Cody said, "These bandages don't mean anything. I feel fine."

"They told me," Lucy said. "It was one time I was glad of telepathy. I knew they could really tell if you were all right-even if you were unconscious."

He put his arm around her, looking down at the sleeping baby.

Lucy said, "I couldn't tell a thing by watching you. You

might have been-dead. But it was so good to have Allenby and the others able to look into your mind and make sure you were all right. I wanted to do something to help, but there wasn't anything I could do. Except... this. Allenby told me he needed volunteers for the Inductor experiment. So I volunteered. It's one way I can help-and I want to."

So Lucy knew about the Inductor now. Well, the time and need for secrecy was past. It no longer mattered how much or how little the prisoners in the Caves knew. It no longer mattered, now that the pogrom had begun.

"It's a total pogrom this time, isn't it?" she asked, and he had an irrational



second of amazement (telepathy?) before he realized that Lucy was merely reacting to cues learned through long familiarity with his behavior. All married couples have flashes of this kind of pseudo-telepathy, if there is real sympathy between them. And in spite of everything, that sympathy had existed. It was strange to know this now, to be sure of it and to feel elation, when so little time might remain. The pogrom could still destroy everything, in spite of the Inductor.

"Lucy," he said. "If we fail-we'll make sure you get safely out of the Caves, back home-"

She looked down at the baby, and then turned away from Cody. He suddenly realized, as men have always done, that even with telepathic power to aid him, he would never really understand a woman's reactions-not even Lucy's.

"Aren't you ready yet?" she asked Allenby.

"I think so," he said. "Let somebody hold the baby, Lucy."

She turned back to Cody, smiled at him, and put the baby in his arms. Then she followed Allenby toward an insulated chair, jury-rigged with a tangle of wires which led to a complicated instrument panel.

The mind of the baby had a little flame in it like the flames Cody remembered in the goldfish in the pool back at American Gun. But there was a very great difference. He did not know exactly what it was, but he had not felt pity and fear as he watched the glimmering minds of the fish. The mind of his child, his and Lucy's, held a small flame that burned with ridiculous confidence for so small and helpless a creature, and yet each slight stimulus, the rocking movement of his arms, the slight hunger-contractions of the child's stomach, made the fragile flame quiver and blow in a new direction before it swung back to its perseverant burning. So many things would shake that flame, in even the best of all

worlds-but, he thought with sudden clarity, in that flame the personality of the child would be forged and made strong.

He looked toward Lucy. She was sitting in the chair now, and electrodes were being attached to her temples and the base of her skull. A man he recognized as Pomerance, gaunt and gray-haired, was hovering over her, getting in the way of the experimenters. In Pomerance's mind, Cody saw, was a slight irritation the man was trying hard to repress. This application, this connection-I don't understand how it fits the theory. My God, if only I were a telepath/ But if the Inductor works, I can be. Now how does this hook-up fit into-and then the thoughts swung into inductive abstractions as the biochemist tried to puzzle the problem out.

The cave-laboratory was crowded. There were the Mute-scientists, and there were a score of captives from the Caves -all volunteers, Cody realized warmly. In spite of everything, they had wanted to help, as Lucy had wanted to.

Now the test was beginning. Lucy relaxed in the chair, her thoughts nervously considering the pressure of the electrodes. Cody withdrew his

mind. He felt nervous too. He scanned the group, found a receptive mind, and recognized Allenby.

"Suppose the Inductor works," Cody said in silence. "How will that stop the pogrom?"

"We'll offer telepathy to everybody," Allenby told him. "There's a video hook-up all ready to cut in on every screen in every town. I think even a lynch mob will stop to listen if they're offered telepathy."

"I wonder."

"Besides, there are plenty of humans on our side, like Pomerance. We've got-" The thought paused.

For something was happening to Lucy's mind. It was like a wave, a flood of something as indefinable as abstract music rising in Lucy's thoughts as the nucleoproteins of her brain altered. She's becoming a telepath, one of us, Cody thought.

"Power off," Allenby said suddenly. He bent forward and removed the electrodes. "Wait a minute, now, Lucy." He stopped talking, but his mind spoke urgently in silence.

Move your right hand, Lucy. Move your right hand.

Not a Baldy looked at Lucy's hands. There must be no unconscious signals.

Lucy did not move. Her mind, opened to Cody, suddenly

and appallingly reminded him of Jasper Home's walled mind. He did not know why, but a little thrill of fear touched him.

Move your right hand.

No response.

Try another command, someone suggested. Lucy-stand up. Stand up.

She did not move.

It may take time, a Baldy suggested desperately. She may need time to learn-

Maybe, Allenby thought. But we'd better try another subject.

"All right, Lucy," Cody said. "Come over here with me. We're going to try someone else."

"Didn't it work?" she asked. She went to him, staring into his eyes as though trying to force rapport between mind and mind.

"We can't tell yet," he said. "Watch June."

June Barton was in the chair now, flinching a little as the electrodes were attached.

In Cody's thoughts something moved uneasily-something he had not thought of since he woke. If the Inductor failed, then-it would be his problem again, the same old problem, which he had failed to solve. The dilemma which had sent him out to try to kill Jasper Home. The responsibility that was too great for any one man to carry after a while. Operation Apocalypse. The end of all flesh....

Very quickly he turned his mind from that thought. He reached out mentally with a sense of panic, while his arm tightened about Lucy. (Would he have to MI her-her and their child? It may not come to that. Don't think about it!) He searched for a concept intricate enough to drive the obsessive terror from his mind. The Inductor, he asked at random. What's the theory? How does it work?

Another mind leaped gratefully toward the question. It was Kunashi, the physicist. From beneath Kunashi's Mute helmet came quick clear thoughts that could not quite conceal the anxiety in the man's mind. For Kunashi, too, was married to a non-teleparth.

"You remember when we asked the calculator for a solution to our problem?" (The electrodes were being undamped from June Barton's head now.) "We gathered all the data we could to feed into the calculator. We read the minds of human scientists everywhere, and coded all the data that could possibly be relevant. Well, some of that data came

from Pomerance's mind, more than a year ago. He wasn't very far along with his theory then, but the key concepts had been formulated-the hypothesis involving mutation of nucleoproteins by resonance. The calculator integrated that with other data and came up with the simplest answer-the virus. It didn't have the necessary data to follow the theory along the lines of the Inductor, even though both concepts depend on the same basic-resonance."

(Someone else was sitting down in the chair. The electrodes were being attached. Cody felt the growing distress and anxiety in every mind.)

Kunashi went on doggedly, "Pomerance is a biochemist He was working on a virus-Japanese encephalitis type A- and trying to mutate it into a specialized bacteriophage." The thought faltered for an instant and picked up again. "The reproduction of a virus-or a gene-depends on high internal resonance; it's a nucleoprotein. Theoretically, anything can change into anything else, eventually. But the physical probability of such a change depends on the relative resonance measure of the two states-high for the aminoacid-protein chain, for example, and the two states of the benzene ring."

(Kunashi's wife was sitting down in the chair.)

"The change, the reproduction, also involves high specificity of the chemical substances involved. That's the reason tele-paths would be immune to the Operation Apocalypse virus, whatever it is. Now... now specificity can vary not only from species to species, but within the species too. Our immunity is innate. The (will it work? will it work?) nucleoprotein of the Operation Apocalypse virus must have a high affinity for certain high-resonance

particles in the central nervous system of non-telepaths. Such particles have a great capacity for storing information. So our virus would attack the information centers of the non-telepathic brain.

"That affinity depends on resonance differential-and Pomerance's experiments were aimed at finding a way to alter that differential. Such a method would make it possible to mutate virus-strains with great predictability and control. And it can also be used to induce telepathy. Telepathy depends on high resonance of nucleoproteins in the brain's information centers, and by artificially increasing specificity, the telepathic function can be induced in-in-"

The thought stopped. Kunashi's wife was leaving the experimental chair, and the physicist's mind clouded with doubt, misery, and hopelessness. Cody's thoughts linked with Ku-

nashi's, sending a strong message of wordless warm encouragement-not intellectual hope, he did not have much of that himself-but a deep emotional bridge of understanding and sympathy. It seemed to help a little. It helped Cody, too. He watched Kunashi's wife walk quickly to him, and they linked arms and stood together waiting.

Suddenly Lucy said, "I want to try again."

"Do you feel-" Cody began, but immediately knew that there had been no change. Her mind was still walled.

Yet Allenby, across the room, nodded.

"It's worth trying," he said. "Let's do it with the power on, this time. The resonance effect should last for several minutes after disconnecting the electrodes, but we won't take any chances." Cody had taken the baby again, and Lucy was settling herself in the chair. "Ideally, all these gadgets will be in a small power-pack that will be worn and operating continuously ... All right, Lucy? Power on."

Again mind after mind tried to touch Lucy's. Again Cody sensed, as he had sensed in the minds of the other subjects too, that strange walled aspect that reminded him of Jasper Home. But Lucy wasn't paranoid!

Yet her mind did not open. So it was failure-not a mechanical failure, for Pomerance's hypothesis had been verified by everything except the ultimate verification of experimental proof. And yet, without that proof, the pogrom would rage on unchecked, spreading and destroying.

She's not paranoid! Cody thought. The baby stirred in his arms. He reached into that warm, shapeless mind and sensed nothing there that reminded him at all of Jasper Home.

The baby, Allenby thought suddenly. Try the baby.

Questions thrust toward the psychologist. But they were not answered. He did not know the answers. He had a hunch, that was all.

Try the baby.

Allenby turned off the power and removed the electrodes from Lucy's head. The baby was laid gently, in his blankets, on the seat Lucy vacated. The electrodes were attached carefully. The baby slept.

Power on, Allenby ordered.

His thoughts reached out toward the child.

The child slept on.

... Defeat, the last defeat of all, Cody knew. Telepaths and non-telepaths were ultimately different, after all. That wall

could never go down. No armistice could ever be made, pogrom could not be stopped.

The paranoids had been right. Telepaths could not exist side "by side with non-telepaths.

And suddenly hi Cody's mind blazed the flash and roar of the exploding bomb, the blinding thunderclap that was to engulf the whole world now-

On the chair, the baby squirmed, opened its eyes and mouth, and screamed.

In the soft, floating mistiness of its mind was the formless shape of fear-the sudden flash and roar and Cody's own memory of falling helplessly through space-the oldest fears of all, the only fears which are inborn.

For the first time in history, telepathy had been induced.

Cody sat alone at the control panel of the electronic calculator. For there was no time at all now. In a moment the emergency telecast would begin, the last appeal to the group of non-telepaths. They would be offered the Inductor-conditionally. For they could not use it. Only their children could.

If they were willing to accept the Inductor and halt the pogrom, the Baldies would know very quickly. The most secret thoughts of men cannot be hidden from telepaths.

But if they would not accept-the Baldies would know that, too, and then Cody would touch a certain button on the panel before him. Then Operation Apocalypse would begin. In six hours the virus would be ready. In a week or two, ninety per cent of the world's population would be dead or dying. The pogrom might go on until the last, but telepaths could hide efficiently, and they would not have to remain hidden long. The decision was man's.

Cody felt Allenby come in behind him.

"What's your guess?" he asked.

"I don't know. It depends on egotism-paranoia, in a way. Maybe man has learned to be a social animal; maybe he hasn't. We'll soon find out."

"Yes. Soon. It's the end now, the end of what started with the Blowup."

"No," Allenby said, "it started a long time before that. It started when men

first began to live in groups and the groups kept expanding. But before there was any final unification, the Blowup came along. So we had decentralization, and that was the wrong answer. It was ultimate disunity and control by fear. It built up the walls between man and man higher than

ever. Aggression is punished very severely now-and in a suspicious, worried, decentralized world there's a tremendous lot of aggression trying to explode. But the conscience represses it-the criminal conscience of a fear-ruled society, built up in every person from childhood. That's why no non-telepathic adult today can let himself receive thoughts-why Lucy and the others couldn't."

"She'll... never be able to?"

"Never," Allenby said quietly. "It's functional hysteric deafness-telepathic deafness. Non-telepaths don't know what other people are thinking-but they believe they know. And they're afraid of it. They project their own repressed aggressions on to others; unconsciously, they feel that every other being is a potential enemy-and so they don't dare become telepaths. They may want to consciously, but unconsciously there's too much fear."

"Yet the children-"

"If they're young enough, they can become telepaths, like your baby, Jeff. His superego hasn't formed yet. He can learn, and learn realistically, with all minds open to him, with no walls locking him in as he grows and learns."

Cody remembered something an old poet had written. Something there is that doesn't, love a wall. Too many walls had • been built, for too long, walls that kept each man apart from his neighbor. In infancy, perhaps in early childhood, anyone was capable of receiving telepathic thoughts, given the Inductor. In infancy the mind of the child was whole and healthy and complete, able to learn telepathic as well as verbal communication. But soon, fatally soon, as the child grew and learned, the walls were built.

Then man climbed his wall and sat on it like Humpty Dumpty-and somehow, somewhere, in the long process of maturing and learning, the mind was forever spoiled. It was the fall, not only of Humpty Dumpty, but the immemorial fall of man himself. And then-

All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

For Lucy, it was forever too late.

After a little while, Cody said, "What about the paranoids? They were telepathic as children. What happened to them?"

Allenby shook his head.

"I don't know the answer to that one, Jeff. It may be an hereditary malfunction. But they don't matter now; they're a minority among telepaths-a very small minority. They've

been dangerous only because we were a minority among non-telepaths, and vulnerable to scapegoating. We won't be, if...."

"What about the secret wave-bands?"

"The Inductor can be built to adapt to any wave-length the human brain can transmit. There won't be any more walls at all."

"If our offer is accepted. If it isn't-if the pogrom goes on-then I still have the responsibility for Operation Apocalypse."

"Is it your responsibility?" Allenby asked. "Is it ours, even? The non-telepaths will be making their own choice."

"The telecast's starting," Cody said. "I wonder how many will listen to it."

The mob that swept through the town of Easterday, secretly led by a paranoid, swirled toward a big house with a wide verandah. The mob sent up a yell at sight of the row of men standing on the verandah waiting. But the paranoid hesitated.

The man beside him did not. He shouted and sprinted forward. There was a sharp crack and dust spurted at his feet.

"They've got guns!" somebody yelled.

"Get 'em!"

"Lynch 'em!"

The mob surged forward. Again a rifle snapped.

The mob-leader-not the paranoid, but the apparent leader -swore and dropped to the ground, clutching at his leg.

On the verandah a man stepped forward.

"Get out of here," he said crisply. "Get going-fast."

The leader stared in amazement.

"Doc!" he said. "But you're not a Baldy. What the hell are you doing?"

The doctor swung his rifle slowly back and forth.

"A lot of us up here aren't Baldies," he said, glancing along the row of silent men. Several races were represented, but the mob was not concerned with race just now. The lynchers searched out the men on the porch whom they knew to be Baldies-and found each one flanked by coldly determined non-telepaths, armed and waiting.

There weren't many of them, though-the defenders.

That occurred to the leader. He stood up, testing the flesh wound in his calf. He glanced over his shoulder.

"We can take 'em," he shouted. "It's ten to one. Let's go get all of 'em!"

He led the wave.

He died first. On the verandah a runty man with spectacles and a scrubby

moustache shivered and lowered his gun for a moment. But he did not move from where he stood in the determined line.

The mob drew back.

There was a long pause.

"How long do you think you can hold us off, Doc?" someone called.

The dead man lay on the open ground between the two groups.

The air quivered with heat. The sun moved imperceptibly westward. The mob coalesced tighter, a compact, murderous mass waiting in the sunlight.

Then a telecast screen within the house lit up, and Allen-by's voice began to speak to the world.

The telecast was over.

Baldy minds were busy searching, questioning, seeking their answer in minds that could not conceal their true desires. This was a poll that could not be inaccurate. And within minutes the poll would be finished. The answer would be given. On that answer would depend the lives of all who were not telepaths.

Jeff Cody sat alone before the electronic calculator, waiting for the answer.

There could be only one answer a, sane man, a sane people, could give. For the Inductor meant, for the first time in human history, a unity based on reality. It opened the gates to the true and greatest adventures, the odyssey into the mysteries of science and art and philosophy. It sounded the trumpet for the last and greatest war against the Ilium of nature itself-the vast, tremendous, unknown universe in which man has struggled and fought and, somehow, survived.

No adult living today could live to see more than the beginning of that vast adventure. But the children would see it.

There could be only one answer a sane people could give. A sane people.

Cody looked at the keyboard before him.

The earth is filled with violence through them.

Yes, there could be another answer. And if that answer were given-the end of all flesh is come before me.

I will destroy them with the earth!

Cody's mind leaped ahead. He saw his finger pressing the

button on the keyboard, saw Operation Apocalypse flooding like a new deluge across the planet, saw the race of man go down and die beneath that destroying tide, till only tele-paths were left alive in all the world, perhaps in all the universe. He remembered the terrible, lonely pang Baldies feel when a Baldy dies.



And he knew that no telepath would be able to close his mind against that apocalyptic murder of all mankind.

There would be the wound which could not heal, which could never heal among a telepathic race whose memories would go on and on, unweakened by transmission down through the generations. A hundred million years might pass, and even then the ancient wound would burn as on the day it had been made.

Operation Apocalypse would destroy the Baldies too. For they would feel that enormous death, feel it with the fatal sensitivity of the telepath, and though physically they might live on, the pain and the guilt would be passed on from generation to crippled generation.

Suddenly Cody moved.

His finger pushed a button. Instantly the guarding monitor began to operate. There was a soft humming that lasted less than a second. Then a light burned bright on the control panel, and under it was a number.

Cody pressed another button. The unerring selectors searched the calculator for the bit of crystal that held the code of Operation Apocalypse. The crystal, with its cipher of frozen dots of energy, was ready.

A thousand minds, sensing Cody's thought, reached toward him, touched him, spoke to him.

He paused for an instant while he learned that man had not yet made his decision.

The voices in his mind became a tumultuous clamor. But the ultimate decision was neither man's nor theirs; the responsibility was his own, and he waited no longer. "

He moved his hand quickly forward and felt the cool, smooth plastic of a lever sink with absolute finality beneath his fingers.

On the bit of ferroelectric crystal waiting in the calculator, the cipher-pattern of energy shivered, faded and vanished completely.

Operation Apocalypse was gone.

Still Cody's fingers moved. Memory after memory died

within the great machine. Its vast pools of data drained their energy back into the boundless sea of the universe and were lost. Then at last the brain of the calculator was empty. There was no way to re-create the Apocalypse-no way and no time.

Only waiting was left.

He opened his mind. All around him, stretching across the earth, the linked thoughts of the Baldies made a vast, intricate webwork, perhaps the last and mightiest structure man would ever build. They drew him into their midst and made him one with them. There were no barriers at all. They did not judge. They understood, all of them, and he was part of them all in a

warm, ultimate unity that was source of enough strength and courage to face whatever decision mankind might make. This might be the last time man would ever bind itself together in this way. The pogrom might go on until the last Baldy died. But until then, no Baldy would live or die alone.

So they waited, together, for the answer that man must give.