

# JUNGLE DOCTOR

by Robert F. Young

Snow! At first, Sarith couldn't believe her eyes. Snow on Chalce? Snow in the reception room of the Chalce Clinic?

Shivering, she looked around her. Night. A strange sky. An even stranger valley. She guessed, then, what had happened. In her excitement over her first appointment and in her impatience to get started in her chosen field, she had misjudged her transit co-ordinates and had inadvertently transmitted herself to one of Chalce's primitive neighbors.

But which one? Obviously it had to be a member of a system near the edge of the galactic lens, for the Chalce binary was remote from the main federated planets. But the transit-unit strapped around her waist demanded more accurate information than that. If she wanted to transmit herself to Chalce she had to visualize not only the correct Chalce coordinates, but the distance between her present position and her desired destination. To do that she had to know exactly where she was. Her transit-unit had no memory: it merely accepted data, reacted to it, and awaited further data.

Sarith shivered again. The wind-driven snow clung icily to her face, sifted down the back of her thin afternoon suit and melted coldly on her spine. She remembered the heavier clothing she had brought along for holiday treks in the Sharsh mountains, and she looked around for her traveling kit. All she saw was snow.

Even her belongings had gone astray!

Panic touched her, but she brushed it aside and forced her thoughts into an orderly pattern. The only type of planet to which a transit-unit could react was an inhabitable type, and inhabitable planets invariably supported intelligent life forms. Intelligent life forms always had a civilization of some kind, and even the crudest of civilizations included some mariner of astronomical science. Her problem, then, was to contact the local natives and probe them for whatever information they possessed concerning the location of their world.

The trouble was, there were no natives in the vicinity. Then, when the wind abated momentarily, she glimpsed a scattering of wan lights far down the valley and in sudden hope she started towards them. That was when she realized how serious her situation was. The gravity was compatible enough, but the snow was knee-deep in some places and waist-deep in others. The cold numbed her nose, her hands, her feet; penetrated her afternoon suit as though it did not exist.

She had little strength remaining when she finally reached the road, and even that little was lost. For Sarith had never heard of ditches. One moment she was wading knee-deep in snow, and the next she was floundering up to her neck in snow. She managed to scramble up the slope of the ditch to the shoulder, but the effort completed her exhaustion. She was so tired, so very tired— I'll sleep for a while, she thought. Sleep—for a while—

Lindsey washed cars days and drank nights. He walked home talking to trees, sometimes mumbling the *Sonnets From The Portuguese*, sometimes quoting passages from *Paradise Lost*. When there had been a lot of blood on the cars and he was real drunk, he concentrated on Hamlet's soliloquy. Tonight he was having a hard time of it. It wasn't the wind so much, it was the blinding snow. He kept blundering off the road and into the ditch, and once he fell ignominiously, sprawling face down right in the middle of his favorite line, "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all; and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er—"

Lindsey lay there for some time, the blood-flecked cars whirling wildly in his mind. After a while he got to his hands and knees, and thence to his feet. He stood there in the wind, swaying, a gaunt white ghost of a man. "—with the pale cast of thought," he finished deliberately. The wind tore the words apart and flung them over his shoulder.

The fall had sobered him a little, and he remembered his flashlight. He got it out and flicked it on. He moved forward into the wind, lapsing into the *Sonnets*. "Beloved, my Beloved, when I think that thou

wast in the world a year ago—" He felt the tears begin in his eyes, and then he felt them intermingling with the melted snow on his cheeks. He tasted their salt on his lips.

His lurching body patterned the beam of the flashlight, making the light jump from road to ditch to field, and crazily back again. The swirling snow played pranks on his eyes, teasing them with fantastic shapes and shadows, turning a roadside drift into the body of a sleeping child—

Lindsey paused uncertainly. He stared down at the body, but it would not go away. He concentrated on the mass of yellow curls, on the bare white arm half covering the childish face. And then, suddenly, he was kneeling by the roadside, touching the soft hair, the thin wrist, and thinking of Silas Varner and his lost gold.

Lindsey lived in a rundown cottage a mile outside of Elmsville. Two apple trees grew riotously in the front yard and there was a 1948 Ford coupe perpetually parked in the overgrown driveway. There was a path leading between the apple trees to the front door.

The path was buried deep in drifts now, and for a while Lindsey was afraid he wasn't going to make it. But he forced his numb legs forward and after an eternity he reached the door. Inside the house he switched on the light and dropped the girl on the couch before the fireplace. Then he began to build a fire.

As soon as the wood caught, he returned to the girl. He undressed her with clumsy hands, marveling at the texture of her clothing, struck by the exotic design of her sandals. There was a silvery belt strapped around her waist beneath her gossamer underclothing. It consisted of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of tiny interwoven wires, and it was embellished by a continuous series of tiny glistening nodes. When he touched it his fingers tingled.

He tried to unfasten it, but could find no means of doing so, and finally he left it where it was and went into the bedroom for blankets. He wrapped the girl in them and began to chafe her wrists. Slowly, color came into her cheeks, and the flicker of her pulse became a steady throb.

Lindsey added more wood to the fire and returned to the couch. There was a conflicting quality about the girl's face that fascinated him. The cheeks were full, but the nose was fine and delicate, if slightly turned up; and although the chin was small, its firm lines suggested maturity.

In one way she looked like a little girl sleeping, and in another way she looked like a young woman about to wake up.

But it was her hair that fascinated him the most. In the light of the flashlight, it had looked like gold. But it wasn't gold at all—it was pure yellow, the deep, rich yellow of summer sweetcorn—

Presently Lindsey became aware of his own exhaustion, and realized with a start that he was cold sober. He went into the kitchen, found a bottle that was not quite empty, and emptied it. Returning to the living room, he switched off the overhead light and turned on the battered floor lamp by the couch. He noticed the girl's wet clothing lying in a pile on the floor, and he picked it up and spread it on the back of a chair to dry. Then he drew another chair close to the hearth and sat down.

He sat there quietly, listening to the crackling of the maple logs, feeling the soporific heat of the flames. I'll have to tell the police about her first thing in the morning, he thought. Her parents are probably crazy, wondering where she is. What was she doing out in a storm like this anyway, dressed for summer instead of winter, or maybe dressed for bed? Maybe she was running away. Kids do crazy things sometimes. Kids and people—

He'd had no intention of falling asleep. He had wanted to be there, waiting, when the girl came to, so that he could reassure her. But he was very tired, too tired even to think of the cars. Almost without his knowing it, his head dropped back and his eyes closed.

Sarith's first reaction to the room was horror. A native hut, she thought—primitive, sordid, unkempt. Then, looking around her further, she saw the little cultural traces that years of neglect had not entirely obliterated: the ragged curtains, the moldering wallpaper, the tiers of dusty books wainscoting one of the walls.

Presently her eyes came to her clothes, and with a shock she realized her nakedness. Instantly she thought of her transit-unit, and she had a sudden demoralizing vision of herself stranded forever on a primitive planet, hopeless light years from home. Almost immediately she became aware of the familiar

tingle around her waist, and she sighed with relief.

Her eyes moved from her clothes to the fire, past the fire— Suddenly she saw the sleeping man.

Again, her first reaction was horror. But it transmuted swiftly to curiosity when she reached out and touched the sleeping mind. In the long years of preparation for her profession, Sarith had traversed many strange mental corridors, but she had never been confronted by a corridor as twisted and as tortured as the corridor that stretched before her now.

Intrigued, she moved into it. The first memory she came to was a gentle picture of herself sleeping on the couch. She felt the aura of kindness pervading the picture, and with a start she thought: A child! He thinks I am a little child! And then, wonderingly: He saved my life. This poor wretched creature saved my life!

She went on. The corridor curved abruptly and she saw the endless rows of alien vehicles stretching on and on into infinity. She approached them closely and saw the flecks of blood on them, and for a moment she doubted the validity of her own psi-vision. What manner of complex is this, she wondered. What manner of mechanized culture have I blundered into?

She bypassed the vehicle sequence and came to the girl. The girl was tall and dark-haired and very beautiful in an alien way, and she was standing, sitting, reclining in a thousand different poses. Her name was Elaine, and she was dead. Sarith knew she was dead even before she saw the gray memory of the bier.

She became aware then of the sleeping man's anguish, his pain. And suddenly she saw the love he bore for the girl. It was a love so deep and profound, and so permeated with dull, aching regret, that she had to turn away from it.

That was when she saw the vault.

Just as the corridor was a concrete analogy supplied by her own mind to give substance to a psi-structure that otherwise would have been intangible, so was the vault an analogy—the most apt analogy her trained faculties could supply—to give substance to an experience which the sleeping man had buried deeply in his subconscious.

Sarith tried to open it, but its analogous door was tightly secured and defied her mental strength. Finally she desisted. There were other items of far more importance than repressed experiences to be garnered from the native's mind. The locale of his planet, for one, and the locale of Chalce, for another.

Provided such information was available.

She left the emotional level symbolized by the corridor, and delved into the accumulated data beneath. First she assimilated the language; then she went on to learn that the planet's name was Earth and that it was the third of nine orbiting a Go star somewhere near the perimeter of the galactic lens. All of which was excellent information and on a much higher plane than she had anticipated—but still not good enough.

Presently she found a half-remembered star map, and her heart began to pound. But the details were dim and she could not make them out. On an inspiration she traced the map to its source and was delighted to discover that the original was part of a book stored in the very room in which she lay.

She departed swiftly from the sleeping man's mind. The room was gray with dawn. She wriggled out of the blankets and dressed in the wan warmth of the diminished fire; then started round the couch to the tiers of books.

Her route took her close to the chair where the man slept, and remembering the twisted corridor, the rows of incarnadine vehicles, the myriad pictures of the girl, but most of all remembering the vault, she paused and gazed down into the sleeping face.

Then, for a moment, she forgot the books and the star map; the sordid room itself. For a moment she even forgot Chalce. For the face was like no face she had ever seen before. It was a face that had aged beyond its years, yet still retained traces of youth; a face of shadowed eyes and drawn mouth; of thin cheeks, and a forehead horizontally excoriated by the whiplash of self-torture.

It was the face of a sick and dying man.

As she stood there, cold with the new knowledge, the sleeper stirred, awakened

They were the bluest eyes that Lindsey had ever seen, and they were set far apart in the fairest face

that he had ever seen. At the moment their sole *raison d'etre* seemed to be him.

He straightened in the chair, feeling the stiffness of his legs and back. He looked around the room, surprised at the dawn light. The events of the preceding night came back slowly.

He returned his eyes to the girl. "How do you feel?" he asked.

She didn't answer right away. He got the impression she was searching for the right words. Finally: "I feel all right," she said. "Thank you for saving my life."

He looked at her closely. Her words had been full and clear, her intonation perfect. Perhaps that was the trouble; you didn't expect flawless diction from a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old child.

"I'm glad you're okay," Lindsey said. "I was a little worried last night. What's your name?"

"Sarith."

"Mine's Gordon. Gordon Lindsey. Where do you live?"

There was a pause during which the blue eyes regarded him searchingly. Then: "I live a long ways from here, Mr. Lindsey."

"That's not much of an answer. What town do you live in? What state?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because it would sound absurd to you. Besides, it doesn't matter. I'll be leaving soon."

"But I'd like to help you," Lindsey said. "Are you in some kind of trouble? Did you run away and get stranded in the storm?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that either."

"But why not? You're going to have to tell the police."

"The police?"

"Why of course. I've got to report finding you. Your parents are probably looking all over the countryside for you right now."

"My parents are not looking for me, Mr. Lindsey."

Lindsey stood up. "I've got to report you anyway," he said.

I should take her down to the police station, he thought. But she'd only freeze all over again in those thin clothes. I'll drop in the station on my way to work and tell them to stop by for her. I can't keep her here—

Suddenly he was conscious of the intensity of the girl's eyes. Their blueness seemed to incandesce, to stab into his mind; and yet he felt no pain other than the dull throbbing of the hangover that was always with him. And then, abruptly, her eyes resumed their normal hue, and he was at a loss to explain whether their metamorphosis had been real or imaginary. Considering the fact that it was early in the morning and he hadn't had his first drink yet, the latter contingency seemed the more probable.

He built up the fire; then went into the kitchen and fried the girl some eggs, and made a pot of coffee. Sarith approached the eggs diffidently, employing a spoon instead of a fork. Sipping his coffee across the table from her, Lindsey could have sworn she had never seen an egg before. But apparently she liked them, for she cleaned her plate thoroughly.

"If you get hungry later on, you can fix yourself something to eat." He showed her where the canned goods were. Then he donned his denim jacket and went to the door. No sense telling her the police are coming, he decided. She'd only be upset, and she might run away again. "I'm going to work now. You be a good little girl till I get back."

He took a good look at her before he went out. He wanted to remember her face, her eyes, her childish mouth; and above all he wanted to remember the sweet-corn shade of her hair—the gold he had found in the snow and couldn't keep, because he was living in the twentieth century, and because he was a drunk.

A good little girl! Sarith was furious. Here she was, a graduate psi-therapist, a resident psi-therapist in the greatest mental clinic in the galactic federation, and in the eyes of this technological savage she was nothing but a little girl!

And yet his thoughts were so kind, she thought. Beautiful almost. Gold in the snow— No one ever thought that way about my hair before. But if I'm going to get to Chalce I'll never do so standing here. By

the time he gets back I can be light years away, interviewing my first patient, possibly—

My first patient.

No, not really my first. This poor savage is my first, in a way. But of course, he doesn't count. I've no time to bother with him and his wretched vault. There must be medicine men in his society. They should be capable of dealing with his sickness.

But why don't they come to him? Why do they let him suffer?

She stamped her foot angrily. Well, I don't care, she thought. I'm not going to concern myself about it. Why, this isn't even a federated planet. And why should I worry about him anyway? He's going to report me to his wretched native police force and have me taken off his hands.

Or at least he thinks he is.

She smiled at the thought of the block she had imposed. In better humor she went over to the wainscoting of books and began searching for the one she had seen in Lindsey's mind.

The storm had blown itself out during the night and the February morning was crisp and blue-skied. Lindsey walked in the middle of the road, giving the cars a hard time as he always did, never moving out of the way till the last second, and then giving them just enough room to go by. There weren't many cars that morning though; the snowplow hadn't come through yet and the drifts were discouragingly deep.

The road was officially designated Route 16, and before the Throughway had bypassed the town it had been a heavily traveled highway. Now it was just another road, servicing local traffic. It came into Elmsville on the north, became Locust Street for a while, then turned right and became Main Street, going down a hill and across a viaduct, finally turning left, leaving the town and becoming Route 16 again.

The garage where Lindsey worked was at the bottom of the hill, on the other side of the viaduct. There was a drug store on the corner where he had to turn to go down the hill, and right next door to the drug store was the police station.

He had every intention of stopping in and telling the night clerk about the girl. He even had the words framed in his mind and ready to deliver. He was surprised, then, when he walked right by the frosted door and on down the hill.

He made an effort to turn around and go back. He went right on walking. He frowned. He knew that in his heart he didn't want to report the girl, that he liked to think of her there in his house, waiting for him to come home. But just the same, he had to report her. For her parents' sake, if not her own. And if her parents were dead, or had deserted her, there still had to be someone, somewhere, who was concerned about her.

Not necessarily, though. There were plenty of kids around that no one wanted. There were cases in the paper every day— Oh, the hell with it! he thought suddenly. I'll report her this noon.

Across the viaduct there was a metal sign over the walk that said, NICK'S GARAGE—CARS GREASED, WASHED & REPAIRED. Across the street from Nick's, there was a neon sign—anemic now in the morning sunlight—that said, SAM'S STOP-OVER—RESTAURANT & GRILLE.

Lindsey crossed the viaduct diagonally, contemptuous of the passing cars, and helped Sam open up. Then he waited impatiently at the bar till the backbar clock registered the legal hour of 8:00 A.M., and after ordering and downing his usual eye-opener, a double shot with beer chaser, he recrossed the street and went to work.

There was only one car to wash that morning—one that had been left the night before. After Lindsey washed it, doing his usual meticulous job and making sure all the blood was off, Nick put him to work sweeping. When Lindsey finished sweeping, Nick put him to work wiping down the grease-job equipment. Once Nick had let Lindsey wait on the front, but never again. Lindsey wouldn't get out of the way of the cars and several times he'd come close to being run down. Nick wasn't partial to drunks, especially educated drunks, and he wouldn't have cared particularly if Lindsey had got run down; but you had to think of the insurance rates, and besides car wash men were hard to get.

At noon Lindsey crossed the street to the Stop-Over again and consumed what was known locally as the Lindsey Lunch—three double shots, three beers, and a ham on rye. He didn't go near the police station. The car wash business picked up that afternoon. It was Friday, and the February sun hinted that

a pleasant weekend might be coming up. Lindsey washed five cars. There was a lot of blood on the last one and he knew he needed a drink pretty bad, but he made sure he washed it all off. It was quitting time by then, and he returned to the Stop-Over.

After three double shots, things steadied a little. But some of the blood had come off on his hands and it took four more double shots to make it go away. Lindsey felt pretty good by then. He sat quietly at the end of the bar, watching the customers come and go, nodding to the handful he knew, seeing the shadows lengthen on the street.

Pretty soon Elaine came in and sat beside him. She'd been to the library again and there was a little piece of paper marking her place in the book she had borrowed.

Hi, baby, he said.

Hello, Gordon.

There was a presumptuous autumn leaf clinging to her suede jacket, and he reached over and brushed it off. He touched the book tucked under her arm.

What are we reading now? he asked.

Just something I happened to pick up.

He slipped the book from under her arm and opened it. *Sonnets From The Portuguese*, he read. Aren't you the literary young thing, though! Not really, she said. I just thought I'd like to read them.

He turned the pages to the bookmark. One of the sonnets was underlined, and he began to read it aloud: *And wilt thou have me fashion into speech*—it was noisy in the college cafeteria and he had to raise his voice—*the love I bear thee, finding words enough*

She took over.

*And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough, between our faces, to cast light on each? I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach my hand to hold my spirit so far off from myself—that I should bring thee proof in words, of love hid in me out of reach*

Say, you already know it, he said.

I memorized it today.

Suddenly he saw the way her eyes were. There was a new quality in them—a mistiness that softened them and made them different from any woman's eyes he had ever seen before. And then he felt cheap and shoddy, undeserving of the idealism with which she had clothed him. And yet at the same time he felt relieved; thankful that he would no longer need to conceal his love for her with affected indifference and flippant remarks.

He riffled the pages of the book, stopped them finally. He began to read

*Beloved, my Beloved, when I think that thou wast in the world a year ago, what—*

The hours passed.

"—time I sat alone here in the snow and saw no footprint, heard the silence sink no moment at thy voice, but—"

"Okay, Lindy, that's all for you."

Elaine blurred, faded away. The college cafeteria disintegrated and a lovely autumn afternoon became a bleak February night. Slowly the Stop-Over came into focus, the Stop-Over, and Sam standing on the other side of the bar with the familiar shut-off look in his eyes.

Lindsey shrugged. He drank the rest of his shot and stood up. "To hell with you, Sam," he said, and walked out.

There were other bars.

He stopped in three of them before he started for home. He was in the "soliloquy" stage by then, and the road was far too narrow for his erratic progress. Once a new Buick nearly ran him down. Lindsey stood weaving in the darkness after it had passed, cursing the dwindling taillights, cursing the impulse that had made him leap aside at the last moment.

He had forgotten all about the girl, and he was astonished to see a light in his window and smoke wreathing up from his chimney into the crisp night. He was even more astonished when he entered the house and saw his books scattered all over the floor, with the girl in the midst of them, one of them open on her lap. . . .

Finding the book that contained the star map had been simple, and the star map, while crude, had been accurate enough to enable her to orient herself. On it, the Chalce binary bore the fanciful appellation of Alpha Centauri.

To establish her position and to determine the distance to Chalce, all she had to do was substitute the corresponding sector of her eidetic star map. That required but a moment, and she could have transmitted herself then and there.

But she didn't.

For one thing, there was the vault in her host's mind. No matter how many times she told herself that Lindsey wasn't really her first patient, the relentless fact recurred that, patient or not, his was the most baffling mind she had ever entered, and therefore a challenge to her newly acquired abilities as a psi-therapist.

And then, for another thing, there were the books. They were surprisingly varied, and some of them were on an intellectual plane considerably higher than she had thought possible in so barbaric a culture. She had read them, every one, pausing only to eat and to rebuild the fire, and finally she had come to the one that interested her the most.

Interested, and infuriated her. A book by Albert Schweitzer.

Self-centered savage! she thought. Bargaining his life for nobility. Running off to a little jungle clearing and playing god to a handful of unwashed aborigines. And believing, actually believing in his heart, that his motivation is spiritual!

Her mood had calmed by the time Lindsey arrived, but dregs of her anger still remained. She rechanneled them in his direction. Just look at the chaotic creature! she thought. Permeated, utterly permeated with the distilled grain he imbibes to wash away reality!

She laid the book aside and stood up. "I thought you were going to report me to the police," she said coldly.

"The police," Lindsey said, swaying. He shook his head vaguely. "I didn't," he said. "Somehow I didn't. I don't know why." He looked bewilderedly at the scattered books. "My books—" he began.

She saw the thought in his mind and intercepted his words. "I was only reading them," she said. Did children *mutilate* books in this horrid society?

"But you're so young," Lindsey said. "So young to be reading Shakespeare, Hegel— Schweitzer."

He stepped forward and nearly fell. Sarith saw how bad he was then, and she helped him out of his jacket and over to the chair by the fire. She peeked into the corridor and saw all the cars, and suddenly contrition overcame her.

"Sit down and rest," she said softly. "Are you hungry?"

But Lindsey's head had already fallen back and his eyes had closed. For a shocked moment, Sarith thought he was dead, but then she saw the movement of his chest and heard the hoarse sound of his breathing.

For some time she stood immobile beside the chair, then she went over and sat down on the couch.

I could leave this instant, she thought. With a flick of my mind I could escape from this slovenly hovel, this forsaken psychopath, this jungle clearing. In an instant I could be in the Chalce Clinic and see the lucid walls rising around me, and through the walls the eternal summer landscape stretching away to the pink Sharsh mountains

The native twisted in his chair, moaned softly in his sleep.

Sarith sighed. . . .

At first the over-all pattern of the corridor seemed the same. Just past the entrance there was a blue-eyed image of herself, but sitting in the middle of the living room floor this time instead of sleeping on the couch; and then the sudden curve and all the cars.

Abruptly Sarith saw the man moving among the cars. Washing them. Furiously, desperately, meticulously washing them.

The man was Lindsey.

There were so many cars, and all of them had flecks of blood on them. The new cars were the worst because so many of them were red and you could never really tell if all the blood was off, and you had to

get it off, some way, somehow, because it had no right to be there, it was wrong for it to be there, horribly, shamefully, unforgivably wrong—

Shuddering, Sarith ran past the car sequence and came to the mental images of the girl named Elaine. She did not view them haphazardly this time, but tried to arrange them in their proper chronological order.

As nearly as she could ascertain, the first image was the one where Elaine was sitting in what appeared to be a primitive classroom. There were vague faces all around her, but hers was the only one that stood out: flashing black eyes beneath dark winged brows, rather high cheek bones, cheeks filled with the pinkness of youth, a wide mouth parted in a warm smile. A beautiful face, Sarith had to admit, though by her own standards it seemed old.

The next image had to be the one where Lindsey and Elaine were walking together across a close-cropped sward beneath tall stately trees. In the background were vine-garnished buildings reminiscent of a different, far more dignified age.

And the one after that was probably the one where Elaine was entering what seemed to be a public eating place of some kind, carrying a thin book under her arm. It was a particularly vivid image, for Sarith could see a tiny piece of paper marking one of the pages of the book, and she could even see a small colored leaf on the girl's shoulder—

There were so many images that she could not study each of them individually but had to skim through them, dwelling longest over the ones she considered to be the most essential:

Elaine's face, painstakingly remembered, the lashes of the closed eyes a delicate fringe lightly touching the soft cheeks, the upturned mouth a pale crimson flower about to bloom

Elaine's hand, and a golden band being slipped on one of the fingers—Elaine's profile silhouetted against the background of a tremendous cataract—

Elaine standing in the doorway of a small building, waving— (The building was newly painted, asparkle with white siding and green shutters; nevertheless, Sarith recognized it as the native hut in which she sat.)

Elaine and Lindsey meandering through meadows green with summer

Elaine and Lindsey in a familiar room, packing clothing into leather containers— (This room, Sarith thought. This very room!)

Elaine lying in her bier among wreaths and blankets of flowers, her cheeks no longer pink, but white and cold; her eyes closed forever—

Puzzled, Sarith went through the images again. At first she thought she had missed one, the most essential one of all. But her second survey netted her nothing: there was no image that threw any light whatsoever on the circumstances of Elaine's death.

Suddenly she remembered the vault. Why of course!

She approached it confidently, but her knowledge of the nature of its contents was not enough; she still couldn't open it. For a moment she was furious, and she pounded on the symbolized door with angry psi-fists. Then she calmed herself. She was behaving like a child instead of a graduate psi-therapist.

She remembered her training. There were more ways than one to uncover a repressed experience. When ordinary psi-techniques failed, there was always word association, and the association words, in this instance, were right at her fingertips: Elaine, car, blood, death.

But in order to apply them, she would have to wait till Lindsey awoke.

She withdrew from his mind. His breathing was deep, labored. It would be morning, at least, before awareness returned to that drink-saturated mind.

There was nothing for it but to spend another night in the cramped little room. But in the morning I'll be free, she thought—free to leave this psychopathic jungle and carry on my work among civilized patients with civilized complexes.

But civilized or not, Lindsey's complex intrigued her more than any of those with which she had come in contact during her long internship. Why does he see blood on the cars? she thought. Is it possible that there really is blood on them?

She knew what cars were, of course, by then. She had seen many of them passing on the road during



the day and she had identified them with the images in Lindsey's mind. But she had never seen a real one at close range, so she couldn't be absolutely sure whether Lindsey's preoccupation was normal or psychopathic.

Then she remembered the car that stood in the yard outside. Suddenly curious, she got up from the couch and slipped out of the house. In the east a gibbous moon was rising, and the snow-covered yard was silvered. The car was an ugly blob in the silvered snow, on a line with the corner of the house. Sarith approached it closely. It was quite old, she saw, and it had not been moved for a long time. The weather had been unkind to it; its tires were rotted, and its sides were streaked with rust. One of its doors was open and hanging by one hinge. The interior smelled of mold and decay.

She walked around the car in the moonlight. There was no blood on it as far as she could see.

At least not now. . . .

Sarith slept badly. She twisted and turned on the couch, thinking over and over of the car in the yard. And all through the night she was vaguely conscious of a growing uneasiness, an uneasiness that had nothing to do with the abandoned car and its potential implications but which was related in some way to her physical *status quo*. It wasn't until dawn was a gray ghost in the room that she realized what was wrong.

In her excitement over her first appointment and in her eagerness to get started in her chosen field, she had not only misjudged her co-ordinates, but she had also forgotten to replenish the energy cells of her transit-unit. The tingle around her waist had faded to a faint titillation.

Her first impulse was to transit to Chalce immediately. As long as the unit contained any life at all it would function for so relatively brief a distance. But then her eyes touched the man sleeping in the chair, and she remembered the vault, and she realized that if she did not discover its contents before she left she would be haunted for the rest of her life. And it was out of the question for her to transit to Chalce, replenish her unit, and then return, for once on Chalce her residency would automatically go into effect. While a residency was not restrictive in a planetary sense, it was definitely restrictive in a galactic sense. A resident psi-therapist was on constant call, and except for her biennial sabbatical, was never permitted to transit beyond the Chalcean horizons.

There was still time to learn the nature of the buried experience, but not time enough for word association subtleties. She had to make a direct approach and risk aggravating Lindsey's complex still further. There was no other way.

She got up, dressed, and went over to the chair. She was about to shake Lindsey into wakefulness when she saw the fluttering of his eyelids, detected the slight change in his breathing.

The eyes seemed even bluer than before, and more absorbed in him than ever. Lindsey straightened up in the chair, felt the renewed throb of the endless hangover. He was totally unprepared when the girl said, "Why did you murder your wife, Mr. Lindsey?"

At first his mind fought back the words, refused to assimilate them. But gradually they got through his defenses and stabbed into his consciousness. The room reeled around him, and he raised a trembling hand to his throbbing head. In spite of everything he could do, the present tore ahead and the past came walking arrogantly through the rent. Seven years absconded and the ghastly day returned—

It was the Tuesday following the Labor Day weekend, the Tuesday marking the end of sweet summer—that dreaming honeymoon in the cottage he and Elaine had bought on the outskirts of the little town so that they would always have some faraway place to come to whenever their new posts at the university permitted.

Bitter Tuesday.

Bitter with the aftermath of their first quarrel. . . .

Lindsey threw the suitcases into the trunk of the new Ford, slammed the trunk cover shut, and went around and got into the driver's side. He started up the car and let the motor idle, then he sat there hating Elaine.

Elaine was still in the cottage, smearing silly lipstick on her lips, touching up her cheeks with unnecessary rouge.

Lindsey waited for her to come out, lock the back door, and get into the car. He thought up cruel,

cutting things to say to her, sitting there in the car, the motor idling.

His resentment smoldered in him as the minutes whispered past. She was deliberately making him wait, deliberately trying to show him that she didn't care if they *never* made up.

Well, he didn't care either!

He gripped the steering wheel angrily, raced the motor loudly so that she would hear it and know that he didn't care.

Abruptly the front door slammed, and the thought that she had decided to go out the front way when she knew perfectly well that he was waiting at the back was a catalyst to his anger. He shifted into reverse and brought his foot down hard on the accelerator—harder than he had intended. The car shot back wildly. His desperate foot found the brake and bore down hard, but the scream had already shattered the September day by then, and the sickening lurch of the car as the back wheels passed over the soft, beloved body was already an excruciating memory.

And then he was out of the car and running around to where Elaine lay crumpled on the gravel, and seeing the startled disbelief on her gray and dying face and the accusation in her dilated eyes, and then seeing the drops of red on the gleaming fender and the crimson smear on the white sidewalls of the tire. .

Lindsey was back in the present. He got up from the chair and found his way out of the room and into the morning. The wind was from the south, and the snow was melting, and the car was sitting in the drive the way he had left it seven years ago. There was no corpse beneath it now, and the blood had long since washed away. And yet it was still there—

He got to the road somehow, and he walked down the middle of the road, praying that a car would come. Come swiftly. Mercifully—

So now you know, Sarith thought. Now you can go to Chalce.

You can go to Chalce and take up your residency. You can forget all about this miserable savage who imagines he killed his mate because her eyes accused him when she died.

Who washes imaginary blood off cars as part of a self-inflicted penance and who drinks himself into insensibility because the penance is too much for him to bear.

Who wanders the dim trails of his jungle civilization hoping that a careless driver will perform the task which he cannot find the courage to perform for himself.

Who is a victim of his own sensitivity—a poor wanderer in this jungle civilization wherein the physician does not come to the maimed but expects the maimed to come to him.

Except for one physician; only one. And perhaps he is noble, after all, this jungle doctor in his primitive African province, writing his *Philosophy of Civilization* in his corrugated iron hut, playing his Bach in stolen moments, administering to the strangulated hernias of his flock

Now you can go, Sarith. Now.

To the clean, chaste corridors of the Chalce Clinic and the clean, uncomplicated minds of the federated patients whom the peripatetic therapists have deemed in need of institutional care.

And you can begin the noble task of alleviating their picayune frustrations, of reanimating their sexual desires, of refurbishing their egos—He picked me up, out of the snow, and carried me to the crude hovel he calls his home. He was concerned about me. I was a living creature, and despite the pain of his years and the horrid apathy of his days he was concerned with the life in me.

This sick savage. This jungle wanderer.

And what a vast jungle it must be! Far larger than Lambaréné. There must be many Lindseys wandering its dim trails, maimed of mind and spirit. Many many Lindseys. And no jungle doctor to ease their dumb pain—

Now you can go, Sarith. *Now!*

Lindsey had never seen so much blood on a car. He scrubbed and scrubbed, but it wouldn't come off. Presently Nick came over to where Lindsey was kneeling at the back left fender of the Chrysler. "What's the matter with you?" Nick said. "You should have finished that car a long time ago!"

Lindsey didn't say anything. Nick didn't understand about the blood. No one understood about the blood, about how it was always there, Elaine's blood, and you had to wash it away, you couldn't leave it

there, it was wrong to leave it there, horribly, shamefully, unforgivably wrong. If someone would understand, perhaps there wouldn't be so much blood, perhaps there wouldn't be any blood at all—

There was so much blood this morning that it was too much for one person to wash away. He scrubbed furiously—

"Hey!" Nick shouted. "Are you crazy? You'll ruin the finish! You'll—"

Nick's voice floundered, trailed away. Lindsey saw the exotic sandals then, and the slender legs rising above them. When Sarith knelt beside him her face seemed older somehow, and there was a quality in her eyes that made him think of Christ.

She took the sponge from his bleeding hands.

"Let me help you," she said.