

F L I G H T S   O F   F A N T A S Y

By

Kenneth B. Blois

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**FORWARD**

Deep Space Voyage appeared as a two part story in the Harlem Senior High School newspaper "The Pepper". The first part appearing in the January 13,1967 issue, the second in the February 10,1967 issue. This story has only been slightly modified for this printing.

Life In The Year 2000 appeared in the Harlem Senior High School newspaper "The Pepper" in the April 23,1965 issue. And School Days In The Year 2000 appeared in the same paper in the April 14,1967 issue.

White Flakes (Originally titled Alien White Flakes) appeared in the Harlem Senior School newspaper "The Pepper" in the May 20,1966 issue.

A Distant Sound was originally a radio play I wrote for my English class while I was still a Senior at Harlem Senior High School (1967).

Can't You See appeared under my pen-name, Jerry H. Hawks, as a cut on the Now Sounds of Today record album (October 1974).

The two books in print before this were All Around The Mulberry Bush (Palomar Publishing, November 1974) and Tales Of The Sandman (Dorrance & Company Publishing, February 1976). All Around The Mulberry Bush contained two of my poems: Watch and Wonderful Willie. Tales Of The Sandman was my first full length published book, its contents were strictly poetry.

The July 1977 issue of Popular Electronics contained an article by me on how to build an Electronic Eye for under \$3.00 (Page 92).

Flights Of Fantasy contains a selection of some of my better poems and short stories. I hope you will enjoy them.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

I was born November 27,1949 in Ottawa, Ontario (Canada). My early childhood was spent playing and attending school in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada). I spent most of my days as a teenager in Rockford, Illinois (USA). Graduating from High School, the summer of 1967, my family moved to Portland, Oregon and I went to stay with my grandparents in Haney, British Columbia (Canada). While there I owned and operated a small Radio and Television repair shop (1967 - 1968).

In October 1968 I went back down to stay with my parents while waiting for the US Air Force to call me for service. I worked as a lathe operator at Leupold and Stevens in the interim. The Air Force called me to duty December 31,1968. There was a blizzard that day and I had to walk down to the main highway to catch a bus to Portland. All the smaller roads were blocked by the heavy snowfall.

My first four years in the Air Force were spent in Texas. Three of the four were spent at Laughlin AFB, Del Rio, Texas. While there, I spent most of my off-duty time frequenting the establishments in Mexico. The next year (December 1972 - December 1973) I was assigned overseas to Ubon, Thailand. After my tour there ended I was again reassigned to Laughlin AFB, Texas for my next two years.

My next tour overseas took me to Clark Air Base, in the Republic of the Philippines (1975 - 1980). While there I met and married my wife, Leticia (October 1975). Our Son, Dennis, was born two years later, on October 23, 1977. We moved to the States on my next assignment and spent the next three years (1980 - 1983) at Williams AFB, near Chandler, Arizona.

From Arizona I became separated from my family for a year. While I spent a remote tour in Korea (Osan AB), I sent them on ahead to my next duty assignment (Clark AB, Philippines). I rejoined my family a year later (1984) and have remained with them in the Philippines ever since. Now I am out of the service and back in Arizona once again.

**A DISTANT SOUND**

THE SCENE: an outpost on Luna. The year 2098. We see an elderly man bent over a large panel of instruments, intent on a message being transmitted from Earth.

"The number of casualties has grown to twenty-two-thousand dead, several thousand more either wounded or seriously injured. Russia has entered the war and is now our number one enemy.

"I dare not even think of the time when she will send aloft her mighty bomb ... or when we do the same. I ..." a sudden burst of static fills the room and then subsides, leaving only a shallow hissing.

The old man looks up through the crystalline dome above as the Earth passes in orbit. He sighs as the green globe gets shrouded in a golden cloud, then turns milky after a few minutes.

As two men enter the room the man turns to greet them.

"Well, it finally happened ... you don't have to be so happy about it! We can't rely on mother Earth ... as a matter of fact, she could use our help ... but right now we had better report in or Joe might suspect ..."

"Yeah, old man, we know what that floating wire factory might suspect. But you have to admit ... having a computer for a boss isn't as bad as what we had thought. Remember that little blonde a few weeks ago Tom?" one of the men, a bit on the heavy side, remarked.

"Yeah," continued the smaller of the two, "she was some dish Fred! What a party ... but I would sure like to be the boss, like it was back in the old days, instead of that computer ... imagine! Commanding both Earth and Luna from way out there beyond Venus ... what a job!"

The old man resumes his place behind the board and radios his report to Joe...the computer designed by the smaller nations of Earth to prevent global destruction through its own arsenal of highly advanced weaponry.

A few days pass before the silence on Lunar Relay Station 3 is again disrupted by sound from the radio. The voice coming through the speaker is barely discernible as it relays a message.

"Sole survivor ... having difficulty breathing ... will make a complete report of Earth ...

"... barren of life as far as my infected eyes can see ... I am mutilated beyond all hope of recovery ... radiation burns over 90% of my body have commenced eating away my skin, changing my appearance.

"... water is contaminated with radiation, but I have the damndest urge to drink ... all food is gone except for scraps of plant and animal tissue here and there.

"I am shrouded in almost total darkness due to the thick blanket of clouds covering the Earth, no doubt caused by the Big Bomb when it was accidentally fired.

"As the atmosphere is being drawn into space daily it is becoming harder and harder to breathe ..."

The old man presses a red button on the board before him so the frail voice is transmitted to all portions of the moon complex. The two men in the room with him turn their heads slowly in his direction.

"Do you think he will last long, Professor?" Fred inquires.

"Not possible, I can't understand how he has lasted this long. Chances are he won't last the day ... you hear that? Seems to be a slight change ..."

"If there be any wouldst help a poor sole I wouldst that they do so quickly, for thou can'st stay for too long 'ere on this world where ... what be this? It looketh not like what I have seen before. What be ye? ... thou dost

not answer ... can'st be thou art an instrument of the Devil? ... thine own tongue shall tell ... what art thou?"

"Can't we help him? It seems to me Dr. Eugebert was right when he predicted that after the 'Big One' was dropped anybody left alive would repeat history in reverse ... but he didn't know how right he was," Fred commented, letting his belt out another notch.

"If you two will remember ... when the bomb exploded a few days ago it light up the whole sky. Of all the pieces of radio equipment on Earth it's a miracle at all that even the one he has still works.

"Earlier I tried to contact the man. I found that either his set wasn't receiving, or the fool just doesn't know how to operate the thing and is just babbling away near it," the old man explained as he turned his attention back to the receiver.

"What meanest thou? Caesar is dead? thou liest! Caesar be the greatest, the invulnerable ...

"Yea verily, it is I whom thou seekest. I be Eric the Red. Why doest thou whishest me? ... art thou real? or art thou just playing in my mind? You looketh like ... but that cannot be ... who is that beside you? ... the one with the babe in her arms ... you are ..."

"Incredible." The old man murmurs. "He seems to have passed through several stages while we sat here listening.

"If we follow through on Dr. Eugeberts theory then, the next stage should prove to be very interesting indeed. He should become what he was before the Earth was born. Wait ... he seems to be talking again ..."

"Muga junga la strap fran dref naf..."

The transmitter falls silent as the three gather around the secondary sending unit ... the one which places them in direct contact with Joe.

Each man relays to the massive computer what he has learned and heard ... as the last man completes his report he fails to disconnect the microphone from the circuit and it remains in the 'ON' position.

"Well, Fred," he turns to his friend and says, "that about does it for life on Earth. The poor guy finally met his maker. The only thing left to do now is to...let's see now, there's you, me, the professor, and twenty women over in complex 'B' ... now if only that blasted computer would quit monitoring our movements all the time we could get down to business!"

Somewhere in the depths of space near Venus an almost silent moan seems to emanate from a giant metallic cylinder. The cylinder changes its course minutely and slowly drifts toward the sun.

## INVASION FROM WOLFRAM

It had begun like any other day in June, hot, humid, with a slight breeze from the East ... but it sure didn't end that way! When I awoke I showered, dressed, ate, and started for work as usual. I walked to the station, caught the eight-o-five bus to Cleveland. I took my seat next to a man as the bus got rolling, and asked him what the latest news was.

"Says here in the paper," he replied, holding up the first section of the Morning Herald, "that a couple of people saw some mysterious flying objects hovering over a lake last night. A few actually say they even saw it land."

"Where did it say the lake was?" I asked, looking briefly at the paper.

"Lake Erie ... that's where I'm heading now."

"Guess my boss wouldn't mind if I tagged along for a follow up on the story."

Two hours later, the bus pulled in at one of the service centers and refueled, we got a bite to eat. I turned to my new acquaintance as we walked toward the cafeteria.

"You order the food, I have to call my boss and let him know where I am."

"OK. but make it fast, after we eat we have to get going, the bus only stops for a few minutes. If we keep traveling at the speed we have been we should reach the spot where that UFO went down in an hour or so."

"Hello? Is Mr. W.G. Ferdinand there?" I asked when I heard the receiver lift.

A moments silence, then.

"Yes, this is Waldo Grover Ferdinand, Central Security United States."

"This is Karl Warburb, agent 003, assigned to case 33344328, the UFO sighting in Wisconsin. I'm traveling with a guy that goes by the name of Paul Metchinkoff. Relay me all the info you have on him. I'll be staying at the Cajal Royal Motel in Milwaukee."

"Will do ... Anything else?"

"No. Not right now." I replied as the receiver went dead.

An hour later the bus pulled into the Cajal Royal Motel. Paul and I found a room to stay in, and while I took a shower, he went to get a paper. When he came back I suggested we tour the countryside in the morning.

A messenger came while Paul was in the shower and handed me a message. I read it over. As Paul came out I said "Sram."

"Sram." Paul replied. "Woh did uoy dnif tuo ohw I saw?"

"I made a call at the Oasis, remember?" I said. Then holding up the message, "here's the answer I received."

"That's how you knew I was a..."

"A secret agent? Yes. I also discovered that you were working the same case as I. Did you find out anything new on that UFO?"

"Nobody seems to know anything about it except the old woman who reported it."

"Woman?"

"Yes. I made a visit to the place where she had been living and discovered she was living like a hermit in the woods near the lake."

"We'll visit the place tomorrow morning. But this time, while I'm in the house talking to her, you scout around outside and see what you can come up with."

"Now that we've got that settled, let's call it quits for the night and get some sleep."

I awoke abruptly to the heat of the sun striking my unprotected face. Sitting up I looked around, couldn't find Paul. The window was open, a cool morning breeze blowing the spray from off the lake into the room. The door was ajar and I could hear the noisy drip, drip, drip of the bathroom faucet. I dressed, ate, and showered ... not quite in that order ... then went outside to look for Paul.

My first stop was the main post office --- the clerk on duty hadn't seen him. I checked the corner store and found he had come in, bought a paper, then taken a taxi from. I went to the other end of town, via taxi as well. I found Paul waiting in front of the news tower.

"Where have you been? I've been looking for you," he exclaimed, walking in my direction.

"Where have I been? ... I've been looking for you! Where have you been?!" I answered as we sat down on the bus bench.

"I went out to get a newspaper and took a taxi back to the motel. You weren't there, so I thought I'd come here. I thought you might have gone to see Miss Harper. That's where I was heading when I saw you pull up in the taxi."

"What was in the paper? Anything good?"

"Sure. Read page one and see what we started yesterday by asking all those questions."

I took the paper he offered and read the headlines:

INVADERS FROM PLANET X ON EARTH!

RUN! THE INVADERS ARE HERE!

MILWAUKEE FAVORITE CITY FOR MONSTERS!

"I'm going to have a talk with those editors and tell them to quit printing this rubbish. Do you know where their offices are?" I asked looking up at the building behind us, which housed the Milwaukee Printing and Publishing House.

"Twenty-eighth floor," Paul answered, stretching his neck, searching for the appropriate floor. Then pointing, "Up there."

"You stay here and talk to the editors then, I'll take a look at Miss Harpers' house ... I get vertigo."

"Sure. I'll join you in a little while then."

I had been waiting nearly an hour at the Harper home before Paul joined me. I went up to the door and knocked. We wanted to see if Miss Harper would let us look at the sight of the UFO landing.

I kept knocking for several minutes before entering. Hastily I called back to Paul to join me.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Look," I replied, pointing to a skeleton.

"You don't think that's Miss Harper, do you?"

"No, it couldn't be. I talked with the druggist at the corner store this morning when I got the paper. He said she had come in early to have her prescription re-filled for her heart condition."

Wait ... what's that in the hand?", Paul asked, reaching down and picking up the object clasped in the hand of the skeleton.

"A vial ... with some pills inside," I said, rotating the bottle in my hand, watching the tiny pellets roll along the curvature of the glass.

Turning the bottle until the label appeared I read:

TAKE 3 PILLS DAILY.  
ONE BEFORE EACH MEAL.  
MORNING, NOON, AND EVENING.

We got back in the rented car and started to town. We located the druggist and asked him if the bottle we found was the one he had issued earlier that day.

"I'll check", he said, pulling out a huge register from beneath the counter. He turned a few pages, stopped, ran his finger down a column of numbers until he reached what he sought. He turned to us. "Why, yes, I gave these pills to Miss Harper for her heart about eight this morning. How did you get them?"

"We went to her cabin this morning, found them lying near-by," Paul threw over his shoulder as he walked over to the newsstand.

"She must have dropped them as she was leaving to go on vacation. I'll give them to her the next time I see her," he said, placing the bottle behind the counter.

"Karl. Look at this!" Paul exclaimed, pointing to a picture in the paper.

"Looks like some kind of rocket," I said, as I paid the cashier for the paper.

As Paul drove us back to Miss Harpers' house, I studied the picture in the paper minutely. The object in view was hidden partially by trees and swamp, but enough of it could be made out to determine that it was not one of ours. It was cigar-shaped and had three blue fins protruding from the lower half of the main body. The nose was pointed and had the same tint as the foliage around it. In one of the fins was a small opening. Near this opening were several mounds of dirt. The caption under the picture read:

WHAT CAN THEY BE? THIS PHOTO TAKEN AT FIVE O'CLOCK THIS MORNING  
NEAR LAKE MICHIGAN. UPI WIRE PHOTO.

We arrived at the Harper home in short time and parked the car.

"Karl! Come here quick!" Paul yelled from the doorway.

"What is it? ... I don't see anything," I said entering.

"That's just it! Where's the skeleton!?! There's no trace of it."

"Well," I started, stepping through the door, "let's scout around the woods and see if we come up with anything."

We had been searching for two hours when we entered a clearing. In the middle stood the ship that had been pictured in the newspaper.

"Do you think?..." Paul asked, peering around the bole of a tree.

"Only way I know to find out is ... but be wary of those mounds near the base of the ship. I don't like the looks of them."

We had advanced mid-way to the ship when Paul let out a cry.

"That mound over there moved!"

"So did that one!" I exclaimed, pointing in the opposite direction.

"We gotta get out of here ... but we should get a sample of the mounds to take back with us ... Snazzles ... look at that!"

One of the mounds had started splitting at its center. It spit out a small metallic band which struck a near-by tree. The bark on the tree started peeling away, then turned to liquid. We hesitated momentarily, looked at one another, then left the clearing in a head-long dash for its edge and safety in the forest beyond.

"Moving what!" Mr. Ferdinand shouted over the receiver.

"Moving dirt mounds, sir. Or at least that's what they appear to be to me. We're going back tonight to get a sample of the outer surface for further study. We will send it to Washington," I said, bringing the receiver back to my ear.

"Uh huh ... by the way, the scientists here agree that the ship must have come here from Wolfram."

"Where's that? I never heard of it."

"It's located in the Cappella Star System. Seventh planet from the sun."

"We'll send you a sample of the mounds then in about an hour," I said, placing the receiver back in its cradle.

I walked over to the sporting goods store and joined Paul, who had purchased a couple of Elephant guns and some ammo. We had previously decided that only one of us was to take the journey back to the woods to get the samples. I was the one who had drawn the shortest straw, so I was to go.

I saw the mounds a few seconds after entering the clearing. I managed to make my way around the back of one of them. I noticed that on that side of the mounds was a large opening. I scraped some of the body elements from this opening before climbing inside the mound itself.

Inside I could see row upon row of shelf-like structures housing several lead-lined jars. I opened one of the jars and found millions of white bugs inside. I secured the lid and quickly made my exit.

It was a lucky thing I decided to leave when I had. No sooner had I exited than the hole closed.

Back at the motel I met with another agent from the service who had been sent to retrieve the samples I had taken. I gave him half of what I had collected, the other half I gave to Paul to process in our own makeshift lab.

"What's that?" Paul inquired, pointing to the jar.

"Something I discovered inside one of the mounds."

"Inside?"

"Sure. There's a two foot opening in the rear of the mound when it spits out the metallic bands. I climbed inside and discovered hundreds of these jars. I took one to study further."

"Look like maggots to me," he commented, turning the jar in his hands.

After hours of experimenting Paul commented: "These maggots are sure powerful little devils."

"I see what you mean. Seems like they consume anything you place them on, besides their original container. What are they composed of?"

"So far I have been able to break them down into the following known substances: Sulfuric Acid, Kendrillium Acid, and Hydrochloric Acid."

"No wonder they destroy everything they touch! What's the jar made of?"

"I don't know yet ... maybe Chicago will have the answer."

"Chicago?"

"Labs bigger there than in Washington."

\* \* \*

"That's funny," I commented, looking out the window.

"What's funny?"

"On the radio this morning the weatherman said it would be sunny and clear. Outside it's black as night."

Paul arose from his chair, walked over to the window and looked out. When he returned his face was pale.

"What's the matter?"

"The ... entire parking lot ... is ... full ... of ..." he stammered, then fainted as the lights in the room were extinguished.

I walked from the window where I had been standing to the one Paul had been looking through. I looked out in time to see one of the dirt mounds suck the skin from the body of a man lying on the ground. I decided then that something must be done to prevent these mounds from further destroying human life.

I took the Elephant gun and shot at the mound through the window. The bullets had no effect, they seemed to be absorbed by the creature. Paul came to at the sound of the gun. I asked what we should do next.

"We must fill some bottles with a substance opposite that which those little maggots are composed of. Then we must throw them at those creatures. We detonate them by remote control and..."

"Yeah. I see what you're getting at. The stuff will counteract what's inside the creature now and vaporize ... when do you think we can have the stuff ready?"

"A few days."

"Can't you get it ready any sooner?"

"No. I have to mix the chemicals slowly or a reaction will set up and vaporize me."

Three days later the mounds had taken over Milwaukee and had moved on to Chicago. Paul and I tried to keep ahead of them and warn the people in their path in time to evacuate. We succeeded in most towns along the way, but there were some where people just didn't believe us until it was too late and they were destroyed.

After the chemicals had been mixed and placed into the bottles we threw the prepared bottles at the mounds. Taking a chopper we detonated them from the air.

Billows of green smoke rose over the infected area. Loud bubbling was followed by complete silence. As the smoke cleared I looked below on the city of Chicago.

"It'll have to be cleaned of the green goo, but we stopped them 'ol pal."

"THAT WAS ONLY OUR FIRST GENERATION, MY FRIEND." Paul began. "I AM THE SECOND ... WE SAW OUR MISTAKE WHEN WE MET THE FIRST OF YOUR KIND IN THAT CABIN IN THE WOODS. WE HAVE NOW ADAPTED OUR SHAPE TO YOURS, UNTIL WE ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE OVER. THERE ARE MILLIONS JUST LIKE ME THAT ARE LANDING. WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR US TO UNITE WE SHALL TAKE CONTROL OF THIS PUNY LITTLE PLANET!"

Hearing this I threw the control box of the chopper out the door and we made a rapid descent to the ground below. Paul, or the creature he had turned into, was destroyed on impact. I was somehow thrown clear and landed in the lake. I received a broken arm and leg. I wish that I too had died in the crash because I knew what I must do when I get better ... search out and destroy the aliens here on this planet before they take it over!

**DEEP SPACE VOYAGE**

KERPLUNK, KERPLUNK. The drops of rain spattered the surface of the newspaper as it lie upon the porch.

U.S. TO SEND FIRST DEEP SPACE PROBE TODAY!

The light above the porch peered out from beneath the dense fog. A young man opened the door slowly and picked up the paper. He looked up at the sky, dense clouds hanging there were only now beginning to dispel. Scratching his head he yawned, then went back into the house.

"Lift-off in two minutes," blared the voice over the public address system.

Near the tip of the rocket a door slowly swung shut. The man who had closed it took his place before the control panel inside. As he sat there, he gave one last glance around to determine if everything was set for the journey. His co-pilot was seated next to him, members of the crew occupied the three beds to his right, and the other beds to his left were empty. Everything in order, he thought to himself.

The Co-pilot leaned toward him and whispered.

"Well, John, this is the big one. We'll be first to explore the depths of space. How do you feel?"

"... a little jumpy. There's only one thing that's bothering me ... what IS out there?" the pilot replied, keeping an eye glued to the TV monitor before him displaying the outside of the ship.

"We'll know soon enough ... there's the confirmation on lift-off." Mike said, pointing to the green light flashing above the screen. Checking to see everyone was strapped in he pushed the button next to the light.

The roar of the booster rockets became deafening as the framework of the large ship shrieked and groaned under the forces pushing it upward. The five members of the crew were pressed deep within their acceleration couches as gravity increased and they were rocketed skyward.

The blackness of space crept in around them. The men mopped the perspiration from their foreheads as the pressure on them was released as the ship reached the edge of space, gravity releasing its hold.

The three men lying in beds arose and moved to one of the portals to catch their first glimpse of space. They saw below their planet, further out in space, their sun ... the one that seemed so large when viewed from the planet on a summer's eve. As hard as they looked though, they could detect no stars or planets. The men looked at each other and then walked up behind the pilot.

"There's something weird going on out there, Mike." One of the men said, tapping the pilot on his shoulder.

"Why do you say that, Tom?"

"Tell me what you saw last night when you looked into the sky..."

"The moon, stars, planets ... what are you driving at, Jimmey?" Mike replied, looking up.

"Turn on the outside camera and you will see ..."

"I still don't see what this is about ... but, if you want the scanner on, Paul, then I will oblige you and turn it on. Not only to quell your fears, whatever they may be, but because I was about to turn it on anyway." Mike replied, setting the switch to the 'ON' position.

The center of the dark screen began coming to life as power was applied. The cold blackness was replaced by an image of a fiery sun and the planet it was illuminating.

"What do you see?" asked Jimmey.

"Nothing but the sun and our own pla--n--et .... NOTHING BUT THE SUN!!! Where are the rest of the planets and stars? Where's the moon? What is this?" Mike asked, looking blankly at the screen before him.

"Radar has picked a barrier of sorts, sir." John informed Mike.

"Barrier?"

"It doesn't register on any of our instruments, but it's there ... you can see it from here," John said, looking through the portal.

Mike released the speed control and the ship remained motionless in space momentarily before plunging downward toward another barrier. Mike applied power from the auxiliary rockets when the main motors failed to slow the descent. With the combined power of both sets of motors the ship was able to check its rate of fall until it encountered the barrier moments later with a soft thud.

Try as they might, though, the men could not re-launch their vehicle into space, the gravitational pull that held them was too great. They were stranded until they found some solution to get more power to the engines of their ship.

After testing the atmosphere of the barrier three of the crew ventured onto the surface. The atmosphere outside the ship was found to be much like that inside, so helmets were not required for the three.

Mike, John, and Jimmey started off in the direction where the two barriers met ... not far from where the ship had come down. Once there:

"Hey, Mike, you notice the texture of the surface we've been walking on?"

"Yeah, you'd swear it was a floor ... and look at this other one ... it feels solid enough, almost like a wall. "

"Look over here, you two," Mike joined in, pointing to their right, "I think I've discovered a passageway."

The two joined Mike and, after searching upward to locate the top of the passageway, then right to discover the opposite side of the passage several hundred feet further down the wall, they entered.

"Radio Paul and let him know what we've discovered. We'll go on ahead," Jimmey said, looking to John. "Catch up to us after you've made the report."

After several long hours of searching for the end of the corridor the men approached a well light area several acres square. It took several days to explore the region, and everything they encountered was of gargantuan proportion. Mike stood next to what was discovered to be the tip of a straight pin. The point was several inches in diameter and Mike could rest an arm on it, so high off the floor did it rest.

After several days of exploring John discovered what appeared to be a diary lying on top of one of the tables in the room. The three men, utilizing some fallen string lying in a heap on the floor, were able to cast the string to the top, where it caught the head of one of the nails holding the table-top down and stuck fast. They then laboriously made their way to the top.

After hours of turning large pages in the book and reading each Mike made his report to the ship. When his report was completed each man, in turn, cast himself from the top of the table to the floor, hundreds of feet below. An explosion was heard in the distance as ship and crew exploded. The following is an excerpt from the last page in the diary which lay open:

JULY 18,2309. The time on the experimental planet at this entry should be somewhere in the middle 1900s. We shall soon place upon the planet a life form similar to that which already exists there, but one to whom they shall respect with utmost honor. The species of life we created several years ago should now be reaching the point where they will be sending exploratory ships to other systems in their galaxy ... which we are producing now in hopes of being completed before they send their ship on its

first exploratory mission. If they should send up a ship before we are ready ....

Tomorrow we shall place another form of life on this planet ... we shall call them HUMANS. I have been selected to represent the MALE, or masculine form. Eva Ni Flick has been designated to represent the feminine, or FEMALE form. Once on the planet we shall create a noble race. This day is coming to an end, so I must rap up this report to the Council for Bettering Humanity by saying that although we have progressed a lot toward our understanding of the human race through these experiments (as viewed through our remote microscope ... I understand that the race on the planet refers to it as a moon ... ), we still have much to learn about the life forms we classify as the unpredictable Humans.

ADAM DIVI,  
Scientist for Research  
And Control of Pests  
3rd Division of the National  
Council for Bettering Humanity

**DRIFTERS**

EVERYWHERE I turn, everything I do, I feel their presence. At night I hear silent breathing as one of them sneaks around behind me. I quickly turn, but only catch a shadow.

Out of the corner of my eye I sense something as it moves among the bushes. I turn and catch a glimpse of another fading shadow.

Each morning I awaken with a start as the sun suddenly shines upon the arid plain I sleep upon, night after night.

The soil grows warmer each day that passes.

Sol, the last of the stars left by the Aliens, radiates in uneven heat waves by day, caressing what is left of our moon at night with its ghastly bluish glow. Under this soft glowing I seek out the hiding places of the Aliens.

I grow weary now, but dare not close my eyes. I fear that my time has come. The Aliens will find me and destroy me, as they have the others who had sought them before.

I am reminded of how my brother had looked upon them, and of how his eyes had melted. His body had been charred when we discovered it minutes later. They took from me all I have ever loved. My friends and family destroyed. They had done this while I was engaged in underwater activities for our government. Before they took my dearest friend though, he was able to tell me of their awful deaths.

Encased in my lead shield I suffer only lack of water and food. The Aliens know sooner or later I must venture from my protection to gain the sustenance I crave. When I do, they will pounce upon me and show no mercy.

I feel weak and can barely budge the door to my box-like shelter. I feel the Aliens creeping toward my body even now. Sooner or later they will swarm in through the tiny crack next to the door and attack me. When that time comes, my end will be but seconds away.

\* \* \*

The day is drawing to a close, there are still no signs of life, other than my own, here on this planet. Tomorrow I will end the agony I have endured thus far ... for tomorrow I shall eat, drink, and die with a full stomach. I end this message to whomever shall find it, using what little strength I have left to write and place it in the bottle I have covered with lead to protect it from the Aliens.

John P. Warbow,  
2nd Commander 3rd Battalion Solar Patrol,  
WWIII consultant to whatever world is left,  
The sole survivor of the war...  
That is, until tomorrow.

**KAWN DU SUN, ON THE FROZEN PLANET***CHAPTER ONE*

A subdued vibration shook the ship as Kawn edged the red lever forward. Down the empty corridors came a low, ominous, growl, as the engines sprang to life.

Gazing at the view-screen Kawn was elated to discern a slight movement amidst the starry field, outlining the blackened hull of his ship.

At first the movement was slight then, as he continued advancing the lever, the speed increased.

The pulsations of the stars began to slow, yet their intensity increased as the ship picked up speed. Soon even the faintest stars ceased pulsating and shone brilliantly. Kawn directed his gaze elsewhere as the stars began forming a living sheet of color.

Kawn reached up, brought down the special goggles to screen out the harsh light. Again he saw the outline of the ship amidst the fiery backdrop.

He could see the nose taking on an azure glow. The partially diffused light crept along the fuselage, back toward the control room.

The temperature started rising. Kawn turned the air-circulating unit up another notch. The temperature held briefly, then resumed its climb.

Readjusting the small dial on the unit brought no change in temperature. The heat kept mounting. He turned the dial "FULL-ON" then returned to the view-screen.

The nose of the ship had vanished! A sparkling red-green flame sprouted where it should have been. The flame slowly started working its way back toward him in the control room.

Kawn turned his chair to face the corridor to his left. He could smell the ozone burning heavy in the air. The corridor became bathed in a red and green light, then it too disappeared! In its stead grew a red-green flame.

Kawn momentarily glanced at the screen. Only the fins and control cabin remained, the rest of the ship had vanished. He felt a sharp pain, then found himself drifting back through time to when he had first received word of the project.

He had been working one of the mineral mines on Elato. A messenger had come from Banners ... the first scientist to have employed a perpetual motion machine.

Banners sought him, Kawn Du Sun, as test pilot for the new HyperSpace Rocket Engine. To be tested in the depths of space. Naturally he had accepted.

It was only after extensive training that he had been allowed aboard the 'Centar'. The ship that was to allow him to pass into HyperSpace using the Stellar-Drive.

He had just lifted from Vega III on a trial run when Banners contacted him, telling him to proceed to Phase II ... the actual transition into HyperSpace.

Kawn was brought back to reality as flame passed over him. He found his eyes resting on the view-screen. The forward cabin had completely disappeared. As the flame passed the fore section of the ship began reappearing.

The red-greed flames had turned blue-green and, instead of consuming the ship, were now rematerializing it. Tightening his jaw he looked at the speed monitoring equipment ... the indicators had gone completely off-scale! They had been calibrated to the speed of light, but were registering beyond! He had successfully broken the barrier. The Stellar-Drive was a success!

## CHAPTER TWO

Satisfied with the new engines Kawn set about bringing the ship back to space-norm. Stretching upward he grasped the red lever, slowly bringing it back, notch-by-notch, along the curved track until it was again at its starting position, eyes glued to the screen to detect any irregularities during the reversal.

At first he detected only ghostly images as the ship lie outlined against the fiery background. Soon, however, the tail began glowing, then vanished beneath a blue-green flame. This consumed the aft-section of the ship in its journey forward, leaving quasi-colored emptiness in its wake.

He again passed through the warp in space, returned to space-norm. The nose of the ship was gone, but was quickly returning as the red-green flame passed over it. The multi-colored background was replaced by thousands of twinkling lights forming the new galaxy Kawn had entered.

One star, singled from among the millions, shone like a beacon. It was toward this Kawn turned his ship. He twisted one of the dials on the control board and was rewarded with a view of a room, lined with several cages.

He zoomed in first on one cage, then another, checking for changes which had occurred since transition through hyperspace. Finding none he shifted his observation to the plant life in the room. Some showed no signs of alteration, while others had begun to turn a deep green ... but, if you weren't looking this might go undetected.

Adjusting the scanner he observed other areas of the ship. First food and storage rooms, several decks below ... nothing, no visible change. Next the library, recreation room, sleeping quarters. No changes here either. It was not until he was scanning the empty storage rooms that he came across something out of normal. A faint glow emanated from one of the rooms on level six.

Crossing to the arms locker he pulled out one of the Polar-Ray guns, strapped it to his waist, then ran to the shaft leading down. The Polar-Ray guns had, on numerous occasions, proven effective against hostile forces. When the beam encountered an object it influenced the electro-magnetic field which surrounded the object, immobilizing it. These guns had been developed under the direction of the Intra-Vegan Research Center, on Vega II.

Entering level six Kawn noted a bluish-tint surrounding one of the doors. Light flowed around the door, into the corridor beyond. Moving swiftly he crept close. Hesitantly placing an ear against the door he waited for some sound from within ... none came. Cautiously repositioning the bar securing the door, Kawn slid it to one side, then rolled into the room beyond.

Kawn wasn't prepared for the sight which met him as he entered. Facing him, his first visitor from the depths of space. A creature whom he was to bring back as ally in the fight against the Equalites ... that strange half-Vegan race who wanted the entire universe for themselves.

In the center of the room, wrapped in fur, poised a huge, hooded snake. It slithered across the metallic floor, coming to rest several feet before him. Bracing himself Kawn leveled the Polar-Ray gun.

"Fear me not. I come on a mission of peace," the reptile projected ... for though Kawn had heard the words, they had not come from the gaping mouth where he saw the tongue constantly test the air.

"Where do you come from? ... How did you get aboard my ship?" Kawn asked, moving cautiously to one side.

"I am of Snog, but you may not yet be aware of this planet as you have but recently arrived from your own system. The Vegan Star System, I believe. Here, in the Guod Star System, we are the ruling race. All lower forms of life, including what you call 'Humans', do our bidding.

"My crew will join me momentarily. We will guide your ship back to our planet, where we shall disembark and you will take your place with the other slaves." concluded the snake, slithering across the floor, coming to rest against a cylindrical object in the corner ... one which had not been there during takeoff!

"Now wait just a minute! What makes you think I will let myself become your slave! I do not intend to let you, nor any of your crew, become my master. Nor do I intend letting you stay aboard my ship ... your welcome has expired," Kawn replied, pressing the trigger.

A crimson ray shot from the mouth of the weapon, toward the snake. It comes within a few feet before angling toward the floor and being absorbed. Kawn fires again, with much the same result. He advances toward the creature and throws the weapon. It rebounds off the force-field several inches from the creature. Kawn advances but finds himself repelled within inches of the creature.

"As you see, your efforts are futile. I am protected by this field ... you cannot pass through it, nor can any of your 'weapons'. Now go ... back to your cabin, I am in command of this ship. You will not be needed until we reach our destination. Now leave ..."

Kawn turns and leaves the room, defeat heavy in his heart. It is only thoughts of revenge that keeps him in check. Again he traverses the passageway back to the control room. Taking his place at the controls. Though try as he might, they won't respond to his touch. He sits back, deep in thought.

One of the points of light within space moves away from the others. Slowly growing larger and larger, until it completely fills the screen. As it grows, more and more features are revealed. It isn't long before the screen is filled completely. Kawn is able to make out sea and land formations of the planet.

One of the smaller land masses swings into view as sky replaces land. The descent starts. Land becomes populated with dark-green masses which, as the ship keeps descending, begin forming large forests. A small clearing near the outer edge seems to be the destination.

Settling slowly to the surface the ship comes to a complete rest on the matted vegetation. His host appeared in the cabin, motioning Kawn to follow. They descend the inner workings of the ship, emerging through one of the lower air-locks.

"You see before you," comments the host, "my homeland. We lived in peace with the galaxy for many years. Now our planet is losing its atmosphere and we are forced to search for another on which to live.

"Our mission, at this outpost, is to capture all passing ships and convert them for our transportation needs. We need many transport ships."

"If you have taken my ship for that purpose, what do you intend doing with me?" Kawn inquired, following the creature down the ramp toward the ovoid structure.

"Should you pass our usefulness test, you will become one of my own servants."

"... and if I fail?"

"Why, of course, we would have to dispose of you."

As they approach the ramp a translucent panel before them rises, revealing a darkened interior. Kawn and Bomo, his snake-host, enter the darkness. The panel slides silently shut behind them, sealing out the radiance of the sun. Feeling his stomach surge upward momentarily Kawn sees the darkness surrounding them dispel as again a panel rises and light from beyond filters in.

Kawn finds himself in a narrow corridor, being pushed along by more of his snake-like hosts. As they make their way toward an opening in the wall it seems as if the creatures pushing and shoving him along the corridor were

running their tentacles over his entire body. Once inside the room he was again left alone with Bomo.

"We must await the results of the tests," Bomo said, curling itself around one of the many posts in the room. Some thirty or forty of these poles were in the room, each spaced five to six feet from the next and extending fifteen feet to the ceiling above.

"You mean that mauling I received was some sort of test?"

"Our 'Elite' only sampled your body tissues and are on their way to the 'Processor' with them. It will analyze these samples and let us know if you are 'Stable' or not. If you are, you shall be 'processed' as our servant."

"... and if not? ... gii-i-ik!" Kawn replied, running his finger across his throat.

"Well, not quite so barbaric ... we do have the Dispossessor-Scrambler."

"What does it do? ... or should I ask?" he inquired, not relishing the reply.

"It extracts the spirit from your body, then reassembles your body into useful objects ... such as this Frolu I am resting against. This happens to be one of my friends, who had been killed in an accident."

One of the Elite gestured toward itself with the tip of its tail. "Bomo?"

"Ah yes ..." Bomo replied, taking the thin tube from the messenger. "... the results of your tests ... I see that you have passed excellently ... you have been recommended to serve Kor, our leader. Yes, you have indeed been honored. Come ... you must be prepared."

"Prepared ...?" Kawn asks, meekly following his host.

"Yes, you must have the 'Disrupter' implanted in your nervous system. Once this has been done we need fear you no longer. Any hostilities will cause the device to be activated ... causing your nervous system to break down."

Kawn remains silent the remainder of the walk to the transportation chamber. As they enter the room the light is extinguished. When Kawn appears on the surface of the planet he is alone.

He looks out across the plain before him. Here and there, dotting the landscape, are small scrubs. Silhouetted against the green evening sky stands a reddish-black mountain. It is toward this that he turns his steps.

## CHAPTER THREE

Kawn ate and rested many times before reaching the foothills of Torg, the mountain range he had seen from the transporter. He roamed through its foothills many days before coming to that which he sought ... another transporter. Enters he adjusts the dials he has learned control its operation.

A solid sheet of darkness surrounds him momentarily, then once again he is shrouded in light. He exits into a triangular room. A dozen Matos (the snake-like creatures inhabiting the planet) greet him. One of them ripples its broad neck in his direction.

"Well slave, what is it?"

"I seek Kor, leader. I have been selected for him. I was told by Jot, the messenger, that he resides in the Caverns of Torg."

"I am Kor. I was not aware Zitmar, the implanter, had completed surgery on another ..." the green-hooded Matos began, uncoiling from its Frolu.

"That is because it was never installed. Your faithful Zitmar lies molting at the exit to his laboratory." Kawn replies, backing himself against the wall.

"What!! How can this be! Perhaps you wish to end your days here rapidly ... by being here without the protection of the 'Disrupter' you have sealed your own doom," Kor projects, as it and other Matos begin slithering toward Kawn.

"Hold your pace Python! or I shall rid myself of you and your friends ... just as I did your personal assistant in his laboratory." Kawn said, stepping forward.

"EXPLAIN!" Was the single thought projected by the Matos.

"It was while in conversation with your assistant, Bomo, that I learned you had to have the 'Disrupter' implanted in all slaves. I asked myself 'why?' ... you outnumber the slaves 20 to 1. What I came up with was so simple, I dismissed it. Then I began thinking. All the facts I gathered started fitting together.

"Your need of protective clothing, like on the ship, was quite perplexing. At first I'd thought maybe your body temperature was lower than mine ... then I remembered, you are reptiles. Reptiles are cold-blooded. You should have been able to adapt to temperatures on my ship when you boarded, but you persisted in wearing coverings.

"I saw then that you must exist on a planet which circled a star much closer than my own planet did. I find the climate here quite warm, but am able to adapt. Hence your need for protective clothing while you travel upon its surface.

"Piecing the information together I determined that it wasn't me you feared, but what I could accomplish if I weren't under your control. As could any slave.

"The hood about your head protects you from external forces which I might bring against you ... except one. Temperature. I would not have thought it possible, after advancing far enough to conquer space travel, that you should have such a vulnerability.

"I still had to verify this weakness. I had such an opportunity on the way to the Laboratory.

"We had stopped at one of the rest areas ... another of your weaknesses I presume. I noticed a pool of water where several slaves were bathing. I felt its temperature. It was warm to the touch. I secured some in the vial I was to fill with my own fluids when the time came.

"Bomo lead me to the transportation chamber. He said we were being transported to his operating room. We started our ascent. Unnoticed I opened the container of now cooled liquid. I threw it toward his head.

"I heard a high-pitched screech, then silence. I was astonished. I had only meant to stun, not kill, Bomo. I learned how to operate the transporter and brought it to the surface. I left Bomo to his fate and started toward to my ship, where I picked up this ..." Kawn concluded, brandishing the weapon he had concealed behind his back.

"And that is?", Kor inquired, uncoiling to its full height.

"This is the Diatisolometer from my ships cooling unit. Its main function, to cool the storage rooms on board and keep them below -210°F ... so you see, if one setting doesn't freeze you ... another will.

"But I have not come here to kill. Had I wished to, I would have done so when I first had entered."

"That would appear to be so," Kor stated, slithering back around his Frolu. "... why is it then, that you have come?"

"I am in need of your help. If you could tell me the problem you are having with your atmosphere, I might be able to find some solution ... with the help of my ship computer. I am certain we can reach some mutual agreement ..."

"If you are able to restore the atmosphere, we would be grateful. But ... how may we help you?"

"Our galaxy is plagued by a race called the Equalites. It is their desire to control the galaxy and use it toward their evil purposes. If we become allies, you could have them as your slaves and rid us of their menace," Kawn replied, lowering the nozzle.

"So it shall be done then. Come ... I will show you what we have learned of the storm which shrouds our galaxy," Kor replies, leading the way toward the transportation chamber.

A translucent panel slides into place as the two enter the darkened room. When the panel rises again the duo step into what Kor calls the 'Science Room'. Kor quickly moves to a corner and wraps one of his tentacles around a small object, passing it to Kawn.

"This is a complete breakdown of our planets atmosphere. And this ..." he says, handing Kawn another sphere, "is that of the storm around our planet. You will find the decoding machine over there ... on that bench," his tail lifts toward a small globular module sitting atop one of the benches lining the wall of the room.

Seating himself behind the indicated device Kawn inserts one of the small discs. He pours over the data displayed on the small screen before him. Making notes here and there he scans through the text. Inserting the next disc he again makes notes.

The second disc pops out after completing its cycle and Kor replaces the discs into their holding racks. Kawn informs Kor that he will return to his ship and feed the information to his computer, returning shortly with the findings. Kor agrees and Kawn leaves, starts his journey back to the ship.

Kor slept and feasted many times before again meeting with Kawn in the Caverns of Torg. Kawn explains his plan. The Matos are to use their captured ships to transport the frozen atmosphere from one of the outer planets to their home planet. There the atmosphere will slowly melt, bringing life back to the planet. While this is happening Kawn, and another group of Matos, will construct a machine which was to dispel the storm surrounding the planet. Kor is delighted and says they should start at once.

On the far side of Krom a lone ship departs. Moments later the Matos space fleet leaves the planet. Aboard the small ship, two human-like creatures, gaze intently at a small screen before them. Pointing to a large dot one turns to the other.

"This, then, is the transport ship for the 'Trans-fixer' ... the machine which will retain the atmosphere?"

"Yes," the other replies. "It is being transported to Snog by Kawn Du Sun from the Vegan Star System. He intends to disrupt our storm covering Krom and replace the atmosphere, all this in return for their co-operation. Therefore, Romlu, I suggest that we destroy him and that machine before they have a chance to use it. We have not completed our mission here, so I needn't remind you of the consequences of being discovered ..."

"Point well taken, Tarna, but I think this stranger is different from those we have subdued in the past. We must take care how we handle him. I do not like what we must do, but it must be done ... if we are to maintain secrecy."

Several dots on the screen before the two start moving rapidly in one direction, others remain on a steady course. Tarna nods to the reclining figure.

"You see ... it is as I have said. They separate. This group ... toward Emos, to collect frozen gases, and this group ... toward Snog with the 'Transfixer'. We will leave orbit and follow until it is time for us to be seen."

A lone ship falls into a course parallel to that taken by Kawn as he proceeds toward Snog. Away from Krom twelve ships turn in their journey toward Snog. Twelve distinctive dots upon a triangular screen aboard the command ship 'Centar'. Twelve dots ... and possibly a small, piece of space-dust, which occasionally floats across the screen --- or is it space-dust?

## CHAPTER FOUR

High above the frozen surface of Emos several large cargo ships orbit patiently. Down on the surface the Akela-trams, servants to the Matos, gather in the frozen Methane and Nitrogen, readying it for transport to the ships above.

"Captain," the ovoid speaker blared, "landing party secure, mining has begun. Any orders before we go into transit?"

The slender body of the Matos Captain slowly uncoils from around the Frolu and advances toward the control panel on the wall. His tentacles run rapidly over the wavering lights on the panel.

"Proceed as planned. Contact me after you have completed stage one ... Krothan, out."

\* \* \*

Manipulating the stick before him Kawn swung the 'Centar' along-side the 'Kreeton'. The ships briefly touch, then momentarily separate, their magnetic grapples brought into play, and the two are secured. On board the 'Kreeton' the air-lock opens slowly. A long, thin body drifts slowly across the gap between the two, entering the 'Centar'. Safely inside both air-locks close and pressure builds, sealing the ships against the vacuum of space.

"I trust you will find the accommodations to your liking, Kor. I hope you will not regard me as rude, but we must get under way at once. Time is valuable."

"Your remarks are duly noted, Kawn," Kor replies, raising his tail ever so slightly, "and as you have stated, we do have much to accomplish. So let us stop this idle chit-chat!"

The two space travelers leave the air-lock and proceed down the main corridor toward the heart of the ship. They come to a cross corridor and follow it left to the ships cargo hold. Here numerous cartons are marked with 'Trans-Fixer' in large, two-inch, black letters. The TRF was to be assembled from the holds of the Vegan Star Ship 'Centar' and the Matos Star Ships 'Kreeton', 'Latos', and 'Melton'.

Minutes turn to hours as the project gets underway. Hours to days. Days to weeks. Still the TRF isn't complete. It is not until two months of continuous labor pass that the TRF is ready for testing. Floating between the four Star Ships, its twelve elliptical sides gleam under the light of Guod.

"Well, Kor," Kawn said, eyeing the entire three-mile length, "our work here is complete. Soon we'll send the TRF down into your planets atmosphere and see it work. Let us enjoy the comfort of the 'Centar' until it is time."

"It is a rare occasion when I agree with what you inferior creatures may say, but for once ... you're right!"

"Commander Sun, sir ... I have an important message from the 'Tremill'," voiced one of the semi-humans rushing into the control room.

Turning to meet the messenger Kawn accepts the thin silver film from him. He inserts it into a slot in the control board and watches the oval viewer as one of the Akela-trams comes into view.

"We encountered an object on our scan-screen as we departed Krom. The object paralleled our course when we turned toward Emos. It remained out of range until 0830 this morning, at which time it began traveling on a course which would take it into the very mist of the fleet circling Snog. Its intentions are not clear, but I suspect foul play ..."

As the report ends the picture fades from view. When the silver film appears again at the slot Kawn turns in rage to Kor.

"Why was I not informed of this sooner!"

"You know how unreliable these Akela-trams can be. They probably picked up space-dust."

"Commander? If I may ..." the messenger queried. "On my way here I passed through the navigation room on board the `Kreeton'. I overheard the crew discussing something about an image that had appeared on their screen. They said that they could not identify it as any ship they had encountered. Maybe this was what the 'Tremill' saw?"

"Let's check the scanners and see what we come up with," Kawn suggested, leaning over the control panel, adjusting several knobs. "What's this? ... Kor? ... look at this! Seems someone is more than interested in what we are doing."

"Let us wait to see what they do. Remember, above all else we must protect the TRF!" Kor stated as he joined Kawn. "If we are to win we must know their plans. Let them make the first move."

\* \* \*

"Krothan! ... Captain Krothan! ... wake up!" the attendant shouted, shaking the limp snake-like body as it slowly uncoiled from about its Frolu.

"What is it?" the Captain lazily drawled resuming his place at the controls.

"Our mission is complete. The cargo holds are full of the atmosphere from Emos. We must proceed to Snog."

"I know what we must do, you insolent Akela-tram! Prepare for immediate departure."

"This has already been accomplished, sir. We but await your orders to rejoin the main fleet."

"!\*!? ... Well, do so!" Krothan said in rage, attempting to regain his composure ... having lost most of it hibernating the three days they had orbited Emos. "There are only two days left before activating the TRF. Our mission is to be there before its activation. If we are to be successful, we must proceed with haste to join the fleet."

With that the attendant left the room, running through the ship, issuing orders to insure everything was in readiness for the journey.

\* \* \*

"Romlu, come quickly! The 'Centar' has pulled out of formation and is heading directly toward us!" Tarna exclaimed, peering intently at the screen before her.

Sliding from his sleeping pad Romlu advanced to where Tarna was standing. After gazing at the screen for a few seconds he said: "We have been discovered! We must attack!"

\* \* \*

"Sir, the object is turning. It has set a collision course for us," the observer reported, gazing at the small ovoid screen.

"Good ... train all Electron Beams on it and fire when I give the signal," Kawn directed, swiveling in the acceleration couch. "Kor, station three of your ships around the TRF and have the rest follow us into battle."

"It will be as you have said."

\* \* \*

"We are coming up on the fleet sir," the Akela-tram at the scanner stated, as the commander slithered into the control room aboard the 'Manther'.

"Are we close enough to use convergence beams effectively?"

"Another twenty minutes, sir," came the reply.

"By then it will be too late! We need more power! Already the invading ship has taken the 'Centar' in tow," hissed Krothan, manipulating controls on the screen to his right.

"We can dump our cargo and come back for it later."

"No, that would defeat our prime objective, to get the atmosphere to Snog. There must be some other way we can get more speed out of this ship." Krothan remarked, searching the controls before him.

"There is ONE way, sir. But with all that frozen atmosphere in the hold it is too dangerous to consider"

"Well? let's have it. What danger, and how do we do it!"

"We could dismantle the scanners, remake them into 'Q-Ray' receptors. That would force us into manual navigation. Once we had the receptors working they would pull us toward Guod at an increasing speed. There is one drawback. We would have to place the receptors on the same deck as the frozen gas. If the receptors burn out or can't be controlled during shut-down the gases will begin thawing. They will expand the ship beyond its maximum dimensions, escaping into space," the Akela-tram concluded, resuming his seat at the control board.

"We could monitor the shut-down from the control board ... how long would it take to convert?" Krothan demanded.

"Five minutes," the young man replies, pausing enough to make some computations.

"Do it! Proceed with the change."

\* \* \*

"Fire all weapons!" Kawn screamed, watching the invading ship closed in.

"Something has happened to main control, sir. Our guns won't fire," the Akela-Tram yells through the turmoil.

At that moment all living entities aboard the three Matos ships, and aboard the 'Centar', become immobile as a blue beam of energy sweeps through the fleet. Moments later a new arrival is alongside the 'Centar' and two new passengers board her.

"Release the beam, Tarna." Romlu said, taking up position.

Tarna threw a switch on the box she had been carrying and the crew returned to life again.

"What was that? ... We have company. Kor!" Kawn said, eyeing the latest additions to his crew.

"What have you done? Why are you here?" Kor asked, slithering close to the arrivals.

"Hold your position Kor, or I will again freeze you!" Romlu stated, turning toward the reptile.

"You know who I am? Then you must know of our mission here. What is it you seek?"

"We tried preventing your kind from coming to our galaxy by placing a storm around your planet. Tried to eliminate you at your home base. We have not been successful. With the help of this human you will successfully undo what we have created. It then became our duty to stop him and destroy this equipment." Romlu continues, directing his attention toward Kor.

"Why is it you wish to prevent us from coming to your Galaxy? We intend you no harm. Where are you from?" Kor asked.

"I can answer that," Kawn stated. "They come from my own Galaxy, I am at a loss how they managed to arrive before me. They represent part of the group we were discussing earlier, the Equalites. Their purpose is clear to me. They are not satisfied with taking over our Galaxy, now they intend doing the same to

yours as well. This only strengthens why you must join us in an alliance. We cannot let any one race rule, it must be a co-operative effort of all races if peace is to be maintained."

"Enough talking," Romlu stated, "let's get this ship under way. Tarna, go aboard our ship and lead the way. You, Captain Sun, direct your ships to follow, or Kor here gets wasted."

"Kor?" Kawn inquires, turning toward the Matos.

"Do as he says, Kawn." Kor replied, looking down the barrel of the weapon pointed in his direction, "At the moment he seems to have the upper hand."

"Where to?" Kawns asks, turning to Romlu.

"Vega II."

"Why there?"

"That's where our headquarters are located. What better place to bring our illustrious prize," Romlu stated, indicating Kor.

"Prepare to get under way..."

\* \* \*

"Fire all forward convergence beams!" Krothan hissed.

"All beams activated ... direct hit amid-ship!" replied the Akela-Tram bending over the scanner.

"Release the Stun ray and start shutting down those Q-Ray receptors now! You ..." Krothan hissed at a passing Matos, "take a few of the Akela-Trams and board the 'Centar', regain control and turn it back over to Kor." Krothan then slithers back to the control station, having watched the destruction of the invading ship through the portal.

"Yes-s-s-s." comes the reply.

"The gas is expanding, sir!" an Akela-tram shouts, indicating a wavering needle on one of the instruments.

A moments silence, then Krothan directs "Open all exterior hatches."

"But that will release the gas into space!"

"I am aware of that! It is so cold in space that the gas will not expand. At our present speed and heading the ejected gas will continue traveling until it encounters the gravitational forces of Snog. Once there it will begin to dissipate into the atmosphere ... on schedule I might add," Krothan replied.

"Brilliant, Krothan. But what about the TRF?"

"... ah yes," Krothan replied, listening through a pair of head-phones, "even as we speak, control of the 'Centar' has returned to Kor and they are turning back to Snog. The TRF will be operational as the gas arrives."

The Akela-tram leaves the room and hurries about his duties. Krothan slithers back to his Froflu and looks out the portal. He sees the lead ship 'Centar' turn in its course and head toward Snog.

\* \* \*

The frozen atmosphere was released onto Snog as the TRF is placed in motion. The gas begins to melt, bringing life back to the planet. The surrounding storm began disbursing and the Matos were again able to go back to their home to live.

Several of the Matos ships were equipped with the 'Stellar Drive' and accompanied Kawn to his galaxy. Here they met with leaders of the Intra-Vegan Research Council. A formal agreement made and now, with information where the headquarters of the Equalites was, it was simple to stop their revolution. The Equalites were transported aboard the Matos ships, which returned to Snog. They remained eternal slaves to the Matos, after they had been 'treated' of course.

**THE DOOR**

I had seen it happen --- the two cars had been traveling at a high rate of speed down the highway. One, the blue Ford, had applied its brakes in order not to strike the child crossing the street in front of him.

The green sedan had also applied its brakes, but the driver had lost control of the car and ended up in a tailspin, hitting the Ford, and landing on top of it. I stopped my car, as did a few other motorists, and quickly ran over to the two cars to see if I could render any assistance.

One driver was already dead, the other badly injured. As I looked closer I discovered the injured driver to be my sisters' husband. His mother and father had died three years ago, he had married my sister two months later. I heard a siren in the distance.

As the ambulance pulled up I walked over to the driver and asked to sit by my friend. They said it would be alright. Jim looked up at me.

"Mike?"

"I'm here, Jim," I replied, as the ambulance sounded its siren.

"Everything's so dark. I can't see...wait a minute. I do see something. There's a slight haze though. Yes, now I can see it more clearly. There are trees of sorts. Tall, green trees.

"Wait...no...it can't be...yes, it is...it's mom and dad. They are searching for me. They see me now and are motioning me toward them. I feel as if I can reach out and touch them.

"They are leading me somewhere. The forest is becoming brighter, but there's no sun. A slight mist covers the ground. I can barely see the clearing ahead. Mom is smiling, dad keeps waving me on. They are becoming clearer now. I can feel myself rising in the air. I have almost caught up to mom and dad, but now they are running. I see a magnificent house. It seems to be floating above the small clearing.

"I DO feel myself rising. The house is getting closer. The door is very strange, I have seen none like it before. There appears no breeze now as I walk through the door. The hallway has no lights, but is illuminated. I feel as if I am in some sort of dream, but yet it feels so real.

"A door is opening. Inside the room are two doors. In the middle of the room a figure sits behind some sort of desk. As I step to one side of the room it seems unbearably hot, yet the other side seems normal. I hear mother calling. The judge rises and motions me to sit. A jury in magnificent clothing walks in. One of them hands the judge something. The judge walks over to one of the two doors, opens it. Inside the door is standing a-a-a"

Jim's hand went limp. I called to one of the doctors, he came over and examined Jim. He confirmed what I already suspected.

"Sorry, he didn't make it."

**LEGEND OF THE MIGHTY SOTO***INTRODUCTION*

IT WAS THAT ICY DAY in December of 1292 that Soto had come, staggering, to the rear of our castle. He had been covered in the skins of various rodents when we had first laid eyes upon him ... peering at us through the rusty iron grating, at the servant's entrance.

His hands were smeared with some ill-smelling fluid to help keep them warm ... it was no wonder we had been able to detect his presence long before he appeared. His shoes were scarred with the grooves of many twigs and pebbles. Over his left shoulder, he slung a ragged piece of material he referred to as a coat. His entire 5 foot 8 frame was covered with a fine layer of newly fallen snow. His knotted chin spouted a slightly gnarled black beard, and his long, matted, black hair fell several inches around his broad shoulders. His right wrist had several long, jagged gashes, healed over by time. Over his left eye, a three-inch scar, reminder of some recent battle.

At first the sight of this vagabond banging on our gate had aroused our anger and we would have sent him on his way. Then he spoke in that soothing, low, voice. Convincing us to let him rest from his journey.

We were taken by his deception and bade him enter to freshen himself. We told him to leave quickly though, before the King heard of what we had done. He agreed and followed inside.

Refreshed by a long bath and face trimmed, the stranger proceeded to don the clothing he had carried in the bundle slung from his shoulder. The new attire was far better than his old.

He covered his well developed legs with some loose fitting apparel made from finely woven linens. On his feet he had placed a pair of sleek, deep-cut, heavily polished black boots, of the finest hide we had seen in years. Around his chest a sash of the same finely woven material used in the pants.

Fully dressed, the stranger asked for audience with the King. We were happy to grant this ... for while he had cleansed himself, the King had requested to see this stranger who had gained entrance to his castle so easily.

The stranger came with us and we entered the antechamber to the courtroom. He stood by the inner door as it closed, waiting the King to call him forward. As we were not allowed to enter the main court we again found ourselves listening outside, peering through holes.

As the doors close the we heard the King:

"Advance. Tell me, where went the poor man entering my castle earlier this 'morn?"

We heard diminishing footsteps, then the strangers voice.

"Most honorable Lord. I ask forgiveness for the way in which I presented myself. When I started my journey, I appeared much as you see me now. Through misfortune, I was reduced to the beaten sole which you witnessed standing before your gate."

"Please, tell me what has befallen you on your journey. For what purpose have you come?" the King stated, leaning back on his throne.

## I

*Soto tells his story*

My name is Hwang Ni Soto. I have spent most of my life in the Third District of Xoar, in the NorthEastern Mountains. Four years ago I set out to destroy an evil force. I had been apprentice wizard to one of the lesser overlords.

I started training after my parents were lured away by powerful spirits from the under-world. I have devoted my life to searching out these evil spirits so I may destroy them and release my parents.

I took up practice with one of the local overlords, serving him well. My learning progressed smoothly until one day my lord was confronted by the same spirits which had taken my parents. They called themselves the 'Three Seekers'.

Before they took my lord I had tried my feeble powers against them. They sat back, mocking my attempts, laughing and joking. When I completed my array of spells and incantations they rendered me unconscious through one of their own, then fled the castle ... but not before leaving their mark on my right wrist.

Later I recovered and searched the castle for my lord. Although I combed the castle from Dungeon to Guard Towers, I could find no trace ... my lord was indeed, a captive of the 'Three Seekers'. I determined I should free him, as well as my parents, when eventually I rid the land of them.

Gathering my belongings, I set out on my quest. I heard them mention that my lord would work in a cave, near the highest mountain in the land. I set my trail toward the west ... toward Chi Twan, land of the High Mountains.

Several times I came upon small villages where the three had passed. Always I tried to repair their damage. At first, it taxed my powers to cure but a few. As I grew accustomed to their spells I grew stronger. I was helped by other wizards. They would teach their spells in trade for mine ... thus we were all able to profit from the effects of the 'Three Seekers'.

I became so efficient that news of my ability spread throughout the kingdom. Before long, as I came upon a village I was greeted and treated with respect. I would accept their hospitality and they would send me their smitten kin-folk who had fallen under the spell of the three.

I soon ran out of villages and came to the edge of our kingdom ... the Great Forest lay before me. I was to leave my homeland and travel to Chi Twan, land of the High Mountains. Here I was to fight inhabitants of the forest. Scratches and cuts, a grim reminder of my battles. I remember one incident vividly.

I had been traveling through the forest several days, nothing big crossing my path. I decided to bed down for the night in one of the larger trees.

As I started up the bole, toward the low-hanging branch that I had selected to spend the night, my ears detected a low grumbling, deep within the darkened depths. Through the leafy foliage above a pair of green eyes glared at me.

I jumped to the ground. Looked back at the branch. Those eyes were not as wide as they had seemed, but had moved further out along the branch. I made out the dim outline of a great cat against the soft glow of the moon. It appeared to be crouching.

I started backing toward a pile of wood I had gathered. I was a few paces from the pile when the feline launched itself into the air, straight toward me.

I went down under the flailing claws and tawny hide the moment it struck. I was out only a moment ... but that was enough to get a gash above my eye, where the cat had grazed me with its paw. As I regained my senses I tried to rid myself of that windmill of destruction.

Clamping my legs over its back I applied pressure. Forcing the mighty jaws away with one hand and groping with the other for one of the pieces of wood near-by.

Grasping a thick branch I brought it down time and time again on that growling face. The feline soon began flinching and cowering beneath my attack. I was not long taking advantage of this lull. Using both hands I brought down the cudgel, this time to the side of its head.

The cat was stunned ... but that was all the advantage I needed. I pulled myself free of its limp form and, using my remaining strength, brought the club down fully on its head one last time. The wood pierced the skull and lodged there, protruding like a horn.

Weakened, I was still able to build a small fire. To keep away more prowlers. I pulled myself into the tree. Nestled in the branch previously occupied by the cat.

Most of my clothes had been torn in the fight, I decided to wait until I was clear of the forest before donning better attire. I transversed the remainder of the forest with little difficulty and came upon a broad plain covered with large brushes and trees. It was to the mountains in the distance, however, that my eyes had drifted. It was there my final goal lie.

I noticed a large dwelling to my left. It was toward this I turned my steps ... hoping to find shelter for the night. I arrived, was taken in, and allowed to refresh myself. Then, my lord, I was brought before you.

"You must be tired, my son. Please ... rest, eat. We shall hear more tomorrow. Go ... return on the 'morrow, after you have rested. You shall be treated with respect during your stay here. But let us eat, sleep," the King replied, stepping down from his throne, advancing toward Hwang.

Departing the room the two dined in yet another antechamber. After dinner Hwang retired to his room on the third floor of the castle.

Let me explain something about the castle to which Hwang had come seeking refuge for the night. The first level was devoted to business affairs of the kingdom; the second, housing servants and helpers; the third was left for quartering the King and Queen, and their guests.

Hwang was not the sole occupant of the guestroom but shared it with two others. A Knight, traveling from one of the kingdoms far to the north, and a priest, from a neighboring village.

A stalwart native of the north, the Knight had taken residence a few weeks before the priest had arrived. Due to his bulky frame he had barely been able to squeeze through the opening to the room. The priest had managed quite successfully to slide his bony body through. He had taken leave of his town earlier and arrived seeking help from the king to rid his town of non-believers. He succeeded in swaying the King, and was to return to his town the next day.

Unlike the priest, the Knight had stopped for a brief rest on his march to the East, to free a comrade from the rule of an evil King. He had postponed his departure when he caught a glimpse of a beautiful maiden. He had discovered her one day while looking through the courtroom window. She had been picking flowers. It turned out that she was the daughter of the King, so he had kept his love secret.

The room in which these three found themselves had its center common to all. Four doors led out, three to sleeping chambers, the fourth by which they gained entrance.

It was little wonder then, when Hwang stepped into the room he was greeted warmly.

"Welcome stranger, what business seek ye here in our fair land?" asked the Knight, rising to his feet.

"I seek the help of the king, kind Knight, to aid me in my quest to destroy an evil in this land," Hwang replied, stepping into the room.

"Come, rest your weary bones," said the priest, indicating one of the teakwood chairs resting against the wall.

Listening through the door we heard Hwang take a seat and then retell his story. His new acquaintances growing interested as he went along. At the end the priest spoke:

"It seems we support much the same goal. You, to rid your kingdom of this evil; I, to rid my town of believers in the secret Sect of Dann."

"The Sect of Dann?" Hwang asked, leaning forward.

"I have not always been a priest. For a short time I too was one of the followers of Dann. Let me tell you how I entered priesthood ...."

## II

*The Priest tells a story*

Shrouded in darkness a figure in the balcony overlooks the courtyard. As the figure steps into the light the crowd below begins to cheer. I speak and the people below listen.

"I have been called to pass judgment on a man. A man who has taken our idol. There can be only one solution ... death. This to be executed mid-day tomorrow on our day of feasting. He has until then to make known the location of our idol, lest he be given to Dann himself!

"I return to the Palace to visit Dann. I shall return for the execution." I leave as I had come, melting into the shadows of the balcony.

The people in the courtyard thin out, as the hours pass, until but a lone woman remains. She, seated on a marble slab beneath a shade tree, is joined by a cloaked figure. The two whisper for a few minutes then depart. I follow, remaining within the shadows of the balcony.

They follow a pathway along the stone wall enclosing the courtyard until reaching the entrance of a small building. They do not enter, but stop to chat with the sentry. He looks about hastily, whispers a few words, then points toward a tall tower in the distance. The man and woman nod, then walk in the indicated direction. I take the secret passage connecting the two towers and arrive shortly before they do. Again I hide myself from view, listening.

"You don't think you can get away with this, do you Dann?" inquired the man chained to the wall. The bull-necked man standing in front of him strikes another blow to the side of his face. He continues. "That's why you deceive the people into thinking it was I who had stolen your precious stone. When you tell them I failed to speak, then kill me; none will suspect the truth ..."

"Shut up!" Dann screamed, caressing the mans face with his huge gnarled hand. "I'll ask you one more time, Tepu ... join forces and end this battle."

"By the gods that are high on high. I've seen a goat with more sense than you. A duck from the tenth sea would cross the Red River to see such an idiot ..." Tepu began.

Dann landed a balled fist against the lower jaw. Tepu sunk low in the chains momentarily, then slowly regained his feet. Dann struck him again. Again Tepu slunk against the wall, held there by the chains. He slowly regained his feet and stood, glaring at his tormentor.

Dann pulled one of the hot irons out of the near-by fire, bringing its glowing tip within inches of Tepu's face.

"You WILL NOT taunt me!!" he said, drawing the yellow point across the face, leaving a crusty trail in its wake.

"Y-e-o-o-o-w!!!" Tepu yelled, as the tip penetrated his skin.

"I'm going to leave, Tepu. Contemplate the fate that awaits you in a few hours ..." Dann said, climbing the circular stairway. Passing through the door he bolts it from the outside and his footsteps slowly diminish.

The sun set on the horizon, casting shadows on the tower I was in. One shadow, extending into the courtyard, covers two people lurking within the foliage. They move toward the tower, keeping within the shadows. Each flattened against the rounded wall, cautiously make their way to the top. The man advances to the door and slides the wooden latch soundlessly back along its track. He enters, then the woman.

They descend the circular stairs and cautioning the man in chains to remain quiet, quickly release him from his fetters. The three make their way up the stairs and to the security of the bushes growing near the stone wall. I follow silently.

"Now that we are safely away," the man was saying, "tell us, Tepu, where you hid the stone."

"I'll tell you what I told Dann ... I didn't take the stone. I was set up. He sent for me. I came to the castle from my crusades in the East to see what he wanted. When I arrived I was shown to an antechamber next to the treasury. I was alone in the room the length of time it takes the sun to pass midway across the sky. When Dann arrives he accuses me of having taken a golden idol. I deny the charge, and am thrown into the tower." Tepu stated.

"But why? What did Dann hope to gain?" the woman asked.

"He knew my crusades against the evil ones were influencing the people. It was his desire to make it look as if I had stolen the idol in my attempt to thwart the evil ones. I was to be sacrificed in the morning. Later a new idol would be constructed ... of course it would be made from gold in the treasury. Dann would declare there wasn't enough gold to build the new idol and force the people to pay more taxes." Tepu continued.

"What if the people suspected the idol had not been stolen?" the man asked.

"Dann would have produced a statement, signed by me, saying I had stolen the idol ... only after torture could he have wrought such a statement. He is very clever and needs to be removed from office as Court Tariff Collector. His ways are evil."

"Evil?" echoed the woman.

"Yes. I have heard of his dealings with the underworld. He can call spirits from Eldor to do his bidding. It was he who brought us the evil ones. They serve him."

"What was that? ..." the woman asked, hearing a twig snap in my direction.

I poked my head out from behind the tree.

"Is that one of Danns' agents?" the man asked Tepu.

"Yes," Tepu replies, watching me advance toward him. "I wonder what he wants?"

"I have followed all that has happened since Dann left, Tepu. I have misjudged you. I see you have only been a victim of Dann. I have been restless many days, seeking a direction to turn. I see it must be away from Danns' evil clutches. In order to flee his reach I will take up priesthood, seeking the forces of good to battle him. I hope my will can be as great as yours, Tepu," I said, sitting on a stump.

Tepu came over and laid a hand on my shoulder. "If we could only believe you ..."

"If I enlisted the aid of the King?" I said looking him in the eye.

"If you could turn the King against Dann, indeed our joy would be great!" the man and woman said together.

"Then so it shall be," I said, rising. "I shall do all I can to persuade him to join our cause and free us of Dann. When shall we meet again?"

"When the moon has passed thrice in the sky we shall be in the forest of Del," Tepu announced.

"Until then ..." I said, and left, disappearing into the forest.

I made my way from the courtyard and soon appeared at the entrance of the castle. I was admitted into the presence of the king and was able to persuade him to join forces and ban Dann from the Kingdom. That was two days ago.

"Then today is your last in the castle?" Hwang asked.

"Yes," the priest replied, leaning back on his stool.

"It seems," Hwang stated, "these evil ones might be the same whom I seek. I shall join you tomorrow in your journey."

"I would be honored by your company," the priest replied.

"I too," said the Knight, joining hands with the others, "shall join you. I need to get out of this castle for a time."

"I will be honored to have you both as company," the priest had said.

We hear rumblings as the three prepare for their journey on the 'morrow. Leaving our listening posts we, too, rest. The next day the three approached the King with their plan. He wishes them well on their quest and bades them stop back when they had time as he enjoyed their company and stories.

We did not see them for several months. Then Hwang arrived at our gate seeking shelter for the night. His attire was not as ragged as when first we had laid eyes on him, but did show troubled times. His boots no longer glistened under the light of the sun but were marred with the scratches. His hair fell about his broad neck in jagged strands, not the same evenness we had noted on his first arrival. He had acquired a small scar from the knuckle of his second finger to his wrist on his left hand and had picked up a noticeable limp.

We bade him refresh while we notified the King of his arrival.

A short time passed before Hwang presented himself to the King in the Throne Room.

"Come, come, Hwang. Join me ..." the King was saying as we listened outside. "Tell me where are the priest and Knight who accompanied you?"

"The priest is dead. The Knight should arrive soon, he has business to take care of," Hwang replied.

We heard footsteps grow fainter as he approached the King.

"The priest dead? How did this come about ..."

**III***Let us rid ourselves of Dann*

As I sat astride my horse waving to the people in the castle I could not help feeling I would return under much different circumstances. My two companions, Bakacha the Knight, and Tol the Priest, rode a few strides ahead, yet I felt they were even more distant as I watched.

Bakacha, dwarfing the horse given him by the king, rode in silence. It had a black patch near its left ear and Bakacha made this primary target for his stubby fingers. He entwined them amidst the hairs and pulled gently upward, bringing an extra burst of speed ... leaving me and Tol behind.

Tol looked diminutive atop the steed the king had selected. His long legs falling well below the belly of his mount brushed its hindquarters. The horse broke into a gallop.

I could tell he had something on his mind. Occasionally he would bring himself to reality, jerking involuntarily in the saddle. I sensed something amiss, but wasn't sure what. I would find out soon enough.

As I caught up the two were again exchanging differences.

"... you ever do! Why don't you hold your mount and restrain him from galloping off. We are in no hurry to get to the Del Forest," Tol was saying.

"Aw, don't give me that. The sooner we get this over, the better off I will feel. I shouldn't have come in the first place. What made me open my big mouth!" Bakacha replied, releasing his fingers from the thick hair on the horses neck.

"Knock it off you two," I said. "We have Dann and the 'Three' to contend with."

"Oh ... all ... right," Bakacha said, reluctantly.

"... uh huh ..." Tol echoed absently, eyes staring in the distance.

We rode on, only the chirping of birds breaking the silence. We made camp at the edge of the Del Forest, awaited word from Tepu and his companions. It was not long coming.

It was early morning, I was coming off the night watch. I heard a rustling of leaves to my right, turned to investigate and was knocked to the ground by a blow from behind.

When I regained my senses the sun was shining on my face. I tried sitting up, but discovered my hands had been fastened behind me with some sort of strap. My feet were trussed in a like manner. Turning my head, I looked to my right. There, standing a few feet distant was Tol, talking to the whom I suspected as Dann. There was a uneasiness about this man, Dann. I had encountered this feeling before, but where?

"He's coming to ..." Tol said, turning toward me.

"Good ... good ... We can proceed as planned," the other said.

"Alright, Soto ... up. On your feet," Tol said, stretching out a hand to help lift me.

"What's going on? Where's Bakacha?" I asked, struggling to gain my feet.

"You really think I could cross Dann? Nay, I was under orders to seek you out. To bring you to him. You have been a menace, curing all those whom he sought to destroy. I was on my way to the mountains when I had stopped to rest at the castle. When you appeared I changed my plan.

"As for Bakacha ... he has been taken to the tower. He patiently awaits your company. Ha ... ha ... ha ..." Tol replied, slinging me over the back of my horse like a sack of flour.

We rode through the forest for hours before coming to a clearing. Near its center stood a wall, several hundred feet high, enclosing a tower which spiraled upward. No movement came from within. We crossed the drawbridge

spanning the moat. Head down I was afforded a splendid view of the slime covered water. I could sense the movements beneath its surface.

Once inside a large wooden door was lowered, sealing us. My feet were unbound and I was pushed along a passage, leading downward. We stopped at a door secured by a large, wooden bar. The door was opened and I pushed inside. Then the door hurriedly closed and bar replaced. I heard a movement behind me.

"So, traveler, we meet again..." came a voice from the dark.

I turned to see the bulky Knight advancing toward me.

"I see the priest has provided yet another surprise," he said. "I was deceived much the same as you, Bakacha," I said.

"I was asleep and awoke to an evil stench, here in this cell. How is it you were captured?" the Knight inquired, rising from the cold stone bench and advancing toward me.

"I was on duty for the night. I heard a noise and was hit from behind. When I awoke I saw the priest talking to this other man ... I'm sure it must have been Dann. I was put on a horse and brought here. Do you know this place?", I explained as I greeted him.

"I have heard there is a tower in the forest where Dann rules. It is an evil place, where spirits of the dead linger," came the reply from a corner.

"And who might you be?" I asked, turning.

"I am Tepu, warrior," came the reply.

"I thought you were to meet us in the forest?" I asked.

"In the forest? ..." he questioned.

"Tol said we were to meet you at the edge of the Del Forest and together would destroy Dann at his palace of power." I replied, looking at him quizzically.

"Who is Tol?" he asked.

"The priest," Bakacha replied.

"Priest? ... you don't mean Fen-Tar do you? He was a priest once, long ago, before joining forces with Dann. This is Fen-Tar's tower. It was he who shoved you into this room ..." Tepu said.

"He told us he was Tol, that he was a priest ... had just become a priest ... after you had been saved in the tower by your two friends," the Knight said, looking toward the man.

"He said what? Let me tell you what happened at the tower ..."

I had been locked in Dann's tower for three days before I was visited by anyone. It was not Dann who had come, but Fen-Tar. He had me thrown into the tower because he wanted the land I had been living on. I wouldn't give in to him. So he had me locked up and took over my land, saying I had met with an unexpected end. He had come to taunt me but didn't know I had freed my hands of the straps securing them to the post.

"Well, Tepu, we meet again. This time there will be no escape." he had said, reaching toward the kettle holding the glowing stones that warmed the iron poker.

"I think not, Fen-Tar," I had said, pulling hard on the last strand of fabric binding my hands.

I was away from the post before he had time to apply the hot iron to my face, but not before it left its mark on the post. The wood still smoldering, Fen-Tar turned to me. I swung for his head with my left hand, he swerved in time to avoid contact. I lunged out again, this time with my right. He countered with his left and grazed my right cheek with one of the nails on his hand. It must have coated with a potion, for no sooner had I been scratched than I found myself lying on the floor, looking up at him ... immobile.

"You thought you could beat me, did you? Ha!", he had said. Then calling to the guards at the top of the stairs: "Put him in the cell until I have Hwang."

Unable to resist, I was dragged, into the cell. The door closed, then locked.

"If what you say is true, we must hasten our escape. We must rid ourselves of both Dann and the priest. Come, let us look for a way from this room," I said, surveying our surroundings.

"It is useless. I did much as you when first I awoke. The only way in or out is either through the door we entered, secured by the cross-beam on the other side, or the window ..." Tepu said, pointing twenty feet upward to the barred window.

I thought for a while in silence, then, reaching into the small pouch I carried, withdrew a small amount of powder and sprinkled it near the door. I withdrew several paces and began my incantation. Bakacha looked on, bewildered.

Shortly there was a puff of blue-red smoke and the door fell back on its hinges. Bakacha threw his weight against the door, opening it enough so we could pass through. The guard in the outer room, taken by surprise, was easy to subdue. We bound him in a strip of cloth torn from his uniform, left him in the room.

We crept up the stairs to the level above. Peering around the corner into the next room I found it empty. We crossed and continued upward. It wasn't until we had passed through several rooms that we began to hear voices. As we closed in they became intelligible.

"... spirits of the dead. Rise, be reborn this day."

As we listened I felt as I had when first observing Dann in the forest. Before rounding the corner I knew he was there, chanting those words. I also knew why I was feeling strange. I had the same sensation before ... when my master had been taken by the 'Three Seekers', that day in the castle. It was Dann's presence I had felt, much as I was feeling it now.

Turning the corner I quickly motioned my companions back along the corridor. There, gathered around a fire in the center of the room, were the 'Three Seekers', as well as Dann, and Tol. The room opened to the sky through a large ovaloid opening. Gray smoke from the fire rose through it, billowing as Dann threw powders into the flame. I described the situation to Tepu and Bakacha.

"They're all there. Dann, Tol, and the 'Three'. Together they are a formidable force. If we are to overcome them here's what we must do ..." I said and explained my plan to them.

Tepu left, departing the way we had come. We gave him a few minutes then entered the room. Tol was facing us, but it was not he who detected our presence.

"We have been waiting ..." Dann said, turning to greet us. "Where is the other? ... no matter. You wish to test your skills, do you? Let us begin ..."

Bakacha was sent reeling back into the corridor as Dann released a bolt of power. I rolled aside, ducking behind one of the partitions set throughout the room. Reaching into the bag I carried I brought forth one of the metallic globules. Tossing it quickly into the fire. Dann laughed heartily as green smoke began to fill the room. His laughter ceased shortly as he watched the 'Three Seekers' collapse near the fire. The chemical I had placed in the capsules worked well. That left Dann and Tol.

Bakacha re-entered, under cover of the green mist, and joined me where I hid. He handed me one of the weapons he had received from Tepu, who had returned. Tepu positioned himself against the far wall. We made ready our attack.

Holding the broad-sword Bakacha had given me in my left hand, I advanced toward Tol. Tepu and Bakacha kept taunting Dann from behind their positions.

I swung my blade, coming within inches of Tol. He countered with the edge of his sword, the resultant clamor echoing throughout the room. My blade slid effortlessly off his, coming to rest on the floor. I picked it up and prepared to swing again. My arc was cut short. I caught a flash of light from behind, then pain entered my left hand. The sword crashing noisily to the floor. I gripped my wounded hand. There was a deep gash on the back from knuckle to wrist. I turned to watch Dann advancing toward me, Tepu and Bakacha lay on the floor behind, motionless.

I looked around for a weapon. My sword was useless. The opening in the ceiling too high to reach, as was the door by which we had entered. That left the fire where the chanting had been held. It was contained in a huge basin, supported by three poles in pyramid formation.

Diving quickly to my left I grabbed the leg supporting the basin nearest Tol and knocked it with my leg as I rolled through, coming to rest on the opposite side of the fire. I looked up, saw the basin tip, then fall to the floor, spilling its contents on the astonished Tol. Engulfed in flame he started running toward Dann screaming at the top of his voice. Dann held out his right hand. A bolt of white flame shot forth, toward Tol. As the two met there was an explosion and a puff of blue smoke. As the smoke cleared, Tol was no longer in the room.

Dann and I turned to face each other.

"So it has come down to us, has it? Let me put you out of your misery ..." Dann stated, raising his arm.

"You will not be rid of me so quickly, Dann." I replied, limping toward him.

"What can you do, cripple!" Dann said, laughing, pointing to my leg. "You can't even walk!"

"You needn't worry about that, Dann. But you should, about this ..." I said, pulling from my pouch that which I had been saving for this moment.

"Where did you get that!" he cried, backing away.

"I have studied the spells cast by your ambassadors of evil, the 'Three Seekers'. They all had one common peculiarity. It was upon that which I had based my own incantations. As I began to cure more victims, I grew certain that when I met their master I could use the same potion I had used on their victims to rid me of his power." I concluded throwing a ball made of leaves from the Peasle Bush toward Dann.

The moment the leaves landed Dann started smoldering. Smoke emanated from his head, working its way toward his feet. A few moments later the flames had consumed him and no longer was the room filled with evil. I looked around, the 'Three Seekers' had started smoldering where they lie, moments later they too were gone. Tepu lie where struck by Dann, dead.

"What happened?" Bakacha asked, raising his head off the stone flagging.

"They're all dead," I said, helping him to his feet. "What happened to you?"

"Me and Tepu ..." he started, looking to where Tepu was lying, "... dead?"

"Yes."

"... we did what you had told us. Tried to keep Dann occupied while you attacked Tol. When Dann pointed his hand toward me I ducked behind the wall. I guess it took most of the charge, huh?"

"It was lucky you hid behind the wall. You can see, Tepu wasn't so lucky. It is over now. I must return to seek out my master and parents. What about you?" I asked, as we started toward the gate.

"I'll continue what I set out to do and rescue my friend." He replied, pushing up the log securing the gate, letting the door rise up.

"Need any help?" I asked.

"No, this is something I must do myself." He replied, turning toward the open road.

As we turned our different ways I couldn't help thinking I would miss this big Knight. Bakacha set off to rescue his friend. I turned my steps back along the trail we had come. Homeward, to find my parents and master.

IV  
*Epilogue*

"So he wasn't really a priest?" the King asked, climbing from his throne.

"No," Hwang said.

"I must watch whom I associate with. I thank you for stopping again. If there is anything I can do ..."

"No, you have done enough. Providing me a place to rest on my journey back." Hwang had said. Then we heard his footsteps approach the door.

"Have a good rest and a pleasant journey," the King commented as Hwang left the room.

We saw Hwang no more, but did hear stories of his skills. When Bakacha didn't return, we suspected he had been killed. One day a passing traveler told us he had seen him and that he had rescued his friend and others from the evil king.

One of the women Bakacha had freed took his fancy so he had taken her for his wife and settled down. But enough of this, the King has summoned us to prepare another meal ...

*(Original title: Vampire From the Year 2000)*

*PROLOGUE*

A LONE WOLF howls in the distance. The full moon rises slowly into the velvet surroundings of the Mid-Autumn sky. Dead leaves from the near-by forest crash heedlessly into vacant buildings as a strong wind springs from the NorthWest, toward the forest. The wolf stops howling, tail tucked between its legs, as a scream of terror fills the air.

The scream emanates from one of the deserted huts of the village. It stops abruptly. A faint sound of bubbling liquid fills the otherwise still night air. The windstorm vanishes as quickly as it came, leaving a slight chill in the air.

The only sound disturbing the night ceases. A glow radiates within the hut. The light quickly moves, disappearing into the forest. A figure, shrouded in darkness, is seen exiting the hut by a lone hunter, returning from the hunt. He recognizes the figure of a woman. Recognized, she advances toward him. Places a hand on his shoulder. The man looks horridly into her eyes as he discovers two abnormally long teeth, jutting from her mouth. Too late he recognizes the danger, as they sink quickly into his soft fleshy neck.

The woman places her lips over the pulsating fluid, spurting from the neck, lapping at it hungrily with her tongue. A few minutes pass, the man turns a ghastly white and drops to the ground at her feet. She looks toward the forest, then vanishes in a flash of blinding light.

**PART ONE**  
*(The Fang)*

The sudden splash of water from the surf breaking over the rocks awoke the sun-bather from a restful nap. The sleeper looks at her watch, then rushes to a near-by bathing house. Minutes later she exits fully clothed, running toward her parked car. She roars off down the beach, toward the highway, travels until reaching the outskirts of a big city, exits the main traffic flow, and takes a side street to a subway station. Purchasing a ticket, she rushes to catch the inbound train.

Finding a seat she waits for her stop, then exits rapidly. Watching the train pull away from the station, she makes her way to the street above, climbs into a near-by van and closes the door.

Withdrawing a silver key from her handbag she inserts it into a lock behind the seat and turns it. A panel behind her opens as she turns the key, revealing the rear of the van. In a far corner a point of light begins growing brighter and brighter, moving toward the front of the van.

The light touches the woman on the side of her neck. A faint sound of draining liquid is heard. The woman shows no emotion, but stares straight into the street beyond, eyes glassy, immobile. As the sound stops, the light retreats to the rear of the van, grows dim, then vanishes. The woman withdraws her key from the lock, slides the door closed, replacing the key in her handbag ... exits the van.

The woman enters a dimly light alley and waits. After half an hour a drunk stumbles into the opposite end and staggers toward her. She watches him come closer and closer. The bum, thinking her too frightened to move, smiles to himself ... but this smile freezes as she smiles back, revealing two abnormally long teeth protruding from beneath her upper lip.

The man starts to turn ... but can't. His eyes are glued to the woman's by a power he hasn't felt before. He feels himself drawn to her. She reaches toward him. Holding him with one hand, she tilts his head back with the other, covering the blue vein exposed with her pointed teeth.

The man winces and slowly turns white, dropping to the ground at her feet. She looks at him and smiles, blood still dripping from her mouth, then turns, whispers something into the wind, and vanishes.

\* \* \*

"I know it is hard to believe inspector, but I tell you I saw her approach the truck and get in. There was this flash of light. She gets out and goes into the alley. I see this guy approach from the other end of the alley. He turns, starts to run, then stops. He seemed to be fighting something. Then he turns and goes to the woman. She steps in front of him. A moment later he drops. As she turned toward me I thought I saw blood dripping from her mouth ... anyway, she turns and vanishes into the air," the man said, looking up from beneath the sweltering floodlights.

"You don't expect us to believe that story do you? ... We all know you didn't get along with Jako. You two had more than a few fights. Do you deny this?" the inspector questioned from behind the lights.

"No ... but I tell you I didn't know who the man was until you came to arrest me for his murder."

"We found a bottle of intoxicant in your possession when we arrested you. You were pretty well soused..."

"I purchased the bottle after I saw the guy die. I hadn't had a drink all night. Honest. I ran from there and hit the bottle."

"We know you're guilty, Joe. Fred ... lock him up."

"OK."

"I get one call, I know my rights..."

**PART TWO**  
*(The Claw)*

The dim moonlight filtering through the dark clouds outlines the tall, gaunt figure approaching the door of a small house. The figure reaches the house then raises and lowers the brass door-knocker several times, patiently waits for reply from within.

A light is turned on at one end of the house. Footsteps are heard approaching the door. The light above turns on and the door opens, revealing a short, half-clothed man.

"Henry Waster?" questions the figure outside.

"Yeah, what do you want?" yawns the short man, rubbing his stubby fingers through his unkept hair.

"Will you sign this ..." the tall man says, passing a pen and pad of paper to the figure resting on the doorway.

"What is it?" he asks, signing.

"Special delivery from Colorado."

Henry takes the letter and package, then closes the door. On his way back to the bedroom he reads:

DEAR HENRY:

I have found myself in need of your services once again. I am writing this letter to you through the bars of a jail-cell in Newton. I was witness to a murder committed by a vampire. No one here believes my story, so I am requesting your assistance. You will find a package containing your fee I am sending with this letter. Hurry.

JOE FREMNAT

Henry picks at the package with his short fingers, slowly unwrapping it. As he removes the last wrappings from the box the lid falls open, revealing the contents. Dropping the box to the floor he draws a quick breath. The objects in the box spread out before him. A silver bullet with his name inscribed on its side, a metallic cross, and a well-preserved ham.

\* \* \*

KNOCK! KNOCK! Knock! Joe hastily spun around to look at the door.

"Joe ... you there?" inquired a voice from the other side. "It's me, Henry."

Joe cautiously advances toward the door, buttoning his shirt. Slowly opening the door enough to see into the hallway beyond.

"Henry! Boy, am I glad to see you ... come in, come in," he said, opening the door fully.

"I thought you were still in jail. I checked the station, they said they dropped all charges and released you."

"Yeah ... seems their evidence disappeared."

"... disappeared?" Henry said, seating himself in a chair.

"You might say it got up and walked away ..."

"The friend bitten by this woman? ..." Henry asks, leaning forward.

"Yeah. They took him to the morgue and left him. When they returned he had disappeared. Without the body they had no case and had to release me ... but they are tailing me and watching every move I make."

"It's almost seven. You game for a little action?" Henry asked.

"Sure ... what you have in mind?" Joe replied, rummaging in the closet for his coat.

"Track us down a vampire."

The two left the room and exited the apartment building. They hailed a taxi and were soon pulling up in front of a tavern on the south side of town. The neon light outside flashed 'THE LIGHT' ... 'THE LIGHT'. Henry paid the driver and watched the taxi pull away, leaving them standing on the curb. Joe looked up at the sign.

"The 'LIGHT'?"

"You told me you had seen the woman vanish in a ball of light ... well, what better place to start?" Henry remarked, strolling toward the entrance.

**PART THREE**  
*(The Club)*

The moment Joe stepped through the doorway into the darkness of the club he knew something was amiss. Smoke hung heavy in the air, swirling to either side as they made their way past tables, toward the bar in the corner.

Couples they passed gave them the once-over. Others buried their faces in menus or turned away completely. Joe started feeling uneasy.

"I don't like this place, Henry. It gives me the creeps."

"Exactly why I chose it in the first place. I feel at home here ... so should the one we are searching for." Henry replied, taking a seat at the bar.

"Give me a beer ..." Joe said, taking a seat next to him.

"Make that two," Henry said, turning in his stool to observe his surroundings.

The dim light filtering through the skylight played mysteriously upon the smoke drifting about the room, casting dismal shadows here and there, outlining figures moving in the room. Joe turned his head as a light glancing off some jewelry clinging to the neck of one of the dancers caught his eye. The figure danced momentarily into the moonlight, Joe nudged Henry.

"That looks like the woman I saw in the alley. She seems different tonight."

"You sure it's her?" Henry asked, following his friends gaze.

"She looks different, but it's her..." Joe replied, squinting through the smoke.

Reaching into his coat Henry brought out a gun, passed it to Joe.

"Take this ... and the bullet you sent me," he said, reaching in his pocket. "If you have to use this tonight ... don't miss. Hit me in the head."

Taking the weapon Joe hurriedly places it in his pocket. "Why?" he asks.

"I've never tangled with vampires before ... wait, here she comes," he said watching the advancing figure.

"Hi. I'm Clerdi Du. I haven't seen you two here before," she said, taking a seat next to Henry.

"I'm sort of new in town. Name's Henry Waster," he said. Then, looking at the shiny object hanging from her neck, "you Catholic?"

"No, I keep this for good luck."

Joe looked to Henry, turned in his seat and looked in the mirror. He saw the woman seated next to Henry reflecting in its silvery surface. "Can't be," he thought to himself.

"What'll you have?" Henry said, looking deeply into the woman's smiling face.

"Bloody Henry ... I mean ... Mary." She apologized, looking at the bartender.

Her drink was brought and placed on the bar before her. It looked strange, but Joe dismissed it as the effect the light in the bar was having on him.

"Wanna dance?" Henry asked.

"Sure ... you mind?" She asked, looking at Joe.

"No. Go right ahead. I need another drink anyway." Joe said, turning to the barkeep. "Give me a Bloody-Mary too."

The bartender looked at him, shrugged his shoulders, and poured the drink requested.

Henry and the woman departed for the dance-floor and had started to dance as Joe received his drink. The moment he placed a hand on the glass he knew something was amiss. The glass felt warm, not cold. He swished the liquid around the rim. It moved more like an emulsion than a beverage. Maybe the bartender had

put too much tomato juice in it, or had used fresh tomatoes. He ventured a sip.  
"Ptuh..."

He spit the foul tasting liquid on the floor. Joe looked at the barkeep, then at Henry, then to his drink again.

"... blood? ..." he thought to himself.

It was too late. He watched the woman lure Henry to the center of the room, beneath the skylight. She stood there gazing at him, swaying to the music playing in the background. Stunned, Joe watched as Henry was drawn closer and closer. He turned to see what the bartender was doing and found him pouring a drink for another customer.

Joe took a closer look at the dispensing machine the bartender was using and grew uneasy. He watched the barkeep pull down the handle, then release it. As the handle resumed its upright position he made out writing on the backside as it reflects in the mirror. He made out the lettering on all the handles and became aware of their secret.

O+    A-    A+    B+    B-

Through misty eyes Joe turned toward the dance floor. The woman was bending Henry's head back, exposing his neck. Opening her mouth, she exposed two long upper teeth, sunk them into the soft fleshy neck. Henry winced in pain.

As a beam of moonlight struck Henry he started changing into a werewolf. The woman drew back in surprise, blood dripping from her fangs. The change was almost instantaneous. One moment Henry was leaning back in the grip of the woman, the next he had her in his own grasp, tearing at her neck with his fangs.

A murmur began to rise in the club. People started crowding around the two centered in the moonlight. Joe left his seat, pulling the gun from beneath his coat, readying it. As he made his way through the crowd and neared center stage he noticed a strange quietness filling the air about him. He rushed forward to see what had happened to his friend.

Pushing passed the last two people barring his way Joe came upon his friend, bending over the fallen body of the woman, her throat ripped away. She lie motionless. Henry, growling, assumed a crouching position over the body, turning his head toward Joe. He nodded. Joe knew what he had to do. He fired the gun. A small round spot appeared over one eye and blood began trickling into it. Henry dropped to the floor.

Joe placed the gun back in his coat and turned to leave. He heard a motion behind him and turned to investigate. Astounded he watched his friend roll to one side and transform back to human form. Then, attention totally on his friend, he watched as his mouth grew two long teeth. Joe reached for the gun. Took dead aim at his friend and pulled the trigger.

CLICK ... CLICK ... Click ... Click ... Click ...

Joe turned to make a hasty exit from the club. As he did a crowd of smiling faces met him. Each spouting two abnormally long teeth from beneath their upper lips ...

Joe looked around, desperate. He discovered a couple of knives lying on one of the tables. He picked these up and placed them in a cross in front of him. The crowd momentarily halted. Turned to one another. Shrugged their shoulders in disbelief, then attacked ...

### THE ROAD

I am a road. I was born beneath the feet of many. This is my story.

At first there were no people ... then came MAN and did the only thing he knew how ... shattered the serenity of the forest. He tromped upon the earth from one end of the forest to the other. The rut he made he called a pathway.

Many people traveled upon this pathway and soon not one blade of grass came to grow where man had trod. Many towns sprang up along the pathway and the forest was denuded here and there to make his towns.

People traveled more and more upon this pathway. From one town to another. This pathway they now called a ROAD.

This road was me.

Man moved along in his world until some townsmen became weary of the soft soil upon their feet and began placing pebbles in the dirt so their feet would remain clean. The villagers now began traveling in groups along the road.

Time, as slow as it is, passed and man grew a little older.

Some eager villagers now came and replaced the small pebbles with larger stones and a substance they called TAR. It was not too soon after this change that man began traveling the road in AUTOMOBILES.

Soon even the tar was replaced ... with a substance man called CEMENT.

The road was made wider and more automobiles began to travel it. Time passes again and the cement is replaced, this time with a compound called a BLACK-TOP.

Cars are now made with VULCANIZED tires so they can travel faster and make man feel at ease. The road is made yet wider and more automobiles are made to travel on it. Only a few trees now remain of the forest which stood before.

The well traveled road is now dismantled as man takes to the air in his new cars. The unearthed remnants of the road are replaced with rich topsoil, which is now used for planting crops of food to feed man.

Time passes by and man turns against fellow man in futile war. The field of food that man has grown is destroyed in flames as one of man's by-products of his war, a 'bomb', strikes and spreads its wealth around. Time again passes and trees start to spring up. The grass again turns green.

"At first there were no people ..."

**LIFE IN THE YEAR 2000**

This is the first of a two part article entitled 'Life in the Year 2000'. These articles deal primarily with people in the year 2000 and how they would probably live. The first part is focused on how they would go about obtaining food. I shall call my fictitious character Mr. John Harton. This is the possible procedure he might go through if he were purchasing food.

Mr. Harton arrives at the enclosed shopping center via a long cylinder, used now instead of cars or trucks for transportation. He steps out onto the slidewalk, a belt of synthetic rubber moving over the smooth surface of many cylindrical roller assemblies located just beneath ground level. As Mr. Harton passes a store a metallic voice hollers out what store it is and what special bargains of the day are being presented.

Mr. Harton hears the voice of one calling: "Groceries. Come in and get your fresh, low-priced groceries." He steps off the slidewalk and up to the mirror-like wall. The wall rises as he steps within a few feet of it, caused by the tripping of photo detectors on either side of the sliding door. As the door slides upward John steps in and is hit by a pink ray of light. This searches him for concealed weapons or possible devices which could wreck the machines in the store. He passes through with flying colors.

Upon entering he sees vast aisles of food stretching before him. John decides to start to the right of the centralized checkout counter. He walks between two rows of shelves lined with globe-shaped containers encased in glass boxes. He spies a package of his favorite food, Brand X. He removes the plastic card from his wallet and places it in the slot provided to the left of the machine. It gets punched then John moves down the aisle and collects the other varieties of food he enjoys. Plastic wrapped containers of water, compact cereal boxes, dehydrated capsules of meat and other necessities. Having now completed his shopping John proceeds to the checkout counter, places his punched card in the slot provided to the left of the machine. The machine totals his order, punches his card and waits for John to deposit the required sum before allowing him to leave. John drops the square plastic coins in a box at the right of the machine and walks around to the opposite side, receives a compact package wrapped in anti-grav paper, then starts back to his booth for a ride home again.

When John gets home all he has to do for dinner is add water to the tiny globules. They fold out into ????#####???. After he has finished his dinner John simply picks up a hose-like device near the spherical tabletop and directs a stream of warm air, containing various chemicals mixed with it, onto his plate. The plate disappears food and all ... no mess, no dishes, and no work.

**SCHOOL DAYS IN THE YEAR 2000**

School as we know it today will not exist in the year 2000. There will have been many changes made, through man's progress, that will affect the children of the future. This article deals with one of those changes to be made ... the change in the school system.

Going to and from school in the years to come will have its advantages over the transportation methods in use today. Instead of walking five or six miles to school a student will just have to walk to a booth in the comfort of their own home, an instant later they would walk out of a booth in the school building. The booth into which the student enters disassembles their atoms and transports them to the booth in the school, where their atoms are again reassembled.

Teachers will almost be obsolete; that is, they will either have been replaced by automated television sets ... which will project the information to be learned onto its screen in active displays where the student becomes part of the action ... or they will be replaced by the THOUGHT NEEDLE.

The THOUGHT NEEDLE will contain a fluid extracted from someone's brain. This fluid will be placed into another persons brain (the student). The student will then know as much information as did the first ... this has already been proven in lab tests with rats.

The school hallways will be covered with glass roofs. Along the edge, where the glass meets the walls, will be placed softly glowing lights. These will help illuminate the hallways in times of darkness or when the sky is overcast.

The students will still use desks, but these desks will be capable of movement from classroom to classroom. Each student will be assigned a separate desk. This way each student is held personally responsible for the property, fewer scratches and defacing result. The student will rent the desk just like he does the textbooks ... the same rule applying to the desks as the books, you deface it you buy it.

Chalk will no longer come in messy stick form but will come in tubes containing liquefied chalk. This chalk can be removed from the boards with either an ordinary eraser or by a blast of hot air from the hose hanging to the left of the board. Thus, messy hands and clothes are eliminated.

2118 A.D.

*By Sraes Golitac*

The year 2118 has brought about many changes to this old world of ours. Since the year 1987 all women have been made sterile, sex education has increased so much now that it is ranked among the top ten subjects required by schools for graduating students.

The whole world is under governmental rule ... ruled by one government, a computer located in a remote spot on the moon.

There are many colonists setting out to colonize other planets and asteroids ... due to the population growth caused by the massive sex raids during the late 1900's.

There are no more communicable diseases since Sir Henry Jole invented (discovered) the MOSS Shots. These shots are given to every infant at the moment of birth and are effective until the end of that infant's life.

Air pollution has been outlawed and transportation is now done by either thermo-electric conveyer belts, or by the Pdim-Emb-So (Plate dissolvment of the inner molecules by means of Electro-magnetic beams bounced off Satellite mirrors in Orbit several hundred miles above the Earth).

Crime is fully under control of the government. At birth, each child has a small electronic device implanted in its head at the base of the skull. This device radios that persons every move to the computer on the moon. Should a child or adult get a wrong idea or think a wrong thought the computer sends a mild electric shock to that person. Should these thoughts linger in the mind of that person the computer keeps sending the shocks under increased intensity and for longer durations until the person has either changed their mind, or is dead.

So ends this report from 2118 A.D. to whomsoever shall find it. Remember this, you might think your society is bad now ... wait a few years then look back at where you were to see what you had then and don't now!

**LIFE TODAY**

"Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anyone to realize."

The earth has, through the passing years, supplied us with many materials. We have taken many of these things the earth gives us for granted. From the smallest form of life, the ameba, to the fanciest factory or home ... all these and more we take from the earth. For example the food you eat. Did you ever wonder where it came from?

The steak that you ate for supper came from a cow ... an animal of the earth upon which you live. The cow was butchered with an axe, an axe or wood and steel. Both the wood and steel are products of the earth. The wood comes from a tree, perhaps several hundred years old. The steel comes from minerals. Minerals composed of dead plant and animal tissues.

The air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink ... all come from this wonderful earth upon which we live. Although it is though we drink fresh water each day we are in fact only drinking and eating the same food and water our ancestors did. Look at it this way: we drink water today and it gets flushed down some river or stream, only to soak into the ground and appear elsewhere ready for drinking.

The food we eat we dispose of in such a way that in time it sinks into the ground breaks down and through time again appears on the surface to feed the roots of plants. An animal comes by, grazing, and eats the plant. The plant becomes part of the animal. When we eat the animal, after being killed by our skillful hunters, we are only eating what someone has eaten before.

Our earth is rapidly deteriorating. It is bringing about changes which can cause us some day to explore new forms of life, or die in one of the faults in the earth's crust.

**THE AGREEMENT***DAY ONE*

On the first day there had been an uprising in the local prison; of which, I am sorry to say, I had the misfortune of being a guest of at the time. The outcome of this slight turn of events was that the inmates were placed in charge of their former keepers ... who took their place in chains.

At the termination of the first day several of the regular inmates, the ones serving the longest terms in the pen, had made arrangements with several of their contacts outside the prison walls. They soon vacated their former stomping grounds and proceeded to overthrow the authorities. They captured the near-by town of Baxley, Idaho and soon had it under their control.

*DAY TWO*

The second day brought about a drastic change in the neighboring town of Tidmire. Once Tidmire had been secured the inmates began working their way toward the West Coast.

Those of us selected to remain behind at the prison, mind you there weren't too many upon whom this honor had been bestowed, set up shop and tended to our former wardens as best we could. By the afternoon of the second day OUR inmates had started forming into small groups and had begun whispering among themselves. Several times during the afternoon meal our small force of men had to break up many such gatherings. By the time darkness descended on the prison the inmates seemed to take on an air of mystery as they crowded around their meal tables.

By the time the moon had spaced itself several hand widths across the northern sky our inmates had fallen asleep ... or so we had been lead to believe! What actually transpired that night I don't think any of us can really say for sure. We do, however, recall that before the moon had climbed mid-way across the sky there was an explosion near one of the darkened walls. Our captives managed to elude us and slip out into the darkness in the ensuing confusion. When they finally did return we were taken by surprise and again placed back in bondage.

*DAY THREE*

It had been on the third night of that well known rampage, the one the historians would probably refer to later as the 'Baxley Bungle', that I stumbled upon the landing. I can still picture it today as I sit here awaiting my fate the events which transpired on that day of the siege.

I had been sitting partially hidden by one of the many boulders strewn about the prison (debris left from the night before), when there fell upon my ears the sound of a distant rumbling, descending from the heavens above. I released my grip on my leg-iron, twisted my head from under the overhanging stone slab I had been sitting beneath, and strained my eyes upward in an attempt to seek out the disturbance I had heard.

During my sweep of the heavens I failed to notice anything out of place so turned back to the task of picking the lock that secured my fetters. I could

have been mistaken about the noise ... I was having a tendency of late to jump at even the slightest of noises. Why, once I almost swatted one of my fellow inmates when a fly buzzed by at a most inopportune time. I recovered in time to avoid any unnecessary damage.

Again I strained my ears, but could only detect the sharp rasping of the field crickets as they called to their mates somewhere across the field. The bellowing of the bull frogs in the near by mountain stream were tediously trying to harmonize with the faint squealing of the field mice as they scampered toward their homes. All at once, as if by some signal unseen, all the mutterings of the field were silenced. There then came to my ears that alien grumbling sound from somewhere high in the heavens.

Momentarily raising my eyes I sought out the annoying sound. It was with much awe that I watched a small black ovoid object low in the western sky slowly become larger and more distinct.

It seemed to take on a rather cylindrical shape as it approached. It seemed to have acquired a rotational motion peculiar to its horizontal axis. Several of the other inmates now joined me and stared upward as the object drew closer and more distinguishable. It was roughly half a mile in diameter, several hundred feet in height, and had numerous ports lining its sides in long rows. These ports had a tendency to fade out around the curving hull as you looked at them. The rumbling noise we heard was quite loud by now and had succeeded in drawing several of the prison officials into the area.

The object descended and landed several hundred feet beyond the prison wall. Although we weren't able to see all that transpired over the next few hours I do recall that at first there had been a soft whirring sound after the object landed which had slowly died away. Several of the prison officials departed the compound and made their way to the object, the guards still stood in their tall towers, pacing slowly to and fro. Once again the whirring sound was heard, then silence.

The silence lasted several hours before the whirring sound was again heard. The next time we saw the prison officials they were leading several short, stalky individuals into one of the buildings within the compound. We were soon told to report back to our cells and to remain there until further notice.

#### DAY FOUR

It was on the afternoon of the fourth day that we were allowed to exit from our cells. We were ushered into one of the conference rooms instead of being taken to what we commonly referred to as the 'Rock Shop'. Once seated inside the room our escorts left us and the lights were dimmed momentarily.

When the lights came back on we saw before us the members of the strange ship that had landed outside the prison walls. They were men much like ourselves. They were dressed in a two-tone silken outfit. The leader, the largest in the group seated before us, also wore a blue sash about his waist with some sort of insignia on it. He carried a staff-like instrument several feet in length in his left hand, while his right held a long sheet of paper with what appeared to be names written on it. He stood and addressed us in his squeaky voice.

"You men, and I use that term loosely, gathered here today are all classified as criminals of one sort or another. On the planet where we come from there are but two ways to deal with the likes of you ... we either set them free, or kill them. If they choose to go free then they are branded on

their forehead with a capital letter 'C' to signify to the rest of the world that they are criminals.

"We have come to your world to help your world. The first thing the council has suggested is that we enforce our type of criminal justice here as well.

"Today you will be given your choice. To be killed now, or to be set free to seek out your life again ... if you can. Once set free every imaginable degradation will be set upon you when good people meet you and see your brand.

"You might have lived a normal life if you had been set free before under your present system of justice, none might have known you had been in prison ... now there shall be a permanent mark to tell the world that you are not to be trusted. With this system we are placing into effect now, gentlemen, it will be plain to the world abroad just who among us is good and who is not. Gentlemen ... the decision is yours," and with that the speaker returned to his seat.

For the next few hours we discussed among ourselves just what we were to do, if we were to believe this hogwash or what. At the end of the time allotted us we still were unsure as to which course we would take.

The speaker again rose and started calling off our names. When the name was called that person went to him and they were given their choices. Many of the men before me had chosen the new road to life and liberty ... no matter what form it came in. When it was my turn, however, I took the alternative road ... as were an alarming number of those called after me were doing.

I was given a day in which to prepare for my end. In that day I have set down and told for you the events which have lead up to my eventual death, by now, and the start of the NCS (New Criminal System of justice). I leave my name from the narrative as I will be but one of the many who have died there on that evil day. I think that the new system will work, but it might just work too well ... for after all, we are only human.

**THE NEGLECTED DUTY**

Dark clouds stormed the skies as a bolt of lightning struck a fence post near the red brick house. Inside a curly haired lad of ten was roughly roused from a deep sleep by an elderly man.

"I thought I told you yesterday to dig that hole!"

"Aw, pop, maybe that creature you found was the only one." John Halmond whined as he pulled on his trousers and the two of them headed for the door.

"That, my son, is one of the reasons I want to widen that hole I nearly tripped over yesterday when I discovered those tracks which lead us to that giant ant! If there are any more of those giant ants still living down there I must find out why and where they came from."

When John had finished his breakfast he dressed and went to the shed outside, gathered the tools he'd need for the digging, then proceeded to unearth the small mound located close to the house.

John would pause in his digging now and then to cast an eye skyward at the ominous clouds drifting by. Around eleven o'clock the storm broke, but John paid it no heed as he dug deeper and deeper.

When the sky became so dark that even the small flashlight he was carrying failed to pierce it John decided to discontinue digging and return to the house. He told his father the situation and they waited for the storm to pass before investigating.

"Golly, son. Did you have to dig so deep? There are plenty of tunnels before you even reach the big one at the bottom."

"I just got caught up in my work, dad."

"That's OK. Here, put these rubber gloves on ... now stick your hand into one of those holes and see what's in there."

With little or no enthusiasm John did as requested by his father. At first there was a turn in the tunnel, then his hand encountered something gooey. He scooped it up and brought it forth. His father placed the flashlight over it. It appeared to be a mass of eggs. They were large as chicken eggs, not like ant eggs at all. John asked his father what chicken eggs were doing under the ground as they walked back to the house.

"I have no doubt that these are indeed ant eggs, son. They were probably left there by dinosaurs eons ago. When we had that flood a few years ago it probably moistened the eggs, causing them to become alive once again. I imagine the rest will hatch later tonight sometime."

"That was a good explanation dad, except for one thing. I thought that whatever lived millions of years ago became fossilized, turned to stone. If that were true, no amount of water would re-activate the dinosaur eggs."

"That is what scientists thought until just recently when they discovered insects living within the ice up north. As the ice melted the insects came to life again. The same thing has happened here. This whole valley we live in was covered by the ice age many hundred years ago. These eggs were probably covered by soil as the ice retreated. When we had that flood a few years back it thawed out the eggs. The eggs have just now begun to hatch. My only worry now is if the eggs all decide to hatch at the same time the world will be overrun by these giant ants for a few days ... and that may be enough time to destroy humanity as we know it."

"I'd better go and get a cage to place these eggs in dad."

"Sure. Go ahead."

John took the gloves off and, leaping three steps at a time, ran up the stairs to the attic. He entered the white room at the top of the stairs and hurriedly picked up one of the glass cages with a wire top on it. This he then carried to the top of the stairway. The room he had left was filled with the sound of many animals. In one cage an albino female rat was fighting with a

half-breed mouse. In another two birds were making love to one another; one a female cardinal, the other a male Strehford. Yet another cage held two squirrels. One, sleek and slim (I'd say that the poor thing was suffering from malnutrition), while the other was plump and fat (PLUMP! You could say it was like a pig compared to the other one!). The slender squirrel now attacked the overgrown one and chewed off one of its hind legs. It then commenced to consume the tender morsel while the other squirrel just cowered in the corner, licking its wound. John did not even pay attention as one creature bit off a chunk of his mates head and commenced chewing on it.

John moved down the flight of stairs to the oval door at its bottom.

As John approached the table in the kitchen, the only one in the house, his father motioned him to open the cage. He did so. John placed his gloves on his hands once again and picking up the gooey mass before him, placed it into the glass cylinder. The cage top was closed and the entire cage was then placed under a special light normally used in destroying chicken eggs.

"My only hope is that this special light will destroy these eggs. If it doesn't ... we will have an messy problem on our hands." The father stated.

The two then files out of the room, leaving the light to do its work. They started for the bathroom, a little of the egg mass having gotten on their hands. John filled the metal basin with water and started washing his hands with soap. His father did much the same. As John finished drying his hands on the towel he removed them and exclaimed.

"My God! I burnt a hole in the towel! What happened, dad?"

"It is obvious to me now that the mass of eggs contains some sort of an acid. You tried removing it with regular soap and water and that seemed to have no effect on it. Let's try some Ajax this time."

John tried the detergent this time and dried his hands again.

"Same thing happened as before, dad. What would happen if I put some lye on my hands?"

"That's a good idea. Fight fire with fire, acid with acid."

John looked at his hands a moment before pouring the lye onto them. During this brief moment the two heard coming from the kitchen a slight popping sound, the eggs were hatching. Closing his eyes John unscrewed the cap of the bottle. The paleness in his hands was slowly creeping up his arm, as it was doing to his fathers. Several more popping sounds were heard from the kitchen. John poured the acid onto his hand. His fingers fell to the floor with a resounding bump, bump.

"Quick! Dip your hand into the water!" screamed his father, watching as his sons back also started taking on the ghastly whiteness.

There came a bursting sound from the kitchen. John turned toward the sound and screamed. The lye was burning his flesh, killing it. His father, not having as much egg jelly on his hands, poured just a little lye on his fingers and placed them into the water immediately. He helped bandage his son then the two headed toward the kitchen.

As the two neared the kitchen there was a peculiar musty odor hanging in the air. John asked his father what it was and his father told him it was the smell of things that were dead.

"You mean that those ants in there are dead ... but they are alive?"

"Yes, John. If you were thinking about killing them with that bottle of lye, you might just as well try to kill a horse with a piece of straw. Those ants in there are already dead. They will cease to exist in three of four hours. Until then we must keep out of their way and not let any more into this house."

John peered around the corner at the ants. There, not three feet from him, stood three ants, no bigger than newly hatched chicks. This, however, was not what had startled him, he had been expecting that. What he had not been expecting was for the ants to have weapons. They carried a speak-like weapon in

their abdomen and had a small, but powerful set of pincers. Their pincers were more like that of a crab than that of an ant ... but of course these were not normal ants now, were they.

As John had entered the room the three ants had started slowly advancing toward him. They had stopped now about a foot and a half from him and were eyeing him. John turned and ran, his father close behind, to the bottom of the metal stairway. Opening the oval door he stepped inside. His father bolted the door after them and then both sped upward to the top of the stairs. The ants could be heard scratching at the bottom of the stairs. Shortly there appeared a white spot in the middle of the door.

"It seems that these ants also come equipped with some sort of acid," his father said, pulling a lever on the wall next to John.

"What's that for, dad?"

"This, son, will raise the stairs from the floor below, giving us more time in which to determine our next step to take."

"They broke through." John stated, watching the ants climb through the hole in the door, stopping to peer upward at the two men above.

"They're tearing the foundation out from under us," John exclaimed as the floor started shaking.

His father had already determined their next move and was on his way down the hallway. He turned into the white room just ahead of his son. Shortly after entering they appeared again, carrying numerous animals in their arms. Being overloaded with his burden his father failed to see where he was going and backed into a window, falling the thirty feet to the ground below. John, dropping his load, rushed to the window. He took one look below at his father then swung to the roof above.

Once on the roof John turned and ran toward the edge nearest that connecting to the garage. He could make it, he kept telling himself as he eyed the twelve foot gap separating the two buildings. He perched on the edge of the roof, waiting for the courage to jump the intervening space between the two.

John looked back to the window from which he had recently crawled. There, climbing out the window, was an ant ... behind it were coming the creatures he had released from the experimental room, the white room. They climbed to the roof. John readied his legs for the jump. The ant started across the rooftop. John tensed his leg muscles, readying for the spring. He pushed off. Ground whizzed by in a myriad of colors. Looking back to the housetop John saw the ant stuck, mystified as to how to cross the space before it. John thought himself safe for the time. As he looked over the edge of the garage roof he saw the bullet heads of the remaining ants staring up at him. One of the ants seemed to say:

"Come on down, we won't hurt you."

John went mad then, thinking that these ants really COULD speak. He addressed them.

"What have I done to deserve this sort of treatment?"

One of the ants seemed to move its head slightly. "You have mistreated our friends who have called upon us to save them from their profane torture. You have neglected to care for them properly while you were experimenting on them."

With that the ants below started climbing the walls before them. Before they were half way to the roof John leapt from the roof. The ants had foreseen this move and had left a guard at the bottom to catch him. The guard caught the falling body, but was crushed in the process. The other ants soon surrounded John. They picked him up carefully in their pincers and carried him to the pit.

John was twenty-three the day of his capture. He was forced to be slave to the queen ant for ten years, his sentence being reduced because he was only helping his father in his research, it was him who they really wanted.

Ten years passed quickly and John found himself in a fertile field of wheat, not ten miles from where he had been captured. He asked the farmer plowing the fields who the owner of the house was.

"I am sorry to say that John Halmond died over ten years ago. The home was taken over by a teen-age girl. Are you a relative of his, you look an awfully lot like what he used to look like."

"I AM John Halmond! I didn't die ten years ago. Some gigantic ants took me away to serve them underground ..."

"SURE they did. You had better lie down and rest a while before you see your cousin. Terrible thing this heat, does tricks on the mind sometimes."

"But I tell you I AM John Halmond. The ants took me because I had treated some of their friends wrongly. They made me serve their queen for ten long years. They have just now returned me to the surface. And you say that I am dead? Do I look dead? See this," John said, pointing to his bandaged arm. "I received this when I picked up some of their eggs from their nest."

"I heard that there was an accident not too far from here. You must be one of those victims."

"But I AM telling you the truth!"

"Next thing you will be telling me is that these gigantic ants are from outer space or something."

"How did you know where they came from? At first we suspected that they were dinosaur eggs. When they told me that they were from outer space, well, I was in no position to argue. They were telepaths."

"I think I'd better call the doctor before you get any worse."

John did not wait to see the doctor. As the farmer turned he jumped up and ran across the field again to the main road. He turned toward his old home. As he arrived a few minutes later he knocked on the door. A woman answered.

"Hello. What do you want?"

"What are YOU doing in MY house?"

"YOUR house. Why, mister, I bought this house from an old junk dealer who told me that its former owner died a few months earlier. That was over nine years ago. I have the legal papers to prove it ... what happened to your arm?"

"This one got tangled in some barbed wire a few miles down the road, the other one was dipped in lye several years back."

"I had to remodel this house when first I moved in. Seems the former owner had been in a fight before he died or some such happening. I came across a few bones while cleaning. I took them to a surgeon friend of mine who told me they were human bones. I guess they must have belonged to the former owner, I threw them in the garbage."

"I am an interior decorator by trade. This house was just the place I needed to practice my trade. Hey ... where you going?" she asked as John started off down the walk.

"To find some shelter. I may even buy a house. By the way, what ever happened to that hole in the back yard?"

"Oh, that thing. I enlarged it and had them make it into a swimming pool. Wanna see?"

"Sure, why not? I have nothing left to lose."

As they walked around the house to the back yard John kept scanning the roof. So, she fixed them too I see, he thought. They rounded the corner. John glanced down at where the hole had been.

"Yes," he said softly, "she did a nice job in covering that up too. She probably fixed up the attic and stairway as well."

"What'd you say?" the girl asked, turning around.

"Oh, I was just admiring your fine looking pool. What did it look like when you first moved in?"

"It had the strangest looking holes in it. There was even a shoe stuck at the bottom of the hole, in one of the smaller holes in its sides."

"I have to go now, good bye."

"Good bye. Hope you find a nice place to live."

John walked out into the dimly illuminated sidewalk and continued down to the corner. He caught a bus and rode it until he reached a hotel on the opposite side of town. He purchased a room for the night and soon was sound asleep.

When John awoke in the morning he found himself in HIS bedroom in HIS house. Yes, John, it was just a dream ... or was it?

After breakfast with his father John walked down to the corner store to purchase an ant farm for his science class project. Did you notice how strange it was that the storekeeper was in an UNUSUALLY good mood this morning ... EH, JOHN? In fact, he was in such a good mood that he cut the price of the farm in half. That made you run home and arrive earlier than you planned ... didn't it John?

Did you notice that after you got home your father told you to dig for some strange breed of ants he had discovered earlier in the day? OH WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN. With one exception ... this time it is REAL, John. THIS TIME IT IS REAL! Ha .. Ha .. Ha .. Ha .. Ha.

**WHITE FLAKES**

Floating through the upper atmosphere are numerous tiny white flakes of matter, similar in texture to that of snow. As they float lazily down through the atmosphere they attract the attention of three men. Ordinary snowflakes would attract little attention. These flakes were not to pass unnoticed because they chose to fall in the middle of summer. Had they passed unnoticed I might not be here to relate this story to you.

The flakes did not melt as they touched the ground, but lie there wiggling on the hot sidewalk. One of the three men placed one of the flakes on a slide he had in his pocket. They entered a tall building and proceeded to a small laboratory where the man placed the slide under a microscope. As he gazed into the instrument a look of disbelief swept over his face. He summoned the other two men and showed them the spectacle under the microscope. They too came up with a look of disbelief. Before them, under the high powered microscopic eye they had seen a colony of creatures never before seen on the planet. One of the men had been drinking some water, after seeing what he had his hand trembled so much that he ended up spilling some on the slide. The flakes started to grow with amazing speed.

Clouds were gathering to the east as little white flakes floated down through the morning sky in South Dakota. Three men, looking out a large clear window, ran to the phone and tried contacting someone. A man entered the room, behind the gentlemen. He advanced and told them to follow.

The four men entered another room where a glass cage had been constructed at its center. The cage held a creature of immense proportions beyond description. On the floor of the cage were various fruits and vegetables. The fourth man now spoke:

"The only thing it ate was a piece of meat I inserted in the cage a short time ago. I fear that if any more of these creatures appear on this planet the human race as we know it will be terminated."

"A news report stated that millions of them were landing all over California and Colorado. I have just come from the observation room and have witnessed the millions which are even now landing outside this laboratory. If the storm to the east of us decides to break soon, we are in for a massacre," replied one of the first three men.

At that very moment in Washington, the president was speaking to the press.

"Gentlemen of the press. I have only one thing on my mind today and that is our immediate crisis. I have already summoned the greatest minds in the world to meet this afternoon in the White Room of the White House. If this meeting is successful we will have nothing to worry about from our visitors. If they can not come up with some sort of defense strategy against this thing, we will have to go underground until these creatures either die or pass on to another planet, neither of which I think we would see in our own lifetime.

"The military tried shooting the creatures in Africa. It was no use. The Congo has been cleaned of all forms of meat based life forms. I am sending reinforcements to the Congo equipped with equipment used in destroying plant life. I repeat. To try and kill these creatures with our present weapons I think is useless. Thank You."

As the press agents hurried from the room the president retired to the Oval Office to make ready for the conference later in the day. The U.N. was holding an emergency meeting that very day over the same issue the president had talked on. All over the world fluffy white flakes were drifting down through the atmosphere. In some places they had piled up three to four inches deep. At the observatory the three men reached a solution to the problem ... just as it began to rain.

As the flakes outside the laboratory started growing the roof started to crumble. The sides started sagging. Windows breaking in a series of popping sounds. All electrical systems were knocked out as the main generator came to a stand still, clogged with a mass of growing organisms. As the storm swept over various parts of the world the organisms grew, destroying everything in their path. The cattle industry was wiped out in a matter of seconds. The hungry creatures were rapidly diminishing wildlife in Africa. Forests smashed under the excess weight being pressed upon them from above.

As the scientists in the laboratory set up the equipment for destroying the creatures one of the walls gave way under the tons of pressure built up outside. One of the three intent on stepping into the hallway to see how far the creatures had progressed was consumed the moment he opened the door.

As one of the remaining scientists, standing close to the door as well, was consumed by another creature the third scientist aimed the death dealing device at the oncoming enemy. His finger resting on the trigger he watched as the creature advanced. He felt his finger tighten under the slender piece of metal. He saw it redden under the extreme pressure being generated. The first creature was but ten feet distant as the man pulled harder and harder on the small device before him. Could it be that the mechanism had jammed? The man tugged with the fingers of both hands, then with one hand, then both again. What would he do, what would all humanity do, if the machine were to fail?

There was a blinding flash ...

**A REPORT TO DELTA 5**

This is my fourth year on the planet. I, Silob Ennek, third commanding officer in the Martian Space Patrol, send back the following report about our neighboring planet ... the third in orbit around our great sun Rega.

There seem to be four changes to the planets atmosphere. The first occurs when Rega is low in the sky. White things start falling through the air, landing on the topsoil and covering everything within sight sometimes. Many of the inhabitants of the planet hide in their caves above ground when this occurs or place heavy cloth-like material over their bodies whenever they venture out of their caves and onto the white ground.

The second change comes when Rega is wakening and sleeping mid-way across the sky. Rega curses the tiny white things which bring the nullified heat to the planet. He burns in anger, giving off great warmth.

The third change occurs when the fruits of the old tall ones bloom into life. Rega becomes very angry and sometimes makes to vast waterways very warm. Sometimes Te cries and lets his tears touch the ground, making the little weeds turn green. Sometimes, however, he cries too much and makes great water come upon the land, washing clean the inhabitants from their dwellings.

Rega sometimes becomes very mad when Te is crying and throws down little white balls. Fudu, the wind god, becomes very angry at the inhabitants and sends great winds over the land and great channels of liquid sometimes wrecking everything they touch.

The fourth change occurs when the old ones shed their fruit and the inhabitants pile these dead fruits and mock Rega by turning them into miniature Regas through the use of wooden sticks dipped in some chemical. The dead ones become no more and return to the soil to make room for more fruit.

There are many mysterious things which occur above, below, and on the planets surface. The great buzzard which flies high in the sky making big noises, dropping many eggs to the ground. These eggs burst open and inside are found fully grown inhabitants. The great fish that swallows inhabitants, only to lose them again when it comes to the surface for air. Of course I could not forget to tell you of the great monsters which rove the surface of the planet. They also eat the inhabitants, growling at them, then throw them away after some pre-determined time has elapsed. The monsters also have a tendency to collide with one another, causing much red stuff to be spilled onto the ground.

As I rise above the planets atmosphere to send this report I can see many of the white puffy things below ... over the caves of the inhabitants. The great birds are laying many eggs which create the great puffy things. As the eggs contact the surface of the planet the caves of the inhabitants disappear.

While out on a survey mission once one of the great birds followed me, reporting to the other birds what it had seen. It said that we looked like 'white crystalline structures floating in space'. I end this report now to Delta 5 in order to escape the planets resisting force and complete my next mission.

SILOB ENNECK  
3rd Commanding Officer M.S.P

**TERROR NEAR BLUE SAINT'S ISLAND**

The S.S. Olivetti was anchored off the coast of Blue Saint's Island when the first tremor came. It was a small one, but large enough to shake the ship from stem to stern. We were in the port of Milay for repairs ... we had been hit amid-ship several hours before by a German torpedo. Blue Saint's Island lay seventy miles north of Honolulu mainland. The natives of Milay had already started repairs when the tremor shook the boat, tossing workers into the water.

Most of the island was deserted because of the large volcano located at its center and composing most of the island. Our captain had managed to enlist the aide of several of the villagers in repairing the damage to the ship. The Olivetti was floated in as far as could be, then let set. When the tide drifted out the work on the hole had been started. The tide was now returning. The natives started returning to their homes for the night.

I was a passenger on the Olivetti at the time the tremors started coming. I was a traveling salesman. On a trip from Australia to Canada. As night drew near the passengers were requested to return to their cabins. I went back to mine and awaited my black companion, James Halworth. When James did arrive he told me that he had seen several of the natives leaving the far side of the island.

"I don't like the looks of that volcano," he had said, looking through the cabin port-hole.

"I don't either. It's been acting up the past few days, according to the natives I have been talking to. It seems the volcano erupted several years ago," I said, James sitting on the edge of the bed.

"How do you know that, Jim?"

"I studied a book on Geology several years ago. I still remember a few things from it. When I took a close look at the ground today I noticed it was covered with a fine, abrasive dust, not dirt. I could tell from the texture that volcanic lava had covered this portion of the island when it erupted before. One of the natives told me of a legend that says that every thirty moons the volcano erupts, and every thirty times it erupts, it covers the entire island. The native also told that when the moon is full the volcano would erupt. Last night I checked the moon and saw it was only half in shadow. I have a feeling that if we are not out of here in another two weeks, we will not leave period."

"The captain said the repairs should be completed within a few days. We needn't worry about the volcano. That is, of course, if the native that told you of the legend was telling you the truth ... or just pulling your leg," James concluded as he slipped into his bed.

Saying Goodnight, I too hit the sack.

I was awakened to the sound of a screaming woman as she ran past our door. Jumping from my bed, still dressed in my nightware, I ran outside in time to see a woman throw herself off the ships railing, into the waters below. Running to where she had jumped I saw her body lying on the rocks below, not a pretty sight. I asked if anyone knew why she had jumped. I received several responses.

"She became terrified on hearing that the Olivetti was to stay here several more weeks. Seems one of the boilers blew last night," one person had said.

"She had heard a rumor that the volcano was nearing its peak activity and would overflow in the next few hours," came another.

The first explanation I could readily believe, I too had heard the sound of the exploding boiler last night as I slept. The second explanation was a

little harder to believe. I turned to the second man and queried him as to how he knew the volcano would erupt in the next few hours.

"Mr. Howard," he replied, "I believe this is true because it is starting to smoke and there is a constant flow of lava down its far side."

I glanced toward the volcano, saw a speck of red near its top. The snow had melted and was running down into the water nearest the boat. We went to the captain, told him of our observations. He thanked us, but said he was well aware of the situation and asked us to return to the safety of our cabins.

Entering my cabin I found James looking out the porthole. I went to him and asked what had caught his interest so.

"The volcano. In the last half hour it has been acting up. The snow has all melted from its top, running into the water near our boat. Puffs of smoke keep coming from its top every few minutes or so now. They are mingled with sparks. I don't like this."

"I told the captain of the activity. He didn't seem too concerned about it and said he was working as fast as he could to remedy our present situation. He said we should be receiving some good news over the P.A. System in the near future," I said, taking the binoculars James had been using.

Putting the glasses to my eyes I searched for the top of the volcano. I located it and the small opening off to one side which was issuing the smoke signals. Filling with smoke, releasing it to the atmosphere, filling again. As I continued my search, I discovered small patches of smoldering rock formations and bubbling streams of water. At the very top I discovered a small patch of red peeking through the jagged peaks. I was startled then as the P.A. System blared its warning.

"This is your captain speaking. You are no doubt aware of our present situation. Let me sum it up for those of you still in doubt. We are stranded here momentarily while we repair our ship. There is an active volcano in the area which could erupt at any time. It is my intention to have all passengers and crew away from this island before that happens. In the meantime, I want everyone on board this ship to follow my orders if they wish to survive. Stay in your cabins. Limit your travel on deck to a minimum. This ship was built to withstand plenty of pressure and heat. If the volcano does erupt I want you to return to the safety of your cabins, lock your doors from the inside. We will do the same on the outside. This is for your own protection. There will not be any fires if you do not use any sort of candles, cigarettes, matches, cooking stoves, etc. Each room can withstand temperatures in excess of 9500°F. If you follow these orders and stay clear of the passageways you will be safe for the meantime. I will try to maneuver the Olivetti away from the island when the tide comes back. That is all. Thank you."

"How does he expect to get the ship away from the island with that hole in its side? and only one boiler operating?" I asked, turning to face James.

"How should I know. Do I look like the captain? Why don't you go find out from him?" James asked, opening the door for me.

"Remember what the captain said: 'Stay in your cabins'."

"Do you want to find out, or not? ... Well, go and see then."

"I guess it would be alright ... maybe I could help him," I replied, walking through the door.

The corridor beyond was filled with a multitude of rushing, screaming people. Women, children, passengers, crewmembers, everyone was rushing past me heading either for the opposite side of the ship or the open water. At the moment I was not sure why they were acting this way, it couldn't be the captains' last order. As I pushed my way toward the captains' cabin I passed by several people lying on the floor, trampled beneath the feet of many trying to escape. The corridor to the east was barren, the one to the west was filled with

quickly departing people. Deciding not to seek out the captain after all, I turned and ran down the barren corridor until I encountered a lone woman.

"Where is everyone off to in such a hurry?" I asked, stopping her.

"Off this damn ship. The volcano has erupted. Lava has started to flow into the east end of the ship. You had better hurry if you want to get off this ship ... the lava flow is not far behind me," she said. Then turning, "Oh, no ..."

She fainted. Looking behind her I saw the advancing flow. Slowly the lava was crawling down the corridor, scorching all it came in contact with. Lifting the woman's body into my arms I hurried back to my cabin. James took the woman from me after I entered and placed her on the bed, trying to revive her while I stood lookout at the door. I saw the lava turn the corner and start down our corridor. As I called James the flow stopped and started cooling. The woman had revived and now joined us at the door.

"The eruption must have temporarily stopped," she said.

The corridors began filling with voices once again as the passengers started returning. As the captain passed by I stopped him and asked what had happened, why the people were coming back on board the ship.

"Everyone panicked when some of the lava found its way into the east corridor from the hole amid-ship. I told them to remain in their cabins. If they would have listened we would have fifty more passengers and twenty more crewmen alive right now. I counted on the lava coming through the hole in the side of the ship. The hole is patched far enough now with the cooled lava to permit us to sail from the island when the tide comes in." he replied, as he turned to leave.

I followed him, asking how he knew the lava would fill the hole and not just melt more of the side away.

"I knew that as the lava flowed through the hole near the edge of the water that the water would steam from its heat, creating a spray onto the lava, cooling it little by little. As each layer of cooled lava progressed it filled the hole. The lava stopped when no more could pass through, into the ship."

"But what would you have done if it didn't stop?" I asked, as I turned to retrace my steps back to my cabin.

James and the girl greeted me as I returned to the room.

"Where've you been?" James asked, as I sat down.

"Talking to our captain."

"What did he have to say?" the girl asked, as James bolted the door and opened the porthole.

"His great plan was to get us to wait in our rooms while he waited for the lava to fill the hole in the side of the ship. If I would have known that was his plan, mind you, I would have been the FIRST one to leave the ship!" I said, joining James by the window. "By the way, miss, what is your name. I don't think we were properly introduced yet. My name is Jim Howard and this is my companion James Halworth."

"Why, it's Mary Mc Ellis," she replied as she too joined us at the window.

James handed me the field glasses. I searched for the top of the bubbling crater. I detected several lava rivers flowing down its side, into the open water. One of the flows ran right by the ship. I stuck my hand out the window opening and could feel the heat as it rose from the cooling flow. I brought my hand back inside as we heard the crackling sounds emanating from the P.A. System in the room. The captain broke the silence once more.

"This is your captain once more. I wish to tell you now that the S.S. Olivetti will be leaving Blue Saint's Island within the next three hours. All passengers and crewmembers will remain on board and in their assigned cabins unless on detail to attend to the dead or wounded. The following people will

compose the burial/medical detail: John Nickleson, Mike Mc Dottel, Jim Howard, Mary Mc Ellis, James Halworth, Kim ..."

"Looks like we're elected to care for the dead 'uns," James stated, opening the door.

The captains' voice faded in the distance as we made our way along the still warm corridor. The lava had cooled enough to permit us to pass by without getting too scorched. The cooling had been sped up by the crew as they hosed down the flow with the firehoses. There had been twenty of us that were selected by the captain to compose the detail that was to dispose of the dead and care for the wounded. The women were to place the wounded, mostly badly burned or bruised, into a corridor separated from the rest and secured at both ends by hastily improvised doors of metal. The men, on the other hand, were to dispose

of the dead bodies, all that they could pull free of the lava flow, into the ocean. The work lasted but half an hour, then we returned to our cabin. James went on ahead, while I tried to locate Mary.

As I entered the closed corridor a crewmember stopped me.

"Where you going?"

"To the hospital section," I replied, trying to step passed him.

"Nobody but the wounded enter there, sorry. Now return to your cabin before you get hurt," the crewman threatened, raising his arm.

"Let me through," I said, knocking him out of the way.

The man fell to the floor, hitting his head as he did so on the lip of the chair he had been seated at. I traveled along the corridor a ways until I heard a scream come from behind. I turned in time to see a mob of people rushing toward me. I quickly ducked into one of the open doors as they passed by. I stopped the last to pass by and found that the lava dike had broken and that fresh lava was pouring into the boat. I realized I had better find Mary, and fast. She was in the section just above where the lava dike had been. The lava had been piled so high last time, that with this new flow it was sure to melt

through the floor of the corridor and overflow onto those above, the women caring for the wounded.

I paid no heed to the passengers that had fallen by the side as I made my way to Mary. Most had been trampled in the mad rush to leave. I knew that no matter what the captain promised this time, the passengers would not return to the ship. They much preferred their freedom of movement in the waters, to that of the confinement the ship offered.

As I neared the corridor where Mary was I felt the floor beneath me getting increasingly warmer and warmer. When I did reach the corridor, my shoes were beginning to smolder. I looked around. Women were hurrying to and fro in their mad rush to escape the ship. The wounded, the ones that could move, were crawling, walking, running to the doors, windows, or making their own exits from the room. I looked around and spotted Mary, lying on the floor beneath a crude

wheelchair. I ran over to her, lifted the wheelchair, then carried her out of the room just as the flow of lava entered the room from the opposite end. Some of the women were caught in its flow, not quick enough to escape, along with several of the already wounded.

I traveled the deserted corridor back to my own cabin, where I found James pinned beneath his fallen bed. Busting through into an adjacent room I placed Mary on the bed and returned for James. I soon realized it was no use, he was already dead. I uprighted the bed and pulled James from beneath it. I placed him gently on the bed and covered him with a sheet. I went to the other room to revive Mary.

Once again on her feet, Mary and I made our way down the corridor to where it intersected the next. I looked both ways down the intersecting

corridors. They were both clogged with the flow of lava. We must turn our steps and seek escape in the opposite direction. We traveled to the opposite end of the hallway, where we discovered this way too was blocked by a cooled lava flow. We ran back to my cabin. I frantically searched for my suitcase. Finding it buried beneath some boxes I opened it and took three metal boxes from within. Giving one to Mary, we proceeded toward the kitchen. I told Mary to try and locate

some salt, water, a pot, a spoon, a match, and a tube of some kind. Once all these had been located I took the pot and added the ingredients of one of the metal boxes into it, then added the water and salt. I added in the ingredients from the other two containers I had then took the spoon and started mixing them together. I stuck the tube over the opening of the pot, after bending it into a cone shape first, then struck a match to its opening. A large flame issued from the tubes opening. I applied this to a spot on the wall, the side nearest the water.

Mary kept watch for the lava flow while I started cutting the hole in the side of the ship. When I had completed half the hole Mary said she saw the lava starting to come down the corridor. I tried to hurry the cutting of the hole, but only succeeded in scorching myself. As the lava started entering the room, I started kicking the metal before me. It started bending outward. When it had bent far enough for our bodies to pass I hurried Mary out through it. As she disappeared through the opening I gave her a few seconds then jumped myself.

As I landed in the water below, I turned to see the first part of the lava flow seep through the hole and start dripping into the water behind me. I swam toward Mary ... the tide by now having come in ... and together we swam toward a floating log. Hanging on we turned and watched as the S.S. Olivetti burst into flames. I left Mary clinging to the log as I swam about collecting other loose wood and stray seaweed. Lining the logs together as best I could I secured them to each other with the seaweed, forming a not too large platform on which to rest. Using my shirt for a sail we slowly began drifting away from the activity of the island and toward Honolulu.

"Jim," Mary said, turning toward me, "what did you have in those boxes?"

"Oh, those. One was Carbonic Acid, used in destroying paper in large factories. The other two were filled with Sodium Pituminate, an acid used in making the ink in your pens. I read a book on chemistry when I was young. I remembered the ingredients used in making a self-contained blowtorch were those along with salt and water. I was transporting several chemicals to show to my clients. I advertise for a chemical firm in Canada. When I was a boy I used to read lots of books ... no matter what the book was I read it. Sometimes my parents would catch me reading some books that they said I wasn't supposed to read until I was a little older," I replied, looking toward the distant horizon."

"Oh, look. Doesn't that look like a boat?" Mary asked, pointing to a distant moving spot on the southern horizon.

"Could be," I said, taking down the small sail we had been using and starting to wave it.

The spot grew larger and larger as the ship drew closer and closer. It turned out to be an ocean liner in search for the downed boat. As they drew within a few feet they lowered a ladder. Mary climbed aboard first, then me. We were given fresh clothing and some warm food. I relayed the story of Blue Saint's Island and all that had befallen us while aboard the Olivetti.

As I looked to the island, I saw it covered in a cloud of smoke. When the smoke cleared several hours later the island, volcano, and the S.S. Olivetti were all gone. The water where the island had once been remained rough for several days after. A few of the rescue boats sent out came back empty, others were filled to their limit with cheering passengers off the S.S. Olivetti. As soon as all passengers were loaded we got under way and headed toward Honolulu.

The S.S. Honolulu, the steamliner which had picked us up, docked a few days later. I arranged to have some flowers sent to James' wife. Mary and I were married shortly after that. The next time someone tells me the best thing for me to do is to take an ocean cruise, I think I'll tell them ...

## THE SILVER DOLLAR

## I

"MANUEL, I don't want to see you again!"

"But Rosa, I tell you she means nothing to me!" Manuel pleaded, as Rosa threw him back the locket.

"I have made up my mind Manuel, and nothing you can say will change it," Rosa replied, vanishing into the awaiting taxicab.

"Papa, my little Rosa, she is gone!" the elderly woman cried, running into the room.

"Rosa? Our little Rosa is gone? No, this is not true ... what has happened Ma-Ma?" the elderly man inquired, placing his arm around his wife.

"Her room, pa-pa, she is vacant. Her clothes and suitcase are gone. Wait, what's that? ... someone is at the door," she replied noting the approaching footfalls.

"Manuel ... what are you doing here?" pa inquired, letting the youth into the small three-room house.

"Well, Señor Gomez, I came to ask Rosa to come with me to the Festival tonight ... in the hope that she could forgive me," Manuel replied, seating himself in one of the moth-eaten chairs occupying the room.

"You, Manuel? You have harmed our little Rosa?" Mr. Gomez asked, rising to his feet and advancing toward the seated lad.

"Now Mr. Gomez, don't get the wrong idea. I have not harmed her ... but rather she thinks that I have. I had better explain ..." Manuel stated, as he arose and started pacing the floor.

"Yes, Manuel, I think you had better ..." Mr. Gomez replied, taking the seat beside his wife.

"Rosa saw me at Ginos with this other girl. She thought that I didn't love her anymore and had turned to another. I told her I still loved her and that I had just been sitting with a teacher from the College I was to enter. She told me she didn't believe me and that I was in love with the girl, and always had been. I told her she was wrong and that it was only a teacher she had seen me with and that I was to attend College no matter what she thought. She gave me back the locket I had given her for our engagement. Honest Señor Gomez, that's all that happened. I don't want to give up College, but I love your daughter and want to marry her. What should I do?" Manuel stated, passing back and forth in front of the couple.

"I don't know Manuel, our Rosa has left us. We don't know where she is, or where she went. She will come back someday, I hope. Until then, my son, there is nothing any of us can do," pa said, rising to pat the young lad on his back. "If we hear anything we will let you know. See you later Manuel."

"I will try to find her, Mr. Gomez," Manuel replied, looking back at the couple through the ragged edge of the screen door. "I know that Monterey is a big city, but if she is still here, I shall try to find her and bring her back. If she isn't ... well, I don't know."

"Thank you Manuel," ma said, as she sat back in the rickety old sofa with pa and started weeping.

## II

"Me?" Rosa asked, looking at the girl across the table. "I've been here three days."

"You told me you were trying to go somewhere and forget your boyfriend, right? Well, it just so happens I am traveling to a small border town in a few hours. Why don't you join me? I'm sure I could find you a job where I work," the young girl replied, downing another sip of coffee.

"Well, it's not that I don't trust you, but I know so little about you. What line of work are you in?" Rosa asked, as she sunk her white teeth into a third steaming taco.

"Me? I'm a waitress. I assure you I would not lead you astray. Think it over, and if you decide to accompany me I'll be in my room until 1:00 this afternoon, when the bus leaves. I can almost guarantee you a fine job where I am employed. Well, see you later, maybe," the other girl stated as she picked up her bag and left the crowded cafe.

"Maria ... I'll think about it," Rosa replied, taking the last taco and hastily consuming it.

Two hours later the girls were looking out separate windows on a bus heading toward the small Mexican border-town of Acuña. Each was thinking about what had brought them on this trip. Rosa had been lonely and had wanted companionship ... with the added attraction of a possible job when she finally arrived at her destination. Maria, on the other hand, didn't mind the company the other girl was giving on her return trip, but that wasn't the reason she had asked her along. Her reason was well hidden in what she had told Rosa her line of work was. She had told her what she had done for a living, but not how she accomplished it! To her Rosa was just another 10% commission from the club where she worked.

The two girls arrived in the small border-town and disembarked from the bus. They booked into the "Golden Hoof" motel and settled into a nice cozy room for the night. The warm room was good protection against the cold December air blowing outside. They ate some dinner at a near-by cafe and spent the remainder of the night at the movie theater about a block from the motel.

As the movie ended the girls went back to their room for some badly needed sleep. Maria was the first to fall asleep. Rosa, meanwhile, was busy fixing her hair for the night and removing her make-up. She took one of the books she had brought along and began reading. Soon, though, she too had fallen asleep.

Two hours later Maria awoke rather abruptly to the sound of her watch-alarm. She looked over at Rosa to assure herself the girl was deep in slumberland. Finding the girl had not been disturbed by the sound of the alarm Maria arose and quickly dressed. She packed her suitcase and proceeded to do the same to Rosas'. Taking a last glance in the direction of the sleeping girl she crept silently from the room, carrying both sets of luggage. She went to the checkout desk and paid the clerk some money. Next, she placed a phone call.

A taxi soon arrived and Maria got into it.

"The 'Silver Dollar'."

"OK. Maria ... By the way, who did you bring this time?" the driver asked, looking through the rear-view mirror at the girl.

"Rosa Gomez," she replied, combing her long black hair in the side-view mirror.

"Never heard of her, but I guess I've never heard of any of them until they come here, eh?" he replied, and then they both broke into laughter at the private joke. "Well, here you are my dear."

"The club will pay for it," Maria threw the driver over her shoulder as she exited the cab and entered the club a few feet away.

"Well, if it isn't the old seducer herself! Who'd you bring back this time? Another scrawny slut? ... No? ... Maybe a fat, sniveling, slob then? ... No? ... Well, what is there left? ... Surely you couldn't have stumbled upon a real prize. Well, where is she?" a familiar voice greeted and clasped hands with Maria as she was shown to a corner of the club.

"For your information, Juan, I have the prettiest little thing you could ask for staying at the 'Golden Hoof'. All you have to do is go down and pick her up. I'm sure she will agree to work for you, rather than go to jail. I'll take my payment in advance," Maria stated, laying her palm face up across Juan's' lap.

"Why the switch, Maria? Why payment in advance? You know how we usually work. First the girl, then the payment ... What have you got up your sleeve?" Juan asked, reaching down and taking Maria's' arm, swinging it back behind her in an arm-lock.

"Alright!! I'll tell you. I want to catch the next bus to Mexico City so I can get to work on another prospect as soon as possible. The next bus leaves in an hour. So ... do you mind! ..." she replied, directing her gaze toward her arm.

"Well, first tell me where the room she is staying in is located, so we can pick her up without any delay. When my boys get there and have her on her way here, I'll give you the money ... not until." Juan said, releasing his hold on her arm.

"Do I have a choice?" Maria said, rubbing the injured member. "She's staying in 24A. Name is Rosa Gomez."

"Thanks." Juan replied, rising from the table. Making his way toward the bar he made a call on the bar phone, then returned to the table. "Now, we'll just sit back and wait to hear from Jose. If he says it's alright, I'll pay you and you can catch your bus. If not ... you had better do some fast talking."

Upon awakening Rosa turned her sleepy eyes toward the bed in which her roommate had flopped the night before. The bed was empty and had been made to look as if it hadn't been slept in. Rosa looked around the room and discovered she was its only occupant. She also discovered to her horror that her luggage had disappeared, along with her roommates. She hurriedly got up and performed a more thorough search of the room. She discovered there was nothing left but a couple of towels and some soap.

Dressed in only a flimsy nightgown she took one of the towels and, wrapping it about her, stepped out onto the cold pavement, making her way to the office at the front of the motel. There she confronted the manager.

"Señor, my room-mate has disappeared and so has my luggage and money! I want you to inform the policia of this at once." she bravely stated, drawing herself nearer the warmth of the oven being used to cook some eggs.

"May I have your name, and the room you were staying in?" the clerk replied, bringing out the register book.

"Rosa Gomez, room 24A." Rosa replied, rubbing her cold toes among the warm fibers of the rug that lined the office.

"I'm terribly sorry, Señorita," said the clerk, running his finger down first one page and then another, "but I can't seem to find you name listed. 24A you say? ... Hmmm ... it seems that room has been vacant for a few days now. Yet, you say that you and another girl slept there last night? ... and now she has disappeared ... and so has your money and luggage? Let me check this room and see what I can come up with. You stay right here and help yourself to some of the eggs there on the stove if you like. I'll be back in a minute."

Bewildered, Rosa took some eggs and sat down in one of the couches in the office while the clerk checked out the room. He returned after a few minutes and made a phone call. Then turned to Rosa and confronted her with what he had found.

"Well, young lady, it seems to me that there has been a great mistake made here ... it seems that you only wanted a warm room to stay in during the night and a warm meal in the morning. You came in here with that wild story hoping I would be taken in by it and offer you some food and shelter until we found this other girl ... who never even existed.

"Well, you're not going to get off by that ruse, you'll have to pay ... one way or another. I have just called a friend of mine who says he will pay your bill if you will work for him. He should be here any moment now ... ah, there he is.

"Jose, you old Tequila's worm, how you been? Here is the girl I told you about on the phone. Her name is Rosa Gomez ... I thank you for the money," he said, taking the bills from the man. "And now, she is all yours."

"Come Rosa, we must go now," Jose said, offering a hand to the girl.

"Now wait just a minute! What are you going to do about this girl, Maria! What about my clothes? and my money? I tell you I am telling the truth," Rosa shouted, standing up and drawing her towel up tighter.

"Come off it girl! You didn't actually expect us to swallow that story did you? Do you want that I give Jose here back his money and tell the Policia just what I found back in that room back there? You know what the Policia do to vagrants, don't you? Well?

"I know what you are thinking, but you can't prove a thing. There is no evidence that the other girl was even here. Nor that you brought any money or luggage with you to this motel. The only thing that the Policia will find when they come is a half-naked girl wearing a motel towel with a story no one in their right mind would believe. When they check out the room you say you had been staying in they will find the bed you slept in still unmade, and the lock to the door of the room broken. Now go with Jose here for your own good. You will work for him until you have paid off your debt ... from there on, well, that's up to you," the clerk said, stuffing the bills in his pocket.

Taking the girl by the hand, Jose drug her into the waiting taxi and the two left the motel. As they were driving away a slender girl wearing a fur coat approached the office and walked in.

"Alright, Manuel, where's my cut?" she asked, leaning over the desk, pushing her hand forward.

"Now, Maria, what makes you sure that I owe you anything? If anything I should think that you should be paying me for what I have done. How about it?" he replied, leaning back in his chair, sliding his feet into her open hands.

"Where do you get off calling for more money! You wouldn't have received what you did had it not been for me! Now pay up now before I call Jose back and explain to Rosa just what happened here this morning. I may spend a few days in the calaboose, but you would be in there the rest of your life," Maria replied, pushing his feet off the desk.

"You no good slut! You would cross me, now wouldn't you! ... Well, I don't intend to spend the rest of my life sitting in some forgotten cell somewhere no one ever heard of, so I'll just give you these bills," the clerk replied, handing over some folded bills.

"No you don't ... two more ... that's it. Thank you." Maria said, folding the bills and placing them between her bosoms. Picking up her coat she walked out of the office and hailed a bus on its way to Mexico City.

## III

"I'll tell you what ... why don't we carry our festivities over toward old Mexico?" George said, looking past the man next to him, letting his gaze rest on the shapely blonde several feet away.

"Do you realize what time it is? We have to work tomorrow ... and quit staring at that girl, don't you know that's impolite!" Henry answered, kicking George beneath the table.

"Ouch! Now was that nice? Anyway, it's midnight and things are just starting to happen across the way ... Since when did our going out on a work day ever enter into our plans before? Let's just get into the car, drive the six miles, and spend the remainder of the night enjoying ourselves," George replied, rubbing his shin.

"Yeah ... and I know where we'll end up too ... over there in that so-called 'Girl City' you seem to enjoy so much. You and your girls anyway!" Henry replied, picking himself up from the bar. Shifting his weight to the edge of the stool he pushed off in an effort to get his body moving in the general direction of the door.

"Aw come off it Henry, they-re just misguided girls who have to work there because of the lack of funds. Do you think that they enjoy that kind of work as much as we do?" George said as he helped his friend navigate the door.

"I still think it's a big mistake, George. But I figured that we'd more than likely end up over there before the night was out anyway ... so we might as well get there early and avoid the rush," Henry said, stumbling into the '55 Chev, slamming the door behind him.

"Do you think you can manage to get us there in one piece tonight? I mean, man, like you're way out there as it is," George said, sliding into the other seat and locking his door.

"I'll get us there, buddy. Just you get us back in time for work ..." was all he could get out before the sound of the engine drowned him out.

Both George and Henry were GIs looking for a good time that night, so they had decided to start their rounds of the bars early. As soon as they had gotten off duty they had changed clothes and started drinking. George was very popular in the bars over Mexico way, as was Henry. But by this time both were well polluted and didn't have a thing to worry about all night except getting to work on time in the morning.

George had one favorite club he liked to frequent in 'Girl City' and usually ended up staying there the entire night, talking to the girls in the bar. Henry, on the other hand, usually liked to roam around and travel from bar to bar to check out the local personalities. Tonight, however, he just wanted some rest. When he drove into the 'Silver Dollar' (George's favorite bar) and parked the car he asked George to set him up with one of the girls for the night.

"Sure," George replied, as they walked in through the double doors to the club. "Maria, vamos con mi amigo por todo la noche, sí?"

"Sí." the girl replied taking Henry's hand and leading him off toward one of the rooms behind the bar.

"Well," exclaimed one of the bartenders as George walked into the bar, "if it isn't the Triple-X Kid."

"Hello, Manuel," George replied, shaking hands as he seated himself at one of the near-by tables. "My usual, please."

"XXX for the Kid, Jose," Manuel said, throwing the towel and tray onto the counter top. The can was placed onto the tray and Manuel returned to the

table. "Who will it be this time? Maria? Melina? or maybe the new girl that just came in this morning?"

"Another one?" George asked, placing the money on the tray. "Where is she?"

"Against the wall, over there." Manuel pointed.

Looking to where the waiter had indicated George saw a slender, tan-skinned girl. She had not acquired that certain quality that made her an indistinguishable part of the club yet. She looked out of place in the club with the other girls. George asked the waiter to bring her over to him, as he wished to drink with her. Manuel made the arrangements and soon the two were united at the same table. George ordered a drink and waited until it came before starting up conversation with the girl.

"What's your name?" he asked, relying on the old conversational starter to get them going. "Mines George."

"Rosa ... Rosa Gomez," she came back, partaking the beverage set before her.

"Where are you from, and how did you get here?" George asked, eyeing her from the top of her dainty head to the bottom of her pixie-like feet.

"I was born and raised in Monterey. I came here by bus a few days ago. I was seeking employment here as a waitress," she replied, tipping her glass, draining it of its contents.

"You want another?" George offered, pointing to the empty glass. She said she would so he ordered a refill. "Do you like your work here?"

"No, but I must work if I expect to pay off the bill I owe a certain member of this bar."

The drink arrived and George paid for it and several others before the night came to a close and he had to return to work. When he had first met the girl he had quit his partying, so that by now he was quite sober. He asked her to wait for him at the same table tomorrow at six. She agreed and he started off to find Henry so they could both head back to the base for work.

"Hey Henry, you know that new chick I was telling you about? ... Rosa? Well, I went back there tonight and she was sitting there waiting for me at the table just like she said she would. First time that has happened," George said, fingering the photo he had on his lap, resting the phone on his shoulder. "I took her to the movies and then to one of the restaurants to get something to eat. She's got a great personality and is a lot of fun to be with.

"... you're kidding ... You and Maria? She's a real sweet chick and all, but don't you think you're carrying this thing a little too far? ... Sure, I'm sweet on them myself, but I'd never go that far ... you know what they are as well as I do ... What do you mean by that? ... I did? ... When? I said that! ... Now that you mention it I guess I did. Anyway, I'm supposed to see her tomorrow and take her shopping for a few things ... of course I'm buying, she hasn't got any money yet ... What-do-you-mean-by-that? No I'm not getting involved. I'm just getting her set up for later on, that's all. I am not making up excuses! ... Well, I do like her just a little, but I like all those chicks just a little ... I don't know, it's too early to tell. Well, I have to go now, work you know ... well so what if you DID get off ... go by yourself for once, you'll like it  
I assure you. Bye for now."

George hung the phone back on its hook. Placing the photo back into his rear pocket he navigated the two flights of stairs to his room, changed clothes and started off to work.

The next few months found George and Rosa drawing closer and closer. Soon they were engaged and George went out and bought Rosa a diamond ring to celebrate their engagement.

"Oh George, you're so wonderful!" Rosa exclaimed, looking at the diamond as it glistened under the mid-day sun. "I must write my parents and tell them this good news. They will be so surprised ... we must get back to the club now, before they start missing me."

"You're right, Rosa. I completely forgot about the time ... I was having such a wonderful time out here by the lake with you. Just talking to you seems to put me at ease. I couldn't feel any happier. Write your mother, by all means.

Ask her if she can send you the papers we need to get married," George asked, as he helped the girl to the back of the motorcycle.

George pulled in the clutch handle on the bike and soon the two were on their way down that lonely stretch of highway back to the club. As he guided the bike George kept thinking of how happy he would be with Rosa for the rest of

his life. Rosa just clung to the back of the man she thought she loved more than any other in the world.

After George left her at the club Rosa sat down to write her mother a letter.

Dear Ma-Ma:

Although I am very sorry for leaving without explaining, I had no other choice at the time. I caught Manuel running around with this other girl. He actually admitted this to me when I asked him about it. He said that he would continue to see her even though I had insisted that he stop.

I met a girl at the motel I was staying at and she convinced me to join her and come to the city where she was staying. She even promised me a job if I would join her in her trip home. I went with her and we arrived in the city and stayed in a motel the same night. When I awoke in the morning she was gone, and so was my money and all my luggage I had taken with me. I went to the motel manager to get help from the Policia. He said that there was no evidence of another girl being here with me. He accused me of sneaking into the motel room for a room for the night. He charged me rent for the room I had taken as well as the food I had eaten. He said I had to pay the bill or go to the calaboose myself.

A man came down from one of the clubs and paid my bill. He said I had to work for him until my bill was paid. I have been working here at the 'Silver Dollar' for the past few months trying to pay off my debt to Jose and then come home.

Jose keeps adding more to the amount I already owe him each time I buy something with the money the club gives me to live on ... I have to pay for the food, the room, my clothes, and my past bills with the money I make working here. It was so bad the first few months that I was spending more than I was making and I thought I would never get the bill paid off. Just recently I met a very nice Americano from the town across the border. He has been helping me pay off my bill. He is very kind to me, not like the rest of the Americanos. He seems to enjoy my company, I think I am starting to fall in love with him myself. Just today he has given me a most expensive ring to show his affection for me.

He is constantly taking me out to the movies, or to dinner, or just out, to get away from the club.

He has asked me to marry him. I wanted you to know and to send up my birth certificate and baptismal papers. By the way ... how is Manuel?

Love,  
Rosa

Rosa enclosed the letter in an envelope and rushed down to the city as soon as she could get away from the club and posted it. She waited three weeks before receiving a reply to the letter.

Dear Rosa:

We were so glad to hear from you again. We thought that you had taken ill or had died. Manuel started searching for you the moment he heard of your disappearance. He was so sorry that it was because of him that you had decided to go away. He says that he would do anything to get you back again. He stopped looking for you last week when he found you had left the city on a bus going to one of the small border-towns. He has been so unhappy these past few months that it has started to affect his work at the College.

Manuel says he is sorry you took his talk with the teacher for love. He says that he could never love anyone more than he does you. He says that he always has loved you and that he always will, no matter what. He wishes the best for you and your Americano, but says that if he were there it would not be the Americano that you would be marrying ... it would be him.

We are glad to hear that you are doing well, but we are sorry you were placed into that situation. We are sending you the papers that you requested so you can go through with the wedding if that is what you still want. Manuel sends his love.

Love,  
Ma-Ma

Rosa crumpled the letter and threw it into the corner. She lay down on her bed and cried for nearly an hour. Then she visited a few of her friends rooms and the three girls left the club and went to one of the out-of-the-way clubs and began drinking.

"I think you should go back to Manuel, Rosa," one of the girls said, sipping on the bottle in front of her.

"I want to go back, Maria, but I love this Americano as well," Rosa sobbed, putting her bottle back on the table and motioning the waiter to bring another round.

"Who is you love stronger for, Rosa? This Americano you have known only for a few months? Or Manuel, whom you have known for over ten years?" the other girl asked, as she flicked the ashes from the end of her cigarette.

"I don't know, Melina. I had thought that I had loved Manuel stronger, but George has such a strong love for me that it would break his heart if I went back to Manuel. Yet my love for him is not as strong as it is for Manuel, whom I have known for many a year."

"Think of it this way, Rosa," Maria said, emptying her bottle into a glass." ... haven't you harmed Manuel enough by deserting him when he needed you the most? Now he is thinking of dropping out of College because of you. He will end up with a lower paying job if he does that."

"Your best bet, Rosa, is to sell the ring and go back to Manuel. Tell George you have to go home for some reason or another. He won't follow you, he's not that type. He'll just sit here and wait for you to come back. He'll be waiting here for you while you are down there with the one you really love ... Manuel." Maria stated as she put her cigarette out on the floor.

"... I guess that you are right. I might not like it, but I guess it is the best way," Rosa said, downing the remainder of the bottle before her.

"Don't look now, but I think George just wandered in," Melina nudged Rosa.

"What'll I do?" Rosa asked, hanging her head between her hands, again starting to weep.

"Just do what we told you to do ... He has us spotted. Here he comes now," Maria said, looking over Rosas' head at the approaching figure." Hey, Rosa, look who just walked in."

"Hello Rosa, Maria, Melina. I heard you had gone out drinking and I thought I might find you here. What's happened, Rosa? Was it anything that I have said or done?" George asked, taking a seat opposite his love.

"No ... (sob) ... it was nothing ... (sob) ... that you did. It is my mother ... (sob) ... she is sick and I must go to her ..." Rosa sobbed, keeping her head concealed in her arms on the table." ... I have to leave tomorrow ... (sob) ... but I don't have all the money I need. I have to work harder tonight so I can leave tomorrow ... (sob) ..."

"Now, now, Rosa. You know that I would do anything I could to help you. Is there ANYTHING I can do?" George asked, placing his hands over hers.

"No ... no ... there is nothing that you can do, but thanks anyway," came the answer as Rosa began wiping the tears from her eyes with the hankey George had lent her.

"Did your mother send you those papers? ... no? ... well, maybe you can pick them up while you are down there. I would like to pay for your trip down. Here, take this," George said, passing her a few large bills. "It will help pay for the trip back ... and give you a little spending money to use while you are there."

Rosa looked up at him and began to cry again, "Thank you ... (sob) ... you're too kind to me ... (sob) ..."

"I had better go now," George said, looking to his watch, "I have been looking for you all night. Now that I have found you I have so little time to spend with you. But little as it was I have enjoyed it. I want to see you off tomorrow at the bus depot, what time do you plan on leaving?"

"No, you mustn't ... (sob) ... I don't think I could stand it. Please tell me you won't." Rosa pleaded as she stood up and started walking toward the door.

"Well for heavens sake, why not?"

"It might cause you more sorrow, and that is what I wish to avoid. We would say our good-byes and no sooner would I be out of sight than you would start feeling sorry that I was going. So I ask you, for your own sake, not to see me off and avoid the sorrow that tomorrow will bring," she replied, grasping his hand a little tighter.

"I suppose you are right. I will see you when you get back then ... when will that be, do you know?" George asked as he joined her and the other girls outside on their walk back to the 'Silver Dollar'.

"I don't know. I will write to you in care of the 'Silver Dollar' when I am to come back. Maybe a week or two, or just a few days. I don't know. Until then ..." Rosa said, and she hugged him so hard he thought he had stopped breathing. Then she kissed him so warmly she just seemed to melt the heart right out of him.

"Rosa ..." George began, as he watched the three girls disappear into the club. Tears streaming from his eyes he started his cycle and headed back across the border to the base. Once back on base he made it to his room and collapsed on his bunk in a flood of tears.

IV  
(Epilogue)

"Oh Rosa, I've missed you so much," Manuel said as he embraced the one he loved ever so tightly. "I was so glad you had come back to me. I will always be true to you, my love. I will even give up my College career if I have to so I can be with you."

"Oh no, Manuel. You mustn't do that! I am to blame for all that has happened. I was wrong about that girl, I can see that now. I have grown more in these past few months than you can ever realize. You must forgive me for thinking what I did about you and her, Manuel." Rosa stated, flinging her arms about his neck.

"It is I to whom the blame should be placed, my Rosa. It is I who talked to you in a way that you mistook for being love for another. If I had been more careful in selecting my words none of this would have happened. I feel sorry for that Americano you left behind. His love for you must truly have been strong for you to have written that letter to him explaining what you had done to be with me here. You have left a part of your life back there in that small border-town

that I can never replace. I only hope that you will let me try to make it up to you in some way," Manuel finished as he released his hold on the girl and refocused his eyes back onto the movie screen in front of him.

"I will never forget my Americano no matter how long I live. I will not forgive myself for what I had to do to him to be back here with you, Manuel. I can only hope he will see that our love has been the stronger of the two," she replied as she too turned to the screen before them.

"You see dear, it has all worked out for the better," Mr. Gomez said to his wife as they overlooked the couple sitting before the TV set in the living room.

"Even so, I still think that what she did was wrong, but it is her life and she must live with the decisions she has made," Mrs. Gomez stated, placing an envelope beneath her arm and walking out through the screen door. "I hope that this Americano will read this letter and think no more about her. But, I feel that his love for our daughter is too strong to break just like that ... I hope that I am wrong."

Several weeks later a letter arrives at the Gomez home from a small border-town. It reads as follows:

Dear Miss Gomez:

We are sorry this letter was not delivered to the party it had been intended for. He never showed up to collect it. We have enclosed it here in hopes that something else can be worked out.

Sincerely,

Jose

The elderly couple unfolded the other letter and read it:

Dear George:

I am very sorry that I have to write this letter, but I feel I must make up to you in some way for what I have done. I am

truly sorry that I could not tell you before that I was coming here to marry Manuel, the one whom I really love. I feared you might persuade me to marry you ... I feel my love for you would have pulled me into that marriage blindly. My love for you was too strong and I just had to get away to think before I made any decisions. I feel that in marrying Manuel I am doing the right thing.

I shall always cherish the love you gave to me in those few months that I came to know you. I hope you will forgive me and think of me only as I have thought of you, in the fondest of memories. I am truly very sorry for you.

Love

Rosa

Mrs. Gomez crumpled the letter and threw it into the fireplace. She then turned to her husband.

"I feel that it is better if we do not tell Rosa he did not receive her letter ... don't you?"

"Yes," Mr. Gomez stated, as he hugged his wife and took his place in his favorite chair by the fire to continue reading his book.

## A COLD WINTRY DAY

Golden orb ... up in the sky,  
Shed forth your light today.  
Let the clouds seek safer ground,  
As you dispel their mists away.  
5 Warm the land, the earth, the sea;  
Let not this coldness stay.

My smiling friend who circles high,  
Cast your glow beneath.  
10 Spread your light through hill and dale,  
Disburse these cries of grief.  
Twist a smile, a frown ... or laugh;  
Add some pleasure to your heat.

Ah mighty wind: 'Be still', say I;  
Let not your temper show.  
15 Cease your moods of spent delight,  
Your tempest ... do not grow.  
Calm the seas, the grass, the trees;  
But if you must ... breathe low.

**ALL OF THE DAYS**

All of the days and the,  
Nights that you're gone.  
I've been dreaming 'bout you,  
And I just can't go on.  
5 Visions playing their games  
In my mind,  
Leaving me lonely  
For such a long time.  
All of the days you've been gone.

10 I've been hearing 'bout you and what  
You're doing to me.  
All of them lies as I  
Plainly can see.  
Turning your back to the  
15 Things that you love.  
There's nobodyelse I can  
Put you above.  
All of the days you've been gone.

20 Told me you would love me,  
Told me you would care.  
Told me to quit botherin' you and take my place  
And sit down in a chair.

25 All of the days and the  
Nights you've been here.  
Moving so softly so I  
Could not hear.  
Telling me things that  
You knew would come true,  
'Till one night I caught you  
30 So what did you do?  
Told me you would love me all the time.  
You are mine.

**A MISTY, MUSTY, DREAM**

My love: Today I saw you,  
Through the mists of fear;  
And how distorted were you,  
I dare not say, my dear.

5 For when I'd think of what I'd seen ...  
I'm only too glad it was but a dream.

**ANTS**

O-O-Oh! Those creepy, crawling, climbing ants.  
How much trouble they can be!  
They're so small and run so slow,  
Why, I'm like God to them ... you see?

5 I can squish them with my finger,  
Squash them in my hand.  
Pull off all their feelers,  
And hide them in the sand.

10 Why, there's one now!  
By the hill!  
I'll show him what I can do!  
I'll close my hands and ...  
OOps, he got away.  
He can't do that !?!

**BLUE, GREEN ... WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Blue love,  
Try to find your place.  
Green love,  
You are out of place.  
5 But they come to me ...  
The only one they can see.

Blue love,  
Always losing ground.  
Green love,  
10 You'll be coming around.  
The morning sun is too bright;  
Things just aren't working out right,  
For me.

Blue love,  
15 Staying late at night.  
Green love,  
You're a little too tight ... for me.

Blue love,  
I know who you are.  
20 Green love,  
It's gone way too far.  
You're making me upset,  
You can't give me up yet.  
My love is around,  
25 I can't let you put me down.

Blue, Green,  
What do you mean?  
Tell me,  
Before I scream.  
30 Now I know it's too late.  
I can't take my own fate.  
Though I know I am through,  
For I gave all my loving ...  
To you.

**CAN'T YOU SEE**

Haven't you seen all those things that they say?  
Sliding and crawling as they come our way.  
Born in your nightmares and live in your dreams.  
Seeing them dying and hearing them scream.  
5 All day long.

Seeing such madness in the things that you do.  
The creatures are coming, they're all after you.  
Be careful of darkness, be careful of night.  
Watch when they bite you, for you may not live  
10 Much too long.

Can't you see.  
It's only me.  
I'm after you today.  
And the things that you do and say,  
15 Are just driving me so mad.

You cannot feel all the pain in my heart.  
When I see you leaving it just tears me apart.  
Break up my pieces and throw them away.  
Save them tomorrow and hear people say about you.  
20 What did you do?  
You tore him in two.  
So much to live.  
So much to give ... to you.

**FLIGHT 907**

The first thing I remember  
When flying back from Nome,  
Were the visions I had of happiness  
When I was landing near my home.  
5 But my dreams were quickly shattered  
When a voice had spoke to us,  
Said we had turned in flight  
And were going to see Cubas!

All my newborn dreams of fame  
10 Had died within my head,  
Soon thoughts that we were victimized  
Gave way to ones of dread.  
My fare was paid from Nome to home  
And nowhere in-between!  
15 What was that young man saying?  
What did he really mean?

Soon a husky man in tattered shirt  
Stood by the captains' door,  
20 There was a patch of red upon his chest  
Which gave way to several more.  
His gun was turned to cover us  
As he staggered across the floor,  
But he found his loss of blood too much  
And so leaned against the door.

25 The plane tilted then  
And threw him to the right,  
Which swung the door open ...  
And the captain dove into sight.  
His head was bruised,  
30 His eyes were puffing out,  
It was even painful breathing;  
But he could still move about.

He reached the fallen man  
And pinned him to the floor,  
35 Hitting him again and again  
As we just stood and yelled for more.  
Our cries went unanswered  
As the plane tipped back to left,  
The captain bound the prisoner  
40 And then he took a rest.

The plane resumed its westward course  
And we set down for the night.  
There were no cheers of greeting, as I had hoped;  
Only police and gate-guards met our sight.  
45 I was glad to be back home again  
And back on mother earth;  
I had my scare for the night ...  
For whatever THAT was worth.

I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU

Can't you see ... that  
I'm feeling broken hearted 'cause  
My life has only started  
And there's not much left of me.

5 Won't believe ... that  
My eyes are really helping me  
Clearing up the world I see  
So I can really live. I

10 Remember when the rays of dawn, they  
Kissed a darkened sky  
And a thousand stars were falling down  
When a tear formed in my eye.

15 All of those nights,  
When I was with you.  
Said we'd be together now,  
Because our love was true.

20 I can't tell ... if  
My feet were only guiding me  
To hands that would be helping free  
A captive of the well.

Confide in me ... and  
Tell me all the things you know:  
Places where I mustn't go  
And things I shouldn't see.

25 The only one I ever knew had  
Turned and ran away, but  
She found out I had told her true  
And now she's here to stay.

**JELLY MOLD**

One sunny-side egg,  
With slightly scrambled yellow;  
Two cross-eyed potatoes,  
And a lop-sided pear;  
5 Add three screaming chickens,  
Plucked in mid of day;  
Stir together warmly,  
And with these words do say:  
"Grods, Grods",  
10 And soon there will appear ...  
All the ingredients you need,  
To form a fools' gold Jell-O.

**JOURNEY 42**

I walked down a street last night,  
Heading toward my destiny.  
I left the one that loved me,  
Safe at home.  
5 I trace my footsteps along my way,  
Where they touch,  
They would not stay.  
But when they touch the ground,  
I know they will.

10 Down in my shack by the sea,  
I hear you.  
"Come and spend your life with me,"  
I'll be near you.  
Let's love life and be free,  
15 I'll be near you ... now.

My pathway making me turn right.  
I may not make it,  
But I might.  
Turn my head and gently  
20 Look away.

**LET'S ALL BE HAPPY AND CHEER**

Laying all the presents 'neath the Xmas tree,  
Laying them out for all to see.  
Mama and Papa in their dressing-gowns,  
Watching the children as they come down.

5 In the middle of the floor is a big white box,  
Laying on its side without a top.  
Father shows the sun a corner of the room,  
Mothers' little sisters will come in soon.

10 Mama and Papa now take their place,  
Wondering which child will win the race.  
Now the children will have some fun,  
Unwrapping the presents, having lots of fun.

15 Christmas is a lovely time of year now,  
Christmas brings lots of fun and cheer.  
Christmas comes only once a year now,  
Let's all be happy and cheer.

**LITTLE SPARROW RED-BREAST**

Little sparrow red-breast, sitting in a tree;  
I wonder why you look so nice, and how you came to be?  
I heard your father was a sparrow and your mother,  
The red-breast wonder;  
5 Is this true? Can this be you?  
Some mistake, or fathers blunder?

Was it on some lonely night, when mother sat alone;  
Or was it your father, dear, whose wings began to roam?  
He took to air and beat the bush,  
10 And wandered all about;  
'Till he spied a beauty fair,  
Who danced and took him out.

Little sparrow red-breast, sitting on a branch;  
Was it from your father, or mother,  
15 That taught you such a dance?  
I'm coming closer to your nest,  
So I might a take a gander;  
And pull the leaves down on our heads,  
Until I chance to land 'er.

20 'Though I be a chicken fair, and pleasant as a bastard;  
I'd still like to make you mine,  
Even though you're master.  
Red and blue don't make you mine,  
But my yellow is the charmer;  
25 For when your son shall raise his head,  
He'll be one hell of an alarmer!

**NEVERALITIES**

Two ounces of petrified butterfly fat,  
Fermenting in an open urn;  
Spoiling for a feast someday,  
In forgotten forest skulls.

5           Skeletons of spineless ants,  
              Roasting in the sun;  
              Glimmer in perpetual heat,  
              Slowly melt away.

10           Wingless birds and flying 'Crocks',  
              Battle for a feast;  
              While walking snakes and crawling trees,  
              Romp 'til break of day.

15           Fragmentary leaves running through suspended streams,  
              Drop ... yelling, screaming;  
              To broken trampolines below.  
              Somewhere afar a worm falls, crying.

**ODE TO A CHANGING TIME**

We are gathered here today to bring forth such blessings as are deemed necessary. Joining together this man and this machine in an ever lasting wedlock so holy and against all sin as to be deemed plausible under these circumstances. Do you MAXIMUS EFFORTUS hereby take this machine to be your lawfully wedded partner in any acts you wish to render upon said party? Through bad times and even worse, sickness and wealth, for until layoff do you part? ... I DO. Do you GOTTIMUS DUNNIMUS hereby take this man to be your lawfully wedded punch-card in any acts rendered feasible by said party? Through re-runs and re-winds, splices and punch-cards, for bending or mutilating? ... BEEP BEEP. I now pronounce you both dead.

**ONE**

Five men laid down for all to see,  
A sight as lovely as a tree;  
A tree that grows and spouts a flame,  
And hides among the bushes plain.

5           Four men lead and one man tottered,  
For each had hold of someone's daughter.  
Some moved out, and some moved in;  
Some were game, but some would win.

10           Three had run and two had fell,  
One was sick, and one was well.  
One threw out, the other in;  
While one was fast, the other'd grin.

15           One lone man sat by himself,  
Put all away to enjoy his health.  
Past was present, but now we knew;  
While I was one ... you were too!

**PLANETS**

Let me take the planets,  
In their order from the sun;  
And tell you all about them,  
Or how their life begun.

5           First in order is Mercury,  
          With its semi-liquid sheet;  
          Where life would be unbearable,  
          Because of the intense heat.

10           Then we find the lady Venus,  
          Surrounded by her clouds;  
          Too thick to even pierce,  
          So she won't draw a crowd.

15           Next we have the fertile Earth,  
          With her sun-filled fields of corn.  
          That's one place I should like to be,  
          If I were to be born.

20           Onward and outward,  
          To the planet Mars.  
          Where we will find our long-lost friends,  
          Along will all used trucks and cars.

          The Asteroids ( or Planetoids),  
          While sailing through the sky;  
          Would seem to make the best of use,  
          As a perfect place to die.

25           On toward Jupiter,  
          Land of the mystery spot;  
          Where people had only gone to play,  
          Until they lost their minds and fought.

30           The mystery rings of the planet next,  
          Known to possess our Saturn;  
          Have made their mark in history too,  
          As their message sets its pattern.

35           Uranus, the land of cold,  
          Where fruit trees grow no more;  
          It was here that man had found,  
          Was something more than just a floor.

40           But it was not until,  
          We reach the planet Neptune;  
          That we realize our thirst,  
          For its mighty fortune.

          At last we come to Pluto,  
          That frozen hunk of ice;  
          Where man will never learn to stay,  
          Unless he's looking twice.



**REALITY**

Is it time to face the light of reality?  
Here in a world where exists nothing  
But peace and tranquillity?  
Man has formed an image of stone to his own likeness  
5 And has bowed down in a great respect of it.

Shall the mind of man linger long  
On the problems at hand?  
Or shall they wander on a distant road  
To an endless goal?

**SATAN'S PICNIC**

Five men lay buried beneath the dirt,  
That time had scattered down.  
Yet each one said that they were first,  
To reach that sacred ground.  
5 ---and who's to say they weren't?

The first had told of the bitter war,  
He had fought when almost dead;  
And then had come the other four,  
To chop off his wounded head.  
10 ---and who's to say they didn't?

The second lay torn and scattered about,  
Over the sea, the air, and lands.  
From him had come that hollow shout,  
That someone had stole his hands.  
15 ---So who could deny they didn't?

Yet even the third remains unsure,  
As the word was passed around;  
That they had found him almost pure,  
And yet he was still tied down.  
20 ---Or maybe yet he wasn't?

The fourth and fifth remained aloof,  
Preparing to repent.  
It was not their wish to slip or goof,  
For the price was high for rent.  
25 ---Yet there was no one left to quibble.

The five lie still beneath their graves,  
As the shovel cast its spell.  
Too late they found inside their caves,  
Their kind of living hell.  
30 And so as once they'd come ... they went.

**SEE HER PASSING**

I'm peeking through the curtains at the  
Crowd down in the street,  
As a poet writes his message in a book.

5 I turn to leave the scene tonight,  
For the clock down in the street is right and  
Merrily goes ringing out its tune.

10 Happily the night has gone,  
I'm with her now I can't go on.  
Only she can tell I'm right.  
See her passing merrily along.

She's answering the questions  
I'm asking her tonight  
And she tells me only things  
I wish to know.

15 Everything is working out so perfectly  
I have my doubts that something  
Surely mustn't be so right.

20 I'm thumbing through the pages of a long forgotten book,  
And it's rightly so that I have to look.  
I'm looking for the oath you take,  
When you're going to take a mate  
I've heard it's in this golden book of old.

25 The day has come the night has passed  
I think with her my love will last.  
I haven't heard a nag or cry from her.

Tomorrow's still another day,  
Until it comes we'll pass away  
The time we spend  
Taking part again.

30 See her passing merrily along.

**SLEEPING PASSION**

See the inmates sleeping in their beds so quietly.  
Will they wake to see their world has gone?  
Passing eons wake the sleepers.  
Crawling 'neath a sheet a sleeper weeps.

5            His father has gone,  
              His brother won't live.  
              Father of a son of his weeps in pain  
              At a glass upon the shelf.  
              The bottle tips,  
10            The fluid melts.

Vapors lock mystifying secrets in a mist  
Hung near a virgin weed.  
When the summer comes,  
The fall will be too late!

**THE GOO-LEP**

WHAT IS THE GOO-LEP?

Is it a he? she? or it?

Where does it come from?

Where does it go?

5 Be it animal, mineral, or some spark or fear  
Left dormant in the mind of man for ages?

What is the Goo-Lep?

Is it that to which we look for refuge from ourselves?

Is it here? there? now? or when?

10 Will it hurt? scratch? bite? or just look?

If it were to have eyes would it see us? you? me? who?

Is it red? or green? or blue?

What matters if it has come for me or for you?

Is it matter? energy? or whatever?

15 The Goo-Lep will come; but for who? when? and why?

Is it bigger than a bread-box?

Smaller than a frog?

Will my heart beat faster?

Or just sit and throb?

20 Does it crawl, squirm, or wiggle?

Will it make me laugh, cry, or just giggle?

The Goo-Lep is strange ... yet the same as if different.

It travels its web of fear,

Through eyes, nose, and even from there to here

25 Without a sound.

Thrashing, smashing, bashing,

The Goo-Lep speeds by the space left vacant

By some forgotten owner sent to pasture.

Crawling, clawing, spreading before the mass

30 Of whatever left behind.

Is it faster than fast,

Slower than slow?

If you look to its eyes,

Which way will it go?

35 If your door is seen to open,

And your windows left ajar;

Will the Goo-Lep enter,

And seek a place to hide?

Or will it pass you by and fall to someone afar?

Does it bring greed, wealth, or sorrow?

Is it here today, and gone tomorrow?

Does it travel on legs, wings, or thought?

Will it turn on its master, or can it be bought?

The Goo-Lep is strange and its adventures untold;

45 But will it still exist if you die or grow old?

Can it exist where nothing has been?

Or is it how, who, why, or whenever?

The Goo-Lep will fly, or is it walk, or cry?

Whatever has been or will be, the Goo-Lep  
Will hang on until it can or could be.

**THE PEANUT**

Once there was a peanut,  
Just sitting in a tree;  
So he went and asked his parents,  
Of how he'd come to be.

5 His mother said it was a Robin.  
His father said: "Just a bird."  
Had come looking for a place to rest,  
And plant another .... !

**THROUGH THE PANE**

The clouds roll past my window,  
And now too late it seems.  
That yesterday I met you and,  
Now you're in my dreams.

5           The wind blows in from,  
          Out my window.  
          The rain,  
          It comes in too.  
10          But when I dream of loveliness,  
          It seems I dream of you.

          The rain pours down,  
          The water freezes.  
          The waves are building high.  
15          My love for you,  
          It can be measured.  
          Whenever you pass by.

          The morning sun it,  
          Shines so brightly.  
          The dew has left the ground.  
20          The birds they sing,  
          Their songs so sweetly.  
          Whenever you're around.

**TWO MATCHES**

Two wooden matches  
Sitting by a fire;  
Warming up their outsides,  
Getting higher, higher.  
5 Until deep within them  
Raged a purple flame,  
That kept them warm at night.  
Though warm within and warm without  
A charcoal coat was worn.  
10 So though they lived that night and day,  
Both were dead by 'morn.

**YOU ARE MORE THAN A FRIEND**

5 My dearest, my love, my sweet,  
Why do I miss you?  
Why is it I wish to meet?  
I have known you longest through your heart,  
I have hoped to me you have been true.  
Why then is it I wish you  
Were here and would never depart?  
Could I be ... in love ... with you?

10 Memories of days gone past,  
Fill my head with shame.  
For how can I love whom I've never met?  
But yet, this feels not strange.  
For does not happiness ... come from the heart  
When I wish the world could see?  
15 This fair young maiden of whom I've spoke,  
If she were to walk side-by-side with me.

**WISHES**

5 A wish is a multitude of things  
Ranging from pennies and dimes,  
To the love someone brings.  
Contained in this gift are visions of glee  
Sorrow, or love, or someone set free.  
These are some of the gifts we want  
In the visions we see.

10 A scrap of food to a starving prisoner  
Less money to pay for the food for your dinner.  
More money on hand and less weeds in the garden,  
No taxes to pay or more eggs to a carton.  
To grow hair on the bald  
Or give life to the old,  
These are some of the wishes we hold.

15 People who are too fat or too tall  
Ask to be skinny or small.  
Blind men, deaf men, ask of the poor  
Sight or sound for riches galore.  
20 People who laugh or people who weep  
Ask from others an emotion they keep.  
These are but some of the wishes we seek ...