

/* /* XML end]]*/

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Indirection, by Everett B. Cole

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

Title: Indirection

Author: Everett B. Cole

Illustrator: Freas

Release Date: November 5, 2007 [EBook #23339]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK INDIRECTION ***

Produced by Greg Weeks, Stephen Blundell and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

INDIRECTION

The best way to keep a secret is to publish it in a quite unbelievable form—and insist that it is the truth.

BY EVERETT B. COLE

Illustrated by Freas

Elwar Forell leaned back in his chair, looking about the small dining salon. The usual couples were there, he noticed. Of course, the faces were different from those of last evening, but the poses were similar. And the people were there for the same reasons. They were enjoying the food and drinks, just as many others had enjoyed them before. But like all those others, their greater enjoyment was in the company of one another. Forell glanced at the vacant chair across the table from him and sighed.

It would be nice, he thought, if— But any arrangement involving a permanent companion would be hardly practical under his circumstances. After all, prudence dictated limits.

He picked up his cup and drained it, then leaned back and beckoned the waiter over.

"The reckoning, please," he ordered.

He looked again at the letter on the table before him, then folded it and put it in his pocket. It was well, he thought. His latest book of fairy tales and fantasy had enjoyed good acceptance. And the check in the letter had been of satisfactory size. He smiled to himself. There were compensations in this job of his. It seemed to be profitable to have a purpose other than the obvious and usual one.

He paid his bill and left the restaurant, to walk slowly along the street, enjoying the mild, spring air.

As he passed a sidewalk café, a man beckoned from one of the tables.

"Oh, Forell," he called. "I was hoping I'd see you this evening." He held up a book.

"Just finished your 'Tales of the Sorcerers,'" he added. "Some of those yarns of yours seem almost real."

Elwar Forell nodded. They should, he thought. Factual material, however disguised, often shines through its fictional background. And he had an inexhaustible source of material, drawn from many sources. He twisted his face into a gratified smile.

"That's my objective," he said aloud. "I do all in my power to place the reader inside the story."

Charo Andorra nodded. "It's the secret of good fiction, I know," he admitted, "and every storyteller tries to do it. But I seem to see more than that in your stuff. There's an almost believable pattern." He hesitated. "You know, while I'm reading it, I can almost see beings of superior powers walking the earth. And sometimes, I visualize us working with them." He laughed shortly.

"Of course, I may be more credulous and imaginative than most. Probably why I'm a critic. And I really should know better." He looked down at the book in his hands.

"But that stuff of yours can be mighty convincing." He tilted his head. "Somehow, I can't help but look at some of the old legends—and some of the things that have happened in more recent years, too. Can't help but wonder if we actually are babes of the cosmos, and if we haven't been visited and watched by some form of extra-planetary life at one time or another."

Forell looked closely at his friend. Andorra, he knew, was a clear thinker in his own right. And he just might start a serious analysis—and publish it. He grimaced. It wasn't time for that, he knew. Many years must pass before it would be time.

He placed a hand on the back of Andorra's chair, remembering the words of one of the teachers.

"Remember, Elwar," he had been told, "your objective is clear, but your methods must be most indirect—and even unclear. Some things you must obscure in a mass of obviously imaginative detail, while you bring others to the fore. You must hint. You must suggest. You should never fully explain or deny. And you must never be guilty of definite, direct falsehood.

"There may come a time when you will be directly questioned—and when discovery of your real background and purpose seems imminent, and you will have to take positive action. For such an eventuality, I cannot outline any steps, or even any definite plan of action, since I neither fully understand many of the factors involved, nor have any way of knowing the circumstances which may arise. You'll have to prepare yourself for almost anything, always keeping in mind the peculiarities and capabilities of your own people."

It looked as though the time might have come. If Andorra, a clever, influential critic, should guess at the real background and the sources of the Forell tales, and if he should misunderstand the motives behind

those tales, he would probably publish his thoughts. And those thoughts would be widely read. Many would smile as they read and regard the thing as a hoax. But others might start their own analyses. And some of those might come to highly undesirable conclusions and cause undesirable, even disastrous, reactions. It would be many generations before clear explanations could be made and definite principles outlined without causing misunderstanding and serious damage. The Forell tales were evasive and preparatory as well as vaguely instructive.

He recovered his self-discipline and waved his hand negligently.

"You know, Charo," he said laughingly, "I've been thinking along similar lines for a long while. Of course, you know I must have built up some sort of fantasy world to base my yarns on?"

Andorra nodded. "That's obvious. I've been wondering about some of your basic theory. Like to see your notes some time."

Forell spread his hands. "You're quite welcome to look them over," he said. "Come on up to my rooms now." He smiled. "As a matter of fact, I've been doing a little extension on my dream world. Built up a little sketch a while ago, and I'm not just sure what to do with it."

As they entered the study, Forell walked across to his desk. He fumbled for a few seconds under the

desk, then opened a drawer. For a moment, he paused, looking inside, then pulled out a thin folder. Again, he hesitated. At last, he picked a small, metallic object from the drawer and held it in his left hand.

"Might need this," he told himself. "If I'm wrong, it'll take a sector patrolman to straighten out the mess. And I could be wrong—two ways."

Casually, he placed his left hand in his pocket, then he turned toward Andorra, holding out the folder.

"Here," he said. "See what you think of this one."

Andorra opened the folder, taking out a few sheets of paper. He read for a moment, then looked up quizzically.

"A little different from your usual style, isn't it?"

Forell nodded, watching the man tensely. "I'm trying something new," he said. "Go ahead and read it, then tell me what you think."

He busied himself with a bottle and glasses.

INFORMAL MEMO

130-263

From: Explorations Officer, Sector Nine To: Ecological Officer Subject: Incident Report

Enclosed is the file on that recent occurrence on Planet 3-G3-9/4871, consisting of the certificates and statements of the various officers and guardsmen concerned, together with a digest of the interrogation of Elwar Forell, a young planetary native, who appears to have been the instigator.

It seems to me that something is seriously wrong with our system of operation, at least on the subject planet. After all, our operations have the purpose of research and observation, with a view to protection and development. Certainly, we cannot create chaos. And knowledge of our existence by very young cultures would certainly cause just that. We've got to clear this up in a hurry. The Elder Galactics are most certain to be unhappy about it in any event, and I don't like to make them unhappy.

Obviously, there was a chain of errors, and some of our people concerned will have to be reassigned for further training, but that's just the beginning. I've recalled all the observers from this planet, pending reorganization, and we've got to come up with an answer that'll prevent further occurrences of this nature, as well as covering this affair on the planet concerned.

I realize that the situation has some of the elements of comedy, and I presume that it will eventually be regarded with considerable amusement, but right at the moment, my sense of humor is working very poorly.

I have a few ideas of my own, but would like to have your recommendations and those of other section officers before I make any final decision or report. I am calling a conference on this incident at 280.1000, so make a full investigation on this, and give me some practical recommendation as soon as possible.

CIJORN

6 enclosures

STATEMENT

I, Florand Anremdor, am assigned to the Communications Branch, Exploratory Section, Sector Nine.

At 261.0196, I was on duty in the emergency communications room at Increment Four. A call came in from Resident Station number fourteen, Planet 3-G3-9/4871, requesting emergency condensation over the immediate station area. Co-ordinates were not given and I checked the planetary co-ordinates with the call sign and the Communications List. I added these to the message and forwarded the request to the Patrol Duty Officer for his action.

There was no visual on the call, but the voice sounded urgent. I relayed the request without requiring special authentication, since the station was precisely on the correct settings, no inimical culture is known to be operating in this sector, and the coded call was correct. At the time, I had no way of suspecting that this was not a genuine emergency call.

Florand Anremdor Comm. 1/c

CERTIFICATE

I, Captain Binkar Morancos, am assigned to the 334th Vector, which is presently under the orders of the Commander, Sector Nine.

I was assigned as Sector Patrol Duty Officer at 261.0200, when a message was relayed from Increment Four, requesting emergency condensation on a planet in that increment. I checked the co-ordinates and data furnished, consulted the situation chart, and instructed Cruiser P-4730, Captain Klorantel commanding, to carry out the mission.

Since the message came through normal channels, I had no doubt as to its authenticity, and treated it as routine. I felt that the cruiser commander could deal with the matter at his discretion.

Binkar Morancos Capt. StG(C)

CERTIFICATE

I, Captain Corrondao Klorantel, am in command of the Stellar Guard Cruiser *Myloren*, number P-4730. I am assigned to duty with the 334th Vector, which is operating in Sector Nine.

The *Myloren* was on routine patrol in the Fourth Increment at 261.0203, when a message was received from Sector Headquarters, giving co-ordinates on Planet 3-G3-9/4871, with a request for emergency condensation. I proceeded to the subject planet and took position outside the atmosphere. Visual checks failed to show any emergency condition on the surface, though a burned-out area was noted in the forest a short distance to the planetary south of the station concerned. A call was made to the resident station, requesting clarification of the request, and the answer proved to be unsatisfactory.

There was no visual transmission, and the voice was strongly accented. The message gave insufficient data for action, contained no identification, and was in improper form for station-to-ship contact. I decided to make contact by other means, and shifted my secondary communicator to the guardsman's personal settings, requesting further information, suitable identification, and confirmation of the request. Guardsman Jaeger immediately informed me that the call was spurious, stating that he was away from his station, and that he would return immediately. During the conversation, I noted that full condensation was taking place to atmospheric limits.

I called Auxiliary, and Technician Melran stated that his control circuits were inoperative and that he was tracing the difficulty. He cleared the trouble, but condensation had already been established and

precipitation had commenced. I ordered re-absorption, which was started as soon as repairs had been accomplished.

At the request of Guardsman Jaeger, we stood by to render aid if necessary, maintaining contact with his station. At 0572, Jaeger requested immediate evacuation for himself and for one other person. I entered atmosphere, made planetfall with nullified visibility, and took off the guardsman and a young native. During the evacuation, I noted a number of natives armed with various implements, who were attempting to break their way into the station. Guardsman Jaeger fired his demolitions as he left, firing the screen generator with his last flare. For a few minutes, the natives fell back before the flames, but they were entering the station by the time we cleared the planet. It is believed that the installation was completely destroyed.

Corrondao Klorantel Capt. StG(C) Commanding P-4730

STATEMENT

I, Danaeo Melran, am assigned to the Patrol Cruiser *Myloren*, number P-4730, for duty.

At 261.0204, I was on duty in Auxiliary Equipment when Captain Klorantel called, informing me that a request had come in for emergency condensation. He told me to set up and await execution order. I preset two forward radiators for forty kilometers at low condensation, with a three kilometer radius at surface. I then put the controls on automatic trigger, notified the captain, and went on with my normal duties. At 0221, we came out of trans-light, and I adjusted my equipment for slow-drive operation.

At 0223, my indicators showed activity on the forward radiators. I checked and discovered that full power was being applied. Attempts to override the automatics were unsuccessful, and while I was attempting to clear the trouble, the captain called again, saying that the request was false, and asking why I had turned the radiators on. I told him that the controls were jammed, and he instructed me to make repairs and set up re-absorption.

I discovered a short between the automatic trigger and the ship's secondary communication antenna. After clearing this, I found trouble in the control section of the condensation driver. The automatic trigger had become fused, and the control paths were shorted to full-drive throughout. The sub-assemblies were replaced and trouble cleared by 0300. I then set up re-absorption as ordered.

Danaeo Melran Eq Tech 3/c

STATEMENT

I, Franz Jaeger, am Resident Guardsman at Station Fourteen, Planet 3-G3-9/4871.

I have been assigned to my station for eight planetary years for survey and observation duty. During the past five years, I have employed Elwar Forell, the son of a local peasant, to keep the living quarters clean and to do general work about the station. I have never discussed the possibilities of extra-planetary civilization with him, and I have been careful to exclude him from knowledge of my technical equipment, which I have kept in a secure room in accordance with regulations. I have presented myself to him, as well as to all the villagers in my area, as a scholar, tired of city life, and desirous of a quiet existence.

There has been a drought in part of my area for the entire season. We have suffered from one forest fire and there is a strong possibility of others. Crops are doing very badly, and the peasants have been complaining bitterly. This is not an unheard-of situation, but it has caused considerable discomfort and worry, since there is a very definite threat of famine. There have been numerous attempts to obtain rain by occult means, and I have been personally approached on the matter. For some time, the villagers in

the immediate area of the station have regarded me as a sorcerer, and I have been asked to cast a spell to cause rain.

I had considered a request for light condensation, but had hesitated to make such a request, since I felt that rain closely following the villagers' petition to me would confirm their supernatural beliefs, which I have attempted to discourage.

At 261.0223, I was on a routine tour of my area. I received a call from the cruiser *Myloren*, Captain Klorantel commanding, asking for further information on a request for emergency condensation. I informed him that I had made no such request, adding that a light rain would be desirable if he were in position and prepared to radiate.

During the conversation with Captain Klorantel, I noted that the sky was darkening. There were several flashes of lightning, and I felt the signs of imminent, heavy rain. I promptly started back to my station.

Upon my arrival, I discovered that Elwar had managed to open the communications room and had been using the equipment. He was extremely frightened, and made incoherent remarks about talking to a demon. When I attempted to question him as to how he had opened the room, and where he had learned the operation of the communications equipment, he became hysterical and I could find out precisely nothing.

By this time, it was raining violently. There was a high wind. Several trees had been blown down and lightning was frequent. A flood was starting down the mountainside toward the village, threatening severe damage. It was quite apparent that crops, such as they were, would be almost completely destroyed.

At the time, I could do little to remedy the situation. I re-established contact with the cruiser, informed Captain Klorantel of the situation, and requested that he stand by. I then turned on my viewsphere to keep watch on the village from the communications room. Since Elwar had been in the room on several previous occasions, I saw no reason for excluding him. On the contrary, I thought it would be advisable to keep him with me, since I felt that he would be seriously injured if he were turned loose in the village. I do not believe he would have survived the fury of the villagers, who had taken shelter, and were watching the destruction of their crops.

The flood had become a torrent, which overflowed the banks of the village brook, tore at the bridge, and swept through the lanes. In the fields, grain was beaten into the ground and it was clear that the villagers would have little or no harvest to celebrate during the approaching festival. The wind grew in force, lashing at the tall festival pole, which bent, crashed down in the village square, and partially demolished the front of the inn.

During this period, there was no human activity, since everyone had taken what shelter he could find.

At 0448, the rain slackened, the wind died down, and people started gathering in the square. For a time, they milled about, wading through the ebbing flood. They examined the damage, then they gathered in groups, talking earnestly.

The dry wind came up at 0510, and by 0550, the entire village was on the march toward my station. Their intentions were quite easy to determine. They were armed with pitchforks, scythes, axes, and other tools which could be converted to offensive use. I established a protective screen, but realized that to set up a permanent defense would be impractical and even harmful. I therefore called the cruiser, requesting evacuation for myself and for young Forell. Prior to evacuation, I demolished all my fixed equipment, so that the only things left for the villagers to find when they entered the station were damaged remains of those things normal for a recluse scholar of their era.

Franz Jaeger Observer 2/c

INFORMAL MEMO

130-265

From: Evaluations Officer To: Explorations Officer Subject: Interrogation

Enclosed is a digest of the interrogation of one, Elwar Forell, who was evacuated from forty-eight seventy-one, in company with Guardsman Jaeger. This boy was abjectly terrified and had to be calmed several times during questioning. He was pitifully hysterical when recalling his conversation with Captain Klorantel, who, you will remember, is a capriform humanoid.

The subject appears to be an intelligent specimen of his race, and when he had conquered his hysteria, was extremely co-operative, showing active interest in his surroundings. I believe he would be able to assimilate training, and would make a valuable addition to the Stellar Guard. I recommend his retention and training.

If Elwar is a typical "son of a simple peasant," and if the planet from which he comes has any considerable number of "simple peasants" with sons like him, I can foresee some strangely interesting problems in connection with further dealings on that planet.

FONZEC

1 enclosure

DIGEST

Interrogation of Elwar Forell, native of Planet 3-G3-9/4871.

"My Masters, I did mean no harm, but only good. I have long known that my master was possessed of power denied to most men. When I was apprenticed to him five years ago, I thought I would one day learn some of the dark secrets of the hidden worlds, but never did my master mention aught of those secrets he so surely knew. He taught me only of those things known to the scholars. He told me of reading, of writing, and of ciphering, and taught me many facts of our world which are known to the learned. I wished to know of many other things, but of these he was silent. Even so, I am grateful for his teachings, for how else could the son of a simple peasant gain the knowledge of the scholars?"

"I saw that my master often repaired to a room which I was never allowed to enter. This room he cleaned himself. And he always entered in the greatest of secrecy, being quite cross with me when I once betrayed curiosity. I remained curious, however, and fell at last to watching him in secret as he opened the door.

"He slid aside a secret panel, then turned a wheel this way and that, finally pushing a handle. I watched, at last learning to what numbers he did turn the wheel, and how he pushed the handle. During his absences, I went sometimes to that room of magic, and I read the books of power, though there was much I could not read, since much of the writing was in strange tongues and I dared not ask my master the meanings of the strange words. But for his own convenience, my master had written many instructions plainly. And these, I read.

"I did learn that there were powers beyond those of men. I learned that these strange instruments on the table did have strange ability to call forth demons and spirits, but never until that day did I dare touch other than the books and papers. And those I took great care to restore to their original condition.

"For three months past, my father's land and the fields of his neighbors have been dry. During this time, there has been no rain, nor hint of rain, and the peasants have cried out for relief. They have appealed even to my master, who has told them that he has no strange powers—that he can do naught to call up rain. But they did not believe him, nor did I, Elwar, who knew better than this. I had seen the books of power, and I knew the demons could cause the skies to deliver water if rightly asked. So, I visited the room of magic upon the occasions of my master's absence. And I tried to decipher his writings that I might find the means to ask for the skies to open. Always, when I felt my master's presence approaching, I left the room, taking care to properly lock the door and to hide all evidence of my entry.

"On that day of direful events, I found a paper in my master's hand. It mentioned fire in the forests. It mentioned rain. And it had on it words of power.

"For a time, I practiced the strange syllables. Many times did I speak them aloud, then I pressed the bosses on the table, as shown by one of the books. There was a light. Then, the great ball glowed with color, to show me the first demon.

"He spoke. And I conquered my fear, to repeat the syllables I had labored to learn. Once again, he spoke, and I could not understand him. I could think of nothing but to say again those words which I hoped would bring the rain we so badly needed. I took my hands from the bosses and stood, wondering what would happen. The ball became dark.

"I stood, waiting. And nothing happened. Finally, thinking nothing was to occur, I turned and started to leave the room. Then, a great voice spoke. Again, the wall was alight. Within it was a fearsome demon who glared at me ferociously and demanded something in that tongue of power. I could not think. I stood, trembling fearfully. And he spoke again. Then did I repeat again the words I had learned, and ran from the room.

"It became dark. The lightnings flashed, and the rain fell, and my master came, but not as I had ever seen him before. He did not walk from the forest as was his wont, but appeared before me from the air. I started back in fright, for now I was certain beyond doubt that he was a man of great wizardry. I thought he would beat me, or possibly cast me under a spell.

"Never has he beaten me, always saying that it was wrong to beat an apprentice, and that those who so did were lacking in their senses. And this is but another proof of his sorcery, for who, other than a sorcerer, could handle his servants without beating them?

"I dared do nothing other than to tell him of my misdoing, and he rushed to the room, taking me with him. He pressed the bosses, turning one that I had not known of, and the demon appeared again and talked with him. Then, my master made strange passes about the instruments and the village was shown in the ball.

"At last the rain stopped. A wind blew—hot and dry, as from the pit—and the people came and did try by violence to enter. But they could not. At last, the great machine came, and though we could not at first see it, we entered and were carried away through the sky.

"The people watched the house burn, then entered, to scatter the ashes.

"And I am here, and afraid."

Doer Kweiros flipped off the playback and gazed at the unresponsive wall. He rubbed the back of his head, looked at the viewsphere, then checked the playback index and tapped the rewind.

"Oh, me," he complained sorrowfully, "how do we get into these things?"

He looked toward the communicator controls unhappily, then reached out and dialed a number. The sphere lit and an alert face looked at him inquiringly.

"How is that Forell boy?"

"Soaking up information like a sponge, sir."

Kweiros nodded. "Gathered he might," he remarked. "Send him up here, will you? And have Jaeger come with him."

"Yes, sir."

Kweiros snapped the communicator off, sat back to drum idly on his desk, then got up and walked over to his master file control board. He glanced at the index, then punched out a sequence on the buttons. There was a subdued hum and a door opened. Kweiros reached into the compartment, to take out several tape reels. He glanced at them, nodded, and went back to the desk, where he spread them out and looked from one to another. Finally, he selected one of the smaller reels and started to thread it into the playback.

There was a light tap on the door and he looked up.

"So soon? Come in."

A tall, sharp-featured guardsman entered and stood at attention. Beside him was a boy, who looked curiously and a little fearfully at the officer, who waved to chairs.

"Sit down, both of you. I'm not going to claw you. Just want to go over a few things. I've some ideas, but I want to be sure of a couple of points." The captain glanced at the reels before him.

"One thing puzzles me, Jaeger. Why did you have notes in the planetary language in your communications room?"

Jaeger stirred uneasily. "I started doing that some time ago, sir," he explained. "You see, their language is quite dissimilar to either my own or to Galactica, and I have yet to learn to think in it. I wanted to avoid any possibility of lapsing away from it, so I translated my instructions and notes, hoping to keep myself constantly reminded to refrain from using Galactica at any time." He spread his hands. "I suppose—"

Kweiros waved. "Logical, I presume," he admitted. "Anyway, that's done, and we can't do much about it now. Now for another thing." He glanced at the tape reels. "I noticed that the villagers in your area regarded you as a sorcerer. What cause did they have to form such an opinion?"

"None, sir, that I know of." Jaeger shook his head.

Kweiros looked at the boy. "Elwar?"

"Why, all the village knew it, Master." The boy shook his head. "One had but to be near Master Jaeger for a time, and he could feel the power, just as I can feel it now." He shook his head again. "But it is very strong, Master. You must be one of the ones of truly great power."

Kweiros looked speculatively at Jaeger.

"I understood they were nontelepaths. All the reports agree on that."

"Definitely, sir, they are. They're absolutely mute. Not a trace of radiation, even when they're close. And they don't receive. You can try it now, sir. It's just like punching into space itself. No resistance, no reflection, just nothing."

"Shield?"

"No, sir. Just no indication. Makes me feel as though I were in free space with a dead drive."

Kweiros looked for a moment at Jaeger, then sent out a probing thought, searching for some indication of mental activity from the boy. But there was nothing. It wasn't anything like a shield, he thought. It seemed more like an infinite baffle.

But there was some reaction. The boy shrank back in terror.

"Please, Master," he begged. "Do not place me under enchantment." He held up his hands in a peculiar gesture.

"What made you do that?" Kweiros raised a hand slowly, palm out. "I have no intention of harming you."

"But I could feel you, trying to cast me under a spell."

"You ... felt me?"

"To be sure, Master, just as I have felt the same power from my master, Jaeger. But this was far stronger. It hurt. And it seemed as though you wanted me to do something."

Kweiros nodded. "I think I'm getting an idea," he remarked. "And it scares me a little. They're not really nontelepathic, any more than the Kierawelans, for example, are nonvocal. I think we've got something here that's almost unique in the galaxy." He rubbed his neck. "Excuse me a few minutes. I want to check something in one of these tapes."

Jaeger nodded and leaned back in his chair, looking curiously at the boy beside him, then back at his superior, who had selected a tape reel. He threaded it into the playing heads, put on a headband, and snapped a switch. Jaeger and the boy watched as Kweiros leaned back.

The officer's face became vacant, then twisted, seeming to reflect painful mental effort. Slowly, he leaned forward again, touching another switch. Then, he sank back, to concentrate on his thoughts.

Jaeger looked again at the boy, who was sitting tensely, his hands gripping the arms of his chair, his eyes fastened fearfully on the officer before him. As Jaeger watched, Elwar half rose from his chair, then sank back, his face appearing to mirror Kweiros' efforts.

At last, Kweiros sat up. Shakily, he removed his headband and snapped the playback off.

"Long time since I checked that tape," he said. "Pretty rugged stuff, and highly speculative. Always gives me a headache." He shook his head as he looked at Elwar.

"And this makes it even worse. It was bad enough as pure speculation, but we've got something real here. Something rough. For one thing, we have got a planet where no one but native operatives stand a chance of working. For another we—"

He cupped his chin in his hands and examined Elwar closely.

"Do you really want to learn the secrets you looked for in the books, youngster? Do you still want the secrets you first thought you might learn?"

The boy seemed to withdraw a little. "I have a great fear," he admitted tremulously.

"You haven't been injured or mistreated, have you?"

"No, Master, but—"

Elwar looked toward the door.

"And you won't be," he was told reassuringly. "Now you just go ahead on back to your quarters."

As the door closed, Kweiros turned to Jaeger.

"Think we'll put you on special assignment. For the next few cycles, you'll act as a private tutor. Then you can go back to Main Base with Elwar while they give him his training."

Jaeger raised his eyebrows. "Yes, sir," he said doubtfully. "You think the boy will develop?"

Kweiros nodded. "I'm quite sure of it," he said. "And he's got a big job ahead of him. He may be instrumental in preventing a major disaster." He waved at the tape reels.

"I got that little tape out just on an off chance," he added. "Didn't really expect to find anything, but—" He flipped his hands out. "Anyway, I pulled it." He leaned forward, looking at Jaeger.

"We may have run into a second, or even third growth culture," he said slowly. "Once, before some ancient war of destruction, the people of this planet might have been normally telepathic." He closed his eyes for an instant. "Possibly they were unable to use their telepathic power. And equally possibly, they could have had a highly developed mechanical civilization. Something went wrong." He waved at the tape reel.

"In this reconstruction, there's an hypothesis on just such a situation. Here, a race reaches high development and wrecks itself—leaving no trace of its accomplishments. Growth starts over from the most meager of beginnings. Survival becomes a matter of the most bitter conflict, with everyone becoming a hunter and being hunted in his turn. In this situation, detection of an enemy becomes vital." He grinned wryly. "Can you imagine what would happen to someone who radiated his thoughts?"

Jaeger ran a finger over his lips. "He'd be easy to locate," he mused. "And he'd have a hard time evading an enemy."

"Precisely." Kweiros nodded. "And he'd never be able to approach his prey. In short, he'd fail to survive. Complete telepathic blankness would have a high survival value. But an ability to detect mental radiation would still be a big help." He waved a hand.

"So, a race like this one could evolve. And the author of this tape extrapolated from there. A normal telepathic reception will be accompanied, by a slight feedback. A completely black body, however, will neither radiate nor feed back. It merely absorbs energy and, unless it's super-imposed on a reflective background, it leaves no trace. Since nothing in nature other than a telepathic mind can reflect telepathy, no background would survive for long." He frowned a little.

"Of course, no mind we are familiar with could act as a telepathically black body, but this author hypothesized a race that could do just that—plus. There's a further hypothesis of an ability to detect and localize radiations as such, without bothering to resolve them."

"Sounds like just what we have here," Jaeger admitted.

"It does, doesn't it?" Kweiros nodded. "And there's a further extrapolation. Some of the members or the elder races have speculated on a sort of second-order telepathy, undetectable to the normal telepath, but capable of noting normal radiation. And some of the speculations seem to make sense—though they're a little confusing. If you don't have a specific sense, it's difficult to visualize it, or even to speculate on its presence." He drew a deep breath.

"That leads us into a real problem. Our people roamed around this planet for several cycles this time. And there may have been others before us, who didn't record their visits, other than in the minds and legends of the natives. And there may be other legends from that other, older culture." He shrugged.

"We picked up what we could on the culture, but we didn't get the full story on them. And we've

probably left a thousand legends behind us, including that beautiful mess at your station." He grinned.

"Right now, their folklore is loaded with sorcerers, warlocks, wizards, and what not. After all, whatever their past is, they're primitive now. So those stories are going to grow and continue. Eventually, long before they really develop a stabilized ethic, someone's going to collate that whole mess. And do you know what he'll come up with?"

"Us?"

"Us, yes. Us, in a distorted form." Kweiros nodded emphatically. "They will come to a full realization that there are advanced entities running around the cosmos, entities that have all kinds of mysterious powers. And they'll invent still more powers and characteristics—mostly bad." He spread his hands, then laid them on the desk in front of him.

"That way, they could develop a hopeless, planet-wide trauma—a sort of super inferiority complex—and they could contract on themselves, devote their time to an intensive study of demonology, and very possibly come apart at the seams.

"Or, they could do something else. I was watching Elwar while I was checking that tape. Did you notice anything peculiar?"

"He seemed disturbed."

"As though he were sensing my thoughts?"

"Something like that. But—"

Kweiros nodded. "But I had a shield up. You could detect no trace of mental action. Right?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's what I thought." Kweiros shook his head and looked closely at Jaeger.

"Can you imagine," he added, "a primitive race with the power to detect a galactic by his thoughts? And can you imagine that power developing until that detection is possible at interstellar ranges, with members of that race being able to pick up faint impressions from received thoughts—distorted impressions? And can you imagine that same race, ignorant of the humanic equations, devoid of a stable ethic, superstitious, distrustful and fearful of advanced entities? They would be undetectable by normal telepathic means, you know. And suppose they were disposed to destroy what they could not understand." He frowned.

Jaeger looked back at him, his eyes becoming wide. Suddenly, his gaze defocused and he looked aside, to stare unseeingly at the floor.

"Something's got to be done, sir," he said reluctantly.

Kweiros nodded. "Something's got to be done," he agreed. "Of course, there's another side to the picture. If this race develops and learns, they'll be just as valuable to the galaxy as they would otherwise be dangerous." He looked toward the door.

"And our boy out there is one of the few who can help in this situation. He's going to have to work out counter stories—amusing stories—about all those magical creatures his people tell about.

He's going to have to hint at the possibilities of close co-ordination and co-operation between members of his own species. And he's going to have to suggest the possibility of friendly co-operation between his species and others." He drew a deep breath.

"And he's going to have to do all this without taking any risk of exposing the existence of other, more advanced species in the galaxy." He brushed a hand across his head, then pressed the back of his neck, kneading the skin.

"These stories of his, he'll have to publish. He'll have to get them circulated all over his planet, if he can. Possibly we can give him some indirect help, but he's going to have to carry a good share of the load.

"He knows his own people as we could never hope to. And he'll have to be thoroughly educated, so he can say what he wants to. And he'll have to be fully aware of the humanic equations and all their connotations. If he's to have any direct help, he'll have to choose his helpers from among his own people, and he'll have to choose carefully." Kweiros thrust at his temple with the heel of a hand, then shook his head violently.

"Somehow, he's going to have to accentuate any legends he may be able to find which present a favorable light on co-ordination and co-operation, and he'll have to invent more. And all those other legends—the ones which treat of superstition and destructive force—will have to be reduced to the realm of the storybook, submerged under a layer of amused condemnation, and kept there. All these things, that youngster is going to have to do.

"It's your job to help teach him."

Forell watched his friend closely as the critic laid aside the last page.

Andorra sat for a moment, his head cocked in thought. Then, he picked up the last page and looked at it again. Finally, he laid the sheet aside. He looked at his friend with a wry smile, then picked up his wineglass, looking at it quizzically.

"Do you always give your own name to one of your characters?"

Forell's grip tightened on the small object in his hand.

"Oh, sure," he said. "Gives me a better identification. If I can get into the story, it's easier to draw the reader in." He forced a casual smile. "I'll change that name later, of course."

"I see what you mean." Andorra sipped from his glass.

"You know," he added, "a couple of hours ago, I was almost ready to get excited about the idea of a cosmos full of super beings. And I even might have dreamed up something like this myself—and more than half believed it." He shook his head.

"But when a fantasist like yourself comes up with it, and makes it look so nicely possible, the idea almost looks foolish. After all, Elwar, if you actually were the guy in that little sketch of yours, you'd hardly be asking me to read it, now would you?" He looked down at the papers, then raised his head again, frowning.

"He'll have to choose his helpers from among his own people," he quoted. "All these things, that youngster is going to have to do." He sipped again from his glass, keeping a searching gaze on his friend.

"And on the other hand, if your story here should be true, you just might be asking me to read it, for one reason or another." He raised his glass, examining the bright liquid within it.

Elwar tensed, his hand coming part way out of his pocket.

Suddenly, Andorra set the glass down and leaned forward, hands gripping his knees.

"Tell me, Elwar," he begged, "this isn't a hoax, is it? Surely, no one could be so warped as to present a friend with something like this and then to laugh it off?"

Forell drew a deep breath and examined his companion closely. At last, his left hand relaxed a little.

"It's no hoax," he admitted.

Andorra sighed and leaned back.

"And you can use help? You're asking me?"

He paused, waiting as Forell nodded, then spread his hands.

"You know," he said, "it shouldn't take me too long to fix it so I would not be missed too much for a few years." He looked at the wall.

"It must be quite a training course."

THE END

Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from *Astounding Science Fiction* January 1956. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Minor spelling and typographical errors have been corrected without note.

End of the Project Gutenberg EBook of Indirection, by Everett B. Cole

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK INDIRECTION ***

***** This file should be named 23339-h.htm or 23339-h.zip *****
This and all associated files of various formats will be found in:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/2/3/3/3/23339/>

Produced by Greg Weeks, Stephen Blundell and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

Updated editions will replace the previous one--the old editions
will be renamed.

Creating the works from public domain print editions means that no
one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation
(and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without
permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules,
set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to
copying and distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works to

protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away--you may do practically ANYTHING with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

*** START: FULL LICENSE ***

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg-tm License (available with this file or online at <http://gutenberg.org/license>).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works by

freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg-tm License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any

word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic

works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH F3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at <http://www.pglaf.org>.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at <http://pglaf.org/fundraising>. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at <http://pglaf.org>

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations

where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit <http://pglaf.org>

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: <http://pglaf.org/donate>

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

<http://www.gutenberg.org>

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.