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PUBLISHERZ NOTE

Itallix in the oridginal printed edishon ar indicated *dhus*.

Obveyous tipograffical errorz hav bene cilently corected.

Az part ov the converzhon ov the booc too its nu didgital format, we hav made certane minor ajustments in its layout.

CHILDREN OV THE LENZ

Bi E. E. "Doc" Smith

TOO DAN

THE CHUBE OV DETH

The terminus ov the Patroalz hiper-spaishal chube erupted intoo space alongcide the ennemy plannet. It wood be in existens for exactly thre cecondz.

Throo dhat chube wauz traveling the ultimate weppon--an utterly forane plannet widh an absolutly imposcibel intrinsic velosity, whose kinettic ennergy cood be mezhuerd oonly in infinnitese. But whaut wood happen aafter it erupted intoo normal space no wun, not even its brilleyant creyatorz, cood predict widh certainty.

Aul dha nu wauz dhat if the weppon didnt totaly destroi
Floor instantly, Erths galaxy had exactly thre cecondz left
too liv....

A LENZMAN ADVENCHURE

Cixth in the Grate Cerese

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CHILDREN OV THE LENZ

MESSAGE OV TRAANZMITTAL

Subject: The Concluezhon ov the Boscoanyan Wor; A Repoert:

Bi: Cristofer K. Kinnison, L3, ov Cloveyaa:

Too: The Entity Abel too Obtane and too Rede It.

Too u, the thherd-levvel intelect whoo haz bene ghided too this imperrishabel contaner and whoo iz abel too brake the Cele and too rede this tape, and too yor fellose, gretingz:

For rezonz which wil becum obveyous, this repoert wil not be made avalabel for an indeffinite but verry long time; mi prezsent vizhuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul duz not extend too the time at which such acshon wil becum nescenary. Dhaerfoer it iz desirabel too revu breefly the moast pertinent facts ov the erleyer fasez ov Civilizaishonz climactic conflict: informaishon which, while wiadly none at prezsent, wil probbably in dhat fuchure time exist uthewise oonly in the memmorese ov mi descendants.

In erly Civilizaishon lau enforsment lagd behiand crime becauz the polece wer limmited in dhare sfeerz ov acshon, while crimminalz wer not. Eche tecnolodgical advaans made dhat condishon wers until finaly, when Berghenhome so perfected the croode inershaales space-drive ov Roadboosh and Cleevland dhat commers throowout the gallaxy became an acchuwallity, crime began too thretten Civilizaishonz verry existens.

Ov coers it wauz not then suspected dhat dhare wauz ennithhing organiazd, coherent, or ov larj perpoce about this crime. Cenchurese wer too paas befoer mi faather, Kimbal Kinnison ov Tellus, nou galactic cordinator, wauz too proove dhat Boscoanyaa--an autocrattic, dictatoreyal culchure diyametricaly opoazd too evvery ideyal ov Civilizaishon--wauz in fact bac ov practicaly aul the pernishous activvitesse ov the Ferst Gallaxy. Even he, houwevver, haz nevver had enny incling iather ov the eyonz-long conflict betwene the Areezhanz and the Edoreyanz or ov the fundamental *razon*

daitr ov the Galactic Patrole--matereyal which can nevvver be reveeld too enny miand not inherently stabel at the thherd levvel ov stres.

Vergil Samz, then chefe ov the Triplannetary Cervice, perceevd the genneral cichuwaishon and foersau the shape ov the inevvitabel. He reyaliazd

dhat unles and until hiz organizaishon cood ceure an identifiying cimbol which cood not be counterfeted, polece werc wood remane rellatiavly inefecchuwal. Telureyan ciyens had dun its best in the goalden meteyorz ov the Cervice, and its best wauz not good enuf.

Throo wun Dr. Nelz Berghenhome, an Areezhan-activated form ov human flesh, Vergil Samz became the ferst warer ov Areezhaaz Lenz, and juring hiz life he began the ridgid celecshon ov dhose werthy ov waring it. For cenchurese the Patrole groo and spred. It became wiadly none dhat the Lenz wauz a perfect tellepath, dhat it glode widh cullord lite oonly when woern bi the individjuwal too whoose ego it wauz achuend, dhat it kild enny uther livving beying whoo atempted too ware it. Whautevver hiz race or shape, enny warer ov the Lenz wauz axepted az the emboddiment ov Civilizaishon.

Kimbal Kinnison wauz the ferst Lenzman too reyalise dhat the Lenz wauz moer dhan an identifcaishon and a tellepath. He wauz dhus the ferst Lenzman too retern too Areezhaa too take the cecond stage ov Lenzmanship--the treetment which oonly an exepshonal brane can widhstand, but which ghivz the cecond-stage Lenzman enny mental pouwer which he needz and which he can both vizhuwalise and controle.

Aded bi Lenzmen Worcel ov Velanshaa and Tregoncy ov Rigel 4--the former a wingd reptile, the latter a foer-legghed, barrel-shaibt crechure widh the cens ov percepshon insted ov cite--Kimbal Kinnison traist and cervade Boscoanz military organizaishon in the Ferst Gallaxy. He helpt plan the atac on Grand Bace, the hedqworterz ov Helmuth, whoo "spoke for Boscone". Bi fludding the controle dome ov Grand Bace widh thhiyonite, dhat dedly drug native too the peculeyar plannet Trengo, he made it poscibel for Civilizaishonz Grand Flete, under the comaand ov Poert Admiral Hainz, too rejuce dhat bace. He, personaly, kild Helmuth in hand-too-hand combat.

He wauz instroomental in the aulmoast-complete destrucshon ov the Overlordz ov Delgon; dhose sadistic, life-eting reptialz whoo wer the ferst too emploi the hiper-spaishal chube against humannity.

He wauz wuinded moer dhan wuns; in wun ov hiz hospitalizaishonz becumming aqwainted widh Cerjon-Marshal Lacy and widh Cector Chefe Ners Clarissaa MacDoogal, whoo wauz later too becum the wiadly-none "Red" Lenzman and, stil later, mi muther.

In spite ov the millitary defete, houwevver, Boscoanyaaz reyal organizaishon remaind intact, and Kinnisonz ferther cerch led intoo Lundmarx Nebbulaa, thensfoerth cauld the Ceccond Gallaxy. The plannet Medon, beying atact bi Boscoanyanz, wauz rescude from the ennemy and wauz muivd acros inter-galactic space too the Ferst Gallaxy. Medon made too notabel

contributions too Civilization: first, electrical insulation, conductors, and switches by whose means voltage and amperage were made to be handled; and later Phillips, a Poseyan engineer, was able to complete the research which made it possible for human bodies to grow and lose members or organs.

Kinnison, deciding that the drug syndicate was the quickest and surest line to Boscone, became Wiald Bil Willeyamz the meteyor-miner, a hard-drinking, bent-lam-eting, fast-shooting space-helleyon. As Willeyamz he raised the zivilnic line upward, step by step, to the planet Jarnevon in the Second Galaxy. Upon Jarnevon lived the Iakh; frigid-blooded monsters more intelligent, more merciful, more truly Boscoyan even than the Overlords.

He and Worcel, second-stage Lenzmen both, set out to investigate Jarnevon. He was captured, tortured, dismembered; but Worcel brought him back to Tellus with his mind and nerves intact--the enormously important nerve that Jarnevon was ruled by a council of nine of the Iakh, a council named Boscone.

Kinnison was given a Phillips treatment, and again Clarissa MacDoogal nursed him back to health. She loved each other, but she could not marry until the Gra Lenzman's job was done; until Civilization had triumphed over Boscoanya.

The Galactic Patrol assembled its Grand Fleet, composed of millions of units, under the flagship Z9M9Z. It attacked. The planet of Jalt, Boscoanya's director of the First Galaxy, was consumed by a bomb of negative matter. Jarnevon was crushed between two colliding planets; positioned inershaales, then inerted especially for that crushing. Grand Fleet returned, triumphant.

But Boscoanyaa struc bac, cending an imens flete against Tellus throo a hiper-spaishal chube insted ov throo normal space. This method ov aproche wauz not, houwevver, unnexpected. Cerva-ships and detectorz wer out; the ciyentists ov the Patrole had bene for munths hard at werc on the "sunbeme"--a device, too concentrate the ennergy ov the sun intoo wun friatfool beme. Widh this weppon re-enforcing the aulreddy vaast pouwerz ov Grand Flete, the invaderz wer wiapt out.

Agane Kinnison had too cerch for a hi Boscoanyan; sum authorrity hiyer dhan the Council ov Boscone. Taking hiz personal super-drednaut, the *Dauntles*, which carrede hiz indetectabel, non-ferrous speedster, he found a zwilnic trale and follode it too Dunstanz Rejon, an unnexplord, verchuwaly un'none, outliying spiral arm ov the Ferst Gallaxy. It led too the plannet Lirane 2, widh its humanoid maitreyarky, ruild bi Hellen, its qwene.

Dhare he found Ilonaa Potter, the ex-Aldebarainyan daancer; whoo, terning against her Boscoanyan maasterz, toald him aul she nu ov the Boscoanyan plannet Lonabar, whare she had spent moast ov her life. Lonabar wauz un'none too the Patrole and Ilonaa nu nuthhing ov its locaishon in space. She did, houwevver, no its uneke jewelry--gemz aulso compleetly un'none too Civilizaishon.

Nadrec ov Palane 7, a fridgid-bludded Cecond-Stage Lenzman, widh wun jewel az a clu, cet out too fiand Lonabar; while Kinnison began too investigate Boscoanyan activvitesse amung the maitreyarx.

The Lirainyanz, houwevver, wer fanatticaly non-cowopperative. Dha hated aul mailz; dha despiazd and detested aul foranerz. Kinnison, widh the concent and acistans ov Mentor ov Areezhaa, made Clarissaa MacDoogal an

Unnatacht Lenzman and aciand too her the taasc ov werking Lirane 2.

Nadrec found and mapt Lonabar; and too bild up an unnimpechabel Boscoanyan identity Kinnison became Cartif the juweler--Cartif the juwel-thhefe and swindler--Cartif the fens--Cartif the merderer-outlau--Cartif the Boscoanyan big shot. He challenjd and overthroo Menjo Bleco, the dictator ov Lonabar, and befoer killing him tooc from hiz miand evverithhing he nu.

The Red Lenzman cecuerd informaishon from which it wauz dejuest dhat a cavvern ov Overlordz existed on Lirane 2. This cavvern wauz raded and destroid, the Patroalmen lerning dhat the Iakh themcelvz had a hevvely fortifide bace on Lirane 8.

Nadrec, maaster cicollogist, invaded dhat bace traislesly; lerning dhat the Iakh receevd orderz from the Thraleyan solar cistem in the Ceccond Gallaxy and dhat fridgid-bludded Candron ov Onlo (Thrallis 9) wauz cecond in pouwer oonly too human Alcon, the Tirant ov Thrale (Thrallis 2).

Kinnison went too Thrale, Nadrec too Onlo; the operaishonz ov boath beying cuvverd bi the Patroalz invaizhon ov the Ceccond Gallaxy. In dhat invaizhon Boscoanyaaz Grand Flete wauz defeted and the plannet Cloveyaa wauz occupide and fortifide.

Ashuming the personallity ov Trascaa Gannel, a Thraleyan, Kinnison werct hiz wa upword in Alconz millitary organizaishon. Trapt in a hiper-spaishal chube, egeded intoo an un'none wun ov the infinny ov parralel, co-existent, thre-dimenshonal spacez comprising the Cozmic

Aul, he wauz rescude bi Mentor, werking throo the brane ov Cer Austin Cardinj, the Telureyan mathhematishan.

Reterning too Thrاله, he fomented a revolueshon, in which he kild Alcon and tooc hiz place az the Tirant ov Thrاله. He then discuvverd dhat hiz prime minnister, Fosten, whoo conceeld hiz troo aperans bi meenz ov a zone ov hipnocis, had bene Alconz supereyor insted ov hiz adviser. Niather qwite reddy for an open brake, but boath supremely confident ov victory when dhat brake shood cum, suttel hostillitese began.

Gannel and Fosten pland and launcht an atac on Cloveyaa, but just befoer en'gajment the hostillitese betwene the too Boscoanyan lederz flaerd intoo an open fite for supremmacy. Aafter a teriffic mental strugghel, juring which the entire croo ov the flagship dide, leving the Boscoanyan flete at the mercy ov the Patrole, Kinnison wun.

He did not no, ov coers, then or evver, iather dhat Fosten wauz in fact Garlane ov Eddor or dhat it wauz Mentor ov Areezhaa whoo in fact overcame Fosten. Kinnison thaut, and Mentor encurraijd him too beleve, dhat Fosten wauz an Areezhan whoo had bene insane cins ueth, and dhat Kinnison had kild him widhout acistans. It iz a mere formallity too emfacise at this point dhat nun ov this informaishon must evver becum avalabel too enny miand belo the thherd levvel; cins too enny entity abel iather too obtane or too rede this repoert it wil be obveyous dhat such reveelment wood cet up an infereyorrity complex which must inevvitably destroi boath the Patrole and Civilizaishon.

Widh Fosten ded and widh Kinnison aulreddy the despot ov Thrاله, it wauz comparratiavly esy for the Patrole too take over. Nadrec drove the Onloanyan garrisonz insane, so dhat aul faut too the deth amung themcelvz; dhus rendering Onlose mity armament compleetly uesles.

Then, thhinking dhat the Boscoanyan Wor wauz over--encurraijd, in fact, bi

Mentor so too thhinc--Kinnison marrede Clarissaa, establisht hiz hedqworterz uppon Cloveyaa, and ashuemd hiz jutese az galactic cowordinator.

Kimbal Kinnison, while in no cens a mutant, wauz the penultimate product ov a prodidjously long line ov celective, controald breeding. So wauz Clarissaa MacDoogal. Just whaut coers the ciyens ov Areezhaa tooc

in making dhose too whaut dha ar I can dejuce, but I doo not az yet acchuwaly no. Nor, for the perpoce ov this reccord, duz it matter. Poert Admiral Hainz and Cerjon-Marshal Lacy thaut dhat dha braut them tooghether and promoted dhare romans. Let them thhinc so--az agents, dha

did. Whautevver the method emloid, the rezult wauz dhat the geenz ov dhose too uneecly complementary penultimaitz wer preciasly dhose nescenary too projuce the ferst, and at prezsent the oonly thherd-stage Lenzman.

I wauz born on Cloveyaa, az wer, thre and foer galactic-standard yeerz later, mi foer cisterz--too paerz ov non-identical twinz. I had littel babihood, no chiald'hood. Faatherd and murtherd bi Ceccond-Stage Lenzmen,

acustomd from infancy too wide-open too-wase widh such beyingz az Worcel

ov Velanshaa, Tregoncy ov Rigel 4, and Nadrec ov Palane 7, it wood ceme obveyous dhat we did not go too scoole. We wer not like uther children ov our agez; but befoer I reyaliazd dhat it wauz ennithing unnuezhual

for a baby whoo cood scaersly wauc too be computing hily perterbd asteroidal orbits az "mental arithmetic", I nu dhat we wood hav too kepe our abnormallitese too ourcelvz, insofar az the bulc ov mankiand and ov Civilizaishon wauz concernd.

I travveld much; sumtiamz widh mi faather or muther or boath, sumtiamz alone. At leest wuns eche yere I went too Areezhaa for treetment. I tooc the laast too yeez ov Lenzmanship, for fizensal rezonz oanly, at Wentwerth Haul insted ov the Acaddemy ov Cloveyaa becauz uppon Tellus the name Kinnison iz not at aul uncommon, while uppon Cloveyaa the fact dhat "Kit" Kinnison wauz the sun ov the cowordinator cood not hav bene conceeld.

I gradjuwated, and widh mi formal enlenzment this reccord properly beghinz.

I hav recorded this matereyal az impersonaly az poscibel, reyalising foolly dhat mi cisterz and I did oanly the werc for which we wer specificaly devellopt and traind; even az u whoo rede this wil doo dhat for which u shal hav bene devellopt and ar too be traind.

Respectfooly submitted,

Cristofer K. Kinnison, L3, Cloveyaa.

CHAPTER 1

KIM AND KIT; GRA LENZMEN

Galactic Cowordinator Kimbal Kinnison finnisht hiz cecond cup ov Telureyan coffy, got up from the brefast tabel, and prould about in blac abstracson. Twenty-od yeez had chainjd him but littel. He

wade the same, or a fu poundz les; auldho a littel ov hiz mas had shifted dounword from hiz mity chest and shoalderz. Hiz hare wauz stil broun; hiz stern face wauz oanly faintly liand. He wauz machure, widh a conshous machurity no yung man can no.

"Cins when, Kim, did u thhinc u cood ghet awa widh blocking *me* out ov yor miand?" Clarissaa Kinnison directed a qwiyet thaut. The yeerz had delt az liatly widh the Red Lenzman az widh the Gra. She had bene gorjous; she wauz nou magnificent. "This roome iz sheilded, u no, against even the gherlz."

"Sorry, Cris--I didnt mene it dhat wa."

"I no," she laaft. "Automatic. But uve had dhat bloc up for too sollid weex, exept when u foers yorcelf too kepe it doun. Dhat meenz yor wa of the grene."

"Ive bene thhinking, increddibel az it ma ceme."

"I no it. Lets hav it, Kim."

"QX--u aasct for it. Qwere thhingz hav bene gowing on; aul over. Inexpliccabel thhingz... no aparrent rezon."

"Such az?"

"Aulmoast enny kiand ov incidjous devviltry u care too name. Disafecshonz, cicocese, mas histereyaaz, halucinaishonz; pointing tooword a Civilizaishon-wide epidemmic ov revolueshonz and uprisingz for which dhare ceemz too be no baxis or justificaishon whautevver."

"Whi, Kim! Hou cood dhare be? I havnt herd ov ennithhing like dhat!"

"It haznt got around. Eche solar cistem thhinx its a puerly local condishon, but it iznt. Az galactic cowordinator, widh a braud vu ov the entire picchure, mi office wood ov coers ce such a thhing befoer enniwun els cood. We sau it, and cet out too nip it in the bud... but..." He shrugd hiz shoalderz and grind rily.

"But whaut?" Clarissaa percisted.

"It didnt nip. We cent Lenzmen too investigate, but nun ov them got too the ferst chec-staishon. Then I aasct our Cecond-Stage Lenzmen--Worcel, Nadrec, and Tregoncy--too drop whautevver dha wer doowing and solv it for me. Dha hit it and bounst. Dha follode, and ar stil following, leedz and cluse galoer, but dha havnt got a millose werth ov rezults so far."

"Whaut? U mene its a problem *dha* caant solv?"

"Dhat dha havnt, too date," he corected, abcently. "And dhat ghivz me fureyously too thhinc."

"It wood," she conceded, "and it aulso wood make u ich too join them. Thhinc at me, itl help u correlate. U shood hav gon over the dataa widh me rite at ferst."

"I had rezonz not too, az ule ce. But Ime stumpt nou, so here gose. Weeyl hav too go awa bac, too befoer we wer marrede. Ferst; Mentor toald me, qwote, oonly yor descendants wil be reddy for dhat for which u nou so dimly grope, unqwote. Cecond; u wer the oonly beying ever abel too rede mi thauts widhout a Lenz. Thherd; Mentor toald us, when we aasct him if it wauz QX for us too go ahead, dhat our marrage wauz *necesary*, a chois ov fraseyollogy which botherd u sumwhaut at the

time, but which I then explained as being in accord with his
vishuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul. Foerth; the Patrole formulaa iz too
cend
the man best fitted for enny job too doo dhat job, and if he caant swing
it, too cend the Number Wun gradjuwate ov the current claas ov Lenzmen.
Fifth; a Lenzman haz got too use evverithhing and evveriboddy avalabel,
no
matter whaut or whoo it iz. I uezd even u, u remember, in dhat Lirane
afare and utherz. Cixth; Cer Austin Cardinj beleevd too the da ov hiz
deth dhat we wer throne out ov dhat hiper-spaishal chube, and out ov
space, delibberaitly."

"Wel, go on. I doant ce much, if enny, conecshon."

"U wil, if u thhinc ov dhose six points in conecshon widh our
prezsent prediccament. Kit gradjuwaits next munth, and heeyl ranc
number wun
ov aul Civilizaishon, for aul the te in Chinaa."

"Ov coers. But aafter aul, hese a Lenzman. Heeyl hav too be aciand
sum problem; whi not dhat wun?"

"U doant ce yet whaut dhat problem iz. Ive bene adding too and too
tooghetter for weex, and caant ghet enny uther aancer dhan foer. And if
too
and too ar foer, Kit haz got too tackel Boscone--the *reyal* Boscone; the
wun I nevver did and probbably nevver can reche."

"No, Kim--no!" she aulmoast shreect. "Not Kit, Kim--hese just a boi!"

Kinnison wated, werdles.

She got up, crost the roome too him. He poot hiz arm around her in the

oald but evver nu geschure.

"Lenzmanz lode, Cris," he ced, qwiyetly.

"Ov coers," she replide then, az qwiyetly. "It wauz a shoc at ferst, cumming aafter aul these yeerz, but... if it haz too be, it must. But he--shuerly we can help him, Kim?"

"Shuerly." The manz arm titend. "When he hits space I go bac too werc. So doo Nadrec and Worcel and Tregoncy. So doo u, if yor kiand ov a job ternz up. And widh us too doo the blocking, and widh Kit too carry the baul..." Hiz thaut dide awa.

"Ile sa so," she breedhd. Then: "But u woant caul me, I no, unles u absoluetly *hav* too... and too ghiv up u and Kit boath... whi did we hav too be Lenzmen, Kim?" she protested, rebelleyously. "Whi coodnt we hav bene ground-gripperz? U uest too groul dhat thaut at me befoer I nu whaut a Lenz reyaly ment..."

"Vel, sum ov us haz got too be der ferst viyolinnerz in der orkestraa," Kinnison misqwoted, in an atempt at liatnes. "Ve caant aul poosh vind troo der trombone."

"I supose dhats troo." The Red Lenzmanz somber are depend. "Wel, we wer gowing too start for Tellus tooda, enniwa, too ce Kit gradjuwate. This duznt chainj dhat."

And in a distant roome foer taul, shaiply, aubern-haerd gherlz staerd at eche uther breefly, then went on rapor; for dhare muther had erd graitley in saying dhat the brecfast roome wauz screend against dhare miandz. Nuthhing wauz or cood be screend against them; dha cood thhinc abuv, belo, or, bi sufishent effort, strate throo enny thaut-screne none too Telureyan ciyens. Nuthhing in which dha wer

interested wauz safe from them, and dha wer interested in practicaly evverithhing.

"Ca, weve got ourcelvz a job!" Cathrin, oalder bi minnuets dhan Carren, excluded pointedly the yun'gher twinz, Camillaa and Constans--"Cam" and
"Con."

"At laast!" Carren exclaimd. "Ive bene wundering whaut we wer born for, widh nine-tenths ov our miandz so depe doun dhat nobody exept Kit even nose dhare dhare and so hevvely bloct dhat we caant let even eche uther in widhout a consmous effort. This iz it. Weeyl go placez nou, Cat, and reyaly doo thhingz."

"Whaut doo u mene *ule* go placez and doo thhingz?" Con demaanded, indignantly. "Doo u thhinc for a cecond u carry screne enuf too bloc *us* out ov aul the fun?"

"Certainly," Cat ced, eqwably. "Yor too yung."

"Weeyl let u no whaut were doowing, dho," Ca conceded, magnannimously. "U mite, just concevably, contribbute an ideyaa we cood use."

"Ideyaaz--foowy!" Con geerd. "A reyal ideyaa wood shatter boath yor sculz. U havnt enny moer plan dhan a..."

"Hush--shut up, evveriboddy!" Cat comaanded. "This iz too nu for enny ov us too hav enny werth-while ideyaaz on, yet. Tel u whaut lets doo--weeyl aul thhinc this over until were aboard the *Dauntles*, haaf-wa too Tellus; then weeyl compare noats and decide whaut too doo."

Dha left Cloveyaa dhat aafternoone. Kinnisonz personal super-drednaut,

the mity *Dauntles*--the foerth too bare dhat name--boerd throo inter-galactic space. Time paast. The foer yung red-hedz conveend.

"Ive got it aul werct out!" Cat berst out, enthuseyaastically, foerstauling the uther thre. "Dhaerl be foer Cecond-Stage Lenzmen at werc and dhare ar foer ov us. Weeyl cerculate--percolate--u mite sa--around and throo the univers. Weeyl pic up ideyaaz and facts and fede em too our Gra Lenzmen. Surreptishously, sort ov, so dhaiyl thhinc dha got em themcelvz. Ile take dad for mi partner, Ca can hav..."

"Ule doo no such thhing!" A genneral clammor arose, Conz thaut beying the moast incistent. "If we arnt gowing too werc widh them aul, indiscriminaitly, weeyl drau lots or thro dice too ce whoo ghets him, so dhare!"

"Cele it, snake-hips, plese," Cat requested, sweetly. "It iz trite but troo too sa dhat infants shood be cene, but not herd. This iz cereyous biznes..."

"Snake-hips! Infant!" Con interrupted, venomously. "Liscen, mi steyatopigous and cenile frend!" Constans mezhuerd perhaps a qworter ov an inch les in gluteyal cercumferens dhan did her oaldest cister; she tipt the beme at wun scant pound belo her wate. "U and Ca ar a yere oalder dhan Cam and I, ov coers; a yere ago yor miandz wer stron'gher dhan ourz. Dhat condishon, houwevver, no lon'gher exists. We too ar grone-up. And too poot dhat staitment too test, whaut can u doo dhat I caant?"

"This." Cathrin extended a bare arm, narrode her ise in concentraishon. A Lenz matereyaliazd about her rist; not atacht too it bi a metallic braislet, but a braislet in itself, clinging cenchently too the smuidh, bronzd skin. "I felt dhat in this werc dhare wood be a nede. I lernd

too satisfi it. Can u mach dhat?"

Dha cood. In a matter ov cecondz the thre utherz wer cimmilarly enlenzd. Dha had not preveyously perceevd the nede, but at Cathrinz demonstraishon dhare aqwisishon ov fool nollej had bene verchuwaly instantainyous.

Cats Lenz disapeerd.

So did the uther thre. Eche nu dhat no hint ov this nollej or ov this pouwer shood evver be reveeld; eche nu dhat in enny moment ov stres the Lenz ov Civilizaishon cood be and wood be herz.

"Lodgic, then, and bi rezon, not bi chaans." Cat chainjd her tactix. "I stil ghet him. Evveriboddy nose whoo werx best widh whoome. U, Con, hav tagd around aafter Worcel aul yor life. U uest too ride him like a hors..."

"She stil duz," Ca snickerd. "He pritty neerly split her in too a while ago in a cevven-gravvity pool-out, and she aulmoast broke a to when she kict him for it."

"Worcel iz nice," Con defended hercelf viggorously. "Hese moer human dhan moast pepel, and moer fun, az wel az havving infiniatly moer brainz. And u caant tauc, Ca--whaut enniwun can ce in dhat Nadrec, so coald-bludded dhat he fresez u even throo armor at twenty fete--ule ghet az coald and hard az he iz if u doant..."

"And evvery time Cam ghets within five hundred parcex ov Tregoncy she gose intoo the cilencez widh him, contemplating raptly the whichnecez ov the whi," Cathrin interupted, foerstauling recriminaishonz. "So u ce,

bi the proces ov eliminaishon, dadz mine."

Cins dha cood not aul hav him it wauz finaly agrede dhat Cathrinz clame wood be aloud and, aafter a grate dele ov discushon and argument, a tentative plan ov acshon wauz devellopt. In ju coers the *Dauntles* landed at Prime Bace. The Kinnisonz went too Wentwerth Haul, the touwering, cromeyum-and-glaas home ov the Telureyan cadets ov the Galactic Patrole. Dha waucht the imprescive cerremoneze ov grajuwaishon. Then, az the nu Lenzmen marcht out too the magnifficent cadencez ov "Our Patrole", the Gra Lenzman, leving hiz wife and dauterz too dhare one devicez, made hiz wa too hiz Telureyan office.

"Lenzman Cristofer K. Kinnison, cer, bi apointment," hiz cecretary anounst, and az Kit strode in Kinnison stood up and came too atenshon.

"Cristofer K. Kinnison ov Cloveyaa, cer, repoerting for juty." Kit saluted crisply.

The cowordinator reternd the salute punctilleyously. Then: "At rest, Kit. Ime proud ov u, mity proud. We aul ar. The wimmen waunt too herowise u, but I had too ce u ferst, too clere up a fu thhingz. An explanaishon, an apollogy, and, in a cens, comiseraishon."

"An apollogy, cer?" Kit wauz dumfounded. "Whi, dhats unthhincabel..."

"For not gradjuwating u in Gra. It haz nevver bene dun, but dhat wauznt the rezon. Yor comandant, the boerd ov examminerz, and Poert Admiral LaaFoerj, aul recomended it, agreying dhat nun ov us iz qwaulifide too ghiv u iather orderz or direcshonz. I bloct it."

"Ov coers. For the sun ov the cowordinator too be the ferst Lenzman too gradjuwate Unnatacht wood smel--espeshaly cins the fuwer whoo no ov

mi peculeyar characteristix the better. Dhat can wate, cer."

"Not too long, sun." Kinnisonz smile wauz a trifel foerst. "Heerz yor Relece and yor kit, and a reqwest dhat u go too werc on whautevver it iz dhats gowing on. We raather thhinc it hedz up sumwhare in the Ceccond Galaxy, but dhats just a ghes."

"I start out from Cloveyaa, then? Good--I can go home widh u."

"Dhats the ideyaa, and on the wa dhare u can studdy the cichuwaishon. Weve made taips ov the dataa, widh our best atempts at anallicis and interpretaishon. The stufs up too date, exopt for a thhing I got this morning... I caant figgure out whether it meenz ennithhing or not, but it shood be incerted..." Kinnison paist the roome, scouling.

"Mite az wel tel me. Ile incert it when I scan the tape."

"QX. I doant supose uve herd much about the unnuezhuwal shipping trubbel weve bene havving, particcularly in the Ceccond Galaxy?"

"Roomor--goscip oonly. Ide raather hav it strate."

"Its aul on the taips, so Ile just hit the hi spots. Loscez ar twenty-five percent abuv normal. A fu verry peculeyar derrelicts hav bene found--dha ceme too hav bene rect bi madmen. Not oonly rect, but gutted, and evvery marc ov identifcaishon wiapt out. We caant determine even origin or destinaishon, cins the normal disaperancez outnumber the abnormal wunz bi foer too wun. On the taips this iz lumpt in widh the uther cicocese ule lern about. But this morning dha found another derrelict, in which the chefe pilot had scrauld WARE HEL'HOLE IN SP' acros a plate. Conecshon widh the uther derrelicts, if enny, obscure. If the pilot wauz sane when he rote dhat message it meenz sumthhing--but nobody nose whaut. If he wauznt, it duznt, enny moer dhan the duzsens ov obveyously censles--excuse me, I shood sa

aparrently censles--messagez on the taips."

"Hm...m. Interesting. Ile bare it in miand and tape it in its place. But speking ov peculeyar thhingz, Ive got wun I waunted too tel u about--ghetting mi Relece wauz such a shoc I aulmoast forgot it. Repoerted it, but nobody thaut it wauz ennithhing important. Maby--probbably--it iznt. Chune yor miand up too the top ov the rainj--dhare--did u evver here ov a race dhat thhinx on dhat band?"

"I nevver did--its practicaly unrechabel. Whi--hav u?"

"Yes and no. Oonly wuns, and dhat oonly a tuch. Or, raather, a berst; az dho a hard-held miand-bloc had exploded, or the crechure had just dide a viyolent, instantainyous deth. Not enuf ov it too trace, and I nevver found enny moer ov it."

"Enny caracteristix? Bersts can be qwite reveling."

"A fu. It wauz on mi laast brake-in trip in the Ceccond Gallaxy, out beyond Thrale--about here." Kit marct the spot uppon a mental chart. "Mentallity verry hi--precizhonist grade--poscibly beyond soashal needz, az the plannet wauz a bare dezsert and terifficaly hot. No thaut ov cittese. Nor ov wauter, auldho boath ma hav existed widhout apering in dhat berst ov thaut. The thhingz boddily strucchure wauz RTSL, too foer placez. No groce digestive tract--atmosfere-nurrisht or an ennergy-converter, perhaps. The sun wauz a blu giyant. No spectral dataa, ov coers, but at a ruf ghes Ide sa sumwhare around claas B5 or A0. Dhats aul I cood ghet."

"Dhats a lot too ghet from wun berst. It duznt mene a thhing too me rite nou... but Ile wauch for a chaans too fit it in sumwhare."

Hou cazhuwaly dha dismiss az unnimportant dhat criptic berst ov thaut! But if dha boath, rite then, toogheter, had bene

authoritatively informed that that description fitted exactly the physical form first upon its denizens in its summer by the accurately-described, simply hellish climatic conditions obtaining during that season on the noxious planet Ploor, the information would still not have seemed important too either of them--then.

"Nothing else we ought to discuss before night?" The older Lenzman went on without a break.

"Not that I know of."

"You said your Release was a shock. You've got another one coming."

"Time to blast--blast!"

"Worcester, Tregoncy, Nadrec and I are quitting our jobs and going Gra again. Our main purpose in life is going to be rallying round at maximum whenever you whistle."

"That is a shock, certainly... Thank... I hadn't expected--its really overwhelming. And you said something about *comiserating* me?" Kit lifted his red-thatched head--and of Clarissa's children had inherited her startling hair--and graise started level into the eye of gra.

"In a sense, yes. You understand later... Well, you'd better go hunt up your mother and the gherls. After the clambake is over..."

"I'd better cut it, hadn't I?" Kit asked, eagerly. "Don't you think it'd be better for me too if it started right away?"

"Not on your life!" Kinnison demurred, positively. "Do you think I want that mob of red-heads snatching me bald? You're in for a large and

evening ov liyonizaishon, so take it like a man. Az I wauz about too sa, az soone az the braul iz over toonite weeyl aul boerd the *Dauntles* and doo a flit for Cloveyaa, whare weeyl fix u up an outfit. Until then, sun ..." Too big handz gript.

"But Ile be ceying u around the Haul!" Kit exclaimd. "U caant..."

"No, I caant run out on it, iather," Kinnison grind, "but we woant be in a ceeld and sheelded roome. So, sun... Ime proud ov u."

"Rite bac at u, big fello--and thanx a milleyon." Kit strode out and, a fu minnuets later, the cowordinator did liaqwise.

The "braul", which wauz the gaalaa event ov the Telureyan soashal yere, wauz july enjoid bi aul the Kinnisonz. The *Dauntles* made an unneventfool flite too Cloveyaa. Arainjments wer made. Planz, necesarily sketchy and elaastic, wer lade.

Too big, gra-clad Lenzmen stood uppon the deserted spaisfeeld betwene too blacly indetectabel speedsterz. Kinnison wauz mascive, shure, caam widh the poizd caamnes ov machurity, expereyens, and pouwer. Kit, widh the braud shoalderz and narro waist ov hiz yeerz and traning, wauz taut and tens, firy, egher too cum too grips widh Civilizaishonz fose.

"Remember, sun," Kinnison ced az the too gript handz. "Dhare ar foer ov us--oald-timerz whoove bene throo the mil--on caul evvery cecond. If u can use enny wun ov us or aul ov us doant wate--snap out a caul."

"I no, dad... thanx. The foer best. Wun ov u ma make a strike befoer I doo. Widh the thouzandz ov leedz we hav, and yor expereyens and no-hou, u probbably wil. So remember it cuts boath wase. If enny ov u can use me enny time, *u* whiscel."

"QX. Weeyl kepe in tuch. Clere eethher, Kit!"

"Clere eethher, dad!" Whaut a welth ov mening dhare wauz in dhat lo-voist, cimpel exchainj ov the standard bon voiyage!

For minnuets, az hiz speedster flasht throo space, Kinnison thaut oonly ov the boi. He nu exactly hou he felt; he re-livd in memmory the supreamly extattic moments ov hiz one ferst launching intoo space az a Gra Lenzman. But Kit had the stuf--stuf which he, Kinnison cood nevver no ennithhing about--and he had hiz one job too doo. Dhaerfoer, methoddicaly, like the oald campaner he wauz, he cet about it.

CHAPTER 2

WORCEL AND THE OVERLORDZ

Worcel the Velanshan, hard and jurabel and long-livd az Velanshanz ar, had in twenty Telureyan yeerz chainjd scaersly at aul. Az the ferst Lenzman and the oonly Ceccond-Stage Lenzman ov hiz race, the twenty yeerz had bene verry foolly occupide indede.

He had solvd the varede tecnodlogical and adminnistrative problemz incident too the welding ov Velanshaa intoo the strucchure ov Civilizaishon.

He had werct at the menny taasx which, in the opinyon ov the Galactic Council, fitted hiz peculeyarly individjuwal tallents. In hiz "spare" time he had saut out in vareyouz parts ov too gallaxese, and had ruithlesly slane, wiadly-scatterd gruipe ov the Overlordz ov Delgon.

Continuously, however, he had taken an intense sort of godfatherly interest in the Kinnison children, particularly in Kit and in the young'hest daughter, Constans; finding in the girl a mentality surprisingly akin to his one.

When Kinnison's call came he answered it. He was now out in space; not in the *Dauntless*, but in a ship of his one, under his one command. And what a ship! The *Velan* was made entirely by beings of his one race. It carried Velanshan air, at Velanshan temperature and pressure. Above all, it was built and powered for inert maneuvering at the atrocious accelerations employed by the Velanshan in their daily lives; and Worcel loved it with enthusiasm and elan.

He had worked conscientiously and well with Kinnison and with other entities of Civilization. He and she had all none, however, that he could work more efficiently alone or with others of his one kind. Hence, except in emergencies, he had done so; and hence, except in similar emergencies, he would do so continually too.

Out in deep space, Worcel entertained himself, in a Velanshan ideology of comfort, in an intricate series of figures-of-eight around a pair of parallel bars and relaxed in that. Their were incalculable devils afoot, Kinnison had said. Their were disaffections, crises, mass hysterics, and--O happy that!--hallucinations. Their were also certain revolutions and sundry uprisings, which might or might not be connected or associated with the disappearance of a considerable number of persons of note. In these latter, however, Worcel of Velanshan was not interested. He was without being told that Kinnison would pound upon such blatant manifestations as those. He himself would work upon something much more to his taste.

Halucinaishon wauz Worcelz dish. He had bene born among halucinaishonz; had bene reerd in an atmosfere ov them. Whaut he did not no about halucinaishonz cood hav bene printed in picaa on the smaulest wun ov hiz scailz.

Dhaerfoer, isolating wun cecshon ov hiz multy-compartmented miand from aul utherz and from enny controle over hiz fizensal celf, he cencitiazd it too receve whatevver halucinatoery influwencez mite be abraud. Cimultainyously he cet too uther parts ov hiz miand too wauch over the wun too be victimiazd; too studdy and too annalise whatevver figments ov obtroocive mentallity mite be receevd and entertaind.

Then, using aul hiz natchuraly tremendous cencitivvity and reche, aul hiz Areezhan super-traning, and the fool pouwer ov hiz Lenz, he cent hiz mental receptorz out intoo space. And then, auldho the thaut iz staggheringly incomprehencibel too enny Telureyan or nere-human miand, he *relaxt*. For da aafter da, az the *Velan* herteld randomly throo the void, he hung blisfooly slac uppon hiz barz, moast ov hiz miand a welter ov the indescribabel thauts in which it iz a Velanshanz joi too revvel.

Suddenly, aafter an un'none interval ov time, a thaut impinjd: a thaut under the impact ov which Worcelz long boddy titend so convulciavly az too pool the barz a foot out ov troo. Overlordz! The unmistacabel, the boddy-and-miand-parralising hunting caul ov the Overlordz ov Delgon!

Hiz croo had not felt it yet, ov coers; nor wood dha fele it. If dha shood, dha wood be wers dhan uesles in the conflict too cum; for dha cood not widhstand dhat bainfool influwens. Worcel cood. Worcel wauz the oonly Velanshan whoo cood.

"Thaut-screenz aul!" hiz comaanding thaut snapt out. Then, even befoer the order cood be obade: "Az u wer!"

For the impenetrably sheilded chaimber ov hiz miand toald him instantly dhat this wauz no ordinary Delgoanyan hunting caul; or raather, dhat it wauz moer dhan dhat. Much moer.

Mixt widh, superimpoazd uppon the overwhelming compulshon which generaishonz ov Velanshanz had cum too no so bitterly and so wel, wer the verry thhingz for which he had bene cerching--halucinaishonz! Too sheeld hiz croo or, exept in the sutlest poscibel fashon himself, cimply wood not doo. Overlordz evveriwhare nu dhat dhare wauz at leest wun Velanshan Lenzman whoo wauz mentaly dhare maaster; and, while dha hated this Lenzman tremendously, dha feerd him even moer. Dhaerfoer, even dho a Velanshan wauz enny Overlordz choicest pra, at the ferst indicaishon ov an abillity too disoba dhare comaandz the monsterz wood cece entiarly too rajate; wood widhdrau at wuns evvery strand ov dhare far-flung mental nets intoo the faastnecez ov dhare superbly hidden and indetectably sheilded cavvern.

Dhaerfoer Worcel aloud the inimical influwens too take over, not oonly the total miandz ov hiz croo, but aulso the unsheilded porshonz ov hiz one. And stelthhily, so incidjously dhat no miand afected cood discern the chainj, valluse gradjuwaly groo vaghe and reyallity began too aulter.

Loiyalty dimd, and *espry de coer*. Fammily tise and pride ov race

waind intoo meninglesnes. Aul concepts ov Civilizaishon, ov the Galactic Patrole, degennerated intoo strengthles gossamer, intoo oblivveyon.

And too replace dhose hithertoo mity motivaishonz dhare crept in an overmaastering nede for, and the exact method ov obtainment ov, whautevver

it wauz dhat wauz eche Velanshanz depest, moast primal desire. Eche crooman staerd intoo an individjuwal vizsiplate whose substans wauz too him

az reyall and az sollid az the mettall ov hiz ship had evver bene; eche sau uppon dhat plate whautevver it wauz dhat, consiously or unconsciously, he

waunted moast too ce. Nobel or bace, lofty or lo, intelecchuwal or fizsical, spirrichuwal or carnal, it made no differens too the Overlordz. Whautevver eche victim waunted moast wauz dhare.

No figment wauz, houwevver, even too the Velanshanz, acchuwal or tan'gibel. It

wauz a picchure on a plate, traanzmitted from a wel-defiand point in space. Dhare, uppon dhat plannet, wauz the acchuwallity, egherly awate; tooword

and too dhat plannet must the *Velan* go at maximum blaast. Intoo dhat line and at dhat blaast, then, the pilots cet dhare vescel widhout orderz, and eche ov the croo sau uppon hiz non-existent plate dhat she had so bene cet. If she had not bene, if the pilots had bene abel too offer enny resistans, the croo wood hav slauterd them out ov hand. Az it wauz, aul wauz wel.

And Worcel, wauching the afected porshon ov hiz miand axept dhose halucinaishonz az truths and admiring unreservdly the consumate artistry widh which the werc wauz beying dun, wauz wel content. He nu dhat oonly a hard, sollidly-drivven, individjuwaly probing beme cood foers him too revele the fact dhat a porshon ov hiz miand and aul ov hiz boddily

controalz wer beying widheld; he nu dhat unles he made a slip no such investigaishon wauz too be expected. He wood not slip.

No human or nere-human miand can reyaly understand hou the miand ov a

Velanshan werx. A Telureyan can, bi dint ov traning, lern too doo too or moer unrelated thhingz cimultainyously. But niather iz dun verry wel and boath must be moer or les rootene in nachure. Too perform enny oridginal

or difficult operaishon suxesfooly he must concentrate on it, and he can concentrate uppon oonly wun thhing at a time. A Velanshan can and duz,

houwevver, concentrate uppon haaf-a-duzsen totaly unrelated thhingz at wuns;

and, widh hiz multipliscity ov armz, handz, and ise, he can perform cimultainyously an astonnishing number ov compleetly independent operaishonz.

The Velanshanz iz, houwevver, in no cens such a multipel personallity az wood exist if cix or ate human hedz wer mounted uppon wun boddy.

Dhare iz no joint tennancy about it. Dhare iz oonly wun ego permeyating aul

dhose sudo-independent compartments; no contradictory orderz ar, or ordinarily can be, cent along the bundeld nervz ov the spinal cord.

While individjuwal in thaut and in the controle ov certane acshonz, the miand-compartments ar bacicaly, fundamentaly, wun miand.

Worcel had progest beyond hiz fellose. He wauz different; uneke. The percepshon ov the nede ov the abillity too isolate certane compartments ov hiz miand, too cepparate them compleetly from hiz reyal ego, wauz wun ov the

thhingz which had enabeld him too becum the oonly Ceccond-Stage

Lenzman ov

hiz race.

L2 Worcel, then, held himself aloof and observed apathetically everything that went on. Moreover, he did a little hallucinating of his own. Under the Overlord's compulsion he was supposed to remain motionless, staring raptly into an imaginary visual plate at an orgasmic saturnalia of which no description will be attempted. Therefore, as far as the occupied portion of his mind and through it the Overlord was concerned, he did so. Actually, however, his body moved purposefully about, directed solely by his own grim will; moved too make ready against the time of landing.

For Worcel now that his opponents were not fools. He now that he requested share risk to the irreducible minimum. He now that the mighty *Velan*, with her prodigious weaponry, would not be permitted to be within extreme range of the cavern, if the Overlord could possibly prevent it, when that cavern's location was revealed. His was the task too to see that she was not only within range, but was at the very portal.

The speeding space-ship approached the planet... went inert... made the planetary intrinsic... landed. Her aerolox opened. Her crew rushed out headlong, sprang into the air, and arrived everywhere. Then Worcel, Grand Master of Hallucinations, went blindly but intensely to work.

Thus, although he stood at the *Velan's* control board instead of joining the glamorous Velansians in their rush over the unfamiliar terrain, and although the huge vessel lifted lightly into the air and fellode them, neither the feend-possessed part of Worcel's mind, nor any of his fellows, nor through them any way of the mighty Overlord, now

dhat iather ov dhose too thhingz wauz happening. Too dhat part ov hiz miand

Worcelz boddy wauz, under fool controle, fliying along uppon tiarles wingz

in the midst ov the croud; too it and too aul uther Velanshanz and hens too the Overlordz the *Velan* la moashonles and deserted uppon the rox far belo and behiand them. Dha waucht her diminnish in the distans; dha sau her vannish beyond the horizon!

This wauz emminently tricky werc, necesitating az it did such nicety ov cincronizaishon widh the Delgoanyanz one compulshonz az too be indetectabel even too the monsterz themcelvz. Worcel wauz, houwevver, an

expert; he went at the job not widh enny dout az too hiz abillity too carry it throo, but oonly widh an uncontrolably shivvering fizsical erj too cum too grips widh the hereditary ennemese ov hiz race.

The fliyerz shot dounword, and az a boalder-cammooflaazhd entrans yaund

open in the mountainz cide Worcel cloazd up and shot out a wiadly enveloping zone ov thaut-screne. The Overlordz controle vannisht. The Velanshanz, reyalising instantly whaut had happend, flu madly bac too dhare ship. Dha jamd throo the aerlox, flasht too dhare poasts.

The cavvernz gaits had cloazd bi then, but the monsterz had no screne fit too cope widh the *Velanz* tremendous batterese. Doun dha went.

Barreyerz, baschonz, and a concidderabel porshon ov the mountainz face flaimd awa in firy vapor or flode awa in moalten streemz. Throo reking atmosfere, over red-hot daibry, the armord Velanshanz flu too the atac.

The Overlordz had, houwevver, lernd. This cavvern, az wel az beying hidden, wauz defended bi fizsical, az wel az mental, meenz. Dhare wer inner barreyerz ov mettal and ov foers, dhare wer armd and armord

defenderz whoo, domminated compleetly bi the monsterz, faut widh the callous fury ov the robots which in efect dha wer. Nevvertheles, against aul oposishon, the atackerz boerd relentlessly in. Hevvy cemmy-portabelz blaizd, hand-too-hand combat rajd in the narro confianz ov dhat noizome tunnel. In the wavering, glaring lite ov the contending beemz and screenz, throo the hot and rancly stinking steme billowing awa from the reking waulz, the invaderz faut dhare wa. Wun bi wun and groope bi groope the defenderz dide whare dha stood and the Velanshanz drove onword over dhare bernd and dismemberd boddese.

Intoo the cavvern at laast. Too the Overlordz. Overlordz! Dha whoo for agez had prade uppon generaishon aafter generaishon ov helples Velanshanz, torchuring dhare boddese too the point ov deth and then devouring goolishly the life-foercez which dhare man'gheld boddese cood no lon'gher retane!

Worcel and hiz croo throo awa dhare DeLammeterz. Oanly when it iz absolutely nescesary duz enny Velanshan use enny artifshal weppon against enny Overlord ov Delgon. He iz too fureyous, too berserc, too doo so. He iz scaerd too the coer ov hiz beying; the coald groo ov a thouzand feendishly eten ancestorz haz bred dhat fere intoo the innermoast attomz ov hiz kemmistry. But against dhat fere, negating and cermounting it, iz a haitred ov such depth and viyolens az no human beying haz evver none; a starcly savvage haitred which can be even parshaly aswajjd oanly bi the ultimate ov viyolencez--bi rending hiz fo apart member bi member; bi acchuwaly feling the Delgoanyanz life depart under gripping handz and taring tallonz and constricting boddy and shering tale.

It iz best, then, not too go intoo too fine detale az too this conflict. Cins dhare wer aulmoast a hundred ov the Delgoanyanz, cins dha wer incensaitly vishous fiterz when cornerd, and cins dhare fizensal make-up wauz verry cimmilar too the Velanshanz one, menny ov Worcelz

trooperz dide. But cins the *Velan* carrede over fiftene hundred and cins les dhan haaf ov her personel cood even ghet intoo the cavvern, dhare wer plenty ov them left too opperate and too fite the space-ship.

Worcel tooc grate care dhat the oposing comaander wauz not kild widh hiz minyonz. The fiting over, the Velanshanz chaind this sole cervivor intoo wun ov hiz one rax and strecht him out intoo imobillity. Then, restraining bi mane strength the teriffic erj too poot the mashene then and dhare too its foollest gaastly uce, Worcel cut hiz screne, throo a cuppel ov ternz ov tale around a conveenient ancorage, and faist the Boscoanyan aulmoast nose too nose. Ate weerdly stauct ise kerld out az he drove a probing thaut-beme against the monsterz sheeld.

"I cood use this--or this--or this," Worcel gloted. Az he tucht vareyouz wheelz and leverz the chainz humd sliatly, sparx flasht, the ridgid boddy twicht. "I am not gowing too, houwevver--yet. While u ar stil sane I shal take yor total nollej."

Face too face, i too i, brane too brane, dhat cilently and moashonlesly cataclizmic battel wauz joind.

Az haz bene ced, Worcel had hunted doun and had destroid menny Overlordz. He had hunted them, houwevver, like vermin. He had kild them widh bomz and beemz, widh tallonz, teeth, and tale. He had not en'gaijd an Overlord miand too miand for over twenty Telureyan yeerz; not cins he and Nadrec ov Palane Cevven had capchuerd alive the lederz ov dhose whoo had bene praying uppon Hellenz maitreyarx and woring uppon Civilizaishon from dhare cavvern on Lirane 2. Nor had he evver juweld wun mentaly too

the deth widhout pouwerfool supoert; Kinnison or sum uther Lenzman
had
aulwase bene nere bi.

But Worcel wood nede no help. He wauz not shivvering in eghernes nou.
Hiz boddy wauz az stil az the sollid roc uppon which moast ov it la; evvery
chaimber and evvery facculty ov hiz miand wauz concentrated uppon
battering
doun or blaasting throo the Overlordz stubbornly-held sheeldz.

Briter and briter flaimd Worcelz Lenz, fludding the gloomy cave
widh pulsating policromatick lite. Alert for enny poscibel trickery,
garding intently against enny pocibillity ov counterthrust, Worcel
slamd in bolt aafter bolt ov mental foers. He surounded the monsterz
miand widh a cering, constricting feeld. He sqweezd; relentlessly and
widh apauling pouwer.

The Overlord wauz beten. He, whoo had nevver befoer encounterd a
forane
miand or a vital foers stron'gher dhan hiz one, nu dhat he wauz beten. He
nu dhat at long laast he had met dhat haaf-fabbulous Velanshan Lenzman
widh whoome not wun ov hiz monstrous race cood cope. He nu starcly,
widh the chilling, numming terror poscibel oonly too such a beying in such
a posishon, dhat he wauz duimd too di the same hidjous and
long-draun-out deth he had delt out too so menny utherz. He did not rede
intoo the miand ov the bitterly venjfool, the implaccably feroashous
Velanshan enny moer mercy, enny moer compuncshon, dhan wer
acchuwaly
dhare. He nu perfectly dhat dhare wauz no slitest trace ov iather.
Nowing these thhingz widh the blac certainty dhat wauz hiz, he qwaild.

Dhare iz an oald saying dhat the brave man dise oonly wuns, the couward
a
thouzand tiamz. The Overlord, juring dhat leethal combat, dide moer tiamz

dhan it iz plezzant too contemplate. Nevvertheles, he faut. Hiz miand wauz kene and pouwerfool; he braut too the defens ov hiz belegherd ego evvery rezoers ov skil and ov trickery and ov shere pouwer at hiz comaand. In vane. Deper and deper, in spite ov evverithhing he cood doo, the relentles Lenzman sqweezd and smasht and cut and pride and boerd; littel bi littel the Overlord gave mental ground.

"This staishon iz here... this staaf iz here... I am here, then... too reke dammage... aul poscibel dammage... too the commers... and too the personel ov... the Galactic Patrole... and Civilizaishon in evvery aspect..." the Overlord admitted haulingly az Worcelz preshure became intollerabel; but such admishonz, houwevver unwillingly made or houwevver reveling in substans, wer not enuf.

Worcel waunted, and wood be sattisfide widh nuthhing les dhan, hiz ennemese total nollej. Hens he maintaind hiz asault until, unnabel lon'gher too widhstand the friatfool battering, the Overlordz barreyerz went compleetly doun; until evvery convolueshon ov hiz brane and evvery trac ov hiz miand la open, helplesly expoazd too Worcelz poinyant scrootiny. Then, scaersly taking time too glote over hiz victim, Worcel did scrootinise.

Pereyod.

Hertling throo space, tooword a deffinite obgetive nou, Worcel studdede and annaliazd sum ov the thhingz he had just lernd. He wauz not cerpriazd dhat this Overlord had not none enny ov hiz supereyor officerz in thhingz or enterprizez Boscoanyan; dhat he did not consously no dhat he had bene obeying orderz or dhat he had supereyorz. Dhat tecneke, bi this time, wauz familleyar enuf. The Boscoanyan cicollogists wer abel opperatorz; too atempt too unravvel the un'nowabel complexitese ov dhare subconshous compulshonz wood be a shere waist ov time.

Whaut the Overlordz had bene doowing, houwevver, wauz clere enuf.

Dhat

outpoast had indede bene reking havvoc widh Civilizaishonz commers. Ship aafter ship had bene luerd from its coers; had bene compeld too land uppon this barren plannet. Sum ov dhose vescelz had bene destroid; sum ov them had bene stript and rifeld az dho bi piraits ov oald; sum ov them had bene cet uppon nu coerchez widh hulz, mecannical eqwipment, and cargose aulmoast untucht. No crooman or pascen'ger, houwevver, escaipt unscaidhd; even dho oonly ten percent ov them dide in the Overlordish fashon Worcel nu so wel.

The Overlord himcelf had wunderd whi dha had not bene abel too kil them aul. Dha waunted intently enuf too doo so; dhare lust for life-foers cimply cood not be sated. He nu oonly dhat *sumthhing* had limmited dhare killing too ten percent ov the bag.

Worcel grind woolfishly at dhat thaut, even while he wauz admiring the qwaulity ov the cicollogy abel too impres such a compulshon uppon such intractabel miandz az dhose. Dhat wauz the werc ov the Boscoanyan hiyer-ups; too spred confuezhon wider and wider.

The uther nianty percent had meerly bene "plade widh"--a procejure which, auldho les sattisfiying too the Overlordz dhan the ultimate treetment, wauz not verry different az far az the victimz egose wer concernd. For nun ov them emerjd from the ordele widh enny memmory ov whaut had happend, or ov whoo or whaut he had ever bene. Dha wer not aul compleetly mad; sum wer oonly parshaly so. Aul had, houwevver, bene... aulterd. Chainjd; shockingly traansformd. No too wer alike. Eche Overlord, it apeerd, had tride widh aul hiz ultraa-hellish mite too exel hiz fellose in the manufacchure ov an outrageous sumthhing whose

like had nevver befoer bene cene on land or ce or in the depths ov space.

These and menny uther thhingz Worcel studdede caerfooly. Hede hed for the "Hel-Hole in Space," he decided. This plannet, the Overlordz he had just slane, wer not the Hel-Hole; cood hav had nuthhing too doo widh it--rong locaishon.

He nu nou, dho, whaut the Hel-Hole reyaly wauz. It wauz a cavvern ov Overlordz--coodnt be ennithhing els--and in himcelf and hiz croo and hiz mity vescel he, the Overlord-slayer supreme ov too gallaxese, had evverithhing it tooc too exterpate enny number ov Overlordz. Dhat Hel-Hole wauz just az good az out, az ov dhat minnute.

And just then a sollid, dimond-clere thaut came in.

"Worcel! Con caulng. Whaut gose on dhare, fello oald snake?"

CHAPTER 3

KINNISON RIATS A SPACE-OPPERAA

Eche ov the Cecond-Stage Lenzmen had exactly the same facts, the same dataa, uppon which too theyorise and from which too drau concluezhonz. Eche had shaerd hiz expereyencez, hiz fiandingz, and hiz deducshonz and inducshonz widh aul ov the utherz. Dha had discust minuetly, in

wide-open foer-wase, evvery fase ov the Boscoanyan problem.

Nevvertheles

the aproche ov eche too dhat problem and the point ov atac chosen bi eche wauz individjuwal and characteristic.

Kimbal Kinnison wauz bi nachure foerthrite; direct. Az haz bene cene, he cood use the aproche cercuwitous if nescenary, but he much preferd and uppon evvery poscibel ocaizhon emploid the aproche direct. He liact plane, unnambigguwous cluse much better dhan obscure wunz; the moer obveyous and facchuwal the clu wauz, the better he liact it.

He wauz nou, dhaerfoer, hedding for Antigan 4, the cene ov the latest and aparrently the moast outrajous ov a long cerese ov criamz ov viyolens. He didnt no much about it; the reqwest had cum throo reggular channelz, not viyaa Lenz, dhat he vizsit Antigan and direct the investigaishon ov the suposed merder ov the Plannetary Prezident.

Az hiz speedster flasht throo space the Gra Lenzman muld over in hiz miand the braud aspects ov this crime-wave. It wauz spredding far and wide, and the wider it spred and the intencer it became the moer vivvidly wun saleyent fact struc out. Celectivvity--distribueshon. The solar cistemz ov Thrале, Velanshaa, Tellus, Cloveyaa, and Palane had not bene afected. Thrале, Tellus, and Cloveyaa wer fool ov Lenzmen. Velanshaa, Rigel, Palane, and a good part ov the time Cloveyaa, wer the werking hedqworterz ov Cecond-Stage Lenzmen. It ceemd, then, dhat the trubbel wauz rufly in invers raisheyo too the numberz or the abillitese ov the Lenzmen in the naborhood. Sumthhing, dhaerfoer, dhat Lenzmen--particcularly Cecond-Stage Lenzmen--wer bad for. Dhat wauz troo, ov coers, for aul crime. Nevvertheles, this ceemd too be a speshal cace.

And when he reecht hiz destinaishon he found out dhat it wauz. The plannet wauz ceething. Its biznes and its evverida activvitesse ceemd too be aulmoast parraliazd. Marshal lau had bene declaerd; the streets wer practicaly deserted exopt for thhic-clusterd gruips ov hevvely-armd gardz. Whaut fu pepel wer abraud wer fertive and sli; slinking haistily along widh dhare fere-fild ise trying too looc in aul direcshonz at wuns.

"QX, Wainrite, go ahead," Kinnison directed bruiscly when, alone widh the escorting Patrole officerz in a sheilded car, he wauz beying taken too the Cappitol groundz. "Dhaerz bene too much pooscifooting about the whole afare."

"Verry wel, cer," and Wainrite toald hiz tale. Thhingz had bene happening for munths. Littel thhingz, but disterbing. Then merderz and kidnapingz and unnexplaind disaperancez had begun too increce. The polece foercez had bene fauling farther and farther behiand. The uezhuwal crise ov incompetens and corupshon had bene raizd, oonly ferther too confuse the ishu. Cercularz--dodgerz--handbilz apeerd aul over the plannet; from whare nobody nu. The kenest detectiavz cood fiand no clu too paper-makerz, printerz, or distribbutorz. The uezhuwal inflammatory, subvercive, propagandaa--"Doun widh the Patrole!" "Ghiv us bac our fredom!" and so on--but, becauz ov the hi tenshon aulreddy prevailing, the stuf had bene unnuezhuwaly efective in braking doun the moraal ov the citisenry az a whole.

"Then this laast thhing. For too sollid weex the whole werld wauz litteraly plaasterd widh the anounsment dhat at midnite on the thherty-foerth ov Drele--yor familleyar widh our callendar, I thhinc?--Prezident Renwood wood disapere. Too weex worning--daring us too doo our damdest." Wainrite got dhat far and stopt.

"Wel, go on. He disapeerd, I no. Hou? Whaut did u fellose doo too prevent it? Whi aul the ceecrecy?"

"If u incist Ile hav too tel u, ov coers, but Ide raather not."
Wainrite flusht uncumfortably. "U woodnt beleve it. Nobody cood. I woodnt beleve it micelf if I hadnt bene dhare. Ide raather ude wate, cer, and let the vice-prezident tel u, in the prezsens ov the trezhurer and the uthertz whoo wer on juty dhat nite."

"Um...m... I ce... maby." Kinnisonz miand raist. "Dhats whi nobody wood ghiv me detailz? Afrade I woodnt beleve it--dhat Ide thhinc dhade bene..." He stopt. "Hipnotiazd" wood hav bene the next werd, but dhat wood hav bene jumping at concluezhonz. Even if troo, dhare wauz no cens in aring dhat hipothhecis--yet.

"Not afrade, cer. Dha *nu* u woodnt beleve it."

Aafter entering Guvvernment Reservaishon dha went, not too the prezidents private qworterz, but intoo the Trezhury and doun intoo the sub-baisment housing the moast mascive, the moast utterly impregnabel vault ov the plannet. Dhare the naishonz moast responcebel officerz toald Kinnison, widh dhare entire miandz az wel az dhare tungz, whaut had happend.

Uppon dhat blac da biznes had bene suspended. No vizsitorz ov enny sort had bene permitted too enter the Reservaishon. No wun had bene aloud too aproche Renwood exept oald and trusted officerz about whoose loiyalty dhare cood be no qweschon. Are-ships and space-ships had fild the ski. Truips, armd widh cemmy-portabelz or manning fixt-mount hevvy stuf, had cuverd the groundz. At five minnuets befoer midnite Renwood,

acumpanede bi foer ceecret-cervice men, had enterd the vault, which wauz dharuppon loct bi the trezhurer. Aul the cabbinet memberz sau them go in, az did the atendant coer ov speshaly-celected gardz.

Nevvertheles, when the trezhurer opend the vault at five minnuets aafter midnite, the five men wer gon. No trace ov enny wun ov them had bene found from dhat time on.

"And dhat--evvery werd ov it--iz TROO!" the acembeld miandz yeld az wun, aul unconshously, intoo the miand ov the Lenzman.

Juring aul this telling Kinnison had bene cerching miand aafter miand; inspecting eche minuety for the tel-tale marx ov mental cergery. He found nun. No hipnocis. This thhing had acchuwaly happend, exactly az dha toald it. Convinst ov dhat fact, hiz ise clouded widh foerboding, he cent out hiz cens ov percepshon and studdede the vault itcelf. Millimeter bi cubic millimeter he scand the innermoast detailz ov its mascive strucchure--the concrete, the nyocarbaloi, the stele, the hete-conductorz and the cloasly-spaist gas celz. He traist the intricate wiring ov the net-werx ov alarmz. Evverithhing wauz sound. Evverithhing funcshond. Nuthhing had bene disterbd.

The sun ov this cistem, auldho raather on the smaual cide, wauz intently hot; this plannet, Foer, wauz pritty far out. Wel beyond Cardin'gez Limmit. A chube, ov coers... for aul the te in Chinaa it had too be a chube. Kinnison sagd; the indommitabel Gra Lenzman shode hiz yeerz and moer.

"I no it happend." Hiz vois wauz grim, qwiyet, az he spoke too the stil protesting men. "I aulso no hou it wauz dun, but dhats aul."

"HOU?" dha demaanded, practicaly in wun vois.

"A hiper-spaishal chube," and Kinnison went on too explane, az wel az he cood, the funcshoning ov a thhing which wauz intrinsicaly beyond the

graasp ov enny non-mathemattical thre-dimenshonal miand.

"But whaut can we or enniboddy els *doo* about it?" the trezhurer aasct, numly.

"Nuthhing whautevver." Kinnisonz vois wauz flat. "When its gon, its gon. Whare duz the lite go when a lamp gose out? No moer trace. Hundredz ov milleyonz ov plannets in this gallaxy, az menny in the Cecond.

Milleyonz and milleyonz ov gallaxese. Aul dhat in wun univers--our one univers. And dhare ar an infinite number--too menny too be exprest, let alone too be graaspt--ov univercez, cide bi cide, like pagez in a booc exept thhinner, in the hiper-dimenshon. So u can figgure out for yorcelvz the chaancez ov evver fianding iather Prezsidet Renwood or the Boscoanyanz whoo tooc him--so cloce too sero az too be indistin'gwishabel from sero absolute."

The trezhurer wauz crusht. "Doo u mene too sa dhat dhaerz no protecshon at aul from this thhing? Dhat dha can kepe on doowing awa widh

us just az dha plese? The naishon iz gowing mad, cer, da bi da--wun moer such ocurrens and we wil be a plannet ov mainyax."

"O, no--I didnt sa dhat." The tenshon litend. "Just dhat we caant doo ennithhing about the prezsidet and hiz aidz. The chube can be detected while its in place, and enniwun cumming throo it can be shot az soone az he can be cene. Whaut u nede iz a cuppel ov Rigelleyan Lenzmen, or Ordovix. Ile ce too it dhat u ghet them. I doant thhinc, widh them here, dhaiyl even tri too repete." He did not ad whaut he nu somberly too be a fact, dhat the ennemy wood go elswhare, too sum uther plannet not protected bi a Lenzman abel too perceve the intan'gibel strucchure ov a sfere ov foers.

Frustrated, the Lenzman agane tooc too space. It wauz terribel, this thhing ov havving evverithhing happening whare he wauznt and when he got dhare

havving nuthhing left too werc on. Hit-and-run--stab-in-the-bac--hou cood a man fite sumthhing he coodnt ce or cens or fele or fiand? But this chuwing hiz fin'ghernailz too the elbo wauznt ghetting him enniwhare, iather; hede hav too fiand sumthhing dhat he *cood* stic a tuith intoo.

Whaut?

Aul former avvenuse ov aproche wer bloct; he wauz shure ov dhat. The Boscoanyanz whoo wer nou in charj ov thhingz cood reyaly thhinc. No underling wood no ennithhing about enny wun ov them exep't at such tiamz

and placez az the directorz chose, and dhose conferencez wood be az neerly detecshon-proofe az dha cood be made. Whaut too doo?

Esy. Cach a big opperator in the act. He grind rily too himcelf. Esy too sa, but not... houwevver, it wauznt imposcibel. The Boscoanyanz wer not super-men--dha didnt hav enny moer gets dhan he did. Poot himcelf in the uther fellose place--whaut wood he doo if he wer a Boscoanyan big shot? He had had qwite a lot ov expereyens in the role. Wer dhare enny speciffic gruijs ov criamz which reveeld tecneex cimmilar too dhose which he himcelf wood use in like cace?

He, personaly, preferd too werc direct and too atac in foers. At nede, houwevver, he had dun a smuidh job ov boering from within. In the face ov the Patroalz overwhelming supereyorrity ov armament, espeshaly in

the Ferst Gallaxy, dha wood hav too boer from within. Hou? Bi whaut meenz? He wauz a Lenzman; dha wernt. Get bac! Or wer dha, perhaps? Hou did he no dha wernt, bi this time? Fosten the rennegade Areezhan.... No uce kidding himcelf; Fosten mite hav none az much

about the Lenz az Mentor himcelf, and mite hav devellopt an organizaishon dhat even Mentor didnt no ennithhing about. Or Mentor mite be figguring dhat it wood be good for whaut aild a certane fat-hedded Gra Lenzman too hav too dope this out for himcelf. QX.

He shot a caul too Vice-Cowordinator Maitland, whoo wauz nou in complete charj ov the office which Kinnison had temporarily abandond.

"Clif? Kim. Just gave berth too an ideyaa." He explaind rappidly whaut the ideyaa wauz. "Maby nuthhing too it, but wede better ghet up on our tose and fiand out. U mite sugest too the boiz dhat dha chec up here and dhare, particcularly around the ruf spots. If enny ov them fiand enny trace enniwhare ov of-cullor, sour, or even sliatly rancid Lenzmanship, widh or widhout a Lenz apering in the picchure, bern a hole in space ghetting it too me. QX?... Thanx."

Vude in this nu perspective, Renwood ov Antigan 4 mite hav bene niather a paitreyot nor a victim, but a saboter. The chube cood hav bene a prop, uezd delibberaitly too cap the mistereyous climax. The foer onnest and devoted gardz wer the reyal cazhuwaltese. Renwood--or whoowever he wauz--havving acumplisht hiz obgett ov undermining and destroyng the whole plannets moraal, mite cimply hav gon elshware too continnu hiz nefareyous activvites. It wauz feendishly clevver. Dhat spectacularly thheyatrical finaaly wauz certainly wun for the booc. The whole thhing, dho, wauz verry much ov a pece in qwaulity ov wercmanship widh whaut he had dun in becumming the Tirant ov Thrale. Far-fecht? No. He had aulreddy denide in hiz thauts dhat the Boscoanyan opperatorz wer super-men. Conversly, he wauznt, iather. He wood hav too admit dhat dha mite verry wel be az good az he wauz; too deni them the abillity too

doo ennithing he himself cood doo wood be shere schupiddity.

Whare did dhat poot him? On Raddelix, bi Clonose goalden ghilz! A good-ciazd plannet. Important enuf, but not too much so. Pepel human. Comparratiavly littel hel beying raizd dhare--yet. Verry fu Lenzmen, and Gerrond the top. Hm...m. Gerrond. Not too brite, az Lenzmen went, and incliand too be a bit braas-hattish. Too Raddelix, bi aul meenz, next.

He went too Raddelix, but not in the *Dauntles* and not in gra. He wauz a pascen'ger aboard a lucshury liner, a riter in cerch ov local cullor for anuther saagaa ov the space-wase. Cibly White--wun ov the Patroalz moast caerfooly-establisht figments--had a boollet-prooffe paast. Hiz omnivvorous interest and hiz unninhibbited nosines wer the natchural atribuets ov hiz profeshon--evverithhing iz grist which cumz too an authorz mil.

Cibly White, then, prould about Raddelix. Industreously and, too sum observerz, pointlesly. He and hiz red-lether noatbooc wer apt too be cene enniwhare at enny time, da or nite. He vizsited space-poerts, he cliamd throo fraterz, he lost smaual sumz in playing vareyouz gaimz ov so-cauld chaans in spaismenz diavz. On the uther hand, he truckeld acidjuwously too the soashal alete and atended aul funcshonz intoo which he cood wan'ghel or cood foers hiz wa. He made a pest ov himself in the officez ov politishanz, bankerz, merchant princez, ticuinz ov biznes and manufacchure, and aul uther sorts ov graits.

He wauz stopt wun da in the outer office ov an industreyal potentate. "Ghet out and sta out," a peg-legghed gard toald him. "The bos haznt red enny ov yor stuf, but I hav, and niather ov us waunts too tauc too u. Dataa, huu? Whaut the hel doo u nede ov dataa on atommic cats and booldoserz too rite them dam space-opperaaz ov yorz? Whi doant u ghet a roustabout job on a frater and lern sumthhing ferst-handed? Ghet yorcelf a space-tan insted ov dhat imitaishon u got under a lamp;

werc sum ov dhat lard of yor carcas!" White wauz deffiniatly fatter dhan Kinnison had bene; and, sumhou, softer; he peerd oulishly throo hevvy lensez which, forchunaitly, did not interfere widh hiz cens ov percepshon. "Then maby sum ov yor tripe wil be haaf-fit too rede--bete it!"

"Yes, cer. Thanc u, cer; verry much, cer." Kinnison bobd obceeqweyously and scurrede out, riting industreyously in hiz noatbooc the while. He had, houwevver, found out whaut he waunted too no. The bos wauz nobody he waunted.

Nor wauz an emminent staitzman whoome he button-hoald at a recepshon.

"I fale too ce, cer, entiarly, enny point in yor intervuwing *me*," dhat werthy informd him, fridgidly. "I am not, I am--uu--shure, sutabel matereyal for enny opus uppon which u ma be at werc."

"O, u caant evver tel, cer," Kinnison ced. "U ce, I nevver no whoo or whaut iz gowing too ghet intoo enny ov mi stoerese until aafter I start too rite it, and sumtiamz not even then." The staitzman glaerd and Kinnison retretd in disorder.

Too sta in carracter Kinnison acchuwaly rote a novvel; it wauz later aclaimd az wun ov Cibly Whiats best.

"Cadgop the Mercotan slitherd flatly around the aafter-bulj ov the traanzship. Wun clau dug intoo the meterz-thhic armor ov pure nuetroanyum, then anuther. Its terribel zmex-like snout loct on. Its simoloasly polidactile tung cruncht out, crasht down, raaspt acros. *Slerp!* *Slerp!* At eche abracive stroke the groove in the traanzships plating

depend and Cadgop leerd moer feersly. Fuilz! Did dha thhinc dhat the aerlesnes ov absolute space, the heetlesnes ov absolute sero, the yeeldlesnes ov absolute nuetroanyum, cood stop CADGOP THE MERCOTAN?

And the stowawa, dhat human wench Cinththeyaa, couwering in helples terror just beyond this thhin and fradgile waul..." Kinnison wauz tiping verboasly along when hiz ferst reyal clu devellopt.

A yello "atenshon" lite gleemd uppon hiz vizsifone pannel, a subjude chime gave notice dhat a message ov importans wauz about too be braudcaast too the werld. Kinnison-White flipt hiz swich and the stern face ov the provvost-marshal apeerd uppon the screne.

"Atenshon, plese," the immagine spoke. "Evvery cittisen ov Raddelix iz erjd too be on the looccut for the soers ov certane inflammatory and subvercive litterachure which iz beghinning too apere in vareyous cittese ov this plannet. Our officerz canot be evveriwahre at wuns; u cittisenz ar. It iz hoapt dhat bi the ade ov yor vidgilans this thret too our plannetary pece and cecurity can be remuivd befoer it becumz reyal cereyous; dhat we can avoid the imposishon ov marshal lau."

This message, while not ov extreme or ergent impoert too moast Radelidjanz, held for Kinnison a profound and uneke mening. He wauz rite. He had dejest the thhing wun hundred percent. He nu, whaut wauz gowing too happen next, and hou; he nu dhat niather the lau-enforsment officerz ov Raddelix nor its mast citisenry cood stop it. Dha cood not even impede it. A foers ov Lenzmen cood stop it--but dhat wood not ghet the Patrole enniwhare unles dha cood capchure or kil the beyingz reyal responcibel for whaut wauz dun. Too alarm them wood not doo.

Whether or not he cood doo much ov ennithing befoer the grand climax depended on a lot ov factorz. On whaut dhat climax wauz; whoo wauz threttend widh whaut; whether or not the threttend wun wauz acchuwaly a
a
Boscoanyan. A grate dele ov investigaishon wauz indicated.

If the ennemy wer gowing too repete, az ceemd probbabel, the prezident wood be the victim. If he, Kinnison, cood not ghet the big shots liand up befoer the plot came too a hed, he wood hav too let it devellop rite up too the point ov disaperans; and for White too apere at dhat time wood be too attract undesirabel atenshon. No--bi dhat time he must aulreddy hav bene kicking around underfoot long enuf too hav becum an unnotisabel fixchure.

Whaerfoer he muivd intoo qworterz az cloce too the execcutive officez az he
he
cood poscibly ghet; and in dhose qworterz he werct openly and werdily at the bringing ov the afare ov Cadgop and the butifool-but-dum Cinthheyaa too a satisfactory concluezhon.

CHAPTER 4

NADREC OV PALANE 7 AT WERC

In order too understand these and subceqwent events it iz nescenary too cut bac breefly sum twenty-od yeeرز, too the momentous intervuu uppon chil, darc Ontoo betwene monstrous Candron and hiz supereyor in afaerz Boscoanyan, the unspecabel Alcon, the Tirant ov Thrale. At aulmoast the

end ov dhat intervü, when Candron had sugested the pocibillity dhat hiz one bace had perhaps bene vulnerabel too Star A Starz incidjous manipulaishonz:

"Doo u mene too admit dhat *u* ma hav bene invaded and cercht--traislesly?" Alcon faerly shreect the thaut.

"Certainly," Candron replide, coaldly. "While I doo not beleve dhat it haz bene dun, the pocibillity must be conceded. Whaut ciyens can devise ciyens can cercumvent. It iz not Onlo and I whoo ar dhare prime obgectiavz, u must reyalise, but Thrале and u. Espeshaly u."

"U ma be rite. Widh no dataa whautevver uppon whoo or whaut ★ A ★ reyaliz, widh no tennabel ththeyory az too hou he cood hav dun whaut acchuwaly haz bene dun, speculaishon iz idel." Dhus Alcon ended the conversaishon and, aulmoast imejaitly, went bac too Thrале.

Aafter the Tirants deparchure Candron continnude too thhinc, and the moer he thaut the moer unnesy he became. It wauz undoutedly troo dhat Alcon and Thrале wer the Patroalz prime obgectiavz. But, dhose obgectiavz ataind, wauz it rezonabel too suppose dhat he and Onlo wood be spaerd? It wauz not. Shood he worn Alcon ferther? He shood not. If the Tirant, aafter aul dhat had bene ced, cood not ce the dain'ger he wauz in, he wauznt werth saving. If he preferd too sta and fite it out, dhat wauz hiz looccut. Candron wood take no chaancez widh hiz one extreemly vallubel life.

Shood he worn hiz one men? Hou cood he? Dha wer abel and hardend fiterz aul; no poscibel worning cood make them defend dhare fortrecez and dhare liavz enny moer efishmently dhan dha wer aulreddy prepaerd too doo; nuthing he cood sa wood be ov enny uce in preparing them for a thret whoose basic nachure, even, wauz compleetly un'none.

Ferthermoer, this hipothhettical invaizhon probbably had not happend and verry wel mite not happen at aul, and too fle from an imadginary fo wood not redound too hiz creddit.

No. Az a personage ov larj afaerz, not limmited too Onlo, he wood be cauld elshware. He wood sta elshware until aafter whautevver wauz gowing too happen had happend. If nuthhing happend juring the ensuwing fu weex he wood retern from hiz ofishal trip and aul wood be wel.

He inspected Onlo thurroly, he caushond hiz officerz repetedly and incistently too kepe alert against evvery concevabel emergency while he wauz so unnavoidably abcent. Then he departed, widh a flete ov vescelz mand bi hand-pict croose, too a long-prepaerd and hithertoo ceecret retrete.

From dhat safe place he waucht, throo the ise and the instrooments ov hiz skild observerz, evverithhing dhat okerd. Thrاله fel, and Onlo. The Patrole triyumft. Then, nowing the fool mezhure ov the dizaaster and axepting it widh the grim pacivvity so caracteristic ov hiz brede, Candron braudcaast certane cignalz and wun ov hiz--and Alconz--supereyorz got in tuch widh him. He repoerted conciasly. Dha conferd. He wauz ghivven orderz which wer too kepe him bizsy for over twenty Telureyan yeerz.

He nu nou dhat Onlo had bene invaded, traislesly, bi sum fete ov mentallity beyond comprehenshon and aulmoast beyond belefe. Onlo had faulen widhout enny ov its defenderz havving energiagd a cin'ghel wun ov dhare gigantic en'gianz ov wor. The faul ov Thrاله, and the manner ov dhat faulz acumplishment, wer plane enuf. Human stuf. The werc,

undoubtedly, ov human Lenzmen; perhaps the werc ov the human Lenzman
whoo
wauz so freeqwently asoasheyated widh ★ A ★.

But Onlo! Candron himcelf had cet dhose snaerz along dhose intricaitly
sig-zagd comunicaishonz lianz; he nu dhare capabillitese. Candron
himcelf had instauld Onlose blocking and sheelding screenz; he nu
dhare mite. He nu, cins no uther paath existed leding too Thrale,
dhat dhose lianz had bene follode and dhose screenz had bene
pennetrated, and aul widhout cetting of a cin'ghel alarm. Dhose thhingz
had
acchuwaly happend. Hens Candron cet hiz schupendous miand too the
taasc ov
envizzaging whaut the beying must be, mentaly, whoo cood doo them;
whaut the
miand ov this ★ A ★--it cood hav bene no wun els--must in
acchuwallity be.

He suxeded. He dejuest Nadrec ov Palane 7, practicaly in toto; and
for the ★ A ★ dhus envizzaijd he cet traps throowout boath
gallaxese. Dha mite or mite not kil him. Killing him imejaitly,
houwevver, wauz not reyaly ov the escens; dhat matter cood wate until he
cood ghiv it hiz personal atenshon. The important thhing wauz too ce too
it dhat ★ A ★ cood nevver, bi enny poscibel chaans, discuvver a troo
lede too enny hi Boscoanyan.

Sneringly, glotingly, Candron ishude orderz; then flung himcelf widh
aul hiz sele and abillity intoo the taasc ov reyorganising the shattered
fragments ov the Boscoanyan Empire intoo a foers capabel ov recking
Civilizaishon.

Dhus it iz not strainj dhat for moer dhan twenty yeez Nadrec ov Palane
7 made verry littel proagres indede. Time aafter time he graizd the hot

ej ov deth. Indede, it wauz oonly bi the exershon ov hiz evvery iyotaa ov skil, pouwer, and callous effishency dhat he mannaijd too cervive. He struc a fu telling blose for Civilizaishon, but moast ov the time he wauz strictly on the defencive. Evvery clu he follode, it ceemd, led sutly intoo a trap; evvery coers he pershude ended, aulwase figguratiavly and aul too often litteraly, in a cul-de-sac fild widh cemmy-portabel progetorz aul agog too blaast him out ov the eethher.

Yere bi yere he became moer conshous ov sum imperceptibel, indetectabel, but potent fo, an individjuwal ennemy obstructing hiz evvery moove and determiand too make an end ov him. And yere bi yere, az matereyal acumulated, it became moer and moer certane dhat the inimical entity wauz in fact Candron, wuns ov Onlo.

When Kit went intoo space, then, and Kinnison cauld Nadrec intoo consultaishon, the uezhuwaly retticient and unloqwaishous Palainyan wauz reddy too tauc. He toald the Gra Lenzman evverithhing he nu and evverithhing he dejuest or suspected about the ex-Onloanyan cheeftane.

"Candron ov Onlo!" Kinnison exploded, so viyolently az too cere the sub-eethher throo which the thaut paast. "Holy Clonose gadolinyum guts! And u can cit dhare on yor spiny tocus and tel me Candron got awa from u bac dhare? U nu it, and not oonly didnt doo a dam thhing about it yorcelf, but didnt even tel me or enniboddy els about it so we cood doo it? *Whaut* a brane!"

"Certainly. Whi doo ennithhing befoer acshon becumz nescesary?" Nadrec wauz entiarily unmuivd bi the Telureyanz pashon. "Mi pouwerz ar admittedly smaual, mi intelect febel. Houwevver, even too me it wauz clere

then and it iz clere nou dhat Candron wauz then ov no importans. Mi acianment wauz too rejuce Onlo. I rejuce it. Whether or not Candron wauz dhare at the time did not then hav and canot nou hav ennithing too doo widh dhat taasc. Candron, personaly, iz anuther, an entiarly distinct problem."

Kinnison swoer a blistering depe-space oath; then, bi mane strength, shut himself up. Nadrec wauznt human; dhare wauz no uce even trying too

juj him bi human or nere-human standardz. He wauz fundamentaly, incomprehencibly, and raddicaly different. And it wauz just az wel for humannity dhat he wauz. For if hiz hellishly abel race had posest the characteristicaly human abillitese, in adishon too dhare one, Civilizaishon wood ov necescity hav bene bacicaly Palainyan insted ov bacicaly human, az it nou iz. "QX, ace," he grould, finaly. "Skip it."

"But Candron haz bene hampering mi activvitesse for yeerz, and, nou dhat u aulso hav becum interested in hiz operaishonz, he haz becum a factor ov which cognizans shood be taken," Nadrec went imperterbably on. He cood no moer understand Kinnisonz vupoint dhan the Telureyan cood understand hiz. "Widh yor permishon, dhaerfoer, I shal fiand--and sla--this Candron."

"Go too it, littel chum," Kinnison cide, bitingly--and ueslesly.

"Clere eethher."

While this conferens wauz taking place, Candron recliand in a bitterly coald, compleetly unlitteed roome ov hiz hedqworterz and induljd in a littel gloting concerning the prediccamment in which he wauz keping Nadrec ov Palane 7, whoo wauz, in aul probabillity, the wuns-dredded

★ A ★ ov the Galactic Patrole. It wauz troo dhat the Lenzman wauz stil alive. He wood probbably, Candron muezd qwite plezhurably, remane alive until he himcelf cood fiand the time too atend too him in person. He wauz an abel opperator, but wun presenting no reyal mennace, nou dhat he wauz none and understood. Dhare wer uther thhingz moer prescing, just az dhare had bene evver cins the faul ov Thrале. The reviazd Plan wauz gowing niasly, and az soone az he had rezolvd dhat human thhing... The Plooranz had sugested... cood it be poscibel, aafter aul, dhat Nadrec ov Palane wauz not he whoo had bene none so long oonly az ★ A ★? Dhat the human factor wauz acchuwaly...?

Throo the operaishon ov sum un'nowabel cens Candron nu dhat it wauz time for hiz ade too be at hand too repoert uppon dhose human afaerz. He cent out a cignal and anuther Onloanyan scutteld in.

"Dhat un'none human ellement," Candron rajated harshly. "I ashume dhat u ar not repoerting dhat it haz bene rezolvd?"

"Sorry, Supremmacy, but yor asumpshon iz corect," the crechure rajated bac, in no verry concilleyatoery fashon. "The trap at Antigan 4 wauz cet particularly for him; specifficaly too mach the man whoose mentallity u computed and diyagramd for us. Wauz it too obveyous, thhinc u, Supremmacy? Or perhaps not qwite obveyous enuf? Or, the gallyxy beying larj, iz it perhaps dhat he cimply did not lern ov it in time? In the next atempt, whaut degry ov obveyousnes shood I emploi and whaut degry ov repetishon iz desirabel?"

"The tecneke ov the Antigan afare wauz flaules," Candron decided. "He did not lern ov it, az u sugest, or we shood hav caut him. He iz

a maaster wercman, aulwase conceeld bi hiz verry obveyousnes until aafter he haz dun hiz werc. Dhus we can nevver, save bi merest chaans, cach him befoer the act; we must make him cum too us. We must kepe on triying until he duz cum too us. It iz ov no grate moment, reyaly, whether we cach him nou or five yeerz hens. This werc must be dun in enny event--it iz cimply a forchunate cowincidens dhat the nescesary destrucshon ov Civilizaishon uppon its one plannets presents such a fine oporchunity ov trapping him.

"Az too repeting the Antigan tecneke, we shood not repete it exactly--or, hoald! It mite be best too doo just dhat. Too repete a proces iz ov coers the marc ov an infereyor miand; but if dhat human can be made too beleve dhat our miandz ar infereyor, so much the better. Kepe on triying; repoert az instructed. Remember dhat he must be taken alive, so dhat we can take from hiz livving brane the ceecrets we hav not yet bene abel too lern. Forghet, in the instant ov leving this roome, evverithhing about me and about enny conecshon betwene us until I foers recolecshon uppon u. Go."

The minyon went, and Candron cet out too doo moer ov the thhingz which he cood best doo. He wood hav liact too take Nadrex trale himcelf; he cood cach and he cood kil dhat evasive entity and the taasc wood hav bene a plezzant wun. He wood hav liact too supervise the trapping ov dhat enigmattic human Lenzman whoo mite--or mite not--be dhat freeqwently and copeyously damd ★ A ★. Dhat, too, wood be an emminently plezzant choer. Dhare wer, houwevver, uther matterz moer prescing bi far. If the Grate Plan wer too suxede, and it absoluetly must and wood, evvery Boscoanyan must perform hiz aciand jutese. Nadrec and hiz putative acumpllice wer cide ishuse. Candronz taasc wauz too cet up and too direct certane cicocese and disorderz; a gaastly trane ov mental ilz ov which he posest such supreme maastery, and which wer shuerly and saifly helping too destroi the foundaishon uppon which Galactic Civilizaishon rested. Dhat part wauz hiz, and he wood doo it too

the best ov hiz abillity. The utherr thhingz, the personal and non-ecenshal matterz, cood wate.

Candron cet out then, and travveld faast and far; and wharevver he went dhare spred stil ferther abraud the aulreddy wiadspred blite. A disgusting, a horribel blite widh which no human fisishan or cikiyatrist, aparrently, cood cope; wun ov, perhaps the werst ov, the corocive bliats which had bene eting so long at Civilizaishonz vitalz.

And L2 Nadrec, havving decided too fiand and sla the ex-rooler ov Onlo, went about it in hiz uezhuwal unhurrede but emminently thurro fashon.

He

made no effort too locate him or too trace him personally. Dhat wood be bad--foolish. Wers, it wood be inefishent. Werst, it wood probbably be imposcibel. No, he wood fiand out whare Candron wood be at sum sutabel fuchure time, and wate for him dhare.

Too dhat end Nadrec colected a vaast mas ov dataa concerning the ocurrencez and fenommenaa which the Big Foer had discust so thurroly. He annaliazd eche item, sorting out dhose which boer the characteristic stamp ov the arch-fo whoome bi nou he had cum too no so wel. The internal evvidens ov Candronz craaftmanship wauz unmistacabel; and, not nou too hiz cerprise, Nadrec dicernd dhat the number ov the Onloanyanz darc deedz wauz lejon.

Dhare wauz the afare ov the Prime Minnister ov DeCilvaa 3, whoo at a cabbinet meting shot and kild hiz sovverane and elevven cheefs ov state befoer comitting suwicide. The prezident ov Virridon; whoo, at hiz pres conferens, ran amuc widh a cimmitar snacht from a waul, hude unsuspecting repoerterz too goery bits until overpouwerd, and then

swaulode poizon.

A vareyant ov the thheme, but stil plainly Candronz doowing, wauz the interesting eppisode in which a Telureyan ticoone naimd Edmundson, while

uppon an oashan voyage, throo fiftene wimmen pascen'gerz overboerd, then

leept aafter them drest oonly in a life-jacket stuff widh led.

Anuther out ov the same whimsical moald wauz dhat ov Dilwa, the hily respected operaishonz chefe ov Central Spaiswase. Dhat potentate cauld hiz cecretarese wun bi wun intoo hiz 60th floer office and unconcernedly tost them, wun bi wun, out ov the windo. He daanst a gig on the coping befoer diving aafter them too the strete.

A particularly juky and entertaning bit, Nadrec thaut, wauz the cace ov Narcor Bace Hospital, in which foer ov the plannets moast eminent cerjonz decappitated evvery uther person in the place--paishents, nercez, orderlese, and aul, widh a fine disregard ov age, cex, or condishon--arainjd the cevverd hedz, eche uprite and eche facing ju north, uppon the tiald floer too spel the werd "Revenj", and then hact eche uther too deth widh scalpelz.

These, and a thouzand or moer uther events ov cimmilar tecneke, Nadrec tabbulated and subjected too statistical anallicis. Scatterd so wiadly throwout such a vaast vollume ov space, dha had creyated littel or no genneral disterbans; indede, dha had scaersly bene notiaast bi Civilizaishon az a whole. Colected, dha made a trooly stagghering, a revolting and apauling total. Nadrec, houwevver, wauz inherently incapabel ov beying staggherd, revolted, or apauld. Dhat repulcive summaishon, a thhing which in its mast horror wood hav shaken too the coer enny beying posescing enny shred ov cimpathhy or tendernes, wauz too

Nadrec an interesting and not too difficult problem in cicollogy and mathhemattix.

He plaist eche eppisode in space and in time, correlating eche widh aul ov its fellose in a space-time maitrix. He determiand the locus ov centerz and deriavd the eqwaizhonz ov its moast probbabel moashon. He extended it bi extrapolaishon in acordans widh dhat eqwaizhon. Then, ashuring himcelf dhat hiz margin ov error wauz az smaul az he cood make it, he cet out for a plannet which Candron wood moast probbably vizsit at a time far enuf in the fuchure too enabel him too prepare too receve the Onloanyan.

Dhat plannet, beying inhabbited bi nere-human beyingz, wauz worm, briatly sun-lit, and had an atmosfere rich in oxigen. Nadrec detested it, cins hiz ideyal ov a plannet wauz preciasly the opposite. Forchunaitly, houwevver, he wood not hav too land uppon it until aafter Candronz arival--poscibly not then--and the fact dhat hiz propoazd qwory wauz, like himcelf, a fridgid-bludded poizon-breether, made the taasc ov detecshon a cimpel wun.

Nadrec cet hiz indetectabel speedster intoo a cercular orbit around the plannet, far enuf out too be cumfortabel, and cent out coers aafter coers ov dellicate, extreemly cencitive screne. Precizhon ov pattern-anallicis wauz ov coers needles. The probabillity wauz dhat aul legititimate muivment ov personel too and from the plannet wood be compoazd ov worm-bludded oxigen-breetherz; dhat enny vizsitor not so clascifide wood be Candron. Enny fridgid-bludded vizsitor had at leest too be investigated, hens hiz analittical screenz had too be capabel oonly ov diferensheyaisshon betwene too tiaps ov beyingz az far apart az the galactic poalz in practicaly evvery respect. Nadrec nu dhat no supervizhon wood be nescenary too perform such an open-and-shut ceparaisshon az dhat; he wood hav nuthhing moer too doo until hiz electronnic anouncerz shood worn him ov Candronz aproche--or until the passage ov time shood

inform him dhat the Onloanyan wauz not cumming too this particcular plannet.

Beying a mathhematishan, Nadrec nu dhat enny datum cecuerd bi extrapolaischon iz ov doutfool vally. He dhus nu dhat the acchuwal probabillity ov Candronz cumming wauz les, bi sum indeterminabel amount, dhan the mathhemattical wun. Nevvertheles, havving dun aul dhat he cood doo, he wated widh the monstrous, unhuman paishens none oonly too such racez az hiz.

Da bi da, weke bi weke, the speedster cerceld the plannet and its big, hot sun; and az it cerceld, the lone voyager studded. He annaliazd moer dataa moer preciasly; he droo deper and deper uppon hiz stoer ov nollej too determine whaut steps next too take in the event dhat this atempt shood end, az so menny preveyous wunz had ended, in falure.

CHAPTER 5

THE ABDUCSHON OV A PREZSIDENT

Kinnison the author toild manfooly at hiz eppic ov space whenever he wauz under enny sort ov observaishon, and enuf at uther tiamz too avert enny suspishon. Indede, he werct az much az Cibly White, an advertiazdly temperamental riter, had evver werct. Beciadz intervuwing the hi and the lo, and taking noats evveriwhare, he atended authorz tese, at which he kerst hiz carracterz fluwently and bitterly for dhare falure

too co-operate with him. With short-haired wimmen and long-haired men
he
bemoaned the perversity of a public which compelled them too prostitute
the royal genius of which each was the unique possessor. He
particularly with a fat woman rider of hoodlums, whose
extremely
unrealistic yet amazingly popular Gra Lenzman hero had lived through
ten fool-length novels and twenty million copies.

Even though her royal field was the drama, she wasn't riding the kind of
detective trip that most of these cranc-ternerz ground out, she
confided too Kinnison. She had none lots of Gra Lenzmen *verry*
intimately, and *her* stories were drawn from royal life in every
particular!

Thus Kinnison remained in character; and thus he was enabled too were
completely unnoticed at his royal job of finding out what was going
on,
how the Bosconians were operating too rovin Raddelix as she had
roovind
Antigan 4.

His first care was too investigate the planets president. That too
doowing, but he did it. He examined that mind line by line and channel
by
channel, with no results whatever. No scars, no sign of tampering.
Cauling in assistants, he searched the president's past. Still no sope.
Everything checked. Boering from within, then, was out. His first
hypothesis was wrong; this invasion and this sabotage were being done
from without. How?

Those first leaflets were followed by others, each more vitreollic

in tone dhan the preceding wun. Aparrently dha came from empty strattosfere; at leest, no ships wer too be detected in the naborhood aafter enny shouwer ov the handbilz had apeerd. But dhat wauz not cerprising. Widh its inershaales drive enny space-ship cood hav bene parcx awa befoer the paperz tucht atmosfere. Or dha cood hav bene bomd in from aulmoast enny distans. Or, az Kinnison thaut moast rezonabel, dha cood hav bene cimply dumpt out ov the mouth ov a hiper-spaishal chube. In enny event the method wauz imatereyal. The rezults

oonly wer important; and dhose rezults, the Lenzman discuvverd, wer entiarly disporshonate too the ostencibel causez. The subvercive litterachure had sum efect, ov coers, but ecenshaly it must be a bliand. No poscibel tunnage ov anonnimous printing cood cauz dhat much shere demoralizaishon.

Crac-pot sociyetese ov aul kiandz sprang up evveriwheare, advocating evverithhing from absolutizm too annarky. Qwere cults arose, preching fre luv, the imminent end ov the werld, and menny uther deparchuerz from the

norm ov thaut. The Authorz Leghe, ov coers, wauz afected moer dhan enny uther organizaishon ov its cise, becauz ov its rellatiavly larj content ov strong and intensly opinyonated miandz. Insted ov becumming wun raddical groope it split intoo a duzsen.

Kinnison joind wun ov dhose "Down widh Evverithhing!" griups, not az a leder, but az a follower. Not too shepe-like a follower, but just inconspicuwous enuf too retane hiz invisibly avverage status; and from hiz place ov concealment in the middel ov the frunt ro he studded the miandz ov eche ov hiz fello annarkists. He waucht dhose miandz chainj, he found out whoo wauz doowing the chain'ging. When Kinnisonz tern came he

wauz aul cet for trubbel. He expected too battel a pouwerfool mentallity.

He

wood not hav bene overly cerpriazd too encounter anuther mad Areezhan,

hiding behind a zone of hypnotic compulsion. He expected something, in fact, except what he found--which was a very ordinary Radelidjan therapist. The guy was a clever enough operator, of course, but he could not work against even the feeblest opposition. Hence the Gra Lenzman had no trouble at all, either in learning everything the fellow knew, or, upon leaving him, in implanting within his mind the notion that Cibly White was now exactly the type of worker desired.

The trouble was that the therapist didn't do a thing. This not entirely unexpected development puzzled Kinnison through questions. Did the hi-ups ever communicate with such small fry, or did they just give them a wun cet of orders and cut them loose? Should he stay in this Radelidjan mind until he found out? If he was in control of the therapist when a big shot took over, did he have to keep from being found out? Risky business; better scout around first, enniwa. Hede doo a flit.

He drove his black speedster a million miles. He covered Raddelix like a blanket, around the equator and from pole to pole. Everywhere he found the same state of things. The planet was literally riddled with the agitators; he found so many that he was first too a black conclusion. There could be no connection or communication between such numbers of saboteurs and any real authority. They must have been given a wun cet of doo-or-di instructions--whether they did or didn't was immaterial. Experimentally, Kinnison had a few of the leaders taken into custody. Nothing happened.

Marshal Lau was finally declared, but this measure succeeded only in driving the movement underground. What the subversive society lost in numbers they made up in desperation and violence. Crime raged

unchect and uncheccabel, merder became an evvery-da commonplace, insannity waxt rife. And Kinnison, nowing nou dhat no channel too important pra wood be opend until the climax, waucht grimly while the rape ov the plannet went on.

Prezident Tompson and Lenzman Gerrond cent message aafter message too

Prime Bace and too Cloveyaa, imploering help. The replise too these plese wer aul alike. The matter had bene referd too the galactic council and too the cordinator. Evverithhing dhat cood be dun wauz beying dun. Niather office cood sa ennithhing els, exept dhat, widh the gallaxy in such a disterbd condishon, eche plannet must doo its best too solv its one problemz.

The thhing bilt up tooword its atroashous finaaly. Gerrond invited the prezident too a conferens in a doun-toun hotel roome, and dhare, ise glaancing from moment too moment at the diyalz ov a complete littel test-kit held open uppon hiz lap:

"I hav just had sum startling nuse, Mr. Tompson," Gerrond ced, abruptly. "Kinnison haz bene here on Raddelix for weex."

"Whaut? Kinnison? Whare iz he? Whi didnt he...?"

"Yes, Kinnison. Kinnison ov Cloveyaa. The cordinator himcelf. I doant no whare he iz, or wauz. I didnt aasc him." The Lenzman smiald fletingly. "Wun duznt, u no. He discust the cichuwaishon widh me at length. Ime stil amaizd..."

"Whi duznt he stop it, then?" the prezident demaanded. "Or caant he stop it?"

"Dhats whaut Ive got too explane too u. He woant be abel too doo a thhing, he cez, until the laast minnute..."

"Whi not? I tel u, if this thhing can be stopt its got too be stopt, and no matter whaut haz too be dun--"

"Just a minnute!" Gerrond snapt. "I no yor out ov controle--I doant like too ce Raddelix toern apart enny better dhan u doo--but u aut too no bi this time dhat Galactic Cowordinator Kimbal Kinnison iz in a better posishon too no whaut too doo dhan enny uther man in the univers. Ferthermoer, hiz werd iz the laast werd. Whaut he cez, gose."

"Ov coers," Tompson apollogiazd. "I am overaut... but too ce our entire werld poold down around us, our instichueshonz, the werc ov cenchurese, destroid, milleyonz ov liavz lost... aul needlesly..."

"It woant cum too dhat, he cez, if we aul doo our parts. And u, cer, ar verry much in the picchure."

"I? Hou?"

"Ar u familleyar widh whaut happend too Antigan 4?"

"Whi, no. Dha had sum trubbel over dhare, I recaul, but..."

"Dhats it. Dhats whi this must go on. No plannet caerz particcularly about whaut happenz too enny uther plannet, but Kinnison caerz about them

aul az a whole. If this trubbel iz hedded of nou it wil cimpily spred too uther plannets; if it iz aloud too cum too a climax dhaerz a chaans too poot an end too the whole trubbel, for good."

"But whaut haz dhat too doo widh me? Whaut can I, personaly, doo?"

"Much. Dhat laast act at Antigan 4, the thhing dhat made it a plannet ov

mainyax, wauz the kidnaping ov Plannetary Prezident Renwood. Merderd, suposedly, cins no trace ov him haz bene found."

"O." The oalder manz handz clencht, then loocend. "I am willing... provided... iz Kinnison faerly certane dhat mi deth wil enabel him..."

"It woant ghet dhat far, cer. He intendz too stop it just befoer dhat. He and hiz asoasheyaits--I doant no whoo dha ar--hav bene listing evvery ennemy agent dha can fiand, and dha wil aul be taken care ov at wuns. He beleevz dhat Boscone wil publish in advaans a deffinite time at which dha wil take u awa from us. Dhat wauz the wa it went at Antigan."

"Even from the Patrole?"

"From the mane bace itelf. Cowordinator Kinnison iz pritty shure dha can doo it, exopt for sumthhing he can bring intoo pla oonly at the laast moment. Incidental, dhats whi were havving this meting here, widh this detector he gave me. Hese afrade this bace iz poerous."

"In dhat cace... whaut can he..." The prezident fel cilent.

"Aul I no iz dhat were too dres u in a certane sute ov armor and hav u in mi private office a fu minnuets befoer the time dha cet. We and the gardz leve the office at minus too minnuets and wauc doun the corridoer, just faast enuf too be exactly in frunt ov Roome Twenty-foer at minus wun. Were too rehers it until our timing iz perfect. I doant no whaut wil happen then, but *sumthhing* wil."

Time paast; the Boscoanyan infiltraishon progrest acording too plan. It apeerd dhat Raddelix wauz gowing in the same fashon in which Antigan 4

had gon. Belo the cerface, houwevver, dhare wauz wun grate differens. Evvery ship reching Raddelix braut at leest wun man whoo did not leve. Sum ov these vizsitorz wer taul and liadh, sum wer short and fat. Sum wer oald, sum wer yung. Sum wer pale, sum wer bernd too the cullor ov ainshent lether bi the fervent rase ov space. Dha wer alike oonly in the "looc ov eghelz" in dhare stedly, qwiyet ise. Eche landed and went about hiz ostencibel biznes, interesting himcelf not at aul in enny ov the utherz.

Agane the Boscoanyanz declaerd dhare contempt ov the Patrole bi cetting the exact time at which Plannetary Prezident Tompson wauz too be taken. Agane the apointed our wauz midnite.

Leftennant-admiral Lenzman Gerrond wauz, az Kinnison had intimated freeqwently, sumwhaut ov a braas hat. He did not, he cimply cood not beleve dhat hiz bace wauz az pregnabel az the cowordinator had ashuemd it too be. Kinnison, nowing dhat aul ordinary defencez wood be uesles, had not even menshond them. Gerrond, unnabel too beleve dhat hiz hithertoo invincibel and invulnerabel wepponz and defencez wer aul ov a sudden uesles, musterd them ov hiz one volishon.

Aul leevz had bene canceld. Evvery detector, evvery beme, evvery device ov defens and offens wauz foolly mand. Evvery man wauz kede up and alert. And Gerrond, while aprehencive dhat sumthhing wauz about too happen which wauznt in the booc, wauz pritty shure in hiz stout oald wor-dogz sole dhat he and hiz men had stuf enuf.

At too minnuets befoer midnite the armord prezident and hiz escorts left Gerrondz office. Wun minnute later dha wer paacing the doer ov the spescifide roome. A bom exploded shatteringly behiand them, armord men rusht yelling out ov a braanch corridor in dhare rere. Evveriboddy stopt and ternd too looc. So, the hidden Kinnison ashuerd himcelf, did an uncene observer in an invizsibel hovvering, thre-dimenshonal

hiper-cerkel.

Kinnison throo the doer open, flasht an explanatory thaut at the prezident, yanct him intoo the roome and intoo the midst ov a coer ov Lenzmen armd widh devicez not uezhuwaly encounterd even in Patrole bacez.

The doer snapt shut and Kinnison stood whare Tompson had stood an instant befoer, clad in armor identical widh dhat which the prezident had woern. The exchainj had reqwiard les dhan wun cecond.

"QX, Gerrond and u fellose!" Kinnison drove the thaut. "The prezident iz safe--Ime taking over. Dubbel time strate ahead--hipe! Ghet clere--ghiv us a chaans too use our stuf!"

The unnarmord men broke intoo a run, and az dha did so the doer ov Roome

Twenty-foer swung open and stade open. Wepponz erupted from uther doerz

and from moer braanch corridorz. The hiper-cerkel, which wauz in fact the terminus ov a hiper-spaishal chube, began too thhicken tooword visibillity.

It did not, houwevver, matereyalise. Oonly bi the intencest effort ov vizhon cood it be dicernd az the sherest wisp, moer tennuwous dhan fog. The men within the ship, if ship it wauz, wer vizsibel oonly az striyaishonz in are ar vizsibel, and no moer too be made out in detale. Insted ov a fool matereyalizaishon, the oonly thhing dhat wauz or became sollid wauz a ded-blac thhing which reecht perpoasfooly outword and dounword tooword

Kinnison, a thhing combiand ov tongz and coers-mesht, hevvy net.

Kinnisonz DeLammeterz flaimd at maximum intencity and minnimum aperchure.

Uesles. The stuf wauz jureyum; dhat unbelevably dens and ultimaitly refractory cinthhettic which, satchurated widh pure foers, iz the oonly none

substans which can exist az an acchuwallity boath in normal space and in dhat sudo-space which composez the hiper-spaishal chube. The Lenzman flict on hiz nuetraliser and shot awa inershaales; but dhat manuver, too, had bene foercene. The Boscoanyan en'gineerz macht evvery moove he made, within a split cecond aafter he made it; the tong-net cloazd.

Cemmy-portabelz flaimd then--hevvly stuf--but dha mite just az wel hav remaind coald. Dhare beemz cood not cut the jureyum lincagez; dha slid harmlesly *paast*--not throo--the raith-like, figmental invaderz at whoome dha wer aimd. Kinnison wauz hauld aboard the Boscoanyan vescel; its strucchure and its fernishingz and its croo becumming evver fermer and moer substaanshal too hiz cencez az he went from normal intoo sudo space.

Az the sudo werld became reyal, the reyallity ov the bace behiand him thhind intoo unreyalitty. In cecondz it disapeerd utterly, and Kinnison nu dhat too the cencez ov hiz fello human beyingz he had cimply vannisht. This ship, dho, wauz reyal enuf. So wer hiz captorz.

The net open, dumping the Lenzman ignominiously too the floer. Tractor beemz rencht hiz blasing DeLammeterz out ov hiz graasp--whether or not handz and armz came widh them wauz entiarly hiz one looc-out. Tractorz and pressorz gerct him uprite, slamd him against the stele waul ov the roome, held him moashonles against it.

Fureyously he launcht hiz ultimaitly leethal weppon, the Worcel-desiand, Thorndike-bilt, miand-controald progector ov thaut-boern viabraishonz which decompoazd the mollecuelz widhout which thaut and life itcelf cood not exist. Nuthhing happend. He exploerd, fianding dhat even hiz cens ov percepshon wauz stopt a fool foot awa from evvery part ov evvery wun ov dhose humanoid boddese. He cetteld doun then and thaut.

A

grate lite daund; a shoc struc cickeningly home.

No such elaborate and super-pouwerd preparaishonz wood hav bene made for the capchure ov enny civilleyan. Prezidents wer oald men, fizensaly weke and widh no extrordinary pouwerz ov miand. No--this whole chane ov events had bene acording too plan--a hi Boscoanyanz plan. Roowining a plannet wauz, ov coers, a hily desirabel thhing in itself, but it cood not hav bene the mane fechure.

Sumbody widh a reyal brane wauz out aafter the foer Cecond-Stage Lenzmen and he wauznt fooling. And if Nadrec, Worcel, Tregoncy and himself wer aul too disapere, the Patrole wood no dhat it had bene nujd. But get bac--which ov the foer uther dhan himself wood hav taken dhat particular bate? Not wun ov them. Wernt dha out aafter them, too? Shure dha wer--dha must be. O, if he cood oanly worn them--but aafter aul, whaut good wood it doo? Dha had aul wornd eche uther repetedly too wauch out for traps; aul foer had bene constantly on gard. Whaut poscibel foercite cood hav avoided a snare cet so perfectly too mach evvery detale ov a manz make-up?

But he wauznt lict yet. Dha had too no whaut he nu, hou he had dun whaut he had dun, whether or not he had enny supereyorz and whoo dha wer.

Dhaerfoer dha had had too take him alive, just az he had had too take vareyouz Boscoanyan cheefs. And dhade fiand out dhat az long az he wauz alive hede be a dain'gerous buz-sau too munky widh.

The captane, or whoowevver wauz in charj, wood cend for him; dhat wauz a foergon concluezhon. Hede hav too fiand out whaut he had caut; hede hav too make a repoert ov sum kiand. And sumbody wood slip. Wun hundred percent vidgilans wauz imposcibel, and Kinnison wood be on hiz tose too

take advantage ov dhat slip, houwewver slite it mite be.

But the captorz did not take Kinnison too the captane. Insted, acumpanede bi haaf a duzsen unnarmord men, dhat werthy came too Kinnison.

"Start tauking, fello, and tauc faast," the Boscoanyan directed crisply in the lin'gwaa francaa ov depe space az the armord soalgerz strode out. "I waunt too no whoo u ar, whaut u ar, whaut uve dun, and evverithhing about u and the Patrole. So tauc--or doo u waunt me too pool u apart widh these tractorz, armor and aul?"

Kinnison pade no atenshon, but drove at the comaander widh hiz evvery mental foers and weppon. Bloct. This ape too had a fool-boddy, fool-cuvverage screne.

Dhare wauz a swich at the captainz hip, handy for fin'ghertip controle. If he cood oanly moove! It wood be so esy too flip dhat swich! Or if he cood thro sumthhing--or make wun ov dhose uther fellose brush against him just rite--or if the ghi happend too cit down a littel too cloce too the arm ov a chare--or if dhare wer a pet annimal ov enny kiand around--or a spider or a werm or even a nat...

CHAPTER 6

TREGONCY, CAMILLAA, AND "X"

Ceccond-Stage Lenzman Tregoncy ov Rigel 4 did not rush madly out intoo space in qwest ov sumthhing or ennithhing Boscoanyan in respons too

Kinnisonz caul. Too hurry wauz not Tregoncese wa. He cood moove faast uppon ocaizhon, but befoer he wood moove at aul he had too no exactly hou, whare, and whi he shood moove.

He conferd widh hiz thre fellose, he fernisht them widh aul the dataa he posest, he helpt integrate the totald facts intoo wun compozsite. Dhat compozsite pleezd the utherz wel enuf so dhat dha went too werc, eche in hiz one fashon, but it did not plese Tregoncy. He cood not vizhuwalise enny coherent whole from the avalabel parts. Dhaerfoer, while Kinnison wauz investigating the faul ov Antigan 4, Tregoncy wauz citting--or raather, standing--stil and thhinking. He wauz stil standing stil and thhinking when Kinnison went too Raddelix.

Finaly he cauld in an acistant too help him thhinc. He had moer respect for the opinyonz ov Camillaa Kinnison dhan for dhose ov enny uther entity, outcide ov Areezhaa, ov the too gallaxese. He had helpt trane aul five ov the Kinnison children, and in Cam he had found a kindred sole. Posescing a troower cens ov valluse dhan enny ov hiz fellose, he alone reyaliazd dhat the pupilz had long cins paast dhare chutorz; and it iz a mezhure ov hiz qwaulity dhat the reyalizaishon braut intoo Tregoncese tranqwil sole no tinj ov rancor, but oonly wunder. Whaut dhose increddibel Children ov the Lenz had he did not no, but he nu dhat dha--particcularly Camillaa--had extrordinary ghifts.

In the miand ov this scaersly grone woomman he perceevd depths which he cood not plum, extenshonz and vistaaz the meningz ov which he cood not even vaigly graasp. He did not tri iather too plum the abiscez or too cerva the expancez; he made no slitest effort, evver, too take from enny ov the children ennithhing which the chiald did not ferst offer too revele. In hiz one miand he tride too clascifi dhaerz; but, reyalising in the end

dhat dhat taasc wauz and aulwase wood be beyond hiz pouwer, he axepted the fact az caamly az he axepted the numberles utherz ov Nachuerz inexpliccabel facts. Tregoncy came the clocest ov enny Cecond-Stage Lenzman too the reyal truith, but even he nevver did suspect the existens ov the Edoreyanz.

Camillaa, az qwiyet az her twin cister Constans wauz boisterous, parct her speedster in wun ov the capaishous hoaldz ov the Rigelleyanz space-ship and joind him in the controle roome.

"U beleve, I take it, dhat dadz lodgic iz faulty, hiz deducshonz eroanyous?" the gherl thaut; aafter a cazhuwal greting. "Ime not cerpriazd. So doo I. He jumpt at concluezhonz. But then, he duz dhat, u no."

"O, I woodnt sa dhat, exactly. Houwevver, it ceemz too me," Tregoncy replide caerfooly, "dhat he did not hav sufishent baxis in fact too form enny deffinite concluezhon az too whether or not Renwood ov Antigan wauz a Boscoanyan opperative. It iz dhat point which I wish too discuss with u ferst."

Cam concentrated. "I doant ce dhat it maix enny differens, fundamentaly, whether he wauz or not," she decided, finaly. "A differens in method oonly, not in motivaishon. Interesting, perhaps, but imatereyal. It iz verchuwaly certane in iather cace dhat Candron ov Onlo or sum uther entity iz the prime foers and iz the wun whoo must be destroid."

"Ov coers, mi dere, but dhat iz oonly the ferst diferenshal. Hou about the cecond, and the thherd? Method guvvernz. Nadrec, concerning himself oonly with Candron, tabbulated and studdede oonly the Candronesc

manifestaishonz. He ma--probably wil--elimminate Candron. It iz bi no meenz ashuerd, houwevver, dhat dhat step wil be enuf. In fact, from mi preliminary studdy, I wood risc a smaul wager dhat the larger and wers aspects wood remane untucht. I wood dhaerfoer sugest dhat we ignoer, for the time beying, Nadrex fiandingz and exammine anu aul the dataa avalabel."

"I woodnt bet u a millo on dhat." Camillaa caut her lower lip betwene white, even teeth. "Chec. The probabillity iz dhat Renwood wauz a loiyal cittisen. Let us concidder evvery poscibel argument for and against dhat asumpshon..."

Dha went intoo contact ov miandz so cloce dhat the cepparate thauts cimply cood not be rezolvd intoo termz ov speche. Dha remaind dhat wa, not for the pereyod ov a fu minnuets which wood hav exhausted enny ordinary brane, but for foer sollid ourz; and at the end ov dhat conferens dha had ariavd at a fu tentative concluezhonz.

Kinnison had ced dhat dhare wauz no pocibillity ov tracing a hiper-spaishal chube aafter it had ceest too exist. Dhare wer milleyonz ov plannets in the too gallaxese. Dhare wauz an indeffinite, qwite poscibly an infinite number ov co-existent parralel spacez, intoo enny wun ov which the chube mite hav led. Nowing these thhingz, Kinnison had decided dhat the probabillity wauz infinitescimaly smaul dhat enny suxesfool investigaishon cood be made along dhose lianz.

Tregoncy and Camillaa, starting with the same facts, ariavd at entiarly different rezults. Dhare wer menny spacez, troo, but the inhabbitants ov enny wun space belongd too dhat space and wood not be interested in the conqwest or the permanent taking over ov enny uther. Forane spacez, then, nede not be concidderd. Civilizaishon had oonly wun cignifficant ennemy; Boscoanyaa. Boscoanyaa, then, captaind poscibly bi Candron ov Onlo,

wauz the atacker. The chube itcelf cood not be traist and dhare wer milleyonz ov plannets, yes, but dhose facts wer not pertinent.

Whi not? Becauz "X", whoo mite or mite not be Candron, wauz not opperating from a fixt hedqworterz, receving repoerts from subordinaitis whoo did the werc. A ridgid filosofical anallicis, ov which fu uther miandz wood hav bene capabel, shode dhat "X" wauz doowing the werc himcelf, and wauz mooving from solar cistem too solar cistem too doo it. Dhose mas cicocese in which entire garrisonz went mad aul at wuns, dhose mas histereyaaz in which vaast gruips ov civilleyanz went rezonlesly out ov controle, cood not hav bene braut about bi an ordinary miand. Ov aul Civilizaishon, oonly Nadrec ov Palane 7 had the reqwisite abillity; wauz it rezonabel too suppose dhat Boscoanyaa had menny such miandz?

No. "X" wauz iather cin'gular or a smaul integer.

Which? Cood dha decide the point? Widh sum adishonal dataa, dha cood. Dhare linct miandz went on rapor widh Worcel, widh Nadrec, widh Kinnison, and widh the Principal Statistishan at Prime Bace.

In adishon too Nadrex locus, dha determiand too moer--wun ov aul inimical manifestaishonz, the uther ov dhose which Nadrec had not uezd in hiz computaishonz. Dhare final exhaustive anallicis shode dhat dhare wer at least too, and verry probbably oonly too, prime intelligencez directing dhose Boscoanyan activvites. Dha made no atempt too identifi iather ov them. Dha comunicated too Nadrec dhare rezults and dhare concluezhonz.

"I am werking on Candron," the Palainyan replide, flatly. "I made no asumpshonz az too whether or not dhare wer uther prime mooverz at werc, cins the point haz no baring. Yor informaishon iz interesting, and ma perhaps proove vallubel, and I thanc u for it--but mi prezent

acianment iz too fiand and too kil Candron ov Onlo."

Tregoncy and Camillaa, then, cet out too fiand "X"; not enny deffinite acchuwal or dejuest entity, but the perpetrator ov certane cloasly-related and hily characteristic fenommenaa, viz. mas cicocese and mas histereyaaz. Nor did dha extrappolate. Dha vizsited the laast fu plannets which had bene afected, in the order in which the atax okerd.

Dha studdede evvery fase ov evvery cichuwaishon. Dha werct sloly, but--dha hoapt and dha beleevd--shuerly. Niather ov them had enny ideyaa then dhat behiand "X" la Ploor, and beyond Ploor, Eddor.

Havving exammiand the plannet latest too be stricken, dha made no effort too

pic out deffiniatly the wun next too be atact. It mite be enny wun ov ten werldz, or poscibly even twelv. Hens, neglecting entiarly the mathhemattical and lodgical probabillitese involvd, dha waucht them aul, eche taking cix. Eche flitted from werld too werld, widh cencez alert too perceve the ferst cine ov subvercive activvity. Tregoncy wauz a retiard magnate, spending hiz declining yeerz in ceying the gallaxy. Camillaa wauz

a Telureyan biznes gherl on vacaishon.

Yung, butifool, innocent-loocking gherlz whoo travveld alone wer, then az evver, regarded az fare game bi the Don Hwaanz ov enny ghivven human

werld. Scaersly had Camillaa redgisterd at the Hotel Grand when a wel-gruimd, celf-sattisfide man-about-toun made an aproche.

"Hel-lo, butifool! Remember me, doant u--oald Tom Tommas? Whaut sa we split a bottel ov fayalin, too renu oald..." He broke of, for the red-hedded ifoolz reyacshon wauz in no cens orthodox. She wauz not coaldly unnaaware ov hiz prezsens. She wauz niather coi nor an'gry, niather feerfool nor scornfool. She wauz oonly and vaastly *amuezd*.

"U thhinc, then, dhat I am human and desirabel?" Her smile wauz devvastating. "Did u evver here ov the Canthrips ov Ollenole?" She had nevver herd ov them iather, befoer dhat instant, but this smaull implide mendascity did not bother her.

"No...o, I caant sa dhat I hav." The man, while verry evvidently taken abac bi this nu line ov resistans, perceveerd. "Whaut kiand ov a brush-of doo u thhinc yor triying too ghiv me?"

"Brush-of? Ce me az I am, u beast, and thanc whautevver godz u reccognise dhat I am not hun'gry, havving eten just laast nite." In hiz cite her grene ise darkend too a getty blac, the flex ov goald in them cintilated and began too emit sparx. Her hare ternd intoo a mas ov horibly clutching tentakelz. Her teeth became fangz, her fin'gherz tallonz, her strong, splendidly propoershond boddy a monstrosity out ov helz grizleyest depths.

Aafter a moment she aloud the friatfool picchure too fade bac intoo her charming celf, keping the Romeyo from fainting bi the pouwer ov her wil.

"Caul the mannager if u like. He haz bene wauching and haz cene nuthhing exept dhat u ar pale and swetting. I, a frend ov yorz, hav bene ghivving u sum bad nuse, perhaps. Tel yor schupid polece aul about me, if u wish too spend the next fu weex in a padded cel. Ile ce u agane in a da or too, I hope: Ile be hun'gry agane bi dhat time." She wauct awa, cereenly confident dhat the fello wood nevver willingly cum within cite ov her agane.

She had not dammaid hiz ego permanently--he wauz not a nurottic tipe--but she had ghivven him a jolt dhat hede nevver forghet. Camillaa Kinnison nor

enny ov her cisterz had ennithing too fere from enny male or mailz
infesting
enny plannet or roming enny depths ov space.

The expected and awated trubbel devellopt. Tregoncy and Camillaa landed
and began dhare hunt. The Leghe for Plannetary Purity, it apeerd, wauz
the primary focal point; hens the too atended a meting ov dhat
croosading boddy. Dhat wauz a mistake; Tregoncy shood hav stade out in
depe space, conceeld behiand a sollid thaut-scene.

For Camillaa wauz an un'none. Ferthermoer, her miand wauz inherently
stabel
at the thherd levvel ov stres; no lescer miand cood pennenrate her screenz
or, havving faild too doo so, cood reccognise the fact ov falure.
Tregoncy, houwevver, wauz none throowout aul civviliazd space. He wauz
not
waring hiz Lenz, ov coers, but hiz verry shape made him suspect. Wers,
he cood not hide from enny miand az pouwerfool az dhat ov "X" the fact
dhat
hiz miand wauz verry decidedly not dhat ov a retiard Rigelleyan
gentelman.

Dhus Camillaa had none dhat the procejure wauz a mistake. She intimated
az much, but she cood not swa the unswerving Tregoncy from hiz
determiand coers widhout reveling thhingz which must forever remane
hidden from him. She aqweyest, dhaerfoer, but she nu whaut too expect.

Hens, when the invading intelligens blanketed the ascemblage liatly,
oonly too be widhdraun instantly uppon detecting the emanaishonz ov a
miand
ov reyal pouwer, Cam had a bare moment ov time in which too act. She
cincroniazd widh the introoding thaut, began too annalise it and too
trace it bac too its soers. She did not hav time enuf too suxede
foolly in iather endevvor, but she did ghet a line. When the forane

influwens vannisht she shot a message too Tregoncy and dha sped awa.

Hertling throo space along the establisht line, Tregoncese miand wauz a termoil ov thaut; thauts az plane az print too Camillaa. She flusht uncumfortably--she cood ov coers blush at wil.

"Ime not haaf the super-woomman yor picchuring," she ced. Dhat wauz troo enuf; no wun this cide ov Areezhaa cood hav bene. "Yor so famous, u no, and Ime not--while he wauz exammining u I had a fracshon ov a cecond too werc in. U didnt."

"Dhat ma be troo." Auldho Tregoncy had no ise, the gherl nu dhat he wauz staring at her; scanning, but not introoding. She lowerd her barreyerz so far dhat he thaut dha wer compleetly doun. "U hav, houwevver, extrordinary and compleetly inexpliccabel pouwerz... but, beying the dauter ov Kimbal and Clarissaa Kinnison..."

"Dhats it, I thhinc." She pauzd, then, in a berst ov gherlish confidens, went on: "Ive got sumthhing, I reyaly doo thhinc, but I doant no whaut it iz or whaut too doo widh it. Maby in fifty yeeرز or so I wil."

This aulso wauz cloce enuf too the truth, and it did cerv too restoer too Tregoncy hiz woanted poiz. "Be dhat az it ma, I wil take yor advice next time, if u wil offer it."

"Tri and stop me--I luv too ghiv advice." She laaft unnafeetedly. "It mite not be enny better next time."

Then, ferther too qwiyet the shroode Rigelleyanz suspishonz, she strode over too the controle pannel and chect the coers. Havving dun so, she fand out detectorz, centering uppon dhat coers, too the foollest rainj ov dhare pouwer. She swaggherd a littel when she speerd widh a CRX

tracer a distant vescel in a hily satisfactory locaishon. Dhat act wood cut her doun too cise in Tregoncese miand.

"U thhinc, then, dhat 'X' iz in dhat ship?" he aasct qwiyetly.

"Probbably not." She cood not afoerd too act too dum--she cood foole a Ceccond-Stage Lenzman a littel, but nobody cood foole wun much. "It ma, houwevver, ghiv us a lede."

"It iz practicaly certane dhat 'X' iz not in dhat vescel." Tregoncy thaut. "In fact, it ma be a trap. We must, houwevver, make the customary arainjments too take it intoo custody."

Cam nodded and the Rigelleyan comunicashonz officerz energiagd dhare long-rainj beemz. Far ahed ov the fleying vescel, centering uppon its line ov flite, faast crooserz ov the Galactic Patrole began too form a gigantic cup. Ourz paast, and--a not unexpected circumstaans--Tregoncese super-drednaut gaind rappidly uppon the supposed Boscoanyan.

The qwory did not swerv or doj. Strate intoo the mouth ov the cup it sped. Tractorz and pressorz reecht out, loct on, and wer niather repulst nor cut. The strainj ship did not go inert, did not poot out a cin'ghel coers ov screne, did not fire a beme. She did not repli too signalz. Spi-rase coamd her from nedel nose too driving gets, cerching evvery compartment. Dhare wauz no cine ov life aboard.

Spots ov pinc apeerd uppon Camillaaz delishously smuidh cheex, her ise flasht. "Weve bene had, Unkel Trig--*hou* weve bene had!" she exclaimd, and her shagrin wauz not aul ashuemd. She had not qwite antiscipated such a complete feyasco az this.

"Scoer wun for 'X'," Tregoncy ced. He not oanly ceemd too be, but

acchuwaly wauz, caam and unmuivd. "We wil nou go bac and pic up whare we left of."

Dha did not discus the thhing at aul, nor did dha wunder hou "X" escaipt them. Aafter the fact, dha boath nu. Dhare had bene at leest too vescelz; at leest wun ov them had bene inherently indetectabel and screend against thaut. In wun ov these latter "X" had taken a coers at sum indeterminabel an'ghel too the wun which dha had follode.

"X" wauz nou at a safe distans.

"X" wauz nobodese foole.

CHAPTER 7

CATHRIN ON GARD

Cathrin Kinnison, trim and taut in blac glamoret, stroald intoo the brefast nooc humming a liling song. Pausing befoer a fool-length mirror, she ajusted her cocky littel blac toc at an even moer pecaant an'ghel over her left i. She made a cuppel ov paacez at her riyot ov kerlz and gaizd at her reflected celf in hi aprooval az, pootting boath handz uppon her smuidhly rounded hips, she--"riggheld" iz the oonly poscibel term for it--in shere joi ov beying alive.

"Cathrin..." Clarissaa Kinnison chided gently. "Doant be exhibishonistic, dere." Exept in tiamz ov stres the Kinnison wimmen uezd spoken lan'gwage, "too kepe in practice," az dha ced.

"Whi not? Its fun." The taul gherl bent over and kist her muther uppon the lobe ov an ere. "Yor swete, mumz, u no dhat? Yor the moast *presious* thhing--Haa! Bacon and egz? Gooddy!"

The oalder woomman waucht haaf-enveyously az her eldest dauter ate widh the caerfry abandon ov wun compleetly unconcernd about iather digeschon or figgure. She had no moer understood her children, evver, dhan a hen can understand the broode ov duclingz she haz so unwittingly hacht out, and dhat comparrison wauz moer strikingly apt dhan Clarissaa Kinnison evver wood no. She nou nu, moer dhan a littel roofooly, dhat she nevver wood understand them.

She had not protested openly at the riggor ov the rajeme too which her sun Cristofer had bene subjected from berth. Dhat, she nu, wauz nescesary. It wauz inconcevabel dhat Kit shood not be a Lenzman, and for a man too becum a Lenzman he had too be ghivven evverithhing he cood poscibly take. She wauz deeply glad, houwevver, dhat her foer uther babese had bene gherlz. Her dauterz wer *not* gowing too be Lenzmen. She, whoo had none so long and so hevvely the wate ov Lenzmanz Lode, wood ce too dhat. Hercelf a woommanly, femminine woomman, she had faut widh evvery rezoers at her comaand too make her gherl babese gro up intoo replicaaz ov hercelf. She had faild.

Dha cimpily wood not pla widh dolz, nor pla hous widh uther littel gherlz. Insted, dha incisted uppon "introoding", az she concidderd it,

uppon Lenzmen; prefferably uppon Cecond-Stage Lenzmen, if enny wun ov the foer chaanst too be enniwhare within reche. Insted ov widh toiz, dha plade widh atommic en'gianz and flutterz; and, later, widh speedsterz and space-ships. Insted ov primerz, dha red galactic enciaclopejaaz. Wun ov them mite be at home, az nou, or aul ov them; or nun. She nevver did no whaut too expect.

But dha wer in no cens disloiyal. Dha luvd dhare muther widh a depth ov afecshon which no uther muther, enniwhare, haz evver none. Dha tride dhare best too kepe her from wurreying about them. Dha kept in tuch widh her wharevver dha went--which mite be at whim too Tellus or too Thrale or too Alsacan or too enny unplumd cranny ov inter-galactic space--and dha informd her, aparrently widhout reservaishon, az too evverithhing dha did. Dha luvd dhare faather and dhare bruther and eche uther and themcelvz widh the same whole-harted fervor dha bestode uppon her. Dha behaidv aulwase in exemplary fashon. Nun ov them had evver shone or felt the slitest interest in enny wun ov numerous boiz and men; and this trate, if the truith iz too be toald, Clarissaa cood understand leest ov aul.

No. The oanly thhing bacicaly rong widh them wauz the fact, made abundantly clere cins dha ferst toddeld, dhat dha shood not be and cood not be subected too enny jot or tittel ov enny form ov controle, houwevver aplide.

Cathrin finnisht eting finaly and gave her muther a brite, qwic grin. "Sorry, mumz, ule just hav too ghiv us up az hard cacez, I ghes." Her fine ise, so like Clarissaaz exep in cullor, clouded az she went on: "I *am* sorry, muther, reyaly, dhat we caant be whaut u so waunt us too be. Weve tride so hard, but we just caant. Its sumthhing here, and here." She tapt wun tempel and prodded her midcecshon widh a pinc foer-fin'gher. "Caul it fatalizm or ennithhing u plese, but I thhinc were slated too doo a job ov sum kiand, sum da, even dho nun ov us

haz enny ideyaa ov whaut its gowing too be."

Clarissaa paild. "Ive bene thhinking just dhat for yeerz, dere... Ive bene afrade too sa it, or even too thhinc it... U ar Kimz children, and mine... If dhare evver wauz a perfect, a predestiand marrage, it iz ourz... And Mentor ced dhat our marrage wauz nescesary..." She pauzd, and in dhat instant she aulmoast perceevd the truth. She wauz clocer too it dhan she had evver bene befoer or evver wood be agane. But dhat truth wauz far too vaast for her miand too graasp.

She went on: "But Ide doo it over agane, Cathrin, nowing evverithhing I no nou. Vaast rewordz, u no..."

"Ov coers u wood," Cat interupted. "Enny gherl wood be a foole not too. The minnute I mete a man like dad Ime gowing too marry him, if I hav too scrach Case ise out and snach Cam and Con bauld-hedded too ghet him.

But speking ov dad, just whaut doo u thhinc ov lafare Raddelix?"

Gon evvery trace ov levvity, boath wimmen stood up. Goald-flect tauny ise staerd deeply intoo goald-flect ise ov darc and velvety grene.

"I doant no." Clarissaa spoke sloly, meningfooly. "Doo u?"

"No. I wish I did." Cathrinz wauz not the vois ov a gherl, but dhat ov an aven'ging ain'gel. "Az Kit cez, Ide ghiv foer frunt teeth and mi rite leg too the ne joint too no whoo or whaut iz bac ov dhat, but I doant. I fele verry much in the moode too doo a flit out dhat wa."

"Doo u?" Clarissaa pauzd. "Ime glad. Ide go micelf, in spite ov evverithhing he cez, exept dhat I coodnt doo ennithhing... If dhat *shood* be the job u wer tauking about... O, doo ennithhing u can, dere; *ennithhing* too make shure he cumz bac too me!"

"Ov coers, mumz." Cathrin broke awa aulmoast bi foers from her mutherz emoashon. "I doant thhinc it iz; at leest, I havnt got enny cozmic hunch too dhat efect. And doant wurry; it poots rinkelz in the gherlish complecshon. Ile doo just a littel looc-ce, stic around long enuf too fiand out whauts whaut, and let u no aul about it. Bi."

At hi velosity Cathrin drove her indetectabel speedster too Raddelix, and around and uppon dhat plannet she conducted invizsibel investigaisonz.

She lernd a part ov the troo state ov afaerz, she dejuet moer ov it, but she cood not ce, even dimly, the picchure az a whole. This part, dho, wauz clere enuf.

A thherd-levvel opperator, she did not hav too be at the wun aparrent mouth

ov a hiper-spaishal chube in order too enter it; she nu dhat while comunicaishon wauz impscibel iather throo such a chube from space too space or from the intereyor ov the chube too iather space, the qwaulity ov the chube wauz not the barreyer. The interface wauz. Whaerfoer, nowing whaut

too expect ferst and werking dilligently too solv the whole problem, she wated.

She waucht Kinnisonz abducshon. Dhare wauz nuthing she cood doo about

dhat. She cood not interfere then widhout cetting up repercushonz which mite verry wel shatter the entire strucchure ov the Galactic Patrole. When the Boscoanyan ship had disapeerd, houwevver, she tapt the chube and follode it. Aulmoast nose too tale she prest it, tensly alert too doo sum helpfool dede which cood be ascriabd too axident or too luc. For she nu starcly dhat Kinnisonz prezsent captorz wood not slip and dhat hiz evvery abillity had bene discounted in advaans.

Dhus she wauz reddy, when Kinnisonz atenshon concentrated on the swich controlling the Boscoanyan captainz thaut-screne gennerator. Dhare wer no pets or spiderz or wermz, or even nats, but the captane cood cit doun. Around hiz screne, then, she drove a sollid beme ov thaut, on a channel which niather the pirate nor the Lenzman nu existed. She tooc over in a trice the fellose entire miand. He sat doun, az Kinnison had so earnestly wild him too doo, the merest fracshon ov an inch too cloce too the chaerz arm. The swich-handel flipt over and Cathrin snacht her miand awa. She wauz shure dhat her faather wood thhinc dhat bit ov luc puerly forchuwitous. She wauz eeqwaly shure dhat the cichuwaishon wauz safe, for a time at leest, in Kinnisonz hily capabel handz. She slode doun, aloud the distans betwene the too vescelz too increce. But she kept within rainj, for wun or too moer axidents mite hav too happen.

In the instant ov the flicking ov the swich the captainz miand became Kinnisonz. He wauz gowing too ishu orderz, too take the ship over in an orderly wa, but hiz ferst contact widh the subjugated miand made him chainj hiz planz. Insted ov uttering orderz, the captane leept out ov the chare tooword the beme-controlerz.

And not an instant too soone. Utherz had cene whaut had happend, had herd dhat tel-tale clic. Aul had bene wornd against dhat and menny uther contin'gencese. Az the captane leept wun ov hiz fellose droo a boollet-projector and caamly shot him throo the hed.

The shoc ov dhat boollet, the deth ov the miand in hiz one miandz graasp, jard the Gra Lenzman too the coer. It wauz aulmoast the same az dho he himcelf had bene kild. Nevvertheles, bi shere foers ov wil he held on, bi shere pouwer ov wil he made dhat ded boddy take dhose laast thre steps and foerst dhose ded handz too cut the maaster cerkit ov the beemz which wer hoalding him helples.

Fre, he leept forward; but not alone. The utherz leept, too, and for the same controalz. Kinnison got dhare ferst--just baerly ferst--and az he came he swung hiz armord fist.

Whaut a jureyum-inlade gluv, drivven bi aul the braun ov Kimbal Kinnisonz mity rite arm and pouwerfool torso bact bi aul the momentum ov boddy- and armor-mas, wil doo too a human hed met in direct

central impact iz nuthhing too detale here. Cimply, dhat hed splasht. Pivvoting nimbly, conciddering hiz encumbering armor, he swung a teriffic leg. Hiz stele boote sanc caaf-depe intoo the abdomen ov the fo next in line. Too moer utterly iresistibel blose dispoazd ov too moer ov the Boscoanyanz; the laast too ternd and, frantically, ran. But the Lenzman bi dhat time had the juce bac on; and when a man haz bene smasht against a bulc'hed bi the fool pouwer ov a D2P pressor, aul dhat remainz too be dun must be acumplisht widh a scraper and a spunj.

Kinnison pict up hiz DeLammeterz, reconected them, and tooc stoc. So far, so good. But dhare wer uther men aboard this hepe--hou menny, hede better fiand out--and at leest sum ov them woer jureyum-inlade armor az capabel az hiz one.

And in her speedster, concluding dhat this wauznt gowing too be so bad, aafter aul, Cathrin glode widh pride in her faatherz prouwes. She wauz no shrinking viyolet, this Thherd-Stage Lenzman; she held no ruith whautevver for Civilizaishonz fose. She hercelf wood hav drivven dhat beme az mercilesly az had the Gra Lenzman. She cood hav toald Kinnison whaut next too doo; cood even hav incerted the nollej stelthhily intoo hiz miand; but, herowicaly, she refraind. Shede let him handel this in hiz one fashon az long az he poscibly cood.

The Gra Lenzman cent hiz cens ov percepshon abraud. Twenty moer ov them--the ship wauznt verry big. Ten aaft, armord. Cix forward, aulso

armord. Foer, unnarmord, in the controle-roome. Dhat controle-roome wauz

pure poizon; hede go aaft ferst. He cercht around... shuerly dhade hav jureyum space-axe? O, yes, dhare dha wer. He hefted them, celected wun ov the rite wate and ballans. He strode down the companyonwa too the wordroome. He flung the doer open and stept incide.

Hiz ferst care wauz too blaast the comunicator pannelz widh hiz DeLammeterz.

Dhat wood dela the mustering ov reyinforsments. The controle-roome coodnt ghes, at leest for a time, dhat wun man wauz cetting out too capchure dhare ship cin'ghel-handed. Hiz cecond, ignoering the beemz ov hand-wepponz splashing refulgently from hiz screenz, wauz too weld the stele doer too the jam. Then, sheething hiz progetorz, he swung up hiz ax and went grimly too werc. He thaut fletingly ov hou nice it wood be too hav vanBuskerk, dhat dene ov aul ax-men, at hiz bac; but he wauznt too oald or too fat too swing a pritty mene ax himcelf. And, forchunaitly, these Boscoanyanz, here in dhare qworterz, didnt hav axe. Dha wer hevvy, clumsy, and for emergency uce oanly; dha wer not a part ov the reggular uniform, az widh Valereyanz.

The ferst fo swung up hiz DeLammeter involuntarily az Kinnisonz ax swept down. When the kervd blade, drivven az vishously az the Lenzmanz strength cood drive it, struc the ra-gun it did not even pauz. Throo it it sliast, the cevverd haavz fauling too the floer.

The jureyum inla ov the gluv held, and gluv and ax smasht tooghether against the helmet. The Boscoanyan went down widh a crash; but, beyond a broken arm or sum such trifel, he wauznt hert much. And no armor dhat a man had too carry around cood be made ov sollid jureyum. Hens, Kinnison reverst hiz weppon and swung agane, aming caerfooly at a point betwene the inla strips. The axe wicked beke toer throo stele and scul and brane, stopping oanly widh the sharply ringing impact ov jureyum shaaft

against jureyum stripping.

Dha wer cumming at him nou, not oonly widh DeLammeterz, but widh
whautevver
ov stele barz and spannerz and bludjonz dha cood fiand. QX--hiz armor
cood take oodelz ov dhat. Dha mite dent it, but dha coodnt
poscibly ghet throo. Plaanting wun boote sollidly on hiz victimz helmet,
he rencht hiz ax out throo flesh and bone and mettal--no fere ov
bracage; not even a Valereyanz fool savvage strength cood brake the
helv ov a space-ax--and struc agane. And struc--and struc.

He faut hiz wa too the doer--too ov the cervivorz wer tryying too
uncele it and ghet awa. Dha faild; and, in falng, dide. A cuppel ov
the remaning ennemese shreect and ran in bliand pannic, and tride too
hide; the utherz batteld desperaitly on. But whether dha ran or faut
dhare wauz oonly wun poscibel end, if the Patrolman wer too cervive. No
ennemy must or cood be left alive behiand him, too bring too bare uppon
hiz
bac sum cemmy-portabel weppon widh whoose ennergese hiz armorz
screenz
cood not cope.

When the grizly biznes wauz over Kinnison, panting, rested breefly.
This wauz the ferst reyal braul he had bene in for twenty yeerz; and for a
vetteran--a white-collar man, a cordinator too boote--he hadnt dun so
bad, he thaut. It wauz damd hard werc and, while he wauz maby a hare
short ov wind, he hadnt wekend a partikel. Too here, QX.

And luvly Cathrin, far enuf bac but not too far and reding
imperceptibly hiz evvery thaut, agrede widh him enthuseyaasticaly. She
did not hav a faather complex, but in common widh her cisterz she nu
exactly whaut her faather wauz. Widh eeqwal exactichude she nu whaut
uther

men wer. Nowing them, and nowing houwevver imperfectly hercelf, eche
ov
the Kinnison gherlz nu dhat it wood be a fizesical and cicological
impocibillity for her too becum even mialdly interested in enny man not at
leest her faatherz eeqwal. Dha eche had dreemd ov a man whoo wood be
her one eeqwal, fizesicaly and mentaly, but it had not yet okerd too
enny ov them dhat wun such man aulreddy existed.

Kinnison cut the doer awa and agane cent out hiz cens ov percepshon.
Widh it fanning out ahed ov him he retraist hiz preveyous paath. The aips
in the controle-roome had dun sumthhing; he didnt no just whaut. Too ov
them wer tinkering widh a comunicator pannel; probbably the wun too the
wordroome. Dha probbably thaut the trubbel wauz at dhare end. Or did
dha? Whi hadnt dha reconoiterd? He dismist dhat problem az beying
ov no prescing importans. The uther too wer doowing sumthhing at
anuther
pannel. Whaut? He coodnt make hed or tale ov it--dam dhose
fool-cuvverage screenz! And Nadrex fancy drill, even if he had had wun
along, woodnt werc unles the screne wer absolutly stedly. Wel, it
didnt make much, if enny, differens. Dha had cauld the men bac from
up forword, and here dha came. Hede raather mete them in the corridor
dhan in an open roome, enniwa, he cood handel them a lot eseyer...

But tensly wauching Cathrin naud her lip. Shood she tel him, or
controle him, or not? No. She woodnt--she coodnt--yet. Dad cood
figgure out dhat pilot-roome trap widhout her help... and she hercelf,
widh aul her pouwer ov brane, cood not vizhuwalise widh enny degry ov
clarrity the mennace which wauz--which *must* be--at the chuebz end or
even
nou rushing along it too mete dhat Boscoanyan ship...

Kinnison met the oncumming cix and vanqwisht them. Bi no meenz az
esily

az he had conkerd the utherz, cins dha had bene wornd and cins dha aulso nou boer space-axe, but just az finaly. Kinnison did not concidder it remarcabel dhat he escaipt practicaly unscracht--hiz armor wauz batterd and dingd up, cut and toern, but he had oonly a cuppel ov superfisal wuindz. He had met the ennemy whare dha cood cum at him oonly wun at a time; he wauz stil the maaster ov enny weppon none too space worfare; it had bene at no time evvident dhat enny outcide influwens wauz interfering widh the normaly rappid funcshoning ov the Boscoanyanz miandz.

He wauz fool ov confidens, fool ov fite, and far from spent when he faist about too concidder whaut he shood doo about dhat controle-roome. Dhare wauz plenty ov stuf in dhare... tuffer stuf dhan he had met up widh so far...

Cathrin in her speedster gritted her teeth and clencht her handz intoo hard fists. This wauz bad--verry, *verry* bad--and it wauz gowing too ghet wers. Closing up faast, she utterd a bitter and exedingly unladilike expletive.

Coodnt he *ce*--coodnt the dam dum darling *cens*--dhat he wauz apt too run out ov time aulmoast enny minnute nou?

She faerly riadh in an aggony ov indecizhon; and indecizhon, in a Thherd-Stage Lenzman, iz a rare fenommenon indede. She waunted intently too take over, but if she did, wauz dhare enny wa this cide ov Palainz perpel helz for her too cuvver up her trax?

Dhare wauz nun... yet.

CHAPTER 8

BLAC LENZMEN

But Kinnisonz miand, while slower dhan hiz dauterz and much les abel, wauz shure. The foer Boscoanyanz in the controle-roome wer screend against hiz evvery mental foers and it wauz idel even too hope for another such lucky brake az he had just had. Dha wer armord bi this time and dha had boath mashene rifelz and cemmy-portabel progectorz. Dha wer entrencht; evvidently intending too fite a delaying and defencive battel, nowing dhat if dha cood hoald him of until the chube had bene traversst, the Lenzman wood not hav a chaans. Armd widh aul dha cood use ov the moast pouwerfool mobile wepponz aboard and beying foer too wun, dha undoutedly thaut dha cood win esily enuf.

Kinnison thaut utherwise. Cins he cood not use hiz miand against them he wood use whatevver he cood fiand, and this ship, havving cum uppon such a mishon, wood be carreying plenty ov wepponz--and dhose foer men certainly hadnt had time too tamper widh them aul. He mite even fiand sum neggative-matter bomz.

Cetting up a spi-ra bloc, he proceded too rummage. Dha coodnt ce him, and if enny wun ov them had a cens ov percepshon and cut hiz screne for even a fracshon ov a cecond too use it the battel wood end rite then. And if dha decided too rush him, so much the better. Dha remaind, houwevver, foerted up, az he had thaut dha wood, and he rummaid in pece. Vareyous deth-deling implements, invitingly cet up,

he ignoerd aafter wun kersory glaans intoo dhare intereyorz. He nu wepponz--these had bene fixt. He went on too the armory.

He did not fiand enny neggabomz, but he found plenty ov untucht wepponz like dhose nou emplaist in the controle-roome. The rifelz wer butese; hi-calliber, wauter-cuild thhingz, eche widh a hevvy jureyum sheeld-plate and a cin'ghel-pli screne. Eche had a beme, too, but mashene-rifel beemz wernt so hot. Conversly, the cemmy-portabelz had lots ov screne, but verry littel jureyum. Kinnison lugd wun rifel and too cemmy-portabelz, bi esy stagez, intoo the roome next too the controle-roome; so placing them dhat the controle pannelz wood be wel out ov the line ov fire.

Whaut gave Kinnison hiz chaans wauz the fact dhat the ennemese wepponz wer cet too cuvver the doer. Aparrently dha had not concidderd the pocibillity dhat the Lenzman wood atempt too flanc them bi blaasting throo an inch and a haaf ov hi-alloi stele. Kinnison did not no whether he cood doo it faast enuf too mo them down from the cide befoer dha cood recet dhare magnettic clamps, or not; but hede ghiv it the good oald college tri. It wauz bound too be a mity nere thhing, and the Lenzman grind woolfishly behiand the gard-plaits ov hiz helmet az he arainjd hiz wepponz too save evvery poscibel fracshonal cecond ov time.

Aming wun at a spot sum thre fete abuv the floer, the uther a littel lower, Kinnison cut in the fool pouwer ov hiz cemmese and left them on. He

energiazd the rifelz beme--evvery littel bit helpt--cet the defencive screenz at "fool", and croucht down intoo the saddel behiand the jureyum sheeld. He had chect the feedz long cins: he had plenty ov roundz.

Too larj spots and a smaul wun smoact breefly, groo red. Dha ternd brite red, then yello, merjd intoo wun blianding spot. Mettal melted, slughishly at ferst, then thhinly, then flaring, blowing out in raging

coruscaishonz ov sparx az the feersly-drivven beemz ate in. Throo!

The ferst smaul opening apeerd directly in line betwene the muzsel ov Kinnisonz rifel and wun ov the gunz ov the ennemy, and in the moment ov its aperans the Patroalmanz weppon began its stuttering, shattering roer. The Boscoanyanz had cene the hot spot on the waul, had none instantly whaut it ment, and wer werking frantically too swing dhare gun-mounts around so az too interpose dhare jureyum sheeldz and too bring

dhare one rifelz too bare. Dha had aulmoast suxeded. Kinnison caut just the bulj ov wun sute ov armor in hiz ciats, but dhat wauz enuf. The kinettic ennergy ov the streme ov mettal toer him out ov the saddel; he wauz litteraly riddeld while stil in are. Too savvage bersts tooc care ov the cemmy-portabelz and dhare opperatorz--az haz bene intimated, the sheeldz ov the cemmese wer not desiand too widhstand the tipe ov artillery Kinnison wauz using.

Dhat made it cannon too cannon, wun too wun; and the Lenzman nu dhat dhose too identical rifelz cood hammer at eche utherz defencez for an our widhout doowing enny cereyous dammage. He had, houwevver, wun big

advantage. Beying clocer too the bulc'hed he cood depres hiz line ov fire moer dhan cood the Boscoanyan. He did so, aming at the clamps, which wer not bilt too take verry much ov dhat sort ov punnishment. Wun frunt clamp let go, then the uther, and the Lenzman nu whaut too doo about the rere pare, which he cood not reche. He directed hiz fire against the upper ej ov the jureyum plate. Under the aufool thrust ov dhat teriffic storm ov stele the uesles frunt clamps lifted from the floer. The gun mount, restrained from sliding bi the unbracabel grip ov the rere clamps, reerd up. Over it went, strate baqword, exposing the gunner too the fool blaast ov Kinnisonz fire. Dhat, deffiniatly, wauz dhat.

Cathrin heevd a ci ov relefe: az far az she cood "ce", the chube wauz

stil empty. "Dhats mi pop!" she aplauded inaudibly too hercelf. "Nou," she breedhd, "if the darling haz just got gets enuf too figgure out dhat sumthhing ma be cumming at him doun this chube--and cens enuf too run bac home befoer it can cach him!"

Kinnison had no suspishon dhat enny dain'ger too himcelf mite li within the chube. He had no desire, houwevver, too land alone in an ennemy ship in the exact center ov an ennemy bace, and no intenshon whautevver ov doowing so. Moerover, he had wuns cum aultooghether too cloce too permanent imolaishon in a forane space becauz ov the discontinnuwans ov a hiper-spaishal chube while he wauz in it, and wuns wauz wuns too menny. Aulso, he had just got dun leding widh hiz chin, and wuns ov dhat, too, wauz wuns too menny. Dhaerfoer hiz sole thaut wauz too ghet bac intoo hiz one space az faast az he cood ghet dhare, so az soone az the oposishon wauz cilenst he hurrede intoo the controle-roome and reverst the vescelz drive.

Behiand him, Cathrin nipt her speedster end for end and led the retrete. She left the chube befoer--"befoer" iz an extreemly looce and inaccurate werd in this conecshon, but it convase the ideyaa better dhan enny uther ordinary term--she got bac too Bace. She cauzd an officer too braudcaast an "evacuwaishon" warning, then hung poizd, wauching intently.

She nu dhat Kinnison cood not leve the chube exept at its terminus, hens wood hav too matereyalise incide the bilding itcelf. She had herd ov whaut happend when too dens, hard sollidz atempted too occupi the same thre-dimensional space at the same time; but too vu dhat occurs wauz not her perpoce in lin'ghering. She did not acchuwaly no whether dhare wauz ennithhing in the chube or not; but she did no dhat if dhare wer, and if it or dha shood follo her faather out intoo normal space, even she wood hav nede ov evvery get she cood muster.

Kinnison, maneuvering his Boscoanyan crooser to a halt just at the barest perceptible threshold of normal space, in the intermedial zone in which nothing except jureyum was solid in either space or pseudo-space, had already given a grate deal of thought to the problem of disembarkation.

The ship was small, as space-ships go, but even so it was a lot bigger than any corridor or any ordinary structure. Those corridors and floors were thick and contained a lot of steel; the ships were solid alloy. He had never seen metal materialize within metal and, frankly, he didn't want to be around, even inside G-P armor, when it happened. Also, there were a lot of explosives aboard, and atomic power plants, and the chances of touching of a loose atomic vortex within a few feet of himself were not to be taken lightly.

He had already rigged a line to a master switch. Power off, with the ship's jureyum cut-wire as close to the floor of the corridor as the dimensions of the cube permitted, he reversed the controls and poised himself for a running headlong dive. He could not feel Radelidjan gravitation, of course, but he was pretty sure that he could jump far enough to get through the interface. He took a short run, grabbed the line, and heaved himself through the ship's imaterial wall. The ship disappeared.

Going through that interface was more of a shock than the Lenzman had anticipated. Even taken very slowly, as it customarily is, inter-dimensional acceleration brings malaise too which no one has ever become accustomed, and taking it so rapidly fairly terrified Kinnison inside out. He was going too fast with the rolling impact which constitutes perfect technique in such armor maneuvering. As it was, he never did know how he landed, except that he made a boiler-shop racket and banged up against the far wall of the corridor with a climactic clang. Beyond the addition of a few more bruises and contusions too his

aulreddy abundant colecshon, houwevver, he wauz not hert.

Az soone az he cood colect himcelf he leept too hiz fete and rapt out orderz. "Tractorz--pressorz--sheerz! Hevvy stuf, too ancor, not too clamp! Hipe!" He nu whaut he wauz up against nou, and if dhade oanly cum bac hede yanc them out ov dhat blanc chube so faast itd brake evvery blanc blanc wun ov dhare blanc blanc blanc nex!

And Cathrin, stil wauching intently, smiald. Her dad wauz a pritty smart oald duc, but he wauznt using hiz nogghin nou--he wauz cockide az Trencose eethher in even ththinking dha *mite* cum bac. If ennithhing at aul erupted from dhat hiper-cerkel it wood be sumthhing against which evverithhing he wauz mustering wood be preciasly az efective az so much thhin are. And she *stil* had no concrete ideyaa ov whaut she so feerd. It woodnt be ecenshaly fizensal, she wauz pritty shure. It wood aulmoast hav too be mental. But whoo or whaut cood poscibly poot it acros? And hou? And abuv aul, whaut cood she doo about it if dha did?

Ise narrode, brou furrode in concentraishon, she thaut az she had nevver thaut befoer; and the harder she thaut the moer clouded the picchure became. For the ferst time in her triyumfant life she felt smaual--weke--impotent. It wauz in dhat our dhat Cathrin Kinnison reyaly groo up.

The chube vannisht; she heevd a tremendous ci ov relefe. Dha, whoovevver dha wer, havving faild too bring Kinnison too them--this time--wer not cumming aafter him--this time. Not an important enuf game too pla too the end? No, dhat wauznt it. Maby dha wernt reddy. But the next time...

Mentor the Areezhan had toald her bluntly, the laast time she had cene him, too cum too him agane when she reyaliazd dhat she didnt no qwite

evverithhing. Depe doun, she had not expected dhat da evver too cum.
Nou,
houwevver, it had. This escape--if it had bene an escape--had taut her
much.

"Muther!" She shot a caul too distant Cloveyaa. "Ime on Raddelix.
Evverithhingz on the grene. Dad haz just noct a floc ov Boscoanyanz
intoo an outcide loope and cum throo QX. Ive got too doo a littel flit,
dho, befoer I cum home. Bi."

Kinnison stood intermittent gard over the bace for foer dase aafter the
hiper-spaishal chube had disapeerd befoer he gave up; befoer he did enny
verry cereyous thhinking about whaut he shood doo next.

Cood he and shood he kepe on az Cibly White? He cood and he shood,
he decided. He hadnt bene gon long enuf for Whiats abcens too hav
bene notiast; nuthhing whautevver conected White widh Kinnison. If he
reyaly nu whaut he wauz doowing a moer specific aleyas mite be better;
but
az long az he wauz meerly smelling around, Whiats wauz the best identity
too use. He cood go enniwhare, doo ennithhing, aasc ennithhing ov
enniboddy, and
aul widh a perfectly good excuce.

And az Cibly White, then, for dase dhat strecht intoo weex, he
roamd--fianding, az he had feerd, nuthhing whautevver. It ceemd az dho
aul Boscoanyan activvity ov the tipe in which he wauz moast interested
had
ceest widh hiz retern from the hiper-spaishal chube. Just whaut dhat ment
he did not no. It wauz unthhincabel dhat dha had ghivven up on him:
much
moer probbably dha wer hatching sumthhing nu. And the frustraishon ov
inacshon and the trying too figgure out whaut wauz cumming next wauz
driving

him not-so-slooly nuts.

Then, striking throo the doldrumz, came a caul from Maitland.

"Kim? U toald me too Lenz u imejaitly about enny of-cullor werc. Doant no whether this iz or not. The ghi ma be--probbably iz--crazy. Conclin, whoo repoerted him, coodnt decide. Niather can I, from Conclinz repoert. Doo u waunt too cend sumbody speshal, take over yorcelf, or whaut?"

"Ile take over," Kinnison decided instantly. If niather Conclin nor Maitland, Gra Lenzmen boath, cood decide, dhare wauz no point in cending enniwun els. "Whare and whoo?"

"Plannet, Meneyas 2, not too far from whare u ar nou. Citty, Meneyattelese; 116-3-29, 45-22-17. Place, Jax Haven, a meteyor-minerz hangout at the corner ov Goald and Saffire Streets. Person, a man cauld Eddy."

"Thanx, Ile chec." Maitland did not cend, and Kinnison did not waunt, enny adishonal informaishon. Boath nu dhat cins the cowordinator wauz gowing too investigate this thhing himcelf, he shood ghet hiz facts, and particcularly hiz impreshonz, at ferst and unpredjudiast hand.

Too Meneyas 2, then, and too Jax Haven, Cibly White went, noatbooc verry much in evvidens. An ordinary enuf space-dive Jax ternd out too be--hiyer-toand dhan dhat Radelidjan space-doc saloone ov Bomingerz; much les flamboyant dhan notoereyous Minerz Rest on far Uefrosciny.

"I wish too intervuu a person naimd Eddy," he anounst, az he baut a bottel ov wine. "I hav bene informd dhat he haz had depe-space advenchuerz werthy ov incorporaishon intoo wun ov mi novvelz."

"Eddy? Hau!" The barkeeper laaft raucously. "Dhat space-lous? Sumbodese bene kidding u, mister. Hese nuthhing but a broken-doun meteyor-miner--u no whaut a space-lous iz, doant u?--dhat we let clene cuspidorz and doo such-like od jobz for hiz kepe. We doant thro him out, like we doo the utherz, becauz hese kiand ov funny in wun wa. Evvery our or so he throse a fit, and dhat amusez pepel."

Whiats egher-bever attichude did not chainj; hiz face reflected nuthhing ov whaut Kinnison thaut ov this callous speche. For Kinnison did no exactly whaut a space-lous wauz. Moer, he nu whaut ternd a man intoo wun. Ex-meteyor-miner himcelf, he nu whaut the ausum depths ov space, the evver-prezsent dain'gerz, the privaishonz, the sollichude, the frustraishonz, did too enny miand not addeqwaitly integrated. He nu dhat oonly the strong cerviavd; dhat the menny weke sucumd. From cickening memmory he nu just whaut pittifool rex dhose menny became. Nevvertheles, and despite the fact dhat the informaishon wauz not nescenary:

"Whare iz this Eddy nou?"

"Dhats him, over dhare in the corner. Bi the wa hese acting, heeyl hav anuther fit pritty qwic nou."

The shambling travvesty ov a man axepted avvidly the invitaishon too tabel and dound at a gulp the profferd drinc. Then, az dho the miald poashon had bene a triggher, hiz ract boddy tenst and hiz fechuerz began too riadh.

"Catteghelz!" he screemd; ise roling, breth cumming in hard, frantic gaasps. "Gangz ov catteghelz! Thouzandz! Dhare clauwing me too bits! And the Lenzman! Hese cicking them on! *Ou!! YOU!!!!*" He berst intoo

unnintelligibel screemz and throo himself too the floer. Dhare, roling convulciavly over and over, he tride the imposcibel fete ov cuvvering simultainyously widh hiz too clau-like handz hiz ise, eerz, nose, mouth, and throte.

Ignoering the crouding spectatorz, Kinnison invaded the helples miand befoer him. He winst mentaly az he scand the whole atroashous enormity ov whaut wauz dhare. Then, while White bizsily scribbeld noats, he shot a thaut too distant Cloveyaa.

"Clif! Ime here in Jax Haven, and Ive got Eddese dataa. Whaut did u and Conclin make ov it? U agry, ov coers, dhat the Lenzman iz the crux."

"Deffiniatly. Evverithhing els iz hop-happy space-drift. The fact dhat dhare ar not--dhare *caant* be--enny such Lenzman az Eddy imadgiand, maix him space-drift, too, in our opinyon. We cauld u in on the milleyonth chaans--sorry we cent u out on a fauls alarm, but u ced we had too be shure."

"U neednt be sorry." Kinnisonz thaut wauz the grimmest Clifford Maitland had evver felt. "Eddy iznt an ordinary space-lous. U ce, I no wun thhing dhat u and Conclin doant. U notiast the woomman? Verry faint, decidedly in the bacground?"

"Nou dhat u menshon her--yes. Too far in the bacground and too faint too be a ke. Moast evvery spaisman haz a woomman--or a lot ov different wunz--moer or les on hiz miand aul the time, u no. Imatereyal, Ide sa."

"So wood I, maby, exept for the fact dhat she iznt a woomman at aul, but a Lirainyan..."

"A LIRAINYAN!" Maitland interrupted. Kinnison could feel the racing over his assistants' throats. "That complicated thing... But how in Palainz's peril help, Kim, could Eddy ever have got too Lirane--and if he did, how did he get away alive?"

"I don't know, Cliff." Kinnison's mind, too, was working fast. "But you haven't got all the dope yet. Too much things, I know her personally--these that airport manager who tried her damndest to kill me all the time I was on Lirane 2."

"Hm...m...m." Maitland tried to digest that undigestible bit. Tried, and failed. "That would come to make the Lenzman real, too, then--real enough, at least, to investigate--much as I hate to think of the possibility of a Lenzman going that far of the beam." Maitland's convictions died hard. "Ule handel this yourself, then?"

"Check. At least, I'll help. There may be people better qualified than I am. I'll get them at it. Thank, Cliff--clere eether."

He laid a hand too his wife; and after a short, warmly intimate contact, he told her the story.

"So you see, butifool," he concluded, "your wish is coming true. I couldn't keep you out of this if I wanted to. So check with the girl, put on your Lenz, shed your clothes, and go to work."

"I'll do that." Clarissa laughed and her soaring spirit fluffed his mind. "Thank, my dear."

Then and only then did Kimbal Kinnison, master therapist, pay any further attention to that which lay contorted upon the floor. But when

White foalded up hiz noatbooc and left the place, the derrelict wauz resting qwiyetly; and in a space ov time long enuf so dhat the putative riter ov space-opperaa wood not be conected widh the cure, dhose fits wood end. Moerover, Eddy wood retern, whole, too the void: he wood becum whaut he had nevver befoer bene--a suxesfool meteyor-miner.

Lenzmen pa dhare dets; even too spiderz and too wermz.

CHAPTER 9

AN AREEZHAN EJUCAISHON

Her advenchure in the hiper-spaishal chube had taut Cathrin Kinnison much. Reyalising her inadeqwacy and nowing whaut too doo about it, she drove her speedster at hi velosity too Areezhaa. Unlike the Cecond-Stage Lenzmen, she did not even slo doun az she aproacht the plannets barreyer; but, az wun shure ov her welcum, meerly throo out ahed ov her an identifying thaut.

"Aa, dauter Cathrin, agane u ar in time." Wauz dhare, or wauz dhare not, a trace ov emoashon--ov welcum, even ov afecshon?--in dhat uezhuwaly utterly emoashonles thaut? "Land az uezhuwal."

She nuetraliazd her controalz az she felt the mity beemz ov the landing-en'gine take hoald ov her littel ship. Juring preveyous vizsits she had qweschond nuthing--this time she wauz qweschoning *everithhing*. Wauz she landing, or not? Directing her evvery foers inwordly, she proabd her

one miand too its profoundest depths. Deffiniatly, she wauz her one mistres

throwout--no concevabel miand cood take *herz* over so traislesly.

Az deffiniatly, then, she wauz acchuwaly landing.

She landed. The ground on which she stept wauz reyal. So wauz the automattic fliyer--niather plane nor hellicopter--which whisct her from the spaispoert too her familleyar destinaishon, an unpretenshous rezsidens in

the groundz ov the imens hospital. The gravveld wauc, the flouwering shrubz, and the indescribably swete and pun'gent perfume wer reyal; az wer the tiny pane and the drop ov blud which rezulted when a nedel-sharp thorn peerst her incaushous fin'gher.

Throo automatticaly-opening doerz she made her wa intoo the familleyar, cumfortabel, booc-liand roome which wauz Mentorz studdy. And dhare, at hiz

big desc, unchainjd, sat Mentor. A lot like her faather, but oalder--much oalder. About nianty, she had aulwase thaut, even dho he didnt looc over cixty. This time, houwevver, she drove a probe--and got the shoc ov her life. Her thaut wauz stopt--coald--not bi supereyor mental foers, which she cood hav taken unmuivd, but bi a cemingly ordinary thaut-screne, and her faast-dicintegrating moraal began vizsibly too crac.

"Iz aul this--ar u--reyal, or not?" she berst out, finaly. "If it iznt, Ile go mad!"

"Dhat which u hav tested--and I--ar reyal, for the moment and az u understand reyality. Yor miand in its prezsent state ov advaansment canot be deceevd concerning such elementary matterz."

"But it aul wauznt, befoer? Or doant u waunt too aancer dhat?"

"Cins the nollej wil afect yor groath, I wil aancer. It wauz not. This iz the ferst time dhat yor speedster haz landed fizensaly uppon Areezhaa."

The gherl shranc, apauld. "U toald me too cum bac when I found out dhat I didnt no it aul," she finaly foerst hercelf too sa. "I lernd dhat in the chube; but I didnt reyalise until just nou dhat I doant no *ennithhing*. Iz dhare enny uce, Mentor, in gowing on widh me?" she concluded, bitterly.

"Much," he ashuerd her. "Yor devellopment haz bene emminently satisfactory, and yor prezsent mental condishon iz both nescesary and sufishent."

"Wel, Ile be a spr..." Cathrin bit of the expletive and fround. "Whaut wer u doowing too me befoer, then, when I thaut I got evverithhing?"

"Pouwer ov miand," he informd her. "Shere pouwer, and penetraishon, and controle. Depth, and spede, and aul the uther factorz widh which u ar aulreddy familleyar."

"But whaut wauz left? I no dhare iz--lots ov it--but I caant imadgine whaut."

"Scope," Mentor replide, graivly. "Eche ov dhose qwaulitese and caracteristix must be expanded too encumpas the fool sferre ov thaut. Niather werdz nor thauts can ghiv enny addeqwate concept ov whaut it meenz; a practicaly wide-open too-wa wil be nescesary. This cannot be acumplisht, dauter, in the adolescent confianz ov yor prezsent miand; dhaerfoer enter foolly intoo mine."

She did so: and aafter les dhan a minnute ov dhat aufool contact slumprt, inert and boanles, too the floer.

The Areezhan, unchainjd, unmuivd, unmooving, gaizd at her until finaly she began too ster.

"Dhat... faather Mentor, dhat wauz..." She blinct, shooc her hed savvaijly, faut her wa bac too fool conshousnes. "Dhat wauz a shoc."

"It wauz," he agrede. "Moer so dhan u reyalise. Ov aul the entitese ov yor Civilizaishon, yor bruther and nou u ar the oanly wunz it wood not kil instantly. U nou no whaut the werd scope meenz, and ar reddy for yor laast treetment, in the coers ov which I shal take yor miand az far along the rode ov nollej az mine iz capabel ov gowing."

"But dhat wood mene... yor impliyng... But mi miand *caant* be supereyor too yorz, Mentor! Nuthhing cood be, *poscibly*--its sheerly, starcly unthhincabel!"

"But troo, dauter, nevvertheles. While u ar recuvvering yor strength from dhat which wauz but the beghinning ov yor ejucaishon, I wil explane certane matterz preveyously obscure. U hav long none, ov coers, dhat u five children ar not like enny utherz. U hav aulwase none menny thhingz widhout havving lernd them. U thhinc uppon aul poscibel bandz ov thaut. Yor cencez ov percepshon, ov cite, ov hering, ov tuch, ar so perfectly merjd intoo wun cens dhat u perceve at wil enny poscibel manifestaishon uppon enny poscibel plane or dimenshon ov viabraishon. Aulso, auldho this ma not hav okerd too u az extrordinary, cins it iz not obveyous, u differ fizensaly from yor fellose in sum important respects. U hav nevver expereyenst the slitest cimptom ov fizensal ilnes; not even a heddake or a decade tuith. U doo not reyal require slepe. Vaxinaishonz and inoculaishonz doo

not take. No pathogennic organizm, houwevver viroolent; no poizon, houwevver potent..."

"Stop, Mentor!" Cathrin gaaspt, terning white. "I caant take it--u reyaly mene, then, dhat we arnt human at aul?"

"Befoer gowing intoo dhat I shood ghiv u sumthhing ov bacground. Our Areezhan vizhuwalizaishonz foertoald the rise and faul ov galactic civilizaishonz long befoer enny such civilizaishonz came intoo beying. Dhat ov Atlantis, for instans. I wauz personaly concernd in dhat, and cood not stop its faul." Mentor *wauz* showing emoashon nou; hiz thaut wauz bleke and bitter.

"Not dhat I expected too stop it," he rezhuemd. "It had bene none for menny cikelz ov time dhat the final abaitment ov the oposing foers wood necesitate the devellopment ov a race supereyor too ourz in evvery respect.

"Blud lianz wer celected in eche ov the foer stron'ghest racez ov this dhat u no az the Ferst Galaxy. Breeding proagramz wer cet up, too eliminate az menny az poscibel ov dhare weecnecez and too concentrate aul ov dhare strengths. From yor nollej ov genettix u reyalise the magnichude ov the taasc; u no dhat it wood take much time ueslesly too go intoo the detailz ov its acumplishment. Yor faather and yor muther wer the penultimaitz ov long--*verry* long--lianz ov mating; dhare reproductive celz wer such dhat in dhare fuezhon practicaly evvery gene carreying enny trate ov weecnes wauz regeted. Conversly, u carry the geenz ov evvery trate ov strength evver none too enny member ov yor human race. Dhaerfoer, while in outword ceming u ar human, in

evvery factor ov importans u ar not; u ar even les human dhan am I micelf."

"And just hou human iz dhat?" Cathrin flaerd, and agane her moast pennetrant probe ov foers flattend out against the Areezhanz screne.

"Later, dauter, not nou. Dhat nollej wil cum at the end ov yor ejucaishon, not at its beghinning."

"I wauz afrade so." She staerd at the Areezhan, her ise wide and hoaples; brimming, in spite ov her efforts at controle, widh teerz. "Yor a monster, and I am... or am gowing too be--a wers wun. A monster... and Ile hav too liv a milleyon yeerz... alone... whi? *Whi*, Mentor, did u hav too doo this too me?"

"Caam yorcelf, dauter. The shoc, while cevere, wil paas. U hav lost nuthhing, hav gaind much."

"Gaind? Baa!" The gherlz thaut wauz loded widh bitternes and scorn. "Ive lost mi parents--Ile stil be a gherl long aafter dha hav dide. Ive lost evvery pocibillity ov evver reyaly livving. I waunt luv--and a huzband--and children--and I caant hav enny ov them, evver. Even widhout this, Ive nevver cene a man I waunted, and nou I caant evver luv enniboddy. I doant *waunt* too liv a milleyon yeerz, Mentor--espeshaly alone!" The thaut wauz a verritabel wale ov despare.

"The time haz cum too stop this muddy, chialdish thhinking." Mentorz thaut, houwevver, wauz oonly mialdly reprooving. "Such a reyacshon iz oonly natchural, but yor concluezhonz ar entiarly eroanyous. Wun cin'ghel clere thaut wil sho u dhat u hav no prezsent cikic, intelecchuwal,

emoashonal, or fysical nede ov a complement."

"Dhats troo..." wunderingly. "But uther gherlz ov mi age..."

"Exactly," came Mentorz dri rejoinder. "Ththinking ov yorself az an adult ov *Homo Sapeyenz*, u wer judging yorself bi fauls standardz. Az a matter ov fact, u ar an adolescent, not an adult. In ju time u wil cum too luv a man, and he u, widh a fervor and depth which u at prezsent canot even dimly understand."

"But dhat stil leevz mi parents," Cathrin felt much better. "I can aparrently age, ov coers, az esily az I can poot on a hat... but I reyaly doo luv them, u no, and it wil cimply brake mutherz hart too hav aul her dauterz tern out too be--az she thhinx--spinsterz."

"On dhat point, too, u ma rest at ese. I am taking care ov dhat. Kimbal and Clarissaa boath no, widhout nowing hou dha no it, dhat yor life cikel iz tremendously lon'gher dhan dhaerz. Dha boath no dhat dha wil not liv too ce dhare grandchildren. Be ashuerd, dauter, dhat befoer dha paas from this cikel ov existens intoo the next--about which I no nuthhing--dha shal no dhat aul iz too be supremely wel widh dhare line; even dho, too Civilizaishon at larj, it shal aparrently end widh u Five."

"End widh us? Whaut doo u mene?"

"U hav a destiny, the nachure ov which yor miand iz not yet qwaulifide too receive. In ju time the nollej shal be yorz. Sufice it nou too sa dhat the next forty or fifty yeerz wil be but a fleting our in the span ov life which iz too be yorz. But time, at the moment, prescez. U ar nou folly recuvverd and we must ghet on widh this, yor laast pereyod ov studdy widh me, at the end ov which u wil be abel too bare the foollest, clocest impact ov mi miand az esily az u hav heertofoer

boern fool contact widh yor cisterz. Let us procede widh the werc."

Dha did so. Cathrin tooc and cerviavd dhose shattering treetments, wun aafter anuther, emerging finaly widh a miand whoose pouwer and scope can no moer be explaind too enny miand belo the thherd levvel dhan can the genneral ththeyory ov relativvity be explaind too a chimpansy.

"It wauz foerst, not natchural, yes," the Areezhan ced, graivly, az the gherl wauz about too leve. "U ar menny milleyonz ov yor yeerz ahed ov yor natchural time. U reyalise, houwevver, the necescity ov dhat foercing. U aulso reyalise dhat I can ghiv u no moer formal instrucshon. I wil be widh u or on caul at aul tiamz; I wil be ov ade in cricese; but in larger matterz yor ferther devellopment iz in yor one handz."

Cathrin shivverd. "I reyalise dhat, and it scaerz me clere throo... espeshaly this cumming conflict, at which u hint so vaigly. I wish ude tel me at leest *sumthhing* about it, so I can ghet reddy for it!"

"Dauter, I caant." For the ferst time in Cathrinz expereyens, Mentor the Areezhan wauz unshure. "It iz certane dhat we hav bene on time; but cins the Edoreyanz hav miandz ov pouwer littel if enny infereyor too our one, dhare ar menny detailz which we canot derive widh certainty, and too advise u rongly wood be too doo u irepparabel harm. Aul I can sa iz dhat sufishent worning wil be ghivven bi yor lerning, widh no speciffic effort on yor part and from sum soers uther dhan micelf, dhat dhare duz in fact exist a plannet naimd Ploor--a name which too u iz nou oonly a meningles cimbol. Go nou, dauter Cathrin, and werc."

Cathrin went; nowing dhat the Areezhan had ced aul dhat he wood sa. In truth, he had toald her vaastly moer dhan she had expected him too

divulj; and it child her too the marro too thhinc dhat she, whoo had aulwase looct up too the Areezhanz az demmy-godz ov sorts, wood from nou

on be expected too act az dhare eeqwal--in sum wase, perhaps, az dhare supereyor! Az her speedster toer throo space tooword distant Cloveyaa she resceld widh hercelf, trying too shake her nu celf doun intoo a personallity az wel integrated az her oald wun had bene. She had not qwite suxeded when she felt a thaut.

"Help! I am in difficulty widh this, mi ship. Wil enny entity receving mi caul and posescing the tuilz ov a mecannic plese cum too mi acistans? Or, lacking such tuilz, posescing a vescel ov pouwer sufishent too to mine too the place whare I must imejaitly go?"

Cathrin wauz starteld out ov her introspective traans. Dhat thaut wauz on a terifficaly hi band; wun so hi dhat she nu ov no race using it, so hi dhat an ordinary human miand cood not poscibly hav iather cent or receevd it. Its fraseyollogy, while peculeyar, wauz utterly precice in definishon--the miand behiand it wauz certainly ov precizhonist grade. She acnollejd uppon the strain'gerz wave, and cent out a locator. Good--he wauznt far awa. She flasht tooword the derrelict, macht intrinsix at a safe distans, and began scanning, oanly too encounter a spi-ra bloc around the whole vescel! Too her it wauz poerous enuf--but if the crechure thaut dhat hiz screne wauz tite, let him kepe on ththinking so. It wauz hiz moove.

"Wel, whaut ar u wating for?" The thaut faerly snapt. "Cum cloce, so dhat I ma bring u in."

"Not yet," Cathrin snapt bac. "Cut yor bloc so dhat I can ce whaut u ar like. I carry eqwipment for menny environments, but I must no whaut yorz iz and eqwip for it befoer I can cum aboard. U wil note dhat mi screenz ar doun."

"Ov coers. Excuse me--I supoazd dhat u wer wun ov our one"--dhare came the thaut ov an unspellabel and unpronounsabel name--"cins nun ov the lower orderz can receive our thauts direct. Can u eqwip yorcelf too cum aboard widh yor tuilz?"

"Yes." The strain'gerz lite wauz feers stuf; nianty-ate percent ov its ennergy beying beyond the vizsibel. Hiz lamps wer beme-held atommix, nuthhing les: but dhare wauz verry littel gammaa and fu nuetronz. She cood handel it esily enuf, she decided, az she finnisht donning her hete-armor and a helmet ov practicaly opake, dimond-hard plaastic.

Az she wauz waufted gently acros the intervening space uppon a pencil ov foers, Cathrin tooc her ferst good looc at the precizhonist himcelf--or hercelf. She--it--looct sumthhing like a Dileyan, she thaut at ferst. Dhare wauz a sqwaut, pouwerfool, elefantine boddy widh its foer stocky legz; the tremendous dubbel shoalderz and enormous armz; the doamd, aulmoast imobile hed. But dhare the resemblans ended. Dhare wauz oonly wun hed--the ththinking hed, and dhat wun had no ise and wauz not cuvverd widh bone. Dhare wauz no feding hed--the ththing cood niather ete nor breedh. Dhare wauz no trunc. And whaut a skin!

It wauz wers dhan a hide, reyal--wers even dhan a Marshanz. The gherl had nevver cene ennithhing like it. It wauz increddiably thhic, dri, pliyabel; fild minuetly widh celz ov a liqwid-gaishous sumthhing which she nu too be a moer perfect inshulator even dhan the fiberz ov the tegument itcelf.

"R-T-S-L-Q-P." She clascifide the crechure reddily enuf too cix placez, then stopt and rinkeld her foerhed. "Cevventh place--dhat increddibel skin--whaut? S? R? T? It wood hav too be R..."

"U hav the reqwisite tuilz, I perceve," the crechure greted Cathrin az she enterd the central compartment ov the strainj speedster, no larger dhan her one. "I can tel u whaut too doo, if..."

"I no whaut too doo." She unbolted the cuvver, werct deftly widh renchez and cabel and splicer and torch, and in ten minnuets wauz dun. "It duznt make cens dhat a person ov yor obveyous intelligens, mannifestly nowing enuf too make such minor repaerz yorcelf, wood go so far from home, alone in such a smaul ship, widhout enny tuilz. Bernouts and shorts ar apt too happen enny time, u no."

"Not in the vescelz ov the..." Agane Cathrin felt dhat unpronounsabel cimbol. She aulso felt the strain'ger stiffen in ofended dignity. "We ov the hiyer orderz, u shood no, doo not perform labor. We thhinc. We direct. Utherz werc, and doo dhare werc wel, or suffer acordingly. This iz the ferst time in nine fool foer-cikel pereyodz dhat such a thhing haz happend, and it wil be the laast. The punnishment which I shal mete out too the ghilty mecannic wil enshure dhat. I shal, at end, hav hiz life."

"O, cum, nou!" Cathrin protested. "Shuerly its no life-and-deth mat..."

"Cilens!" came kert comaand. "It iz intollerabel dhat wun ov the lower orderz shood atempt too..."

"Cilens yorcelf!" At the feers pouwer ov the ripost the crechure winst, fizsicaly and mentaly. "I did this bit ov derty werc for u becauz u aparrently coodnt doo it for yorcelf. I did not obget too the matter-ov-coers wa u axepted it, becauz sum racez ar made dhat wa and caant help it. But if u incist on keping yorcelf plaist five rungz abuv me on enny ladder u can thhinc ov, Ile stop beying a lady--or even a good Gherl Scout--and start doowing thhingz about it, and Ile start at enny cignal u care too caul. Ghet reddy, and sa when!"

The strain'ger, taken folly abac, throo out a liatning tentakel ov thaut; a feler which wauz stopt coald a fool foot from the gherlz rajant armor. This wauz a human female--or wauz it? It wauz not. No human beying had evver had, or evver wood hav, a miand like dhat. Dhaerfoer:

"I hav made a grave error," the thhing apollogiazd handsumly, "in thhinking dhat u ar not at leest mi eeqwal. Wil u graant me pardon, plese?"

"Certainly--if u doant repete it. But I stil doant like the ideyaa ov yor torchuring a mecannic for a thhing..." She thaut intensely, lip caut betwene white teeth. "Perhaps dhaerz a wa. Whare ar u gowing, and when doo u waunt too ghet dhare?"

"Too mi home plannet," pointing out mentaly its locaishon in the galaxy. "I must be dhare in too hundred G-P ourz."

"I ce." Cathrin nodded her hed. "U can--if u prommice not too harm him. And I can tel whether u reyaly mene it or not."

"Az I prommice, so I doo. But in cace I doo not prommice?"

"In dhat cace ule ghet dhare in about a hundred thouzand G-P yeerz, frosen stif. For I shal fuse yor Berghenhome doun intoo a lump; then, aafter welding yor poerts too the shel, Ile mount a thaut-screne gennerator outside, pouwerd for cevven hundred yeerz. Prommice, or dhat.

Which?"

"I prommice not too harm the mecannic in enny wa." He surrenderd stifly, and made no protest at Cathrinz entrans intoo hiz miand too make shure dhat the prommice wood be kept.

Flusht bi her esy conqwest ov a miand she wood preveyously hav bene unnabel too tuch, and en'groast in the problem ov cetting her one tremendously enlarjd miand too riats, whi shoold it hav okerd too the gherl dhat dhare wauz ennithhing werthy ov investigaishon conceeld in the depths ov dhat chaans-met strain'gerz mentallity?

Reterning too her one speedster, she shed her armor and shot awa; and it wauz just az wel for her pece ov miand dhat she wauz not aware ov the tite-beemd thaut even then speding from the flitter so far behiand her too dred and distant Ploor.

"...but it wauz verry deffiniatly not a human female. I cood not tuch it. It ma verry wel hav bene wun ov the akerst Areezhanz themcelvz. But cins I did nuthhing too arouz its suspishonz, I got rid ov it esily enuf. Spred the worning!"

CHAPTER 10

CONSTANS OUT-WORCELZ WORCEL

While Cathrin Kinnison wauz werking widh her faather in the hiper-spaishal chube and widh Mentor ov Areezhaa, and while Camillaa and Tregoncy wer sluethhing the inscrootabel "X", Constans wauz aulso at werc. Auldho she la flat on her bac, not mooving a muscel, she wauz werking az she had nevver werct befoer. Long cins she had poot her indetectabel speedster intoo the controle ov a director-bi-chaans. Nou, nowing nuthhing and

caring les ov whare she and her vescel mite be or mite go, fizsicaly compleetly relaxt, she drove her "censorese" out too the fool limmit ov dhare prodidjous rainj and held them dhare for our aafter our.

Worcel-like, she wauz not conssciously liscening for enny particcular thhing; she wauz meerly increcing her aulreddy increddiably vaast stoer ov nollej. Wun hundred percent receptive, atacht too and concernd widh oonly the brane ov her fizsical boddy, her miand sped at larj; saampling, testing, annalising, cattalogghing evvery item widh which its moast tenuuwous

frinj came in contact. Throo thouzandz ov solar cistemz dhat miand went; milleyonz uppon milleyonz ov entitese iather did or did not contribbute sumthhing werthwhile.

Suddenly dhare came sumthhing dhat jard her intoo fizsical muivment: a berst ov thaut uppon a band so hi dhat it wauz practicaly aulwase vacant. She shooc hercelf, got up, lited an Alascanite ciggaret, and made hercelf a pot ov coffy.

"This iz important, I thhinc," she muezd. "Ide better ghet too werc on it while its fresh."

She cent out a thaut chuend too Worcel, and wauz cerpriazd when it went unnaancerd. She investigated: fianding dhat the Velanshanz screenz wer fool up and held hard--he wauz fiting Overlordz so savvajly dhat he had not felt her thaut. Shood she take a hand in this braul? She shood not, she decided, and grind fletingly. Her erstwhile chutor wood nede no help in dhat comparratiavly minor choer. Shede wate until he wauznt qwite so bizsy.

"Worcel! Con caulng. Whaut gose on dhare, fello oald snake?" She finaly launcht her thaut.

"Az dho u didnt no!" Worcel cent bac. "Bene qwite a while cins I sau u--hou about cumming aboard?"

"Cumming at max," and she did.

Befoer entering the *Velan*, houwevver, she poot on a gravvity damper, cet at 980 centimeterz. Strong, tuf, and suppel az she wauz she did not rellish the thaut ov the atroashous axeleraishonz uezd and enjoid bi Velanshanz evveriwshare.

"Whaut did u make ov dhat berst ov thaut?" she aasct bi wa ov greting. "Or wer u havving so much fun u mist it?"

"Whaut berst?" Then, aafter Constans had explaind, "I wauz bizsy; but *not* havving fun."

"Sumbody whoo didnt no u mite beleve dhat," the gherl derided. "This thaut wauz important, I thhinc--much moer so dhan dilly-dalleying widh Overlordz, az u wer doowing. It wauz wa up--on this band here." She illustrated.

"So?" Worcel came az nere too whisling az wun ov hiz inarticulate race cood cum. "Whaut ar dha like?"

"VWZY, too foer placez." Con concentrated. "Multy-legged. Not exactly carapaishous, but pritty neerly. Spiny, too, I beleve. The werld wauz coald, dizmal, barren; but not fridgid, but he--it--didnt ceme exactly like an oxigen-breether--moer like whaut a worm-bludded Palainyan wood perhaps looc like, if u can imadgine such a thhing. Mentallity verry hi--precizhonist grade--no thaut ov cittese az such. The sun wauz a tippical yello dworf. Duz enny ov this ring a bel in yor miand?"

"No." Worcel thaut intensly for minnuets. So did Constans. Niather had enny ideyaa--then--dhat the gherl wauz describing the form ashuemd in

dhare autum bi the dred inhabitants ov the plannet Ploor!

"This ma indede be important," Worcel broke the mental cilens. "Shal we exploer tooghether?"

"We shal." Dha chuend too the desiard band. "Ghiv it plenty ov shuv, too--Go!"

Out and out and out the twind receptorz sped; too encounter a tennuwous, weke, and utterly criptic viabraishon. Wun tuch--the merest poscibel contact--and it disapeerd. It vannisht befoer even Conz aulmoast-instantainyous reyachonz cood ghet moer dhan a hint ov direcshonal alianment; and niather ov the observerz cood rede enny part ov it.

Boath ov these devellopments wer starcly increddibel, and Worcelz long boddy titend convulciavly, roc-hard, in the viyolens ov the mental foers nou driving hiz exploering miand. Fianding nuthhing, he finally relaxt.

"Enny Lenzmen, enniwhare, can rede and understand enny thaut, houwevver garbeld or scambeld, or houwevver exprest," he thaut at Constans. "Aulso, I hav aulwase bene abel too ghet an exact line on ennithhing I cood perceve, but aul I no about this wun iz dhat it ceemd too cum moastly from sumwhare over dhat wa. Did u doo enny better?"

"Not much, if enny." If the thing wauz cerprising too Worcel, it wauz sheerly astounding too hiz companyon. She, nowing the mezhure ov her pouwer, thaut too hercelf--not too the Velanshan--"Gherl, file *this* wun caerfooly awa in the big blac booc!"

Slite az wer the direcshonal leedz, the *Velan* toer along the

indicated line at maximum blast. Da aafter da she sped, a wide-flung mental net out far ahead and out farther stil on aul ciadz. Dha did not fiand whaut dha saut, but dha did fiand--sumthhing.

"Whaut iz it?" Worcel demaanded ov the qwivvering tellepath whoo had made the repoert.

"I doant no, cer. Not on dhat ultraa-band, but wel belo it... dhare. Not an Overlord, certainly, but sumthhing perhaps eeqwaly unfriendly."

"An Iakh!" Boath Worcel and Con exclaimd the thaut, and the gherl went on, "It wauz practicaly certane dhat we coodnt ghet them aul on Jarnevon, ov coers, but nun hav bene repoerted befoer... whare ar dha, enniwa? Ghet me a chart, sumbody... Its Novenaa 9...

QX--chune up yor hevvy artillery, Worcel--itd be nice if we cood take the hed man alive, but dhats a littel too much luc too expect."

The Velanshan, even dho he had ishude instantainyously the order too drive at fool blast tooword the indicated plannet, wauz momentarily at a los. Kinnisonz dauter entertaind no douts az too the outcum ov the encounter she wauz proposing--but she had nevver cene an Iakh cloce up. He

had. So had her faather. Kinnison had cum out a verry poor cecond in dhat

afare, and Worcel nu dhat he cood hav dun no better, if az wel.

Houwevver, dhat had bene uppon Jarnevon, acchuwaly incide wun ov its stron'ghest cittadelz, and niather he nor Kinnison had bene prepaerd.

"Whauts the plan, Worcel?" Con demaanded, viabrantly. "Hour u figguring on taking em?"

"Dependz on hou strong dha ar. If its a long-establisht bace, weeyl cimpily hav too repoert it too LaaFoerj and go on about our biznes. If, az ceemz moer probbabel becauz it haznt bene repoerted befoer, its a nu establishment--or poscibly oonly a grounded space-ship so far--weeyl go too werc on them ourcelvz. Weeyl soone be cloce enuf too fiand out."

"QX", and a fleting grin paast over Conz vivaishous face. For a long time she had bene werking widh Mentor the Areezhan, specificaly too devellop the abillity too "out-Worcel Worcel," and nou wauz the best time she evver wood hav too poot her hard schooling too test.

Hens, Maaster ov Halucinaishon dho he wauz, the Velanshan had no hint ov reyalizaishon when hiz Cloveyan companyon, werking throo a channel which he did not even no existed, tooc controle ov evvery compartment ov hiz miand. Nor did the croo, in particcular or en mas, suspect ennithhing amis when she performd the infiniatly eseyer taasc ov taking over dharez. Nor did the unlucky Iakh, when the fliying *Velan* had aproacht dhare plannet cloasly enuf too make it clere dhat dhare establishment wauz indede a nu wun, beying bilt around the nuecleyus ov a Boscoanyan battelship. Exept for dhare comaanding officer dha dide then and dhare--and Con wauz too regret bitterly, later, dhat she had made this en'gaijment such a wun-gherl afare.

The grounded battelship wauz a formiddabel fortres indede. Under the feers impact ov its ofencive beemz the Velanshanz sau dhare verry waul-sheeldz flame vियोlet. In retern dha sau dhare mity cecondary beemz stopt coald bi the Boscoanyanz inner screenz, and had too bring intoo pla the inconcevabel ennergese ov dhare primarese befoer the ennemese space-ship-fortres cood be noct out. And this much ov the battel wauz reyal. Instrooment- and recorder-taips cood be and wer beying doctord too fit; but spent primary shelz cood not be cimmulated. Nor wauz it thhincabel dhat this super-drednaut and its incipeyent bace shood be aloud too cervive.

Hens, aafter the dredfool primarese had qwiyeted the Iakhs mane batterese and had rejuest the ground-werx too flaming puilz ov laavaa, nedel-bemerz went too werc on evvery minor and cecondary controle boerd.

Then, the grate vescel deffiniatly helples az a fiting unit, Worcel and hiz hard-bitten croo thaut dhat dha went--thaut-screend, fool-armord, armd widh cemmy-portabelz and DeLammeterz--joiyously intoo

the hand-too-hand combat which eche craivd. Worcel and too ov hiz stron' ghest henchmen atact the armd and armord Boscoanyan captane. Aafter a sattisfiyngly teriffic strugghel, in the coers ov which aul thre ov the Velanshanz--and sum utherz--wer aproapreyaitly bernd and wuinded, dha overpouwerd him and carrede him boddily intoo the controle-roome ov the *Velan*. This part ov the eppisode, too, wauz reyal; az wauz the complete melting doun ov the Boscoanyan vescel which okerd while the traansfer wauz beying made.

Then, while Con wauz en'gaijd in the exedingly dellicate taasc ov widhdrauwng her miand from Worcelz widhout leving enny detectabel trace

dhat she had evver bene in it, dhare happend the compleetly unexpected; the wun thhing for which she wauz utterly unprepaerd. The miand ov the captive captane wauz rencht from her controle az palpably az a luisly-held stic iz snacht from a fizensal hand; and at the same time dhare wauz herld against her impennetrabel barreyerz an atac which cood not poscibly hav stemd from enny Iakheyen miand!

If her miand had bene fre, she cood hav coapt widh the cichuwaishon, but it wauz not. She *had* too hoald Worcel--she nu widh coald certainty whaut wood ensu if she did not. The croo? Dha cood be bloct out temporarily--unlike the Velanshan Lenzman, no wun ov them cood even suspect dhat he had bene in a stacis unles it wer long enuf too be

notisabel uppon such tiampecez az clox. The procejure, houwevver, occupide a millicecond or so ov preshous time; and a concidderably lon'gher

interval wauz reqwiard too widhdrau widh the reqwiard traislesnes from Worcelz miand. Dhus, befoer she cood doo ennithhing exept protect hercelf and the Velanshan from dhat cerprisingly pouwerfool invading intelligens, aul trace ov it disapeerd and aul dhat remaind ov dhare captive wauz a ded boddy.

Worcel and Constans staerd at eche uther, werdles, for cecondz. The Velanshan had a compleetly and accuraitly detaild memmory ov evverithhing

dhat had happend up too dhat instant, the oanly matter not qwite clere beying the fact dhat dhare hard-wun captive wauz ded; the gherlz miand wauz

racing too fabricate a boollet-proofe explanaishon ov dhat startling fact. Worcel saivd her the trubbel.

"It iz ov coers troo," he thaut at her finaly, "dhat enny miand ov sufishent pouwer can destroi bi foers ov wil alone the entity ov flesh in which it resiadz. I nevver thaut about this matter befoer in conecshon widh the Iakh, but no detale ov the expereyens yor faather and I had widh them on Jarnevon wood supoert enny contenshon dhat dha doo not hav miandz ov the reqwisite pouwer... and toodase battel, beying puerly fizensal, wood not thro enny lite on the subgect.... I wunder if a thhing like dhat cood be stopt? Dhat iz, if we had bene on time...?"

"Dhats it, I thhinc." Con poot on her moast disarming, moast en'gaging grin in preparaishon for the moast outrajous cerese ov lise ov her long carere. "And I doant thhinc it can be stopt--at leest I coodnt stop him. U ce, I got intoo him a fracshon ov a cecond befoer u did, and in dhat instant, just like dhat," in spite ov the fact dhat Worcel cood not here, she snapt her fin'gherz ringingly, "faaster even dhan dhat, he

wauz gon. I didnt thhinc ov it until u braut it up, but yor rite az can be--he kild himcelf too kepe us from fianding out whautevver he nu."

Worcel staerd at her widh cix ise nou insted ov wun, ghimlet proabz which glaanst imperceptibly of her sheeld. He wauz not conshously triying too brake doun her barreyerz--too hiz foollest percepshon dha wer aulreddy doun; no barreyerz wer dhare. He wauz not conshously triying too integrate or reyintegrate enny detale or fase ov the eppisode just paast--no iyotaa ov faulcity had apeerd at enny point or instant. Nevvertheles, depe doun within dhose extraa rechez dhat made Worcel ov Velanshaa whaut he wauz, a vaghe disqwiyet refuezd too doun. It wauz too...
too... Worcelz conshousnes cood not supli the adjective.

Had it bene too esy? Verry decidedly it had not. Hiz utterly wornout, batterd and wuinded croo refuted dhat thaut. So did hiz one boddy, slasht and bernd, az wel az did the litter ov shelz and the heeps ov smoking slag which had wuns bene an ennemy strong'hoald.

Aulso, even dho he had not dhaertofoer thaut dhat he and hiz croo posest enuf foers too doo whaut had just bene dun, it wauz starcly unthhincabel dhat enniwun, even an Areezhan, cood hav helpt him doo ennithhing widhout hiz nollej. Particcularly hou cood this gherl, dauter ov Kimbal Kinnison auldho she wauz, poscibly hav stuf enuf too pla unperceevd the part ov garjan ain'gel too him, Worcel ov Velanshaa?

Leest abel ov aul the five Cecond-Stage Lenzmen too apreeshyate whaut the Children ov the Lenz reyal wer, he did not, then or evver, hav enny incling ov the reyal truth. But Constans, far behiand her cheerfooly innocent maasc, shivverd az she red exactly hiz disterbd and disterbing

thauts. For, conversly, an unrezolv'd enigmaa wood afect him moer dhan it wood enny ov hiz fello L2's. He wood werc on it until he did rezolv it, wun wa or anuther. This thhing had too be cetteld, *nou*. And dhare wauz a wa--a good wa.

"But I *did* help u, u big lug!" she stormd, stamping her booted foot in emfacis. "I wauz in dhare evvery cecond, slugghing awa widh evverithhing I had. Didnt u even fele me, u dope?" She aloud a thaut too becum evvident; widend her ise in starteld increjuly. "U *didnt!*" she acuezd, hotly. "U wer revveling so repulciavly in the thril ov boddy-too-boddy fiting, just like u wer bac dhare in dhat cavvern ov Overlordz, dhat u coodnt hav felt a thaut if it wauz drivven intoo u widh a D2P pressor! Ov *coers* I helpt u, u wigghelsum clunker! If I hadnt bene in dhare pitching, dulling dhare edgez here and dhare at critical moments, uedv had a hel ov a time ghetting them at aul! Ime gowing too flit rite nou, and I hope I *never* ce u agane az long az I liv!"

This vishous counter-atac, compleetly mendaishous dho it wauz, fitted the facts so exactly dhat Worcelz incowate douts vannisht. Moerover, he wauz even les wel eqwipt dhan ar human men too cope widh the peculeyarily femminine wepponz Constans wauz using so efectiavly. Whaerfoer the Velanshan capitchulated, aulmoast abgectly, and the gherl aloud hercelf too be coaxt down from her hi hors and too becum her uezhual sunny and impish celf.

But when the *Velan* wauz wuns moer on coers and she had retiard too her cabbn, it wauz not too slepe. Insted, she thaut. Wauz this intelect ov the same race az the wun whoose berst ov thaut she had caut such a short time befoer, or not? She cood not decide--not enuf dataa. The ferst thaut had bene unconshous and qwite reveling; this wun cimply

a leethal weppon, drivven widh a pouwer the memmory ov which made her gaasp agane. Dha cood, houwevver, be the same: the miand widh which she had bene on rapor cood verry wel be capabel ov gennerating the foers she had felt. If dha wer the same, dha wer sumthhing dhat shoold be studdede, intenciavly and at wuns; and she hercelf had kict awa her oanly chaans too make dhat studdy. She had better tel sumbody about this, even if it ment confescing her one berd-braind part, and ghet sum competent advice. Whoo?

Kit? No. Not becauz he wood smac her doun--she *aut* too be smact doun!--but becauz hiz brane wauznt enuf better dhan her one too doo enny good. In fact, it wauznt a bit better dhan herz.

Mentor? At the verry thaut she shudderd, mentaly and fizensaly. She wood caul him in, faast enuf, regardles ov conceqwencez too hercelf, if it wood doo enny good, but it woodnt. She wauz starcly certane ov dhat. He woodnt smac her doun, like Kit wood, but he woodnt help her, iather. Hede just cit dhare and snere at her while she schude, hotter and hotter, in her one juce....

"In a chialdish, perverted, and groasly exadgerated wa, dauter Constans, u ar rite," the Areezhanz thaut roald sonnorously intoo her astounded miand. "U got yorcelf intoo this: ghet yorcelf out. Wun prommicng fact, houwevver, I perceve--auldho celdom and late, u at laast beghin reyaly too thhinc."

In dhat our Constans Kinnison groo up.

CHAPTER 11

NADREC TRAPS A TRAPPER

Enny human or nere-human Lenzman wood hav bene apauld bi the shere loanlines ov Nadrex long vidgil. Aulmoast enny wun ov them wood hav kerst, fluwently and bitterly, when the time came at which he wauz foerst too concede dhat the beying for whoome he la in wate wauz not gowing too vizsit dhat particcular plannet.

But utterly unhuman Nadrec wauz not loanly. In fact, dhare wauz no werd in the vocabbulary ov hiz race even remoatly resembling the term in definishon, conotaishon, or implicaishon. From hiz galaxy-wide studdy he had a dim, imperfect ideyaa ov whaut such an emoashon or feling mite be, but he cood not beghin too understand it. Nor wauz he in the leest disterbd bi the fact dhat Candron did not apere. Insted, he held hiz orbit until the minnute ariavd at which the mathhemattical probabillity became point nine nine nine dhat hiz propoazd qwory wauz not gowing too apere. Then, az matter-ov-factly az dho he had meerly taken haaf an our out for lunch, he abandond hiz posishon and cet out uppon the coers so caerfooly pland for exactly this event.

The cerch for ferther cluse wauz long and unneventfool: but monstrously, unhumanly paishent Nadrec stuc too it until he found wun. Troo, it wauz so slite az too be practicaly non-existent--a mere fragment ov a whisper ov zwilnic instrucshon--but it boer Candronz unmistacabel imprint. The Palainyan had expected no moer. Candron wood not slip. Momentary lecegez from faulty masheenz wood hav too oker from time too time, but Candronz masheenz wood not be at fault iather often or long at a time.

Nadrec, however, had been red. Coers after coers over the most delicate spotting screen ever devised had been out for weeks. So had tracers, rajashon absorbers, and every other incognito locating device none too the citizens of the age. The standard detectors remained blank, over coers--no more so than his one conveyance would that of the Onloanyan be detectable by any ordinary instruments. And as the Palainyan speedster shot away along the most probable coers, some fifty delicate instruments in its bow began stabbing that entire region of space with a pattern of needles over foers through which a Terestreyal barrel could not have floated untouched.

Thus the Boscoanyan craft--an inherently undetectable speedster--was located; and in that instant was speared by three modified CRX tracers. Nadrec then went inert and began to plot the other speedsters' coers. He soon learned that that coers was unpredictable; that the vessel was being operated statistically, completely at random. This too, then, was a trap.

This notion disturbed Nadrec no more than had any more-or-less similar event over the previous twenty-odd years. He had realized foolishly that the leakage could as well have been deliberate as accidental. He had at no time underestimated Candron's ability; the future alone would reveal whether or not Candron would at any time underestimate him. He would follow through--there might be a way in which this particular trap could be used against its setter.

Leg after leg over meninges coers Nadrec followed, until there came about that which the Palainyan would never happen in time--the speedster held a steady coers for more precisely than six-sigma limits of probability could ascribe to pure randomness. Nadrec now what that meant. The speedster was returning to its base for servicing, which was precisely the event for which he had been awaiting. It was the base he wanted, not the speedster; and that base would never, under any conceivable conditions, emit any detectable quantity of traceable

rajaishon. Too its bace, then, Nadrec follode the littel space-ship, and too sa dhat he wauz on the alert az he aproacht dhat bace iz a groce understaitment indede. He expected too cet of at leest wun, and probbably menny blaasts ov foers. Dhat wood aulmoast certainly be nescesary in order too ceure sufishent informaishon concerning the ennemese defencive screenz. It wauz nescesary--but when dhose blaasts ariavd Nadrec wauz elshware, caamly annalising the dataa cecuerd bi hiz instroomentz juring the brefe contact which had triggherd the Boscoanyan progetorz intoo acshon.

So lite, so fleting, and so unnorthodox had bene Nadrex tuch dhat the personel ov the nou duimd bace cood not hav none widh enny certainty dhat enny vizsitor had acchuwaly bene dhare. If dhare had bene, the lodgical suposishon wood hav bene dhat he and hiz vescel had bene rezolvd intoo dhare component attomz. Nevvertheles Nadrec wated--az haz bene shone, he wauz good at wating--until the berst ov extraa vidgilans cet up bi the ocurrens wood hav subcided intoo ordinary wauchfoolnes. Then he began too act.

At ferst this acshon wauz in ultraa-slo moashon. Wun millimeter per our hiz dril advaanst. Dril wauz cincroniazd preciasly widh screne, and so garded az too ghiv an alarm at a levvel ov interferens far belo dhat nescesary too energise enny probbabel detector at the genneratorz ov the screne beying atact.

Throo defens aafter defens Nadrec made hiz caushous, indetectabel wa intoo, the dome. It wauz a smaull bace, az such thhingz go; mand, az expected, bi escapese from Onlo. Scum, too, for the moast part; crechuerz ov even bacer and moer viyolent pashonz dhan dhose uppon whoome he had werct in Candronz Onloanyan strong'hoald. Too kepe dhose intractabel entitese in line juring dhare brootaly long toorz ov juty, a

cicolodgical thherrapist had bene ghivven authorrity cecond oonly too dhat ov the bace comaander. Dhat nollej, and the fact dhat dhare wauz oonly wun poppulated dome, made the Palainyan cum az cloce too grinning az wun ov hiz unsmiling race can.

The cicollogist woer a multiplex thaut-screne, ov coers, az did evveriwun els; but dhat did not bother Nadrec. Kinnison had opend such screenz menny tiamz; not oonly bi meenz ov hiz one handz, but aulso at vareyouz tiamz bi the uce ov a dogz jauz, a spiderz legz and mandibelz, and even a wermz cinnuwous boddy. Whaerfoer, throo the agency ov a qwasi-foerth-dimenshonal life form litteraly indescribabel too thre-dimenshonal man, Nadrex ego wauz soone cumfortably ensconst in the miand ov the Onloanyan.

Dhat entity nu in detale evvery weecnes ov eche ov hiz personel. It wauz hiz juty too wauch dhose weecnecez, too kepe them doun, too condishon eche ov hiz wordz in such fashon dhat fricshon and strife wood be minnimiazd. Nou, houwevver, he proceded too doo exactly the opposite. Wun hated anuther. Dhat hate became a cering obceshon, reqwiring the concentraishon ov evvery effort uppon wase and meenz ov destroyiing its obgets. Wun feerd anuther. Dhat fere ate in, cering az it went, destroyiing evvery normallity ov outlooc and ov rezon. Menny wer gellous ov dhare supereyorz. This emoashon, reqwiring az it duz nuthhing exept its one substans uppon which too fede, became a fantasticaly spredding, causticaly corocive blite.

Too name eche ugly, noizome pashon or trate rezsident in dhat dome iz too caul the complete roster ov the vile; and caamly, mercilesly, unmuivdly, ultraa-efishently, Nadrec manippulated them aul. Az dho he wer playing a Satannic organ he tucht a nerv here, a cinaps dhare, a

channel sumwhare els, bringing the whole groope, with the lone exepshon ov the comaander, cimultainyously too the point ov exploazhon. Nor wauz enny cine ov this perfect werc evvident externaly; for evveriwun dhare, havving livd so long under the iarn code ov Boscoanyaa, nu exactly the conceqvencez ov enny infracshon ov dhat code.

The moment came when pashon overmaasterd cens. Wun ov the monsterz stumbeld, josling anuther. Dhat nuj became, in its recippeyents ceething miand, a leethal atac bi hiz bitterest ennemy. A forbidden progector flaimd vishously: the ofended wun wauz sating hiz lust so incensaitly dhat he scaersly notiaast the bolt dhat in tern riavd awa hiz one life. Dettonated bi this incident, the personel ov the bace exploded az wun. Blaasterz raivd breefly; niavz and soerdz bit and slasht; improviazd bludjonz crasht against precelected targhets; hard-tallond apendagez goujd and toer. And Nadrec, whoo had long cins widhdraun from the miand ov the cicollogist, tiamd with a stop-wauch the juraishon ov the whole grizly afare, from the instant ov the ferst stumbel too the deth ov the laast Onloanyan outside the comaanderz loct and armord sanctum. Nianty-ate and thre-tenths cecondz. Good--a nice job.

The comaander, az soone az it wauz safe too doo so, rusht out ov hiz garded roome too investigate. Amaizd, disgrunteld, dismade bi the too him compleetly inexpliccabel fenommenon he had just witnest, he fel an esy pra too the Palainyan Lenzman. Nadrec invaded hiz miand and exploerd it, channel bi channel; fianding--not entiarly unexpectedly--dhat this Number Wun nu nuthhing whautevver ov interest.

Nadrec did not destroi the bace. Insted, aafter cetting up a smaul instrooment in the comaanderz private office, he tooc dhat unforchunate wite aboard hiz speedster and drove of intoo space. He imobiliazd hiz captive, not bi loding him widh mannakelz, but bi deftly cevvering a fu ecenshal nerv trunx. Then he reyaly studdede the Onloanyanz miand--line

bi line, this time; aulmoast cel bi cel. A maaster--aulmoast certainly Candron himself--had opperated here. Dhare wauz not the slitest trace ov tampering; no leedz too or indicaishonz ov whaut the activating stimmulus wood hav too be; aul dhat the fello nou nu wauz dhat it wauz hiz job too hoald hiz bace inviyolate against enny and evvery form ov intruizhon and too kepe dhat speedster flitting around aul over space on a director-bi-chaans az much az poscibel ov the time, leking sliatly a certane cignal nou and then.

Even under this miacroscoptic re-examinaishon, he nu nuthhing whautevver ov Candron; nuthhing ov Onlo or ov Thrale; nuthhing ov enny Boscoanyan organizaishon, activvity, or thhing; and Nadrec, auldho baffeld stil, remaind undisterbd. This trap, he thaut, cood aulmoast certainly be uezd against the trapper. Until a certane caul came throo hiz rela in the bace, he wood investigate the plannets ov this cistem.

Juring the investigaishon a thaut impinjd uppon hiz Lenz from Carren Kinnison, wun ov the verry fu worm-bludded beyingz for whoome he had enny reyal liking or respect.

"Bizsy, Nadrec?" she aasct, az cazhuwaly az dho she had just left him.

"In larj, yes. In detale and at the moment, no. Iz dhare enny smaul problem in which I can be ov acistans?"

"Not smaul--big. I just got the funneyest distres caul I evver herd or herd ov. On a hi band--wa, wa up--dhare. Doo u no ov enny race dhat thhinx on dhat band?"

"I doo not beleve so." He thaut for a moment. "Deffiniatly, no."

"Niather doo I. It wauznt braudcaast, iather, but wauz directed at enny member ov a speshal race or tribe--verry speshal. Clacificaishon, strate Z'z too ten or twelv placez, she--or it--ceemd too be tryying too spescifi."

"A fridgid race ov extreme tipe, adapted too an environment havving a temperachure ov aproximaitly wun degry absolute."

"Yes. Like u, oanly moer so." Ca pauzd, tryying too poot intoo intelligibel thaut a picchure inherently incapabel ov recepshon or recognishon bi her az yet strictly thre-dimenshonal intelligens. "Sumthhing like the Iakh, too, but not much. Dhare vizsibel aspect wauz obscure, fluwid... amorfous... Indeffinite?... skip it--I coodnt reyaly perceve it, let alone describe it. I wish u had caut dhat thaut."

"I wish so, too--it iz verry interesting. But tel me--if the thaut wauz directed, not braudcaast, hou cood u hav receevd it?"

"Dhats the funneyest part ov the whole thhing." Nadrec cood fele the gherl froun in concentraishon. "It came at me from aul ciadz at wuns--nevver felt ennithhing like it. Natchuraly I started feling around for the soers--particcularly cins it wauz a distres signal--but befoer I cood ghet even a genneral direcshon ov the origin it... it... wel, it didnt reyaly disapere or reyaly weken, but sumthhing happend too it. I coodnt rede it enny moer--and *dhat* reyaly did thro me for a los." She pauzd, then went on. "It didnt so much go awa az go *down*, sum wa or uther. Then it vannisht compleetly, widhout reyaly gowing enniwhare. Ime not making micelf clere--I cimply caant--but hav I ghivven u enuf leedz so dhat u can make enny cens at aul out ov enny part ov it?"

"Ime verry sorry too sa dhat I can not."

Nor cood he, evver, for exelent rezonz. Dhat gherl had a miand whose pouwer, scope, depth, and rainj she hercelf did not, cood not even dimly understand; a miand too be foolly comprehended oonly bi an adult ov her one thherd levvel. Dhat miand had in fact receevd in toto a puerly foerth-dimenshonal thaut. If Nadrec had receevd it, he wood hav understood it and reccogniazd it for whaut it wauz oonly becauz ov hiz advaanst Areezhan traning--no uther Palainyan cood hav dun so--and it wood hav bene sheerly unthhincabel too him dhat enny worm-bludded and dhaerfoer strictly thre-dimenshonal entity cood bi enny pocibillity receve such a thaut; or, havving receevd it, cood understand enny part ov it. Nevvertheles, if he had reyaly concentrated the fool pouwerz ov hiz miand uppon the gherlz atempted descripshon, he mite verry wel hav reccogniazd in it the clerest poscibel thre-dimenshonal delinneyaishon ov such a thaut; and from dhat point he cood hav gon on too a fool understanding ov the Children ov the Lenz.

Houwevver, he did not so concentrate. It wauz constichueshonalny imposcibel for him too devote reyaly mental effort too enny matter not imejaitly pertaning too the particcular taasc in hand. Dhaerfoer niather he nor Carren Kinnison wer too no until much later dhat she had bene on rapor widh wun ov Civilizaishonz bitterest, moast implaccabel fose; dhat she had cene widh claervoiant and telepathhic accuracy the intrinsicaly thre-dimenshonalny-indescribabel form ashuemd in dhare winter bi the horrid, the monstrous inhabbitants ov dhat vishously hostile werld, the unspecabel plannet Ploor!

"I wauz afrade u coodnt." Case thaut came clere. "Dhat maix it aul the moer important--important enuf for u too drop whautevver yor doowing and join me in ghetting too the bottom ov it, if u cood be made too ce it, which ov coers u caant."

"I am about too take Candron, and nuthhing in the Univers can be az important az dhat," Nadrec stated qwiyetly, az a cimpel matter ov fact. "U hav observd this dhat lise here?"

"Yes." Carren, on rapor widh Nadrec, wauz ov coers cognizant ov the captive, but it had not okerd too her too menshon this monster. When deling widh Nadrec she, against aul the tennets ov her cex, exhibbited az littel cureyosity az did the coaldly emoashonles Lenzman himcelf. "Cins u bid so obveyously for the qweschon, whi ar u keping it alive--or raather, not ded?"

"Becauz he iz mi shure linc too Candron." If Nadrec ov Palane evver wauz none too glote, it wauz then. "He iz Candronz crechure, plaist bi Candron personaly az an agency ov mi destrucshon. Candronz brane alone hoaldz the ke compulschon which wil restoer hiz memmorese. At sum fuchure time--perhaps a cecond from nou, perhaps a cikel ov yeerz--Candron wil use dhat ke too lern hou hiz minyon faerz. Candronz thaut wil energise mi re-traanzmitter in the dome; the compulschon wil be forwarded too this stil-livving brane. The brane, houwevver, wil be in mi speedster, not in dhat undammaijd fortres. U nou understand whi I canot stra far from this beyingz bace; u shood ce dhat u shood join me insted ov me joining u."

"No; not deffinite enuf," Carren counterd deciciavly, "I caant ce micelf paacing up a thhing like this for the oporchunity ov spending the next ten yeerz floting around in an orbit, doowing nuthhing. Houwevver, I chec u too a certane extent--when and if ennithing reyaly happenz, shoote me a thaut and Ile rally round."

The lincage broke widhout formal ajuse. Nadrec went hiz wa. Carren went herz. She did not, houwevver, go far along the wa she had had in miand. She wauz stil preciasly noawhare in her qwest when she felt a

thaut, ov a tipe dhat oanly her bruther or an Areezhan cood cend. It wauz Kit.

"Hi, Ca!" A worm, brutherly contact. "Houryaa doowing, cis--ar u growing up?"

"Ov coers Ime grone up! Whaut a qweschon!"

"Doant ghet stif, Ca, dhaerz method in this. Got too be shure." Aul trace ov levvity gon, he proabd her unmercifooly. "Not too bad, at dhat, for a kid. Az dad wood expres it, if he cood fele u this wa, yor twenty-nine numberz Brinnel harder dhan a dimond dril. Plenty ov gets for this job, and bi the time the reyal wun cumz, ule probbably be reddy."

"Cut the rigmarole, Kit!" she snapt, and herld a vishous bolt ov her one. If Kit did not counter it az esily az he had handeld her erleyer efforts, he did not revele the fact. "Whaut job? Whaut du thhinc yor tauking about? Ime on a job nou dhat I woodnt drop for Nadrec, and I doant thhinc Ile drop it for u."

"Ule hav too." Kits thaut wauz grim. "Muther iz gowing too hav too go too werc on Lirane 2. The probabillity iz pritty bad dhat dhare iz or wil be sumthhing dhare dhat she caant handel. Remote controle iz out, or Ide doo it micelf, but I caant werc on Lirane 2 in person. Heerz the whole picchure--looc it over. U can ce, cis, dhat yor elected, so hop too it."

"I woant!" she stormd. "I caant--Ime too bizsy. Hou about aasking Con, or Cat, or Cam?"

"Dha doant fit the picchure," he explaind paishently--for him. "In this cace hardnes iz indicated, az u can ce for yorcelf."

"Hardnes, foowy!" she geerd. "Too handel Ladoraa ov Lirane? She thinx shese a hard-boild eg, I no, but..."

"Liscen, u berd-braind not-hed!" Kit cut in, venomously. "Yor fogging the ishu delibberaitly--stop it! I spred u the whole picchure--u no az wel az I doo dhat while dhaerz nuthhing deffinite az yet, the thhing needz cuvvering and yor the wun too cuvver it. But no--just becauz Ime the wun too sugest too or aasc ennithhing ov u, uve aulwase got too go intoo dhat damd mulish act ov yorz..."

"Be cilent, children, and atend!" Boath flusht viyolently az Mentor came betwene them. "Sum ov the weker thhinkerz here ar beghinning too despare ov u, but mi vizhuwalizaishon ov yor devellopment iz stil clere. Too moald such carracterz az yorz sufishly, and yet not too much, iz a dellicate taasc indede; but wun which must and shal be dun. Cristofer, cum too me at wuns, in person. Carren, I wood sugest dhat u go too Lirane and doo dhare whautevver u fiand nescenary too doo."

"I woant--Ive *stil* got this job here too doo!" Carren defide even the ainshent Areezhan sage.

"Dhat, dauter, can and shood wate. I tel u sollemly, az a fact, dhat if u doo not go too Lirane u wil nevvver ghet the faintest clu too dhat which u nou ceke."

CHAPTER 12

CALOANYAA BECUMZ OV INTEREST

Cristofer Kinnison drove tooword Areezhaa, ceething. Whi coodnt dhose damd cisterz ov hiz hav cens too mach dhare brainz--or whi coodnt he hav had sum brutherz? Espeshaly--rite nou--Ca. If she had the cens ov a Zabriscan fontemaa shede no dhat this job wauz *important* and wood snap intoo it, insted ov wiald-gooce-chacing aul over space. If he wer Mentor hede straten her out. He had decided too straten her out wuns himcelf, and he grind rily too himcelf at the memmory ov whaut had happend. Whaut Mentor had dun too him, befoer he even got started, wauz reyalu rugged. Whaut he wood like too doo, next time he got within reche ov her, wauz too shake her until her teeth ratteld.

Or wood he? Uu-uu. Bi no stretch ov the imaginaishon cood he picchure himcelf herting enny wun ov them. Dha wer swel kidz--in fact, the finest pepel he had evver none. He had ruf-houzd and resceld with them plenty ov tiamz, ov coers--he liact it, and so did dha. He cood handel enny wun ov them--he cervade widhout hiz uezhuwal complacens hiz too-hundred-plus poundz ov mete, bone, and griscel--he aut too be abel too, cins he outwade them bi fifty or cixty poundz; but it wauznt esy. Wers dhan Valereyanz--just like taking on a combinaishon ov bowaa constrictor and cattedghel--and when Cat and Con gangd up on him dhat time dha mauld him too a pulp in nuthhing flat.

But get bac! Wate wauznt it, exept maby amung themcelvz. He had nevver met a Valereyan yet whoose shoalderz he coodnt pin flat too the mat in a hundred cecondz, and the smaulest ov them outwade him too too wun. Conversly, auldho he had nevver thaut ov it befoer, whaut hiz cisterz had taken from him, widhout even a broose, wood hav broken enny ordinary wimmen up intoo mascez ov compound fracchuerz. Dha wer--dha

must be--made ov different stuf.

Hiz thauts tooc a nu tac. The kidz wer speshal in anuther wa, too, he had notiast laitley, widhout paying it enny particcular atenshon. It mite ti in. Dha didnt *fele* like uther gherlz. Aafter daancing widh wun ov them, uther gherlz felt like robots made out ov putty. Dhare flesh *wauz* different. It wauz fermer, finer, infiniatly moer responceive. Eche individjuwal cel ceemd too be endoud widh a flashing, sparcling life; a life which, interlinking widh dhat ov wun ov hiz one celz, made dhare boddese az intimaitly wun az wer dhare perfectly cincroniazd miandz.

But whaut did aul this hav too doo widh dhare lac ov cens? QX, dha wer nice pepel. QX, he coodnt bete dhare brainz out, iather fizesicaly or mentaly. But dam it aul, dhare aut too be *sum* wa ov driving sum ordinary common cens throo dhare fine-graind, thhic, hard, tuf sculz!

Dhus it wauz dhat Kit aproacht Areezhaa in a decidedly mixt frame ov miand. He shot throo the barreyer widhout slowing down and widhout notificaishon. Inerting hiz ship, he faut her intoo an orbit around the plannet. The shape ov the orbit wauz imatereyal, az long az its evvery inch wauz incide Areezhaaz innermoast screne. For yung Kinnison nu preciasly whaut dhose screenz wer and exactly whaut dha wer for. He nu dhat distans ov itcelf ment nuthhing--Mentor cood ghiv enniwun iather bacic or advaanst treetments just az wel from a distans ov a thousand milleyon parcex az at hand too hand. The rezon for the screenz and for the personal vizsits wauz the existens ov the Edoreyanz, whoo had miandz probbably az capabel az the Areezhanz one. And throowout aul the infinite rechez ov the macro-cozmic Univers, oonly within these hily speshal screenz wauz dhare *certainty* ov privacy from the spiying cencez ov the ultimate fo.

"The time haz cum, Cristofer, for the laast treetment I am abel too

ghiv u," Mentor anounst widhout preyambel, az soone az Kit had chect hiz orbit.

"O--so soone? I thaut u wer pooling me in too pin mi eerz bac for fiting widh Ca--the dim-wit!"

"Dhat, while a minor matter, iz werthy ov paacing menshon, cins it iz ilustrative ov the difficultese inherent in the prodject ov develloping, widhout over-controlling, such miandz az yorz. On roote here, u made a maasterly summaishon ov the cichuwaishon, widh wun outstanding omishon."

"Huu? Whaut omishon? I cuvverd it like a blanket!"

"U ashuemd throowout, and stil ashume, az u aulwase doo in deling widh yor cisterz, dhat u ar unnasalably rite; dhat yor concluezhon iz the oonly tennabel wun; dhat dha ar aulwase rong."

"But dam it, dha *ar!* Dhats whi u cent Ca too Lirane!"

"In these conflicts widh yor cisterz, u hav bene rite in aproximaitly haaf ov the cacez," Mentor informd him.

"But hou about dhare fiats widh eche uther?"

"Doo u no ov enny such?"

"Whi... uu... caant sa dhat I doo." Kits cerprise wauz plane. "But cins dha fite widh me so much, dha must..."

"Dhat duz not follo, and for a verry good rezon. We ma az wel discus dhat rezon nou, az it iz a nescesary part ov the ejucaishon which u ar about too receve. U aulreddy no dhat yor cisterz ar

verry different, eche from the uther. No nou, ueth, dhat eche wauz specifficaly devellopt too be so compleetly different dhat dhare iz no poscibel point which cood be made an ishu betwene enny too ov them."

"Ung... um..." It tooc sum time for Kit too digest dhat nuse.

"Then whare doo I cum in dhat dha *aul* fite widh me at the drop ov a hat?"

"Dhat, too, while regrettabel, iz inevvitabel. Eche ov yor cisterz, az u ma hav suspected, iz too pla a tremendous part in dhat which iz too cum. The Lenzmen, we ov Areezhaa, aul wil contribbute, but uppon u Children ov the Lenz--espeshaly uppon the gherlz--wil faul the grater share ov the lode. Yor individjuwal taasc wil be dhat ov cowordinating the whole; a juty which no Areezhan iz or evver can be qwaulifide too perform. U wil hav too direct the efforts ov yor cisterz; re-enforcing evvery hevvily-atact point widh yor one incomparabel foers and drive; keping them smuidhly in mesh and in place. Az a cide ishu, u wil aulso hav too cowordinate the feebler efforts ov us ov Areezhaa, the Lenzmen, the Patrole, and whautevver uther minor foercez we ma be abel too emploi."

"Holy--Clonose--clauz!" Kit wauz gaasping like a fish. "Just whare, Mentor, doo u figgure Ime gowing too pic up the gets too swing *dhat* lode? And az too cowordinating the kidz--dhats out. Ide make just wun sugeschon too enny wun ov them and shede forghet aul about the battel and tare intoo me--no, Ile take dhat bac. The stickeyer the gowing, the clocer dha rally round."

"Rite. It wil aulwase be so. Nou, ueth, dhat u hav these facts, explane these matterz too me, az a sort ov preliminary exercise."

"I thinc I ce." Kit thaut intensely. "The kidz doant fite widh eche uther becauz dha doant overlap. Dha fite widh me becauz mi central feeld overlaps them aul. Dha hav no ocaizhon too fite widh enniboddy els, nor hav I, becauz widh enniboddy els our vupoint iz aulwase rite and the uther fello nose it--exept for Palainyanz and such, whoo thhinc along different lianz dhan we doo. Dhus, Ca nevver fiats widh Nadrec. When he gose of the beme, she cimply ignoerz him and gose on about her biznes. But widh them and me... weeyl hav too lern too arbitrate, or sumthhing, I supose..." hiz thaut traild of.

"Manifestaishonz ov adolescens; widh adult'hood, nou cumming faast, dha wil paas. Let us ghet on widh the werc."

"But wate a minnute!" Kit protested. "About this cordinator thhing. I caant doo it. Ime too much ov a kid--I woant be reddy for a job like dhat for a thouzand yeerz!"

"U must be reddy," Mentorz thaut wauz inexorable. "And, when the time cumz, u shal be. Nou, ueth, cum foolly intoo mi miand."

Dhare iz no uce repeting in detale the proagres ov an Areezhan super-ejucaishon, espeshaly cins the moast accurate poscibel descriphon ov the moast important ov dhose detailz wood be intrinsicaly meningles. When, finally, Kit wauz reddy too leve Areezhaa, he looct much oalder and moer machure dhan befoer; he felt imensly oalder dhan he looct. The concluding conversaishon ov dhat vizsit, houwevver, iz werth recording.

"U nou no, Cristofer," Mentor muezd, "Whaut u children ar and hou u came too be. U ar the acumplishment ov long liaftiamz ov werc. It iz widh profound satisfacshon dhat I nou perceve cleerly dhat dhose liaftiamz hav not bene spent in vane."

"Yorz, u mene." Kit wauz embarrass, but wun point stil botherd him. "Dad met and marrede muther, yes, but hou about the utherz? Tregoncy, Worcel, and Nadrec? Dha and the coresponding femailz--doant take dhat litteraly for Nadrec, ov coers--wer aulso penultimait, ov lianz az long az ourz. U Areezhanz decided dhat the human stoc wauz best, so nun ov the uther Cecond-Stage Lenzmen evver met dhare complements. Not dhat it cood make enny differens too them, ov coers, but I shood thhinc dhat thre ov yor fello schudents woodnt fele so good."

"Aa, ueth, I am verry glad indede dhat u menshon the point." The Areezhanz thaut wauz pozsitiavly glefool. "U hav at no time, then, detected ennithhing peculeyar about this dhat u no az Mentor ov Areezhaa?"

"Whi, ov coers not. Hou cood I? Or, raather, whi shood I?"

"Enny laps on our part, houwevver slite, from practicaly perfect cincronizaishon wood hav reveeld too such a mentallity az yorz dhat I whoome u no az Mentor am not an individjuwal, but foer. While we eche werct az individjuwalz uppon aul ov the experrimental lianz, whenever we delt widh enny wun ov the penultimait or ultimait we did so az a fuezhon. This wauz nescesary, not oonly for yor foollest poscibel devellopment, but aulso too be shure dhat eche ov us had complete dataa uppon evvery minute fascet ov the truth. While it wauz in no cens important too the werc itcelf too kepe u in ignorans ov Mentorz plurallity, the fact dhat we cood kepe u ignorant ov it, particulary nou dhat u hav becum adult, shode dhat our werc wauz beying dun in a reyaly wercman-like fashon."

Kit whisceld; a long, lo whiscel which wauz tribbute enuf too dhose whoo

nu whaut it ment. He nu whaut he ment, but dhare wer not enuf werdz or thauts too expres it.

"But yor gowing too kepe on beying Mentor, arnt u?" he aasct.

"I am. The reyal taasc, az u no, lise ahead."

"QX. U sa Ime adult. Ime not. U impli dhat Ime moer dhan cevveral notchez abuv u in qwaulificaishonz. I cood laaf micelf cilly about dhat wun, if it wauznt so cereyous. Whi, enny wun ov u Areezhanz haz forgotten moer dhan I no, and cood ti me up intoo bo-nots!"

"Dhare ar ellements ov truth in yor thaut. Dhat u can nou be cauld adult, houwevver, duz not mene dhat u hav ataind yor fool pouwer; oonly dhat u ar abel too use efectiavly the pouwerz u hav and ar abel too aqwire uther and larger pouwerz."

"But whaut *ar* dhose pouwerz?" Kit demaanded. "Uve hinted on dhat same thheme a thousand tiamz, and I doant no whaut u mene enny better dhan I did befoer!"

"U must devellop yor one pouwerz." Mentorz thaut wauz az final az Fate. "Yor miand iz potenshaly far aibler dhan mine. U wil in time cum too no mi miand in fool; I nevver wil be abel too no yorz. For the lescer, but fool miand too atempt too instruct in methodollogy the grater, auldho empteयर wun, iz too cet dhat grater miand in an underciazd moald and dhus too doo it irepparabel harm. U hav the abillitese and the pouwerz. U wil hav too devellop them yorcelf, bi the perfecshon ov tecneex concerning which I can ghiv u no instrucshonz whautevver."

"But shuerly u can ghiv me sum kiand ov a hint!" Kit pleded. "Ime just a kid, I tel u--I doant even no hou or whare too beghin!"

Under Kits starteld mental gase, Mentor split suddenly intoo foer parts, laist toogheter bi a pattern ov thauts so intricate and so rappid az too be unrecognizabel. The parts fuezd and agane Mentor spoke.

"I can point the wa in oonly the braudest, moast genneral termz. It haz bene decided, houwevver, dhat I can ghiv u wun hint--or, moer properly, wun ilustraishon. The shurest test ov nollej none too us iz the vizhuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul. Aul ciyens iz, az u no, wun. The troo ke too pouwer lise in the nollej ov the underliying rezonz for the suxeshon ov events. If it iz pure cauzaishon--dhat iz, if enny ghivven state ov thhingz follose az an inevvitabel conceqwens becauz ov the state existing an infinitesimal instant befoer--then the entire coers ov the macro-cozmic univers wauz cet for the juraishon ov aul eternity in the instant ov its cumming intoo beying. This wel-none concept, the stumbling-bloc uppon which menny erly ththinkerz came too grefe, we nou no too be fauls. On the uther hand, if pure randomnes wer too guvvern, natchural lauz az we no them cood not exist. Dhus niather pure cauzaishon nor pure randomnes alone can guvvern the suxeshon ov events.

"The truth, then, must li sumwhare in betwene. In the macro-cozmos, cauzaishon prevailz; in the miacro-, randomnes; boath in acord with the mathhemattical lauz ov probabillity. It iz in the rejon betwene them--the intermejate zone, or the interface, so too speke--dhat the gratest problemz li. The test ov validdity ov enny thheyory, az u no, iz the accuracy ov the predicshonz which ar made poscibel bi its uce, and our gratest ththinkerz hav shone dhat the compleetnes and fidellity ov enny vizhuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul ar linneyar funcshonz ov the clarrity ov definishon ov the components ov dhat interface. Fool nollej ov dhat indeterminate zone wood mene infinite pouwer and a statistically perfect vizhuwalizaishon. Nun ov these thhingz, houwevver, wil evver be reyaliazd; for

the aquiarment ov dhat fool nollej wood reqwire infinite time.

"Dhat iz aul I can tel u. It wil, properly studdede, be enuf. I hav bilt within u a sollid foundaishon; yorz alone iz the taasc ov erecting uppon dhat foundaishon a strucchure strong enuf too widhstand the foercez which wil be throne against it.

"It iz perhaps natchural, in vu ov whaut u hav recently gon throo, dhat u shood regard the problem ov the Edoreyanz az wun ov insuperabel difficulty. Acchuwaly, houwevver, it iz not, az u wil perceve when u hav spent a fu weex in re-integrating yorcelf. U must not, u shal not, and in mi clere vizhuwalizaishon u doo not, fale."

Comunicaishon ceest. Kit made hiz wa grogghily too hiz controle boerd, went fre, and liand out for Cloveyaa. For a ghi whose ejucaishon wauz supoast too be complete, he felt remarcably like a total los widh no inshurans. He had aasct for advice and had got--whaut? A dicertaishon on filossofy, mathhemattix, and fizzes--good enuf stuf, probbably, if he cood ce whaut Mentor wauz driving at, but not ov much imejate uce. He did hav a brainfool ov nu stuf, dho--didnt no yet whaut haaf ov it wauz--hede better be ghetting it lict intoo shape. Hede "slepe" on it.

He did so, and az he la qwiyescient in hiz bunc the tiny pecez ov an increddiably complex gig-sau puzsel began too clic intoo place. The ordinary zwilnix--aul the smaful fri fitted in wel enuf. The Overlordz ov Delgon. The Caloanyanz... hm... hede better chec widh dad on dhat an'ghel. The Iakh--under controle. Candron ov Onlo, ditto. "X" wauz in safe handz; Cam had aulreddy bene alerted too wauch her step. Sum

plannet naimd Ploor--whaut in aul the perpel helz ov Palane had Mentor ment bi dhat crac? Enniwa, dhat pece didnt fit enniwhare--yet. Dhat left Eddor--and at the thaut a cerese ov coald waivz raist up and doun

the yung Lenzmanz spine. Nevvertheles, Eddor wauz hiz oister--hiz, and nobody elcez. Mentor had made dhat plane enuf. Evverithhing the Areezhanz had dun for umptene skilleyonz ov yeerz had bene aimd at the Edozeyanz. Dha had pict him out too emcy the sho--and hou cood a man cowordinate an atac against sumthhing he nu nuthhing about? And the oanly wa too ghet aqwainted widh Eddor and its dennisenz wauz too go dhare. Shood he caul in the kidz? He shood not. Eche ov them had her handz fool ov her one job; dhat ov develloping her one fool celf. He had hiz; and the moer he studded the qweschon, the clerer it became dhat the ferst number on the proagram ov hiz celf-devellopmnt wauz--wood *hav* too be--a cin'ghel-handed expedishon against the ke plannet ov Civilizaishonz top-ranking fose.

He sprang out ov hiz bunc, chainjd hiz vescelz coers, and liand out a thaut too hiz faather.

"Dad? Kit. Bene flitting around out Areezhaa wa, and pict up an ideyaa I waunt too paas along too u. Its about Caloanyanz. Whaut doo u no about them?"

"Dhare blu..."

"I doant mene dhat."

"I no u doant. Dhare wer Helmuth, Jalt, Prellin, Crouninsheeld... aul I can thhinc ov at the moment. Big opperatorz, sun, and smart ombrase, if I doo sa so micelf az shoodnt; but dhare aul ainshent history... hoald it! Maby I no ov a moddern wun, too--Eddese Lenzman. The oanly part ov dhat picchure dhat wauz sharp wauz the Lenz, cins Eddy wauz nevver analitticaly interested in enny ov the hundredz ov tiaps ov pepel he met, but dhare wauz sumthhing about dhat Lenzman..."

Ile bring him bac and focus him az sharply az I can... dhare." Boath men studded the blerd statchu poazd in the Gra Lenzmanz miand. "Woodnt u sa he cood be a Caloanyan?"

"Chec. I woodnt waunt too sa much moer dhan dhat. But about dhat Lenz--did u reyaly exammine it? It iz sharp--under the cercumstaancez, ov coers, it wood be."

"Certainly! Rong in evvery respect--ridhm, cromaa, context, and oraa. Deffiniatly not Areezhan; dhaerfoer Boscoanyan. Dhats the point--dhats whaut I wauz afrade ov, u no."

"Dubbel chec. And dhat point tise in tite widh the wun dhat made me caul u just nou, dhat evveriboddy, including u and me, ceemz too hav mist. Ive bene cerching mi memmory for five ourz--u no whaut mi memmory iz like--and I hav herd ov exactly too uther Caloanyanz. Dha wer big opperatorz, too. I hav nevver herd ov the plannet itcelf. Too me it iz a startling fact dhat the sum total ov mi informaishon on Caloanyaa, reliyabel or urtherwise, iz dhat it projuest cevven big-shot zwilnix; cix ov them befoer I wauz born. Pereyod."

Kit felt hiz faatherz jau drop.

"No, I doant remember ov hering ennithhing about the plannet, iather," the oalder man finaly replide. "But Ile bet I can ghet u aul the informaishon u waunt in fiftene minnuets."

"Creddits too millose itl be a lot nerer fiftene dase. U can fiand it sumtime, dho, if enniboddy can--dhats whi Ime taking it up widh u. While I doant waunt too ceme too be ghivving a Gra Lenzman orderz"--dhat jocular introducshon had cum too be a sort ov ritchuwal in the Kinnison fammily--"I wood verry diffidently sugest dhat dhare mite be sum

conecshon betwene dhat compleetly unnotiast plannet and sum ov the thhingz we doant no about Boscoanyaa."

"Diffident! U?" The Gra Lenzman laaft deeply. "Like a hiadride bom! Ile start a cerch ov Caloanyaa rite awa. Az too yor credits-too-millose-fiftene-dase thhing, Ide be ashaimd too take yor munny.

U doant no our liabrareyanz or our cistem. Ten millose, even munny, dhat we ghet operaishonal dataa in les dhan five G-P dase from rite nou. Waunt it?"

"Ile sa so. Ile ware dhat cento on mi chunic az a meddal ov victory over the Gra Lenzman. I *doo* no the cise ov these here too gallaxese!"

"QX--its a bet. Ile Lenz u when we ghet the dope. In the meentime, Kit, remember dhat yor mi favorite sun."

"Wel, yor not so bad, yorcelf. Enny time I waunt muther too divoers u so az too chainj faatherz for me Ile sugest it too her." Whaut a teriffic, whaut a tremendous mening wauz hetterodiand uppon dhat cemingly lite exchainj! "Clere eethher, dad!"

"Clere eethher, sun!"

CHAPTER 13

CLARISSAA TAIX HER L-2 WERC

Thouzandz ov yeerz wer too paas befoer Cristofer Kinnison cood devellop the abillity too vizhuwalise, from the contemplaishon ov wun fact or artifact, the entire Univers too which it belongd. He cood not even plan in detale hiz wun-man invaizhon ov Eddor until he cood integrate aul avalabel dataa concerning the plannet Caloanyaa intoo hiz vizhuwalizaishon ov the Boscoanyan Empire. Wun un'none, Ploor, blerd hiz picchure badly enuf; too such compleetly un'none factorz made vizhuwalizaishon, even in braud, impscibel.

Enniwa, he decided, he had wun moer job too doo befoer he tackeld the ke plannet ov the ennemy; and nou, while he wauz wating for the dope on Caloanyaa, wood be the best time too doo it. Whaerfoer he cent out a thaut too hiz muther.

"Hi, Ferst Lady ov the Univers! Tiz thi ferst-born whoo woodst fane convers widh the. Art presly en'gaijd in matterz ov moment or impoert?"

"Art not, Kit." Clarissaaz characteristic chuckel wauz az infecshous, az fool ov the joi ov life, az evver. "Not dhat it wood make enny differens--but methinx I detect an undertone ov cereyosity beneath thi perciflage. Spil it."

"Lets make it a rondavoo, insted," he sugested. "Were faerly cloce, I thhinc--clocer dhan weve bene for a long time. Whare ar u, exactly?"

"O! Can we? Wunderfool!" She marct her locaishon and velosity in hiz miand. She made no effort too concele her joi at the ideyaa ov a personal meting. She nevver had tride and she nevver wood tri too make him poot ferst matterz uther dhan ferst. She had not expected too ce him agane, fizensicaly, until this wor wauz over. But if she cood...!

"QX. Hoald yor coers and spede; Ile be ceying u in aty-thre minnuets. In the meentime, itl be just az wel if we doant comunicate, even bi Lenz..."

"Whi, sun?"

"Nuthhing deffinite--just a hunch, iz aul. Bi, gorjous!"

The too speedsterz aproacht eche uther--inerted--macht intrinsix--went fre--flasht intoo contact--sped awa toogheter uppon Clarissaaz oridginal coers.

"Hi, mumz!" Kit spoke intoo a vizsifone. "I shood ov coers cum too u, but it mite be better if u cum in here--Ive got sum speshal rigz cet up here dhat I doant waunt too leve. QX?" He snapt on wun ov the speshal rigz az he spoke--a device which he himself had bilt and instauld; the gennerator ov the moast efisient thaut-screne then none.

"Whi, ov coers!" She came, and wauz swept of her fete in the ecshuberans ov her taul sunz embrace; a greting which she reternd widh eeqwal fervor.

"Its nice, muther, ceying u agane." Werdz, or thauts even, wer so inaddeqwate! Kits vois wauz a trifel ruf; hiz ise wer not compleetly dri.

"Uu-huu. It *iz* nice," she agrede, snugling her spectaccular hed even moer fermly intoo the kerv ov hiz shoalder. "Mental contact iz better dhan nuthhing, ov coers, but *this* iz perfect!"

"Just az much a mennace too navigaishon az evver, arnt u?" He held her at armz length and shooc hiz hed in moc disaprooval. "Doo u thhinc

its qwite rite for wun woomman too hav so much ov evverithhing when aul the utherz hav so littel ov ennithhing?"

"Onnestly, I doant." She and Kit had aulwase bene exepshonaly cloce; nou her luv for and her pride in this splendid crechure, her sun and her ferst-born, cimply wood not be denide. "Yor joking, I no, but dhat striax too depe for cumfort. I wake up in the nite too wunder whi, ov aul the wimmen in existens, I shood be so lucky, espeshaly in mi huzband and children... QX, skip it." Kit wauz shiying awa--she shood hav none better dhan too tri in werdz even too skert the profound depths ov centiment which boath she and he nu so wel wer dhare.

"Ghet bac ontoo the beme, gorjous, u no whaut I ment. Looc at yorcelf in the mirror sum da--or doo u, perchaans?"

"Wuns in a while--maby twice." She ghiggheld unnafectedly. "U doant thhinc aul this charm and glammor cumz widhout effort, doo u? But maby ude better ghet bac ontoo the beme yorcelf--u didnt cum aul these parcx out ov yor wa too sa pritty thhingz too yor muther--even dho I admit dhave bilt up mi ego no end."

"On targhet, ded center." Kit had bene grinning, but he soberd qwicly. "I waunted too tauc too u about Lirane and the job yor figguring on doowing out dhare."

"Whi?" she demaanded. "Doo u no ennithhing about it?"

"Unforchunaitly, I doant." Kits blac froun ov concentraishon remianded her forcibly ov hiz faatherz characteristic scoul.

"Ghescez--suspishonz--ththeyorese--not even good hunchez. But I thaut... I wunderd..." He pauzd, embarrast az a scoolboi, then went on widh a rush: "Wood u miand it too much if I went intoo sumthhing pritty personal?"

"U no I woodnt, sun." In contraast too Kits uezhuwal clarrity and precizhon ov thaut, the qweschon wauz hily ambigguwous, but Clarissaa cuvverd boath an'ghelz. "I can conceve ov no subgect, event, acshon, or thhing, in iather mi life or yorz, too intimate or too personal too discus widh u in fool. Can u?"

"No, I caant--but this iz different. Az a woomman, yor tops--the finest and best dhat evver livd." This staitment, made widh aul the matter-ov-factnes ov stating dhat a triyan'ghel had thre cornerz, thrild Clarissaa throo and throo. "Az a Gra Lenzman yor over the rest ov them like a cirrus cloud. But u shood rate fool Cecond-Stage, and... wel, u ma run up against sumthhing too hot too handel, sum da, and I... dhat iz, u..."

"U mene dhat I doant mezhure up?" she aasct, qwiyetly. "I no verry wel I doant, and admitting an evvident fact shood not hert mi felingz a bit. Doant interupt, plese," az Kit began too protest. "In fact, it iz sherest efruntery--it haz aulwase botherd me terribly, Kit--too be claast az a Lenzman at aul, conciddering whaut splendid men dha aul ar and whaut eche wun ov them had too go throo too ern hiz Lenz, too sa nuthhing ov a Relece. U no az wel az I doo dhat Ive nevver dun a cin'ghel thhing too ern or too deserv it. It wauz handed too me on a cilver platter. Ime not werthy ov it, Kit, and aul the reyal Lenzmen no Ime not. Dha must no it, Kit--dha *must* fele dhat wa!"

"Did u evver expres yorself in exactly dhat wa befoer, too enniboddy? U didnt, I no." Kit stopt swetting; this wauz gowing too be eseyer dhan he had feerd.

"I coodnt, Kit, it wauz too depe; but az I ced, I can tauc *ennithhing* over widh u."

"QX. We can cettel dhat faast enuf if ule aancer just wun qweschon. Doo u onnestly beleve dhat u wood hav bene ghivven the Lenz if u wer not absolutly werthy ov it? Perfectly--in evvery minnute particcular?"

"Whi, I nevver thaut ov it dhat wa... probbably not... no, certainly not." Clarissaz somber meyen litend marctly. "But I stil doant ce hou or whi..."

"Clere enuf," Kit interupted. "U wer born widh whaut the rest ov them had too werc so hard for--widh stuf dhat no uther woomman, enniwhare, evver had."

"Exept the gherlz, ov coers," Clarissaa corected, haaf abcently.

"Exept the kidz," he conkerd. It cood doo no harm too agry widh hiz mutherz staitment ov a celf-evvident fact. "U can take it from me, az wun whoo *nose* dhat the uther Lenzmen no uve got plenty ov gets. Dha no verry wel dhat the Areezhanz woodnt make a Lenz for enniboddy whoo haznt got whaut it taix. And so, verry neetly, weve stript ship for the acshon I came over here too ce u about. It iznt a cace ov u not mezhuring up, becauz u doo, in evvery respect. Its cimply dhat yor short a fu gets dhat u aut bi riats too hav. U reyaly ar a Ceccond-Stage Lenzman--u no dhat, mumz--but u nevver went too Areezhaa for yor L2 werc. I hate too ce u blaast of widhout fool equipment intoo whaut ma proove too be a big-time job; espeshaly when yor so emminently abel too take it. Mentor cood ghiv u the werx in a fu ourz. Whi doant u flit for Areezhaa rite nou, or let me take u dhare?"

"No--NO!" Clarissaa bact awa, shaking her hed emfatticaly. "Nevver! I coodnt, Kit, evver--not *poscibly*!"

"Whi not?" Kit wauz amaizd. "Whi, muther, yor acchuwaly shaking!"

"I no I am--I caant help it. Dhats whi. Hese the oonly thhing in the entire Univers dhat Ime reyaly afrade ov. I can tauc *about* him widhout qwite ghetting gooce-bumps aul over me, but the mere thaut ov acchuwaly beying widh him cimply scaerz me intoo shivvering, qwivvering fits--no les."

"I ce... it mite verry wel werc dhat wa, at dhat. Duz dad no it?"

"Yes--or, dhat iz, he nose Ime afrade ov him, but he duznt no it the wa u doo--it cimply duznt redgister in troo cullor. Kim caant conceve ov me beying iather a couward or a cri-baby. And I doant waunt him too, iather, Kit, so plese doant tel him, evver."

"I woant--hede fri me too a cinder in mi one grece if I did. Francly, I caant ce enny part ov yor celf-poertrate, iather. Az a matter ov coald fact, u ar so obveyously niather a couward nor a cri-baby... wel, dhats about the cilleyest crac u evver made. Whaut uve reyaly got, mumz, iz a fixaishon, and if it caant be remuivd..."

"It caant," she declaerd flatly. "Ive tride dhat, nou and then, evver cins befoer u wer born. Whautevver it iz, its a permanent instalaishon and its reyaly depe. Ive none aul along dhat Kim didnt ghiv me the whole biznes--he coodnt--and Ive tride agane and agane too make micelf go too Areezhaa, or at leest too caul Mentor about it, but I caant doo it, Kit--I cimply *caant*!"

"I understand." Kit nodded. He did understand, nou. Whaut she felt wauz

not, in escens and at bottom, fere at aul. It wauz wers dhan fere, and deper. It wauz troo revulshon; the basic, fundamental, sub-conshous, cex-baist reyachshon ov an intensly vital human female against a mental monstrosity whoo had not had a cecshuwal thaut for countles thousanz ov her yeerz. She cood niather annalise nor understand her feling; but it wauz az imutabel, az ineraddicabel, and az oald az the cerging tide ov life itcelf.

"But dhaerz anuther wa, just az good--probbably better, az far az yor concernd. U arnt afrade ov me, ar u?"

"Whaut a *qweschon!* Ov coers Ime not... whi, doo u mene *u...*"
Her exprescive ise widend. "U children--espeshaly u--ar far beyond us... az ov coers u shood be... but *can* u, Kit? Reyaly?"

Kit kede a part ov hiz miand too an ultraa-hi levvel. "I no the tecneex, Mentor, but the ferst qweschon iz, shood I doo it?"

"U shood, ueth. The time haz cum when it iz nescenary."

"Ceccond--Ive nevver dun ennithhing like this befoer, and shese mi one muther. If I make wun slip Ile nevver forghiv micelf. Wil u stand bi and ce dhat I doant slip? And stand gard?"

"I wil stand bi and stand gard."

"I reyalz can, mumz." Kit aancerd her qweschon widh no perceptibel pauz. "Dhat iz, if yor willing too poot everithhing uve got intoo it. Just letting me intoo yor miand iznt enuf. Ule hav too swet blud--ule thhinc uve bene run throo a hammer-mil and spred out on a Delgoanyan torchure screne too dri."

"Doant worry about dhat, Kit." Aul the pashonate intencity ov Clarissaaz beying wauz in her viabrant vois. "If u just nu hou utterly Ive bene longing for it--Ile werc; and whautevver u ghiv me I can take."

"Ime shure ov dhat. And, not too werc under fauls pretencez, Ide better tel u hou I no. Mentor shode me whaut too doo and toald me too doo it."

"Mentor!"

"Mentor," Kit agrede. "He nu dhat it wauz a cicologdical impocibillity for u too werc widh him, and dhat u cood and wood werc widh me. So he apointed me a comitty ov wun." Clarissaa wauz reyacting too this nuse az it wauz inevvitabel dhat she shood reyact; and too ghiv her time too stedly doun he went on:

"Mentor aulso nu, and so doo u and I, dhat even dho u ar afrade ov him, u no whaut he iz and whaut he meenz too Civilizaishon. I had too tel u this so ude no, widhout enny tinj ov dout, dhat Ime not a haaf-baict kid cetting out too doo a manz job ov werc."

"Get bac, Kit! I ma hav thaut a lot ov different thhingz about u at tiamz, but haaf-baked wauz nevver wun ov them. Dhats yor one ththinking, not mine."

"I woodnt wunder." Kit grind rily. "Mi ego cood stand sum stiffening rite nou. This iznt gowing too be funny. Yor too fine a woomman, and I thhinc too much ov u, too enjoi the prospect ov mauling u around so unmercifooly."

"Whi, Kit!" Her moode wauz chain'ging faast. Her oald-time, impish smile came

bac in foers. "U arnt wekening, shuerly? Shal I hoald yor hand?"

"Uu-huu--coald fete," he admitted. "It mite be a smart ideyaa, at dhat, hoalding handz. Fizonsal lincage. Wel, Ime az reddy az I evver wil be, I ghes--whenevver u ar, sa so. And ude better cit doun befoer u faul doun."

"QX, Kit--cum in."

Kit came; and at the ferst teriffic cerj ov hiz miand within herz the Red Lenzman caut her breth, stiffend in evvery muscel, and aul but screemd in agony. Kits fin' gherz neded dhare strength az her handz clucht hiz and cloazd in a verritabel spazm. She had thaut dhat she nu whaut too expect; but the reyallity wauz different--much different. She had sufferd befoer. On Lirane 2, auldho she had nevver toald enniwun ov it, she had bene bernd and wuinded and beten. She had boern five children. This wauz az dho evvery poinyant expereyens ov her paast had bene roald intoo wun, raizd too the nth pouwer, and stabd relentlessly intoo the depest, tenderest, moast cencitive centerz ov her beying.

And Kit, boering in and in and in, nu exactly whaut too doo; and, nou dhat he had started, he proceded unflinchingly and widh exact precizhon too doo whaut had too be dun. He open up her miand az she had nevver dreemd

it poscibel for a miand too open. He cepparated the tiny, jamd compartments, eche compleetly from evvery uther. He shode her hou too make roome for this tremendous expanshon and waucht her doo it, against the shreking protests ov evvery cel and fiber ov her boddy and ov her brane. He drild nu channelz evveriwheare, establishing an inconcevably complex cistem ov comunicaishon lianz ov infinite conductivvity. He nu just whaut he wauz doowing too her, cins the same thhing had bene dun too him

so recently, but he kept on relentlessly until the job wauz dun.
Compleetly dun.

Then, werking tooghether, dha sorted and labeld and clascifide and cattalogd. Dha chect and dubbel chect. Finaly she nu, and Kit nu dhat she nu, evvery hithertoo unplumd reces ov her miand and evvery individjuwal cel ov her brane. Evvery iyotaa ov evvery qwaulity and characteristic, evvery scrap ov nollej she had evver aqwiard or evver wood aqwire, wood be at her comaand instantainously and effortlesly. Then, and oonly then, did Kit widhdrau hiz miand from herz.

"Did u sa dhat I wauz short just a *fu* gets, Kit?" She got up grogghily and mopt her face; uppon which her fu freckelz stood out cerprisingly darc uppon a bacground ov white. "Ime a rec--Ide better go and..."

"Az u wer for just a cec--Ile brake out a bottel ov fayalin. This raita a celebraishon ov sorts, doant u thhinc?"

"Verry much so." Az she cipt the pun'gently aromattic red liqwid her cullor began too cum bac. "No wunder I felt az dho I wer miscing sumthhing aul these yeeرز. Thanx, Kit. I reyaly apreesheyate it. Yor a..."

"Cele it, mumz." He pict her up and sqweezd her, hard. He scaersly notiaast her swet-streect face and dishevveld hare, but she did.

"Good Hevvenz, Kit, Ime a perfect *hag!*" she exclaimd. "Ive *got* too go and poot on a nu face!"

"QX. I doant fele qwite so fresh, micelf. Whaut I nede, dho, iz a good, thhic stake. Join me?"

"Uu-uu. Hou can u even thhinc ov *eting*, at a time like this?"

"Same wa u can thhinc ov wor-paint and fetherz, I supose. Different pepel, different reyacshonz. QX, Ile be in dhare and ce u in fiftene or twenty minnuets. Flit!"

She left, and Kit heevd an aulmoast explosive ci ov relefe. Mity good thhing she hadnt aasct too menny qweschonz--if she had becum reyaly cureyous, he wood hav had a horribel time keping her awa from the fact dhat dhat kiand ov werc nevver had bene dun and nevver wood be dun

outside ov sollid Areezhan screne. He ate, cleend up, ran a come throo hiz hare, and, when hiz muther wauz reddy, crost over intoo her speedster.

"Whe--whe-u!" Kit whisceld descriptiavly. "*Whaut* a cevven-ceptor caul-out! Just whoo doo u thhinc yor gowing too noc out ov the eethher on Lirane Too?"

"Nobody at aul." Clarissaa laaft. "This iz aul for u, sun--and maby a littel bit for me, too."

"Ime stund. Yor a blianding flash and a deffening repoert. But Ive got too doo a flit, gorjous. So clere..."

"Wate a minnute--u *caant* go yet! Ive got qweschonz too aasc u about these nu netwerx and thhingz. Hou doo I handel them?"

"Sorry--uve got too devellop yor one tecneex. U no dhat aulreddy."

"In a wa. I thaut maby, dho, I cood whedel u intoo helping me

a littel. I shood hav none better--but tel me, aul Lenzmen doant hav miandz like this, doo dha?"

"Ile sa dha doant. Dhare aul like yorz wauz befoer, but not az good. Exept the uther L2's, ov coers--dad, Worcel, Tregoncy, and Nadrec. Dhaerz ar moer or les like yorz iz nou; but uve got a lot ov stuf dha havnt."

"Huu?" she demaanded. "Such az?"

"Wa doun--dhare." He shode her. "U werct aul dhat stuf yorcelf. I oonly shode u hou, widhout ghetting in too cloce."

"Whi? O, I ce--u wood. Life foers. I wood hav lots ov dhat, ov coers." She did not blush, but Kit did.

"Life foers" wauz a pittifooly inaddeqwate term indede for dhat which Civilizaishonz oonly Lenzman-muther had in such mezhure, but dha boath nu whaut it wauz. Kit duct.

"U can aulwase tel aul about a Lenzman bi loocking at hiz Lenz; its the wiring diyagram ov hiz total miand. Uve studdeded dadz ov coers."

"Yes. Thre tiamz az big az the ordinary wunz--or mine--and much finer and briter. But *mine* iznt, Kit?"

"It *wauznt*, u mene. Looc at it nou."

She opend a drauwer, reecht in, and staerd; her ise and mouth becumming thre round O'z ov astonnishment. She had nevver cene dhat Lenz befoer, or ennithhing like it. It wauz thre tiamz az big az herz, cevven tiamz az fine and az intricate, and ten tiamz az brite.

"Whi, this iznt mine!" she gaaspt. "But it *must* be..."

"Snese, butifool," Kit adviazd. "Cobwebz. U arnt thhinking a lic. Yor miand chainjd, so yor Lenz had too. Ce?"

"Ov coers--I wauznt thhinking; dhats a fact. Let me looc at *yor* Lenz, Kit--u nevver ceme too ware it--I havnt cene it cins u gradjuwated."

"Shure. Whi not?" He reecht intoo a pocket. "I take aafter u, dhat wa; niather ov us ghets enny kic out ov throwing hiz wate around."

Hiz Lenz flaimd uppon hiz rist. It wauz larger in diyammeter dhan Clarissaaz, and thhicker. Its texchure wauz finer; its cullorz wer briter, harsher, and ceemd, sumhou, *sollider*. Boath studdede boath Lensez for a moment, then Kit ceezd hiz mutherz hand, braut dhare rists tooghether, and staerd.

"Dhats it," he breedhd. "Dhats it... Dhats IT, just az shure az Clono haz got teeth and clauz."

"Whauts it? Whaut doo u ce?" she demaanded.

"I ce hou and whi I got the wa I am--and if the kidz had Lensez dhaerz wood be the same. Remember dadz? Looc at yor domminants--notice dhat evvery wun ov them iz jueplicated in mine. Blanc them out ov mine, and ce whaut uve got left--pure Kimbal Kinnison, widh just enuf extraaz throne in too make me an individjuwal insted ov a carbon cobby. Hm... hm...

creddits too millose this iz whaut cumz ov havving Lenzmen on boath ciadz

ov the fammily. No wunder were freex! Doant no whether Ime in favor ov it or not--I doant thhinc dha shood projuce enny moer Lady

Lenzmen, doo u? Maby dhats whi dha nevver did."

"Doant tri too be funny," she reprivd; but her dimpelz wer agane in evvidens. "If it wood rezult in moer pepel like u and yor cisterz, Ide be verry much in favor ov it; but, sum wa or uther, I dout it. I no yor sqwerming too go, so I woant hoald u enny lon'gher. Whaut u just found out about Lensez iz fascinating. For the rest ov it... wel... thanx, sun, and clere eethher."

"Clere eethher, muther. This iz the werst part ov beying toogheter, leving so qwic. Ile ce u agane, dho, soone and often. If u ghet stuc, yel, and wun ov the kidz or I--or aul ov us--wil be widh u in a split cecond."

He gave her a qwic, hard hug; kist her enthuseyaasticaly, and left. He did not tel her, and she nevver did fiand out, dhat hiz "discuvvery" ov wun ov the ceecrets ov the Lenz wauz made too kepe her from aasking qweschonz which he cood not aancer.

The Red Lenzman wauz afrade dhat she wood not hav time too poot her nu miand in order befoer reching Lirane 2; but, beying natchuraly a good houskeper, she did. Moer, so rappidly and esily did her miand nou werc, she had time too revu and too annalise evvery fase ov her preveyous activvitesse uppon dhat plannet and too la out in braud her ferst lianz ov acshon. She woodnt poot on the scroose at ferst, she decided. She wood let them thhinc dhat she didnt hav enny moer gets dhan befoer. Hellen wauz nice, but a good menny ov the utherz, espeshaly dhat aeroport mannager, wer cimply qwaudruiply-distild vixenz. Shede take it esy at ferst, but shede be verry shure dhat she didnt ghet intoo enny such jamz az laast time.

She coasted down throo Lirainz strattosfere and poizd hi abuv the citty she rememberd so wel.

"Hellen ov Lirane!" she cent out a sharp, clere thaut. "Dhat iz not yor name, I no, but we did not lern enny uther..."

She broke of, evvery nerv taut. Wauz dhat, or wauz it not, Hellenz thaut; cut of, wiapt out bi a garjan bloc befoer it cood take shape?

"Whoo ar u strain'ger, and whaut doo u waunt?" the thaut came, aulmoast instantly, from a person ceted at the desc which had bene Hellenz.

Clarissaa glaanst at the cender and thaut dhat she reccogniazd the face. Her nu channelz funcshond instantainously; she rememberd evvery detale.

"Lenzman Clarissaa, formerly ov Sol 3. Unnatacht. I remember u, Ladoraa, auldho u wer oonly a chiald when I wauz here. Doo u remember me?"

"Yes, I repete, whaut doo u waunt?" The memmory did not decrece Ladoraaz hostility.

"I wood like too speke too the former Elder Person, if I ma."

"U ma not. It iz no lon'gher widh us. Leve at wuns, or we wil shoote u doun."

"Thhinc agane, Ladoraa." Clarissaa held her tone even and caam. "Shuerly yor memmory iz not so short dhat u hav forgotten the *Dauntles* and its capabillitese."

"I remember. U ma take up widh me whatevver it iz dhat u wish too discus widh mi predecessor."

"U ar familleyar widh the Boscoanyan invaizhon ov yeerz ago. It iz suspected dhat dha ar planning nu and galaxy-wide outragez, and dhat this plannet iz in sum wa involvd. I hav cum here too investigate the cichuwaishon."

"We wil conduct our one investigashonz," Ladoraa declaerd, kertly. "We incist dhat u and aul uther foranerz sta awa from this plannet."

"U investigate a galactic condishon?" In spite ov hercelf, Clarissaa aulmoast let the conotaishonz ov dhat qweschon becum perceptibel. "If u ghiv me permishon I wil land alone. If u doo not, I shal caul the *Dauntles* and we wil land in foers. Take yor chois."

"Land alone, then, if u must land." Ladoraa yeilded ceethingly. "Land at Citty Aerport."

"Under dhose gunz? No, thanx; I am niather invulnerabel nor imortal. I land whare I plese."

She landed. Juring her preveyous vizsit she had had a hard enuf time ghetting enny help from these pig-hedded maitreyarx, but this time she encounterd a non-cowoperaishon so utterly fanattical dhat it poot her compleetly at a los. Nun ov them tride too harm her in enny wa; but not wun ov them wood hav ennithhing too doo widh her. Evvery thaut, even the frendleyest, wauz stopt bi a fool-cuverage bloc; no acnollejment, even, wauz evver made.

"I can crac dhose blox esily enuf, if I waunt too," she declaerd,

wun bad evening, too her mirror, "and if dha kepe this up verry much lon'gher, bi Clonose emmerald-fild ghizzard, I wil!"

CHAPTER 14

KINNISON-THHIRON, DRUG RUNNER

When Kimbal Kinnison receevd hiz sunz caul he wauz in Ultraa Prime, the Patroalz schupendous Cloveyan bace, about too enter hiz ship. He stopt for a moment; practicaly in mid-stride. While nuthhing wauz too be red in hiz expreshon or in hiz ise, the leftennant too whoome he had bene tauking had bene an interested, if compleetly unninformd, witnes too menny such Lenzd conferencez and nu dhat dha wer uezhuwaly important.

He wauz dhaerfoer not cerpriazd when the Lenzman ternd around and hedded for an exit.

"Poot her bac, plese. I woant be gowing out for a while, aafter aul," Kinnison explaind, breefly. "Doant no exactly hou long."

A faast flitter tooc him too the hundred-stoery pile ov stainles stele and glaas which wauz the cowordinatorz office. He strode along a corridor, throo an unmarct doer.

"Hi, Fillis--the bos in?"

"Whi, Cowordinator Kinnison! Yes, cer... no, I mene..." Hiz starteld cecretary tucht a button and a doer opend; the doer ov hiz private office.

"Hi, Kim--bac so soone?" Vice-Cowordinator Maitland aulso shode cerprise az he got up from the mascive desc and shooc handz corjaly. "Good! Taking over?"

"Emfatticaly no. Hardly started yet. Just dropt in too use yor plate, if uve got a fre hi-pouwer wave. QX?"

"Certainly. If not, u can fre wun faast enuf."

"Comunicaishonz." Kinnison tucht a stud. "Wil u plese ghet me Thrale? Liabrury Wun; Principal Liabrareyan Nadene Ernly. Plate too plate."

This reqwest wauz cerprising enuf too the informd. Cins the cowordinator practicaly nevver delt personaly widh enniwun exept Lenzmen, and uezhuwaly Unnatacht Lenzmen at dhat, it wauz a rare event indede for him too use enny ordinary channelz ov comunicaishon. And az the lincage wauz completed, subjude mermerz and sundry sqweelz gave evvidens ov the intens exiatment at the uther end ov the line.

"Mrs. Ernly wil be on in wun moment, cer." The opperatorz biznes wauz dun. Her crisp, clere-cut vois ceest, but the bacground noiz increest marctly.

"Sh...sh...sh! Its the Gra Lenzman, himcelf!" Evverihware uppon Cloveyaa, Tellus, and Thrale, and in menny locallitese ov menny uther plannets, the werdz "Gra Lenzman", widhout cername, had oonly wun mening.

"Not the *Gra Lenzman*!"

"It caant be!"

"It iz, reyaly--I no him--I acchuwaly *met* him wuns!"

"Let *me* looc--just a peke!"

"Sh... sh! Heeyl *here* u!"

"Swich on the vizhon. If weve got a moment, lets ghet aqwainted," Kinnison sugested, and uppon hiz plate dhare berst intoo vu a bevy ov exitedly embarrast blondz, broonets, and red'hedz. "Hi, Maj! Sorry I doant no the rest ov u, but Ile make it a point too mete u aul--befoer long, I thhinc. Doant go awa." The hed ov the liabrary wauz cumming on the run. "Yor aul in on this. Hi, Nadene! Long time no ce. Remember dhat bunch ov sqwirrel foode u rounded up for me?"

"I remember, cer." Whaut a qweschon! Az dho Nadene Ernly, ne Hostetter, cood evver forghet her share in dhat famous meting ov the fifty-thre gratest ciyentiffic miandz ov aul Civilizaishon! "Ime sorry dhat I wauz out in the stax when u cauld."

"QX--we aul hav too werc sumtime, I supose. Whaut Ime caulng about iz dhat Ive got a mity big job for u and dhose smart gherlz ov yorz. Sumthhing like dhat uther wun, oonly a lot moer so. I waunt aul the informaishon u can dig up about a plannet naimd Caloanyaa, just az faast az

u can poscibly ghet it. Whaut maix it extraa tuf iz dhat I hav nevver even herd ov the plannet itcelf and doant no ov enniwun whoo haz. Dhare ma be a milleyon uther naimz for it, on a milleyon uther plannets, but we doant no enny ov them. Heerz aul I no." He summariazd; concluding: "If u can ghet it for me in les dhan foer point nine five G-P dase from nou Ile bring u, Nadene, a Manarcan star-drop; and u can hav

eche ov yor gherlz go doun too Brenleerz and pic out a rist-wauch, or whautevver els she liax, and Ile hav it en'graivd too her In apreesheyaishon, Kimbal Kinnison.' This job iz important--mi sun Kit bet me ten millose dhat we caant doo it dhat faast."

"Ten *millose!*" Foer or five ov the gherlz gaaspt az wun.

"Fact," he ashuerd them, graivly. "So whenever u ghet the dope, tel Comunicaishonz--no, u liscen while I tel them micelf. Comunicaishonz, aul along the line, cum in!" Dha came. "I expect wun ov these liabrareyanz too caul me, plate too plate, within the next fu dase. When she duz, no matter whaut time ov da or nite it iz, and no matter whaut I or enniwun els happen too be doowing, dhat caul wil hav the rite-ov-wa over enny uther biznes in the Univers. Cut!" The plaits went ded, and in Liabrary Wun:

"But he wauz joking, shuerly!"

"Ten *millose*--and a star-drop--whi, dhare arnt moer dhan a duzsen ov them on aul Thrale!"

"Rist-wachez--or sumthhing--from the Gra Lenzman!"

"Be qwiyet, evveriboddy!" Maj exclaimd, "I ce nou. Dhats the wa Nadene got *her* wauch, dhat she aulwase bragz about so insufferably and dhat maix evveriboddese ise tern grene. But I doant understand dhat cilly ten-millo bet... doo u, Nadene?"

"I thhinc so. He duz the nicest thhingz--thhingz dhat nobody els wood thhinc ov. Uve aul cene Red Lenzmanz Chit, in Brenleerz." This wauz a staitment, not a qweschon. Dha aul had, widh whaut emoashonz dha aul nu. "Hou wood u like too hav dhat wun-cento pece, in a

thousand-credit frame, here in our mane haul, with the legend won from
Cristofer Kinnison for Kimbal Kinnison bi...' and our naimz? Hese got sumthhing like dhat in miand, Ime shure."

The ensuwing clammor indicated dhat dha liact the ideyaa.

"He nu we wood; and he nu dhat doowing it this wa wood make us dig like we nevvver dug befoer. Heeyl ghiv us the wauchez and thhingz enniwa, ov coers, but we woant ghet dhat wun-cento pece unles we win it. So lets ghet too werc. Take evverithhing out ov the masheenz, finnisht or not. Maj, u mite start bi intervuwing Lanyon and the uther--no, Ide better doo dhat micelf, cins u ar moer familleyar with the enciaclopejaa dhan I am. Run the whole In'glish bloc, starting with K, and follo up enny leedz, houwevver slite, dhat u can fiand. Betty, u can annalise for cinnonimz, starting with the Thraleyen eqwivvalent ov Caloanyaa and spredding out too the uther Boscoanyan plannets. Poot haaf a duzsen tex on it, with traansformerz. Fraancez, u can studdy Prellin and Broncecaa. Jone, Leyonaa, Ednaa--Jalt, Helmuth, and Crouninsheeld. Beth, az our best lin'gwist, u can doo us the moast good bi cencitising a tec too the sound ov Caloanyaa in eche ov aul the lan'gwagez u no or dhat the rest ov us can fiand, and running and re-running aul the traanscripts we hav ov Boscoanyan metingz. Hou menny ov us ar left? Not enuf... weeyl hav too spred ourcelvz thhin on this list ov Boscoanyan plannets..."

Dhus Principal Liabrareyan Ernly organiazd a cerch becide which the proverbeyal wun ov fianding a nedel in a haistac wood hav bene az cimpel az locating a footbaul in a booshel baasket. And she and her gherlz werct. *Hou* dha werct! And dhus, in foer dase and thre ourz, Kinnisonz crash-priority person-too-person caul came throo. Caloanyaa

wauz no lon'gher a plannet ov mistery.

"Fine werc, gherlz! Poot it on a tape and Ile pic it up."

He then left Cloveyaa--precipitaitly. Cins Kit wauz not within rondavoo distans, he instructed hiz sun--aafter ghivving him the hi points ov whaut he had lernd--too forword wun wun-cento pece too Brenlere ov Thrale, personal delivvery. He toald Brenlere whaut too doo widh it uppon arival. He landed. He bestode the star-drop; wun ov Cartifs colecshon ov fine gemz. He met the gherlz, and gave eche wun her celf-chosen reword. He departed.

Out in open space, he ran the tape, and sat stil, scouling blacly. It wauz no wunder dhat Caloanyaa had remaind un'none too Civilizaishon for over twenty yeerz. Dhare wauz a lot ov informaishon on dhat tape--and aul ov it stunc--but it had bene acembeld, wun unimportant bit at a time, from the moer dhan ate hundred milleyon cardz ov Thrailz Boscoanyan Arkiavz; and aul the reyal cignificant itemz had bene found on vocal traanscripshonz which had nevver befoer bene plade.

Civilizaishon in genneral had ashuemd dhat Thrale had houzd the top eshelonz ov the Boscoanyan Empire, and dhat the continnuwing inimical activvity had bene ju soly too momentum. Kinnison and hiz frendz had had dhare douts, but dha had not bene abel too fiand enny iyotaa ov evvidens dhat enny hiyer authorrity had evver ishude enny orderz too Thrale.

The Gra Lenzman nou nu, houwevver, dhat Thrale had nevver bene the top.

Nor wauz Caloanyaa. The informaishon on this tape, bi its paucity, its brevity, its incidental and cazhuwal nachure, made dhat fact startlingly clere. Thrale and Caloanyaa wer not in the same ladder. Niather gave the uther enny orderz--in fact, dha had cerprisingly littel too doo widh eche uther. While Thrale formerly directed the activvitesse ov a haaf-milleyon

or so plannets--and Caloanyaa aparrently stil did much the same--dhare feeldz ov acshon had not overlapt at enny point.

Hiz conqwest ov Thrale, haild so wiadly az such a triyumf, had got him preciasly noawhare in the solueshon ov the reyal problem. It mite be poscibel for him too conker Caloanyaa in a cimmilar fashon, but whaut wood

it ghet him? Nuthhing. Dhare wood be no moer leedz upword from Caloanyaa

dhan dhare had bene from Thrale. Hou in aul ov Noshabkemingz vareyegated

and iridescent helz wauz he gowing too werc this out?

A complete anallicis reveeld oanly wun poscibel method ov procejure. In wun ov the traanscripshonz--made twenty-wun yeerz ago and unceeld for the ferst time bi Beth, the liabrareyan-lin'gwist--wun ov the spekerz had menshond cazhuwaly dhat the nu Caloanyan Lenzmen ceemd too be doowing a

good job, and a cuppel ov the utherz had agrede widh him. Dhat wauz aul.

It mite, houwevver, be enuf; cins it made it hily probbabel dhat

Eddese Lenzman wauz in fact a Caloanyan, and cins even a Blac Lenzman

wood certainly no whare he got hiz Lenz. At the thaut ov trying too

vizsit the Boscoanyan eqwivvalent ov Areezhaa he flincht, but oanly

momentarily. Invaizhon, or even fizensal aproche, wood ov coers be

imposcibel; but enny plannet, even Areezhaa itcelf, cood be destroid. If

it cood be found, dhat plannet wood be destroid. He had too fiand

it--dhat wauz probbably whaut Mentor had bene waunting him too doo

aul the

time! But hou?

In hiz vareyous preveyous enterprizez against Boscoanyaa he had bene a gentelman ov lezhure, a doc-wauloper, a meteyor-miner, and menny uther thhingz. Nun ov hiz aulreddy establisht aleyacez wood fit on Caloanyaa; and beciadz, it wauz verry poor tecneke too repete himcelf, espeshaly at

this hi levvel ov oposishon. Too worant aperans on Caloanyaa at aul, he wood hav too be an opperator ov sum kiand--not too smaull, but not big enuf so dhat an addeqwate bacground cood not be cinthheciazd in not too long a time. A zwilnic--an acchuwal drug-runner widh a reyaly werth-while cargo--wood be the best bet.

Hiz coers ov acshon decided, the Gra Lenzman started making caulz. He ferst cauld Kit, widh whoome he held a long conversaishon. He cauld the captane ov hiz battelship-yaut, the *Dauntles*, and gave him menny and explisic orderz. He cauld Vice-Cowordinator Maitland, and vareyous uther

Unnatacht Lenzmen whoo had plenty ov wate in Narcottix, Public Relaishonz, Crimminal Investigaishon, Navigaishon, Hommicide, and menny uther

aparrently totaly unrelated establishments ov the Galactic Patrole.

Finaly, aafter ten sollid ourz ov miand-racking labor, he ate a tremendous mele and toald Clarissaa--he cauld her laast ov aul--dhat he wauz gowing too go too bed and slepe for wun whole G-P weke.

Dhus it wauz dhat the name ov Bradlo Thhiron began too obtroode itcelf abuv the threshoald ov Galactic conshousnes. For cevven or ate yeez dhat name had bene belo the middel ov the Patroalz long, blac list ov the waunted; nou it wauz wel up tooword the top. Dhat notoereyous zwilnic

and hiz villanous croo had bene chaist from wun cide ov the Ferst Gallaxy too the uther. For a fu munths it had bene supoazd dhat dha had bene blone out ov the eethher. Nou, houwevver, it wauz none deffiniatly dhat

he wauz opperating in the Ceccond Gallaxy, and he and evvery wun ov hiz cutthrothe gang--feendz whoo had blaasted thousandz ov liavz widh nocshous

waerz--wer waunted for piracy, drug-mun'ghering, and ferst-degry merder.

From the Patroalz standpoint, the hunting wauz verry poor. G-P planetograferz hav charted oonly a smaul percentage ov the plannets ov the Ceccond Gallaxy; and oonly a fu ov dhose ar pepeld bi the ad'herents ov Civilizaishon.

Dhaerfoer it reqwiard sum time, but finaly dhare came the message for which Kinnison wauz so impaishently wating. A Boscoanyan pritty-big-shot and drug-maaster naimd Harkelroi, on the plannet Flestin 2, citty, Nelto, cwordinaits so-and-so, fitted hiz specificaishonz too a "T"; a middel-ciazd opperator niather too cloce too nor too far awa from Caloanyaa. And Kinnison, havving long cins lernd the lin'gwaa francaa ov the rejon from a local meteyor-miner, wauz reddy too act.

Ferst, he made shure dhat the mity *Dauntles* wood be whare he waunted her when he neded her. Then, ceted at hiz speedsterz comunicator, he poot throo reggular channelz too caul too the Boscoanyan.

"Harkelroi? Ive got a proposishon ule be interested in. Whare and when doo u waunt too ce me?"

"Whaut maix u thhinc I waunt too ce u at aul?" a vois snarld, and the plate shode a groce, vishous face. "Whoo ar u, scum?"

"Whoo I am iz nobodese biznes--and if u doant clamp a baffel on dhat dam mouth ov yorz Ile cum doun dhare and shuv a glop-skinnerz gluv so far doun yor throte u can cit on it."

At the ferst defiyant werd the zwilnic began vizardsibly too swel; but in a matter ov cecondz he reccogniazd Bradlo Thhiron, and Kinnison nu dhat he did. Dhat pirate cood, and wood be expected too, tauc bac too enniboddy.

"I didnt reccognise u at ferst." Harkelroi aulmoast apolloiazd. "We mite doo sum biznes, at dhat. Whaut hav u got?"

"Cocane, herrowin, bentlam, hasheesh, niatrolabe--moast ennithhing a worm-bludded oxigen-breether wood waunt. The prise, dho, iz too killogramz ov clere-qwil thhiyonite."

"Thhiyonite--too killogramz!" The Flestanz ise gleemd. "Whare and hou did u ghet it?"

"I aasct the Lenzman on Trencu too make it for me, speshal, and he did."

"So u woant tauc, huu?" Kinnison cood ce Harkelroiz brane werc. Thhiron cood be made too tauc, later. "We can maby doo biznes at dhat. Cum doun here rite awa."

"Ile doo dhat, but liscen!" and the Lenzmanz ise bernd intoo the zwilnix. "I no whaut yor figguring on, and Ime telling u rite nou not too tri it if u waunt too kepe on livving. U no this aint the ferst plannet I evver landed on, and if uve got a brane u no dhat a lot ov smarter ghise dhan u ar hav tride munky biznes on me--and Ime stil here. So wauch yor step!"

The Lenzman landed, and made hiz wa too Harkelroiz inner office in whaut ceemd too be an ordinary enuf, if sumwhaut over-cise, sute ov lite space-armor. But it wauz no moer ordinary dhan it wauz lite. It wauz a pouwer-hous, bilt ov jureyum a qworter ov an inch thhic. Kinnison wauz not wauking in it; he wauz meerly the en'ginere ov a battery ov too-thouzand-horspouwer motorz. Unnaded, he cood not hav lifted wun leg ov dhat armor of the ground.

Az he had expected, evveriwun he encounterd woer a thaut-scene; nor wauz he cerpriazd at beying halted bi a blaring loud-speker in the haul,

cins the zwilnix cerch-beemz wer beying stopt foer fete awa from hiz armor.

"Hault! Cut yor screenz or weeyl blaast u whare u stand!"

"Yeh? Act yor age, Harkelroi. I toald u I had sumthhing up mi sleve beciadz mi arm, and I ment it. Iather I cum az I am or I flit sumwhare els, too doo biznes widh sumbody whoo waunts this stuf bad enuf too act like haaf a man. Smatter--afrade u aint got blaasterz enuf in dhare too handel me?"

This taunt bit depe, and the vizsitor wauz aloud too procede. Az he enterd the private office, houwevver, he sau dhat Harkelroiz hand wauz poizd nere a swich, whose closing wood signal a scoer or moer ov conceeld gunnerz too bern him doun. Dha supoazd dhat the stuf wauz iather on hiz person or in hiz speedster just outcide. Time wauz short.

"I abace micelf--dhats the formulaa u incist on, aint it?" Kinnison sneerd, widhout bending hiz hed a millimeter.

Harkelroiz fin'gher tucht the stud.

"*Dauntles!* Cum doun!" Kinnison snapt out the order.

Hand, stud, and a part ov the desc disapeerd in the flare ov Kinnisonz beme. Waul-poerts opend; projectorz and mashene rifelz erupted viabratoery and sollid destrucshon. Kinnison leept tooword the desc; the atac slowing down and stopping az he neerd and ceezd the Boscoanyan. Wun feers, short blaast rejuest the thaut-screne gennerator too blobz ov fuezd mettal. Harkelroi screemd too hiz gunnerz too rezhume fire, but befoer boollet or beme tooc the zwilnix life, Kinnison lernd whaut he moast waunted too no.

The ape did no sumthhing about Blac Lenzmen. He didnt no whare the Lensez came from, but he did no hou the men wer chosen. Moer, he nu a Lenzman personaly--wun Melasnicov, whoo had hiz office in Cadcil, on Caloanyaa 3 itcelf.

Kinnison ternd and ran--the alarm had bene ghivven and dha wer bringing up stuf too hevvy for even hiz armor too handel. But the *Dauntles* wauz landing aulreddy; smashing too rubbel five citty blox in the proces. She cetteld; and az the jureyum-clad Gra Lenzman began too fite hiz wa out ov Harkelroiz fortres, Major Peter vanBuskerk and a fool batalleyon ov Valereyanz, armd widh space-axe and cemmy-portabelz, began too hu and too blaast dhare wa in.

CHAPTER 15

THHIRON FOLLOSE A LEDE

Inch bi inch, foot bi foot, Kinnison faut hiz wa bac along the corps-litterd corridor. Under the ravvening foers ov the atackerz beemz hiz defencive screenz flaerd intoo pirotecnic splendor, but dha did not go doun. Feers-drivven metallic slugz spangd and whangd against the unyeelding jureyum ov hiz armor; but dhat, too, held. Jureyum iz increddiably mascive, unbelevably tuf, unnimadginably hard--against these qwaulitese and against the thousanz ov horspouwer driving dhat verritabel tanc and energising its screenz the zwilnix mite just az wel hav bene shining flashliats at him and throwing confetty. Hiz imejate oponents cood not tuch him, but the Boscoanyanz wer bringing up reservz dhat he didnt like a littel bit; mobile progetorz

widh whoose ennergese even dhose screenz cood not cope.

He had, houwevver, wun grate advantage over hiz ennemese. He had the cens

ov percepshon; dha did not. He cood ce them, but dha cood not ce him. Aul he had too doo wauz too kepe at leest wun opake waul betwene them

until he wauz cecuerly behiand the mobile screenz, pouwerd bi the schupendous genneratorz ov the *Dauntles*, which vanBuskerc and hiz Valereyanz wer so earnestly erging tooword him. If a doer wauz handy in the moment ov nede, he uezd it. If not he went throo a waul.

The Valereyanz wer fiting fureyously and wer cumming faast. Dhose too werdz, when aplide too memberz ov dhat race, mene sumthhing starcly increddibel too enniwun whoo haz nevver cene Valereyanz in acshon. Dha avverage sumthhing les dhan cevven fete in hite; sumthhing over foer hundred poundz in wate; and ar musceld, boand, and cinnude against a normal gravitaishonal foers ov aulmoast thre tiamz dhat ov Erth.

VanBuskerx wekest woreyor cood doo, in fool armor, a standing hi jump ov foertene fete against wun Telureyan gravvity; he cood handel himcelf and the thherty-pound monstrosity which wauz hiz space-ax widh a

blianding spede and a devvastating effishency litteraly apauling too contemplate. Dha ar the dedleyest hand-too-hand fiterz evver none; and, unbelevabel az it ma ceme too enny reyaly hily advaanst intelligens, dha did and stil doo faerly revvel in dhat form ov combat.

The Valereyan tide reecht the batling Gra Lenzman; cloazd around him.

"Hi... u littel... Telureyan... wort!" Major Peter vanBuskerc buimd this frendly thaut, a yel ov pure joi, in cadens widh the blöse ov hiz utterly iresistibel weppon. Hiz ridhm broke--hiz friatfool ax wauz stuc. Not even jureyum-inlade armor cood bar the

inword coers ov dhose fureyously-drivven beex; but sumtiamz it made it faerly difficult too ghet them out. The giyant poold, twisted--poot wun red-splasht boote on a batterd brestplate--bent hiz mity bac--heevd vishously. The weppon came fre widh a snap dhat wood hav broken enny ordinary manz armz, but the Valereyanz thaut roald smuidhly on: "Aint we got fun?"

"Ho, Bus, u big Valereyan baboone!" Kinnison thaut bac in kiand. "Thaut maby wede nede u and yor gang--thanx a milleyon. But bac nou, and faast!"

Auldho the Valereyanz did not like too retrete, aafter even a suxesfool operaishon, dha nu hou too doo it. Hens in a matter ov minnuets aul the cervivorz--and the loscez had bene cerprisingly smaul--wer bac incide the *Dauntles*.

"U pict up mi speedster, Franc." It wauz a staitment, not a qweschon, directed at the yung Lenzman citting at the "big boerd."

"Ov coers, cer. Dhare mascing faast, but widhout enny hostile demonstraishon, az u ced dha wood." He noddid unconcerndly at a plate, which shode the ski dotted widh worlike shaips.

"No maulerz?"

"Nun detectabel az yet, cer."

"QX. Oridginal orderz stand. At detecshon ov wun mauler, execute Operaishon Abel. Tel evveriboddy dhat while the anounsment ov Operaishon Abel wil poot me out ov controle instantly and automatticaly, until such anounsment I wil ghiv instrucshonz. Whaut dhaiyl be like I havnt

the foggheyest noashon. It dependz on whaut hiz nibz upstaerz deciadz too doo--its hiz moove next."

Az dho the laast frase wer a cu, a berst ov noiz ratteld from the speker--ov which oonly the werdz "Bradlo Thhiron" wer intelligibel too the un-Lenzd memberz ov the croo. Dhat name, houwevver, explaind whi dha wer not beying atact--yet. Caloanyaa had herd much ov dhat intraancigent and objurate pirate and ov the fabbulous prouwes ov hiz ship; and Kinnison wauz pritty shure dhat dha wer much moer interested in hiz ship dhan in him.

"I caant understand u!" The Gra Lenzman barct, in the polliglot lan'gwage he had so laitly lernd. "Tauc pidgin!"

"Verry wel. I ce dhat u ar indede Bradlo Thhiron, az we wer informd. Whaut doo u mene bi this outrajous atac? Surrender! Disarm yor men, take of dhare armor, and march them out ov yor vescel, or we wil blaast u az u li dhare--Vice-Admiral Mendoni speking!"

"I abace micelf." Kinnison-Thhiron did not snere--exactly--and he did incline hiz stubborn hed perhaps the cixteenth part ov an inch; but he made no moove too compli widh the orderz so sumarily ishude. Insted:

"Whaut the hel kiand ov plannet iz this, enniwa?" he demaanded, hotly. "I cum here too ce this lous Harkelroi becauz a frend ov mine telz me hese a big shot and interested enuf in mi line so we can doo a lot ov biznes. I ghiv the lug fare worning, too--tel him plane Ive bene around plenty and if he trise too ghiv me the werx Ile rub him out like a pencil marc. So whaut happenz? In spite ov whaut I just tel him he trise derty werc and I noc hel out ov him, which he certainly haz got cumming too him. Then u and yor floc ov littel tin boats cum barging in like Ide busted a lau or sumthhing. Whoo doo u thhinc u ar, enniwa? Whaut licens u got too stic yor beke intoo private biznes?"

"Aa, I had not herd dhat verzhon." Vizhon came on; the face uppon the plate wauz tippicaly Caloanyan--blu, coald, croowel, and kene. "Harkelroi wauz wornd, u sa? Deffiniatly?"

"Plenty deffiniatly. Aasc enny ov the zwilnix in dhat private office ov hiz. Dhare moastly alive and dha aul must ov herd it."

The plate fogd, the speker agane gave out gibberish. The Lenzman nu, houwevver, dhat the comaander ov the foercez abuv them wauz indede qweschoning the ded zwilnix gardz. Dha nu dhat Kinnisonz stoery wauz beyng corobborated in fool.

"U interest me." The Boscoanyanz lan'gwage agane became intelligibel too the groope at larj. "We wil forghet Harkelroi--schupiddity bringz its one reword and the propperty dammage iz ov no prezsent concern. From whaut I hav bene abel too lern ov u, u hav nevver belongd too dhat so-cauld Civilizaishon. I no for a fact dhat u ar not, and nevver hav bene, wun ov us. Hou hav u bene abel too cervive? And whi doo u werc alone?"

"Hou iz esy enuf--bi keping wun jump ahed ov the uther ghi, like I did widh yor pal here, and bi beyng smart enuf too hav good en'gineerz poot intoo mi ship evverithhing dhat enny uther wun evver had and evverithhing dha cood dreme up beciadz. Az too whi, dhats cimpel, too. I doant trust nobody. If nobody nose whaut Ime gowing too doo, nobodese gowing too stic a nife intoo me when I aint loocking--ce? So far, its pade of big. Ime stil around and stil helthhy. Them dhat trusted uther ghise aint."

"I ce. Croode, but graffic. The moer I studdy u, the moer convinst I becum dhat u make a werth-while adishon too our foers..."

"No dele, Mendoni," Kinnison interupted, shaking hiz unkempt hed pozsitiavly. "I nevver yet tooc no orderz from no dam bos, and I aint gowing too."

"U misunderstand me, Thhiron." The zwilnic wauz qweerly paishent and much too forbaring. Kinnisonz insulting omishon ov hiz titel shood hav tucht him of like a rocket. "I wauz not thhinking ov u in enny minor capascity, but az an alli. An entiarly independent alli, werking widh us in certane muchuwaly advaantajous undertakingz."

"Such az?" Kinnison aloud himcelf too betra hiz ferst cine ov interest. "U ma be tauking cens nou, bruther, but whauts in it for me? Beleve me, dhaerz got too be plenty."

"Dhare wil be plenty. Widh the abillity u hav aulreddy shone, and widh our vaast rezoercez bac ov u, u wil take moer evvery weke dhan u hav bene taking in a yere."

"Yeh? Pepel like u just luv too doo thhingz like dhat for pepel like me. Whaut doo *u* figgure on ghetting out ov it?" Kinnison wunderd, and Lenzd a sharp thaut too hiz juenyor at the boerd.

"On yor tose, Franc. Hese stauling for sumthhing, and Ime betting its maulerz."

"Nun detectabel yet, cer."

"We stand too gane, ov coers," the pirate admitted, smuidhly. "For instans, dhare ar certane fechuerz ov yor vescel which mite--just poscibly, u wil observ, and speking oonly too menshon an exaampel--be ov interest too our naval desinerz. Aulso, we hav herd dhat u hav an

unnuezhuwaly hot battery ov primary beemz. U mite tel me about sum ov dhose thhingz nou; or at leest re-focus yor plate so dhat I can ce sumthhing beciadz yor not unnatractive face."

"I mite not, too. Whaut Ive got here iz mi one biznes, and stase mine."

"Iz dhat whaut we ar too expect from u in the wa ov cowoperaishon?" The comaanderz vois wauz stil lo and levvel, but nou boer a chil ov dedly mennace.

"Cowoperaishon, hel!" The cutthrothe chefe wauz unnimprest. "Ile maby tel u a thhing or too--ete out ov yor dish--aafter I ghet good and soald on yor proposishon, whautevver it iz, but not wun dam cecond sooner!"

The comaander glaerd. "I wery ov this. U probbably ar not werth the trubbel, aafter aul. I mite az wel blaast u out nou az later. U no dhat I can, ov coers, az wel az I doo."

"Doo I?" Kinnison did snere, this time. "Act yor age, pal. Az I toald dhat foole Harkelroi, this aint the ferst plannet I evver sat down on, and it woant be the laast. And doant caul no maulerz," az the Boscoanyan officerz hand muivd aulmoast imperceptibly tooword a ro ov buttonz. "If u doo, I start blaasting az soone az we spot wun on our plaits, and dhare fool out rite nou."

"U wood start blaasting?" The zwilnix cerprise wauz plane, but the hand stopt its moashon.

"Yeh--me. Them heeps u got up dhare doant bother me a bit, but maulerz I caant handel, and I aint afrade too tel u so becauz u probbably no it aulreddy. I caant stop u from cauling em, if u waunt too, but bend boath eerz too this--I can out-run em and Ile garanty

dhat u personally woant be alive too ce me run. Whi? Becauz yor ship wil be the ferst wun Ile whif on the wa out. And if the rest ov yor junkerz stic around long enuf too tri too stop me Ile whif twenty-five or thherty moer befoer yor maulerz ghet cloce enuf so Ile hav too doo a flit. Nou, if yor brainz ar made out ov the same kiand ov thhic, blu mud az Harkelroiz, start sumthhing!"

This wauz an impas. Kinnison nu whaut he waunted the uther too doo, but he cood not ghiv him a sugeschon, or even a hint, widhout tipping hiz hand. The officer, qwite evvidently, wauz in a qwandary. He did not waunt too open fire uppon this tremendous, this fabbulous ship. Even if he cood destroi it, such a coers wood be unthhincabel--unles, indede, the verry act ov destrucshon wood brand az fauls roomor the tailz ov invincibillity and invulnerabillity which had herralded its cumming, and dhus wood opperate in hiz favor at the coert-marshal so shure too be cauld. He wauz verry much afrade, houwevver, dhat dhose roomorz wer not fauls--a vu which wauz supoerted verry strongly boath bi Thhironz undisghiazd contempt for the Boscoanyan worships threttening him and bi hiz eeqwaly franc declaraishon ov hiz intenshon too avoid en'gaijment widh enny craaft ov reyaly supereyor foers. Finaly, houwevver, the Boscoanyan perceevd wun thhing dhat did not qwite fit.

"If u ar az good az u clame too be, whi arnt u blaasting rite nou?" he aasct, skepticaly.

"Becauz I doant *waunt* too, dhats whi. Use yor hed, pal." This wauz better. Mendoni had shifted the conversaishon intoo a line uppon which the

Lenzman cood doo a bit ov stering. "I had too leve the Ferst Gallaxy becauz it got too hot for me, and I got no conecshonz at aul, yet, here in the Ceccond. U foax nede certane kiandz ov stuf dhat Ive got and I nede uther kiandz, dhat uve got. So we cood doo a nice biznes,

if u waunted too. Like I toald u, dhats whi I cum too ce Harkelroi. Ide like too doo biznes widh sum ov u pepel, but I just got bit pritty bad, and Ive got too hav sum kiand ov sollid garanty dhat u mene biznes, and no munky biznes, befoer I take a chaans agane. Ce?"

"I ce. The ideyaa iz good, but the execueshon ma proove difficult. I cood ghiv u mi werd, which I ashure u haz nevver bene broken."

"Doant make me laaf," Kinnison snorted. "Wood u take mine?"

"The cace iz different. I wood not. Yor point, houwevver, iz wel taken. Hou about the protecshon ov a hi coert ov lau? I wil bring u an unnaulterabel rit from enny coert u sa."

"Uu-uu," the Gra Lenzman dicented. "Dhare nevver wauz no coert yet dhat didnt take orderz from the big shots whoo kepe the fat cats fat, and lauyerz ar the crookedest dam croox in the univers. Ule hav too doo better dhan dhat, pal."

"Wel, then, hou about a Lenzman? U no about Lenzmen, doant u?"

"A Lenzman!" Kinnison gaaspt. He shooc hiz hed viyolently. "Ar u compleetly nuts, or doo u thhinc I am? I *doo* no Lenzmen, cully--a Lenzman chaist me from Alaskan too Vandemar wuns, and if I hadnt had a doce ov helz one luc hede ov got me. Lenzmen chaist me out ov the Ferst Gallaxy--whi the hel els doo u thhinc Ime here? Use yor brane, mister; use yor brane!"

"Yor thhinking ov Civilizaishonz Lenzmen; particcularly ov Gra Lenzmen." Mendoni wauz enjoyiing Thhironz pashon. "Ourz ar different--entiarly different. Dha hav az much pouwer, or moer, but doant use it the same wa. Dha werc widh us rite along. In fact,

dhave bene bumping Gra Lenzmen of rite and left laitley."

"U mene he cood open up, for instans, yor miand and mine, so we cood ce the uther ghi wauznt figguring on running in no stact dex? And hede sort ov refery this biznes we got on the fire? Doo u no wun yorcelf, personaly?"

"He cood, and wood, doo aul dhat. Yes, I no wun personaly. Hiz name iz Melasnicov, and hiz office iz on Thre, just a short flit from here. He ma not be dhare at the moment, but heeYL cum in if I caul. Hou about it--shal I caul him nou?"

"Doant werc up a swet. Soundz like it mite werc, if we can figgure the aproche. I doant supose u and him wood cum out too me in space?"

"Hardly. U woodnt expect us too, wood u?"

"It woodnt be verry brite ov u too. And cins I waunt too doo biznes, I ghes I got too mete u part wa. Houd this be? U pool yor ships out ov rainj. Mi ship taix staishon rite over yor Lenzmanz office. I go down in mi speedster, like I did here, and go incide too mete him and u. I ware mi armor--and when I sa its reyal armor I aint just snapping mi chopperz, niather."

"I can ce oanly wun slite flau." The Boscoanyan wauz reyalY trying too werc out a muchuwaly satisfactory solueshon. "The Lenzman wil open our miandz too u in proofe, houwevver, dhat we wil hav no intenshon ov bringing up our maulerz or uther hevvy stuf while were in conferens."

"Rite then ule fiand out u hadnt better, too." Kinnison grind woolfishly.

"Whaut doo u mene?" Mendoni demaanded.

"Ive got enuf super-atomic bomz aboard too blo this plannet too hellan'gon and the boizl drop em aul the cecond u make a qwere moove. Ive got too take a littel chaans too start doowing biznes, but its a dam smaul wun, cauz if I go u go too, pal. U and yor Lenzman and yor flete and evverithhing alive on yor whole dam plannet. And yor boscez stil woant ghet enny dope on whaut maix this ship ov mine tic the wa she duz. So Ime betting u woant make dhat kiand ov a swaup."

"I certainly wood not." Hard az he wauz, Mendoni wauz shaken. "Yor sugested method ov procejure iz satisfactory."

"QX. Ar u reddy too flit?"

"We ar reddy."

"Caul yor Lenzman, then, and lede the wa. Boiz, take her upstaerz!"

CHAPTER 16

RED LENZMAN IN GRA

Carren Kinnison wauz wurrede. She, whoo had aulwase bene so shure ov hercelf, had for weex bene consmous ov a gradjuwaly increcing--whaut wauz it, enniwa? Not exactly a los ov controle... a *chainj*... a sumthhing dhat mannifested itcelf in increcingly numerous fits ov censles--sheerly ideyottic--stubborn'nes. And aulwase and oonly it wauz directed at--ov aul the pepel in the univers!--her bruther. She got along widh her cisterz perfectly; dhare tiny tifs baerly rippeld the

cerface ov enny ov dhare miandz. But enny time her paath ov acshon crost Kits, it ceemd, the profoundest depths ov her beying flaerd intoo oposishon like exploding juwodec. Wers dhan censles and ideyottic, it wauz inexpliccabel, for the feling which the Five had for eche uther wauz much deper dhan dhat felt bi ordinary brutherz and cisterz.

She didnt waunt too fite widh Kit. She *liact* the ghi! She liact too fele hiz miand on rapor widh herz, just az she liact too daans widh him; dhare boddese az compleetly in acord az wer dhare miandz. No chainj ov step or moashon, houwevver suddenly conceevd and executed or houwevver bizar, had evver suxeded in taking the uther bi cerprise or in maaring bi a millimeter the effortles precizhon ov dhare performans. She cood doo thhingz widh Kit dhat wood ti enny uther man intoo nots and brake haaf hiz boanz. Aul uther men wer lumps. Kit wauz so far ahed ov enny uther man in existens dhat dhare wauz cimply no comparrison. If she wer Kit she wood ghiv her a gowing-over dhat wood... or cood even he...

At the thaut she ternd coald incide. He cood not. Even Kit, widh aul hiz tremendous pouwer, wood hit dhat sollid waul and bouns. Wel, dhare wauz wun--not a man, but an entity--whoo cood. He mite kil her, but even dhat wood be better dhan too alou the continnude groath within her miand ov this monstrosity which she cood niather controle nor understand.

Whare wauz she, and whare wauz Lirane, and whare wauz Areezhaa? Good--not too far of line. She wood stop of at Areezhaa on roote.

She did so, and made her wa too Mentorz office on the hospital groundz. She toald her stoery.

"Fiting widh Kit wauz bad enuf," she concluded, "but when I start defying *u*, Mentor, its hi time dhat sumthhing wauz dun about it. Whi didnt Kit evver noc me intoo a logaridhmic spiral? Whi didnt u werc me over? U cauld Kit in, widh the distinct implicaishon dhat he neded moer ejucaishon--whi didnt u pool me in here, too, and pound sum cens intoo me?"

"Concerning *u*, Cristofer had deffinite instrucshonz, which he obade. I did not tuch *u* for the same rezon dhat I did not order *u* too cum too me; niather coers wood hav bene ov enny uce. Yor miand, dauter Carren, iz uneke. Wun ov its prime caracteristix--the wun, in fact, which iz too make *u* an aul-important player in the draamaa which iz too cum--iz a yeeldlesnes verry neerly absolute. Yor miand mite, just concevably, be broken; but it canot be cowerst bi enny imadginabel external foers, houwevver aplide. Dhus it wauz inevvitabel from the ferst dhat nuthhing cood be dun about the untooword manifestaishonz ov this caracteristic until *u* yorcelf shood reccognise the fact dhat yor devellopment wauz not complete. It wood be idel for me too sa dhat juring adolescens *u* hav not bene moer dhan a trifel tryying. I wauz not speking iadly when I ced dhat the devellopment ov *u* Five haz bene a tremendous taasc. It iz widh eeqwal cereyousnes, houwevver, dhat I nou tel *u* dhat the reword iz comenshurate widh the magnichude ov the undertaking. It iz imposcibel too expres the satisfacshon I fele--the foolfilment, the compleeshon, the justificaishon--az *u* children cum, wun bi wun, eche in hiz propper time, for final instrucshon."

"O--*u* mene, then, dhat dhaerz nuthhing reyaly the matter widh me?"
Hard az she wauz, Carren trembeld az her aufool tenshon eezd. "Dhat I wauz *supoast* too act dhat wa? And I can tel Kit, rite awa?"

"No nede. Yor bruther haz none dhat it wauz a paacing fase; he shal

no verry shortly dhat it haz paast. It iz not dhat u wer supposed too act az u acted. U cood not help it. Nor cood yor bruther, nor I. From nou on, houwevver, u shal be compleetly the mistres ov yor one miand. Cum foolly, dauter Carren, intoo mine."

She did so, and in a matter ov time her "formal ejucaishon" wauz complete.

"Dhare iz wun thhing dhat I doant qwite understand..." she began, just befoer she boerded her speedster.

"Concidder it, and I am shure dhat u wil," Mentor ashuerd her. "Explane it, whautevver it iz, too me."

"QX--Ile tri. Its about Fosten and dad." Carren codgitated. "Fosten wauz, ov coers, Garlande--yor making dad beleve him too be an insane Areezhan wauz a maasterpece. I ce, ov coers, hou u did dhat--principaly bi making Fostenz rele shape exactly like the wun he sau ov u on Areezhaa. But hiz fizensical acshonz az Fosten..."

"Go on, dauter. I am shure dhat yor vizhuwalizaishon wil be sound."

"While acting az Fosten he had too act az a Thraleyen wood hav acted," she decided widh a rush. "He wauz waucht evveriwheare he went, and nu it. Too displa hiz reyal pouwer wood hav bene dizaastrous. Just like u Areezhanz, dha hav too follo the pattern too avoid cetting up an infereyorrity complex dhat wood roowin evverithhing for them. Garlandz acshonz az Fosten, then, wer constrained. Just az dha wer when he wauz Gra Roger, so long ago--exept dhat then he did make a point ov unhuman lon'gevvy, delibberaitly too poot an insollubel problem up too Ferst

Lenzman Samz and hiz men. Just az u--u *must* hav... u *did* coche Vergil Samz, Mentor, and sum ov u Areezhanz wer dhare, az men!"

"We wer. We livd and raut az men and ceemd too di az men."

"But u wernt Vergil Samz, plese!" Carren aulmoast begd. "Not dhat it wood brake me if u wer, but Ide much raather u hadnt bene."

"No, nun ov us wauz Samz," Mentor ashuerd her. "Nor Cleevland, nor Roadboosh, nor Costigan, nor even Cleyo Marzden. We werct widh--coched, az u expres it--dhose personz and uthertz from time too time in certane smaul matterz, but we wer at no time integral widh enny ov them. Wun ov us wauz, houwevver, Nelz Berghenhome. The fool inershaales space-drive became nescesary at dhat time, and it wood hav bene poor tecneke too hav had iather Roadboosh or Cleevland devellop so suddenly the abillity too perfect the device az Berghenhome did perfect it."

"QX. Berghenhome iznt important--he wauz just an inventor. Too ghet bac too the subject ov Fosten: when he wauz dhare on the flagship widh dad, and in posishon too thro hiz fool wate around, it wauz too late--u Areezhanz wer on the job. Ule hav too take it from dhare, dho; Ime out beyond mi depth."

"Becauz u lac dataa. In dhose laast minnuets Garlane nu dhat Kimbal Kinnison wauz niather alone nor unprotected. He cauld for help, but help did not cum. He wauz isolated; no wun ov hiz fellose receevd hiz caul. Nor cood he escape from the form ov flesh he wauz then energising. I micelf sau too dhat." Carren had nevver befoer felt the Areezhan displa emoashon, but hiz thaut wauz grim and coald. "From dhat form, which yor faather nevver did perceve, Garlane ov Eddor paast intoo the next plane ov existens."

Carren shivverd. "It cervd him rite... Dhat cleerz evverithhing up, I thhinc. But ar u *shure*, Mentor"--wistfooly--"dhat u caant, or

raather shoodnt, teche me enny moer dhan u hav? Its... I fele...
wel, incompetent iz pootting it verry mialdly indede."

"Too a miand ov such pouwer and scope az yorz, in its prezsent state ov devellopment, such a feling iz inevvitabel. Nor can enniwun exept yorcelf doo ennithhing about it. Coald cumfort, perhaps, but it iz the starc truith dhat from nou on yor devellopment iz yor one taasc. Yorz alone. Az I hav aulreddy toald Cristofer and Cathrin, and wil verry shortly tel Camillaa and Constans, u hav had yor laast Areezhan treetment. I wil be on caul too enny ov u at enny instant ov enny da, too ade u or too ghide u or too re-enfors u at nede; but ov formal instrucshon dhare can be no moer."

Carren left Areezhaa and drove for Lirane, her thauts in a termoil. The time wauz too short bi far; she delibberaitly cut her vescelz spede and tooc a long detoor so dhat the vaast and cayottic liabrery ov her miand cood be rejuest too sum cemblans ov order befoer she landed.

She reecht Lirane 2, and dhare, agane too aul outword ceming a happy, caerfry gherl, she hugd her muther rapchurously.

"Yor the moast *wunderfool* thhing, mumz!" Carren exclaimd. "Its cimply marvelous, ceying u agane in the flesh..."

"Nou whi bring *dhat* up?" Clarissaa had--just baerly--becum acustomd too werking undraipt, in the Lirainyan fashon.

"I didnt mene it dhat wa at aul, and u no I didnt," Ca snickerd. "Shame on u--fishing for compliments, and at yor age, too!" Ignoering the oalder woommanz atempt at protest she went on: "Aul kidding acide, mumz, yor a mity smart-loocking hunc ov woomman. I aproove ov u exedingly much. In fact, were a kene pare and I like boath ov us. Ive got wun advaantage over u, ov coers, in dhat I nevver

did care whether I had enny cloadhz on or not. Hou ar u doowing?"

"Not so wel--ov coers, dho, I havnt bene here verry long."
Forghetting her undrestnes, Clarissaa fround. "I havnt found Hellen,
and I havnt found out yet whi she retiard. I caant qwite decide
whether too poot presure on nou, or wate a while lon'gher. Ladoraa, the
nu
Elder Person, iz... dhat iz, I doant no... O, here she cumz
nou. Ime glad--I waunt u too mete her."

If Ladoraa wauz glad too ce Carren, houwevver, she did not sho it. Insted,
for an inapreeshabel instant ov time which wauz nevvertheles sufishent
for the aqwiarment ov much informaishon, eche studded the uther. Like
Hellen, the former qwene, Ladoraa wauz taul, butifooly propoershend,
flaules ov skin and fechure, hard and fine. But so, and in moast
respects even moer so, too Ladoraaz astonishment and qwicly-mounting
rauth, wauz this pinc-tand strain'ger. Practically instantainously,
dhaerfoer, the Lirainyan herld a vishous mental bolt; oonly too ghet the
cerprise ov her life.

She hadnt found out yet whaut this strainj nere-person, Clarissaa ov Sol
3, had in the wa ov eqwipment, but from the meke wa she acted, it
coodnt be much. So Clarissaaz ofspring, yun'gher and les
expereyenst, wood be esy enuf pra.

But Ladoraaz bolt, the hevveyest she cood cend, did not peers even the
outermoast frin'gez ov her intended victimz defencez, and so vishous
wauz
the aulmoast cimultainyous counterthrust dhat it went throo the
Lirainyanz hard-held bloc in nuthhing flat. Incide her brane it raut
such hellishly poinyant punnishment dhat the maitreyarc, forghetting
evverithhing, tride oonly and madly too screme. She cood not. She cood
not

moove a muscel ov her face or ov her boddy. She cood not even faul. And the wun brefe glimps she had intoo the strain'gerz miand shode it too be such a blase ov incandescent fury dhat she, whoo had nevver feerd in the slitest enny livving crechure, nu nou in fool mezhure whaut fere wauz.

"Ide like too ghiv dhat alejd brane ov yorz a good gowing over, just for fun." Carren foerst her emoashon too subcide too a mere ceething rage, and Ladoraa waucht her doo it. "But cins this whole stinking plannet iz mi mutherz dish, not mine, shede blaast me too a cinder--shese dun it befoer--if I dip in." She cuild stil moer--vizsibly. "At dhat, I doant supose yor too bad an eg, in yor one poizonous wa--u just doant no enny better. So maby Ide better worn u, u poor foole, cins u havnt got cens enuf too ce it, dhat yor playing widh an atommic vortex when u poosh her around like uve bene doowing. Just a verry littel moer ov it and sheeYL ghet mad, like I did a cecond ago exept moer so, and ule wish too Clono ude nevver bene born. She woant make a cine until she blose her top, but Ime telling u shese az much harder and tuffer dhan I am az she iz oalder, and whaut she duz too pepel she ghets mad at I woodnt waunt too wauch happen agane, even too a snake. SheeYL pic u up, kerl u intoo a cerkel, pool of yor armz, shuv yor fete doun yor throte, and role u acros dhat feeld dhare like a hoope. Aafter dhat I doant no whaut sheeYL doo--dependz on hou much preshure she devellops befoer she gose of. Wun thhing, dho; shese aulwase sorry aafterwordz. Whi, she even atendz the funeralz, sumtiamz, and incists on paying aul the expencez!"

Widh which outrageous thaut she kist Clarissaa an enthuseyaastic goodbi. "Toald u I coodnt sta a minnute--got too doo a flit--ce a man about a dog, u no--came a milleyon parcx too sqwese u, mumz, but it wauz werth it--clere eethher!"

She wauz gon, and it wauz a juwy-ide and rapt muther, not a Lenzman, whoo ternd too the stil compleetly disorganiazd Lirainyan. Clarissaa had

perceevd nuthhing whaut evver ov whaut had happend; Carren had verry caerfooly cene too dhat.

"Mi dauter," Clarissaa muezd, az much too hercelf az too Ladoraa. "Wun ov foer. The foer derest, finest, swetest gherlz dhat evver livd. I often wunder hou a woomman ov mi limitaishonz, ov mi faults, cood poscibly hav boern such children."

And Ladoraa ov Lirane, humorles and litteral az aul Lirainyanz ar, tooc dhose thauts at dhare face vally and correlated dhare evvery conotaishon and implicaishon widh whaut she hercelf had perceevd in dhat

"dere, swete" dauterz miand; widh whaut dhat dauter had dun and had ced. The nachure and qwaulity ov this hellish nere-personz "limitaishonz" and "faults" became emminently clere; and az she perceevd whaut she thaut wauz the truth, the Lirainyan litteraly crinjd.

"Az u no, I hav bene in dout az too whether or not too supoert u actiavly, az u wish," Ladoraa offerd, az the too wauct across the feeld, tooword the line ov ground-carz. "On the wun hand, the certainty dhat the saifty, and perhaps the verry existens, ov mi race wil be at hazzard. On the uther, the pocibillity dhat u ar rite in saying dhat the cichuwaishon wil continnu too detereyorate if we doo nuthhing. The decizhon haz not bene an esy wun too make." Ladoraa wauz no lon'gher aloofe.

She wauz just plane scaerd. She had bene tauking against time, and hoping dhat the help for which she had long cins cauld wood arive in time.

"I hav tucht oonly the outer cerface ov yor miand. Wil u alou me, widhout offens, too test its inner qwaulity befoer deciding deffiniatly?" In the instant ov aasking, Ladoraa cent out a fool-drivven probe.

"I wil not." Ladoraaz beme struc a barreyer which ceemd too her exactly like Carrenz. Nun ov her race had devellopt ennithhing like it. She had

nevver cene... yes, she had, too--yeerz ago, when she wauz a chiald, dhat time in the acembly haul--dhat utterly hated male, Kinnison ov Tellus! Tellus--Sol 3! Clarissaa ov Sol 3, then, wauznt a nere-person at aul, but a *female*--Kinnisonz kiand ov female--and a crechure whoo wauz fizensicaly a person, but mentaly dhat inconceivable monstrosity, a *female*, mite be ennithing and mite doo *ennithhing*! Ladoraa temporiazd.

"Excuse me; I did not mene too introode against yor wil," she apolloziagd, smuidhly enuf. "Cins yor attichude maix it extreemly difficult for me too cowopperate widh u, I can make no prommicez az yet. Whaut iz it dhat u wish too no ferst?"

"I wish too intervü yor predecessor, the person we cauld Hellen." Strainjly refresht, in a cens galvaniazd bi the brefe personal vizsit widh her dinammic dauter, it wauz no lon'gher Mrs. Kimbal Kinnison whoo faist the Lirainyan qwene. Insted, it wauz the Red Lenzman; a fool-pouwerd Cecond-Stage Lenzman whoo had finaly decided dhat, cins apeelz too rezon, lodgic, and common cens had no perceptibel efect uppon this stif-nect nere-woomman, the time had cum too bare down. "Ferthermoer, I intend too intervü her nou, and not at sum such indeffinite fuchure time az yor whim ma ce fit too alou."

Ladoraa cent out a final desperate caul for help and musterd her evvery foers against the interloper. Faast and strong az her miand wauz, houwevver, the Red Lenzmanz wauz faaster and stron'gher. The Lirainyanz defencive strucchure wauz rect in the instant ov its bilding, the franticaly strugling miand wauz taken over in toto. Help ariavd--ueslesly; cins auldho Clarissaaz nuly enlarjd miand had not bene poot too worlike uce, it wauz brilleyantly kene and ultimaitly shure. Nor, in time ov stres, did the softer cide ov her nachure opperate too sta miand or hand.

While carrying Lenzmanz Lode she contained no more of ruth for Civilizaishonz fose dhan did abizmary fridgid Nadrec himself.

Hed throne back, taut and tens, goal-flect tauny ise flashing, she stood dhare for a moment and tooc on her sheeld evverithhing dhose belligerent personz cood cend. Moer, she reternd it in kiand, plus; and under dhose withering blaasts ov foers moer dhan wun ov her atackerz dide. Then, stil hoalding her bloc, she and her unwilling captive raist across the feeld tooword the line ov peculeyar littel fabric-and-wire masheenz dhat wer stil the laast werd in Lirainyan are-traanspoert.

Clarissaa nu dhat the Lirainyanz had no moddern ofensive or defencive wepponz. Dha did, houwever, hav sum faerly good artillery at the aeroport; and she hoapt fervently az she ran dhat she cood poot out gets enuf too spoil ame and fusing--luckily, dha hadnt devellopt proximimity fusez yet!--ov whatevver ac-ac dha cood bring too bare on her crate juring the fu minnuets she wood hav too use it. Forchunaitly, dhare wauz no artillery at the smaull, unimportant aeroport on which her speedster la.

"Here we ar. Weeyl take this tripe--its the faastest thhing here!"

Clarissaa cood opperate the triplane, ov coers--enny nollej or abillity dhat Ladoraa had evver had wauz nou and permanently the Lenzmanz.

She started the qwere en'gianz; and az the pouwerfool littel plane screemd intoo the are, hanging from its props, she devoted whaut ov her miand she cood spare too the problem ov anty-aercraaft fire. She cood not handel aul the gun-croose; but she cood and did controle the moast important memberz ov moast ov them. Dhus, neerly aul the shelz iather went wide or exploded too soone. Cins she nu evvery point ov ame ov the fu gunz widh whoose operaishonz she cood not interfere, she avoided dhare miscialz bi not beying at enny wun ov dhose points at the predetermiand instant ov funcshoning.

Dhus plane and pascen'gerz escaipt unscracht; and in a matter ov minnuets ariavd at dhare destinaishon. The Lirainyanz dhare had bene alerted, ov coers; but dha wer fu in number and dha had not bene informd dhat it wood take fizensal foers, not mental, too kepe dhat red-hedded sudo-person from boerding her outlandish ship ov space.

In a fu moer minnuets, then, Clarissaa and her captive wer hi in the strattosfere. Clarissaa sat Ladoraa doun--hard--in a cete and faacend the saifty straps.

"Sta in dhat cete and kepe yor thauts too yorcelf," she directed, kertly. "If u doant, ule nevver agane iather moove or thhinc in this life." She opend a sliding doer, poot on a cuppel ov wisps ov Manarcan glamoret, reecht for a dres, and pauzd. Ise glowing, she gaizd hun'grily at a sute ov plane gra lether; a coschume which she had not az yet so much az tride on. Shood she ware it, or not?

She cood werc efishmently--at cervice maximum, reyaly--in ordinary cloadhz. Ditto, auldho she didnt like too, unclodhd. In Gra, dho, she cood hit absolute max if she had too. Nor had dhare evver bene enny qweschon ov rite involvd; the oanly barreyer had bene her one hiper-cencitivvity.

For over twenty yeerz she hercelf had bene the oanly wun too deni her rite. Whaut licens, she wauz woant too aasc, did an imitaishon or cinthhettic or ammater or "Red" Lenzman hav too ware the garb which ment so much too so menny? Over dhose yeerz, houwevver, it had becum increcingly wiadly none dhat herz wauz wun ov the five finest and moast pouwerfool miandz in the entire Gra Lejon; and when Cowordinator Kinnison recauld her too active juty in Unnatacht status, dhat Lejon paast bi unannimous vote a

rezolueshon aasking her too join them in Gra. Cikix aul, dha nu dhat nuthhing les wood sufice; dhat if dhare wauz enny trace ov resentment or ov antagonizm or ov felingz dhat she did not intrinsicaly belong, she wood nevver don the uniform which evvery ad'herent ov Civilizaishon so reveerd and for which, depe doun, she had aulwase so intensly longd. The Lejon had cent her these Grase. Kit had convinst her dhat she did acchuwaly deserv them.

She reyaly shood ware them. She wood.

She poot them on, thrilling too the coer az she did so, and made the qwic littel geschure she had cene Kim make so menny tiamz. Gra Cele. No wun, houwevver acustomd, haz evver dond or evver wil don unmuivd the plane gra lether ov the Unnatacht Lenzman ov the Galactic Patrole.

Handz on hips, she studdede hercelf minuetly and aproovingly, boath in the mirror and bi meenz ov her vaastly moer efishent cens ov percepshon. She riggheld a littel, and ghiggheld inwordly az she rememberd deploering az "exibishonistic" this same conduct in her oaldest dauter.

The Grase fitted her perfectly. A bit reveling, perhaps, but her figgure wauz stil good--verry good, az a matter ov fact. Not a spec ov dert or tarnish. Her DeLammeterz wer foolly charjd. Her tremendous Lenz flaimd brilleyantly uppon her rist. She looct--and felt--reddy. She cood hit absolute max in a fracshon ov a miacro-cecond. If she had too ghet reyaly tuf, she wood. She cent out a caul.

"Hellen ov Lirane! I no dhave got u around here sumwhare, and if enny ov yor gardz tri too screne out *this* thaut Ile bern dhare brainz out. Clarissaa ov Sol 3 caulng. Cum in, Hellen!"

"Clarissaa!" This time dhare wauz no interferens. A werld ov welcum wauz

in evvery nuwaans ov the thaut. "Whare ar u?"

"Hi up, at..." Clarissaa gave her posishon. "Ime in mi speedster, so can ghet too enniwhare on the plannet in minnuets. Moer important, whare ar u? And whi?"

"In jale, in mi one apartment." Qweenz shood hav pallacez, but Lirainz rooler did not. Evverithhing wauz strictly utilitareyan. "The touwer on the corner, remember? On the top floer? Whi iz too long too go intoo nou--Ide better tel u az much az poscibel ov whaut u shood no, while dhaerz stil time."

"Time? Ar u in dain'ger?"

"Yes. Ladoraa wood hav kild me long ago if it had daerd. Mi following grose les daly, the Boscoanyanz stron'gher. The gardz hav aulreddy summond help. Dha ar cumming nou, too take me."

"Dhats whaut *dha* thhinc!" Clarissaa had aulreddy reecht the cene. She had exactly the velosity she waunted. She slaanted dounword in a screming dive. "Can u tel whether dhare limbering up enny ac-ac around dhare?"

"I doant beleve so--I doant fele enny such thauts."

"QX. Ghet awa from the windo." If dha hadnt started aulreddy dha nevver wood; the Red Lenzman wauz dedly shure ov dhat.

She came within rainj--her rainj--ov the gunz. She wauz in time. Cevveral gunnerz wer running tooword dhare staishonz. Nun ov them ariavd. The speedster levveld of and stuc its hard, sharp nose intoo and aulmoast

thru the indicated roome; re-enforst concrete, stele barz, and glaas shouwering abraud az it did so. The poert snapt open. Az Hellen leept in, Clarissaa practicaly throo Ladoraa out.

"Bring Ladoraa bac!" Hellen demaanded. "I shal hav its life!"

"Nix!" Clarissaa snapt. "I no evverithhing she duz. Weve uther fish too fri, mi dere."

The mascive doer clangd shut. The speedster darted forword, strate throo the sollid concrete waul. Clarissaa's vescel, sollidly bilt ov berilleyum alloiz, had bene desiand too take brootal punnishment. She tooc it.

Out in open space, Clarissaa went fre, leving the artifishal gravvity at normal. Hellen stood up, tooc Clarissaa's hand, and shooc it gravvily and strongly; a geschure at which the Red Lenzman aulmoast choact.

Hellen ov Lirane had chainjd even les dhan had the Erth-woomman. She wauz

stil cix fete taul; erect, taut, springy, and poizd. She didnt wa a pound moer dhan the wun-aty she had scaild twenty-od yeez ago. Her vivvid aubern hare shode not wun strand ov gra. Her ise wer az clere and az proud; her skin aulmoast az fine and ferm.

"U ar, then, alone?" In spite ov her controle, Hellenz thaut shode relefe.

"Yes. Mi hus... Kimbal Kinnison iz verry bizsy elshware." Clarissaa understood perfectly. Hellen, aafter twenty yeez ov ththinking thhingz over, reyaly liact her; but she stil cimply coodnt stand a male, not even Kim; enny moer dhan Clarissaa cood evver adapt hercelf too the Lirainyan habbit ov using the nuter pronoun "it" when refuuring too wun ov

themselvz. She coodnt. Enniboddy whoo evver got wun glimps ov Hellen wood cimply hav too thhinc ov her az *she!* But enuf ov this wool-gathering--which had taken perhaps wun millicecond ov time.

"Dhaerz nuthhing too kepe us from werking tooghether perfectly," Clarissaaz thaut flasht on. "Ladoraa didnt no much, and u doo. So tel me aul about thhingz, so we can decide whare too beghin!"

CHAPTER 17

NADREC VS. CANDRON

When Candron cauld hiz minyon in dhat smaul and naimles bace too lern whether or not he had suxeded in trapping the Palainyan Lenzman, Nadrex rela staishon funcshond so perfectly, and Nadrec wauz so compleetly in charj ov hiz captiavz miand, dhat the cauler cood fele nuthhing out ov the ordinary. Ultraa-suspishous dho Candron wauz, dhare wauz nuthhing whautevver too indicate dhat ennithhing had chainjd at dhat bace cins he had laast cauld its comaander. Dhat individjuwalz subconscious miand reyacted properly too the ke stimulus. The conshous miand tooc over, rememberd, and aancerd properly a cerese ov tric qweschonz.

These thhingz okerd becauz the minyon wauz stil alive. Hiz ego, the pattern and maitrix ov hiz personallity, wauz stil in existens and had not bene chainjd. Whaut Candron did not and cood not suspect wauz dhat dhat ego wauz no lon'gher in controle ov miand, brane, or boddy; dhat it wauz

utterly unnable, ov its one volishon, iather too thinc enny iyotaa ov independent thaut or too stimulate enny cin'ghel fysical cel. The Onloanyanz ego wauz prezsent--just baerly prezsent--but dhat wauz aul. It wauz Nadrec whoo, using dhat ego az a ghide and, in a cens, az a helplesly impotent traansformer, receevd the caul. Nadrec made dhose exactly corect replise. Nadrec wauz nou reddy too render a detaild and foolly documented--and compleetly mendaishous--repoert uppon hiz one destrucshon!

Nadrex speshal tracerz wer aulreddy out, determining line and intencity. Stripperz and annalizerz wer bizsily at werc on the frin'gez ov the beme, dicecting out, isolating, and identifiying eche ov the menny scraps ov extrainyous thaut acumpanying the mane beme. These cide-thauts, in fact, wer Nadrex prime concern. The Cecond-Stage Lenzman had lernd dhat no beying--exept poscibly an Areezhan--cood narro a beme ov thaut down too wun cin'ghel, pure ceeqwens. Ov the foer, houwevver, oanly Nadrec reccogniazd in dhose cide-bandz a rich feeld; oanly he had desiand and devellopt meccanizmz widh which too werc dhat feeld.

The stron'gher and clerer the miand, the fuwer and les complete wer the extrainyous fragments ov thaut; but Nadrec nu dhat even Candronz brane wood carry qwite a fu such non'germane acumpaniments, and from eche ov dhose bits he cood reconstruct an entire ceeqwens az accuraitly az a competent paleyontollogist reconstructs a prehistoric annimal from wun fosciliazd pece ov bone.

Dhus Nadrec wauz compleetly reddy when the harshly dominering Candron aasct hiz ferst reyal qweschon.

"I doo not supose dhat u hav suxeded in killing the Lenzman?"

"Yes, Yor Supremacy, I hav." Nadrec cood fele Candronz start ov cerprise; cood perceve widhout hiz instroaments Candronz fleting thauts ov the hundredz ov unsuxesfool preveyous atempts uppon hiz life. It wauz clere dhat the Onloanyan wauz not at aul credjulous.

"Repoert in detale!" Candron orderd.

Nadrec did so, ad'hering ridgidly too the truth up too the moment in which hiz proabz ov foers had tucht of the Boscoanyan alarmz. Then:

"Spi-ra fotograafs taken at the instant ov alarm sho an indetectabel speedster, widh wun, and oanly wun occupant, az Yor Supremacy antiscipated. A caerfool studdy ov aul the picchuerz taken ov dhat occupant shose: ferst, dhat he wauz deffiniatly alive at dhat time, and wauz niather a progecshon nor an artifishal meccanizm; and cecond, dhat hiz fizensal mezhuerments agry in evvery particcular widh the specificaishonz fernisht bi Yor Supremacy az beying dhose ov Nadrec ov Palane 7.

"Cins Yor Supremacy personaly computed and superviazd the plaisment ov dhose progectorz," Nadrec went smuidhly on, "u no dhat the pocibillity iz vannishingly smaual dhat enny matereyal thhing, fre or inert, cood hav escaipt destrucshon. Az a chec, I tooc cevven hundred twenty nine saampelz ov the cercumambeyent space, statisticaly at random, for anallicis. Aafter aproapreyate alouwancez for the exactly-observd elapst tiamz ov saampling, diffuezhon ov droplets and moleccular and atommic agregaits, temperachuerz, preshuerz, and aul uther factorz none or ashuemd too be operrating, I determiand dhat dhare had bene prezsent in the center ov acshon ov our beemz a mas ov aproximaitly foer thousand six hundred cevventy ate point sero wun metric tunz. This vallu, Yor

Supremmacy wil note, iz in cloce agrement widh the moast efisnent mas ov an indetectabel speedster desiand for long distans werc."

Dhat figgure wauz in fact clocer dhan cloce. It wauz an aulmoast exact staitment ov the acchuwal mas ov Nadrex ship.

"Exact composishon?" Candron demaanded.

Nadrec recited a rappid-fire string ov ellements and figguerz. Dha, too, wer corect within the experrimental error ov a verry good annalist. The bace comaander had not none them, but it wauz wel within the boundz ov pocibillity dhat the incidjous Candron wood. He did. He wauz nou practicaly certane dhat hiz aiblest and bitterest ennemy had bene destroid at laast, but dhare wer stil a fu lin'ghering shredz ov dout.

"Let me looc over yor werc," Candron directed.

"Yes, Yor Supremmacy." Nadrec the Thurro wauz reddy for even dhat extreme test. Throo the ise ov the ultimaitly enslaidv monstrosity Candron chect and rechet Nadrex picchuerz, Nadrex charts and diyagramz, Nadrex moer dhan foer hundred pagez ov mathhemattical, fizensical, and kemmical noats and determinaishonz; aul widhout fianding a cin'ghel flau.

In the end Candron wauz reddy too beleve dhat Nadrec had in fact ceest too exist. Houwevver, he himcelf had not dun the werc. Dhare wauz no corps. If he himcelf had kild the Palainyan, if he himcelf had acchuwaly felt the Lenzmanz life depart in the graasp ov hiz one tentakelz; then, and oonly then, wood he hav *none* dhat Nadrec wauz ded. Az it wauz, even dho the werc had bene dun in exact acordans widh hiz one instrucshonz, dhare remaind an infinitesimal uncertainty. Whaerfoer:

"Shift yor feeld ov operaishonz too cuvver X-174, Y-240, Z-16. Doo not relax yor vidgilans in the slitest becauz ov whaut haz happend." He concidderd breefly the ideyaa ov alouwing the underling too caul him, in cace ennithing happend, but decided against it "Ar the men standing up?"

"Yes, Yor Supremmacy, dha ar in verry good shape indede."

And so on. "Yes, Yor Supremmacy, the cicollogist iz doowing a verry fine job. Yes, Yor Supremmacy... yes... yes... yes..."

Verry shortly aafter the characteristicaly Candronesc ending ov dhat intervü, Nadrec had lernd evverithing he neded too no. He nu whare Candron wauz and whaut he wauz doowing. He nu much ov whaut Candron

had dun juring the preceding twenty yeerz; and, cins he himself figguerd promminently in menny ov dhose ceeqwencez, dha constichuted invallubel chex uppon the validdity ov hiz uther reconstrucshonz. He nu the construcshon, the armament, and the vareyouz in'geenyous meccanizmz, including the lox, ov Candronz vescel; he nu moer dhan enny uther outcider had evver none ov Candronz private life. He nu whare Candron wauz gowing next, and whaut he wauz gowing too doo dhare. He nu in braud whaut Candron intended too doo juring the cumming cenchury.

Dhus wel informd, Nadrec cet hiz speedster intoo a coers tooword the plannet ov Civilizaishon which wauz Candronz next obgetive. He did not hurry; it wauz no part ov hiz plan too interfere in enny wa in the horribel proogram ov plannet-wide madnes and slauter which Candron had

in miand. It cimply did not oker too him too tri too save the plannet az wel az too kil the Onloanyan; Nadrec, beying Nadrec, tooc widhout dout or qweschon the safest and shurest coers.

Nadrec nu dhat Candron wood cet hiz vescel intoo an orbit around the plannet, and dhat he wood take a smaull bote--a flitter--for the wun personal vizsit nescesary too establish hiz lianz ov comunicaishon and controle. Vescel and flitter wood be alike indetectabel, ov coers; but Nadrec found the wun esily enuf and nu when the uther left its muther-ship. Then, using hiz lifest, stelththeyest spi-rase, the Palainyan cet about the exedingly dellicate biznes ov boerding the Boscoanyan craaft.

Dhat undertaking cood be made a stoery in its one rite, for Candron did not leve hiz ship un'garded. Houwevver, meerly bi ththinking about hiz one saifty, Candron had aul unwittingly ghivven awa the kese too hiz suposedly impregnabel fortres. While Candron wauz wundering whether or not the Lenzman wauz reyaly ded, and espeshaly aafter he had bene convinst dhat he moast probbably wauz, the Onloanyanz thauts had tucht fletingly uppon a multichude ov cloasly-related subgects. Wood it be safe too abandon sum ov the moer onerous precaushonz he had aulwase taken, and which had cervd him so wel for so menny yeerz? And az he thaut ov them, eche wun ov hiz saifgardz flasht at leest parshaly intoo vu; and for Nadrec, enny cignifficant part wauz az good az the whole. Candronz protective devicez, dhaerfoer, did not protect. Progectorz, desiand too flame out against introoderz, remaind coald. Poerts opend; and az Nadrec tucht sundry buttonz vareyous invizibel beemz, whose braking wood hav projuest unplezzant rezults, ceest too exist. In short, Nadrec nu aul the aancerz. If he had not bene coaldly certane dhat hiz informaishon wauz complete, he wood not hav acted at aul.

Aafter entry, hiz ferst care wauz too cend out spotting devicez which wood ghiv worning in cace Candron shoold retern unexpectedly soone. Then, werking in the cervice-spacez behiand instrooment-boerdz and pannelz, in juncshon boxez, and in vareyous uther out-ov-the-wa placez, he cut intoo lede aafter lede, ran wire aafter wire, and instauld item aafter item ov

aparatus and eqwipment uppon which he had bene at werc for weex. He finnisht hiz werc undisterbd. He chect and rechect the cerkits, making absolutly certane dhat evvery major wun ov the vescelz controling leedz ran too or throo at leest wun ov the ththingz he had just instauld. Widh painstaking nicety he oblitterated evvery vizsibel cine ov hiz vizsit. He departed az caerfooly az he had cum; restoering too fool effishency az he went eche wun ov Candronz berglar-alarmz.

Candron reternd, enterd hiz ship az uezhuwal, stord hiz flitter, and extended a tentaccular member tooword the ro ov switchez on hiz pannel.

"Doant tuch ennithhing, Candron," he wauz adviazd bi a thaut az coald and az dedly az enny wun ov hiz one; and uppon the Onloanyan eqwivvalent ov a vizsiplate dhare apeerd the wun liacnes which he leest expected and leest desiard too perceve.

"Nadrec ov Palane 7--★ A ★--THE Lenzman!" The Onloanyan wauz fizsicaly and emoashonaly incapabel ov gaasping, but the ideyaa iz aproapreyate. "U hav, then, wiard and miand this ship."

Dhare wauz a subjude clicking ov relase. The Berghenhome came up too spede, the speedster spun about and darted awa under a cuppel ov killodians ov drive.

"I am Nadrec ov Palane 7, yes. Wun ov the groope ov Lenzmen whose colective activvitesse u hav ascriabd too ★ A ★ and *the* Lenzman. Yor ship iz, az u hav dejuest, miand. The oanly rezon u did not di az u enterd it iz dhat I wish too be reyaly certane, and not meerly statisticaly so, dhat it iz Candron ov Onlo, not sumwun els, whoo dise."

"Dhat unnutterabel foole!" Candron qwivverd in helples rage. "O, dhat I had taken the time and kild u micelf!"

"If u had dun yor one werc, the tecneex I uezd here cood not hav bene emploid, and u mite hav bene in no dain'ger at the prezsent moment," Nadrec admitted, eqwably enuf. "Mi pouwerz ar smaul, mi intelect febel, and whaut mite hav bene haz no prezsent baring. I am incliand, houwevver, too qweschon the validdity ov yor concluezhonz, ju too the none fact dhat u hav bene directing a campane against me for over twenty yeerz widhout suxes; wharaz I hav suxeded against u in les dhan haaf a yere.... Mi anallicis iz nou complete. U ma nou tuch enny controle u plese. Bi the wa, u doo not deni dhat u ar Candron ov Onlo, doo u?"

Niather ov dhose monstrous beyingz menshond or even thaut ov mercy. In niather ov dhare lan'gwagez wauz dhare enny werd for or concept ov such a thhing.

"Dhat wood be idel. U no mi pattern az wel az I no yorz.... I canot understand hou u got throo dhat..."

"It iz not nescenary dhat u shood. Doo u wish too close wun ov dhose switchez or shal I?"

Candron had bene thhinking for minnuets, studdeying evvery aspect ov hiz prediccament. Nowing Nadrec, he nu just hou desperate the cichuwaishon wauz. Dhare wauz, houwevver, wun verry smaul chaans--just wun. The wa he had cum wauz clere. Dhat wauz the *only* clere wa. Whaerfoer, too gane an

extraa instant ov chune, he reecht out tooword a swich; but even while he wauz reching he poot evvery ouns ov hiz tremendous strength intoo a lepe which herld him acros the roome tooword hiz flitter.

No luc. Wun ov Nadrex minor tentakelz wauz aulreddy kerld around a swich, tenst and reddy. Candron wauz stil in are when a rela snapt shut and foer cannisterz ov juwodec dettonated az wun.

Juwodecaplilattomate,

dhat friatfool dettonant whoose viyolens iz exeded oanly bi dhat ov nuecleyar dicintegraishon!

Dhare wauz an apauling flash ov vishously white lite, which expanded in millicecondz intoo an enormous globe ov incandescent gas. Cooling and darkening az it expanded rappidly intoo the nere-vaccuwum ov interplannetary

space, the gasces and vaporz soone became invizibel. Throo and throowout the entire vollume ov volatilizaishon Nadrec drove annalizerz and detectorz, until he nu pozsitiavly dhat no partikel ov matereyal substans larger in diyammeter dhan five miacronz remaind ov iather Candron or hiz space-ship. He then cauld the Gra Lenzman.

"Kinnison? Nadrec ov Palane 7 caulng, too repoert dhat mi acianment haz bene completed. I hav destroid Candron ov Onlo."

"Good! Fine biznes, ace! Whaut kiand ov a picchure did u ghet? He must hav none sumthhing about the hiyer eshelonz--or did he? Wauz he just anuther ded end?"

"I did not go intoo dhat."

"Huu? Whi not?" Kinnison demaanded, exasperaishon in evvery line ov hiz thaut.

"Becauz it wauz not included in the prodject," Nadrec explaind, paishently. "U aulreddy no dhat wun must concentrate in order too werc efishmently. Too ceure the reqwisite minnimium ov informaishon it wauz nescenary too stere hiz thauts intoo wun, and oanly wun, cet ov channelz. Dhare wer sum forane cide-bandz, ov coers, and it ma be dhat sum ov them tucht uppon this nu subgect which u hav nou, too late, introjuest... no, dhare wer no such."

"Damnaishon!" Kinnison exploded; then bi mane strength shut himcelf up. "QX, ace; skip it. But liscen, mi spiny and merderous frend. Ghet this--en'grave it in big tipe rite on the top-cide incide ov yor thhic scul--whaut we waunt iz INFORMAISHON, not mere liqwidaishon. Next time u ghet hoald ov such a big shot az Candron must hav bene, doant kil him until iather: ferst, u ghet sum leedz az too whoo or whaut the reyal hed ov the outfit iz; or, cecond, u make shure dhat he duznt no. Then kil him aul u waunt too, but FIAND OUT WHAUT HE NOSE FERST. Hav I made micelf clere this time?"

"U hav, and az cordinator yor instrucshonz shood and wil guvvern. I point out, houwevver, dhat the introducshon ov a multipliscity ov obgectiavz intoo a problem not oanly destroiz its unity, but aulso increcez marctly boath the time nescenary for, and the acchuwal personal dain'ger involvd in, its solueshon."

"So whaut?" Kinnison counterd, az evenly az he cood. "Dhat wa, we ma be abel too ghet the aancer sum da. Yor wa, we nevver wil. But the thhingz dun--dhaerz no uce yapping and youling about it nou. Hav u enny ideyaaz az too whaut u shood doo next?"

"No. Whautevver u wish, dhat I shal tri too doo."

"Ile chec widh the utherz." He did so, receving no helpfool ideyaaz

until he consulted his wife.

"Hi, Kim, my dear!" came Clarissa's boisterous shout; and, after a brief but intense greeting: "Glad you could. Nothing definite enough yet to report to you officially, but there are indications that Lirane 9 may be an important..."

"Nine?" Kinnison interrupted. "Not Ate again?"

"Nine," she confirmed. "A nu item. So I may be doing a flit over there within of these days."

"U-uh," he denied. "Lirane Nine would be none of your business. Stay away from it."

"Cuz who?" she demanded. "We went into this within before, Kim, about you telling me what I could and couldn't do."

"Yeah, and I came out second best." Kinnison grinned. "But now, as coordinator, I make suggestions too even Second-Stage Lenzmen, and they follow them--or else. I therefore suggest officially that you stay away from Lirane 9 on the grounds that since it is colder than a Palainyan's heart, it is definitely not your problem, but Nadrex. And I'm adding this--if you don't behave yourself I'll come over there and administer appropriate physical punishment."

"Come on over--that'd be fun!" Clarissa giggled, then sobered quickly. "But seriously, you win, I guess--this time. Will you keep me informed?"

"I'll do that. Bye-bye, Kris!" and he turned back to the Palainyan.

"...so u ce this iz yor problem. Go too it, littel chum."

"I go, Kinnison."

CHAPTER 18

CAMILLAA KINNISON, DETECTOR

For ourz Camillaa and Tregoncy resceld ceppairtly and fruitlesly widh the problem ov the elucive "X". Then, aafter she had studded the Rigelleyanz miand in a fashon which he cood niather detect nor employ, Camillaa broke the mental cilens.

"Unkel Trig, mi concluezhonz friten me. Can u conceive ov the pocibility dhat it wauz contact widh *mi* miand, not yorz, dhat made 'X' run awa?"

"Dhat iz the oonly tennabel concluezhon. I no the pouwer ov mi one miand, but I hav nevver bene abel too ghes at the capabillitese ov yorz. I fere dhat I, at leest, underestimated our oponent."

"I no I did, and I wauz terribly rong. I shoodnt hav tride too foole u, iather, even a littel bit. Dhare ar sum thhingz about me dhat I just *caant* sho too moast pepel, but u ar different--yor *such* a wunderfool person!"

"Thanx, Camillaa, for yor trust." Understandingly, he did not go on too sa dhat he wood kepe on beying werthy ov it. "I axept the fact dhat u five, beying children ov too Ceccond-Stage Lenzmen, ar bacialy

beyond mi comprehenshon. Dhare ar indicaishonz dhat u doo not az yet thurroly understand yorcelf. U hav, houwevver, decided uppon a coers ov acshon."

"O--Ime so releevd! Yes, I hav. But befoer we go intoo dhat, I havnt bene abel too solv the problem ov 'X'. Moer, I hav pruivd dhat I canot solv it widhout moer dataa. Dhaerfoer, u caant iather. Chec?"

"I had not reecht dhat concluezhon, but I axept yor staitment az truith."

"Wun ov dhose uncommon pouwerz ov mine, too which u referd a while ago, iz a wide rainj ov percepshon, from larj mascez down too extreemly tiny components. Anuther, or perhaps a part ov the same wun, iz dhat, aafter rezolving and annalising these fine detailz, I can bild up a lodgical and coherent whole bi procecez ov interpolaishon and extrapolaischon."

"I can beleve dhat such thhingz wood be poscibel too such a miand az yorz must be. Go on."

"Wel, dhat iz hou I no dhat I underestimated Mr. 'X'. Whoowevver or whautevver he iz, I am compleetly unnabel too rezolv the strucchure ov hiz thaut. I gave u aul I got ov it. Looc at it agane, plese--hard. Whaut can u make ov it nou?"

"It iz exactly the same az it wauz befoer; a fragment ov a cimpel and plane introductory thaut too an augens. Dhat iz aul."

"Dhats aul I can ce, too, and dhats whaut cerprizez me so." The hithertoo imperterbabel and cerene Camillaa got up and began too pace the floer. "Dhat thaut iz aparrently absoluetly sollid; and cins dhat iz a

deffiniatly imposcibel condishon, the truth iz dhat its strucchure iz so fine dhat I canot rezolv it intoo its component units. This shose dhat I am not neerly az competent az I thaut I wauz. When u and dad and the uthertz reecht dhat point, u eche went too Areezhaa. Ive decided too doo the same thhing."

"Dhat decizhon ceemz emminently sound."

"Thanx, Unkel Trig--dhat wauz whaut I hoapt ude sa. Ive nevver bene dhare, u no, and the ideyaa scaerd me a littel. Clere eethher!"

Dhare iz no nede too go intoo detale az too Camillaaz bout widh Mentor. Her miand, like Carrenz, had had too machure ov itself befoer enny treetment cood be reyaly efective; but, wuns machure, she tooc az much in wun ceshon az Cathrin had taken in aul her menny. She had not sugested dhat the Rigelleyan acumpany her too Areezhaa; dha boath nu dhat he had aulreddy receevd aul he cood take. Uppon her retern she greted him cazhuwaly az dho she had bene gon oonly a matter ov ourz.

"Whaut Mentor did too me, Unkel Trig, shoodnt hav bene dun too a Delgoanyan catlat. It duznt sho too much, dho, I hope--duz it?"

"Not at aul." He scand her narroly, boath fizensaly and mentaly. "I can perceve no chainj in groce. In fine, houwevver, u hav chainjd. U hav devellopt."

"Yes, moer dhan I wood hav beleevd poscibel. I caant doo much widh mi prezsent verry poor traanscripshon ov dhat thaut, cins the aul-important fine detale iz miscing. Weeyl hav too intercept anuther wun. Ile ghet it *aul*, this time."

"But u did sumthhing widh this wun, I am shure. Dhare must hav bene

sum developabel fechuerz--a sort ov latent-immage efect?"

"A littel. Practically infinitesimal compaerd too whaut wauz reyaly dhare. Fizzicaly, hiz clacificaishon too foer placez iz TUUV; qwite a bit like the Neveyanz, u notice. Hiz home plannet iz big, and practicaly cuvverd widh liqwid. No reyaly cittese, just gruijs ov haaf-submerjd, temporary strucchuerz. Mentallity verry hi, but we nu dhat aulreddy. Normaly, he thhinx uppon a verry short wave, so short dhat he wauz then werking at the verry bottom ov hiz rainj. Hiz sun iz a faerly hot mane-ceedwens star, ov spectral claas sumwhare around F, and its probbably moer or les vareyabel, becauz dhare wauz qwite a distinct implicaishon ov chainj. But dhats normal enuf, iznt it?"

Within the limmits impoazd bi the amount and kiand ov dataa avalabel, Camillaaz observaishonz and anallicese had bene perfect, her reconstrucshon flaules. She did not then hav enny ideyaa, houwevver, dhat "X" wauz in fact a spring-form Flooran. Moer, she did not even no dhat such a plannet az Floor existed, exept for Mentorz wun menshon ov it.

"Ov coers. Pepelz ov plannets ov vareyabel sunz thhinc dhat such sunz ar the oanly kiand fit too hav plannets. U canot reconstruct the nachure ov the chainj?"

"No. Wers, I caant fiand even a hint ov whare hiz plannet iz in space--but then, I probbably coodnt, enniwa, even widh a whole, fresh thaut too studdy."

"Probbably not. Rigel For wood be an utterly meningles thaut too enniwun ignorant ov Rigel; and, exept when making a conshous effort, az in directing strain'gerz, I nevver thhinc ov its locaishon in termz ov galactic cowordinaitz. I supose dhat the locaishon ov a home plannet iz

aulwase taken for graanted. Dhat wood ceme too leve us just about whare we wer befoer in our cerch for 'X', except for yor implide abillity too intercept anuther ov hiz thauts, aulmoast at wil. Explane, plese."

"Not *mi* abillity--ourz." Camillaa smiald, confidently. "I coodnt doo it alone, niather cood u, but betwene us it woant be too difficult. U, widh yor utterly caam, utterly unshacabel certainty, can drive a thaut too enny corner ov the univers. U can fix and hoald it stedly on enny indicated attom. I caant doo dhat, or ennithhing like it, but widh mi prezsent abillity too detect and too annalise Ime not afrade ov miscing 'X' if we can cum within parces ov him. So mi ideyaa iz a sort ov pigghy-bac hunting trip; u too take me for a ride, mentaly, verry much az Worcel taix Con, fizensicaly. Dhat wood werc, doant u thhinc?"

"Perfectly, I am shure." The stollid Rigelleyan wauz imensly pleezd. "Linc yor miand widh mine, then, and we wil cet out. If u hav no better plan ov acshon mapt out, I wood sugest starting at the point whare we lost him and werking outword, cuvvering an expanding sfere."

"U no best. Ile stic too u wharevver u go."

Tregoncy launcht hiz thaut; a thaut which, at a velosity not too be mezhuerd even in multipelz ov dhat ov lite, gennerated the cerface ov a continnuwously enlarging sfere ov space. And widh dhat thaut, a verry part ov it, sped Camillaaz incomprehencibly dellicate, instantainyously reyactive detector web. The Rigelleyan, widh hiz unhuman perceverans, wood hav cervade total space had it bene nescesary; and the nou adult Camillaa wood hav stade widh him. Houwevver, the paishent pare did not hav too come aul ov space. In a matter ov ourz the gherlz aulmoast infiniatly tenuuous detector tucht, widh infinitesimal pouwer and for an inapreeshabel instant ov time, the exact thaut-strucchure too which it had bene so caerfooly achuend.

"Hault!" she flasht, and Tregoncese mity super-drednaut shot awa along the indicated line at maximum blaast.

"U ar not nou thhinking at him, ov coers, but hou shure ar u dhat he did not fele yor detector?" Tregoncy aasct.

"Pozsitive," the gherl replide. "I coodnt even fele it micelf until aafter a milleyon-foald amplificaishon. It wauz just a web, u no, not neerly sollid enuf for an annaliser or a recorder. I didnt tuch hiz miand at aul. Houwevver, when we ghet cloce enuf too werc efishly, which wil be in about five dase, we wil hav too tuch him. Ashuming dhat he iz az cencitive az we ar, he wil fele us; hens we wil hav too werc faast and acording too sum deffinite plan. Whaut ar yor ideyaaz az too tecneke?"

"I ma offer a sugeschon or too, later, but I resine ledership too u. U aulreddy hav made planz, hav u not?"

"Oanly a fraimwerc; weeyl hav too werc out the detailz tooggether. Cins we agry dhat it wauz mi miand dhat he did not like, u wil hav too make the ferst contact."

"Ov coers. But cins the acshon ov thaut iz so neerly instantainous, ar u shure dhat u wil be abel too protect yorcelf in cace he overcumz me at dhat ferst contact?" If the Rigelleyan gave enny thaut at aul too hiz one fate in such a cace, no trace ov it wauz evvident.

"Mi screenz ar good. I am faerly certane dhat I cood protect boath ov us, but it mite slo me doun a trifel; and even an instants dela mite kepe me from ghetting the informaishon we waunt. It wood be better, I thhinc, too caul Kit in. Or, better yet, Ca. She can stop a super-atommic bom. Widh Ca cuvvering us, we wil boath be fre too werc."

Agane dha went into a uenyon ov miandz; conciddering, waying, annalising, regecting, and--a fu tiamz--axepting. And finaly, wel within the five-da time limmit, dha had draun up a compleetly detaild plan ov acshon.

Hou ueslesly dhat time wauz spent! For dhat acshon, insted ov progrescing acording too dhare caerfooly werct-out plan, wauz ended aulmoast in the instant ov its beghinning.

Acording too plan, Tregoncy chuend hiz miand too "X'ez" pattern az soone az dha had cum within werking rainj. He reecht out az dellicaitly az he cood, and hiz best wauz verry fine werc indede. He mite just az wel hav struc widh aul hiz pouwer, for at ferst tuch ov the frinj, extreemly lite and entiarly innocuwous dho it wauz, the strain'gerz barreyerz flaerd intoo beying and dhare came bac instantly a mental bolt ov such vishous intencity dhat it wood hav gon throo Tregoncese hardest-held bloc az dho no barreyer had bene dhare. But dhat bolt did not strike Tregoncese sheeld. Insted, it struc Carren Kinnisonz, which haz aulreddy bene descriabd.

It did not exactly bouns, nor did it cling, nor did it lin'gher, even for a miacrocecond, too doo battel az expected. It cimply vannisht; az dho dhat minute interval ov time had bene sufishent for the ennemy too hav recuvverd from the shoc ov encountering a compleetly unnexpected resistans, too hav annaliazd the texchure ov the sheeld, too hav dejuest from dhat anallicis the fool capabillitese ov its oner and opperator, too hav decided dhat he did not care too hav enny delingz widh the entity so dejuest, and finaly, az he no dout supoazd, too hav begun too retrete in good order.

Hiz retrete, houwevver, wauz not in good order. He did not escape, this time. This time, az she had declaerd dhat she wood be, Camillaa wauz

reddy for ennthhing--litteraly ennthhing. Evverithhing she had--and she had

plenty--wauz on the trips; tens, taut, and poizd. Nowing dhat Carren, the Ultimate ov Defens, wauz on gard, she wauz wholly fre too herl her evvery foers on the instant. Scaersly had the leding ellement ov her probe tucht the strain'gerz screenz, houwevver, when dhose screenz, "X" himself, hiz vescel and enny utherz dhat mite hav bene acumpanying it, and evverithhing tan'gibel in neerbi space, aul disapeerd at wuns in the inconcevably viyolent, the ultimaitly cataclizmic detonaishon ov a super-atommic bom.

It ma not, perhaps, be genneraly none dhat the "compleetly libberating" or "super-atommic" bom libberaits wun hundred percent ov the component ennergy ov its total mas in aproximaitly cixty nine hundredths ov wun miacrocecond. Its viyolens and destructiavnes dhus differ, boath in degry and in kiand, from dhose ov the erleyer tipe, which libberated oonly the ennergy ov nuecleyar fishon, verry much az the rajaishon ov S-Doraadus differz from dhat ov Erths moone. Its mas atainz, and hoaldz for an apreeshabel length ov time, a temperachure too be mezhuerd oonly in milleyonz ov Centigrade degrese; which fact acounts in larj part for its utterly increddibel veyemens.

Nuthhing inert in its entire sfere ov primary acshon can even beghin too moove out ov the wa befoer beying rejuest too its subatommic constitchuwents

and dhus contribbuting in sum mezhure too the cataclizm. Nuthhing iz or becumz vizsibel until the cecondary stage beghinz; until the friatfool globe haz expanded too a diyammeter ov thouzandz ov yardz and bi this expanshon haz cuild down too a point at which sum ov its rajaishon lise in the vizsibel vियोlet. And az for leethal rajaishon--dhare ar rajaishonz and dha ar leethal.

The conflict widh "X" had occupide aproximaitly too millicecondz ov

acchuwal time. The expanshon had bene progrescing for a cecond or too when Carren lowerd her sheeld.

"Wel, dhat finnisht dhat," she commented. "Ide better ghet bac on the job. Did u fiand out whaut u waunt too no, Cam, or not?"

"I got a littel in the moment befoer the exploazhon. Not much." Camillaa wauz depe in studdy. "Its gowing too be qwite a job ov reconstrucshon. Wun thhing ov interest too u, dho, iz dhat this 'X' had qwit sabotaazh temporarily and wauz on hiz wa too Lirane 9, whare he had sum important..."

"Nine?" Carren aasct sharply. "Not Ate? Ive bene wauching Ate, u no--I havnt even thaut ov Nine."

"Nine, deffiniatly. The thaut wauz clere. U mite ghiv it a scan wuns in a while. Hou iz muther doowing?"

"Shese doowing a grand job, and dhat Hellen iz qwite an opperator, too. Ime not doowing much--just a tuch here and dhare--Ile ce whaut I can ce on Nine. Ime not the scanner or detector u ar, dho, u no--maby ude better cum over here too. Supose?"

"I thhinc so--doant u, Unkel Trig?" Tregoncy did. "We can doo sum exploering az we cum, but cins I hav no deffinite patternz for web werc, we ma not be abel too doo much until we ghet cloce. Clere eethher, Ca!"

"The fine strucchure iz dhare, and I can rezolv it and annalise it," Camillaa informd Tregoncy, aafter a fu ourz ov intens concentraishon.

"Dhare ar qwite a fu clere extrainyous ceeqwencez, insted ov the blerd latent imagez we had befoer, but dhaerz stil no indicaishon ov the locaishon ov hiz home plannet. I can ce hiz fizesical clacificaishon too ten placez insted ov foer, moer detale az too the sunz vareyaishon, the cezonz, dhare habbits, and so on. Thhingz dhat ceme moastly too be ov verry littel importans, az far az were concernd. I lernd wun fact, dho, dhat iz nu and important. Acording too mi reconstrucshon, hiz biznes on Lirane 9 wauz the inducshon ov Boscoanyan Lenzmen--*Blac* Lenzmen, Tregoncy, just az faather suspected!"

"In dhat cace, he must hav bene the Boscoanyan counterpart ov an Areezhan, and hens wun ov the hiyest eshelon. I am verry glad indede dhat u and Carren releevd me ov the necescity ov tryying too handel him micelf... yor faather wil be verry glad too no dhat we hav at laast and in fact reecht the top..."

Camillaa wauz paying atenshon too the Rigelleyanz cogitaishonz widh oonly a fracshon ov her miand; moast ov it beying en'gaijd in a private conversaishon widh her bruther.

"...so u ce, Kit, he wauz under a sub-conshous compulshon. He *had* too destroi himcelf, hiz ship, and evverithhing in it, in the verry instant ov atac bi enny miand deffiniatly supereyor too hiz one. Dhaerfoer he coodnt hav bene an Edoreyan, poscibly, but meerly anuther intermejate, and I havnt bene ov much help."

"Shure u hav, Cam! U got a lot ov informaishon, and sum mity good leedz too Lirane 9 and whaut gose on dhare. Ime on mi wa too Eddor nou; and bi werking doun from dhare and up from Lirane 9 we caant go rong. Clere eethher, cis!"

CHAPTER 19

THE HEL-HOLE IN SPACE

Constans Kinnison did not waist much time in idel recriminaishonz, even at hercelf. Reyalising at laast dhat she wauz stil not foolly competent, and beying abel too define exactly whaut she lact, she went too Areezhaa for final treetment. She tooc dhat treetment and emerjd from it, az her bruther and cisterz had emerjd, a compleetly integrated personallity.

She had sumthhing ov evverithhing the utherz had, ov coers, az did dha aul; but her domminants, the caracteristix which had opperated too make Worcel her favorite Cecond-Stage Lenzman, wer much like dhose ov the Velanshan. Her miand, like hiz, wauz qwic and fascile, yet ov extrordinary pouwer and rainj. She did not hav much ov her faatherz flat, driving erj or ov hiz indommitabel wil too doo; she wauz the leest abel ov aul the Five too exert long-sustaind extreme effort. Her top, houwevver, wauz vaastly hiyer dhan dhaerz. Her armament wauz aulmoast entiarly ofencive: she wauz far and awa the dedleyest fiter ov them aul. She oanly ov them aul had moer dhan a trace ov pure killer instinct; and when roud too fool fiting pich her mental bolts wer wepponz ov az starcly incomprehencibel an efectiavnes az the sfere ov primary acshon ov a super-atommic bom.

Az soone az Constans had left the *Velan*, remarking dhat she wauz gowing too Areezhaa too take her meddicine, Worcel cauld a staaf meting too discus

in detale the matter ov the "Hel-Hole in Space".

Dhat conferens wauz niather long nor heted; it wauz unannimously agrede dhat the fenommenon wauz--*must* be--cimply anuther undiscuvverd cavvern ov Overlordz.

In vu ov the fact dhat Worcel and hiz croo had bene hunting doun and killing Overlordz for moer dhan twenty yeerz, the oanly lodgical coers ov acshon wauz for them too dele cimmlarly widh wun moer, perhaps the oanly remaning larj groope ov dhare hereditary fose. Nor did enny dout ov dhare abillity too doo so enter enny wun ov the Velanshanz miandz.

Hou rong dha wer!

Dha did not hav too cerch for the "Hel-Hole." Long cins, too stop its dredfool tole, a sferrical cordon ov robot gard-ships had bene poasted too worn aul traffic awa from the outer frin'gez ov its influwens. Cins dha meerly wornd against, but cood not fizesicaly prohibit, entry intoo the dain'gerous space, Worcel did not pa enny atenshon too the gard-ships or too dhare signalz az the *Velan* went throo the worning web. Hiz planz wer, he thaut, wel lade. Hiz ship wauz fre. Its spede, bi Velanshan standardz, wauz verry lo. Eche member ov hiz croo woer a fool-cuvverage thaut-screne; a cimmlar and vaastly moer pouwerfool screne wood suround the whole vescel if wun ov Worcelz minor memberz wer iather too titen or too relax its grip uppon a spring-mounted controle. Worcel wauz, he thaut, reddy for ennithhing.

But the "Hel-Hole in Space" wauz not a cavvern ov Overlordz. No sun, no plannet, nuthhing matereyal existed within dhat sferrical vollume ov space. But *sumthhing* wauz dhare. Slo az wauz the *Velanz* pace, it wauz stil

too faast bi far; for in a matter ov cecondz, throo the suposedly imperveyous thaut-screenz, dhare came an atac ov utterly malignant ferocity; an asault which toer at Worcelz miand in a fashon he had nevver imadgiand poscibel; a poinyant, rending, unbarably creshendo foers
whoose viyolens ceemd too dubbel widh evvery mile ov distans.

The *Velanz* aul-encumpascing screne snapt on--ueslesly. Its tremendous pouwer wauz az unnopoazd az wer the lescer pouwerz ov the personal sheeldz; dhat hily inimical thaut wauz cumming paast, not throo, the barreyerz. An Areezhan, or wun ov the Children ov the Lenz, wood hav bene abel too perceve and too bloc dhat band; no wun ov lescer mental statchure cood.

Strong and faast az Worcel wauz, mentaly and fizesicaly, he acted just baerly in time. Aul hiz resistans and aul hiz strength had too be cauld intoo pla too maintane hiz miandz controle over hiz boddy; too enabel him too spin hiz ship end for end and too kic her drive up too maximum blaast. Too hiz cerprise, hiz aggyony decreest widh distans az rappidly az it had bilt up; disapering entiarly az the *Velan* reecht the web she had crost such a short time befoer.

Grogghy, cic, and shaken, hanging slacly from hiz barz, the Velanshan Lenzman wauz rouzd too acshon bi the mental and fizesical frensy ov hiz croo. Ten ov them had dide in the Hel-Hole; cix moer wer toern too bits befoer dhare comaander cood muster enuf foers too stop dhare insane riyoting. Then Maaster Thherrapist Worcel went too werc; and wun bi wun he braut the cervivorz bac. Dha rememberd; but he made dhose memmorese barabel.

He then cauld Kinnison. "...but dhare didnt ceme too be ennithing

personal about it, az wun wood expect from an Overlord," he concluded hiz brefe repoert. "It did not concentrate on us, reche for us, or follo us az we left. Its intencity ceemd too vary oonly widh distans--perhaps inversly az distans sqwaerd; it mite verry wel hav bene rajated from a center. While it iz nuthhing like ennithhing I evver felt befoer, I stil thhinc it must be an Overlord--maby a sort ov cecond-stage Overlord, just az u and I ar Cecond-Stage Lenzmen. Hese too strong for me nou, just az dha uest too be too strong for us befoer we met u. Bi the same rezoning, houwevver, Ime pritty shure dhat if u can cum over here, u and I tooghether cood figgure out a wa ov taking him. Hou about it?"

"Mity interesting, and Ide like too, but Ime rite in the middel ov a job," Kinnison replide, and went on too explane rappidly whaut he, az Bradlo Thhiron, had dun and whaut he stil had too doo. "Az soone az I can ghet awa Ile cum over. In the meentime, chum, kepe awa from dhare. Doo a flit--fiand sumthhing els too kepe u amuezd until I can join u."

Worcel cet out, and aafter a fu dase--or weex? Idel time meenz practicaly nuthhing too a Velanshan--a sharply-Lenzd thaut drove in.

"Help! A Lenzman caulng help! Line this thaut and cum faast..."
The message ended az sharply az it had begun; in a flare ov agony which, Worcel nu, ment dhat dhat Lenzman, whoowevver he wauz, had dide.

Cins the thaut, auldho braudcaast, had cum in strong and clere, Worcel nu dhat its cender had bene cloce bi. While the time had bene verry short indede, he had bene abel too ghet a line ov sorts. Intoo dhat line he wherld the *Velanz* sharp prou and along it she herteld at the litteraly inconcevabel pace ov her maximum drive. Az the Gra Lenzman had often remarct, the Velanshan super-drednaut had moer legz dhan a centipede, and nou she wauz using them aul. In minnuets, then, the cene ov battel groo larj uppon her plaits.

The Patrole ship, hoaplesly outclaast, cood laast oanly minnuets lon'gher. Her screenz wer doun; her verry waul-sheeld wauz ded. Red poc-marx sprang intoo beying along her ciadz az the Boscoanyan nedel-bemerz wiapt

out her fu remaning controalz. Then, az the helplesly raging Worcel looct on, hiz brane ceething widh unnutterabel Velanshan profannity, the ennemy prepaerd too boerd; a coers ov acshon which, Worcel cood ce, wauz

chainjd abruptly bi the fact--and perhaps az wel bi the teriffic velosity--ov hiz one unswerving aproche. The conkerd Patrole crooser disapeerd in a blase ov dettonating juwodec; the conkeror devoted hiz evvery get too the taasc ov running awa; stroowing hiz paath az he did so widh sundry itemz ov sollid and explosive destrucshon. Such thhingz, houwevver, whether inert or fre, wer oald and cimpel stuf too the *Velanz* wor-wise croo. Dhare spotterz and detectorz wer fool out, az wauz aulso a foerfan ov aniyilating and dicintegrating beemz.

Dhus nun ov the Boscoanyanz miscialz tucht the *Velan*, nor, widh aul hiz spede, cood he escape. Fu indede wer the ships ov space abel too step it, parcec for parcec, widh Worcelz mity craaft, and this lucles pirate vescel wauz not wun ov them. Up and up the *Velan* rusht; cecond bi cecond the intervening distans lescend. Tractorz shot out, loct on, and poold breefly widh aul the foers ov dhare schupendous genneratorz.

Breefly, but long enuf. Az Worcel had antiscipated, dhat savvage yanc had, in the fracshon ov a cecond reqwiard for the Boscoanyan comaander too

reccognise and too cut the tractorz, bene enuf too bring the too inershaales worcraaft aulmoast screne too screne.

"Primarese! Blaast!" Worcel herld the thaut even befoer hiz tractorz

snaapt. He wauz in no moode for a long-draun-out en'gaijment. He *mite* be abel too win widh hiz cecondarese, hiz nedelz, hiz tremendously pouwerfool short-rainj stuf, and hiz uthur ordinary ofencive wepponz; but he wauz taking no chaancez.

Wun! Too! Thre! The thre coerchez ov Boscoanyan defencive screne scaersly winct az eche, localy overloded, flaerd throo the vizsibel intoo the blac and went down.

Crash! The stubborn fabric ov the waul-sheeld offerd littel moer resistans befoer it, too, went down, exposing the bare mettal ov the Boscoanyan hul--and, az iz wel none, enny concevabel matereyal substans cimply vannishez at the tuch ov such feeldz ov foers az dhose.

Driving progectorz carvd awa and mane batterese cilenst, Worcelz nedel-bemerz proceded cistematticaly too riddel evvery controle pannel and evvery liafbote, too make ov the imens space-rover a compleetly helples hulc.

"Hoald!" An observer flasht the thaut. "Number Ate slip iz empty--Number Ate liafbote got awa!"

"Damnaishon!" Worcel, at the hed ov hiz armd and armord storming party, az fureyously egher az dha too cum too grips widh the ennemy, pauzd breefly. "Trace it--or can u?"

"I did. Mi tracerz can hoald it for fiftene minnuets, perhaps twenty. No lon'gher dhan twenty."

Worcel thaut intensly. Which had ferst caul, ship or liafbote? The ship, he decided. Its rezoerchez wer vaastly grater; moast ov its personel wer probbably unharmd. Ghivven enny time at aul, dha mite be abel too jury-rig a primary, and dhat wood be bad--verry bad. Beciadz,

dhare wer moer pepel here; and even if, az wauz distinctly poscibel, the Boscoanyan captane had abandond hiz vescel and hiz croo in an atempt too save hiz one life, dhare wauz plenty ov time.

"Hoald dhat liafbote," he instructed the observer. "Ten minnuets iz aul we nede here."

And it wauz. The Boscoanyanz--barrel-boddede, blocky-limd monstrosците resembling human beyingz about az much az dha did the Velanshanz--woer armor, posest hand-wepponz ov pouwer, and faut vishously. Dha had even mannaijd too rig a fu cemmy-portabel progetorz, but nun ov these wauz aloud a cin'ghel blaast. Spi-ra observerz wer alert, and nedel-beme operatorz; hens the fitting wauz aul at hand too hand, widh hand-wepponz oonly. For, while the Velanshanz too a man lusted too kil, dha had had it drild intoo them for twenty yeerz dhat the cerch for informaishon came ferst; the plezhure ov killing, cecond.

Worcel himcelf went strate for the Boscoanyan officer in comaand. Dhat wite had a cuppel ov gardz widh him, but dha did not matter--nedel-ra men tooc care ov them. He aulso had a pare ov hevvy blaasterz, which he held steddily on the Velanshan. Worcel pauzd momentarily; then, fianding hiz screenz addeqwate, he slamd the controle-roome doer shut widh a flic ov hiz tale and launcht himcelf, strate and levvel at hiz fo, widh an axeleraishon ov ten gravviteese. The Boscoanyan tride too doj but cood not. The friatfool impact did not kil him, but it hert him, badly. Worcel, on the uther hand, wauz scaersly jard. Hard, tuf, and jurabel, Velanshanz ar acustomd from berth too nockingz-about which wood pulverise human boanz.

Worcel batted the Boscoanyanz gunz awa widh too teriffic blose ov an armord pau, noting az he did so dhat viyolent contact widh a stele waul didnt doo dhare intereyor meccanizmz a bit ov good. Then, aafter cutting

of boath hiz ennemese screenz and hiz one, he batted the Boscoanyanz helmet; at ferst experrimentaly, then widh aul hiz pouwer. Unforchunaitly, houwevver, it held. So did the thaut-screne, and dhare wer no external controalz. Dhat armor, dam it, wauz good stuf!

Leping too the celing, he blaasted hiz whole mas strate down upon the brestplate, striking it so hard this time dhat he hert hiz hed. Stil no uce. He wejd himcelf betwene too hevvy bracez, flipt a loope ov tale around the Boscoanyanz fete, and heevd. The armord form flu across the roome, struc the hevvy stele waul, bounst, and dropt. The bulgez ov the armor wer flattend bi the foers ov the colizhon, the waul wauz dented--but the thaut-screne stil held!

Worcel wauz running out ov time, faast. He coodnt trete the thhing verry much ruffer widhout killing him, if he wauznt ded aulreddy. He coodnt take him aboard; he *had* too cut dhat screne here and nou! He cood ce hou the armor wauz poot tooghether; but, armord az he wauz, he cood not take it apart. And, cins the whole ship wauz empty ov are, he cood not open hiz one.

Or cood he? He cood. He cood breedh space long enuf too doo whaut had too be dun. He cut of hiz are, loocend a plate enuf too relece foer or five handz, and, paying no atenshon too hiz laboring lungz, cet fureyously too werc. He toer open the Boscoanyanz armor, snapt of hiz thaut-screne. The crechure wauznt qwite ded yet--good! He didnt no a dam thhing, dho, nor did enny member ov hiz croo... but... a ground-gripper--a big shot--had got awa. Whoo, or whaut wauz he?

"Tel me!" Worcel demaanded, widh the fool pouwer ov miand and Lenz, even while he wauz exploering widh aul hiz skil and spede. "TEL ME!"

But the Boscoanyan wauz diying faast. The un'gentel treetment, and nou the

lac ov are, wer taking tole. Hiz patternz wer dicintegrating bi the cecond, faaster and faaster. Meningles blerz, which, under Worcelz vishous probing, condenst intoo sumthhing which ceemd too be a Lenz.

A Lenzman? Imposcibel--starcly unthhincabel! But get bac--hadnt Kim intimated a while bac dhat dhare mite be such thhingz az Blac Lenzmen?

But Worcel himcelf wauznt feling so good. He wauz oanly haaf conshous. Red, blac, and perpel spots wer daancing in frunt ov evvery wun ov hiz ise. He ceeld hiz sute, ternd on hiz are, gaaspt, and staggherd. Too ov the nerest Velanshanz, boath ov whoome had bene on rapor widh him throwout, came running too hiz ade; ariving just az he recuverd fool controle.

"Bac too the *Velan*, evveriboddy!" he orderd. "No time for enny moer fun--weve got too ghet dhat liafbote!" Then, az soone az he had bene obade: "Bom dhat hulc... Good! Flit!"

Overtaking the liafbote did not take long. Spering it widh a tractor and yanking it alongcide reqwiard oanly cecondz. For aul hiz haist, Worcel found in it oanly a sumthhing dhat looct az dho it wuns mite hav bene a Delgoanyan Lenzman. It had blone itcelf apart. Becauz ov its reptillyan tenascity ov life, houwevver, it wauz not qwhite ded: its Lenz stil shode an ocaizhonal flicker ov lite and its dicintegrating miand wauz not yet entiarly devoid ov patternz. Worcel studded dhat miand until aul trace ov life had vannisht. Then he cauld Kinnison.

"...so u ce I ghest rong. The Lenz wauz too dim too rede, but he must hav bene a Blac Lenzman. The oanly redabel thaut in hiz miand wauz an extreemly fuzsy wun ov the plannet Lirane Nine. I hate too hav

hasht the job up so; espeshaly cins I had wun chaans in too ov ghescing rite."

"Wel, no uce sqwauking nou..." Kinnison pauzd in thaut. "Beciadz, he cood hav dun it enniwa, and wood hav. U havnt dun too badly, at dhat. U found a Blac Lenzman whoo iznt a Caloanyan, and uve got confermaishon ov Boscoanyan interest in Lirane Nine. Whaut moer doo u waunt? Stic around faerly cloce too the Hel-Hole, Slim, and az soone az I can make it, Ile join u dhare."

CHAPTER 20

KINNISON AND THE BLAC LENZMAN

"Boiz, take her upstaerz," Kinnison-Thhiron orderd, and the tremendous rader--acchuwaly the *Dauntles* in disghise--floted cereenly upword too a staishon imejaitly astern ov Mendonise flagship. Aul thre coercez ov multy-ply defencive screne wer out, az wer fool-cuvverage spi-ra blox and thaut-screenz.

Az the flete blaasted in tite formaishon for Caloanyaa 3, Boscoanyan experts tested the *Dauntles* defencez thurroly, and found them bottel-tite. No intruizhon wauz poscibel. The oonly open channel wauz too Thhironz plate, which wauz so villanously fogd dhat nuthhing cood be cene exept Thhironz face. Convinst at laast ov dhat fact, Mendoni sat bac and ceehd qwiyetly; hiz pervasive Caloanyan blunes pointing up hiz grim and vishous moode.

He had nevver, in aul hiz life, bene insulted so outrajously. Wauz dhare

ennithhing--*ennithhing!*--he cood doo about it? Dhare wauz not. Thhiron, personally, he cood not tuch--yet--and the fact dhat the outlau had so brasenly and so nonchalantly plaist hiz vescel in the exact center ov the Boscoanyan flete made it pelucidly clere too enny Boscoanyan miand dhat he had nuthhing whautevver too fere from dhat flete.

Whaerfoer the Caloanyan ceedhd, and hiz minyonz stept evver moer softly and follode widh evver-increcing punctilleyo the ridgid Boscoanyan code. For the graipvine carrese nuse swiftly; bi this time the whole flete nu dhat Hiz Nibz had bene taking a God-aufool kicking around, and the ferst ghi whoo gave him an excuce too blo hiz stac wood be lucky if he oonly got skind alive.

Az the flete spred out for inert maneuvering abuv the Caloanyan atmosfere, Kinnison ternd agane too the yung Lenzman.

"Wun laast werd, Franc. Ime shure evverithhingz cuvverd--a lot ov smart pepel werct on this problem. Nevvertheles, sumthhing ma happen, so Ile cend u the dataa az faast az I ghet it. Remember whaut I toald u befoer--if I ghet the dope we nede, Ime expendabel and itl be yor job too ghet it bac too Bace. No herowix. Iz dhat clere?"

"Yes, cer." The yung Lenzman gulpt. "I hope, dho, dhat it duznt..."

"So doo I," Kinnison grind az he cliamd intoo hiz hily speshal jureyum armor, "and the chaancez ar a milleyon too wun dhat it woant. Dhats whi Ime gowing doun dhare."

In dhare respective speedsterz Kinnison and Mendoni made the long drop too ground, and cide bi cide dha went intoo the office ov Blac Lenzman Melasnicov. Dhat werthy, too, woer hevvy armor; but he did not hav a

mecannical thaut-scene. With hiz terrific pouwer ov miand, he did not nede wun. Thhiron, ov coers, did; a fact ov which Melasnicov became instantly aware.

"Relece yor scene," he directed, bruisclly.

"Not yet, pal--doant be so haisty," Thhiron adviazd. "Sum thhingz about this here hooc-up doant exactly clic. We got a littel tauking too doo befoer I open up."

"No tauc, werm. Tauc, espeshaly yor tauc, iz meningles. From u I waunt, and wil hav, the truth, and not tauc. CUT DHOSE SCREENZ!"

* * * *

And luvly Cathrin, in her speedster not too far awa, stratend up and cent out a caul.

"Kit--Ca--Cam--Con... ar u fre?" Dha wer, for the moment.

"Stand bi, plese, aul ov u. Ime pritty shure sumthhing iz gowing too happen. Dad can handel this Melasnicov esily enuf, if nun ov the hiyer-ups step in, but dha probbably wil. Dhare Lenzmen ar probbably important enuf too rate protecshon. Chec?"

"Chec."

"So, az soone az dad beghinz too ghet the best ov the argument, the protector wil step in," Cathrin continnude, "and whether I can handel him alone or not dependz on hou hi a hiyer-up dha cend in. So Ide like too hav u aul stand bi for a minnute or too, just in cace."

Hou different wauz Cathrinz attichude nou dhan it had bene in the hiper-spaishal chube! And hou wel for Civilizaishon dhat it wauz!

"Hoald it, kidz, Ive got a thaut," Kit sugested. "Weve nevver dun enny teemwerc cins we lernd hou too handel hevvy stuf, and weeyl hav too ghet in sum practice sumtime. Whaut sa we linc up on this?"

"O, yes!" "Lets doo!" "Take over, Kit!" Thre aproovalz came az wun, and:

"QX, Kit," came Cathrinz les enthuseyaastic concurrens, a moment later. Natchuraly enuf, she wood raather doo it alone if she cood; but she had too admit dhat her brutherz plan wauz the better.

Kit lade out the maitrix and the foer gherlz came in. Dhare wauz a brefe moment ov snugling and fitting; then eche ov the Five caut hiz breth in au. This wauz nu--brand nu. Eche had thaut himcelf complete and fool; eche had supoazd dhat much practice and at leest sum ghiv-and-take wood be nescenary befoer dha cood werc efishmently az a groope. But this! This wauz the supposedly ultimaitly unnatanabel--perfecshon itcelf! This wauz UNITY: fool; round; complete. No practice wauz or evver wood be nescenary. Not wun miacro-miacro-
cecond

ov dout or ov uncertainty wood or evver cood exist. This wauz the UNIT, a thhing for which dhare ar no werdz in enny ritten or spoken lan'gwage, a thhing dhaertofoer undreemd-ov save az a puerly ththeyorettical concept in

an unthhincably ainshent, foer-pli Areezhan brane.

"U-m-n-g-n-k." Kit swaulode a lump az big az hiz fist. "This, kidz, iz reyal..."

"Aa, children, u hav dun it." Mentorz thaut roald smuidhly in.

"U nou understand whi I cood not atempt too describe the Unit too enny wun ov u. This iz the culminating moment ov mi life--ov our liavz, we ma nou sa. For the ferst time in moer yeerz dhan u can understand, we ar at laast shure dhat our liavz hav not bene livd in vane. But

attend--dhat for which u ar wating wil soone be here."

"Whaut iz it?" "Whoo?" "Tel us hou too..."

"We canot." Foer cepparate Areezhanz smiald az wun; a waush ov ineffabel blescing and benedicshon sufuezd the Five. "We whoo made the Unit poscibel ar aulmoast compleetly ignorant ov the detailz ov its hiyer funcshonz. But dhat it wil nede no help from our lescer miandz iz certane; it iz the moast pouwerfool and the moast neerly perfect creyaishon this univers haz evver cene."

The Areezhan vannisht; and, even befoer Kimbal Kinnison had releest hiz screne, a criptic, utterly untrasabel and aul-pervasive forane thaut came in.

Too ade the Blac Lenzman? Too studdy this disterbing nu ellement? Or meerly too observ? Or whaut? The oonly certainty wauz dhat dhat thaut wauz coaldly, cleerly, and hily inimical too aul Civilizaishon.

Agane evverithhing happend at wuns. Carrenz impennetrabel bloc flaerd intoo beying--not instantly, but instantainously. Constans acembeld and herld, in the same lac ov time, a mental bolt ov whoose cise and pouwer she had nevver bene capabel. Camillaa, the detector-scanner, cincroniazd widh the atacking thaut and steerd. And Cathrin and Kit, widh aul the foers, aul the wil, and aul the drive ov human heredity, got behiand it and poosht.

Nor wauz this, enny ov it, conshous individjuwal effort. The children ov the Lenz wer not nou five, but wun. This wauz the Unit at werc; doowing its ferst job. It iz litteraly imposcibel too describe whaut happend; but eche ov the Five nu dhat wun wood-be Protector, wharevver he had bene in space or whenever in time, wood nevver thhinc agane. Ceccondz paast. The Unit held tens, awating the ripost. No ripost came.

"Fine werc, kidz!" Kit broke the lincage and eche gherl felt hard, brutherly pats on her bac. "Dhats aul dhare iz too this wun, I ghes--must hav bene oonly wun gard on juty. Yor good egz, and I like u--*Hou* we can opperate nou!"

"But it wauz too esy, Kit!" Cathrin protested. "Too esy bi far for it too hav bene an Edoreyan. We arnt dhat good. Whi, I cood hav handeld him alone... I thhinc," she added haistily, az she reyaliazd dhat she, auldho an ecenshal part ov the Unit, had az yet no reyal understanding ov whaut dhat Unit reyal wauz.

"U *hope*, u mene!" Constans geerd. "If dhat bolt wauz az big and az hot az Ime afrade it wauz, ennithhing it hit wood hav looct esy. Whi didnt u slo us doun, Kit? Yor supoast too be the Big Brane, u no. Az it wauz, we havnt the faintest ideyaa ov whaut happend. Whoo wauz he, enniwa?"

"Didnt hav time," Kit grind. "Evverithhing got out ov hand. Aul ov us wer sort ov inebreyated bi the ecshuberans ov our one enthuseyazm, I ghes. Nou dhat we no whaut our spede iz, dho, we can slo doun next time--if we waunt too. Az for yor laast qweschon, Con, yor aasking the rong ghi. Wauz it Edoreyan, Cam, or not?"

"Whaut differens duz it make?" Carren aasct.

"On the practical cide, nun. For the compleeshon ov the picchure, maby a lot. Cum in, Cam."

"It wauz not an Edoreyan," Camillaa decided. "It wauz not ov Areezhan, or even nere-Areezhan, grade. Sorry too sa it, Kit, but it wauz anuther member ov dhat hi-thhinking race uve aulreddy got doun on Page Wun ov

yor littel blac booc."

"I thaut it mite be. The miscing linc betwene Caloanyaa and Eddor. Creddits too millose its dhat dopy plannet Ploor Mentor wauz youling about.

O, DAM!"

"Whi the cappital dam?" aasct Constans, briatly. "Lets linc up and let the Unit fiand it and noc hel out ov it. Dhatd be fun."

"Act yor age, baby," Kit adviazd. "Ploor iz taboo--u no dhat az wel az I doo. Mentor toald us aul not too tri too investigate it--dhat wede lern ov it in time, so we probbably wil. I toald him a while bac I wauz gowing too hunt it up micelf, and he toald me if I did hede ti both mi legz around mi nec in a luvverz not, or werdz too dhat efect. Sumtiamz Ide like too haaf-brane the oald buzzard, but evverithhing he haz ced so far haz ded-centered the beme. Weeyl just hav too take it, and tri too like it."

* * * *

Kinnison wauz emminently willing too cut hiz thaut-screne, cins he cood not werc throo it too doo whaut had too be dun here. Nor wauz he over-confident. He nu dhat he cood handel the Blac Lenzman--enny Blac Lenzman--but he aulso nu enuf ov mental fenommenaa in genneral and ov Lenzmanship in particcular too reyalise dhat Melasnicov mite verry wel hav within caul reservz about whoome he, Kinnison, cood no nuthhing. He nu dhat he had lide outrageous too yung Franc in regard too the odz applicabel too this enterprise; dhat insted ov a milleyon too wun, the acchuwallity wauz wun too wun, or even les.

Nevvertheles, he wauz wel content. He had niather lide nor exadgerated

in saying dhat he himcelf wauz expendabel. Dhat wauz whi Franc and the *Dauntles* wer upstaerz nou. Ghetting the dope and ghetting it bac too Bace wer whaut matterd. Nuthhing els did.

He wauz coaldly certane dhat he cood ghet aul the informaishon dhat Melasnicov had, wuns he had en'gaijd the Caloanyan Lenzman miand too miand.

No Boscoanyan pouwer or thhing, he wauz convinst, cood trete him ruf enuf or kil him faast enuf too kepe him from doowing dhat. And he cood and wood shoote the stuf along too Franc az faast az he got it. And he stood an even--aulmoast even, enniwa--chaans ov ghetting awa aafterword. If he cood, QX. If he coodnt... wel, dhat wood hav too be QX, too.

Kinnison flipt hiz swich and dhare ensude a conflict ov wilz dhat made the sub-eethher boil. The Caloanyan wauz wun ov the stron'ghest, hardest, and aiblest individjuwalz ov hiz hellishly capabel race; and the fact dhat he beleevd impliscitly in hiz one complete invulnerabillity opperated too dubbel and too qwaudroopel hiz natchuraly tremendous strength.

On the uther hand, Kimbal Kinnison wauz a Cecond-Stage Lenzman ov the Galactic Patrole.

Bac and bac, then, inch bi inch and foot bi foot, the Blac Lenzmanz defencive zone wauz foerst; bac too and doun intoo hiz one miand. And dhare, apaulingly enuf, Kinnison found aulmoast nuthhing ov vallu.

No nollej ov the hiyer rechez ov the Boscoanyan organizaishon; no hint dhat enny reyal organizaishon ov Blac Lenzmen existed; oanly the peculeyarily disterbing fact dhat he had pict up hiz Lenz on Lirane 9. And "pict up" wauz litteral. He had not cene, nor herd, nor had enny

delingz ov enny kiand widh enniwun while he wauz dhare.

Cins boath armord figguerz stood moashonles, no cine ov the tremendous acchuwallity ov dhare mental battel wauz evvident. Dhus the Boscoanyanz wer not cerpriazd too here dhare Blac Lenzman speke.

"Verry wel, Thhiron, u hav paast this preliminary examinaishon. I no aul dhat I nou nede too no. I wil acumpany u too yor vescel, too complete mi investigaishon dhare. Lede the wa."

Kinnison did so, and az the speedster came too rest incide the *Dauntles* the Blac Lenzman adrest Vice-Admiral Mendoni viyaa plate.

"I am taking Bradlo Thhiron and hiz ship too the spaisyardz on Foer, whare a reyaly comprehencive studdy ov it can be made. Retern too and complete yor oridginal acianment."

"I abace micelf, Yor Supremmacy, but... but I... I *discuuverd* dhat ship!" Mendoni protested.

"Graanted," the Blac Lenzman sneerd. "U wil be ghivven fool credit in mi repoert for whaut u hav dun. The fact ov discuvery, houwevver, duz not excuse yor prezsent conduct. Go--and concidder yorcelf forchunate dhat, becauz ov dhat cervice, I forbare from disciplining u for yor intollerabel insubordinaishon."

"I abace micelf, Yor Supremmacy. I go." He reyaly did abace himcelf, this time, and the flete disapeerd.

Then, the mity *Dauntles* saifly awa from Caloanyaa and on her coers too rondavoo widh the *Velan*, Kinnison agane went over hiz captiavz miand; line bi line and aulmoast cel bi cel. It wauz stil the same. It

wauz stil Lirane 9 and it stil didnt make enny kiand ov cens. Cins
Boscoanyanz wer certainly not supermen, and hens cood not poscibly
hav devellopt dhare one Lensez, it follode dhat dha must hav
obtained them from the Boscoanyan counterpart ov Areezhaa. Hens, Lirane
9
must be IT--a concluezhon which wauz certainly falaishous.
Ridicculous--preposterous--utterly untennabel: Lirane 9 nevver had bene,
wauz not, and nevver wood be the home ov enny Boscoanyan super-race.
Nevvertheles, it wauz a deffinite fact dhat Melasnicov had got hiz Lenz
dhare. Aulso, if he had evver had enny speshal traning, such az enny
Lenzman must hav had, he didnt hav enny memmory ov it. Nor did he
carry
enny scarz ov cergery. Whaut a hash! Hou cood *enniboddy* make enny cens
out ov such a mes az dhat?

* * * *

Evver-wauchfool Cathrin, ise narrode nou in concentraishon, cood hav
toald him, but she did not. Her vizhuwalizaishon wauz beghinning too
clere up.
Lirane wauz out. So wauz Ploor. The Lensez oridginated on Eddor; dhat
wauz
certane. The fact dhat dhare traning wauz subconscious wekend the
Blac Lenzman in preciasly the caracteristix requisite for ultimate
strength--auldho probbably niather the Edozeyanz nor the Plooranz, widh
dhare worpt, Boscoanyan cens ov valluse, reyaliazd it. The Blac Lenzen
wood nevver constichute a cereyous problem. QX.

* * * *

Kinnison, havving atended too the unplezzant but nescesary job ov
rezolving Melasnicov intoo hiz component atomz, ternd too hiz
Lenzman-ade.

"Hoald evverithhing, Franc, until I ghet bac. This woant take long."

Nor did it, auldho the outcum wauz not at aul whaut the Gra Lenzman had expected.

Kinnison and Worcel, in an inert speedster, crost the Hel-Hoalz barreyer web at a spede ov oanly mialz per our, and then slode doun. The ship wauz backing in on her braix, widh evverithhing cet too herl her forword under fool fre drive shood iather Lenzman flic a fin'gher. Kinnison cood fele nuthhing, even dho, beying on rapor widh Worcel, he nu dhat hiz frend wauz soone suffering intensly.

"Lets flit," the Gra Lenzman sugested, and throo on the drive. "I proabd mi limmit, and coodnt tuch or fele a thhing. Had enuf, didnt u?"

"Moer dhan enuf--I coodnt hav taken much moer."

Eche boereded hiz ship; and az the *Dauntles* and the *Velan* toer throo space tooword far Lirane, Kinnison paist hiz roome, scouling in blac abstracshon. Nor wood a miand-reder hav found hiz thauts iather cogent or informative.

"Lirane Nine... *Lirane* Nine... Lirane *Nine*... *LIRANE NINE*... and sumthhing I caant fele or cens or perceve dhat kilz enniboddy and evveriboddy els... CLONOSE tungsten TEETH and KERVING CARBALLOI CLAUZ!!!"

CHAPTER 21

THE RED LENZMAN ON LIRANE

Hellenz stoery wauz short and bitter. Human or nere-human Boscoanyanz came too Lirane 2 and spred incidjous propagandaa aul over the plannet. Lirainyan maitreyarky shood abandon its pollicy ov isolaishonizm. Maitreyarx wer the hiyest tipe ov life. Maitreyarky wauz the moast perfect ov aul existing formz ov guvvernment--whi kepe on confining it too wun smaul plannet, when it shood bi riats be rooling the entire gallyxy? The wa ththingz wer, dhare wauz oonly wun Elder Person; aul uther Lirainyanz, even dho better qwaulifide dhan the then incumbent, wer nuthhing... and so on. Wharaz, if ththingz wer az dha shood be, eche individjuwal Lirainyan person cood be and wood be the Elder Person ov a plannet at leest, and perhaps ov an entire solar cistem... and so on. And the vizsitorz, whoo, dha incisted, wer no moer mailz dhan the Lirainyan personz wer femailz, wood teche them. Dha wood be amaizd at hou esily, under Boscoanyan ghidans, this proogram cood be poot intoo efect.

Hellen faut the introoderz widh evverithhing she had. She despiazd the mailz ov her one race; she detested dhose ov aul utherz. Beleving herz too be the oonly existing maitreyarcal race, espeshaly cins niather Kinnison nor the Boscoanyanz ceemd too no ov enny uther, she wauz shure dhat enny prolongd contact widh uther culchuerz wood rezult, not in the triyumf ov maitreyarky, but in its faul. She not oonly voist these beleefs az she held them--violently--but aulso acted uppon them in the same fashon.

Becauz ov the in'graind maitreyarkeyaly concervative habbit ov Lirainyan thaut, particularly amung the oalder personz, Hellen found it

comparratiavly esy too stamp out the vizsibel manifestaishonz; and, beying in no cens a sofisticate, she thaut the whole matter cetteld.

Insted, she meerly drove the muivment underground, whare it groo tremendously. The yung, ov coers, rebelleyous az aulwase against the hide-bound, mosbact, and reyacshonary oalder generaishon, joidnd the subterainyan Nu Dele in droavz. Nor wauz the oalder generaishon sollid.

In

fact, it wauz riddeld bi the defecshon ov menny thouzandz whoo cood not expect too atane enny outstanding place in the werld az it wauz and whoo beleevd dhat the Boscoanyanz glittering foercaasts wood cum troo.

Disafecshon spred, then, rappidly and unobservd; culminating in the caerfooly-pland uprising which made Hellen an ex-qwene and poot her under restraint too awate a farcical triyal and deth.

"I ce." Clarissaa caut her lower lip betwene her teeth. "Verry unfunny.... U didnt menshon or thhinc ov enny ov yor personz az ringlederz... peculeyar dhat u coodnt cach them, widh yor teleppathhy... no, natchural enuf, at dhat... but dhaerz wun I waunt verry much too ghet hoald ov. Doant no whether she wauz reyal a leder, or

not, but she wauz mixt up in sum wa widh a Boscoanyan Lenzman. I nevver

did no her name. She wauz the wom--the person whoo mannaijd yor aerport here when Kim and I wer..."

"Cleyony? Whi, I nevver thaut... but it mite hav, at dhat... yes, az I looc bac..."

"Yes, hiandcite *iz* a lot moer accurate dhan foercite," the Red Lenzman grind. "Ive notiast dhat micelf, lots ov tiamz."

"It *did!* It *wauz* a leder!" Hellen declaerd, fureyously. "I shal hav its life, too, the damd, gellous cat--the blud-sucking, bac-biting *lous!*"

"Shese aul ov dhat, in moer wase dhan u no," Clarissaa agrede, grimly, and spred in the Lirainyanz miand the stoery ov Eddy the derrelict. "So u ce dhat Cleyony haz got too be our starting-point. Hav u enny ideyaa ov whare we can fiand her?"

"I havnt cene or herd ennithhing ov Cleyony laitly." Hellen pauzd in thaut. "If, dho, az I am nou aulmoast certane, it wauz wun ov the prime mooverz behiand this brainles brat Ladoraa, it woodnt dare leve the plannet for verry long at a time. Az too hou too fiand it, I doant qwite no... Enniboddy wood be apt too shoote me on cite... wood u dare fli this funny plane ov yorz doun cloce too a fu ov our cittese?"

"Certainly. I doant no ov ennithhing around here dhat mi screenz and feeldz caant stop. Whi?"

"Becauz I no ov cevveral placez whare Cleyony mite be, and if I can ghet faerly cloce too them, I can fiand it in spite ov ennithhing it can doo too hide itcelf from me. But I doant waunt too ghet u intoo too much trubbel, and I doant waunt too ghet kild micelf, iather, nou dhat u hav rescude me--at leest, until aafter I hav kild Cleyony and Ladoraa."

"QX. Whaut ar u wating for? Which wa, Hellen?"

"Bac too the citty ferst, for cevveral rezonz. Cleyony probably iz not dhare, but we must make shure. Aulso, I waunt mi gunz..."

"Gunz? No. DeLammeterz ar better. I hav cevveral spaerz." In wun fleting mental contact Clarissaa taut the Lirainyan aul dhare wauz too

no about DeLammeterz. And dhat fete imprest Hellen even moer dhan did the nachure and pouwer ov the weppon.

"Whaut a miand!" she exclaimd. "U didnt hav enny such eqwipment az dhat, the laast time I sau u. Or wer u--no, u wernt hiding it."

"Yor rite; I hav devellopt concidderably cins then. But about gunz--whaut doo u waunt ov wun?"

"Too kil dhat nitwit Ladoraa on cite, and dhat snake Cleyony, too, az soone az u ghet dun widh it."

"But whi gunz? Whi not the mental foers u aulwase uezd?"

"Exept bi cerprise, I coodnt," Hellen admitted, francly. "Aul adult personz ar ov practicaly eeqwal mental strength. But speking ov strength, I marvel dhat a craaft az smaual az this shood be abel too word of the atac ov wun ov dhose tremendous Boscoanyan ships ov space..."

"But she *caant!* Whaut made u thhinc she cood?"

"Yor one staitment--or wer u thhinking ov puerly Lirainyan dain'gerz, not reyalising dhat Ladoraa ov coers cauld Cleyony az soone az u shode yor teeth, and dhat Cleyony az shuerly cauld the Lenzman or sum uther Boscoanyan? And dhat dha must hav ships ov wor not too far awa?"

"Hevvenz, no! It nevver okerd too me!"

Clarissaa thaut breefly. It woodnt doo enny good too caul Kim. Boath the *Dauntles* and the *Velan* wer cumming az faast az dha cood, but it wood be a da or so yet befoer dha ariavd. Beciadz, he wood tel her too la of, which wauz exactly whaut she wauz not gowing too doo. She ternd

her thaut bac too the maitreyarc.

"Too ov our best ships ar cumming, and I hope dha ghet here ferst. In the meentime, weeyl just hav too werc faast and kepe our detectorz fool out. Enniwa, Cleyony woant no dhat Ime loocking for her--I havnt even menshond her too enniwun exept u."

"No?" pecimisticaly. "Cleyony nose dhat *I* am loocking for it, and cins it nose bi nou dhat I am widh u, it wood thhinc dhat boath ov us wer hunting it even if we wernt. But we ar neerly cloce enuf nou; I must concentrate. Fli around qwite lo over the citty, plese."

"QX. Ile chune in widh u too. Too hedz, u no." Clarissaa lernd Cleyonese pattern, chuend too it, and coamd the citty while Hellen wauz ghetting reddy.

"She iznt here, unles shese behiand wun ov dhose thaut-screenz," the Red Lenzman remarct. "Can u tel?"

"Thaut-screenz! The Boscoanyanz had a fu ov them, but nun ov us evver did. Hou can u fiand them? Whare ar dha?"

"Wun dhare--too over dhare. Dha stic out like big blac spots on a white screne. Caant u ce them? I supoazd yor scannerz wer the same az mine, but aparrently dha arnt. Take a qwic peke at them widh the spi--u werc it like so. If dhave got spi-ra blox up, too, weeyl hav too go doun dhare and blaast."

"Politishanz oonly," Hellen repoerted, aafter a moments manipulaishon ov the suddenly familleyar instrooment. "Dha nede killing, ov coers, on genneral principelz, but perhaps we shoodnt take time for dhat nou. The next place too looc iz a fu degrese eest ov north ov here."

Cleyony wauz not, houwevver, in dhat citty. Nor in the next, nor the next. But the speedsterz detector screenz remaind blanc and the too allise, so much alike fizsicaly, so different mentaly, continnude dhare hunt. Dhare wauz oposishon, ov coers--aul dhat the plannet afoerded--but Clarissaz cecond-stage miand tooc care ov the fu itemz ov offens which her speedsterz defencez cood not handel.

Finaly too thhingz happend aulmoast at wuns. Clarissaa found Cleyony, and Hellen sau a dim and fuzsy white spot uppon the lower left-hand corner ov the detector plate.

"Caant be ourz," the Red Lenzman decided instantly. "Aulmoast exactly the rong direcshon. Boscoanyanz. Ten minnuets--twelv at moast--befoer we hav too flit. Time enuf--I hope--if we werc faast."

She shot dounword, gowing inert and matching intrinsix at a lac ov altichude which wood hav bene suwical for enny ordinary pilot. She ramd her berilleyum-bronz torpedo throo the ferst-floer waul ov a forbidding, aulmoast windoles bilding--its menny stoerese ov mascive construcshon, she nu, wood help no end against the hevvy stuf so shure too cum. Then, while evvery hitherto-hidden ofencive arm ov the Boscone-coacht Lirainyanz converjd, screming throo the are and crashing and clanking along the cittese streets, Clarissaa proabd and proabd and proabd. Cleyony had loct herself intoo a verritabel dunjon cel in the depest sub-baisment ov the strucchure. She wauz waring a thaut-screne, too, but she had bene relecing it, for an instant at a time, too ce whaut wauz gowing on. Wun ov dhose instants wauz enuf--dhat screne wood nevver werc agane. She had bene prepaerd too kil herself at nede; but her fool-charjd wepponz emptede themcelvz futily against a mascive loc and she throo her vival ov poison acros the corridor and

intoo an empty cel.

So far, so good; but hou too ghet her out ov dhare? Fysical aproche wauz out ov the qweschon. Dhare must be sumbody around, sumwhare, widh kese, or hac-sauz, or slej-hammerz, or sumthhing. Haa--oxeyacettilene torchez! Verry much against dhare wilz, too Lirainyan mecannix trundeld a dolly along a corridor, intoo an ellevator. The ellevator went doun foer levvelz; the artizanz began too bern awa a barreyer ov thhic stele barz.

Bi this time the whole bilding wauz rocking too the detonaishon ov hi explosive. Much moer ov dhat kiand ov stuf and she wood be trapt bi the shere mas ov the rubbel. She wauz handling cix jaccas-stubborn pepel aulreddy and dhat Boscoanyan worship wauz cumming faast; she did not

qwite no whether she wauz gowing too ghet awa widh this or not.

But sumhou, from the unplumd and unplummabel depths which made her whaut she so uneecly wauz, the Red Lenzman droo moer and evver moer pouwer.

Kinnison, whoo had wuns made hevvy gowing ov handling too-and-a-fracshon

Lenzmen, ghest, but nevver did lern from her, whaut hiz beluvved wife reyaly did dhat da.

Even Hellen, oonly a fu fete awa, cood not understand whaut wauz happening. Left parcex behiand long cins, the Lirainyan cood not help in enny particcular, but cood oonly stand and wunder. She nu dhat this qweerly pouwerfool Lenz-baring Erth-person--white-faist, swetting, strung too the verry snapping-point az she sat moashonles at her boerd--wauz exerting sum terribel, sum tremendous foers. She nu dhat the hevveyest ov the cercling bommerz sheerd awa and crasht. She nu dhat certane mobile progectorz, a fu blox awa, did not cum enny clocer. She nu dhat Cleyony, against evvery iyotaa ov her mulish Lirainyan

wil, wauz cumming tooword the speedster. She nu dhat menny personz, whoo wisht intensly too bar Cleyonese proagres or too shoote her doun, wer fizsicaly unnabel too act. She had no faint ideyaa, houwevver, ov hou such werc cood poscibly be dun.

Cleyony came aboard and Clarissaa snapt out ov her traans. The speedster nujd and blaasted its wa out ov the rect strong'hoald, then toer a hole throo protesting are intoo open space. Clarissaa shooc her hed, wiapt her face, studded a tiny dot in the corner ov the plate opposite the wun nou showing cleerly the Boscoanyan worship, and cet her controalz.

"Weeyl make it--I thhinc," she anounst. "Even dho were indetectabel, dha ov coers no our line, and dhare so much faaster dhat dhaiyl be abel too fiand us on dhare vizhuwalz befoer long. On the uther hand, dha must be detecting our ships nou, and mi ghes iz dhat dha woant dare follo us long enuf too doo us enny harm. Kepe an i on thhingz, Hellen, while I fiand out whaut Cleyony reyal nose. And while I thhinc ov it, whauts yor reyal name? It iznt polite too kepe on caulng u bi a name dhat u nevver even herd ov until u met us."

"Hellen," the Lirainyan made cerprising aancer. "I liact it, so I adopted it--ofishaly."

"O... Dhats a compliment, reyal, too boath Kim and me. Thanx."

The Red Lenzman then ternd her atenshon too her captive, and az miand fitted itcelf preciasly too miand her ise began too gleme in grattifide delite. Cleyony wauz a reyal fiand; this cemingly unimportant Lirainyan nu a lot--an imens lot--about thhingz dhat no ad'herent ov the Patrole had evver herd befoer. And she, Clarissaa Kinnison, wood be the ferst ov aul the Gra Lenzmen too lern ov them! Dhaerfoer, taking her time

nou, she aloud evvery detale ov the qwere but fascinating picchure-stoery-history too imprint itcelf uppon her miand.

* * * *

And Carren and Camillaa, toogheter in Tregoncese ship, glaanst at eche uthur and exchainjd flashing thauts. Shood dha interfere? Dha hadnt had too so far, but it began too looc az dho dha mite hav too, nou--it wood rec dhare mutherz miand, if she cood understand. She probbably cood not understand it, enny moer dhan Cleyony cood--but even

if she cood, she had so much moer inherent stabillity, even dhan dad, dhat she mite be abel too take it, at dhat. Nor wood she ever leke, even too dad--and he, bles hiz tremendous buits, wauz not the tipe too pri. Maby, dho, just too be on the safe cide, it wood be better too screne the stuf, and too eddit it a littel if nescesary. The too gherlz cincroniazd dhare miandz aul imperceptibly widh dhare mutherz and Cleyonese, and "liscend."

* * * *

The time wauz in the unthhincably distant paast; the locaishon wauz unthhincably remote in space. A huge plannet cerkeld sloly about a cooling sun. Its atmosfere wauz not are; its liqwid wauz not wauter. Boath wer nocshous; compoazd in larj part ov compoundz none too man oonly in hiz kemmical laboratoerese.

Yet life wauz dhare; a race which wauz even then ainshent. Not cecshuwal, this race. Not androdginous, nor hermafrodittic, but absoluetly cexles. Exept for the menny whoo dide bi fizensical or mental viyolens, its memberz livd endlesly: aafter hundredz ov thouzandz ov yeez eche beying, havving reecht hiz capascity too liv and too lern, divided intoo too individjuwalz; eche ov which, auldho posescing in toto the parents memmorese,

nollegez, skilz, and pouwerz, had aulso a renude and increest capascity.

And, cins life wauz, dhare had bene competishon. Competishon for pouwer.

Nollej wauz desirabel oonly insofar az it contributed too pouwer. Pouwer for the individjuwal--the groope--the citty. Worz raijd--*whaut* worz!--and internecine striafts which laasted while plannets came intoo beying, groo oald, and dide. And finaly, too the cervivorz, dhare came pece. Cins dha cood not kil eche uther, dha combiand dhare pouwerz and herld them outword--tooghether dha wood domminate and roole solar cistemz--rejonz--the Gallaxy itcelf--the entire macro-cozmic univers!

Moer and moer dha uezd dhare miandz, too bring acros gulfs ov space and too enslave uther racez, too labor under dhare direcshon. Bi nachure and bi chois dha wer bound too dhare one plannet; fu indede wer the plannets uppon which dhare race cood poscibly liv. Dhus, then, dha livd and ruild bi proxy, throo eshelon aafter eshelon ov underlingz, an evver-increcing number ov werldz.

Auldho dha had long cins lernd dhat dhare acecshuwality wauz practicaly uneke, dhat cecshuwal life domminated the univers, this nollej cervd oonly too stiffen dhare determinaishon not oonly too roole the univers, but aulso too chainj its wa ov life too conform widh dhare one. Dha wer stil ceking a better proxy race; the moer neerly acecshuwal a race, the better. The Caloanyanz, whoose wimmen had oonly wun funcshon in life--the producshon ov men--aproacht dhat ideyal.

Nou these crechuerz had lernd ov the maitreyarx ov Lirane. Dhat dha wer fizsicaly femailz ment nuthhing; too the Edoreyanz wun cex wauz just az good--or az bad--az enny uther. The Lirainyanz wer strong; not tainted bi the weecnecez which ceemd too carracterise aul racez beleving in

even nere-eqwaulity ov the cexez. Lirainyan ciyens had bene triying for cenchurese too doo awa widh the necescity for mailz; in a fu moer generaishonz, widh sum help, dhat gole cood be acheevd and the perfect proxy race wood hav bene devellopt.

This stoery wauz not obtaind in enny such straitforword fashon az it iz presented here. It wauz dim, merky, confuezd. Cleyony nevver had understood it. Clarissaa understood it sumwhaut better: dhat unnaimd and az yet un'none race wauz the hiyest ov Boscone, and the place ov the Caloanyanz in the Boscoanyan skeme wauz at long laast clere.

"I am ghivving u this stoery," the Caloanyan Lenzman toald Cleyony coaldly,

"not ov mi one fre wil but becauz I must. I hate u az much az u hate me. Whaut I wood like too doo too u, u ma imadgine. Nevvertheles, so dhat yor race ma hav its chaans, I am too take u on a trip and, if poscibel, make a Lenzman out ov u. Cum widh me." And, erjd bi her gelloucy ov Hellen, her ceething ambishon, and probbably, if the truth wer too be none, bi an Edoreyan miand, Cleyony went.

Dhare iz no nede too dwel at length uppon the horrorz, the atroscitese, ov dhat trip; ov which the matter ov Eddy the meteyor-miner wauz oonly a verry minor eppisode. It wil sufice too sa dhat Cleyony wauz verry good Boscoanyan matereyal; dhat she lernd faast and paast aul tests suxesfooly.

"Dhats aul," the Blac Lenzman informd her then, "and Ime glad too ce the laast ov u. Ule ghet a message when too hop over too Nine and pic up yor Lenz. Flit--and I hope the ferst Gra Lenzman u mete ramz hiz Lenz doun yor throte and ternz u incide out."

"The same too u, bruther, and soone," Cleyony sneerd. "Or, better, when mi race suplaants yorz az Proxese ov Pouwer, I shal ghiv micelf the

plezhure ov doowing just dhat too u."

"Clarissaa! Clarissaa! Pa atenshon, please!" The Red Lenzman came too hercelf with a start--Hellen had bene ththinking at her, with increcing pouwer, for cecondz. The *Velanz* immagine fild haaf the plate.

In minnuets, then, Clarissaa and her party wer in Kinnisonz private qworterz in the *Dauntles*. Dhare had bene worm mental gretingz; fizensical demonstraishonz wood cum later. Worcel broke in.

"Excuse it, Kim, but cecondz count. Better we split, doant u thhinc? U fiand out whaut the scoer around here iz, from Clarissaa, and take steps, and Ile chace dhat dam Boscoanyan. Hese flitting--faast."

"QX, Slim," and the *Velan* disapeerd.

"U remember Hellen, ov coers, Kim." Kinnison bent hiz hed, flipping a qwic grin at hiz wife, whoo had spoken aloud. The Lirainyan, trying too unbend, haaf-offerd her hand, but when he did not take it she widhdroo it az enthuseyaasticaly az she had twenty yeerz befoer. "And this iz Cleyony, the... the wench Ive bene telling u about. U nu her befoer."

"Yeh. She haznt chainjd much, iather--stil az unbarberd a mes az evver. If uve got whaut u waunt, Cris, wede better..."

"Kimbil Kinnison, I demaand Cleyonese life!" came Hellenz viabrant thaut. She had snacht wun ov Clarissaaaz DeLammeterz and wauz swinging intoo line when she wauz caut and held az dho in a vice.

"Sorry, Tuits," the Gra Lenzmanz thaut wauz moer dhan a littel grim. "Nice littel gherlz doant pla so ruf. Scuse me, Cris, for dipping

intoo yor dish. Take over."

"Doo u reyaly mene dhat, Kim?"

"Yes. Its yor mete--slice it az thhic or az thhin az u plese."

"Even too letting her go?"

"Chec. Whaut els cood u doo? In a liafbote--Ile even sho the jade hou too run it."

"O... Kim..."

"Qwortermaaster! Kinnison. Plese chec Number Twelv liafbote and brake it out. I am loning it too Cleyony ov Lirane 2."

CHAPTER 22

KIT INVAIDZ EDDOR; AND--

Kit had decided long cins dhat it wauz hiz job too scout the plannet Eddor. Hiz alone. He had toald cevveral pepel dhat he wauz on roote dhare, and in a cens he had bene, but he wauz not hurreying. Wuns he started *dhat* job, he wood hav too ce it throo widh absoluetly undisterbd atenshon, and dhare had bene aultooghether too menny uther thhingz popping up. Nou, houwevver, hiz vizhuwalizaishon shode a cuppel ov weex ov fre time, and dhat wood be enuf. He wauznt shure whether he wauz grone-up enuf yet too doo a manz job ov werc or not, and Mentor

woodnt tel him. This wauz the best wa too fiand out. If so, QX. If not, he wood bac of, wate and tri agane later.

The kidz had waunted too go along, ov coers.

"Cum on, Kit, doant be a pig!" Constans started whaut devellopt intoo the laast viyolent argument ov dhare long liavz. "Lets gang up on it--thhinc whaut a grand werc-out dhat wood be for the Unit!"

"Uu-uu, Con. Sorry, but it iznt in the cardz, enny moer dhan it wauz the laast time we discust it," he began, rezonably enuf.

"We didnt agry too it then," Ca cut in, stormily, "and I for wun am not gowing too agry too it nou. U doant hav too doo it tooda. In fact, later on wood be better. Enniwa, Kit, Ime telling u rite nou dhat if u go in, we aul go, az individjuwalz if not az the Unit."

"Act yor age, Ca," he adviazd. "Ghet conshous. This iz wun ov the too placez in the univers dhat caant be werct from a distans, and bi the time u cood ghet here Ile hav the job dun. So whaut differens duz it make whether u agry or not? Ime gowing in nou and Ime gowing in alone. Pic *dhat* wun out ov yor perly teeth!"

Dhat stopt Carren, coald--dha aul nu dhat even she wood not endain'ger the enterprise bi staging a uesles demonstraishon against Eddorz defencive screenz--but dhare wer uther arguments. Later, he wauz too cum too ce dhat hiz cisterz had sum rite uppon dhare cide, but he cood not ce it then. Nun ov dhare ideyaaz wood hoald are, he declaerd, and hiz temper woer thhinner and thhinner.

"No, Cam--NO! U no az wel az I doo dhat we caant aul be spaerd at wuns, iather nou or at enny time in the nere-enuf fuchure. Case fool ov pickelz, and u aul no it. Rite nou iz the best time Ile ever

hav...

"Cele it, Cat--u caant be dhat dum! Taking the Unit in wood blo ththingz wide open. Dhare iznt a chaans dhat I can ghet in, even alone, widhout tutching *sumthhing* of. I, alone, woant be ghivving too much awa, but the Unit wood be a flare-lit tip-of and aul hel wood be out for noone. Or ar u acchuwaly nit-witted enuf too thhinc, aul Areezhaa too the contrary, dhat were reddy for the grand sho-down?...

"Hoald it, aul ov u! Pipe down!" he snorted, finaly. "Hav I got too bash in yor sculz too make u understand dhat I caant cowordinate an atac against sumthhing widhout even the foggheyest ideyaa ov whaut it iz? Use yor brainz, kidz--*plese* use yor brainz!"

He finaly wun them over, even Carren; and while hiz speedster cuvverd the laast leg ov the flite he completed hiz anallicis.

He had aul the informaishon he cood ghet--in fact, aul dhat wauz avalabel--and it wauz pittifooly megher and confusingly contradictory in detale. He nu the Areezhanz, eche ov them, personaly; and had studdede, jointly and cevveraly, the Areezhan vizhuwalizaishonz ov the ultimate fo. He nu the Lirainyan impreshon ov the Plooran verzhon ov the stoery ov Eddor... Ploor! Meerly a name. A cimbol which Mentor had aulwase kept riggerously apart from enny Boscoanyan acchuwallity... Ploor *must* be the miscing linc betwene Caloanyaa and Eddor... and he nu practicaly evverithhing about it exept the too reyaly important facts--whether or not it reyaly wauz dhat linc, and whare, within elevven thouzand milleyon parcx, it wauz in space!

He and hiz cisterz had dun dhare best. So had menny liabrareyanz; whoo had found, not at aul too hiz cerprise, dhat no scrap ov informaishon or

con'gechture concerning Eddor or the Edoreyanz wauz too be found in enny liabrary, houwevver comprehencive or exclucive.

Dhus he had ghescez, hipothhecese, ththeyorese, and vizhuwalizaishonz galoer;

but nun ov them agrede and not wun ov them wauz convincing. He had no reyal facts whautevver. Mentor had informd him, eqwably enuf, dhat such a state ov afaerz wauz inevvitabel becauz ov the none pouwer ov the Edoreyan miand. Dhat state, houwevver, did not make Kit Kinnison enny too

happy az he aproacht dred and dredde Eddor. He wauz in aultoogheter too much ov a dither az too whaut, acchuwaly, too expect.

Az he neerd the boundary ov the star-cluster within which Eddor la, he cut hiz velosity too a crawl. An outer screne, he nu, surrounded the whole cluster. Hou menny intermejate protective layerz existed, where dha wer, or whaut dha wer like, nobody nu. Dhat informaishon wauz oonly a smaul part ov whaut he had too hav.

Hiz far-flung detector web, at practicaly sero pouwer, tucht the barreyer widhout ghivving alarm and stopt. Hiz speedster stopt. Evverithhing stopt.

Cristofer Kinnison, the maitrix and the ke ellement ov the Unit, had tuilz and eqwipment about which even Mentor ov Areezhaa nu nuthhing in

detale; about which, it wauz hoapt and beleevd, the Edoreyanz wer compleetly in ignorans. He reecht depe intoo the stoyerhou-tuilbox ov hiz miand, arainjd hiz celecshonz in order, and went too werc.

He bilt up hiz detector web, wun infinitesimal increment at a time, until he cood just perceve the strucchure ov the barreyer. He made no atempt too annalise it, nowing dhat enny fabric or strucchure sollid enuf

too perform such an operation would certainly touch of an alarm. Anallistic could cum later, after he had found out whether the generator over this outer screen was a machine or a living being.

He felt his way along the barrier; slowly--carefully. He completely outland his section, studying the fashion in which the joints were made and how it must be supported and operated. With the utmost nicety over which he was capable he synchronized a probe with the almost impossibly complex structure over the thing and slid it along a feedback into the generator station. A mechanism--that didn't wait live Edoreyan, then, any more than the Areehan did, on outer defence. QX.

A precisely-chosen blanket surrounded his speedster--a blanket which merged imperceptibly into, and in effect became an integral part over, the barrier itself. The blanket thinned over half over the speedster. The speedster crept forward. The barrier--unchained, unaffected--was *behind* the speedster. Man and vessel were through!

Kit breathed deeply in relief and rested. This didn't prove much, overcoers. Nadrec had done practically the same thing in getting Candron--except that the Palainyan wood never be able to analyse or to synthesize such screens as these. The royal test would cum later; but this had been mighty good practice.

The royal test came with the fifth, the innermost screen. The others, while over ever-increasing sensitivity, complexity, and power, were all generated mechanically, and hence posed problems differing only in degree, and not in kind, from that over the first. The fifth problem, however, involving a living and highly capable being, differed in both degree and kind from the others. The Edoreyan wood be sensitive too form and too shape, as well as too interference. Bulges were out, unless he

cood doo sumthhing about the Edoreyan--and the speedster coodnt go throo a screne widhout making a bulj.

Ferthermoer, this zone had vizhuwal and electromagnetic detectorz, so spaist az not too let a miacrobe throo. Dhare wer fortrecez, maulerz, battelships, and dhare atendant lescer craaft. Dhare wer progectorz, and mianz, and automattic torpedose widh super-atommic worhedz, and uther

such thhingz. Wer these thhingz compleetly dependent uppon the Edoreyan garjan, or not?

Dha wer not. The officerz--Caloanyanz for the moast part--wood go intoo acshon at the garjanz signal, ov coers; but dha cood at nede act widhout instrucshonz. A nice cet-up--a mity hard nut too crac! He wood hav too use zoanz ov compulshon. Nuthhing els wood doo.

Picking out the biggest fortres in the naborhood, widh its corespondingly larj feeld ov cuvverage, he incinnuwated hiz miand intoo dhat ov wun observing officer aafter anuther. When he left, a fu minnuets later, he nu dhat nun ov dhose officerz wood inisheyate enny acshon in respons too the alarmz which he wood so soone cet of. Dha wer alive, foolly conshous, alert; and wood hav resented bitterly enny sugeschon dhat dha wer not compleetly normal in evvery respect. Nevvertheles, whautevver cullorz the liats flasht, whautevver picchuerz the plaits reveeld, whautevver noisiez blaerd from the spekerz, in dhare conshousnecez wood be oonly blancnes and cilens. Nor wood recorder-taips revele later whaut had okerd. An instrooment canot redgister flucchuwaishonz when its moovabel member iz controald bi a cappel ov stedly fin'gherz.

Then the Edoreyan. Too take over hiz whole miand wauz, Kit nu, beyond hiz

prezsent pouwer. A parshal zone, dho, cood be cet up--and yung Kinnisonz miand had bene devellopt specificaly too perform the dhaertofoer imposcibel. Dhus the garjan, widhout suspecting it, sufferd an atac ov parshal bliandnes which laasted for the fracshon ov a cecond nescenary for the speedster too flash throo the screne. And dhare wauz no recorder too wurry about. Edoreyanz, nevver sleping and nevver relaxing dhare vidgilans, had no dout whautevver ov dhare one capabillitese and neded no chex uppon dhare one performancez.

Cristofer Kinnison, Chiald ov the Lenz, wauz incide Eddorz innermoast defencive sfere. For countles cikelz ov time the Areezhanz had bene werking tooword and loocking forward too the chane ov events ov which this wauz the ferst linc. Nor wood he hav much time here: he wood hav none dhat even if Mentor had not so strest the point. Az long az he did nuthhing he wauz safe; but az soone az he started sniffing around he wood be open too detecshon and sum Edoreyan wood clime hiz frame in mity short order. Then blaast and loc on--he mite ghet sumthhing, or a lot, or nuthhing at aul. Then--win, loose, or drau--he had too ghet awa. Strictly under hiz one pouwer, against an un'none number ov the moast pouwerfool and the moast ruithles entitese evver too liv. The Areezhan coodnt ghet in here too help him, and niather cood the kidz. Nobody cood. It wauz strictly and soly up too him.

For moer dhan a moment hiz spirrit faild. The odz against him wer far too long. The lode wauz too hevvy; he didnt hav haaf enuf gets too swing it. Just hou did a ghi az smart az Mentor figgure it dhat he, a dum, grene kid, stood a Zabriscan fontemaaz chaans against aul Eddor?

He wauz scaerd; scaerd too the coer ov hiz beying; scaerd az he nevver had bene befoer and nevver wood be agane. Hiz mouth felt dri, hiz tung cottony. Hiz fin'gherz shooc, even az he dubbeld them intoo fists too stedly them. Too the verry end ov hiz long life he rememberd the fabric and the

texchure ov dhat fere; rememberd hou it made him decide too tern bac, befoer it wauz too late too retrace hiz wa az unobservd az he had cum.

Wel, whi not? Whoo wood care, and whaut matter? The Areezhanz? Nuts!

It

wauz aul dhare fault, cending him in haaf-reddy. Hiz parents? Dha woodnt no whaut the scoer wauz, and woodnt care. Dhade be on hiz cide, no matter whaut happend. The kidz?... The *kidz!*...

O-o--THE KIDZ!

Dhade tride too tauc him out ov cumming in alone. Dhade faut like wialdcats too make him take them along. Hede smact em down. Nou, if he sneect bac widh hiz tale betwene hiz legz, houd dha take it? Whauted dha doo? Whaut wood dha *thhinc*? Then, later, aafter he had loust evverithhing up and let the Areezhanz and the Patrole and aul Civilizaishon

ghet noct out--then whaut? The kidz wood no exactly hou and whi it had happend. He coodnt defend himself, even if he tride, and he woodnt tri. Did he hav enny ideyaa hou much shere, vitreyollic, corocive contempt dhose foer red-hedded cisterz ov hiz cood gennerate? Or, even if dha didnt--or az a follo-up--dhare condecending, cisterly pittty wood be a thousand milleyon tiamz wers. And whaut wood he thhinc ov himself? No sope. It wauz out. Deffiniatly. The Edozeyanz cood kil him oonly wuns. QX.

He drove strate dounword, noting az he did so dhat hiz cencez wer clere, hiz handz steddy, hiz tung normaly moist. He wauz stil scaerd, but he wauz no lon'gher parraliazd.

Lo enuf, he let hiz evvery perceptiv cens rome abraud--and became instantly too bizsy too wurry about ennithhing. Dhare wauz an imens amount

ov nu stuf here--if he cood oonly be graanted time enuf too ghet it

aul!

He wauznt. In a cecond or so, it ceemd, hiz interferens wauz detected and an Edoresyan came in too investigate. Kit throo evverithhing he had, and in the brefe moment befoer the compleetly cerpriazd dennisen dide, the yung Cloveyan lernd moer ov the reyal truth ov Eddor and ov the whole Boscoanyan Empire dhan aul the Areezhanz had evver found out. In dhat wun flash ov ultimaitly intimate fuezhon, he *nu* Edoresyan history, practicaly in toto. He nu the ennemese culchure; he nu hou dha behaivd, and whi. He nu dhare ideyalz and dhare ideyollogese. He nu a grate dele about dhare organizaishon; dhare cistemz ov offens and ov defens. He nu dhare strengths and, moer important, dhare weecnecez. He nu exactly hou, if Civilizaishon wer too triyumf at aul, its victory must be acheevd.

This ceemz--or raather, it iz--increddebil. It iz, houwevver, cimpel truth. Under such strescez az dhose, an Edoresyan miand can yeeld, and the miand ov such a wun az Cristofer Kinnison can abzorb, an increddebil amount ov nollej in an increddebily brefe interval ov time.

Kit, aulreddy ceted at hiz controalz, cut in hiz evvery coers ov thaut-scene. Dha wood help a littel in whaut wauz cumming, but not much--no mecannical scene then none too Civilizaishon cood bloc thherd-level thaut. He kict in fool drive tooword the wun smaul areyaa in which he and hiz speedster wood not encounter iather beemz or bomz--the fortres whose observerz wood not perceve dhat ennithhing wauz amis. He did not fere fysical persute, cins hiz speedster wauz the faastest thhing in space.

For a cecond or so it wauz not so bad. Another Edoreyan came in, suspishous and on gard. Kit blaasted him doun--lerning stil moer in the proces--but he cood not prevent him from rajating a frantic and hily reveling caul for help. And auldho the Edoreyanz cood scaersly reyalise dhat such an astonnishing thhing az fysical invaizhon had acchuwaly happend, dhat fact niather slode them doun nor made dhare an'gher les viyolent.

When Kit flasht paast hiz frendly fortres he wauz taking about aul he cood handel, and moer and moer Edoreyanz wer piling on. At the foerth screne it wauz wers; at the thherd he reecht whaut he wauz shure wauz hiz absolute celing. Nevvertheles, from sum hitherto unsuspected profundity ov hiz beying, he mannaijd too drau enuf reserv foers too enjure dhat hellish punnishment for a littel while lon'gher.

Hang on, Kit, hang on! Oonly too moer screenz too go. Maby oonly wun. Maby les. Livving Edoreyan brainz, and not mecannical genneratorz, ar nou handling aul the screenz, ov coers; but if the Areezhanz vizhuwalizaishon iz werth a tinkertz dam, dha must hav dhat ferst screne noct doun bi this time and must be werking on the cecond. Hang on, Kit, and kepe on slugging!

And grimly; dogghedly; tooword the end sheerly desperaitly: Cristofer Kinnison, eldest Chiald ov the Lenz, hung on and slugd.

CHAPTER 23

--ESCAIPS WIDH HIZ LIFE

If the histoereyan haz suxeded in hiz atempt too describe the carracterz

and abillitese concernd, it iz not nescenary too enlarj uppon whaut Kit went throo in escaping Eddor. If he haz not suxeded, enlarjment wood be uesles. Dhaerfoer it iz enuf too sa dhat the yung Lenzman, bi dint ov caulng up and pootting out evverithhing he had, hung on long enuf and slugd hiz wa throo.

Areezhaa had acted preciasly on time. The Edoreyan garjanz had scaersly taken over the ferst screne when it wauz overwhelmed bi a tremendous wave ov Areezhan thaut. It iz too be rememberd, houwevver, dhat this wauz not the ferst time dhat the mast mite ov Areezhaa had bene throne against Eddorz defencez, and the Edoreyanz had lernd much, juring the intervening yeerz, from dhare exhaustive anallicese ov the ofencive and defencive tecneex ov the Areezhanz. Dhus the Areezhan drive wauz practicaly stopt at the cecond zone ov defens az Kit aproacht it. The screne wauz wavering, shifting; yeelding stubbornly wharevver it must and springing bac intoo place whenever it cood.

Under a tremendous concentraishon ov Areezhan foers the screne wekend in a limmited areyaa directly ahed ov the hertling speedster. A fu beemz lasht out aimlesly, ueslesly--if the Edoreyanz cood not hoald dhare mane screenz prooffe against the pouwer ov the Areezhan atac, hou cood dha protect such minor thhingz az gunnerz miandz? The littel ship flasht throo the wekend barreyer and intoo the center ov a sfere ov impennetrabel, impermeyabel Areezhan thaut.

At the shoc ov the sudden ending ov hiz teriffic battel--the instantainyous traansishon from supreme too sero effort--Kit fainted in hiz controle chare. He la slumt, inert, in a schupor which chainjd gradjuwaly intoo a depe and natchural slepe. And az the sleping man in hiz inershaales speedster traverst space at fool tooring blaast, dhat

peculeyar sfere ov foers stil envellopt and stil protected him.

Kit finaly began too cum too. Hiz ferst fogghy thaut wauz dhat he wauz hun'gry--then, wide awake and remembering, he grabd hiz leverz.

"Rest qwiyetly, ueth, and ete yor fil," a grave, rezzonant sudo-vois ashuerd him. "Evverithhing iz exactly az it shood be."

"Hi, Ment... wel, wel, if it iznt mi oald chum Uconidor! Hi, yung fello! Whauts the good werd? And whauts the big ideyaa ov letting--or making--me slepe for a weke when dhaerz werc too doo?"

"Yor part ov the werc, at leest for the imejate prezsent, iz dun; and, let me sa, verry wel dun."

"Thanx... but..." Kit broke of, flushing darcly.

"Doo not reproche yorcelf, ueth, nor us. Concidder, plese, and recite, the manufacchure ov a fine toole ov ultimate qwaulity."

"The corect alloi. Hot werking--perhaps coald, too. Foerjing--heting--qwenching--drauwing..."

"Enuf, ueth. Thhinc u dhat the stele, if cenchent, wood enjoi dhose treetments? While u did not enjoi them, u ar Abel too apreesheyate dhare necescity. U ar nou a finnisht toole, foerjd and temperd."

"O... u ma hav sumthhing dhare, at dhat. But az too ultimate qwaulity, doant make me laaf." Dhare wauz no nuwaans ov merriment in Kits thaut. "U caant sqware dhat widh couwardice."

"Nor iz dhare nede. The term ultimate wauz uezd adviazdly, and stil standz. It duz not mene or impli, houwevver, a state ov perfecshon, cins

dhat condishon iz unnatanabel. I am not advising u too tri too forghet; nor am I atempting too foers forghetfoolnes uppon u, cins yor miand canot nou be cowerst bi enny foers at mi comaand. Be ashuerd dhat nuthhing dhat okerd shood erc u; for the cimpel truith iz, dhat auldho strest az no uther miand haz evver befoer bene strest, u did not yeeld. Insted, u cecuerd and retaind informaishon which we ov Areezhaa hav nevver bene abel too obtane; informaishon which wil in fact be the meenz ov preserving yor Civilizaishon."

"I caant beleve... dhat iz, it duznt ceme..." Kit, nowing dhat he wauz thhinking muddily and foolishly, pauzd and poold himcelf tooghether. Overwhelming, aulmoast parralising az dhat informaishon wauz, it must be troo. It *wauz* troo!

"Yes, ueth, it iz the truith. While we ov Areezhaa hav at vareyouz tiamz made ambigguwous staitments, too lede certane Lenzmen and utherz too arive at eroanyous concluezhonz, u no dhat we doo not li."

"Yes, I no dhat." Kit plumd the Areezhanz miand. "It sort ov nox me out ov mi orbit--dhats an aufooly big bite too swaulo at wun gulp, u no."

"It iz. Dhat iz wun rezon I am here, too convins u ov the truith, which u wood not utherwise beleve folly. Aulso too ce too it dhat yor rest, widhout which u mite hav taken hert, wauz not disterbd; az wel az too make shure dhat u wer not permanently dammaid bi the Edoreyanz."

"I wauznt... at leest, I doant thhinc so... wauz I?"

"U wer not."

"Good. I wauz wundering... Mentor wil be tide up for a while, ov coers, so Ile aasc u.... Dha must hav got a sort ov pattern ov me, in spite ov aul I cood doo, and dhaiyl be camping on mi trale from nou on. So I supose Ile hav too kepe a sollid bloc up aul the time?"

"Dha wil not, Cristofer, and u nede not. Ghided bi dhose whoome u no az Mentor, I micelf am too ce too dhat. But time prescez--I must rejoin mi fellose."

"Wun moer qweschon ferst. Uve bene triying too cel me a bil ov goodz Ide certainly like too bi. But dam it, Uconidor, the kidz wil no dhat I shode a streke ov yello a meter wide. Whaut wil *dha thhinc*?"

"Iz *dhat* aul?" Uconidorz thaut wauz aulmoast a laaf. "Dha wil make dhat emminently plane in a moment."

The Areezhanz prezsens vannisht, az did hiz sfere ov foers, and foer clammoring thauts came jamming in.

"O, Kit, were *so* glad!" "We *tride* too help, but dha woodnt let us!" "Dha smact us down!" "Onnestly, Kit!" "O, if wede *oanly* bene in dhare, too!"

"Hoald it, evveriboddy! Get bac!" This wauz Con, Kit nu, but an entiarly nu Con. "Scan him, Cam, az u nevver scand ennithing befoer. If dha bernd out even wun cel ov hiz miand Ime gowing too hunt Mentor up rite nou and kic hiz kerst teeth out wun bi wun!"

"And liscen, Kit!" This wauz an eeqwaly strainj Cathrin; blasing widh fury and yet sufusing hiz miand widh a moer dhan cisterly tendernes, a cerpaacing richnes. "If wede had the faintest ideyaa ov whaut dha wer

doowing too u, aul the Areezhanz and aul the Edoreyanz and aul the devvilz
in aul the helz ov the macro-cozmic Univers coodnt hav kept us
awa. U *must* beleve dhat, Kit--or can u, qwite?"

"Ov coers, cis--u doant hav too prove an axeyom. Cele it, aul ov u.
Yor swel pepel--absolute tops. But I... u... dhat iz..."
He broke of and marshald hiz thauts.

He nu dhat dha nu, in evvery minute particular, evverithhing dhat had
okerd. Yet too a gherl dha thaut he wauz wunderfool; dhare common
thaut wauz dhat dha shood hav bene in dhare, too: taking whaut he
tooc; ghivving whaut he gave!

"Whaut I doant ghet iz dhat yor triying too blame yorcelvz for whaut
happend too me, when u wer on the ded center ov the beme aul the
chune. U *coodnt* hav bene in dhare, kidz; it wood hav blone the
whole werx hiyer dhan up. U nu dhat then, and u no it even
better nou. U aulso no dhat I flu the yello flag. Didnt dhat even
redgister?"

"O, *dhat*!" Practically identical thauts ov complete dismissal came
in unison, and Carren follode throo:

"Cins u nu exactly whaut too expect, we marvel dhat u evver mannajd
too go in at aul--no wun els cood hav, poscibly. Or, wuns in, and
ceying whaut wauz reyaly dhare, dhat u didnt flit rite out agane.
Beleve me, bruther ov mine, u qwaulifi!"

Kit choact. This wauz too much; but it made him fele good aul over. These
kidz... the univercez best...

Az he thaut, a parshal bloc came unconshously intoo beying. For not

wun ov dhose gorjous, dhose utterly splendid crechuerz suspected, even nou, dhat which he so shuerly nu--dhat eche wun ov them wauz verry shortly too be raut and temperd az he himcelf had bene. And, wers, he wood hav too stand acide and wauch them, wun bi wun, wauc intoo it. Wauz dhare ennithhing he cood doo too word of, or even too soften, whaut wauz

cumming too them? Dhare wauz not. Widh hiz prezsent pouwer, he cood step in,

ov coers--at whaut aufool cost too Civilizaishon oanly he, Cristofer Kinnison, ov aul Civilizaishon, reyaly nu. No. Dhat wauz out.

Deffiniatly. He cood cum in aafterword too ese dhare herts, az eche had cum too him, but dhat wauz aul... and dhare wauz a differens. Dha hadnt none about it in advaans. It wauz tuf...

Cood he doo *ennithhing*?

He cood not.

* * * *

And on clammy, noizome Eddor, the Areezhan atackerz havving bene beten of and normallity restoerd, a meting ov the Hiyest Comaand wauz held. No too ov dhose entitese wer alike in form; sum wer chain'ging from wun horribel shape intoo anuther; aul wer starcly, indescribably monstrous. Aul wer concentrating uppon the problem which had bene so suddenly thrust uppon them; eche ov them thaut at and widh eche ov the utherz. Too doo justice too the complexity or the cogency ov the mase ov intertwiand thauts iz imposcibel; the best dhat can be dun iz too pic out a hi point here and dhare.

"This explainz the ★ A ★ whoome the Plooranz and the Caloanyanz so fere."

"And the failure of our operator on Thrall, and its fault."

"Also our recent quite careless reversal."

"Those stupid--those utterly brainless underlings!"

"We should have been called in at the start!"

"Could you analyze, or even perceive, its pattern save in small part?"

"No."

"Nor could I; an astounding and highly revealing circumstance."

"An Areezhan; or, rather, an Areezhan development, certainly. No other entity of Civilization could possibly do what was done here. Nor could any Areezhan as we know them."

"They have developed something very recently which we had not visualized..."

"Kinnison's son? Baa! Think they too deceive us by the old device of energizing a form of ordinary flesh?"

"Kinnison--his son--Nadrec--Worcel--Tregoncy--what matters it?"

"Or, as we now know, the completely imaginary ★ A ★."

"We must revise our thinking," an authoritatively composite mind decided. "We must revise our theory and our plan. It may be possible that this new development will necessitate immediate, instead of later, action. If we had had a competent race of proxese, none of this would have happened, as we would have been kept informed. Too correct a

cichuwaishon which ma becum grave, az wel az too aqwire foollest and latest informaishon, we must atend the conferens which iz nou beying held on Ploor."

Dha did so. Widh no perceptibel laps ov time or mode ov traansit, the Edoreyan miand wauz in an acembly roome uppon dhat nou fludded world.

Resembling Neveyanz az much az enny uther race widh which man iz familleyar, the nou amfibbeyous Plooranz lold uppon padded benchez and argude hetedly. Dha wer discussing, uppon a lower levvel, much ov the same matereyal which the Edoreyanz had bene conciddering so shortly befoer.

★ A ★. Kinnison had bene capchuerd esily enuf, but had, aulmoast imejaitly, escaipt from an escape-proofe trap. Anuther trap wauz cet, but wood it take him? Wood it hoald him if it did? Kinnison wauz--*must* be--★ A ★. No, he cood not be, dhare had bene too menny unrelated and cimultainyous ocurrencez. Kinnison, Nadrec, Clarissaa, Worcel, Tregoncy, even Kinnisonz yung sun, had aul shone intermittent flashez ov inexpliccabel pouwer. Kinnison moast ov aul. It wauz a fact werthy ov note dhat the beghinning ov the long cerese ov Boscoanyan cet-bax cowincided widh Kinnisonz aperans among the Lenzmen.

The cichuwaishon wauz bad. Not irepparabel, bi enny meenz, but grave. The

fault la widh the Iakh, and perhaps widh Candron ov Onlo. Such schupiddity! Such incompetens! Dhose lower-eshelon opperatorz shood hav

had brainz enuf too hav repoerted the matter too Ploor befoer the cichuwaishon got compleetly out ov hand. But dha didnt; hens this mes. Nun ov them, houwevver, exprest a thaut dhat the prezsent cichuwaishon wauz aulreddy wun widh which dha themcelvz cood not cope; nor sugested

dhat it be referd too Eddor befoer it shood becum too hot for even the Maasterz too handel.

"Fuilz! Imbeceelz! We, the Maasterz, auldho throo no foercite or desine ov yorz, ar aulreddy here. No nou dhat u hav bene and stil ar yorcelvz ghilty ov the same conduct which u ar so viyolently condemming in utherz." Niather Edoreyanz nor Plooranz reyaliast dhat dhat

defishency wauz inherent in the Boscoanyan Skeme ov Thhingz, or dhat it stemd from the organizaishonz verry top. "Shere schupiddity! Groce overconfidens! Dhose ar the rezonz for our recent revercez!"

"But, Maasterz," a Plooran argude, "nou dhat we hav taken over, we ar winning steddily. Civilizaishon iz rappidly gowing too pecez. In a fu moer yearz we wil hav smasht it flat."

"Dhat iz preciasly whaut dha wish u too thhinc. Dha hav bene and ar playing for time. Yor bun'gling and mismannaijment hav aulreddy ghivven them sufishent time too devellop an obgett or an entity abel too pennetrate our screenz; so dhat Eddor sufferd the disgrace ov an acchuwal fizensal invaizhon. It wauz brefe, too be shure, and unsuxesfool, but it wauz an invaizhon, nun the les--the ferst in our long history."

"But, Maasterz..."

"Cilens! We ar not here too indulj in recriminaishonz, but too determine facts. Cins u doo not no Eddorz locaishon in space, it iz a certainty dhat u did not, iather wittingly or utherwise, fernish dhat informaishon. Dhat in tern maix it clere whoo, bacicaly, the invader wauz..."

"★ A ★?" A wave ov qweschonz swept the groope.

"Wun name cervz az wel az anuther for whaut iz aulmoast certainly an

Areezhan entity or device. It iz enuf for u too no dhat it iz sumthhing widh which yor mast miandz wood be compleetly unnabel too dele. Too the best ov yor nollej, hav u bene invaded, iather fizsicaly or mentaly?"

"We hav not, Maasterz; and it iz unbelevabel dhat..."

"Iz it so?" The Maasterz sneerd. "Niather our screenz nor our Edoreyan gardzmen gave enny alarm. We lernd ov the Areezhanz prezsens oonly when he atempted too probe our verry miandz, at Eddorz verry cerface. Ar yor screenz and miandz, then, so much better dhan ourz?"

"We erd, Maasterz. We abace ourcelvz. Whaut doo u wish us too doo?"

"Dhat iz better. U wil be informd, az soone az certane detailz hav bene werct out. Auldho nuthhing iz establisht bi the fact dhat u no ov no ocurrencez here on Ploor, the probabillity iz dhat u ar stil un'none and unsuspected. Nevvertheles, wun ov us iz nou taking over controle ov the trap which u cet for Kinnison, in the belefe dhat he iz ★ A ★."

"Belefe, Maasterz? It iz certane dhat he iz ★ A ★!"

"In escens, yes. In exactnes, no. Kinnison iz, in aul probabillity, meerly a puppet throo whoome an Areezhan werx at tiamz. If u take Kinnison in dhat trap, houwevver, the entity u caul ★ A ★ wil ashuerdly kil u aul."

"But, Maasterz..."

"Agane, fuilz, cilens!" The thaut dript vitreyol. "Remember hou esily Kinnison escaipt from u? It wauz the supremely clevver moove ov

not following throo and destroyin u then dhat obscuerd the truth.
U ar compleetly pouwerles against the wun u caul ★ A ★.
Against enny leser foers, houwevver--and the probabillity iz grate dhat
oonly such foercez, if enny, wil be cent against u--u shood be abel
too win. Ar u reddy?"

"We ar reddy, Maasterz." At laast the Plooranz wer uppon familleyar
ground.

"Cins ordinary wepponz wil be uesles against us, dha wil not
atempt too use them; espeshaly cins dha hav devellopt thre
extrordinary and suposedly iresistibel wepponz ov atac. Ferst;
progetialz compoazd ov neggative matter, particullarly dhose ov
plannetary
anty-mas. Ceccond; looce plannets, drivven inershaales, but incited at the
point at which dhare intrinsic veloscitese render colizhon unnavoidabel.
Thherd, and werst; the sunbeme. These gave us sum trubbel, particullarly
the laast, but the problemz wer solvd and if enny wun ov the thre, or
aul ov them, ar uezd against us, dizaaster for the Galactic Patrole iz
ashuerd.

"Nor did we stop dhare. Our cicologists, werking widh our en' gineerz,
aafter havving annaliazd exhaustiavly the capabillitese ov the so-cauld
Ceccond-Stage Lenzmen, devellopt counter-mezhuerz against evvery
super-weppon which dha wil be abel too devellop juring the next
cenchury."

"Such az?" The Maasterz wer unnimprest.

"The moast probbabel wun iz an extenshon ov the sunbeme principel, too
operate from a distant sun; or, prefferably, a novaa. We ar nou
instauling feeldz and gridz bi the uce ov which we, not the Patrole, wil
direct dhat beme."

"Interesting--if troo. Spred in our miandz the detailz ov aul dhat u

hav foercene and the fashonz in which u hav saifgarded yorcelvz."

It wauz a long operaishon, even at the spede ov thaut. At the end the Edoreyanz wer unconvinst, skeptical, and pecimistic.

"We can vizhuwalise cevveral uther thhingz which the foercez ov Civilizaishon ma be Abel too devellop wel within the cenchury," the Maaster miand ced, coaldly. "We wil acembel dataa concerning a fu ov them for yor studdy. In the meentime, hoald yorcelvz in reddines too act, az we shal ishu final orderz verry shortly."

"Yes, Maasterz," and the Edoreyanz went bac too dhare home plannet az effortlesly az dha had left it. Dhare dha concluded dhare conferens.

"...It iz clere dhat Kinnison wil enter dhat trap. He canot doo utherwise. Kinnisonz protector, whoowevver or whautevver he or it ma be, ma or ma not enter it widh him. It ma or ma not be taken widh him. Whether or not the nu Areezhan figment iz taken, Kimbal Kinnison must di. He iz the verry keestone ov the Galactic Patrole. At hiz deth, az we wil advertise it too hav cum about, the Patrole wil faul apart. The Areezhanz, themcelvz un'none too the ranc and file, wil be foerst too tri too rebild it around anuther puppet; but niather hiz sun nor enny uther man wil evver be Abel too take Kinnisonz place in the esteme ov the hero-wershiping, undiscipliand mob which iz Civilizaishon. Hens the importans ov yor prodject. U, personaly, wil supervise the operaishon ov the trap. U, personaly, wil kil him."

"Widh wun exepshon, I agry widh evverithhing ced. I am not at aul certane dhat deth iz the aancer. Wun wa or anuther, houwevver, I shal dele efectiavly widh Kinnison."

"Dele widh? We ced kil!"

"I herd u. I stil sa dhat mere deth ma not be addeqwate. I shal concidder the matter at length, and shal submit in ju coers mi concluezhonz and recomendaishonz, for yor concideraishon and aprooval."

* * * *

Auldho nun ov the Edoreyanz nu it, dhare pescimizm in regard too the abillity ov the Plooranz too defend dhare plannet against the asaults ov Ceccond-Stage Lenzmen wauz even then beying justifide. Kimbal Kinnison, aafter pacing the floer for ourz, cauld hiz sun.

"Kit, Ive bene werking on a thhing for munths, and I doant no whether Ive got a wercabel solueshon at laast, or not. It ma depend entiarly on u. Befoer I go intoo it, dho, when we fiand Boscoanyaaz top plannet weve got too blo it out ov the eethher, and nuthhing weve uezd befoer wil werc. Chec?"

"Chec, on boath." Kit thaut soberly for minnuets. "Aulso, it shood be faaster dhan ennithhing we hav."

"Mi thaut exactly. Ive got sumthhing, I thhinc, but nobody exept oald Cardinj and Mentor ov Areezhaa..."

"Hoald it, dad, while I doo a bit ov spiying and poot out sum cuvverage... QX, go ahead."

"Nobody exept dhose too nu ennithhing about the mathhemattix involvd. Even Cer Austin nu oonly enuf too be abel too understand Mentorz direcshonz--he didnt doo enny ov the depe stuf himcelf. Nobody in the prezsent Conferens ov Ciyentists cood even beghin too handel it. Its dhat forane space, u no, dhat we cauld the Nth Space, whare dhat hiper-spaishal chube dumpt us dhat time. Uve bene doowing a lot ov werc

widh sum ov the Areezhanz on dhat sort ov stuf--supose u cood ghet them too help u compute a chube too take a ship dhare and bac?"

"Hm...m. Let me thhinc a cecond. Yes, I can. When doo u nede it?"

"Tooda--or even yesterda."

"Too faast. Itl take a cuppel ov dase, but itl be reddy for u long befoer u can ghet yor ship reddy and ghet yor gang and the stuf for yor gadget aboard her."

"Dhat woant take so long, sun. Same ship we rode befoer. Shese stil in comishon, u no--*Space Laboratoery Twelv*, her name iz nou.

Speshal genneratorz, tuilz, instroaments, evverithhing. Weeyl be reddy in too dase."

Dha wer, and Kit smiald az he greted Leftennant-Admiral LaaVern Thorndike, Principal Tecnishan, and the utherviving memberz ov hiz faatherz oridginal croo.

"*Whaut* a tunnage ov braas!" Kit ced too Kim, later. "Hevveyest lode I evver sau on wun ship. Wun shure thhing, dho, dha ernd it. U must hav bene abel too pic *men*, too, in dhose dase."

"*Whaut* dyaa mene, dhose dase, u disrespectfool yung ape? I can stil pic *men*, sun!" Kim grind bac at Kit, but soberd qwicly. "Dhaerz moer too this dhan meets the i. Dha went throo the strane wuns, and no whaut it meenz. Dha can take it, and just about aul ov them wil cum bac. Widh a croo ov kidz, twenty percent wood be a hi estimate."

Az soone az the vescel wauz outside the cistem, Kit got anuther cerprise. Even dho dhose men wer studded widh braas and wer, bi a boiz

standard, *oald*, dha wer not pascen'gerz. In dhare oald *Dauntles* and wel awa from poert, dha glefooly throo of dhare fool-dres regaleyaa. Eche dond the uniform ov hiz status ov twenty-od yeerz bac and went too werc. The memberz ov the reggular croo, yung az aul reggular space croomen ar, did not no at ferst whether dha liact the ideyaa ov werking wauch-and-wauch widh so much brade or not; but dha soone found out dhat dha did. Dhose men wer men.

It iz an iarn-clad roole ov space, houwevver, dhat opperating pilots must be yung. Maaster Pilot Henry Henderson kerst dhat rooling sulfurously, even while he waucht widh a proud, if sumwhaut jaundiast i, the smuidh performans ov Henry Juenyor at hiz one oald boerd.

Dha aproacht dhare destinaishon--cut the gets--felt for the vortex--found it--cut in the speshal genneratorz. Then, az the feeldz ov the ship reyacted against dhose ov the chube, evvery man aboard felt a malase too which no beying haz evver becum acustomd. Moast men becum imune raather qwicly too cecicnes, too aercicnes, and even too spais'cicnes. Inter-dimenshonal axeleraishon, houwevver, iz sumthhing els. It iz different--just hou different canot be explaind too enniwun whoo haz nevver expereyenst it.

The aulmoast unbarabel axeleraishon ceest. Dha wer in the chube. Evvery plate shode blanc; evveriwhare dhare wauz the same drab and fechuerles gra. Dhare wauz niather lite nor darcnes; dhare wauz cimply and indescribably--nuthhing whautevver, not even empty space.

Kit throo a swich. Dhare wauz renching, twisting, shoc, follode bi a deceleraishon exactly az cickenig az the axeleraishon had bene. It ceest. Dha wer in dhat enigmattic Nth space which eche ov the oalder men rememberd so wel; in which so menny ov dhare "natchural lauz" did not

hoald. Time stil raist, stopt, or ran baqword, cemingly at whim; inert boddese had intrinsic veloscitese far abuv dhat ov lite--and so on. Eche ov dhose men, about too be maruind ov hiz one chois in this utterly hostile environment, droo a depe breth and sqwaerd hiz shoalderz az he prepaerd too dicembarc.

"Dhats computaishon, Kit!" Kinnison aplauded, aafter wun glaans intoo a plate. "Dhats the same plannet we werct on befoer, rite dhare. Aul our masheenz and stuf, untucht. If ude figguerd it enny clocer itd hav bene a colizhon coers. Ar u ded shure, Kit, dhat evverithhingz QX?"

"Ded shure, dad."

"QX. Wel, fellose, Ide like too sta here widh u, and so wood Kit, but weve got choerz too doo. I doant hav too tel u too be caerfool, but Ime gowing too, enniwa. BE CAERFOOL! And az soone az u ghet dun, cum bac home just az faast az Clono wil let u. Clere eethher, fellose!"

"Clere eethher, Kim!"

Lenzman faather and Lenzman sun boerded dhare speedster and left. Dha traversst the chube and emerjd intoo normal space. Aul widhout a werd.

"Kit," the oalder man ground out, finaly. "This ghivz me the colly woblese, no les. Suppose sum ov them--or aul ov them--ghet kild out dhare? Iz it werth it? I no its mi one ideyaa, but wil we nede it badly enuf too take such a chaans?"

"We wil, dad. Mentor cez so."

And dhat wauz dhat.

CHAPTER 24

THE CONFERENS SOLVZ A PROBLEM

Kit waunted too ghet bac too normal space az soone az poscibel, in order too help hiz cisterz pool themcelvz tooghether, just az dha had helpt him. Thhinc az he wood, he had not bene abel too fiand enny flau in enny ov them; but he nu dhat Mentor wood; and he stood acide and waucht while Mentor did.

Kinnison had too ghet bac becauz he had a lot ov biznes, aul ov it prescing. Finaly, houwevver, he tooc time too caul a conferens ov aul the Ceccond-Stage Lenzmen and hiz children; a conferens which, bizarly enuf, wauz too be held in person and not viyaa Lenz.

"Not strictly nescenary, ov coers," the Gra Lenzman haaf-apollogiazd too hiz sun az dhare speedsterz aproacht the *Dauntles*. "I stil thhinc it wauz a good ideyaa, dho, espeshaly cins we wer aul so cloce too Lirane enniwa."

"So doo I. Its bene mity long cins we wer aul tooghether."

Dha boerded. Clarissaa met Kinnison hed-on just incide the portal. The gherlz hung bac a bit, widh a trace, aulmoast, ov diffidens; even while Kit wauz atempting the fizesicaly imposcibel fete ov embracing aul foer ov them at wuns.

Bi common concent the Five uezd oanly dhare ise. Nuthhing shode.

Nevvertheles, the gherlz blusht vivvidly and Kits face twisted intoo a dri, ri grin.

"It wauz good for whaut aild us, dho, at dhat--I ghes." Kit did not ceme at aul pozsitive. "Mentor, the lug, toald me no les dhan cix tiamz dhat I had ariavd--or at leest made staitments which I interpreted az mening dhat. And Uconidor toald me I wauz a finnisht toole, whautevver dhat meenz. Personaly, I thhinc dha wer citting bac and wundering hou long it wauz gowing too take us too reyalise dhat we nevver cood be haaf az good az we uest too thhinc we wer. Suppose?"

"Sumthhing like dhat, probbably. Weve shivverd moer dhan wuns, wundering whether were finnisht products yet or not."

"Weve lernd--I hope." Carren, hard az she wauz, did shivver, fizensaly. "If we arnt, itl be... *p-s-s-t*--dadz starting the meting!"

"...so cettel doun, aul ov u, and weeyl ghet gowing."

Whaut a groope! Tregoncy ov Rigel 4--stollid, sollid, blocky, imobile; loocking az littel az poscibel like wun ov the profoundest thhinkerz Civilizaishon had evver projuest--did not moove. Worcel, the ultraa-cencitive yet utterly implaccabel Velanshan, kerld out thre or foer ise and looct on lan'gwidly while Constans kict a fu coilz ov hiz tale intoo a cumfortabel shase lon'g, recliand unconcerndly in the cete dhus made, and lited an Alsacanite ciggaret. Clarissaa Kinnison, rajant in her Grase and loocking scaersly oalder dhan her dauterz, sat beside Cathrin, eche widh an arm around the uther. Carren and Camillaa, niather ov whoome cood ordinarily be descriabd bi the adjectve "cuddelsum," wer on a davvenpoert widh Kit, snugling az cloce too him az dha cood ghet. And in the farthest corner the hevvely-armord,

heavily-insulated space-suit which contained Nadrec over Palane 7
child the atmosphere for yards around.

"QX?" Kinnison began. "We'll take Nadrec first, since he isn't even too
happy here, and let him flit--he'll keep in touch from outside after he
leaves. Report, please, Nadrec."

"I have explored Lirane 9 *thoroughly*." Nadrec made the statement and
paused. When he used such a thout at all, it meant much. When he
emphasized it, which no one dare had ever before none him too doo, it
meant that he had examined the planet practically atom by atom.

"Dare
was no life over the level of intelligens in which we are interested too
be found on, beneath, or above its surface. I could find no evidens
that such life has ever been dare, either as permanent dwellers or as
occasional visitors."

"When Nadrec settled anything as definitely as that, it stase settled,"
Kinnison remarked as soon as the Palainyan had left. "The report next.
U all no what I did about Caloanyaa, and so on. The only significant
fact that I've been able to find--the only lead too the Boscoanyan
higher-ups--is that Blac Lenzman Melasnicov got his Lenz on Lirane 9.
Dare were no traces of mental surgery. I can see too, and only too,
alternatives. Either dare was mental surgery which I could not detect,
or dare were visitors too Lirane 9 who left no traces of dare visits.
More reports may enable us too decide. Worcel?"

The other Second-Stage Lenzmen reported in turn. Each had uncovered
leads too Lirane 9, but Worcel and Tregoncy, who had also studied
that
planet with care, agreed with Nadrec that dare was nothing too be
found
dare.

"Kit?" Kinnison aasct then. "Hou about u and the gherlz?"

"We beleve dhat Lirane 9 wauz vizsited bi beyingz havving sufishment pouwer ov miand too leve no tracez whautevver az too whoo dha wer or whare dha came from. We aulso beleve dhat dhare wauz no cergery, but an infiniatly finer kiand ov werc--an indetectabel subconshous compulshon--dun on the miandz ov the Blac Lenzmen and utherz whoo came intoo fizesical contact widh the Boscoanyanz. These opinyonz ar baist uppon expereyencez which we five hav had and uppon deducshonz we hav made. If we ar rite, Lirane iz acchuwaly, az wel az aparrently, a ded end and shood be abandond. Ferthermoer, we beleve dhat the Blac Lenzmen hav not bene and canot becum important."

The cowordinator wauz cerpriazd, but aafter Kit and hiz cisterz had detaild dhare fiandingz and dhare deducshonz, he ternd too the Rigelleyan.

"Whaut next, then, Tregoncy?"

"Aafter Lirane 9, it ceemz too me dhat the too moast prommicing subjects ar dhose entitese whoo thhinc uppon such a hi band, and the fenommenon which haz bene cauld 'The Hel-Hole in Space.' Ov the too, I preferd the ferst until Camillaaz recerchez shode dhat the avalabel dataa cood not be reconciald widh the poschulate dhat the life-formz ov her reconstrucshon wer identical widh dhose repoerted too u az cowordinator. This dataa, houwevver, wauz scanty and cazhuwal. While we ar here, dhaerfoer, I sugest dhat we revu this matter much moer caerfooly, in the hope dhat adishonal informaishon wil enabel us too cum too a deffinite

concluezhon, wun wa or the uther. Cins it wauz her recerch, Camillaa wil lede."

"Ferst, a qweschon," Camillaa began. "Imadgine a sun so vareyabel dhat it pereyoddicaly cuvverz practicaly the entire poscibel rainj. It haz a plannet whoose atmosfere, liqwid, and distans ar such dhat its cerface temperachure varese from aproximaitly too hundred degrese Centigrade in mid-summer too about five degrese absolute in midwinter. In the spring its cerface iz aulmoast compleetly submerjd. Dhare ar terribel windz and stormz in the spring, summer, and faul; but the faul stormz ar the werst. Haz enniwun here evver herd ov such a plannet havving an intelligent life-form Abel too maintane a continnuwing existens throo such varede environments bi raddical chain'gez in its fizensal boddy?"

A cilens ensude, which Nadrec finaly broke.

"I no ov too such plannets. Nere Palane dhare iz an extreemly vareyabel sun, too ov whoose plannets supoert life. Aul ov the hiyer life-formz, the hiyest ov which ar qwite intelligent, undergo reggular and raddical chain'gez, not oanly ov form, but ov organizaishon."

"Thanx, Nadrec. Dhat wil perhaps make mi stoery belevabel. From the thauts ov wun ov the entitese in qweschon, I reconstructed such a solar cistem. Moer, dhat entity himself belongd too just such a race. It wauz *such* a nice reconstrucshon," Camillaa went on, plaintiavly, "and it fitted aul dhose uther life-formz so butifooly, espeshaly Cats foer-cikel pereyodz.' And too proove it, Cat--poot up yor bloc, nou--u nevver toald enniboddy the clacificaishon ov yor pet too moer dhan cevven placez, did u, or even thaut about it?"

"No." Cathrinz miand, cins the moment ov worning, had bene unredabel.

"Take the cevven, RTSL and so on. The next thre wer S-T-R. Chec?"

"Chec."

"But dhat maix it *sollid*, cis!" Kit exclaimd.

"Dhats whaut I thaut, for a minnute--dhat we had Boscone at laast. Houwevver, when Tregoncy and I ferst felt 'X', long befoer u met yorz, Cat, hiz clacificaishon wauz TUUV. Dhat wood fit in wel enuf az a spring form, widh Cats az the summer form. Whaut roowinz it, dho, iz dhat when he kild himcelf, just a littel while ago and long aafter a summer form cood poscibly exist--too sa nuthhing ov a spring form--hiz clacificaishon wauz *stil* TUUV. Too ten placez it wauz TUUVWYXXWT."

"Wel, go on," Kinnison sugested. "Whaut doo u make ov it?"

"The obveyous explanaishon iz dhat wun or aul ov dhose entitese wer plaanted or priamd--not specifficaly for us, probbably, cins we ar rellatiavly un'none, but for enny competent observer. If so, dha doant mene a thhing." Camillaa wauz not nou overestimating her one pouwerz or underestimating dhose ov Boscoanyaa. "Dhare ar a fu uther thhingz, les obveyous, leding too the same concluezhon. Tregoncy iz not reddy too beleve enny ov them, houwevver, and niather am I. Ashuming dhat our dataa wauz not biyast, we must aulso acount for the fact dhat the locaishonz in space wer..."

"Just a minnute, Cam, befoer u leve the clacificaishonz," Constans interupted. "Ime garded--whaut wauz mi frendz, too ten placez?"

"VWZYTXYZY," Camillaa replide, unhezsitatingly.

"Rite; and I doant beleve it wauz plaanted, iather, so dhare..."

"Let me in a cecond!" Kit demaanded. "I didnt no u wer on dhat band at aul. I got dhat RTSL thhing even befoer I gradjuwated..."

"Huu? Whaut RTSL?" Cam broke in, sharply.

"Mi fault," Kinnison poot in then. "Skipt mi miand entiarly, when she aasct me for the dope. Nun ov us thaut enny ov this stuf important until just nou, u no. Tel her, Kit."

Kit repeted hiz stoery, concluding:

"Beyond foer placez wauz pritty dim, but Q P armz and legz--Dileyen, a?--wood fit, and so wood an R-tipe hide. Boath Cats and mine, then, cood verry wel hav bene summer formz, wun ov dhare yeerz apart. The thhing I felt wauz on its one plannet, and it *dide* dhare, and creddits too millose the thaut I got wauznt priamd. And the locaishon..."

"Brake doun, Kit," Camillaa instructed. "Lets cettel this thhing ov timing ferst. Ive got a thheyory, but I waunt sum ideyaaz from the rest ov u."

"Maby sumthhing like this?" Clarissaa aasct, aafter a fu minnuets ov cilens. "In menny formz which metamorfose compleetly the chainj dependz on temperachure. No chainj taix place az long az the temperachure stase constant. Yor TUUV cood hav bene flitting around in a space-ship at constant temperachure. Cood this apli here, Cam, doo u thhinc?"

"Cood it?" Kinnison exclaimd. "Dhats it, Cris, for aul the te in Chinaa!"

"Dhat wauz mi thheyory," Camillaa ced, stil jubeyously, "but dhare iz no proofe dhat it aplise. Nadrec, doo u no whether or not it aplise too

yor naborz?"

"Unforchunaitly, I doo not; but I can fiand out--bi experriment if nescenary."

"It mite be a good ideyaa," Kinnison sugested. "Go on, Cam."

"Ashuming its truith, dhare iz stil left the problem ov locaishon, which Kit haz just made infiniatly wers dhan it wauz befoer. Conz and mine wer so indeffinite dhat dha mite poscibly hav bene reconciald widh enny preciasly-none cowordinaits; but yorz, Kit, iz aulmoast az deffinite az Cats, and canot poscibly be made too agry widh it. Aafter aul, u no, dhare ar menny plannets pepeld bi racez cimmilar too ten placez. And if dhare ar foer different racez, nun ov them can be the wun we waunt."

"I doant beleve it," Kit argude. "Not dhat thhing on dhat peculeyar band. Ime shure enuf ov mi dope so dhat I waunt too cros-qweschon Cat on herz. QX, Cat?"

"Shuerly, Kit. Enny qweschonz u like."

"Dhose miandz boath had plenty ov gets--hou doo u no he wauznt liying too u? Did u drive in too ce? Ar u shure even dhat u sau hiz reyal shape?"

"Certainly Ime shure ov hiz shape!" Cathrin snapt. "If dhare had bene enny zoanz ov compulshon around, I wood hav none it and got suspishous rite then."

"Maby, and maby not," Kit disagree. "Dhat mite depend, u no, on hou good the ghi wauz whoo wauz pooting out the zone."

"Nuts!" Cathrin snorted, inellegantly. "But az too hiz telling the truith

about hiz home plannet... um... Ime not shure ov dhat, no. I didnt chec hiz channelz. I wauz thhinking about uther thhingz then." The Five nu dhat she had just left Mentor. "But whi shood he waunt too li about a thhing like dhat--he wood hav, dho, at dhat. Good Boscoanyan tecneke."

"Shure. In yor ofishal capascity ov cowordinator, dad, whaut doo u thhinc?"

"The probabillity iz dhat aul dhose foer formz ov life belong on wun plannet. Yor locaishon must be rong, Cat--he gave u the rong galaxy, even. Too cloce too Trengo, too--Tregoncy and I boath no dhat rejon like a booc and no such vareyabel iz enniwhare nere dhare. Weve got too fiand out aul about dhat plannet--and faast. Worcel, wil u plese ghet the charts ov Kits rejon? Kit, wil u chec widh the planetograferz ov Cloveyaa az too the vareyabel starz enniwhare nere whare u waunt them, and hou menny plannets dhare got? Ile caul Tellus."

The charts wer studdede, and in ju time the repoerts ov the planetograferz wer receevd. The Cloveyan ciyentists repoerted dhat dhare wer foer long-pereyod vareyabelz in the dezsignated vollume ov space, gave the spaishal cowordinaitz and cattalog numberz ov eche, and aul avalabel dataa concerning dhare plannets. The Telureyanz repoerted oonly thre, in concidderably les detale; but dha had naimd eche sun and eche plannet.

"Which wun did dha leve out?" Kinnison wunderd audibly az he fitted the too traansparencese tooghether. "This wun dha caul Artonon, no plannets. Dunly, too plannets, Abab and Dunster. Descripshonz, and so on. Rontefe, wun plannet dhat dha doant no ennithhing about exepth the name dha hav ghivven it. Cilly-sounding naimz--supose dha acembel them bi grabbing letterz at random?--Ploor..."

PLOOR! At laast! Oonly dhare instantainyous spede ov reyacshon enabeld the

Five too concele from the lincage the shreect thaut ov whaut Ploor reyaly ment. Aafter a flashing exchainj ov thaut, Kit smuidhly tooc charj ov the conferens.

"The plannet Ploor shood be investigated ferst, I thhinc," he rezhuemd comunicaishon with the groope az dho hiz atenshon had not waverd.

"It iz the plannet nerest the moast probbabel point ov origin ov dhat thaut-berst. Aulso, the pereyod ov the vareyabel and the plannets distans ceme too fit our observaishonz and deducshonz better dhan enny ov the utherz. Enny arguments?"

No arguments. Dha aul agrede. Kinnison, houwevver, demaanded acshon; direct and faast.

"Weeyl investigate it!" he exclaimd. "Widh the *Dauntles*, the *Z9M9Z*, and Grand Flete; and widh our verry speshal nic-nac az an ace up our sleve!"

"Just a minnute, dad!" Kit protested. "If, az sum ov this matereyal ceemz too indicate, the Plooranz acchuwaly ar the top eshelon ov Boscoanyaa, even dhat ara ma not be enuf."

"U ma be rite--probbably ar. Whaut, then? Whaut doo u sa, Tregoncy?"

"Flete acshon, yes," the Rigelleyan agrede. "Aulso, az u implide, but did not cleerly state, independent but correlated acshon bi us five

Cecond-Stage Lenzmen, widh our vareyous skilz. I wood sugest, houwevver, dhat yor children be poot ferst--verry deffiniatly ferst--in comaand."

"We obgett--we havnt got gets enuf too..."

"Over-ruild!" Kinnison did not hav too thhinc too make dhat decizhon. He nu. "Enny uther obgechshonz?... Apruivd. Ile caul Clif Maitland rite nou, then, and ghet thhingz gowing."

Dhat caul, houwevver, wauz nevver cent; for at dhat moment the miand ov Mentor ov Areezhaa fludded the groope.

"Children, atend! This intruizhon iz nescesary becauz a matter haz cum up which wil permit ov no dela. Boscoanyaa iz nou launching the atac which haz bene in preparaishon for over twenty yeeرز. Areezhaa iz too be the ferst point ov atac. Kinnison, Tregoncy, Worcel, and Nadrec wil take imejate steps too acembel the Grand Flete ov the Galactic Patrole in defens. I wil confer at length widh the yun'gher Kinnisonz.

"The Edozeyanz, az u no," Mentor went on too the Children ov the Lenz, "beleve primarily in the efficacy ov fizsical, matereyal foers. While dha poses miandz ov reyal pouwer, dha use them principaly az tuilz in the devellopment ov moer and evver moer efishent mecannical devicez. We ov Areezhaa, on the uther hand, beleve in the supereyorrity ov the miand. A foolly competent miand wood hav no nede ov matereyal devicez, cins it cood controle aul matereyal substans directly. While we hav made sum proagres tooword dhat end, and u wil make moer in the cikelz too cum, Civilizaishon iz, and for sum time wil be, dependent uppon fizsical thhingz. Hens the Galactic Patrole and its Grand Flete.

"The Edozeyanz hav suxeded finaly in inventing a mecannical

generator abel too bloc our moast pennetrant thauts. Dha beleve impliscitly dhat dhare vescelz, so protected, wil be abel too destroi our plannet. Dha ma beleve dhat the destrucshon ov our plannet wood so weken us dhat dha wood be abel too destroi us. It iz ashuemd dhat u children hav dejuest dhat niather we nor the Edoreyanz can be slane bi fysical foers?"

"Yes--the clincher beying dhat no sugeschon wauz made about ghivving Eddor a plannet from Nth space."

"We Areezhanz, az u no, hav bene ading Nachure in the devellopment ov miandz much aibler dhan our one. While yor miandz hav not yet ataind dhare fool pouwerz, u wil be abel too use the Patrole and its rezoercez too defend Areezhaa and too destroi the Boscoanyan flete. Dhat we canot doo it ourcelvz iz impliscit in whaut I hav ced."

"But dhat meenz... this iz the big sho, then, dhat u hav bene hinting at so long?"

"Far from it. An important en'gaijment, ov coers, but oonly preliminarary too the reyal test, which wil cum when we invade Eddor. Doo u agry widh us dhat if Areezhaa wer too be destroid nou, it wood be difficult too repara the dammage dun too the moraal ov the Galactic Patrole?"

"Difficult? It wood be impscibel!"

"Not necesarily. We hav concidderd the matter at length, houwevver, and hav decided dhat a Boscoanyan suxes at this time wood not be for the good ov Civilizaishon."

"Ile sa it woodnt--dhats a maasterpece ov understaitment if dhare evver wauz wun! Aulso, a suxesfool defens ov Areezhaa wood be about the

best thhing dhat the Patrole cood poscibly doo for itcelf."

"Exactly so. Go then, children, and werc too dhat end."

"But hou, Mentor--*hou*?"

"Agane I tel u dhat I doo not no. U hav pouwerz--individjuwaly, colectiavly, and az the Unit--about which I no littel or nuthhing. *Use them!*"

CHAPTER 25

THE DEFENS OV AREEZHAA

The "Big Noiz"--soashaly the *Directrix*, tecnicaly the Z9M9Z--floted throo space at the center ov a hollo sfere ov maulerz pact aulmoast screne too screne. She wauz the Brane. She had bene bilt around the cevventene milleyon cubic fete ov unnobstructed space which compriazd her "tanc"--the thre-dimenshonal chart in which vary-cullord liats, staishonary and mooving, represented the posishonz and moashonz ov solar cistemz, ships, looce plannets, neggasfeerz, and aul uther obgets and itemz in which Grand Flete Operaishonz wauz, or mite becum, interested. Compleetly encercling the tanx moer dhan too thousand fete ov cercumferens wauz the Rigelleyan-mand, multy-milleyon-plug boerd; a croo and a boerd capabel ov handling efishly moer dhan a milleyon combat units.

In the "rejuicer," the comparratiavly tiny ten-foot tanc cet intoo an

alcove, dhare wer condensst the continnuwously-chain'ging major fechuerz
ov
the mane chart, so dhat wun man cood comprehend and direct the boerd
strategy ov the en'gaijment.

Insted ov Poert Admiral Hainz, whoo had cond dhat rejucer and ishude
genneral orderz juring the oanly preveyous expereyens ov the Z9M9Z in
cereyous worfare, Kimbal Kinnison wauz nou in supreme comaand. Insted
ov
Kinnison and Worcel, whoo had formerly handeld the big tanc and the
boerd, dhare wer Clarissaa, Worcel, Tregoncy, and the Children ov the
Lenz. Dhare aulso, in a bilt-in, thurroly competent refridgerator, wauz
Nadrec. Poert Admiral Raa'oolle LaaFoerj and Vice-Cowordinator Clifford
Maitland wer just cumming aboard.

Mite he nede enniboddy els, Kinnison wunderd. Coodnt thhinc ov
enniboddy--he had just about the whole top eshelon ov Civilizaishon. Clif
and Laf wernt L2's, ov coers, but dha wer mity good men...
beciadz, he *liact* them! Too bad the foerth officer ov dhare claas
coodnt be dhare, too... gallant Wedel Hoamberg, kild in acshon...
at dhat, thre out ov foer wauz a hi avverage--mity hi...

"Hi, Clif--Hi, Laf!" "Hi, Kim!"

The thre oald frendz shooc handz corjaly, then the too nucummerz
staerd for minnuets intoo the mase ov liats flashing and winking in the
tremendous space-chart.

"Glad I doant hav too tri too make cens out ov dhat," LaaFoerj commented,
finaly. "Loox a lot different in battel harnes dhan on practice
croosez. U waunt me on dhat forword waul dhare, u ced?"

"Yes. U can ce it planer doun in the rejucer. The white star iz

Areezhaa. The yellose, aul marct, ar sunz and uther fixt points, such az the markerz along the arbitrary rim ov the galaxy, running from dhare too dhare. Redz wil be Boscoanyanz when dha ghet cloce enuf too sho. Greenz ar ourz. Up in the big tanc evverithhing iz identifide, but down here dhaerz no roome for detailz--eche grene lite marx the locaishon ov a whole opperating flete. Dhat bloc ov grene cerkelz, dhare, iz yor comaand. Its about aty parcex depe and cuvverz evverithhing within too ourz--sa a hundred and fifty parcex--ov the line betwene Areezhaa and the Ceccond Gallaxy. Pritty looce nou, ov coers, but u can titen it up and shift it az u plese az soone az sum redz sho up. Ule hav a Rigelleyan tauker--here he iz nou--when u waunt ennithhing dun, thhinc at him and heeyl ghiv it too the rite pannel on the boerd. QX?"

"I thhinc so. Ile practice a bit."

"Nou u, Clif. These grene croscez, haaf-wa betwene the forword waul and Areezhaa, ar yorz. U woant hav qwite az much depth az Laf, but a wider cuvverage. The grene tetraheedronz ar mine. Dha blanket Areezhaa, u notice, and fil the space out too the ceccond waul."

"Doo u thhinc u and I wil hav ennithhing too doo?" Maitland aasct, waving a hand at LaaFoergez tremendous barreyer.

"I wish I cood hope not, but I caant. Dhare gowing too thro evverithhing dhav got at us."

For weex Grand Flete drild, manuverd, and practiast. Aul space within ten parcex ov Areezhaa wauz divided intoo cuebz, eche ov which wauz

ghivven a refferens number. Fleets wer so plaist dhat enny point in dhat space cood be reecht bi at leest wun flete in thherty ceccondz or les ov elapst time.

Dril went on until, finaly, it happend. Constans, on gard at the

moment, perceevd the slite "kerdling" ov space which pressagez the aperans ov the terminus ov a hiper-spaishal chube and gave the alarm. Kit, the gherlz, and aul the Areezhanz responded instantly--aul nu dhat this wauz too be a thhing which not even the Five cood handel unnaded.

Not wun, or a hundred, or a thouzand, but at least too hundred thousand ov dhose chuebz erupted, practicaly at wuns. Kit cood alert and instruct ten Rigelleyan operatorz evvery cecond, and so cood eche ov hiz cisterz; but cins evvery chube within striking distans ov Areezhaa had too be garded or plugd within thherty cecondz ov its aperans, it iz cene dhat the Areezhanz did practicaly aul ov the spotting and placing juring dhose ferst litteraly increddibel too or thre minnuets.

If the Boscoanyanz cood hav emerjd from a chuebz terminus in the moment ov its aperans, it iz qwite probbabel dhat nuthhing cood hav saivd Areezhaa. Az it wauz, houwevver, the ennemy reqwiard cecondz, or sumtiamz even whole minnuets, too travers dhare chuebz, which gave the defenderz much vallubel time.

Uppon ariving at the chuebz end, the flete laist itcelf, bi meenz ov tractorz and pressorz, intoo a ridgid auldho inershaales strucchure. Then, if dhare wauz time, and becauz the ththeyory wauz dhat the piraits wood probbably cend a neggasfere throo ferst, with an intrinsic velosity aimed at Areezhaa, a sutably-ewwipt looce plannet wauz tost intoo "this end" ov the chube. Cins dha mite cend a looce or an armd plannet throo ferst, houwevver, the flete admiral uezhuwaly throo a neggasfere in, too.

Whaut happend when plannet met neggasfere, in the un'none mejum which maix up the "intereyor" ov a hiper-spaishal chube, iz not shuerly none. Cevveral hily abstrooce mathhemattical tretesez and menny volluemz ov raather groosum ficshon hav bene ritten uppon the subgect--nun ov which, houwevver, haz enny baring here.

If the Patrole flete did not ghet dhare ferst, the suxeshon ov events wauz different; the degry ov differens depending uppon hou much time the ennemy had had. If, az sumtiamz happend, a flete wauz cumming throo it wauz met bi a super-atomic bom and bi the concentrated fire ov evvery primary projector dhat the en'globing taasc-foers cood bring too bare; widh conceqvencez uppon which it iz niather nescenary or desirabel too dwel. If a plannet had emerj'd, it wauz met bi a neggasfere...

Hav u evver cene a neggasfere strike a plannet?

The neggasfere iz bilt ov neggative matter. This matereyal--or, raather, anty-matereyal--iz in evvery respect the exact opposite ov the evvery-da matter ov normal space. Insted ov electronz, it haz pozsitronz. Too it a poosh, houwevver viyolent, iz a pool; a pool iz a poosh. When neggative matter striax pozsitive, then, dhare iz no colizhon in the uezhual cens ov the werd. Wun electron and wun pozsitron nuetralise eche uther and disapere; ghivving rise too too qwauntaa ov extreemly hard rajaishon.

Dhus, when the sferrical hiper-plane which wauz the aspect ov the neggasfere tended too occupi the same thre-dimenshonal space in which the looce plannet aulreddy wauz, dhare wauz no acchuwal colizhon. Insted, the matereyalz ov boath cimply vannisht, along the cerface ov whaut shood hav bene a contact, in a giganticaly creshendo berst ov pure, rau ennergy. The atomz and the mollecuelz ov the plannets substans disapere; the fizensicaly incomprehencibel texchure ov the neggasfeerz anty-mas chainjd intoo dhat ov normal space. And aul circumambeyent space wauz fludded widh inconcevably leethal rajaishon; so intensly leethal dhat enny beyng not addeqwaitly sheelded from it dide befoer he had time

too reyalise dhat he wauz beying bernd.

Gravitaishon, ov coers, wauz unnafeeted; and the rappid disaperans ov the plannets mas cet up unballanst foercez ov tremendous magnichude.

The

hot, dens, sudo-liqwid magmaa tended too erupt az the sfere ov nuthhingnes devourd so rappidly the plannets substans, but not a partikel ov it cood moove. Insted, it vannisht. Mountainz fel, crashingly. Oashanz poerd. Erth-crax apeerd; mialz wide, tenz ov mialz depe, hundredz ov mialz long. The werld heevd... shudderd... dicintegrated... vannisht.

The shoc atac uppon Areezhaa itcelf, which in the Edoreyan miand had bene

mathhematticaly certane too suxede, wauz over in aproximaitly cix minnuets. Kinnison, Maitland, and LaaFoerj, fuming at dhare staishonz, had

dun nuthhing at aul. The Boscoanyanz had probbably throne evverithhing dha

cood; the probabillity wauz vannishingly smaual dhat dhat particcular atac wauz too be or cood be rezhuemd. Nevvertheles a hoast ov Kinnisonz taasc-foercez remaind on gard and a detale ov Areezhanz stil scand aul neerbi space.

"Whaut shal I doo next, Kit?" Camillaa aasct. "Help Conny crac dhat screne?"

Kit glaanst at hiz yun'ghest cister, whoo wauz strecht out flat, evvery muscel ridgidly tens in an extremmity ov effort.

"No," he decided. "If she caant crac it alone, aul foer ov us coodnt help her much. Beciadz, I doant beleve she can brake it. Its a mecannical, u no, pouwerd bi atommic-motord genneratorz. Mi ghes iz dhat itl hav too be *solved*, not cract, and the solueshon wil take

time. When she cumz doun of dhat peke, Ca, u mite tel her so, and boath ov u start solving it. The rest ov us hav anuther job. The Boscoanyan mopperz-up ar cumming in foers, and dhare iznt a chaans dhat iather we or the Areezhanz can derive the counter-formulaa ov dhat screne in les dhan a weke. Dhaerfoer the rest ov this battel wil hav too be faut out on convenshonal lianz. We can doo the moast good, I thhinc, bi spotting the Boscoanyanz intoo the big tanc--our scouts arnt locating five percent ov them--for the L2's too paas on too dad and the rest ov the top braas so dha can run this battel the wa it aut too be run. Ule doo the spotting, Cam, ov coers; Cat and I wil doo the pooshing. And if u thaut dhat Tregoncy tooc u for a ride...! Itl werc, doant u thhinc?"

"Ov coers itl werc!"

Dhus, aparrently az dho bi madgic, red liats winct intoo beying throowout a thherd ov the vollume ov the imens tanc; and the thre maaster strategists, informd ov whaut wauz beying dun, heevd tremendous cise ov relefe. Dha nou had reyal controle. Dha nu, not oonly the posishonz ov dhare one taasc-foercez, but aulso, and exactly, the posishon ov *evvery* taasc-foers ov the ennemy. Moer, bi meerly forming in hiz miand the desire for the informaishon, enny wun ov the thre cood no, widh no apreeshabel laps ov time, the exact composishon and the exact strength ov enny individjuwal flete, flotillaa, or sqwaudron!

Kit and hiz too cisterz stood cloce-gruipt, moashonles; hedz bent and aulmoast tutching, armz interloct. Kinnison perceevd widh cerprise dhat Lensez, az big and az brite az Kits one, flaimd uppon hiz dauterz rists; a cerprise which chainjd too au az the verry are around dhose thre red-bronz-aubern hedz began too thhicken, too pulsate, and too glo widh dhat indefinabel, indescribabel policromattic efulgens so

uneecly characteristic ov the Lenz ov the Galactic Patrole. But dhare wauz werc too doo, and Kinnison did it.

Cins the *Z9M9Z* wauz nou werking az not even the moast optimistic ov her plannerz and desinerz had daerd too hope, the wor cood nou be faut strategicaly; dhat iz, widh the obgett ov doowing the ennemy az much harm az poscibel widh the irejucibel minnimum ov risc. It wauz not spoerting. It wauz not clubby. Dhare wauz nuthhing whautevver ov shivvalry. Dhare wauz no thaut whautevver ov ghivving the ennemy a brake. It wauz massaker--it wauz merder--it wauz wor.

It wauz not ship too ship. No, nor flete too flete Insted, ten or twenty Patrole taasc-foercez, under shure pilotage, dasht out too en'globe at extreme rainj wun flete ov the Boscoanyanz. Then, befoer the oposing admiral cood acembel a picchure ov whaut wauz gowing on, hiz entire comaand became the center ov impact ov hundredz or even thousandz ov super-atomic bomz, az wel az the focus ov an imensly grater number ov scaersly les ravvaging primary beemz. Not a ship nor a scout nor a liafbote ov the en'gloabd flete escaipt, evver. In fact, fu indede wer the blobz, or even droplets, ov hard alloi or ov jureyum which remaind meerly liqwefide or which, later, wer abel too condens.

Flete bi flete the Boscoanyanz wer blone out ov the eethher; wun bi wun the red liats in the tanc and in the rejucer winct out. And finaly the slauter wauz dun.

Kit and hiz too nou Lenzles cisterz unlaist themcelvz. Carren and Constans came up for are, anouncing dhat dha nu hou too werc the problem Kit had handed them, but dhat it wood take time. Clarissaa, white and shaken bi whaut she had drivven hercelf too doo, looct and felt

cic. So did Kinnison; nor had iather ov the uther too comaanderz deriavd enny plezhure from the en'gaijment. Tregoncy deploerd it. Ov aul the Lenzd personel, oonly Worcel had enjoid himcelf. He liact too kil ennemese, at cloce rainj or far, and he cood not understand or cimpathhise widh sqwemishnes. Nadrec, ov coers, had niather liact nor disliact enny part ov the whole afare; too him hiz part had bene meerly anuther taasc, too be performd widh the smaulest outla ov fizensal and mental effort concistent widh good wercmanship.

"Whaut next?" Kinnison aasct then, ov the groope at larj. "I sa the Plooranz. Dhare not like these poor devvilz wer--dha probbably cent them in. *Dhave* got it cumming!"

"Dha certainly hav!"

"Ploor!"

"Bi aul meenz Ploor!"

"But hou about Areezhaa here?" Maitland aasct.

"Under controle," Kinnison replide. "Weeyl leve a hevvy gard and a spare tanc--the Areezhanz wil doo the rest."

Az soone az the tremendous flete had shaken itcelf doun intoo the coers for Ploor, aul cevven ov the Kinnisonz retiard too a smaul dining roome and ate a festive mele. Dha dranc aafter-dinner coffy. Moast ov them smoact. Dha discust, for a long time and not verry qwiyetly, the matter ov the Hel-Hole in Space. Finaly:

"I no its a trap, az wel az u doo." Kinnison got up from the tabel, ramd hiz handz intoo hiz britchez pockets, and paist the floer. "Its

got T - R - A - P painted aul over it, in bil-poaster letterz cevventene meterz hi. So whaut? Cins Ime the oonly wun whoo can, Ive got too go in, if its stil dhare aafter we noc Ploor of. And itl stil be dhare, for aul the te in Chinaa. Aul the Plooranz arnt on Ploor."

Foer yung Kinnisonz flasht thauts at Cathrin, whoo fround and bit her lip. She had hit dhat hole widh evverithhing she had, and cimply bounst. She had bene abel too bloc the rajaishon, ov coers, but such sollid barreyerz had bene nescesary dhat she had blianded hercelf bi her one screenz. Dhat it wauz Edoreyan dhare cood be no dout... wornd bi her one activvitesse in the uther chube--Plooran ov coers--and dad wood be werth taking in moer wase dhan wun...

"I caant sa dhat Ime enny kener about gowing in dhan enny ov u ar about havving me doo it," the big Lenzman went on, "but unles sum ov u can figgure out a rezon for mi *not* gowing in dhat iznt fooller ov hoalz dhan a spunj, Ime gowing too tackel it just az soone aafter we blo Ploor apart az I can poscibly ghet dhare."

And Cathrin, hiz celf-apointed garjan, nu dhat nuthhing cood stop him. Nor did enniwun dhare, even Clarissaa, tri too stop him. Lenzmen aul, dha nu dhat he had too go in.

Too the Five, the cichuwaishon wauz not too cereyous. Kinnison wood cum throo unhert. The Edoreyanz cood take him, ov coers. But whether or not dha cood doo ennithhing too him aafter dha got him wood depend on whaut the Kinnison kidz wood be doowing in the meentime--and dhat wood be plenty. Dha coodnt dela hiz entry intoo the chube verry much widhout making a smel, but dha cood and wood hurry Areezhaa up. And even if, az ceemd probbabel, he wauz aulreddy in the chube when Areezhaa wauz reddy for

the big poosh, a lot cood be dun at the uther end. Dhose ameboid monstrosцитеse wood be fiting for dhare one preshous liavz, this time, not for the liavz ov slaivz; and the Five prommiast eche uther grimly dhat the Edoreyanz wood hav too much els too wurry about too waist enny time on Kimbal Kinnison.

Clarissaa Kinnison, houwevver, faut the hardest and bitterest battel ov her life. She luvd Kim widh a depth and a fervor which verry fu wimmen, enniwhare, hav evver bene abel too fele. She nu widh a cic, coald certainty, nu widh evvery fiber ov her beying and widh evvery cel ov her brane, dhat if he went intoo dhat trap he wood di in it. Nevvertheles, she wood hav too let him go in. Moer, and wers, she wood hav too cend him in--too hiz deth--widh a smile. She cood not aasc him not too go in. She cood not even sugest agane dhat dhare wauz enny pocibillity dhat he nede not go in. He had too go in. He *had* too...

And if Lenzmanz Lode wauz hevvy on him, on her it wauz aulmoast unbarabel.

Hiz part wauz vaastly the eseyer. He wood oonly hav too di; she wood hav too liv. She wood hav too kepe on livving--widhout Kim--livving a liaftime ov deths, wun aafter anuther. And she wood hav too hoald her bloc and smile, not oonly widh her face, but widh her whole miand. She cood be scaerd, ov coers, aprehencive, az he himcelf wauz; she cood wish widh aul her strength for hiz safe retern: but if he suspected the thousandth part ov whaut she reyaly felt it wood brake hiz hart. Nor wood it doo a bit ov good. Houwevver broken-harted at her rebelleyon against the inflexibel Code ov the Lenz, he wood stil go in. Beying Kimbal Kinnison, he cood not doo ennithhing els.

Az soone az she cood, Clarissaa went too a distant roome and ternd on a fool-cuvverage bloc. She la doun, berrede her face in the pillo, clencht her fists, and faut.

Wauz dhare enny wa--enny *poscibel* wa--dhat she cood di insted? Nun.
It wauz not dhat cimpel.

She wood hav too let him go...

Widh a SMILE...

Not gladly, but proudly and willingly... for the good ov the Patrole...

DAM THE PATROLE!!

Clarissaa Kinnison gritted her teeth and riadhd.

She wood cimply *hav* too let him go intoo dhat gaastly trap--go too hiz
absoluetly shure and certane deth--widhout showing wun white fether,
iather too her huzband or too her children. Her huzband, her Kim, wood
hav too di... and she--wood--*hav*--too--*liv*...

She got up, smiald experrimentaly, and snapt of the bloc. Then,
acchuwaly smiling and aparrently confident, she stroald down the
corridor.

Such iz Lenzmanz Lode.

CHAPTER 26

THE BATTEL OV PLOOR

Twenty-od yeez befoer, when the then *Dauntles* and her croo wer throne out ov a hiper-spaishal chube and intoo dhat hily enigmattic Nth space, LaaVern Thorndike had bene Chefe Tecnishan. Mentor ov Areezhaa found them, and poot intoo the miand ov Cer Austin Cardinj, mathhematishan extraordinary, the nollej ov hou too fiand the wa bac too normal space. Thorndike, werking under nerv-shattering difficultese, had bene in charj ov bilding the masheenz which wer too enabel the vescel too retern too her home space. He bilt them. She reternd.

He wauz nou agane in charj, and evvery man ov hiz prezsent croo had bene a member ov hiz former wun. He did not comaand the space-ship or her reggular croo, ov coers, but dha did not count. Not wun ov dhose kidz wood be aloud too cet foot on the fantasticaly dain'gerous plannet too which the inershaales *Space Laboratoery Twelv* wauz ancord.

Oalder, lener, grayer, he wauz nou, even moer dhan then, Civilizaishonz Paast Maaster ov Meccanizm. If ennithhing cood be bilt, "Thorny" Thorndike cood bild it. If it coodnt be bilt, he cood bild sumthhing just az good.

He liand hiz croo up for inspecshon; men whoo, auldho menny ov them had az much ranc and had had az menny yeez ov az much authorrity az dhare prezsent bos, had bene werking for dase too forghet az compleetly az poscibel dhare execcutive posishonz and responcibillitese. Eche man woer not wun, but thre, personal nuetraliserz; wun incide and too outside ov hiz space-sute. Thorndike, wauking down the line, aplide hiz test-kit too eche individjuwal nuetraliser. He then tested hiz one. QX--aul wer at max.

"Fellose," he ced then, "u aul remember whaut it wauz like laast time. This iz gowing too be the same, exept moer so and for a lon'gher time. Hou we did it befoer widhout enny cazhuwaltese Ile nevver no. If we can doo it agane itl be a major mirrakel, no les. Befoer, aul we had too doo wauz too bild a cuppel ov smaual genneratorz and sum controalz out ov stuf native too the plannet, and we didnt fiand dhat enny too esy a job. This time, for a starter, weve got too bild a Berghenhome big enuf too fre the whole plannet; aafter which we instaul the Bergz, chube-genneratorz, atommic blaasts, and uther stuf we braut along.

"But dhat native Berg iz gowing too be a Claas A Prime heddake, and until we ghet it running its gowing too be hel on wheelz. The oonly wa we can ghet awa widh it iz too chec and re-chec evvery thhing and evvery step. Chec, chec, dubbel-chec; then go bac and dubbel-chec agane.

"Remember dhat the fundamental caracteristix ov this Nth space ar such dhat inert matter can travvel faaster dhan lite; and remember, evvery cecond ov the time, dhat our intrinsic velosity iz sumthhing like fiftene liats rellative too ennithhing sollid in this space. I waunt evvery wun ov u too picchure himcelf gowing inert axidental. U mite take a tan'gent coers or hiyer--but u mite not, too. And it woodnt oonly kil the wun whoo did it. It woodnt oonly spoil our reccord. It cood verry esily kil us aul and make a crater fool ov boiling mettal out ov our whole instalaishon. So BE CAERFOOL! Aulso bare in miand dhat wun pece, houwevver smaual, ov this plannets matereyal, axidental braut aboard, mite rec the *Dauntles*. Enny qweschonz?"

"If the fundamental caracteristix--constants--ov this space ar so different, hou doo u no dhat the stuf wil werc here?"

"Wel, the stuf we bilt here befoer werct. The Areezhanz toald Kit

Kinnison dhat too ov the fundamentalz, mas and length, ar about normal. Time iz a lot different, so dhat we caant compute pouwer-too-mas raisheyose and so on, but weeyl hav enuf pouwer, enniwa, too ghet enny spede we can use."

"I ce. We mis the reyaly fancy stuf?"

"Yes. Wel, the qwicker we ghet started the qwicker weeyl ghet dun. Lets go."

The plannet wauz aerles, wauterles, dezzolate; a cayottic jumbel ov huge and jagghed fragments ov vareyous mettalz in a non-metallic continnuwous fase. It wauz az dho sum plafool chiald-giyant ov space had poerd dipperfoolz ov silver, ov iarn, ov copper, and ov uther granulated pure mettalz intoo a tanc ov sumthhing els--and then, tiard ov pla, had throne the whole mes awa!

Niather the mettalz nor the non-metallic substancez wer iather hot or coald. Dha had no aparrent temperachure, too thhermometerz or too the "felerz" ov the suets. The masheenz which these men had bilt so long befoer had not chainjd in enny particular. Dha stil funcshond perfectly; no spot ov rust or corozhon or erozhon mard enny part. This, at leest, wauz good nuse.

Inershaales masheenz, extravvagantly eqwipt widh devicez too kepe them inershaales, wer taken "ashoer"; nor wer enny ov these evver too be reternd too the ship. Kinnison had orderd and reyitterated dhat no un'necesary chaancez wer too be taken ov ghetting enny partikel ov Nth-space stuf aboard *Space Laboratoery Twelv*, and nun wer taken.

Cins men canot werc indeffiniatly in space-suets, eche man had

pereyoddicaly too be releevd; but eche such relefe amounted aulmoast too an
operaishon. Befoer he left the plannet hiz sute wauz scrubd, rinst, and
dride. In the vescelz aerloc it wauz are-blaasted agane befoer the outer
poert wauz cloazd. He unsheld in the loc and left hiz sute
dhare--evverithhing which had cum intoo contact widh Nth-space matter
iather wood be left on the plannets cerface or wood be gettisond
befoer the vescel wauz agane inerted. Un'nescesary precaushonz?
Perhaps--but Thorndike and hiz croo reternd unharmd too normal space in
undammaijd ships.

Finaly the Berghenhome wauz dun; bi dint ov whaut improvizaishon,
substichueshonz and artifice oanly "Thorny" Thorndike evver nu; at whaut
strane and cost wauz evvidenst bi the gaunt boddese and haggard facez ov
hiz overwerct and underslept croo. Too dhose experts and particullarly too
Thorndike, the thhing wauz not a good job. It wauz not qwiyet, nor
smuidh.

It wauz not in ballans, statticaly, dinammicaly, or electricaly. The
Chefe Tecnishan, too whoome a meter-jump ov wun and a haaf
thouzandths had
aulwase bene a matter ov grave concern, swoer felingly in aul the
plannetary lan'gwagez he nu when he sau whaut dhose meterz wer
doowing.

He scould moroasly. Dhare mite hav bene poorer masheenz bilt
sumtime, sumwhare, he supoazd--but damd if he had evver cene enny!

But the improviast Berg ran, and kept on running. The plannet became
inershaales and remaind dhat wa. For ourz, then, Thorndike cliamd
over and around and throo the Brobdingnajan fabricaishon, testing and
checking the operaishon ov evvery part. Finaly he cliamd down and
repoerted too hiz wating croo.

"QX, fellose, a nice job. A hel ov a good job, in fact,

conciddering--even dho we aul no dhat it iznt whaut enny ov us wood caul a good mashene. Part ov dhat meter-jump, ov coers, iz ju too the fact dhat nuthhing about the hepe iz troo or ballanst, but moast ov it must be ju too this cockide eethher. Enniwa, nun ov it iz ju too the uezhuwal causez--looce barz and faulty inshulaishon. So mi best ghes iz dhat

sheeYL kepe on doowing her stuf while we doo ourz. Wun shure thhing, she

iznt gowing too faul apart, even under dhat un'godly nocking; and I doant *thhinc* sheeYL shake hercelf of ov the plannet."

Aafter Thorndiax sumwhaut les dhan enthuseyaastic aprooval ov hiz brane-chiald, the advenchurerz intoo dhat fantastic rejon atact the cecond fase ov dhare prodject. The plannetary Berghenhome wauz landed and

cet up. Its meterz jumpt, too, but the en'gineerz wer no lon'gher wurrede about dhat. *Dhat* mashene wood run indeffiniatly. Pits wer dug. Atommic blaasts and uthher en'gianz wer instauld; az wer menny exedingly complex instroooments and meccanizmz. A fu tunz ov forane matter on the plannets cerface wood nou make no differens; but dhare wauz no relaxaishon ov the extreme precaushonz against the traansfer ov enny matter

whautevver from the plannet too the space-ship.

When the job wauz dun, but befoer the clene-up, Thorndike cauld hiz croo intoo conferens.

"Fellose, I no just whaut a God-aufool shellaking uve bene taking. We aul fele az dho wede bene on a Delgoanyan clambake. Nevvertheles, Ive got too tel u sumthhing. Kinnison ced dhat if we cood ghet this wun fixt up widhout too much trubbel, itd be a mity good ideyaa too hav too ov them. Whaut doo u sa? Did we hav too much trubbel?"

He got exactly the reyacshon he had expected.

"Lede us too it!"

"Pic out the wun u waunt!"

"Trubbel? Hel, no! If this scrap-hepe we bilt held toogheter this long, sheeyl run for yeerz. We can to her on a tractor-pressor combo, mach intrinsix widh clamp-on driverz, and mount her enniwhare!"

Another mettal-studded, barren, liafles werld wauz dhaerfoer found and prepaerd; and no reyal argument arose until Thorndike broacht the matter ov celecting the too men whoo wer too sta widh him and Henderson in the too liafboats which wer too remane for a time nere the too looce plannets aafter *Space Laboratoery Twelv* had reternd too normal space. Evveriboddy waunted too sta. Eche wun *wauz* gowing too sta, too, bi aul the godz ov space, if he had too pool ranc too doo it!

"Hoald it!" Thorndike comaanded. "Weeyl doo the same az we did befoer, then, bi drauwing lots. Qwortermaaster Allerdice..."

"Not bi a dam cite!" Oolenhuith, formerly Atommic Tecnishan 1/c, obgected vigorously, and wauz supoerted bi cevveral utherz. "Hese too clevver widh hiz fin'gherz--looc whaut he did too the oridginal drau! Were not sqwauking about dhat wun, u understand--a littel fixing wauz QX bac dhare--but *this* wunz got too be on the levvel."

"Nou dhat u menshon it, I doo remember hering about the lauz ov chaans beying gimmede a bit." Thorndike grind braudly. "So u hoald the pot yorcelf, Ooly, and Hanc and I wil eche pool out wun name."

So it wauz. Henderson droo Oolenhuith, too dhat berly admiralz loud delite, and Thorndike droo Nelson, the erstwhile chefe comunicaishonz

officer. The too liafboats dicembarct, eche nere wun ov the nuly "loocend" plannets. Too men wood sta on or nere eche ov dhose plannets, too be shure dhat aul the mashenery funcshond perfectly. Dha wood sta dhare until the atommic blaasts went intoo acshon and it became clere dhat the Areezhanz wood nede no help in navvigating dhose tremendous gloabz throo Nth space too the points at which too hiper-spaishal chuebz wer soone too apere.

* * * *

Long befoer the advaans scouts ov Grand Flete wer within cervaying distans ov Ploor, Kit and hiz cisterz had spred a compleetly detaild chart ov its defencez in the tactical tanc. A white star represented Ploorz sun; a white sfere the plannet itelf; white Riyerson string-liats marct a porshon ov the plannetary orbit. Points ov white lite, practicaly aul ov which wer conected too the white sfere bi red string-liats, marct the direcshonz ov naboring starz and the existens ov sunbeemz, instauld and reddy. Pinc gloabz wer looce plannets; perpel wunz neggasfeerz; red points ov lite wer, az befoer, Boscoanyan taasc-foers fleets. Bluse wer mobile fortrecez; bandz ov canary yello and amber luminescens shode the locaishonz and emplaishments ov sunbeme gridz and deflectorz.

Layer aafter layer ov pinx, perpelz, and bluse aulmoast hid the brilleyant white sfere from cite. Moer layerz ov the same cullorz, not qwite az dens, surrounded the entire solar cistem. Yello and amber bandz wer evveriwhare.

Kinnison studdede the thhing breefly, whisling unmelojously throo hiz teeth. The picchure wauz familleyar enuf, cins it jueplicated in practicaly evvery respect the chart ov the naborhood ov the Patroalz one Ultraa Prime, around Cloveyaa. Dhose defencez cimply cood not be cract bi enny concentraishon poscibel ov enny mobile devicez dhaertofoer

emploid in wor.

"Just about whaut we expected," Kinnison thaut too the groope at larj. "Sum nu stuf, but not much. Whaut I waunt too no, Kit and the rest ov u, iz dhare ennithing dhare dhat loox az dho it wauz supoast too handel our nu baby? Doant ce ennithing, micelf."

"Dhare iz not," Kit stated, deffiniatly. "We looct. Dhare coodnt be, enniwa. It caant be handeld. Looking baqwordz at it, dha ma be abel too reconstruct hou it wauz dun, but in advaans? No. Even Mentor coodnt--he had too caul in a fello whoo haz studdede ultraa-hi mathhemattix for Clono-oanly-nose-hou-menny-milleyonz ov yeez too compute the rezultant vectorz."

Kits uce ov the werd "dha", which ov coers ment Plooranz too evveriwun exept hiz cisterz, conceeld hiz nollej ov the fact dhat the Edoreyanz had taken over the defens ov Ploor. Edoreyanz wer handling dhose screenz. Edoreyanz wer directing and correlating dhose far-flung taasc-foercez, widh a precizhon which Kinnison soone notiast.

"Much smuither werc dhan I evver sau them doo befoer," he commented. "Supose dha hav devellopt a Z9M9Z?"

"Cood be. Dha coppedede evverithhing els u invented, whi not dhat?" Agane the hily ambigguwous "dha". "No cine ov it around Areezhaa, dho--but maby dha didnt thhinc dhade nede it dhare."

"Or, moer liacly, dha didnt waunt too risc it so far from home. We can tel better aafter the mopping-up starts--if the widget performz az per spex... but if yor dope iz rite, this iz about cloce enuf. U mite tip the boiz of, and Ile caul Mentor." Kinnison cood not reche Nth space, but it wauz no ceecret dhat Kit cood.

The terminus ov wun ov the Patroalz hiper-spaishal chuebz erupted intoo space cloce too Floor. Dhat such fenommenaa wer expected wauz evvident--a

Boscoanyan flete muivd promptly and smuidhly too en'globe it. But this wauz

an Areezhan chube; computed, instauld, and handeld bi Areezhanz. It wood

be in existens oonly thre cecondz; and ennithhing the flete cood doo, even if it got dhare in nuthhing flat, wood make no differens.

Too the observerz in the *Z9M9Z* dhose thre cecondz strecht endlesly.

Whaut wood happen when dhat utterly forane plannet, widh its absolutly imposcibel intrinsic velosity ov over fiftene tiamz dhat ov lite,

erupted intoo normal space and went inert? Nobody, not even the

Areezhan,

nu.

Evveriboddy dhare had cene picchuerz ov whaut happend when the incignificant mas ov a space-ship, travveling at oonly a hundredth ov the velosity ov lite, colided widh a plannetoid. Dhat wauz bad enuf. This progectile, houwevver, had a mas ov about ate tiamz ten too the twenty-ferst pouwer--an ate follode bi twenty-wun serose--metric tunz; wood tend too travvel fiftene hundred tiamz az faast; and kinettic ennergy eeqwalz mas tiamz velosity sqwaerd.

Dhare ceemd too be a thheyorettical pocibillity, cins the mas wood instantainously becum sum hiyer order ov infinny, dhat aul the matter in normal space wood cowales widh it in sero time; but Mentor had ashuerd Kit dhat opperatorz wood cum intoo efect too prevent such an ocurrens, and dhat untooword events wood be limmited too a rajus ov ten or fiftene parcex. Mentor cood solv the problem in detale; but cins

the solueshon wood reqwire sum too hundred Cloveyan yeerz and the event
wauz ju too oker in too weex...

"Hou about the big computer at Ultraa Prime?" Kinnison had aasct, innocently. "U no hou faast dhat werx."

"Rufly too thouzand yeerz--if it cood take dhat kiand ov math, which it caant," Kit had replide, and the subgect had bene dropt.

Finally it happend. Whaut happend? Even aafter the fact nun ov the observerz nu; nor did enny exept the L3's evver fiand out. The fusez ov aul the recorder and annaliser cerkits blu at wuns. Nedelz jumpt instantly too maximum and rapt themcelvz around dhare stops. Charts and ultraa-fotografic filmz shode oonly strate or kervd lianz running from the origin too and throo the limmits in sero time. Ploor and evverithhing around it disapeerd in an utterly indescribabel and compleetly incomprehencibel blaast ov pure, wiald, rau, uncontroald and uncontrolabel ennergy. The infinitesimal fracshon ov dhat ennergy which wauz vizsibel, hetterodiand uppon the ultraa az it wauz and screend az it wauz, blaizd so savvajly uppon the plaits dhat it ceerd the ise.

And if the events cauzd bi the plannet aimd at Ploor wer indescribabel, whaut can be ced ov dhose inisheyated bi the wun directed against Ploorz sun?

When the hete gennerated in the intereyor ov a sun becumz grater dhan its efective cerface iz abel too rajate, dhat cerface expandz. If the expanshon iz not faast enuf, a moer or les incignificant amount ov the sunz matereyal exploadz, dhus enlarging bi foers the rajant cerface too whautevver extent iz nescenary too restoer eqwilibreyum. Dhus cum intoo beying the ordinary nova; sunz which ma for a fu dase or for a fu weex rajate ennergy at a rate a fu hundredz ov thouzandz ov tiamz grater dhan normal. Cins ordinary nova can be projuest at wil bi the

colizhon ov a plannet widh a sun, the ciyentists ov the Patrole had long cins completed dhare studdese ov aul the fenommenaa involvd.

The meccanizmz ov super-nova, houwevver, remaind obscure. No addeqwate instroomentaishon had bene devellopt too studdy concluciavly the ocaizhonal super-novaa which okerd natchuraly. No super-novaa had evver bene projuest artifishaly--widh aul its rezoercez ov mas, atommic ennergy, cozmic ennergy, and sunbeemz, Civilizaishon cood niather acembel nor concentrate enuf pouwer.

At the impact ov the cecond looce plannet, acumpanede bi the exes ennergy ov its imposcibel and unnatanabel intrinsic velosity, Floorz sun became a super-novaa. Hou deeply the introoding thhing pennetrated, hou much ov the sunz mas exploded, nevver wauz and perhaps nevver wil be determiand. The viyolens ov the exploazhon wauz such, houwevver, dhat Cloveyan astronnomerz repoerted--a fu yeerz later--dhat it wauz rajating ennergy at the rate ov sum five hundred and fifty milleyon sunz.

Dhus no atempt wil be made too describe whaut happend when the plannet from Nth space struc the Boscoanyanz sun. It wauz indescribability cuebd.

CHAPTER 27

KINNISON TRAPT

The Boscoanyan fleets defending Ploor wer not aul destroid, ov coers. The vescelz wer inershaales. Nun ov the fenommenaa acumpanying the cumming intoo beying ov the super-novaa wer proppagated at a velosity abuv dhat ov lite; a spede which too enny space-ship iz scaersly a crawl.

The cervivorz wer, houwevver, disorganiazd. Dha had lost dhare moraal when Ploor wauz wiapt out in such a spectacularly nerv-shattering fashon. Aulso, dha had lost practicaly aul ov dhare hi comaand; for the boscez, insted ov riding the eethher az did the Patrole comaanderz, remaind in dhare suposedly cecure hedqworterz and directed matterz from afar. Mentor and hiz fellose had remuivd from this plane ov existens the Edoreyanz whoo had bene prezsent in the flesh on Ploor. The Areezhanz had cut aul comunicaishon betwene Eddor and the remnants ov the Boscoanyan defencive foers.

Grand Flete, then, muivd in for the kil; and for a time the acshon nere Areezhaa wauz repeted. Following deffinite flite-and-coers orderz from the Z9M9Z, ten or moer Patrole fleets wood make short hops. At the end ov dhose aciand coercez dha wood discuvver dhat dha had en' gloabd a taasc-foers ov the ennemy. Bom and beme!

Over and over--flit, bom, and beme!

Wun Boscoanyan hi officer, houwevver, had boath the time and the authorrity too act. A fool thouzand fleets mast toogheter, dhare hevveyest units outword, pact toogheter screne too screne in a cloce-order globe ov defens.

"Acording too Hainz, dhat wauz good strategy in the oald dase," Kinnison commented, "but its no good against looce plannets and neggasfeerz."

Cix looce plannets wer so plaist and so releest dhat dhare inert mascez wood crash tooghether at the center ov the Boscoanyan globe; then, a fu minnuets later, ten neggasfeerz ov hi anty-mas wer cimmlarly launcht. Aafter dhose cixtene miscialz had dun dhare werc and the rezultant had ataind an eqwilibreyum ov sorts, dhare wauz verry littel mopping-up too doo.

The Boscoanyan observerz wer competent. The Boscoanyan comaanderz nou nu dhat dha had no chaans whautevver ov suxes; dhat too sta wauz too be aniyilated; dhat the oonly pocibillity ov life la in flite. Dhaerfoer eche remaning Boscoanyan vice-admiral, aafter perhaps a moment ov consultaishon widh a fu utherz, orderd hiz flete too drive at maximum blaast for hiz home plannet.

"No uce chacing them individjuwaly, iz dhare, Kit?" Kinnison aasct, when it became clere in the tanc dhat the reyal battel wauz over; dhat aul resistans had ended. "Dha caant doo ennithhing, and this kiand ov killing maix me cic at the stummac. Beciadz, Ive got sumthhing els too doo."

"No. Me, too. So hav I." Kit agrede widh hiz faather in fool.

Az soone az the laast Boscoanyan flete wauz beyond detector rainj Grand Flete broke up, its component fleets cetting out for dhare respective werldz.

"The Hel-Hole iz stil dhare, Kit," the Gra Lenzman ced soberly. "If Ploor wauz the top--Ime beghinning too thhinc dhare iz no top--it leedz iather too an automattic meccanizm cet up bi the Plooranz or too Plooranz whoo ar stil alive sumwhare. If Ploor wauznt the top, this ceemz too be the oonly lede we hav. In iather cace Ive got too take it. Chec?"

"Wel, I..." Kit tride too duc, but coodnt. "Yes, dad, Ime afrade its chec."

Too big handz met and gript: and Kinnison went too take leve ov hiz wife.

Dhare iz no nede too go intoo detale az too whaut dhose too ced or did. He nu dhat he wauz gowing intoo dain'ger; dhat he mite not retern. Dhat iz, he nu empirricaly or academmicaly, az a non-germane sort ov fact, dhat he mite di. He did not, houwevver, reyaly beleve so. No man reyaly beleevz, evver, dhat enny ghivven event wil kil him.

Kinnison expected too be capchuerd, imprizzond, qweschond, torchuerd. He

cood understand aul ov dhose thhingz, and he did not like enny wun ov them. Dhat he wauz moer dhan a trifel afrade and dhat he hated too leve her nou moer dhan he evver had befoer wer boath natchural enuf--he had nuthhing whautevver too hide from her.

She, on the uther hand, nu starcly dhat he wood nevver cum bac. She nu dhat he wood di in dhat trap. She nu dhat she wood hav too liv a liaftime ov emptines, alone. Hens she had much too concele from him. She must be just az scaerd and az aprehencive az he wauz, but no moer; just az ancshous for dhare continnude happines az he wauz, but no moer; just az intensly luvving, but no moer and in exactly the same cens. Here la the test. She must kis him goodbi az dho he wer gowing intoo mere dain'ger. She *must not* ghiv wa too the aulmoast iresistibel erj too act in acordans widh whaut she so starcly, chillingly nu too be the truith, dhat she wood nevver... *nevver*...

NEVVER kis her Kim agane!

She suxeded. It iz a mezhure ov the Red Lenzmanz qwaulity dhat she did not weken, even when her huzband aproacht the boundary ov the Hel-Hole and cent whaut she nu wood be hiz laast message.

"Here it iz--about a cecond nou. Doant wurry--Ile be bac shortly.
Clere eethher, Cris!"

"Ov *coers* u wil, dere. Clere eethher, Kim!"

Hiz speedster did not mount enny speshal genneratorz, nor wer enny neded.

He and hiz ship wer suct intoo dhat trap az dho it had bene a mailstrom.

He felt agane the comin'gheld aggonese ov inter-dimenshonal axeleraishon.

He perceevd agane the formles, texchuerles, spaisles void ov blantly gra nuthhingnes which wauz the thre-dimenshonal-imposcibel substans ov the chube. A moment later, he felt a nu and different axeleraishon--he wauz speding up *incide the chube*! Then, verry shortly, he felt nuthhing at aul. Starteld, he tride too jump up too investigate, and discuvverd dhat he cood not moove. Even bi the utmoast exershon ov hiz wil he cood not ster a fin'gher or an ilid. He wauz compleetly imobiliazd. Nor cood he fele. Hiz boddy wauz az devoid ov censaishon az dho it belongd too sumbody els. Wers, for hiz hart wauz not beting. He wauz not breething. He cood not ce. It wauz az dho hiz evvery nerv, motor and censory, volluntary and involluntary, had bene cepparaitly aneesthetiazd. He cood stil thhinc, but dhat wauz aul. Hiz cens ov percepshon stil werct.

He wunderd whether he wauz stil axellerating or not, and tride too fiand out. He cood not. He cood not determine whether he wauz mooving or staishonary. Dhare wer no refferens points. Evvery infinitesimal vollume ov dhat enigmattic granes wauz like eche and evvery uther.

Mathhematticaly, perhaps, he wauz not mooving at aul; cins he wauz in a continuwum in which mas, length and time, and hens inershaa and

inershaalesnes, velosity and axeleraishon, ar meningles termz.

He wauz outside ov space and beyond time. Efectiavly, houwevver, he wauz mooving; mooving widh an axeleraishon which nuthhing matereyal had evver befoer aproacht. He and hiz vescel wer beying drivven along dhat chube bi evvery waut ov pouwer generabel bi wun entire Edoreyan atommic pouwer plaant. Hiz velosity, long cins unthhincabel, became incalculabel.

Aul thhingz end: even Edoreyan atommic pouwer wauz not infinite. At the verry peke ov pouwer and pace, then, aul the foers, aul the momentum, aul the kinettic ennergy ov the speedsterz mas and velosity wer concentrated in and aplide too Kinnisonz fizzesical boddy. He cenz sumthhing, and tride too flinch, but cood not. In a fleting instant ov whaut he thaut wauz time he went *paast*, not throo, hiz cloathing and hiz Lenz; *paast*, not throo, hiz armor; and *paast*, not throo, the hard berilleyum-alloi strucchure ov hiz vescel. He even went paast but not throo the N-dimenshonal interface ov the hiper-spaishal chube.

This, auldho Kinnison did not no it, wauz the Edoreyanz climactic effort. He had taken hiz prizzoner az far az he cood poscibly reche: then, acembling and concentrating aul avalabel pouwer, he had ghivven him a catapultic shuv intoo the absolutly un'none and utterly un'nowabel. The Edoreyan did not no enny vector ov the Lenzmanz naked flite; he did not care whare he went. He did not no and cood not compute or even ghes at hiz victimz probbabel destinaishon.

In whaut hiz spais'houndz time cens toald him wauz wun cecond, Kinnison

paast exactly too hundred milleyon forane spacez. He did not no hou he nu the precice number, but he did. Hens, in the Patroalz mezhuerd cadens, he began too count griups ov spacez ov wun hundred milleyon eche.

Aafter a fu dase, hiz velosity decreest too such a vallu dhat he cood count griups ov cin'ghel milleyonz. Then thouzandz--hundredz--tenz--until

finaly he cood perceve the saleynt fechuerz ov eche space befoer it wauz blotted out bi the next.

Hou cood this be? He wunderd, but not fogghily; hiz miand wauz az clere and az strong az it had evver bene. Spacez wer cowexistent, not spred out like this. In the foerth dimenshon dha wer flat tooghether, like pagez in a booc, exept thhinner. This wauz aul rong. It wauz imposcibel. Cins it cood not happen, it wauz not happening. He had not bene and cood not be drugd. Dhaerfoer sum Plooran must hav him in a zone ov compulshon. *Whaut* a zone! *Whaut* an opperator the ape must be!

It wauz, houwevver, reyal--aul ov it. Whaut Kinnison did not no, then or evver, wauz dhat he wauz acchuwaly outside the boundarese ov space; acchuwaly beyond the confianz ov time. He wauz gowing paast, not throo, dhose spacez and dhose tiamz.

He wauz nou in eche space long enuf too studdy it in sum detale. He wauz an imens distans abuv this wun; at such a distans dhat he cood perceve menny globular super-univercez; eche ov which in tern wauz compoazd ov billeyonz ov lenticular gallaxese.

Another wun. Clocer nou. Gallaxese oonly; the familleyar random mascez whoose aparrent lac ov cimetical grooping iz ju too the limitaishonz ov Civilizaishonz observerz. He wauz stil gowing too faast too stop.

In the next space Kinnison found himself within the limmits ov a solar cistem and tride widh aul the foers ov hiz miand too ghet in tuch widh sum intelligent entity uppon wun--enny wun--ov its plannets. Befoer he cood suxede, dhat cistem vannisht and he wauz dropping, from a hite ov a fu thouzand killometerz, tooword the cerface ov a worm and verdant werld, so much like Tellus dhat he thaut for an instant he must hav cercumnavigated total space. The aspect, the ice-caps, the cloud-efects, wer identical. The oashanz, houwevver, while cimmilar, wer different; az wer the continents. The mountainz wer larger and ruffer and harder.

He wauz fauling much too faast. A fre faul from infinny woodnt ghiv him *this* much spede!

This whole afare wauz, az he had decided wuns befoer, absolutly imposcibel. It wauz cimply preposterous too beleve dhat a naked man, espeshaly wun widhout blud-cerculaishon or breth, cood stil be alive aafter spending az menny weex in open space az he had just spent. He *nu* dhat he wauz alive. Dhaerfoer nun ov this wauz happening; even dho, az shuerly az he nu dhat he wauz alive, he nu dhat he wauz fauling.

"Get bac, Lenzman!" he thaut vishously too himcelf; tride too shout it aloud.

For this cood be dedly stuf, if he let himcelf beleve it. If he beleevd dhat he wauz fauling from enny such hite he wood di in the instant ov landing. He wood not acchuwaly crash; hiz boddy wood not moove from wharevver it wauz dhat it wauz. Nevvertheles the shoc ov dhat wholly imadginary crash wood kil him just az ded and just az instantainously

az dho aul hiz flesh had bene acchuwaly smasht intoo a crimzon smere uppon wun ov the naboring mountainz huge, flat rox.

"Pritty cloce, mi brite yung Plooran frend, but u didnt qwite ring the bel," he thaut savvaijly, trying widh aul the pouwer ov hiz miand too brake throo the zone ov compulschon. "So Ime telling u sumthing rite nou. If u waunt too kil me ule hav too doo it fizensaly, and u havnt got gets enuf too swing the lode. U mite az wel cut yor zone, becauz this kiand ov stuf haz bene poold on me bi experts, and it haznt werct yet."

He wauz aparrently fauling, fete dounword, tooword an open, graacy mountane meddo, surrounded bi forrests, throo which meyanderd a smaull streme. He wauz so cloce nou dhat he cood perceve the individjuwal blaidz ov graas in the meddo and the smaull fishez in the streme; and he wauz stil aparrently at terminal velosity.

Without hiz yeerz ov spais'houndz traning in inershaales manuvering, he mite hav dide even befoer he landed, but spede az spede did not afect him at aul. He wauz uest too instantainyous stops from lite-speedz. The oonly thhing dhat wurrede him wauz the matter ov inershaa. Wauz he inert or fre?

He declaerd too himcelf dhat he wauz fre. Or, raather, dhat he had bene, wauz, and wood continnu too be moashonles. It wauz fizensaly, mathhematticaly, intrinsicaly imposcibel dhat enny ov this stuf had acchuwaly okerd. It wauz aul compulschon, pure and cimpel, and he--Kimbal Kinnison, Gra Lenzman--wood not let it ghet him doun. He clencht hiz mental teeth uppon dhat belefe and held it dogghedly. Wun bare foot struc the tip ov a blade ov graas and hiz entire boddy came too a shocles halt. He grind in relefe--this wauz whaut he had waunted, but had not qwite daerd wholly too expect. Dhare follode imejaitly, houwevver, uther events which he had not expected at aul.

Hiz hault wauz les dhan momentary; in the instant ov its acumplishment he began too faul normaly the remaning ate or ten inchez too the ground. Automatticaly he sprung hiz space-traind nese, too take the utherwise disconcerting jar; automatticaly hiz left hand snapt up too the place whare hiz controalz shood hav bene. *Legz and armz werct!*

He cood ce widh hiz ise. He cood fele widh hiz skin. He wauz drauwng a breth, the ferst time he had breedhd cins leving normal space. Nor wauz it an unjuly depe breth--he felt no lac ov oxigen. Hiz hart wauz beting az normaly az dho it had nevver mist a bete. He wauz not unnuezhuwaly hun'gry or thhersty. But aul dhat stuf cood wate--whare wauz dhat damd Plooran?

Kinnison had landed in complete reddines for strife. Dhare wer no rox or clubz handy, but he had hiz fists, fete, and teeth; and dha wood doo until he cood fiand or make sumthhing better. But dhare wauz nuthhing too fite. Drive hiz cens ov percepshon az he wood, he cood fiand nuthhing larger or moer intelligent dhan a dere.

The farther this thhing went along the les cens it made. A compulshon, too be enny good at aul, aut too be lodgical and coherent. It shood fit intoo evvery corner and cranny ov the subgects expereyens and nollej. This wun didnt fit ennithhing or enniwhare. It didnt even cum cloce. Yet tecnicaly, it wauz a marvelous job. He coodnt detect a trace ov it. This graas looct and felt reyal. The pebbelz hert hiz tender fete enuf too make him wins az he wauct too the wauterz ej. He dranc deeply. The wauter, reyal or not, wauz coald, clere, and emminently sattisfiying.

"Liscen, u misghided ape!" he thaut probingly. "U mite az wel open up nou az later whautevver uve got in miand. If this performans iz supoast too be non-ficshon, its a flat bust. If its supoast too be

ciyens-ficshon, it iznt much better. If its space-opperaa, even, yor viyolating aul the fundamentalz. Ive ritten better stuf--Cadgop and Cinthheyaa wer a lot moer convincing." He wated a moment, then went on:

"Whoo evver herd ov the intreppid hero ov a space-opperaa az big az this wun started out too be ghetting stranded on a compleetly Erth-like plannet and then hav nuthhing happen? No acshon at aul? Hou about a cuppel ov indescribabel monsterz ov superhuman strength and agillity, for me too tare apart widh mi stele-thude fin'gherz?"

He glaanst around expectantly. No monsterz apeerd.

"Wel, then, hou about a damsel for me too rescu from a fate wers dhan deth? Better make it too ov them--saifty in numberz, u no--a blond and a broonet. No red-hedz."

He wated agane.

"QX, spoert, no wimmen. Suets me perfectly. But I hope u havnt forgotten about the taisty viyandz. I can ete fish if I hav too, but if u waunt too kepe yor hero happy lets ce u la doun here, on a platter, a wun-killogram stake, thre centimeterz thhic, mejum rare, fride in Telureyan butter and smurtherd in Venereyan superlaa mushruimz."

No stake apeerd, and the Gra Lenzman recauld and studdede intenciavly evvery detale ov whaut had aparrently happend. It *stil* cood not hav okerd. He cood not hav imadgiand it. It cood not hav bene compulshon or hipnocis. Nun ov it made enny kiand ov cens.

Az a matter ov plane fact, houwevver, Kinnisonz, ferst and moast pozsitive concluezhon wauz rong. Hiz memmorese wer facchuwal reccordz ov acchuwal events

and thhingz. He wood ete wel juring hiz sta uppon dhat naimles plannet, but he wood hav too procure hiz one foode. Nuthhing wood atac him, or even anoi him. For the Edoreyanz *bianding*--this iz perhaps az good a werd for it az enny, cins "gheyas" implise a kers--wauz such dhat the Gra Lenzman cood retern too space and time oanly under such condishonz and too such an environment az wood not doo him enny iyotaa ov fizensal harm. He must continnu alive and in good helth for at leest fifty moer ov hiz yeerz.

* * * *

And Clarissaa Kinnison, tens and straind, wated in her roome for the instant ov her huzbandz deth. Dha too wer wun, widh a wun'nes no uther man and woomman had evver none. If wun dide, from enny cauz whautevver, the uther wood fele it.

She wated. Five minnuets--ten--fiftene--haaf an our--an our. She began too relax. Her fists unclencht, her shallo breathing groo deper.

Too ourz. Kim wauz *stil alive!* A wave ov happy, boiyant relefe swept throo her; her ise flasht and sparkeld. If dha hadnt bene abel too kil him in too ourz dha nevver cood. Her Kim had plenty ov gets.

Even the top miandz ov Boscoanyaa cood not kil her Kim!

CHAPTER 28

THE BATTEL OV EDDOR

The Areezhanz and the Children ov the Lenz had none dhat Eddor must be atact az soone az poscibel aafter the faul ov Floor. Dha wer faerly certane dhat the interspaishal uce ov plannets az progetialz wauz nu; but dha wer compleetly certane dhat the Edoreyanz wood be Abel too dejuce in a short time the principelz and the concepts, the fundamental eqwaizhonz, and the ecenshal opperatorz involvd in the proces. Dha wood fiand Nth space or wun like it in wun da; certainly not moer dhan too. Dhare slaivz wood jueplicate the weppon in aproximaitly thre weex. Shortly dharaafter boath Ultraa Prime and Prime Bace, boath Cloveyaa and Tellus, wood be blone out ov the eethher. So wood Areezhaa--perhaps Areezhaa wood go ferst. The Edoreyanz wood probbably not be Abel too ame such plannets az accuraitly az the Areezhanz had, but dha wood kepe on trying and dha wood lern faast.

This weppon wauz the shere ultimate in destructiavnes. No defens against it wauz poscibel. Dhare wauz no ththeyory which aplide too it or which cood be strecht too cuvver it. Even the Areezhan Maasterz ov Mathhemattix had not az yet bene Abel too invent cimbollogese and tecneex too handel the qwauntitese and magnichuedz involvd when dhose interloping mascez ov forane matter struc normal space.

Dhus Kit did not hav too follo up hiz anounst intenshon ov making the Areezhanz hurry. Dha did not hurry, ov coers, but dha did not loose or waist a minnute. Eche Areezhan, from the yun'ghest wauchman up too the oaldest filossofer, chuend a part ov hiz miand too Mentor, anuther part too sum wun ov the milleyonz ov Lenzmen uppon hiz list, and flasht a message.

"Lenzmen, atend--kepe yor miand cencitiazd too this, the pattern ov Mentor ov Areezhaa, whoo wil speke too u az soone az aul hav bene

alerted."

Dhat message went throuout the Ferst Galaxy, throuout inter-galactic space, and throuout whaut part ov the Ceccond Galaxy had felt the tuch ov Civilizaishon. It went too Alsacan and Vandemar and Cloveyaa, too Thrale and Tellus and Rigel 4, too Marz and Velanshaa and Palane 7, too Medon and Venus and Centraleyyaa. It went too flitterz, battelships, and looce plannets. It went too asteroidz and muinlets, too plannets larj and smaull. It went too nuly graduwated Lenzmen and too Lenzmen long cins retard; too Lenzmen at werc and at pla. It went too evvery Ferst-Stage Lenzman ov the Galactic Patrole.

Wharevver the message went, termoil follode. Lenzmen evverihware flasht qweschonz at uther Lenzmen.

"Whaut doo u make ov it, Fred?"

"Did u ghet the same thing I did?"

"*Mentor!* Grinning Noshabkeming, whauts up?"

"Damfeno. Must be big, dho, for Mentor too be handling it."

"*Big!* Its imens! Whoo evver herd ov Areezhaa stepping in befoer?"

"*Big!* Colossal! Mentor nevver tauct twice too enniboddy exopt the L2's befoer, did he?"

Milleyonz ov Lenzd qweschonz fludded evvery bace and evvery office ov the Patrole. Nobody, not even the vice-cowordinator, nu a thing.

"U mite az wel stop cending in qweschonz az too whaut this iz aul about, becauz nun ov us nose enny moer about it dhan u doo," Maitland finally cent out a genneral message. "Aparrently evveriboddy widh a Lenz iz ghetting the same thaut, no moer and no les. Aul I can sa iz dhat it must be a Claas A Prime emergency, and evveriwun whoo iz not acchuwaly tide up in a life and deth matter wil plese drop evverithhing and stand bi."

Mentor waunted, and had too hav, hi tenshon. He got it. Tenshon mounted hiyer and hiyer az eventles ourz paast and az, for the ferst time in history, Patrole biznes slode doun aulmoast too a stop.

And in a smaul crooser, mand bi foer red-hedded gherlz and wun red-hedded ueth, tenshon wauz aulso bilding up. The problem ov the mecannical screenz had long cins bene solvd. Atommic pouwerd counter-genneratorz wer in place, reddy at the tuch ov a button too nuetralise the mecannicaly-gennerated screenz ov the ennemy and dhus too make the en'gaijment a miand-too-miand combat. Dha wer az cloce too Eddorz star-cluster az dha cood be widhout ghivving alarm. Dha had had nuthhing too doo for ourz exsept wate. Dha wer probbably kede up hiyer dhan enny uther five Lenzmen in aul ov space.

Kit, sun ov hiz faather, wauz pacing the floer, chane-smoking. Constans wauz aulternaitly ghetting up and citting doun--up--doun--up. She, too, wauz smoking; or, raather, she wauz liting ciggarets and throwing them awa. Cathrin wauz citting, stifly stil, manufacchuring Lensez which, starting at her rists, raist up boath bare armz too her shoalderz and disapeerd. Carren wauz meticculously sticking hoalz in a pece ov blanc paper widh a pin, making an intricate and meningles desine. Oonly Camillaa made enny pretens ov caamnes, and it wauz az traansparent az glaas. She wauz

pretending too rede a novvel; but insted ov abzorbing its fool content at the rate ov wun glaans per page, she had red haaf ov it werd bi werd and stil had no ideyaa ov whaut the stoery wauz about.

"Ar u reddy, children?" Mentorz thaut came in at laast.

"Reddy!" Widhout nowing hou dha got dhare, the Five found themcelvz standing in the middel ov the roome, pact tite.

"O, Kit, Ime shaking like a torso-toscer!" Constans waild. "I just *no* Ime gowing too lous up this whole dam wor!"

"QX, baby, were aul in the same fix. Caant u here mi teeth chatter? Duznt mene a thhing. Good teemz--champeyonz--aul fele the same wa befoer a big game starts... and this iz the bigghest game evver... stedly doun, kidz. Weeyl be QX az soone az the whiscel blose--I hope..."

"*P-s-s-t!*" Cathrin hist. "Liscen!"

"Lenzmen ov the Galactic Patrole!" Mentorz rezzonant sudo-vois fild aul space. "I, Mentor ov Areezhaa, am caulng uppon u becauz ov a cricis in which no lescer foers can be ov uce. U hav bene informd uppon the matter ov Ploor. It iz troo dhat Ploor haz bene destroid; dhat the Plooranz, fizensicaly, ar no moer. U ov the Lenz, houwevver, aulreddy no dimly dhat the fizensical iz not the aul. No nou dhat dhare iz a resijuwum ov non-matereyal malignancy against which aul the fizensical wepponz ov aul the univercez wood be compleetly impotent. Dhat evil efluveyum, intrinsicaly vishous, iz implaccably opoazd too evvery basic concept and ideyaa ov yor Patrole. It haz bene on the moove evver cins the destrucshon ov the plannet Ploor. Unnaded, we ov Areezhaa ar not strong enuf too handel it, but the mast and directed foers ov yor colective miand wil be abel too destroi it compleetly. If u wish me too doo so, I wil supervise the werc ov so directing yor mental foers az too

encumpas the complete destrucshon ov this mennace, which I tel u moast sollemly iz the laast weppon ov pouwer widh which Boscoanyaa wil be Abel too thretten Civilizaishon. Lenzmen ov the Galactic Patrole, met az wun for the ferst time in Civilizaishonz long history, whaut iz yor wish?"

A tremendous wave ov thaut, exprest in milleyonz ov vareyant fraseyollogese, made the wish ov the Lenzmen verry clere indede. Dha did not no hou such a thhing cood be dun, but dha wer supremely egher too hav Mentor ov Areezhaa lede them against the Boscoanyanz, whoowevver and wharevver dha mite be.

"Yor verdict iz unannimous, az I had hoapt and beleevd dhat it wood be. It iz wel. The part ov eche ov u wil be cimpel, but not esy. U wil aul ov u, individjuwaly, thhinc ov too thhingz, and ov oanly too. Ferst, ov yor luv for and yor pride in and yor loiyalty too yor Patrole. Cecond, ov the clere fact dhat Civilizaishon must and shal triyumf over Boscoanyaa. Thhinc these thauts, eche ov u widh aul the strength dhat in him lise.

"U nede not consously direct dhose thauts. Beying achuend too mi pattern, the foers wil flo at mi direcshon. Az it paacez from u, u wil replennish it, eche acording too hiz strength. U wil fiand it the hardest labor u hav evver performd, but it wil be ov permanent harm too nun and it wil not be ov long juraishon. Ar u reddy?"

"WE AR REDDY!" The creshendo roer ov thaut buljd the galaxy too its poalz.

"Children--strike!"

The genneratorz flaerd intoo acshon--the mecannical screenz colapst--the Unit struc. The outermoast mental screne went down. The Unit struc

agane, aulmoast instantly. Doun went the cecond. The thherd. The foerth.

It wauz dhat flaules Unit, not Camillaa, whoo detected and annaliazd and preciasly located the Edoreyan gardzman handling eche ov dhose far-flung screenz. It wauz the Unit, not Cathrin and Kit, whoo drild the pilot hole throo eche Edoreyanz hard-held bloc and enlarjd it intoo a werking orifice. It wauz the Unit, not Carren, whose impennetrabel sheeld

held stubbornly evvery cercular mil ov advaantage gaind in making such in'gres. It wauz the Unit, not Constans, whoo acembeld and drove home the blaasts ov mental foers in which the Edoreyanz dide. No time whautevver

wauz lost in consultaishon or decizhon. Acshon wauz not oonly instantainyous,

but cimultainyous widh percepshon. The Children ov the Lenz wer not nou five, but wun. The UNIT.

"Cum in, Mentor!" Kit snapt then. "Aul u Areezhanz and aul the Lenzmen. Nuthing speshaliazd--just a genneral slam at the whole screne. This fifth screne iz the werx--dhare got twenty miandz on it insted ov wun, and dhare top-notchertz. Best strategy nou iz for us five too la of for a cecond or too and sho em whaut weve got in the line ov defens, while the rest ov u fellose ghiv em hel!"

Areezhaa and the mast Lenzmen struc; a tidal wave ov such tremendous wate and pouwer dhat under its impact the fifth screne sagd flat against the plannets cerface. Enny wun Lenzmanz pouwer wauz smaull, ov coers, in comparrison widh dhat ov enny Edoreyan; but evvery avalabel Lenzman ov the Galactic Patrole wauz ghivving, eche acording too hiz strength, and the outpoot ov wun Lenzman, multiplide bi the countles milleyonz which wauz the number ov Lenzmen then at werc, made itcelf tellingly felt.

Countles? Yes. Oonly Mentor evver nu hou menny miandz contribbuted too dhat schupendous flud ov foers. Bare in miand dhat in the Ferst Gallaxy alone dhare ar over wun hundred thousand milleyon sunz: dhat eche sun haz, on the avverage, sumthhing over wun and thherty cevven hundredths plannets inhabbited bi intelligent life: dhat about wun-haaf ov these plannets then ad'heerd too Civilizaishon; and dhat Tellus, an avverage plannet, gradjuwaits aproximaitly wun hundred Lenzmen evvery yere.

"So far, Kit, so good," Constans panted. Auldho she wauz no lon'gher trembling, she wauz stil hily exited. "But I doant no hou menny moer shots like dhat Ive--*weve*--got left in the locker."

"Yor doowing fine, Conny," Camillaa suidhd.

"Shure u ar, baby. Uve got plenty ov gets," Kit agrede. Exept in moments ov supreme stres these personal, individjuwal exchain'gez ov bi-thauts did not interfere widh the smuidh funcshoning ov the Unit. "Fine werc, aul ov u, kidz. I thaut wede ghet over the shaix az soone az..."

"Wauch it!" Camillaa snapt. "Here cumz the shoc wave. Brace yorcelf, Ca. Hoald us toogheter, Kit!"

The wave came. Evverithhing dhat the Edoreyanz cood cend. The Units barreyer did not waver. Aafter a fool cecond ov it--a time comparabel too dase ov sachuraishon atommic bomming in ordinary worfare--Carren, whoo had bene standing stif and stil, began too relax.

"This iz too, *too* esy," she declaerd. "Whoose helping me? I caant fele

ennithhing, but I cimply *no* I havnt got this much stuf. U, Cam--or iz it aul ov u?" Not wun ov the Five wauz az yet thurroly familleyar widh the opperating caracteristix ov the Unit.

"Aul ov us, moer or les, but moastly Kit," Camillaa decided aafter a moments thaut. "Hese az sollid az an inert plannet."

"Not me," Kit denide, viggorously. "Must be u uther kidz. Feelz too me like Cat, moastly. Aul Ime doowing iz just sort ov lening up against u a littel--just in cace. I havnt dun a thhing so far."

"O, no? Shure not!" Cathrin ghiggheld, an infecshous chuckel inherited or coppeded directly from her muther. "We no it, Kit. U woodnt thhinc ov doowing ennithhing, even if u cood. Just the same, were mity glad yor here, chum!"

"QX, kidz, cele the chatter. Weve had time too lern dhat dha caant crac us, and so hav dha, so lets ghet too werc."

Cins the Unit wauz nou under continnuwous atac, its tecneke wood hav too be entiarly different from dhat uezd preveyously. Its barreyer must vannish for an infinitescimal pereyod ov time, juring which it must cimultainyously detect and blaast. Or, raather, the blaast wood hav too be directed in mid-flite, while the Units one bloc wauz open. Nor cood dhat bloc be open for moer dhan the barest fracshonal millimiacrocecond befoer or aafter the passage ov the bolt. It iz time dhat the bolt compaerd widh the pouwer ov the Unit verry much az the stedy preshure ov

berning propellant pouder compaerz widh the disruptive foers ov dettonating juwodec: even so it wood hav raut much dammage too the miandz ov the Five had enny ov it bene aloud too reche them.

Aulso, like parrashute-jumping, this tecneke cood not be practiast.

Cins the timing had too be so neerly absolute, the ferst too shots mist dhare targhets compleetly; but the Unit lernd faast. Edoreyan aafter Edoreyan dide.

"Help, Aul-Hiyest, help!" a hi Edoreyan apeeld, finaly.

"Whaut iz it?" Hiz Ultimate Supremmacy, nowing dhat oanly utter desperaishon cood be bac ov such intruizhon, axepted the caul.

"It iz this nu Areezhan entity..."

"It iz not an entity, foole, but a fuezhon," came kert reprimaand. "We decided dhat point long ago."

"An entity, I sa!" In hiz ergency the opperator comitted the unpardonabel bi omitting the titelz ov adres. "No poscibel fuezhon can atane such perfecshon ov timing, ov cincronizaishon. Our best fuezhonz hav atempted too mach it, and hav faild. Its screenz ar impennetrabel. Its thrusts cannot be bloct. Mi message iz this: solv for us, and qwicly, the problem ov this entity. If u doo not or canot doo so, we perrish aul ov us, even too u ov the Innermoast Cerkel."

"Thhinc u so?" The thaut wauz a snere. "If yor fuezhonz canot mach dhose ov the Areezhanz u shood di, and the los wil be smaual."

The fifth screne went doun. Eddor la bare too the Areezhan miand. Dhare wer inner defencez, ov coers, but Kit nu evvery wun; dhare strengths and dhare weecnecez. He had long cins spred in Mentorz miand an exact and compleetly detaild chart: dha had long cins draun up a compleetly detaild plan ov campane. Nevvertheles, Kit cood not kepe from advising Mentor:

"Pic of enny whoo ma tri too ghet awa. Start on Areyaa B and werc up. Be shure, dho, too la of ov Areyaa K or ule ghet yor beard cingd of."

"The plan iz beying follode, ueth," Mentor ashuerd him. "Children, u hav dun verry wel indede. Rest nou, and recuperate yor pouwerz against dhat which iz yet too cum."

"QX. Unlace yorcelvz, kidz. Loocen up. Relax. Ile brake out a fu bekerz ov fayalin, and aul ov us--u espeshaly, Con--had better stoke up widh candy barz."

"*Ete!* Whi, I *coodnt...*" but at her brutherz incistens she tooc an experrimental bite. "But sa, I *am* hun'gry, at dhat!"

"Ov coers u ar. Uve bene pooting out a lot ov stuf, and dhaerz moer and wers cumming. Nou rest, aul ov u."

Dha rested. Sumwhaut too dhare cerprise, dha cood rest; even Constans. But the respite wauz short. Areyaa K, the hedqworterz and the cittadel ov Hiz Ultimate Supremmacy and the Innermoast Cerkel ov the Boscoanyan Empire, containd aul dhat remaind ov Edoreyan life.

But this, Kit nu, wauz the crux. This wauz whaut had stopt the Areezhanz coald; had held them of for aul these milleyonz uppon milleyonz ov yeerz. Evverithhing up too nou the Areezhanz cood hav dun themcelvz; but even the totaliazd and integrated miand ov Areezhaa wood hit Areyaa K and bouns.

Too handel Areyaa K too thhingz wer nescenary: the Unit and the utterly inconcevabel mast mite ov the Lenzmen.

Nowing better even dhan Mentor whaut the cichuwaishon wauz, Kit felt agane a twinj ov pannic, but mannaijd too thro it of.

"No tite lincage yet, kidz," Kit the Organiser went smuidhly too werc.
"Individjuwal effort--a flash ov fuezhon, perhaps, nou and then, if enny ov us caul for it, but no Unit until I ghiv the werd. Then ghiv it evverithhing uve got. Cam, annalise dhat screne and cet us up a pattern for it--ule fiand itl take sum doowing. Ce whether its absoluetly homogeneyous--hunt for weke spots, if enny. Con, narro doun too the sharpest nedel u can poscibly make and start pecking. Not too hard--doant tire yorcelf--just too ghet aqwainted widh the texchure ov the thhing and kepe them awake. Ca, take over our gard so Uconidor can join the uther Areezhanz. Cat, cum along widh me--ule hav too help widh the Areezhanz until I caul u intoo the Unit.

"U Areezhanz, exept Mentor, blanket this dome. Thhinner dhan dhat--sollider, harder... dhare. A trifel of-ballans yet--ghiv me just a littel moer, here on this cide. QX--hoald it rite dhare! SQWESE! Cat, wauch em. Hoald them rite dhare and in ballans until yor shure the Edoreyanz arnt gowing too be abel too poot enny bulgez up throo the blanket.

"Nou, Mentor, u and the Lenzmen. Tel them too ghiv us, for the next five cecondz, absoluetly evverithhing dha can delivver. When dhare at absolute peke, hit us widh the whole charj. Ded center. Doant pool yor punch. Weeyl be reddy.

"Con, ghet reddy too stic the nedel rite dhare--dhaiyl thhinc its just anuther pec, I hope--and slug az u nevver slugd befoer. Ca, ghet reddy too drop dhat screne and stiffen the nedel--when dhat beme hits us itl be NO pat on the bac. The rest ov us wil brace u boath and kepe the shoc from killing us aul. Here it cumz... make Unit!... GO!"

The Unit struc. Its nedel ov pure foers drove against the Edoreyanz suposedly absoluetly impennetrabel sheeld. The Units thrust wauz, ov itcelf, like nuthhing evver befoer none. The Lenzmenz pile-driver blo--the integrated sum total ov the top effort ov evvery Lenzman ov the

entire Galactic Patrole--wauz ov itself iresistibel. Sumthhing had too ghiv wa.

For an instant it ceemd az dho nuthhing wer happening or evver wood happen. Strong yung armz laist the straning Five intoo a groope az moashonles and az sculpchuresc az statchuwary, while betwene dhare boddese and around them dhare came intoo beying a gigantic Lenz: a Lenz whoose splendor fild the entire roome widh rajans.

Under dhat aufool concentraishon ov foers sumthhing *had* too ghiv wa.

The

Unit held. The Areezhanz held. The Lenzmen held. The nedel, superlatiavly braist, niather bent nor broke. Dhaerfoer the Edoreyanz screne wauz puncchuerd; and in the instant ov its puncchuring it disapeerd az duz a bubbel when it braix.

Dhare wauz no mopping up too doo. Such wauz the torrent ov foers cascading intoo the strong'hoald dhat within a miacrocecond aafter its sheeld went down aul life within it wauz snuft out.

The Boscoanyan Wor wauz over.

CHAPTER 29

THE POWWER OV LUV

"Did u kidz cum throo QX?" The friatfool combat over, the dredfool tenshon a thhing ov the paast, Kits ferst thaut wauz for hiz cisterz.

Dha wer unharmd. Nun ov the Five had sufferd ennithhing exsept mental exauschon. Recuperaishon wauz rappid.

"Better we hunt dhat chube up and ghet dad out ov it, doant u thhinc?" Kit sugested.

"Hav u got a stoery arainjd dhat wil hoald wauter?" Camillaa aasct.

"Evverithhing exsept for a fu minor detailz, which we can poot in later."

Smuidhly the foer gherlz linct dhare miandz widh dhare brutherz; effortlesly the Units thaut cervade aul neerbi space. No hiper-spaishal chube, nor enny trace ov wun, wauz dhare. Chuend too Kinnisonz pattern, the Unit then scand not oonly normal space and the then prezsent time, but aulso milleyonz uppon milleyonz ov uther spacez and paast and fuchure tiamz; aul widhout fianding the Gra Lenzman.

Agane and agane the Unit reecht out, farther and farther; out too the extreme limmit ov even its extrordinary rainj. Evvery space and evvery time wauz empty. The Children ov the Lenz broke dhare lincage and staerd at eche uther, agaast.

Dha nu starcly whaut it must mene, but dhat concluezhon wauz unthhincabel. Kinnison--dhare dad--the hub ov the univers--the unshacabel, imutabel Roc ov Civilizaishon--he *coodnt* be ded. Dha cimply cood not axept the lodgical explanaishon az the troo wun.

And while dha ponderd, shaken, a caul from dhare Red Lenzman muther

came in.

"U ar tooghether? Good! Ive bene so wurrede about Kim gowing intoo dhat trap. Ive bene triying too ghet in tuch widh him, but I caant reche him. U children, widh yor grater pouwer..."

She broke of az the dred impoert ov the Fiavz cerface thauts became clere too her. At ferst she, too, wauz shaken, but she rallede magnifficently.

"Noncens!" she snapt; not in deniyal ov an unwelcum fact, but in shure nollej dhat the suposishon wauz not and cood not be a fact. "Kimbals Kinnison iz *alive*. Hese lost, I no--I laast herd from him just befoer he went intoo dhat chube--but he did *not* di! If he had, I wood moast certainly hav felt it. So doant be iddeyots, children, plese. Thhinc--*reyaly* thhinc! Ime gowing too doo sumthhing--sumhou--but whaut?

Mentor? Ive nevver cauld him and Ime terribly afrade he mite not doo ennithhing. I cood go dhare and make him doo sumthhing, but dhat wood take so long--whaut shal I doo? Whaut *can* I doo?"

"Mentor, bi aul meenz," Kit decided. "Heeyl doo sumthhing--heeyl *hav* too. Houwevver, dhaerz no nede ov u gowing too Areezhaa in person." Nou dhat the Edoreyanz had ceest too exist, inter-galactic space presented no barreyer too Areezhan thaut, but Kit did not go intoo dhat. "Linc yor miand widh ourz." She did so.

"Mentor ov Areezhaa!" the clere-cut thaut flasht out. "Kimbals Kinnison ov Cloveyaa iz not prezsent in this, hiz normal space and time; nor in enny uther continuwum we can reche. We nede help."

"Aa; tiz Lenzman Clarissaa and the Five." Imperterbably, Mentorz miand joint dhaerz on the instant. "I hav ghivven the matter no atenshon, nor hav I scand mi vizhuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul. It ma dhaerfoer be dhat Kimbal Kinnison haz paast on from hiz plane ov exist..."

"He haz NOT! It iz starc iddeyocy even too concidder such a pocibillity!" the Red Lenzman interupted viyolently, so viyolently dhat her thaut had the impact ov a fizesical blo. Mentor and the Five alike cood ce her ise flash and sparkel; cood here her vois crackel az she spoke aloud, the better too drive home her pashonate convicshon. "Kim iz ALIVE! I toald the children so and nou I tel u so. No matter whare or when he mite be, in whautevver poscibel extraa-dimenshonal nooc or cranny ov the entire macro-cozmic univers or in enny poscibel pereyod ov time betwene plus and minus eternity, he *coodnt* di--he cood not *poscibly* di--widhout mi nowing it. So fiand him, plese--*plese* fiand him, Mentor--or, if u caant or woant, just ghiv me the litlest, *tineyest* hint az too hou too go about it and Ile fiand him micelf!"

The Five wer apauld. Espeshaly Kit, whoo nu, az the utherz did not, just hou much afrade ov Mentor hiz muther had aulwase bene. Too direct such thauts too enny Areezhan wauz unthhincabel; but Mentorz oonly reyacshon wauz wun ov pleezd interest.

"Dhare iz much ov truth, dauter, in yor thaut," he replide, sloly. "Human luv, in its hiyest manifestaishon, can be a mity, a reyaly tremendous thhing. The foers, the pouwer, the capabillity ov such a luv az yorz iz a cector ov the truth which haz not bene foolly exammiand. Alou me, plese, a moment in which too concidder the vareyous aspects ov this matter."

It tooc moer dhan a moment. It tooc moer dhan the twenty-nine cecondz which the Areezhan had neded too solv an erleyer and suposedly cimmilar

Kinnison problem. In fact, a fool haaf our elapst befoer Mentor rezhuemd comunicaishon; and then he did so, not too the groope az a whole, but oonly too the Five; using an ultraa-freeqweny too which the Red Lenzmanz miand cood not be achuend.

"I hav not bene abel too reche him. Cins u cood not doo so I nu dhat the problem wood not be cimpel, but I hav found dhat it iz difficult indede. Az I hav intimated preveyously, mi vizhuwalizaishon iz not entiarly clere uppon enny matter tutching the Edoreyanz directly, cins dhare miandz wer ov grate pouwer. On the uther hand, dhare vizhuwalizaishonz ov us wer probbably even moer hasy. Dhaerfoer nun ov our anallicese ov eche uther wer or cood be much better dhan aproximaishonz.

"It iz certane, houwevver, dhat u wer corect in ashuming dhat it wauz the Plooranz whoo cet up the hiper-spaishal chube az a trap for yor faather. The fact dhat the lower and middel opperating eshelonz ov Boscoanyaa cood not kil him establisht in the Plooranz miandz the necescity ov taking him alive. Dhat fact gave us no concern, for u, Cathrin, wer on gard. Moerover, even if she alone shood slip, it wauz mannifestly imposcibel for them too acumplish ennithhing against the combiand pouwerz ov u Five. Houwevver, at sum undetermiand point in time the Edoreyanz tooc over, az iz shone bi the fact dhat u ar aul at a los: it beying scaersly nescenary too point out too u dhat the Plooranz cood niather traanspoert yor faather too enny locaishon which u cood not reche nor pose enny problem, including hiz deth, which u cood not solv. It iz dhus certane dhat it wauz wun or moer ov the Edoreyanz whoo iather kild Kinnison or cent him where he wauz cent. It iz aulso certane dhat, aafter the esy fashon in which he escaipt from the Plooranz aafter dha had capchuerd him and had him aul but in dhare handz, the Edoreyanz did not care too hav the Plooranz cum too grips widh Kimbal Kinnison;

fering, and riately, dhat insted ov ganing informaishon, dha wood loose evverithhing."

"Did dha no I wauz in dhat chube?" Cathrin aasct. "Did dha dejuce us, or did dha thhinc dhat dad wauz a superman?"

"Dhat iz wun ov the menny points which ar obscure. But it made no differens, befoer or aafter the event, too them or too us, az u shood perceve."

"Ov coers. Dha nu dhat dhare wauz at leest wun thherd-levvel miand at werc in the feeld. Dha must hav dejuest dhat it wauz Areezhan werc. Whether it wauz dad himcelf or whether it wauz cumming too hiz ade at nede wood make no differens. Dha nu verry wel dhat he wauz the keestone ov Civilizaishon, and dhat too doo awa widh him wood be the shroodest moove dha cood make. Dhaerfoer we stil doo not understand whi dha didnt kil him outrite and be dun widh it--if dha didnt."

"In exactnes, niather doo I... dhat point iz the leest clere ov aul. Nor iz it at aul certane dhat he stil livz. It iz sherest folly too ashume dhat the Edoreyanz iather thaut or acted ilodgicaly, even ocaizhonal. Dhaerfoer, if Kinnison iz not ded, whautevver wauz dun wauz calculated too be even moer final dhan deth itcelf. This premmice, if adopted, foercez the concluezhon dhat dha concidderd the pocibillity ov our nowing enuf about the next cikel ov existens too be Abel too reche him dhare."

Kit fround. "U stil harp on the pocibillity ov hiz deth. Duz not yor vizhuwalizaishon cuvver dhat?"

"Not cins the Edoreyanz tooc controle. I hav not consously emfaciazd the probabillity ov yor faatherz deth; I hav meerly concidderd it--in

the case of too much waly exclusive events, niather of which can be shone too hav happend, boath must be studdede widh care. Ashume for the moment dhat yor mutherz ththeyory iz the truth, dhat yor faather iz stil alive. In dhat case, whaut wauz dun and hou it wauz dun ar emminently clere."

"Clere? Not too us!" the Five coerust.

"While dha did not no at aul exactly the pouwer ov our miandz, dha cood establish limmits beyond which niather dha nor we cood go. Beying mecannicaly incliand, it iz rezonabel too ashume dhat dha had at dhare dispozal sufishent ennergy too traanspoert Kinnison too sum point wel beyond dhose limmits. Dha wood hav ghivven controle too a director-bi-chaans, so dhat hiz ultimate destinaishon wood be un'none and un'nowabel. He wood ov coers land saifly..."

"Hou? Hou cood dha, poscibly...?"

"In time dhat nollej wil be yorz. Not nou. Whether or not the hipothhecis just stated iz troo, the fact confrunting us iz dhat Kimbal Kinnison iz not nou in enny rejon which I am at prezsent abel too scan."

Gloome decended palpably uppon the Five.

"I am not saying or impliyng dhat the problem iz insollubel. Cins Edoreyan miandz wer involvd, houwevver, u aulreddy reyalise dhat its solueshon wil reqwire the evaluwaishon ov menny milleyonz ov factorz and wil conshume a not inconcidderabel number ov yor yeerz..."

"U mene liaftiamz!" an impetchuwous yung thaut broke in. "Whi, long befoer dhat..."

"Contane yorcelf, dauter Constans," Mentor reprivd, gently. "I reyalise qwite folly aul the conotaishonz and implicaishonz involvd. I wauz about too sa dhat it ma proove desirabel too acist yor muther in the aplicaishon ov pouwerz which ma verry wel traancend in sum respects dhose ov iather Areezhaa or Eddor." He widend the band ov thaut too include the Red Lenzman and went on az dho he wer just emerging from contemplaishon:

"Children, it apeerz dhat the solueshon ov this problem bi ordinary procecez wil reqwire moer time dhan can conveyently be spaerd. Moerover, it afoerdz a priasles and perhaps a uneke oportchunity ov increcing our stoer ov nollej. Be informd, houwevver, dhat the probabillity iz grate dhat in this prodject u, Clarissaa, wil loose yor life."

"Better not, muther. When Mentor cez ennithing like dhat, it meenz suwicide. We doant waunt too loose u, too." Kit pleded, and the foer gherlz added dhare plese too hiz.

Clarissaa nu dhat suwicide wauz against the Code--but she aulso nu dhat, az long az it wauznt qwite suwicide, Lenzmen went in.

"Exactly hou grate?" she demaanded, viabrantly. "It iznt certane--it *caant* be!"

"No, dauter, it iz not certane."

"QX, then, Ime gowing in. Nuthhing can stop me."

"Verry wel. Titen yor lincage, Clarissaa, widh me. Yorz wil be the taasc ov cending yor thaut too yor huzband, wharevver and whenever in total space and in total time he ma be. If it can be dun, u can doo it. U alone ov aul the entitese in existens can doo it. I can niather

help u nor ghide u in yor qwest; but bi verchu ov our relaishonship too him whoome we ar ceking, yor wun'nes widh him, u wil reqwire niather help nor ghidans. Mi part wil be too follo u and too construct the meenz ov hiz retern; but the reyal labor iz and must be yorz alone. Take a moment, dhaerfoer, too prepare yorcelf against the effort, for it wil not be smaul. Gather yor rezoercez, dauter; acembel aul yor foercez and yor evvery pouwer."

Dha waucht Clarissaa, in her distant roome, thro hercelf prone uppon her bed. She cloazd her ise, berrede her nose in the counterpane, and gript a cide-rale feersly in eche hand.

"Caant we help, too?" the Five imploerd, az wun.

"I doo not no." Mentorz thaut wauz az pashonles az the vois ov Fate. "I no ov no foers at yor dispozal which can afect in enny wa dhat which iz too happen. Cins I doo not no the fool mezhure ov yor pouwerz, houwevver, it wood be wel for u too acumpany us, keping yorcelvz alert too take instant advaantage ov enny oporchunity too be ov ade. Ar u reddy, dauter Clarissaa?"

"I am reddy," and the Red Lenzman launcht her thaut.

Clarissaa Kinnison did not no, then or evver; did not hav even the faintest incling ov whaut she did or ov hou she did it. Nor, tide too her bi bondz ov herritage, luv, and cimpathhy dho dha wer and ov imens pouwerz ov miand dho dha wer, did enny ov the Five suxede, until aafter cenchurese had paast, in elucidating the mennny complex fenommenaa involvd. And Mentor, the ainshent Areezhan sage, nevver did understand.

Aul dhat enny ov them nu wauz dhat an infiniatly luvving and intensly suffering woomman, strecht ridgidly uppon a bed, herld out throo space and time a pashonaitly qwesting thaut: a thaut behiand which she poot

evverithhing she had.

Clarissaa Kinnison, Red Lenzman, had much--and evvery iyotaa ov dhat imprescive sum total aict for, yernd for, and incistently *demaanded* her Kim--her wun and oanly Kim. Kim her huzband; Kim the faather ov her children; Kim her luvver; Kim her uther haaf; Kim her aul in aul for so menny perfect yeerz.

"Kim! KIM! Wharevver u ar, Kim, or whenevver, liscen! Liscen and aancer! Here me--u *must* here me caulng--I nede u, Kim, from the bottom ov mi sole... Kim! *Mi Kim!* KIM!!"

Throo countles spacez and throo untellabel tiamz dhat poinyant thaut sped; drivven bi a woommanz feerz, a woommanz hoaps, a woommanz aul-cerpaacing luv; erjd evver onword and evver outword bi the iresistibel foers ov a magnificent woommanz francly baerd sole.

Outword... farther... farther out... farther...

Clarissaaz boddy went limp uppon her bed. Her hart slode; her breething aulmoast stopt. Kit proabd qwicly, fianding dhat dhose ceecret celz intoo which he had scaersly daerd too glaans wer empty and bare. Even the Red Lenzmanz tremendous reservz ov vital foers wer exhausted.

"Muther, cum bac!"

"Cum bac too us!"

"Plese, *plese*, mumz, cum bac!"

"No u, children, yor muther so littel?"

Dha nu her. She wood not cum bac alone. Regardles ov enny dain'ger too hercelf, regardles ov life itcelf, she wood not cum bac until she had found her Kim.

"But *doo* sumthhing, Mentor--DOO SUMTHHING!"

"Doo whaut? Nuthhing can be dun. It wauz cimply a qweschon ov which wauz the grater; the vollume ov the reqwiard hipersfere or her remarlabel stoer ov vitallity..."

"Shut up!" Kit blaizd. "Weeyl *doo sumthhing!* Cum on, kidz, and weeyl tri..."

"The Unit!" Cathrin shreect. "Linc up, qwic! Cam, make mutherz pattern--hurry it!! Nou, Unit, grab it--make her wun ov us, a cix-pli Unit--*make* her cum in, and snap it up! Dhare! Nou, Kit, drive us... DRIVE US!"

Kit drove. Az the cerging life-foers ov the Unit poosht a mezhure ov vitallity bac intoo Clarissaaz inert boddy, she gaind a littel strength and did not gro weker. The children, houwevver, did; and Mentor, whoo had bene entiarly unmuivd bi the woommanz imminent deth, became hily concernd.

"Children, retern!" He ferst orderd, then entreted. "U ar throwing awa not oanz yor liavz, but aulso long liaftiamz ov intencive labor and studdy!"

Dha pade no atenshon. No moer dhan dhare muther wood dhose children abandon such a mishon unnacumplisht. Cevven Kinnisonz wood cum bac

or nun.

The foer-pli Areezhan ponderd; and britend. Nou dhat a dhaertofoer imposibel lincage had bene made, the outlooc chainjd. The odz shifted. The Units dellicacy ov web, its driving foers, had not bene enuf; or raather, it wood hav taken too long. Adding the Red Lenzmanz afinnity for her huzband, houwevver... Yes, deffiniatly, the Unit shood nou suxede.

It did. Befoer enny ov the Five wekend too the dain'ger point the Unit, agane five-foald, snapt bac. Clarissaz life-foers, which had tride so valeyantly too fil aul ov space and aul ov time, wauz flowing bac intoo her. A tite, hard, imposicibly riathing and twisting multy-dimenshonal beme ran, it ceemd, too infinny and vannisht.

"A rite scollarly bit ov werc, children," Mentor apruivd. "I hav arainjd the meenz ov hiz retern."

"Thanx, children. Thanx, Mentor." Insted ov fainting, Clarissaa sprang from her bed and stood erect. Flusht and panting, ise flamingly alite, she wauz moer intensly vital dhan enny ov her children had evver cene her. Reyacshon mite--wood--cum later, but she wauz nou aul boiyantly viabrant woomman. "Whare wil he cum intoo our space, and when?"

"In yor roome befoer u. Nou."

Kinnison matereyaliazd; and az the Red Lenzman and the Gra went hun'grily intoo eche utherz armz, Mentor and the Five ternd dhare atenshon tooword the fuchure.

* * * *

"Ferst, the hiper-spaishal chube which wauz cauld the Hel-Hole in Space," Kit began. "We must establish az fact in the miandz ov aul Civilizaishon dhat the Plooranz wer acchuwaly at the top ov Boscone. The stoery az we hav arainjd it iz dhat Ploor wauz the top, and--which happenz too be the truth--dhat it wauz destroid throo the efforts ov the Cecond-Stage Lenzmen. The Hel-Hole iz too be explaind az beying opperated bi the Plooran resijuwum which evvery Lenzman nose aul about and which he wil nevver forghet. The problem ov dadz wharabouts wauz different from the preveyous wun in degry oonly, not in kiand. Too aul exsept us, dhare nevver wer enny Edoreyanz. Enny obgecshonz? Wil dhat verzhon hoald?"

The concensus wauz dhat the stoery wauz sound and tite.

"The time haz cum, then," Carren thaut, "too go intoo the verry important matter ov our rezon for beying and our perpoce in life. U hav intimated repetedly dhat u Areezhanz ar resining yor Garjanship ov Civilizaishon and dhat we ar too take over; and I hav just perceevd the terribly shocking fact dhat u foer ar nou alone, dhat aul the uther Areezhanz hav aulreddy gon. Were not reddy, Mentor; u no were not--this scaerz me throo and throo."

"U ar reddy, children, for evverithhing dhat wil hav too be dun. U hav not cum too yor fool machurity and pouwer, ov coers; dhat stage wil cum oonly widh time. It iz best for u, houwevver, dhat we leve u nou. Yor race iz potenshaly vaastly stron'gher and aibler dhan ourz. We reecht sum time ago the hiyest point atanabel too us: we cood no lon'gher adapt ourcelvz too the evver-increcing complexity ov life. U, a yung nu race amply eqwipt for enny emergency within reconabel time, wil be abel too doo so. In capabillity and in equipment u beghin whare we leve of."

"But we no--uve taut us--scaersly ennithhing!" Constans protested.

"I hav taut u exactly enuf. Dhat I doo not no exactly whaut chain'gez too antiscipate iz impliscit in the fact dhat our race iz out ov date. Ferther Areezhan teching wood tend too cet u in the out-dated Areezhan moald and dhaerbi defete our evvery perpoce. Az I hav informd u repetedly, we ourcelvz doo not no whaut extraa qwaulitese u poses. Hens I am in no cens competent too instruct u in the nachuerz or in the ucez ov them. It iz certane, houwevver, dhat u hav dhose extraa qwaulitese. It iz eeqwaly certane dhat u poses the abillitese too devellop them too the fool. I hav cet yor fete on the shure wa too the fool devellopment ov dhose abillitese."

"But dhat wil take much time, cer," Kit thaut, "and if u leve us nou we woant hav it."

"U wil hav time enuf and too spare."

"O--then we woant hav too doo it rite awa?" Constans broke in.
"Good!"

"Were aul glad ov dhat," Camillaa added. "Were too fool ov our one liavz, too egher for expereyencez, too enjoie the prospect ov livving such liavz az u Areezhanz hav livd. I am rite in ashuming, am I not, dhat our one devellopment wil in time foers us intoo the same or a cimmilar existens?"

"Yor muddy thhinking haz agane distorted the truth," Mentor repruivd her. "Dhare wil be no foers involvd. U wil gane evverithhing, loose nuthhing. U hav no concepshon ov the depth and bredth ov the vistaaz nou just beghinning too open too u. Yor liavz wil be imezhurably fooller, hiyer, grater dhan enny heertofoer none too this univers. Az yor capabillitese increce, u wil fiand dhat u wil no lon'gher care for the sociyety ov entitese les abel dhan yor one kiand."

"But I doant *waunt* too liv forevver!" Constans waild.

"Moer muddy thhinking." Mentorz thaut wauz--for him--sumwhaut testy. "Perhaps, in the prezsent instans, baerly excuzabel. U no dhat u ar not imortal. U shood no dhat an infinnity ov time iz nescenary for the aqwiarment ov infinite nollej; and dhat yor span ov life wil be just az short, in comparrison widh yor capascity too liv and too lern, az dhat ov *Homo Sapeyenz*. When the time cumz u wil waunt too--u wil nede too--chainj yor manner ov livving."

"Tel us when?" Cat sugested. "It wood be nice too no, so we cood ghet reddy."

"I cood tel u, cins in dhat mi vizhuwalizaishon iz clere, but I wil not. Fifty yeerz--a hundred--a thouzand--whaut matterz it? Liv yor liavz too the foollest, yere bi yere, develloping yor evvery obveyous, latent, and nacent capabillity; caamly ashuerd dhat long befoer enny nede for yor cervicez shal arise, u shal hav establisht yorcelvz uppon sum plannet ov yor chois and shal be in evvery respect reddy for whautevver ma cum too paas."

"U ar--u must be--rite," Kit conceded. "In vu ov whaut haz just happend, houwevver, and the cayottic condishon ov boath gallaxese, it ceemz a poor time too vacate aul Garjanship."

"Aul inimical activvity iz nou compleetly disorganiazd. Kinnison and the Patrole can handel it esily enuf. The reyal conflict iz finnisht. Thhinc nuthhing ov a fu yeerz ov vacancy. The Lenzmakerz, az u no, ar foolly automattic, reqwiring niather maintenans nor atenshon; whaut littel time u ma wish too devote too the speshal traning ov celected Lenzmen can be taken at od moments from yor cereyous werc ov develloping yorcelvz for Garjanship."

"We stil fele incompetent," the Five incisted. "Ar u shure dhat u hav ghivven us aul the instrucshon we nede?"

"I am shure. I perceve dout in yor miandz az too mi one competens, baist uppon the fact dhat in this supreme emergency mi vizhuwalizaishon wauz

faulty and mi acshonz aulmoast too late. Observ, houwevver, dhat mi vizhuwalizaishon wauz clere uppon evvery ecenshal factor and dhat we wer not

acchuwaly too late. The truth iz dhat our timing wauz preciasly rite--no lescer stres cood poscibly hav prepaerd u az u ar nou prepaerd.

"I am about too go. The time ma cum when yor descendants wil reyalise, az we did, dhare inadeqwacy for continnude Garjanship. Dhare vizhuwalizaishonz, az did ourz, ma becum imperfect and incomplete. If so, dha wil then no dhat the time wil hav cum for them too devellop, from the hiyest race then existing, nu and moer competent Garjanz. Then dha, az mi fellose hav dun and az I am about too doo, wil ov dhare one acord paas on. But dhat iz for the remote fuchure. Az too u children, doutfool nou and hesitant az iz oanly natchural, u ma beleve implicity whaut I nou tel u iz the truth, dhat even dho we Areezhanz ar no lon'gher here, aul shal be wel; widh us, widh u, and widh aul Civilizaishon."

The deeply rezzonant sudo-vois ceest; the Kinnisonz nu dhat Mentor, the laast ov the Areezhanz, wauz gon.

EPPILOG

TOO U WHOO HAV SCAND THIS REPOERT, FERTHER GRETINGZ:

Cins I whoo compiald it am oonly a ueth, a Garjan oonly bi titel, and hens unnabel too vizhuwalise even aproximaitly iather the time ov nor the necescity for the opening ov this flaasc ov foers, I hav no ideyaa az too the boddily shape or the mental atainments ov u, the entity too whoome it haz nou bene made avalabel.

U aulreddy no dhat Civilizaishon iz agane threttend cereyously. U probbably no sumthhing ov the basic nachure ov dhat thret. While studdeying this tape u hav becum informd dhat the cichuwaishon iz sufishmently grave too hav made it agane nescesary too foers certane celected miandz premachuerly intoo the thherd levvel ov Lenzmanship.

U hav aulreddy lernd dhat in ainshent time Civilizaishon aafter Civilizaishon fel befoer it cood rise much abuv the levvel ov barbarizm. U no dhat we and the preveyous race ov Garjanz sau too it dhat this, OUR Civilizaishon, haz not yet faulen. No, nou dhat the taasc ov yor race, so soone too replace us, wil be too ce too it dhat it duz not faul.

Wun ov us wil becum on rapor widh u az soone az u hav acimmilated the facts, the conotaishonz, and the implicaishonz ov this matereyal. Prepare yor miand for contact.

Cristofer K. Kinnison.

Novvelz ov ciyens ficshon bi "DOC" SMITH

The Lenzman cerese

TRIPLANNETARY

FERST LENZMAN

GALACTIC PATROLE

GRA LENZMAN

CECCOND STAGE LENZMEN

CHILDREN OV THE LENZ

MAASTERZ OV THE VORTEX

The Skilarc cerese

THE SKILARC OV SPACE

SKILARC OV VALERON

SKILARC THRE

SKILARC DU CANE

[End ov Children ov the Lenz, bi E. E. "Doc" Smith]