

Delerium on Deneb

By ROLF MARTELL

Horga learned the secret of the deadly dust—but he had no knowledge of how it would hit him.

JON HORGGA, big, bulky and space-tanned, sat alone in the spaceport bar, nursing the last drink he could buy.

He savagely ground out his blue Venusian cigar and felt the single orange credit note in his jacket pocket. Tomorrow, he knew, a space patrol blacklist would be thrown at him for suspected wrecking, and he'd be grounded for good. Horga, though he burned with anger, was not badly worried. Flush with credits or broke, he'd always land-ed on his feet, because he'd always been a little harder and more ruth-less than his enemies. And everyone —man or humanoid—he considered his potential enemy.

He gave little attention to the bar-girls in their short, provocative skirts, the crew members or the rocket mechan-ics who wandered past his table. But his cold blue eyes narrowed as he saw the old spaceman stagger towards him. Horga judged he was a prospector just back from a long star trip. He had the look of money—a stake that Horga needed badly right now.

Horga shoved out the chair on the opposite side of his table and gestured toward it. The old man, his eyes a little vacant, smiled and dropped into the chair.

"Just blasted in?" Horga asked.

"Yeah—burned it in at 1800—and as glad as I've ever been to get back to a world with a drink. Three months out and back to Deneb ain't a picnic, ever, but this time if it wasn't for luck it would've been my last run, just like it was for my partner." In answer to the old man's gesture, the waitress ap-peared with drinks—Alkursch. His hand trembled a bit as he downed his drink in a gulp.

Horga extended his big, radiation-burned hand across the table. "I'm Jon Horga," he said, "just off the Arcturan Queen. Blaster's Mate First. Sounds to me like you got quite a yarn."

The old man's bleary eyes focused slowly. There was a hint of suspicion in them, but the desire for companion-ship after lonely weeks in space was stronger. He shoved out his hand. "Mine's Barnabus," he said. "Whatever the rest of it was, guess I left it behind, a few million light-years back."

The old man gestured for more drinks, paying off with a bill peeled froth a fat roll. "It's a yarn, all right—one of the kind, son, that they say you gotta give out to the space patrol boys if you want to keep your star papers. And I figure that's where I'd better be headed now, while I still got half a synapse working." The old man started to get up, but Horga laid a friendly hand on his arm.

"Barnabus, old boy, I know the patrol has listened to a lot of wild tales—some of them true—but they have a way of discounting about ninety percent what starboys like us say when we wander in with a jetload of Alkursch—and they're just as likely as not to slap a detain on you with an h.t.s. ticket—hold till sober."

Barnabus slumped back in his chair. For a moment he stared at Horga, the Alkursch showing in his eyes. Finally, he shook himself and muttered, "Son, I guess you got a point. Very same thing happened to me once out on Vega IV—very same thing you just said. Guess what I need is some coffee."

Barnabus twisted in his chair and familiarly patted the hip of a passing waitress. "Coffee for me and my friend," he said in fluent, ungrammati-cal Aldeberan, "and a double order of toasted *pultischtoz*."

AS THE waitress flashed her standard smile and left to fill the order, Horga leaned forward and began to talk rapidly to Barnabus, telling him of the day-long battle he once had with aliens—pirates in the Magellenics. While he talked, his hands were busy under the table. His right hand slipped along the links of his life-bracelet, past the life-radio, past the sustenance link, with food and water substitute for a month; past the antibody link, the loca-tion that automatically gave star coor-dinates—past these and

three similar links to his own special link. He worked the three tiny buttons and the knob in proper sequence and rhythm and the cover of the link sprang open. Carefully, the index finger of his right hand slipped into the cavity and he caught a tiny capsule under his fingernail.

All this time, he continued with his story. "... and, then, when we were disabled, they began to board us. As a last resort, we'd let them think we were all dead. But when they burned their way in, at the stern quarter, we were waiting. I had the trigger-box of the Easton, and I'll always remember the first one that came in through the smok-ing hole they'd made. He looked—well-, if you take a look at that picture be-hind you, over the bar, you'll get some idea . . . "

As old Barnabus glanced behind him at the picture, Horga's right hand shot out over the coffee, and the tension in his finger relaxed just enough to let the capsule drop into the cup. . . .

Barnabus wondered vaguely why the coffee and the *pultisehtoz* didn't help. He kept talking and talking, feeling drunker all the time . . . he hadn't planned to go on this way, but he told how he and his partner had landed out on Deneb IV, hit a rich vein of Thorallite and loaded up. Then, almost by acci-dent, they had stumbled across the me-teorite caves with their lichens that no one, through all of space, had ever seen before. How his partner had attempted to analyze the lichens and the strange blue powder they exuded. And how, when his partner fused the powder in the spectroscope

"It was a nightmare," Barnabus went on. "After it hit him, he was convinced he was surrounded by girls—dozens of them, Earth girls, Venusians, Aldebar-ans—doing anything he wanted. He *knew* they were there. And I guess they were, to him. And money, liquor, food —anything and everything. The hallu-cinations went on for hours. Suddenly, they stopped. Then he just sat, eyes wide open, blank, staring.

I kept watching him for quite awhile and finally I said, 'Bill, why don't you come off it?' His face doesn't change expression at all. He'd been sitting on the bunk but then, more like a servo than a man, he stands up and . . . and ... just waits! I still don't know what's happening, y'understand—I think Bill's trying to give me the business. So I'm disgusted—remember, I ain't a space medic. So I said, disgusted-like, 'Look, Bill, it's time we blasted off. It's time you quit this routine. Fun's fun, and all that, but we got to leave.' So he just stands there, with the same fishy eyes, no expression at all. So finally—I'm get-ting mad now you see—I say, 'Bill, snap out of it or go take a flying leap for yourself.' "

OLD BARNABUS took a long drink of coffee and went on. "We had a K-72-Y—you know the kind of ship—there's a sixty foot drop from the main hatch to the ground. So, when I pulled that 'flying leap' line, Bill happened to be standing nearer to the open hatch than I was. Before I figured what was going on, he'd taken four big steps over to the hatch. Then he looked over at me, as if he wanted my approval. Be-fore I had a chance to say a word, he faced back to the open hatch. I saw his knees bend, then suddenly straighten, and his body shot out. He was gone. There was nothing but sky showing in the hatch."

Barnabus shuddered and poured the rest of the coffee down his throat. "I dashed over to the hatch and looked down. Yeah—there was what was left of Bill—sixty feet below. Smashed to a pulp on the rocks."

Barnabus wiped a thin hand across his mouth. "As I climbed down the ladder, I figured out, more or less, what had happened. Stupid of me not to have caught on sooner. The stuff he'd been testing—must have been a narcotic that we never heard of—set him off in dreams first, and then put him in a state so that he'd do *anything* I said. The flame in the spectroscope set it off—guess the stuff has to be in vapor form to take effect. But, to make sure, before I buried Bill, I took some blood samples. After I ran the Anderson test on them, I was sure. Turned out to be Anderson Rd-7: permanent addiction with no known counteragents. Rough stuff. Makes a man just about one hundred per cent suggestible to anybody, permanently."

Jon Horga's eyes glittered as he offered a cigar to the old man. Here was a stake—a stake bigger than he'd ever dreamed of having. With this drug—what was the old fool saying—the natives called it *locada*—he would have anything—*anything*—he wanted. First, he'd enslave a rich man, to give him the capital he would need at the beginning. Next, technicians and rocket men. Then, hundreds, thousands,

tens of thousands more for every purpose, every whim. With *locada* he could be the absolute master of a planet, a whole system, finally, perhaps, the galaxy. His eyes were watchful as he regarded the old man. Already he could see that the little white capsule was taking effect. The old man was still babbling on, but his eyes were drooping. His head refused to stay erect. His speech was thicker. Horga watched and waited. Seconds later, in the middle of a sentence, the old man's head suddenly fell to the permacloth tabletop.

IT HAD been easy, Horga thought. A little pill, but a big dose. Then, with old Barnabus out on his feet, a matter of paying off the port fees with Barnabus' own credits, a small bribe to the driver of the port jeep who took them out to the ship, then the blast-off. Of course, he'd had to throw a paralyzer beam on the old fool, to keep him happy in hyperspace. And now, he thought, with Deneb bright in front of him, it was time to nick old Barney with a touch of Scop 7-0-8 to get the truth out of him on the position of the *locada* caverns.

He switched in the planet radar and picked up Deneb IV. Ignoring the rules of the space manual, he threw the ship into an FTL "shummer" and immediately slapped it back out. Zero time had passed and he was on the orbit of IV, tailing it a few thousand. Flicks of the rear jets, scherzo manipulations of the auxiliaries. Cancel out the anti-grav, pull the tape from the evaluator, feed masses and velocities into the Compumaster, sling the ship into an orbit, and that's that. Compumaster would take care of the next hour of spiraling in.

Jon Horga stepped out of the pilot seat, filled the Scop needle, and walked back to Barnabus, paralyzed on his couch. Barnabus glared up at him in helpless, frustrated anger as Horga shot the needle home. It was the most powerful truth drug known, though its average effect lasted for only four minutes twenty seconds. But time enough. In three minutes, Horga knew the landing area, azimuth and distance to the *locada* deposits. Plus: characteristics of the humanoid natives, flora, topography, atmosphere, this-and-that for survival.

Horga smiled with satisfaction and pushed his big bulk back into the pilot's compartment. He thought over the characteristics of the *Tzenn*, the humanoid natives old Barnabus had mentioned. Physically, he had said, they looked human, more or less, but their metabolism was silicon-based, rather than carbon-based, and among their organs was a special silicon-lined ductless gland, containing almost pure phosphorous, which, their systems required in relatively large quantities in order to handle the very complex vitamin molecules found in their food supply.

These *Tzenn* should be easy to deal with, Horga decided. The old man had described them as docile, primitive folk, blue skinned, living almost naked in the tropical heat of their planet. They subsisted on the few simple crops they grew. Horga frowned as he recalled that old Barnabus had also said they had a religious tabu strictly prohibiting anyone from entering the *locada* caves. Then he smiled grimly. His needle gun had solved the problem of more than one religious taboo before, among sav-ages.

As the ship spiraled in, Jon Horga set the co-ordinates that Barnabus had been forced to give him into the lat-lon dial. He watched as they passed over a turgid, algae-choked sea, countless miles of dense tropical jungle, and finally the foothills of enormous, rugged moun-tains. Horga took over from the Compumaster and brought the ship down on the same rock-strewn clearing where Barnabus had landed before. It was a good landing, with the nose of the ship pointed straight up, the three tail fins resting on rock in the center of the clearing.

After checking his needle gun, Horga started for the hatch. He grinned at Barnabus as he passed him. "Soon as I'm back with the *locada* dust, you'll have the honor of becoming the first slave in the empire of Horga I."

Old Barnabus glared in helpless rage as Horga opened the hatch and began to climb down the sixty feet to the surface.

HORGA tramped through the hot, steaming jungle, watching for the landmarks he had forced Barnabus to give him: Flying reptiles whirred past overhead, and noises around him indicated that the jungle was full of other forms a life—and death. As the path turned abruptly, Horga suddenly stopped

short and drew back.

At his feet, hungrily reaching for him with enormous claws, _ was a creature with a slug-like body, fully six feet long. It lay across a blue, rotten log in the path and sunlight sparkled, reflected from the compound eyes in its iridescent head. The claws shot out at Horga and snapped viciously again, this time rip-ping his coveralls and just missing his leg. For all its torpid aspect, the thing was amazingly fast and agile. Horga threw himself back, his needle gun flashing out of its holster and into action. Instantly, the thing on the log was black, charred ash. Horga stepped over it and continued, a smile of satisfaction on his face.

He crossed a narrow, rapid stream, leaping from one stone to another, careful to avoid the orange, poisonous lance-fish flashing through the water beneath him. Then the jungle began to thin out as the path climbed into the foot-hills, and the ground became more rocky. Under the glaring rays of the young hot sun, Horga sweated as he doggedly pushed on, up the rugged path.

As he rounded an enormous boulder, he saw his first natives on the hillside ahead. There were two of the *Tzenn*, roughly humanoid, but taller and thinner than men, with glistening blue skins. Each carried a long, crudely fashioned hunting spear. As they saw him, they began chattering excitedly to each other in high, squeaking voices. Horga had his needle gun ready as he advanced toward them, but they retreated off the path into the brush at his approach. As he strode on across the rugged hillside, he heard the *Tzenn* scampering along behind him, squeaking in their strange, high-pitched language. Over his shoulder he could catch an occasional glimpse of them, loping through the brush or across the rocks, with sunlight glistening on their bare blue skins. Horga felt a vague annoyance and irritation at the *Tzenn*. Stupid creatures, he thought contemptuously, and apparently harmless. Of course, they might not be so harmless when he broke their taboo—he'd seen native races turned into murderous frenzy when their religion was offended—but the needle gun would take care of them, as it had before with others who had been stupid enough to get in his way.

He came at last to the canyon opening that Barnabus had spoken of, with sheer cliffs rising at each side—almost the end of his journey. As he walked into the canyon, past the rock walls on either side, the thin squeaking of the *Tzenn* behind him seemed to grow more excited. Horga guessed that this must be the beginning of the forbidden country. He held his needle gun ready and turned it up to full intensity. If the stupid fools asked for trouble, he was ready to give it to them. He strode on. The canyon widened into a barren, rock-strewn floor, hundreds of feet in width, surrounded by sheer walls. At his approach a flying reptile stretched its leathery, green scaled wings and clumsily began to circle into the air.

The needle gun in Horga's hand crackled and the stricken creature seemed to hesitate in mid-air. Then, head downward, its useless wing broken and fluttering, it plunged back to the rocky canyon floor. It thudded among the razor-sharp rocks, trailing a thin plume of smoke. As Horga passed the dying bird, he kicked it with loathing and continued on.

Now his steps quickened and he hurried forward eagerly. Ahead of him, at the base of the canyon wall, he saw the *locada* caverns—the source of limitless power and wealth, the source of slaves to do his bidding, to supply all the things he would ever need or want. An empire of trapped minds! He scrambled over the sharp rocks, ignoring cuts and scratches. At last he clambered over the final tumbled heap of boulders and reached the mouth of the first cavern.

Bending his head, he stepped into the cavern mouth and switched on his light. The cavern at first was narrow; sloping gently downward, lined with wet bare rock. Abruptly, the path curved sharply and then suddenly ended. There was nothing under his feet—a black pit!

Horga barely managed to avoid falling by catching a handhold on an out-cropping of rock. He stepped back and pointed his light into the black pit. Twenty feet below him was the floor of a natural oval room. Drops of lime-soaked water glistened in the light of the torch along the walls of the chamber. Horga shivered in the damp canyon after the burning heat of the day outside. He shivered with cold, but he shivered with excitement too, because on every ledge, on every surface, blue, delicate lichens were growing. And on each of the growing surfaces, on the surrounding rock, on the floor of the cavern itself, there were heaps of blue dust—enough *locada* for hundreds of addicts, in this one cavern alone!

Eyes glinting with anticipation, Jon Horga began to lower himself carefully to the floor of the cavern,

finding foot-holds and handholds in water-seamed crevices. Reaching the solid footing of the canyon floor, he was careful to avoid disturbing any of the heaps of dust. Taking flexible containers from his pack, he began to gather the fine, talc-like dust.

He worked steadily, packing pound after pound into his expansible plasti-bag, oblivious to his surroundings and the passage of time. He had almost filled it when the sense of danger which had enabled him to survive in battles against desperate men and aliens in a hundred systems, brought him back to the immediate scene, all senses alert.

Horga whirled, causing little eddies of dust in the dank air. As his eyes went up, he first saw a pair of blue *Tzenn* legs, arms akimbo, at the mouth of the black passageway. Horga raised his eyes, looking at the *Tzenn*, who had a spear poised in his muscular right hand.

The *Tzenn's* head was encased in a grotesque reptilian mask, topped with bright plumage. Priest . . . medicine man . . . someone who can enter the for-bidden place . . . the ideas flashed automatically through Horga's mind as he raised the needle gun.

In the light of the torch, he saw the muscles tensing in the arm of the *Tzenn*. Horga squeezed the trigger and dropped flat on the canyon floor. Bright orange flashed through black space at the same instant that the *Tzenn's* spear flashed through the air, inches above Horga's head. Horga looked up. The *Tzenn* still stood, swaying in agony, his right arm burned to the bone. Grimly, with a slight smile, Horga aimed the needle gun at the sternum. Pressing the trigger, he methodically burned the *Tzenn*, cutting a deadly line of fire from his thorax to his groin. Still the masked *Tzenn* stood erect, as life left him. Then, with the tremble of a dead, dried-out leaf, he fell.

And as he fell, he flamed.

Jon Horga backed away in terror, scattering great clouds of dust as he stumbled through the lichen-heaps. The body continued to burn, great clouds of thick white smoke rising from it, filling the cavern. Suddenly Horga knew what must have happened—he had hit the *Tzenn's* phosphorous gland with his needle ray—and Horga knew that phosphorous would continue to burn fiercely until it was completely consumed. He had to get out—fast!

Horga stumbled through the thick smoke, coughing and almost blinded. He fell twice before he was able to reach the cavern wall and begin climbing. In his wild haste, he ignored the blood streaming from cuts on his face and hands. A fingernail ripped on sharp projection on the wall, but Horga did not stop for an instant as he clawed his way up the passageway. Anything, any-thing to get out!

At last, Horga's bleeding fingers felt the passageway opening over his head. Exerting all his remaining strength, he pulled himself up to the level passageway surface. Gasping for breath in the phosphorous poisoned atmosphere, he switched on his light. The light was worse than useless as a guide—it showed only the clouds of smoke that filled the cavern. Horga was about to throw it aside when he noticed that the smoke had changed. It had been the pure white of burning phosphorous—now it was definitely blue. The locada dust was vaporizing in the fierce flame of the burning phosphorous!

LOST completely to panic, Horga ran, ran headlong up the dark, smoke-filled passage. His foot hit a projecting rock and he fell heavily. He scrambled to his feet, and half crouching, his eyes full of burning tears from the phosphorous, he dashed on toward the cavern mouth. Seconds later, he saw a bright shaft of sunlight pierce the smoke. He forced himself to a last mad burst of speed and then he was outside. He collapsed across the rocks near the cavern mouth, feeling the welcome heat of Deneb on his lacerated shoulders and back, breathing in fresh air at last, instead of deadly smoke.

Minutes later, he forced himself to his feet. Painfully, he picked his way among the rocks and boulders, down to the canyon floor. As he walked across the canyon he wondered desperately if he had got out in time. Had the drug had time to take effect? At least, there were no addict's dreams, no hallucinations—yet.

He went on doggedly, across the hill-side, back down toward the jungle and the ship. Off in the brush to the side of the path, he caught fleeting glimpses of the *Tzenn*—just a flash of movement, a hint of blue skin, and it would be gone. And, as the wind shifted, it brought to him the squeaking chatter of their high thin voices. Did they seem to be laughing at him? There seemed to be a different, mocking tone in

their incessant talk. Or was it just the distortion of the wind—or his own imagination?

Angrily, he dismissed the idea and gripped his needle gun more tightly. This was only a temporary defeat. When he returned to the caves, he would know how to deal with the *Tzenn*. Kill them. Kill them in the open air, if they got in his way. And set a neu-tronic trap in the cavern mouths, to kill them before they could get inside. No, he wasn't defeated yet.

He smiled grimly and continued on toward the clearing. Already, through the tangled vines and matted jungle growths, he could begin to make out the straight clean lines of the ship ahead.

He broke into the clearing and ran to the ship. Painfully, he began the sixty foot climb to the hatch, gingerly grasping the rungs with his torn fingers. He had almost reached the hatch opening when there was a sudden gust of wind. He froze to the rungs, swaying slightly. As the wind dropped, he started to reach for the next rung. But then it dissolved, before his eyes!

In sudden panic, he locked his fingers in a death grip on the rung he could no longer see. But there was an odd numbness in his fingers, his whole body. Only in a vague, unreal way could he feel the ship, next to his body. And as he looked, the ship's solid form melted, ran in liquid metal around him, swirled in clouds of gleaming vapor, boiled in a thick grey fevered chaos around him, and then...

Nothing.

Nothing at all. No space and no time. No extension or dimension. No form. No place and no sense. No tactile-audi-tory-visual-olfactory-gustatory. No re-pulsion or attraction. No desire.

Except:

In the dead emptiness that had been the ego, a perception of a loss. Whose perception? Don't know. And where? There is no where. No when, no what.

And then, from the void that had been his mind, the thin fabric of hal-lucination began to form. At first—only the hint of a vibration—a motion—a wave through nothing. And then, high and clear, a bell-like note that echoed across and through the synapses of his brain, and became—color ... an alien spectrum of a hundred brilliant hues that shifted, melted, mixed and blended before his eyes ... and then burst into the light of a thousand suns! And it all came. Form and distance, personal-ity, space, desire and time. A world for him to live in ... all false? Gasping with relief, he reached but for it ...

A tall, golden skinned girl was at his side. With a serene quiet smile she handed him a tall glass, filled with some-thing amber. He drank, and as he did a wave of desire for life over-whelmed him. Wonderingly, he ran his hands along the body of the girl, feeling pulse of life beneath her firm skin ... this false? Angrily rejecting the half-formed doubt, he rudely grasped the girl and pulled her to him, lusting for her, lusting for reality ...

TIME lost all existence, blending into infinity. There were other girls—Earth girls, Centaurans, princesses from Arcturus, girls from planets he did not know, from worlds that had no name. There were short, sharp nightmares, succeeded by the almost un-bearable sensation of infinite power—omnipotence. Whole suns, whole galaxies were his, to bend and turn, stop and start, at any whim, and worlds that man would never see. But, as he tramped across his star-strewn uni-verse, the hint of something off-key, something false, returned, stronger than before. Not real? False? He tried to reject the idea, to twist and turn away from it, but it returned and it was with him ... false ... false ... FALSE!

With a tremendous mental effort, he forced his twisted brain back to reality. The first thing he saw was his hand, caked with blood, numb from gripping the rail above his head. And then the smooth metal of the ship, inches from his eyes.

He looked down and felt a stomach-turning vertigo that almost made him lose his grip. How long had he hung there, lost in the narcotic dream? It must have been hours, for the long black shadows extending across the clearing indicated that the long Deneb day was ending.

A wave of loathing overcame him: This could not be his world ... this was the dream ... the other world, the real world, his own world ... he would re-turn to it. With a feeling of infinite relief, he began to drift back. But some tenuous shred of sanity forced him to stop. I must climb, he thought dimly. Why did he have to climb? He did not know, could not remember. But a last spark of determination flamed momen-tarily into life and he raised one foot, leadenly. He almost lost his hold as his cramped arm

reached for the next rung and missed. Then he was up, his head level with the open hatch. One more effort. Just one more. Gathering all his strength, he pushed himself upward and collapsed across the floor of the hatch-way.

ACROSS the compartment, Barnabus waited and watched, his old body still held in the paralyzer beam. Through the interminable hours of the long Deneb day he had waited, at first patiently, then with growing anxiety, as he considered three factors. First, in the weeks of prospecting here before, he had come across a dying *Tzenn*, had watched the body burst into flame as the membrane of the phosphorous gland broke down. Next, he had been im-pressed by the psychological hold their taboos had for them. And finally, he knew Horga was the type to shoot at the first hint of danger. Horga, a twisted man who basically hated all other men, all other living creatures. But, if it happened as Barnabus thought it might, would Horga be able to get back to the ship before the drug took effect? If not, Barnabus would remain locked in the unbreakable grip of the paralyzer, until hunger and thirst had killed him.

It was with great relief that Barnabus heard the ring of Horga's boots outside the ship, mounting toward the hatch. But then almost at the top, they had stopped, and for hours there was no sound. What had happened? Had Horga fallen? Was he lost forever in *locada* fantasies? Barnabus had re-signed himself to slow, lingering death when at last Horga's head appeared at the hatch.

His first feeling was enormous re-lief. Then other thoughts went through his mind as he regarded the unconscious figure of Horga. Jon Horga, now a mind with no control, a willing slave to any suggestion.

If he returned to the spaceports, was there any limit to the evil he would do? Suggest a murder, Horga would commit it, Without a single independent thought, without a trace of conscience. A robbery, a pirate attack—anything. And Barnabus knew that there were many, many men in the raw life of the space-towns, who would take advantage of just such an opportunity. And—a peril to the entire galaxy—one of them would be sure to pry from Horga the source of the deadly dust. A cure was now impos-sible. But if, some time in some way, a cure might be found? No, the risk was too great. And even if Horga might be cured, he was still, even when "normal," a dangerous man, the enemy of all other men, a killer many times over. Barnabus knew what he had to do.

"Get up!" he commanded.

Horga painfully raised his head. His eyes were blank—empty of volition or individuality. The drug was master now.

"Turn off the paralyzer beam!"

Without expression, Horga got to his feet and hobbled to the banked controls. Automatically, he flipped the switches off. Then he waited, motionless.

Freed, Barnabus stood up, rubbing circulation back into his numbed legs and arms.

"This is the last," he said, "that man-kind will ever see of *locada*." He looked up at the addict. "To make sure of that, Horga, I've got to say the same thing to you I said to my partner. It wasn't very funny then, and it sure isn't now. I didn't know what I was doing then—but I do now."

He said softly, "Horga, go take a fly-ing leap!"

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