

## *Wish Upon a Star*

*. . . all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena; . . . the things which we intuit are not in themselves the same as our representations of them in intuition, nor are their relations in themselves so constituted as they appear to us; and . . . if we take away the subject, or even only the subjective constitution of our senses in general, then not only the nature and relations of objects in space and time, but even space and time themselves disappear . . .*

—Immanuel Kant, CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON

**I** walked the lower city streets for hours, not knowing I walked at all. It was late afternoon when I reached the ghetto, and the November sky was beginning to lower when I came to the hut which Actkus and I shared.

I couldn't, I wouldn't believe that the picture I had seen beneath the Strip Theatre marquee represented the girl I had been dreaming about for over eight and a half years. I *refused* to believe that my goddess of the void was really nothing more than an aristo-militarist's mistress, a sordid bubble walker exhibiting her body on the ramp for the ego-gratification of her owner.

Actkus seemed to sense my mood when I entered the hut. But his grotesque face remained impassive, and he asked no questions. He merely got up from his chair by the table, lit the lantern suspended from the corrugated iron roof, and then sat down again. I removed my ragged coat and sat down at the other side of the table.

I told him about the picture. The long walk had aggravated my bad leg and the new pain blended with the agony of my thoughts. When I finished, Actkus showed no surprise. He showed no sympathy either. He merely said: "You should be happy now, Alan. Now you *know* that your 'Dream' girl is real."

I shook my head. "I saw her picture," I said. "Not *her*. And it was a cheesecake poster, not a photograph. I simply can't accept it as evidence of her reality."

"You can't because you don't want to. You idealized this girl; you endowed her with all the qualities you want to find in a woman. And now that you think she has failed to live up to your idealization of her, now that you suspect that she cannot possibly possess any of the qualities that you forced on her, you are unable to accept her. But I'm afraid you're going to have to, Alan. Logically she couldn't be anything else than what she is, and we should have guessed long ago that if she existed in this reality at all, she had to exist as the bubble walker-mistress of an aristo-militarist."

The yellow light of the lantern illuminated only the prominent features of the face across the table from me. The eyes were shadowed by the tufted cornices of eyebrows, the cheeks eclipsed by the protruding ledges of cheekbones. It was a Neanderthalic rather than a noble face just as the shoulders below it were anthropoid rather than human; yet Actkus was the most brilliant metaphysician of his era—a twenty-first century Kant, sans Koenigsberg and sans publisher.

Presently he said: "Tell me the Dream again, Alan."

"At first it was little more than a sensation of nothingness combined with an awareness of extreme velocity," I began. "That was over eight and a half years ago ..."

I had repeated the words so many times that I knew them by heart. The enervated words, the silly stick-words that collapsed to the ground when you tried to build with them; words too lackadaisical to convey the horror and the beauty and the poignancy of the reality I knew by night and tried to forget by day.

I must have experienced the initial phase of the Dream for almost a year before I realized that my eyes—in the dream-reality—were closed. But even when I opened them, I had only partial vision. I could see two vague human figures, one close beside me, the other some distance away and presumably facing me. Then I found that by concentrating I could make out one of the figures.

The process took weeks and innumerable Dreams, but at last I learned that my nearer companion was a beautiful girl, clad in a blue coat and a white dress, whom I had never seen before.

Her eyes were closed and she did not open them for a long time. When she did open them, she stared at me for a long time—Dream after Dream after Dream—and I guessed that she was concentrating on me the way I had concentrated on her. When she finally saw me, she seemed puzzled, and it was clear that she didn't know me any more than I knew her; that she had never seen me before.

All of us seemed to be adrift in a grayish nothingness. There was no light, no darkness. Except for the distance separating our bodies, there was no space. Yet, despite the absence of light, I could see, and despite the spacelessness, I had an awareness of motion, a conviction that I was traveling at extreme velocity from one point to another point.

It was nearly a year after I first "opened my eyes" that I began to see the third figure. Its chest was narrow, its limbs long and straight. Its clothing was that of an aristo-militarist, and as more and more details came into focus, I saw that the breast of the gray, form-fitting coat was spattered with blood.

The face appeared to me as a reddish blur at first, then resolved into a pulpy mass interspersed with flecks of gray. Even then the full horror of the situation did not occur to me, and it was not till I saw the absence of forehead, eyes, nose, mouth and chin that I realized that this was not a face at all, but what had remained after the face had been torn away.

The girl seemed to realize at about the same time I did that our Dream companion had no face, because her own face turned white, her body became rigid, and her lips parted in a soundless scream. Her eyes became glazed, and it was many Dreams later before they cleared again. When they did clear, they focused on me, and neither of us had ever looked at our grisly companion again.

Although we had tried to communicate many times, the Dream was soundless and our communication was limited to the reading of each other's lips. But I had never been able to grasp anything but the simplest of monosyllabic words, and the girl's receptivity seemed to be no better.

But the lack of sound was only a minor anomaly. The Dream differed from ordinary dreams in much more striking ways. It was continuous throughout sleep—if I could trust my own judgment—and it occurred every time I fell asleep, even if I dropped off only for a moment. And while it had continually evolved as to detail, becoming more and more vivid through the years, its basic structure had never altered.

Recently I had become aware of a growing change in myself—my dream-self. Perhaps this change had begun long before; perhaps it had had its beginning in the first occurrence of the Dream. I did not know. I only knew that in the Dream-reality my bad leg was healing, that it had almost become a normal limb. And recently I had become aware of another change in myself—my real self. I had had an increasing sense of turned around realities; a growing conviction that my existence in the Dream was my true existence, and that my existence in the decadent world which the aristo-militarists had created was the Dream ...

The hut was unheated, but I could feel cold sweat on my forehead, and I raised my hand and wiped it away. Outside, a wind had sprung up in the ghetto streets, and I could hear the restless rustling sound of scuttering leaves.

I looked across the table at Acktus, hoping that my telling him the Dream for perhaps the hundredth and one time had evoked the insight he had been waiting for. If it had, his cliff-like face gave no sign.

"You still don't know, do you," I said.

A smile touched his ugly lips. "I am a little like you, Alan," he said. "You know that the picture you saw beneath the marquee this afternoon is unquestionably a representation of the girl you've been dreaming about for all these years. But you do not want your 'Dream' girl to be a bubble walker, therefore you reject the knowledge. And I know that your Dream is directly related to my work in ontology, but I will not accept the knowledge because it conflicts with my preconceived theories. Instead I reject it, and I will go on rejecting it until the relationship becomes so evident that I can reject it no longer."

"But what *is* the relationship?"

"For the moment it isn't necessary that you should know. It is more important, first, that you assimilate your unwanted knowledge. When you have done so, return here and I will make an attempt to assimilate mine. If both of us succeed, I will be in a better position to impart the nature of the relationship,

and you will be in a better position to receive it."

"In other words, you want me to go to the Strip Theatre and watch this girl go through her routine."

Acktus nodded. "There's no other way for you to see her, and you've got to establish in your own mind whether she is or is not the girl in the Dream." He raised his arm, glanced at the ring-watch on his hirsute forefinger. "1930 hours," he said. "If you hurry you can catch the whole performance."

## II

It was late in November and the wind was raw, but the old civilslave woman standing beneath the marquee was selling violets just the same. However, they were paper violets, no more incongruous in the lower city than the ratio of troops to civilslaves, or the popularity of an entertainment the essence of which was frustration.

I paused before the picture, reluctant to enter the theatre. The mixed crowd of the lower city flowed round me like a polluted river. Above my head the lewd red lettering on the marquee spelled out THE GODDESS DIANE. The lettering was repeated, without benefit of neon, at the base of the picture.

It was a life-size picture, the theatre artist's three dimensional conception of the featured bubble walker—or strip goddess, to employ the more euphemistic term. There was a hint of poetry in the lithe long legs and graceful hips, in the burgeoning of half concealed breasts and the flowering of white shoulders. And the face—

The emotion I had experienced that afternoon, when I had first seen the picture, returned. My chest tightened and I heard the loud silent pounding of my heart. The face was hard and sophisticated, not soft and compassionate the way I was used to seeing it in the Dream. But the hair was the same, a soft dark brown, and the wide apart eyes were the same too, a June sky blue. And while the sensitive mouth was shaped into a brazen smile, there was a hint of tenderness still lingering on the lips, and an intimation of girlish dimples still clung to the painted cheeks.

She had to be the same girl. It was futile to deny it any longer. And the Strip Theatre, as Acktus had implied, was the logical place for her to be. Like all beautiful women, she had been appropriated by an aristo-militarist and now was being exhibited on the ramp for the ego-gratification of her owner. But, try as I would, I still couldn't accept the knowledge.

For years the girl in the Dream had been a shining symbol of everything civilization had lost, my solitary touchstone with I wanted her to remain that way.

I entered the theatre and found a seat in the pit. It was a rear seat but quite close to the outermost curve of the crystalline ramp. Above me the loges formed a lofty semicircle, and glancing up I saw the aristo-militarists reclining in their anachronistic chaise lounges, sipping rare wine from thin-stemmed glasses. Jeweled scabbards blazed in the radiance of antique chandeliers; telescopic monocles twinkled. Jaded faces were flushed with anticipation.

I knew the real reason for that anticipation. An aristomilitarist exhibiting his mistress before his men might at first seem to be an exaggerated throwback to the pseudo-democracy of the Pre-Fallout army. Actually it was nothing of the sort. He exhibited his mistress solely for the benefit of his ego: his men, and the civilslaves who shared the pit with his men, could see and desire her, but only he could *have* her.

Just before the theatre lights dimmed, I saw Desteil, the Commanding Officer of the city. His loge was almost directly above me, and I had to crane my neck to see his decadent face. I had always made a practice, whenever I glimpsed him in a crowd, to look into his eyes and tell him as well as I could, without benefit of words, exactly what I thought of him and the system that had spawned him.

I had desecrated him with a glance many times. I desecrated him now. But if he was aware of my existence, his pale blue eyes did not betray the fact, and presently the lights dimmed and I turned my attention to the stage.

The curtains parted, and a blue light-bubble formed upon the dark stage, revealing the chorus. When the first strains of the *Libido* overture emanated from the loudspeakers, they began their mincing walk around the ramp.

The light-bubble accompanied them, bathing their half-naked bodies in indigo mist. They were beautiful girls, the property of the lower ranking aristo-militarists, but carefully culled from the cities, the collective farms and the ghettos. I could feel the soundless sigh that rippled through the pit as the enlisted men and the civilslaves hopelessly contemplated the unattainable.

After the bubble-walk of the chorus the first strip goddess appeared. She wore the usual sequence of gossamer scarfs and each time she removed one, she tossed it contemptuously into the pit for the enlisted men and civilslaves to fight over. The procedure was timed so that the removal of the final scarf coincided with her return to the stage and the closing of the curtains.

But even before she left the stage, I knew that she wasn't the goddess Diane.

The next girl wasn't Diane either, or the next. The featured bubble walker usually came on last. I sat through a monotonous series of colored lights and mincing walks, my bitterness mounting. I wanted to get up and leave, I wanted to retain what little remained of my idealism, but I did not move from my seat. I had to know, regardless of the disillusionment the knowledge might contain, whether the girl in the picture was really the girl in the Dream.

Presently there came a pause in the performance. Then a series of crashing eleventh's ushered in the final movement of the *Libido* and the curtains parted, revealing a golden girl standing in a mist of purest golden light.

I knew then that the goddess Diane and the girl in the Dream were one and the same girl.

She started around the ramp. She walked slowly, not mincingly the way the others had walked, but sedately and with grace. She removed the first scarf and it floated from her fingers like a pale moth.

I watched her approach, drinking in the reality of her; the taste was not bitter as I had thought it would be, but sweet and intoxicating, for there was a dignity about her that raised her high above her tawdry surroundings, that isolated her from the way of life that had been forced upon her.

When she reached the outermost curve of the ramp, she paused a moment, freed another gossamer scarf and tossed it into the pit. As she did so, her eyes touched mine.

The theatre artist, I saw then, was responsible for the sophistication of the face in the picture. Certainly there was no sophistication in the face swimming above me in the gold mist of the light-bubble. This face was soft and compassionate the way I knew it in the Dream, with no brazen smile deforming the tender lips or conflicting with the summer blue of the eyes.

Now, meeting mine, those eyes went wide, first with shock, then with disbelief. Abruptly she lowered them and a blush darkened the gold of her neck, rose like a flame to her cheeks. She turned then, and resumed her walk. But the slowness was gone from her gait, and although the audience screamed for new vistas of her flesh, she did not remove a single scarf, and presently the curtains hid her from view.

Somehow I got out of the pit and into the street. I lingered beneath the marquee. The performance was over and enlisted men and civilslaves jostled against me as they mushroomed out of the theatre. The wind had turned colder and wild flakes of snow were sifting down through the lacy walks of the upper city.

She recognized me, I thought. She *knew* me.

The inference was staggering: *she too was experiencing the Dream.*

But why had she been ashamed? I thought I knew the answer: she didn't care what the faceless crowd in the pit thought of her, or what the perverted creatures in the loges thought of her; but she did care what I thought of her because she wanted my respect.

It was even possible that my presence in the Dream was as reassuring to her as hers was to me, that she needed me the way I desperately needed her.

Suddenly I knew I had to see her, that I had to touch her face, her hair; that I had to talk to her about the Dream.

Shortly, I knew, she and the aristo-militarist who owned her would be departing from the theatre roof. The chance of my contacting her there was remote, but it was the only chance I had.

I reentered the theatre and made my way along the corridor bordering the pit. The cold had set my bad leg to throbbing and I was limping when I came to the lifts.

The lifts dated back to the time when the city was rebuilt into an architectural symbol of the army

caste system. A degree of equality still existed between civilians and officers at that time, and civilians were allowed the freedom of the upper or officer's city. However, when the military dictatorship reduced the status of civilians to the level of enlisted men, that freedom was canceled and the lifts fell into disuse. I hoped to find one that still functioned, for there was no other way for me to gain the roof.

I was in luck. The third set of controls that I tried responded with alacrity, and a moment later I stepped out into the snow-flecked wind of the upper city. I found a shadowed corner on the theatre roof, and I stood in the wind, waiting.

Above me fliers hovered, their lights dimmed by the wet clinging snow. To my right were the loge lifts, and each time an aristo-militarist and his mistress emerged, one of the fliers descended and picked them up. I kept hoping that Diane had not yet departed, even though I realized now that there would be no chance to contact her. But at least I could find out who her owner was, bitter though the knowledge was sure to be; and the identity of her owner would give me some idea of where to find her, hopeless though the information was sure to be.

Abruptly the absurdity of my reasoning overcame me and I saw my position in its true perspective. I, a nondescript civilslave, aspiring to meet an aristo-militarist's mistress! The wind laughed as it leaped the cornice behind me and made a mockery of my ragged clothes; my atrophied leg throbbled with new pain. At that very moment Diane emerged from the nearest lift on the arm of a resplendent officer.

Thee laughter of the wind climbed a wild crescendo when I recognized her owner. I should have known that the most beautiful woman on the ramp would belong to the highest ranking officer in the loges. I should have known that Diane could belong to no one but Desteil.

They passed me very close as I stood there in the shadows, and a flier, larger and more luxurious than the rest, came down to receive them. Desteil's thin, pointed face was flushed with possessive pride, and I could have murdered him happily with my bare hands. But the thought of the photon guns in the belts of the roof guards held me back, and I watched numbly while Diane, in mink and diamonds now, climbed into the bright interior of the flier, followed by her lover, and then I watched the flier purr aloft into the night until the slanting snow and the indifferent darkness hid it from view.

After a while I slipped back through the shadows to the lift that had brought me to the roof. Once in the lower city, I headed for the ghetto. The ghetto—and Acktus.

### III

The world-wide radioactive fallouts of 1969 did more than prove that atomic war was impracticable: they made warfare of any kind unnecessary. The Western dictatorship that followed in their wake differed so little from the dictatorship of the East that nothing was left to fight for.

The new dictatorship was a military one, an offspring of the martial law which was declared after the fallouts. When all danger from the fallouts had passed, it established itself permanently by depositing a thermo-nuclear bomb on Washington D.C. at a time when Congress was in session and the President was in residence at the White House.

After two judicious assassinations in their own ranks, the aristo-militarists, as they now began calling themselves, stated that henceforth both the navy and the air force would be considered subsidiary branches of the army. The draft was expanded into a gargantuan entity that devoured every physically fit citizen past the age of 16. Industries were turned into military institutions replete with private-laborers, sergeant-foremen, and officer-superintendents. Physically unfit civilians were put to work on collective farms under the supervision of the nearest city C.O. or allowed to run small businesses in the cities.

These small businesses, however, proved to be liabilities when the aristo-militarists lowered the civilians' status to that of the enslaved enlisted men. The average enlisted man's values had not improved with the new scheme of things, and the civilians discovered that the price for their remaining in the cities involved their self-respect, the rape of their daughters, and the destruction of their property. The outlying collections of haphazard huts characteristic of all military metropolises were the result.

By 2030 there were still a few schools and universities left. Acktus was a doctor of metaphysics in

one of the latter. Then, with typical suddenness, the aristo-militarists decided they didn't like the idea of educated cripples—by that time the halls of ivy had no other occupants—and the military boot came down with numbing force. All schools and universities were outlawed, and their personnel persecuted.

The first time I saw Acktus, he was lying in a ghetto gutter, left there for dead by Desteil's M.P.'s. I found the flutter of a pulse in the huge wrist and I managed to drag the prodigious body to my hut. It was late at night, and I had to get the ghetto doctor out of bed. The neanderthalic head and the ape-like torso were raw from the systematic beating inflicted by the M.P.'s, but after treating the wounds, the doctor assured me that the man would live.

Acktus healed quickly. In a matter of days strength flowed back into his long arms and short thick legs. By the end of a week he was able to hobble about the three rooms of the hut without my assistance. He told me what I had already guessed; that he was one of the few descendants of the victims of the fallouts—a third generation mutant—and that he had been on the staff of one of the last of the universities to feel the brunt of the military boot.

Next he expounded his theory of ontology ...

Even though ghetto dwellers were forced to maim their children in order to keep them out of the eternal draft, they continued to beget them because children, under almost any circumstances, supply not only a reason but a justification for living. Third generations mutants however, were invariably sterile and had to find other ways to rationalize their lives. Philosophy was one such way, and it was a natural step from philosophy to metaphysics; and if you were a mutant desperately in need of a better world, your next and final step brought you to ontology.

Ontology—the study of reality itself—was Acktus' *raison d'etre*.

I found him waiting up for me. He was sitting at the table staring down at his hands. He took one look at my face and said: "Was it as bad as that, Alan?"

"She's Desteil's mistress," I said.

He returned his eyes to his hands. A shudder shook his massive frame. "So," he said. "Desteil."

Abruptly he stood up. "You have assimilated your unwanted knowledge, Alan. Now it is my turn." He took the lantern and motioning me to follow, moved ponderously into the adjoining room. It was the room which he jokingly referred to as his "laboratory." It was here that he carried on his work in ontology, and the essence of ontology, according to his definition, was its independence from mechanical equipment. Consequently the only "apparatus" in the "laboratory" were bookshelves spacious enough to hold his voluminous notebooks, a couch sturdy enough to support his weight, and a small table.

There was a newly drawn star map spread out upon the table. It was done in full color and it was flawlessly executed. There was a binary consisting of a magnificent blue-white star and a tiny white dwarf. Spread out around them in various orbital positions were nineteen planets—hardly more than tiny specks, but each painstakingly colored to signify its predominant flora or absence thereof.

Acktus set the lantern on a nearby shelf, then leaned over the table like a hairy god contemplating his latest creation; an ape-god surveying his blueprint for a new reality.

Presently he raised his eyes to mine. "I will review my theory briefly," he said.

"The mind creates subjective reality in cooperation with other minds. No two individual subjective realities are precisely similar because no two minds are precisely alike, but a general conformity exists except in cases where the circumstances of an individual's life have made it imperative for him to create an additional subjective reality—a schizo-reality, if you like. But the prefix 'schizo' betrays the inadequacy of the reality so created: it is not complete enough to supersede the reality from which the schizophrenic wishes to escape and consequently he can effect only partial escape and is forced to live in two realities.

"We can compare subjective reality to a force field of ideas generated by the human race: a mass-reality or, to expand on the Berkeleyan conception, a mass-*esse est percipi*—'to exist means to be perceived as an idea' by the whole of humanity. "Although we cannot conceive of the objective universe, we must nevertheless concede its existence, and admit that the reality in which we are involved consists not only of our subjective force field of ideas but of the underlying thing-in-itself as well. We are unable to perceive the true nature of the latter because of the *a priori* factor of our intuition. As Kant said, 'In respect to the form of phenomena, much may be said *a priori*, while of the thing-in-itself, which may lie

at the foundation of these phenomena, it is impossible to say anything.'

"Consider the table between us. Neither of us can conceive of it without locating it in space and connecting it with a moment in time. Yet the table, and all other aspects of the thing-in-itself, is both spaceless and timeless. Our *a priori* factor imposes both elements.

"Conversely, neither of us can conceive of space and time abstracted from objects or events. If you doubt this, close your eyes and concentrate on pure space and pure time. You will find that you cannot visualize either of them, and this alone proves that they are not a part of the thing-in-itself but mental elements which we ourselves supply.

"It follows, then, that if we could free our minds even temporarily from this *a priori* factor, the thing-in-itself would be revealed to us. And while we could not move from one point to another point by employing ordinary methods, since both space and time would be absent, we *might* be able to move from one point to another point by employing an entirely different method—by *altering our individual subjective realities*.

"In other words, if we could create an individual subjective reality strong enough to supersede the mass force field of ideas, we could move from one subjective point to another subjective point; from one subjective world to another subjective world, or from one subjective solar system to another subjective solar system. And if we could make this new reality powerful enough, we could take others—perhaps the whole of humanity—with us.

"Specifically, if I can free my mind from the *a priori* factor and at the same time conceive of a subjective reality on Sirius 9 stronger than our present subjective reality on Earth, we will immediately materialize in the new reality, thereby attaining instantaneous teleportation without recourse to such naive devices as matter transmitters or any of the other transmission machines which our militaristic scientists have conceived of but have never been able to build.

"You are about to raise the objection that perhaps there is no ninth planet in the Sirius system, that for all we know there may be no planetary system at all. May I remind you that we are dealing with subjective reality, and as far as subjective reality is concerned anything that seems to be real *is* real. There is no other criterion. For example, for all we know there is no third planet of the star Sol, or Sol for that matter; yet for all practical purposes we are perfectly content to accept the reality of the ground on which we stand, the air we breathe, and the phenomena we perceive.

"Actually there is only one requirement in the creation of an alternative subjective reality of this kind: it must seem to be more real than the mass subjective reality in which we are involved and which we want to leave. It must be carefully and exhaustively fabricated; it must be replete down to the smallest detail; because if it is lacking in any respect in which the mass force field of ideas is not lacking, movement through the thing-in-itself will be impossible even with the *a priori* factor removed.

"The map here on the table roughly represents my conception of the Sirius system. It facilitates my thinking, but it is by no means indispensable."

He indicated the notebook-laden shelves covering all four walls of the room. "There lies the true essence of my alternative reality: the duplications and the variations of all the phenomena, both past and present, of the mass force field of ideas in which we are imprisoned."

Acktus returned his eyes to the map. "Of the nineteen planets, only one need concern us now—the ninth. It is a primitive planet replete with mountains and forests and lakes and seas. A river-veined wilderness, a—"

"But why a wilderness," I interrupted. "Why not at least a semblance of a civilization? A city or two; towns—"

"Why not, indeed." A smile lightened the line of the neanderthalic lips and it was as though a ray of sunlight had fallen on the massive face. "Humanity needs another chance, Alan; it needs forests, not cities, to live in—Waldens, not New Yorks. It needs blue skies to walk beneath, and winding rivers to follow down to pleasant seas."

"Humanity will never change," I said. "There have been blue skies since the time of Eoanthropus, and Cromagnon had many a winding river to follow down to many a pleasant sea."

The smile softened. "Cynicism does not become you, Alan. It does not become you because you are

not a cynic. You are a frustrated idealist. You have been bitter for years because your parents mutilated your leg to keep you out of the draft, yet at the same time you admire them for their courage in performing the act, and you despise the militaristic system for indirectly bringing about their death through prolonged malnutrition. And you are bitter now because the girl in the Dream has turned out to be Desteil's mistress, yet in your heart you still idealize her. But enough—"

The smile faded away and he returned his attention to the map. One huge hand moved out over the two-dimensional planets and poised high above the tabletop ecliptic. "The blue star is, as you probably know, Sirius," he said. "The cindery speck you see some distance to the left is Sirius' dwarf companion. As I said, of the nineteen planets, only one need concern us now." The hand descended like a great but gentle bird and a forefinger touched the green dot of Sirius 9. "Here, somewhere beneath the thousands of square miles of my fingertip, is a green hill. Below the hill, in an idyllic valley, a blue river winds, fledged by the new growth of trees. There are vineyards and orchards and meadows; flowers and green grass. It is a beautiful valley, as beautiful as I could make it. Subjectively, it is approximately 8.65 light years distant from the minute area of Earth we are inhabiting at this moment.

"Now I will concentrate, and afterwards I want you to tell me what you experienced."

The eyebrow-cornices of the cliff-face seemed to lower; the sunken eyes darkened above the twin ledges of the cheekbones. Lines, like fissures, rivened the gaunt precipice.

At first I experienced nothing. The familiar room, with its notebook lined shelves, remained the same; the tabletop planets moved imperceptibly on their little journeys around their tabletop binary; Acktus stood immobile, his forefinger still touching the green dot of Sirius 9. And then, subtly, nothing became nothingness, and the gray spaceless lightless waste of the Dream closed in around me. Beside me, more vividly beautiful than ever, Diane drifted, and hovering before us, more grisly than ever, was the apparition with blood and gray matter for a face ...

I must have fallen, for suddenly I saw Acktus' pale face swimming above me and felt the pressure of his arm beneath my shoulders. "Quickly, Alan," he said, helping me to my feet. "Tell me!"

When I told him I saw the pain come into his eyes and the pain was so intense that I had to turn away. "I cannot deny the relationship any longer." I heard him say. "The Dream and my experiment are one and the same thing. But I cannot explain yet. I must think. I must try to adjust myself to the unwanted knowledge. I am an old man and I so much wanted to leave Earth . . . . "

## IV

I went out into the somber November evening. The day, like all ghetto days, had been bitter and depressing, and my stand in the market place had yielded its usual pittance. At supper Acktus had explained—reluctantly, it seemed—what I had to do in order to contact Diane. Then he had lapsed into a gloomy silence.

Last night's snow was a damp memory on the lower city streets, but the wind was still running raw and fierce. In the sky dark tatterdemalion clouds brushed the embroidery of the upper city walks. I reached the Strip Theatre long before the line began to form and I waited shivering in the wind till the doors opened. Then, following Acktus' advice, I obtained a seat at the edge of the ramp in the vicinity of the seat I had occupied the night before.

I sat there impatiently while the pit and the loges filled. The aristo-militarists settled back in their chaise lounges like perverted gods preparing for a psychopathic feast. Diamond-studded scabbards danced in the light of chandelier-suns; polished boots gleamed. Once again I glimpsed Desteil in the loge just above me, and this time I could hardly contain my hatred. Everything I deplored seemed to be epitomized in the tall wiry body and the thin hungry face; in the pitiless blue eyes. This time when I sought those eyes they returned my gaze. There seemed to be mockery in them, and cold amusement, but I could not be sure, for at that point the theatre lights dimmed. I turned my attention to the stage just as the first strains of the *Libido* sounded.

The bubble-walks paralleled those of the night before. I brooded through them, thinking over and



over of a Tennysonian passage which my memory had dredged up during the day

*He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,*

*Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.*

In my bitterness, both time and place faded, and I was startled when the eleventh climbed their weird mountain of harmonious dissonance. Softly, lewdly, the strains of the final *Libido* movement sounded in the valley below—

And then my bitterness blew away. Once again Diane was moving slowly out upon the ramp, a Diane all soft and golden; a vivid living statue of Grecian symmetry and grace. The first scarf drifted palely into the pit. The second—

I could hardly breathe when she neared the outermost curve of the ramp. Had Acktus been right in his reasoning? Would she do the one and only thing she could do in order to contact me? Closer and closer she came, a goddess of pink-gold flesh, a lovely Aurora with sun mist in her hair.

She was standing just above me now. She had removed a blue scarf and she was holding it in one hand. There was a tenseness about her, and her eyes were afraid. When they touched mine, relief filled them, and she tossed the scarf straight into my waiting hands.

I fought my way free from the other hands around me, ducked and turned and twisted, and finally gained the street. I stuffed the scarf into the inside pocket of my coat and hurried toward the nearest enlisted men's cafe. Inside, I carried my drink to a secluded booth, took out the scarf and examined it.

At first I could find nothing unusual about it. It seemed to be an ordinary bubble walker's scarf, thin to the point of translucence, but unremarkable otherwise. And then, in one of the corners, I noticed that a tiny clock had been stitched into the material. It was an ancient clock, and its hands pointed to 12:00. Above the numeral was the tiny letter—

Midnight. That was *when* I was supposed to meet her. But *where* was I supposed to meet her?

I went over every square inch of the material searching for another symbol. I found nothing. Suddenly I had the impression that someone was watching me and I glanced over at the semi-circular bar. One of the enlisted men was standing at an angle that gave him a good view of the interior of the booth where I was sitting. He was staring at the backbar now, but I knew that a moment ago he had been staring at me.

I stuffed Diane's scarf into my inside pocket again. I finished my drink, then I got up and walked as casually as I could to the door. But the man did not even turn his head, and I stepped unmolested into the street.

I started walking. The first chrono-streetlight said 2247 hours. I had one hour and thirteen minutes to figure out where I was supposed to meet Diane. Not even that if I deducted the time it would take me to get to wherever I had to go.

I passed the PX district, the enlisted men's and the enlisted women's barracks and the apartment barracks for married personnel. When I came to the lower city military academy, I turned and retraced my steps. The streets were filled with troops returning from the cafes and it was impossible for me to tell whether I was being followed or not.

I glanced at each chrono-streetlight I passed. 2310 hours. 2321 hours. 2340 hours. I jammed my wind-numbed hands deeper into my coat pockets, desperately trying to think.

Angrily I wondered why she had been so cryptic. But my anger was unjustified. She had had to be cryptic in the event that her message fell into the wrong hands. The replica of an ancient clock would be meaningless to the majority of enlisted men. They would take it for a senseless design which the manufacturer had stitched into the material. A civilslave, however, would recognize it for what it was, for civilslaves had intellectual ties with the past and a number of them, myself included, still visited the Pre-Fallout museum where such archaic timepieces could still be found.

The only place where they could still be found—

I made my way through the jungle of the grounds, following the grass-ruptured walk. Presently the dark mass of the building became visible against the cloud-torn sky. Just before me was the once ornate entrance, now little more than a gaping hole flanked by crumbling pillars. I wondered how I would ever find Diane in the dark empty corridors and the vast silent rooms, and then the ragged clouds parted and a gibbous moon shone through; and I saw the silvery figure standing on the steps, and I heard the indrawn breath.

The moonlight had betrayed me too, and I walked numbly through the pale whiteness of it to the steps, and up the steps to where she stood, a goddess no longer gold, but silver; no longer remote, but near. I do not know how it happened, I only know that neither of us said a word; but suddenly I felt the silver coldness of her cheek on mine, and her tall pliant body pressed against me; and then the cool-warm moistness of her lips . . .

After an eternity. "I looked for you so long," she said. "I knew you had to be real. And then when I did see you there in the pit, I was so ashamed—"

"It's all right," I said. "It's all right, darling."

"Desteil appropriated me a month ago. I lived on one of the collective farms. My father kept me hidden for years, and then there was that horrible afternoon when Desteil pulled an unexpected inspection. I was in the fields, and I came walking into the community square not knowing, and suddenly there he was—"

"It's all right," I said again. Her cheeks were wet and I kissed the silver tears away.

"When I saw you in the Dream, I knew that you were the only one, that there could never be anyone else but you, and I wanted you to be the one who kissed me first, who—"

"I kissed you first," I said. "That's the only kiss that counts. What went before doesn't matter."

"I—I don't even know your name."

"Alan."

"You know mine of course. Only it was Dianna originally, but Special Service changed it to Diane. They said 'Diane' looked better on the marquee."

"Dianna or Diane, I love you just the same."

"I love you too, Alan. I've loved you for years. It's so strange, loving someone before you even meet them, dreaming of them before you even see them. Do you have the same Dream, Alan? The grayness and the awful silence, the feeling of movement. The man without a face."

"Yes," I said.

"Sometimes I think I can't stand it any longer, that I must be losing my mind. What's the reason for it, Alan? Why do we dream the same Dream every night?"

"I don't know yet."

I told her about Acktus and his work in ontology and I described my experience of the night before when Acktus had tried to project his new reality.

The moonlight seemed to grow brighter around us and suddenly I noticed Diane's clothes—the simple white dress, the cheap three quarter length coat. "Your dress," I said. "Your coat—"

"They're my own," she said proudly. "Desteil has nothing to do with them ... That's why I wore them."

"They're the same dress and coat you're wearing in the Dream."

She raised her arm and stared at the blue sleeve. She glanced down at the part of the dress visible beneath the hem of the coat. "Why yes," she said wonderingly. "They are the same." She looked at me, at my ragged suit, my even more ragged coat. "And your clothes—they're the same too."

She was right. Suddenly I had the feeling that the answer to our double existence was very close. "Come on," I said. "I'm going to take you to Acktus."

"But Desteil. If I'm not back soon, he'll miss me. He'll alert the whole city."

"I can't let you go back to him no matter what he does. Would you want to go back?"

I felt the shudder that shook her slender body. "No. Never," she said.

We started down the steps. The rift in the clouds had narrowed, but the moonlight still streamed brightly through it, turning the long sodden grass to silver surf, making silver lacework out of trees and

bushes; glinting here and there in the darker places as though the tangled branches had shattered it into shards ...

Or swords—

I pulled Diane back up the steps and into the shadowed entrance. The dozen aristo-militarists who had been hiding in the shrubbery stepped into the clearing and ran toward us. One of them, taller than the others, seemed familiar. The moonlight briefly illumined his pointed features, and I recognized him as Desteil.

I guided Diane into the interior of the museum and up the dusty stairs that led to the mezzanine. All the while I kept thinking of the enlisted man who had watched me in the cafe, of the other enlisted men who must have watched me walk the streets and relayed my every movement to their C.O. In coming to the museum I had taken every devious route I knew, and I had doubled back several times to check on possible pursuit. But apparently I hadn't been careful enough.

Or perhaps Diane hadn't been careful enough. Perhaps Desteil had followed her. We had underestimated him badly. The amusement I had seen in his eyes should have told me that he had seen Diane look at me the previous night—look at me and blush, and then finish her walk without removing another scarf.

Now he had come to retrieve his mistress personally, and to take care of her lover. But not out of anger. He merely wished to gratify his ego further by denying me something only he could have. Diane's infidelity meant nothing to a man of his values. She was nothing but a peasant girl whom he had appropriated. He owned her, he did not love her.

Boots were resounding on the floor below and torches were crisscrossing the darkness with rapiers of light. When Diane and I reached the mezzanine, I felt around for the ancient upright piano that had graced the head of the stairs for more than a century. My fingers touched the dusty mahogany, and I put my shoulder to the wood and pushed. Castors creaked, betraying our position, but the ponderous instrument moved and I knew it could be moved further.

If the aristo-militarists had known the nature of the massive object their torches picked up beside Diane and myself, they never would have started up the stairs. I let them get halfway, then, with Diane's help, sent the quarter ton upright on its downward journey.

The stairway was narrow, flanked by the wall on one side and a wrought iron railing on the other. There was a medley of shouts and screams when the aristo-militarists saw the unanticipated weapon hurtling down upon them. The lights of their discarded torches danced wildly as they vaulted the rail and dropped to the floor below.

The piano ended its career at the bottom of the stairs with a crash of broken chords. Diane and I were just behind it. We made our way to the entrance before the routed aristo-militarists could reorganize, and hurried out into the night. Ragged clouds again obscured the moon and the grounds were shrouded in utter darkness.

Both of us had come on foot to the museum, and I assumed that Desteil and his men had also come on foot. But I had little doubt that there would be fliers on the scene before long, so the sooner we reached the labyrinthine, frequently canopied streets of the ghetto, the safer we would be.

I led the way across the grounds to the city cemetery. We picked our way through the artificial hills and dales of the enlisted men's acres, went around the high wall that enclosed the sacrosanct aristo-militarist's acres, passed through the low-lying swampy area set aside for civilslave dead, and came finally to the ghetto. There were no signs of pursuit, but still I did not dare to stop and rest. I hurried Diane through the narrow streets, through the alleys and the courtyards, past the market place—

"Alan, you're limping."

I stopped then. "Yes," I said.

"I didn't know you hurt yourself. Why didn't you tell me?"

"It happened a long time ago." The old bitterness crept into my voice despite all my efforts to hold it back.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Alan. You don't have to tell me about it."

"But I do have to tell you." I said. "I should have told you before."

When I finished telling her I felt her hand in mine. For a long while neither of us spoke. Dead leaves scattered through the streets and the November wind howled as the clouds hung lower among the buildings. Behind than ever, some of them so low they seemed to touch the hut tops. Clouds ...

Or lightless fliers—

I drew Diane back beneath the overhang of a low rooftop, straining my eyes in the darkness. She did not notice my apprehension. "Try not to be so bitter, darling," she said. "The aristo-militarists are unhappy too. Even Desteil is unhappy. If you ever heard him scream in the night you would pity instead of hate him."

"Nothing could ever make me pity him," I said. I was quite certain now that the dark blurs over the hut tops were fliers.

"I have wondered many times about his screams," Diane went on. "They sound like the screams of a man in terrible physical pain, in unbelievable physical pain. Now I think I know the answer.

"In the Dream the man without a face wears an aristo-militarists's uniform. The blood from his wound has obscured his collar insignia, so I have been unable to make out his rank. But he is tall and thin, and very familiar. Both of us have seen him before."

I was staring at her now, the fliers momentarily forgotten. "Desteil," I said.

She nodded. "*He* is the man without a face."

## VI

Acktus said: "It is time to analyze the Dream."

Diane and I had remained beneath the overhang till the fliers had passed, then hurried through the remaining streets to the hut. I thought that Acktus would advise us to leave the city, but he paid little attention to my account of Desteil's ambush, and when I told him about the fliers, he did not seem at all perturbed. He merely nodded and asked Diane to tell him her version of the Dream.

Now he stood stolidly before us, his anthropoid arms hanging low and motionless at his sides, his neanderthalic face impassive. Diane, after the shock of seeing him for the first time, had related her version—essentially the same as mine—calmly and simply, and now regarded him with dawning awe.

"Even though both of you—and the third party as well—have been experiencing the Dream for a number of years, the incident that provoked it has not yet occurred." Acktus raised his great hand as I started to interrupt him. "Please let me finish, Alan. There is very little time, and when you arrive on Sirius 9, I want you to understand why your transition was instantaneous in one sense, yet required over eight years in another."

The soft voice issuing from the coarse lips was soothing. I could see Diane relax in the lantern light, and I felt my own tension depart. In the presence of this fantastic man, no one could feel insecure.

"If we include the period of partial awareness which preceded your perception of each other, the Dream began about eight years and eight months ago. The fact that neither of you was able to 'see' the third party as anything more than a vague man-shape till much later in the Dream suggests that the events preceding the inception will be of so unpleasant a nature as to cause both your psyches to throw up blocks.

"Since both you, Alan, and you, Diane, are experiencing the Dream, we can tentatively conclude that the third party also is experiencing it—though in quite a different way. But before we can understand the nature of his experience, we must first get at the root of the Dream itself."

Acktus paused a moment, his head tipped to one side as though he were listening. But there was no sound except the whine of the wind and the sporadic rattling of the corrugated iron roof. Presently: "Last night I said that it might be possible to create an individual subjective reality than the mass force field of ideas in which we are imprisoned; I also said that if I could temporarily free my mind from the *a priori* factor, I might be able to move not only myself but others as well from one subjective point in the thing-in-itself to another subjective point—without benefit of machines of any kind. My reasoning was deficient on two counts: 1) transition of this kind does require a machine—a human machine, and 2) since

the *a priori* factor would still be present in the minds of the other persons whom I teleported, it could not fail to have some effect upon the teleportation.

"Consider. The mass force field of ideas is humanity's cooperative effort to perceive the thing-in-itself. If this force field has matured during the subjective tenure of mankind, becoming more and more complicated, more and more replete with ideas, so too has the *a priori* factor which helped to mold it.

"Eoanthropus merely had to separate trees and hills, days and nights. The stars in the sky were lights to him, so subjectively close that he could touch them if he climbed a high enough mountain. And the sun was merely a celestial bonfire, no farther away than the stars. Eoanthropus' *a priori* factor was as immature and as primitive as the force field of ideas to which he contributed.

"But now the force field of ideas has matured to a point where we have to separate continents and seas, centuries and millenia; stars and island universes. Space and time have run together, becoming one, and the *a priori* factor of modern man encompasses the limiting factor of the speed of light—"

Abruptly the sound of shouting came from the street. There was the crackle of a photon gun followed by a woman's scream.

"Desteil!" I said. "He's searching the whole area. We've got to get out of here!"

"No." The massive face seemed suddenly older in the yellow lantern light. There were lines around the mouth that had never been there before and the eyes were more sunken than ever.

Diane was standing close to me, and I put my arm around her shoulders. "Don't be afraid," I heard Acktus say. "There is nothing for either of you to be afraid of. In a short while you will be in paradise.

"The Dream which you have been experiencing for eight years and eight months is an unconscious *a priori* rationalization of your instant transition from here to Sirius 9.

"While it seems to be one Dream because of your similar versions, actually it is two separate Dreams—three, if we count the third person's version. In your case it seems identical because both of you will be similarly involved in the incident which will provoke it.

"The physical appearance which you ascribe to the other persons is valid because you are rationalizing their transition as well as your own. However, while you seem to 'see' them without the aid of light, you are actually 'remembering' them as they will be at the moment of transition.

"The actions and reactions which you ascribe to the other persons are fictitious. For instance, Alan, when you said that Diane's face turned white, that her body went rigid, and that her lips parted in a soundless scream when she realized that the third person had no face, your cliches betrayed you. You *assumed* she would react that way because the heroines in the romantic fiction you have read invariably react that way, and your unconscious mind visualized the assumption.

"And when you tried to communicate with her by lip-reading, you got nowhere because you would have had to supply the answers to your own questions. Your unconscious mind did not have those answers because they weren't essential to the *a priori* rationalization.

"Your Dreams are spaceless, except for the distance between your bodies, because even the *a priori* factor cannot impose space where no objects exist. But the *idea* of space is there.

"Your Dreams are lightless because, while the *a priori* factor includes the speed of light, it does not include light itself, and therefore cannot supply it. Your sense of movement at extreme velocity from one point to another point arises from the *a priori* fact that if a body exchanges spatial co-ordinates, it *must* move. But while your subjective velocity can equal the speed of light, it can never exceed the speed of light—"

There was a pounding on the door.

For a moment none of us moved or spoke. Then Acktus said: "I meant to free the whole world, but I could only free two people. But the mass force field of ideas is never permanent, and while it shifts from one extreme to another, perhaps some day mass man will create his own utopia."

The pounding was repeated, louder than before. Acktus walked slowly across the room. "Causality is a mockery," he said, and threw open the door.

Desteil stood on the threshold. Behind him the faces of his officers showed pale and unreal in the lantern light. He had drawn his sword. His eyes, surveying the room over Acktus' tremendous shoulders,

were a glacial blue. When they touched Diane, the blueness intensified but the coldness did not go away.

He raised his free arm in an attempt to shove Acktus to one side. He would have obtained more perceptible results had he tried to move a mountain. His eyes flickered. "Mutant!" he said. "Ape!" His sword flashed as he drew it back.

Acktus caught the blade in his chest. He did not move from the doorway, but he turned sideways, tearing the hilt from Desteil's grasp. I saw the sword jutting grotesquely from the anthropoid torso and the room went red. Suddenly I was running toward Desteil, oblivious to everything except his gray-collared throat.

I almost reached him; my yearning fingertips brushed the gray collar. Then Acktus' girder-like arm came up, knocking my breath away and flinging me back across the room. Diane was just behind me and when I collided with her both of us tumbled against the wall and slid to the floor.

I lay there half stunned, watching the scene before me. Desteil still stood in the doorway. He was trying to back through it now, but the pressure of his own men behind him was his own undoing. He fumbled wildly for his photon gun but fright had turned his fingers to clay.

Acktus was an immobile ape-god. Abruptly he seized the sword jutting from his chest and jerked it free. He hurled it to the floor. His right arm rose slowly, relentlessly; his massive hand opened. Desteil's scream ended in a gurgling ellipsis when his face was torn away. He staggered into the room and collapsed at Diane's feet, the gray breast of his coat scarlet with the first surge of blood.

Acktus couldn't have had more than a second before the first photon charge struck him. But that second was enough. Lines of concentration fissured his face; cornices and ledges stood out gaunt and cold. The room dimmed, darkened, and through the darkness I heard his final words:

"Sirius 9, Alan. Take it and guard it well."

## VII

Diane and I were standing on a green hilltop in the warm light of a brilliant blue-white sun. The hill sloped gently down into a fertile valley of orchards and vineyards and green grass. In the distance a winding river sparkled through the pale verdure of youthful trees.

Above us arched a bluer sky than we had ever known on Earth, and into it the sun was climbing, a great and gentle god of blue-white light. Below the sun, near the horizon, was another sun, a tiny diamond point of brightness—a perfect morning star.

In that first sweet moment of the new reality we forgot that there had ever been a man without a face. It was only when we lowered our eyes from the matchless sky that we saw the dead man on the slope below us and knew that the Dream was forever over and gone.

I saw the bewilderment in Diane's eyes.

"Acktus didn't have a chance to elaborate on his explanation," I said. "You see, our instantaneous movement from Earth to Sirius 9 violated a subjective fact. We unconsciously rationalized that violation, and the rationalization appeared to us in the form of a repetitious dream.

"The distance from Earth to Sirius 9—in a subjective sense—is approximately 8.65 light years. Subjectively, the speed of light cannot be exceeded, so it is subjectively impossible for a body, or bodies, to travel 8.65 light years in less than eight years and eight months. Therefore, our instantaneous movement, in order to make *a priori* sense, had to begin eight years and eight months before it actually started—unconsciously, of course, and in the form of a dream. Our insistent sense of movement at extreme velocity—the velocity of light—and our conviction that we were traveling from one spatial point to another spatial point, bears this out.

"You and I had to rationalize not only our own instantaneous transition but that of the other persons involved as well. During the early phase of the Dream we weren't trying to 'see' each other, as we thought. We were trying to 'remember' each other—from the future. Such a paradox is possible because true reality—the thing-in-itself—is timeless.

"And Desteil?" Diane asked.

I took her hand and we walked down the hillside to where the dead man lay. Diane turned away, but I forced myself to kneel down beside the inert body and forced my fingers to touch the limp wrist. It was still warm but it contained no vestige of life.

I stood up. "He couldn't have died before the transition was completed," I said, "so he must have experienced the Dream. But not quite the same Dream we experienced. In effecting the teleportation Acktus had to convey the information that our destination was the ninth planet of Sirius, and since Desteil, like all aristo-militarists, was well-grounded in scientific knowledge, he must have known that Sirius is 8.65 light years distant from Sol.

"However, his *a priori* rationalization did not need to include anyone beside himself because he did not know that you and I were also a part of the teleportation. So probably his Dream consisted of a spaceless, lightless, timeless void unpeopled by anyone other than himself, but in addition to the feeling of movement which we experienced, he must have experienced something else. Pain."

Diane shuddered. "How horrible!" she said.

We stood there in silence for a While. A breeze sprang up in the valley, climbed the hill and kissed our faces. There was the sound of the singing of birds, and the scent of meadow flowers.

Suddenly Diane knelt down and plucked a blade of grass. She held it up to the blue-white sunlight and pinched it between her thumb and forefinger till her skin was stained with chlorophyll. She looked at me quizzically.

"All you've proved," I said, "is that Acktus was able to create a world physically identical to the world which mass man created in another phase of the thing-in-itself—Earth. Since he himself was unable to take advantage of his own creation, we have to conclude that movement through the thing-in-itself is possible only through the mind of a non-participator intellectually powerful enough to transcend the *a priori* factor."

"If *feels* real," Diane said, staring at the blade of grass between her green fingers.

"It *is* real. Subjectively real. And subjective reality is all that need ever concern us since it is all we can ever know. Sirius 9 is as valid as Sol 3 is."

She gave a nervous little laugh. "Perhaps more valid in one respect."

I looked at her puzzledly. "In what respect?"

"We *know* there was a God."

We buried Desteil on the hillside, then hand in hand we walked down into the valley toward the blueness of the river. I became aware of a new vitality coursing through my body, and I felt the wholeness of the new leg Acktus had given me. The air was sparkling, the sun warm. Meadow flowers rose round our knees at the foot of the hill, and lush orchards marched to meet us. The valley was a garden really, a paradise; a poem in living things.

Diane paused beneath a luxuriant tree, reached up and plucked a ripe red fruit. Suddenly I remembered Acktus saying that an alternative subjective reality had to be exhaustively fabricated, had to be complete down to the smallest detail: had to possess variations or duplications of all phenomena, both past and present, of the mass force field of ideas.

That was when I saw the serpent coiled around the tree.

I knocked the fruit from Diane's hand before it could touch her lips. Homo sapiens II would probably turn out to be a toolmaker like Homo sapiens I.

But at least he was going to begin life with a clear conscience!