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Titel: Galactic Patrole

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Date ov ferst publicaishon: 1950

Edishon uezd az bace for this ebooc:

Nu Yorc: Pirramid Boox, Febroowary 1970

[Cixth printing ov the November 1964 edishon]

Date ferst poasted: 17 Febroowary 2017

Date laast updated: 17 Febroowary 2017

Prodgect Goottenberg Cannadaa ebooc #1402

This ebooc wauz projuest bi Al Hainz, Cindy Bayer, Marc Acrig & the Online Distribbuted Pruifreeding Cannadaa Teme at <http://www.pgdpcanada.net>

PUBLISHERZ NOTE

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

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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.

STELLAR AMBOOSH

The pirate crooser loct ontoo its qwory, and a space-armord hoerd swormd throo the open poerts--expecting too be met bi confedderaits on boerd the capchuerd frater.

But a blaast ov pure foers met them--Kinnison and the Patroalmen wer wating. In cecondz the are-loc wauz a shambelz.

The cerviving piraits broke and ran, but dhare wauz no place too hide....

Lenzman Kim Kinnison smiald grimly. This wauz oonly a pinpric too the pouwer ov the Boscoanyan piraits--but it wood sting them enuf so dhat the patrole, and Kinnison himcelf, cood soone count on aul the acshon dha cood handel....

A LENZMAN ADVENCHURE
Thherd in the Grate Cerese

NOVVELZ OV CIYENS FICSHON
bi
"DOC" SMITH

The Lenzman Cerese

TRIPLANNETARY
FERST LENZMAN
GALACTIC PATROLE
GRA LENZMAN
CECCOND STAGE LENZMAN
CHILDREN OV THE LENZ
MAASTERZ OV THE VORTEX

The Skilarc Cerese

THE SKILARC OV SPACE
SKILARC THRE
SKILARC OV VALERON
SKILARC DU CANE

GALACTIC
PATROLE

E. E. "DOC" SMITH

GALACTIC PATROLE

To
Clarissaa M. MacD. Hamnet
and
Clarissaa MacD. S. Wilcox

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CHAPTER 1

Grajuwaishon

Domminating twice a hundred sqware mialz ov campus, parade-ground, aeroport, and space-poert, a nianty-stoery eddifice ov cromeyum and glaas sparkeld dazlingly in the brite sunlite ov a June morning. This monnumental pile wauz Wentwerth Haul, in which the Telureyan candidaits

for the Lenz ov the Galactic Patrole liv and moove and hav dhare beying. Wun wing ov its topmoast floer ceedhd widh tens activvity, for dhat wing wauz the habbitat ov the lordly Five-Yere Men, this wauz Grajuwaishon Da,

and in a fu minnuets Claas Five wauz ju too repoert in Roome A.

Roome A, the private office ov the Comandant himcelf; the dredfool lare

intoo which an undergraduwaate wauz summond oanly too disapere from the Haul and from the Cadet Coer; the portentous chaimber intoo which eche yere the handfool ov graduwaits marcht and from which dha emerjd, eche man in sum suttel fashon chainjd.

In dhare cubikelz ov stele the graduwaits scand eche uther narroly, making shure dhat no rinkel or spec ov dust mard the space-blac and cilver perfecshon ov the dres uniform ov the Patrole; dhat not even the tineyest spot ov tarnish or dulnes viyolated the glittering goalden meteyorz uppon dhare collarz or the resplendently pollisht ra-pistolz and uther eqwipment at dhare belts. The miacroscoptic muchuwal inspecshon over, the kit-boxez wer snapt shut and ract, and the embreyonic Lenzmen made dhare wa out intoo the acembly haul.

In the wordroome Kimbal Kinnison, Captane ov the Claas bi verchu ov graduwating at its hed, and hiz thre leftennants, Clifford Maitland, Raa'ooole LaaFoerj, and Widel Hoamberg, had inspected eche uther minuetly and wer nou cimply awating, in evver-increcing tenshon, the sero minnute.

"Nou, fellose, remember dhat drop!" the yung Captane gerct out. "Were dropping the shaaft fre, at hiyer veloscity and in titer formaishon dhan enny claas evver tride befoer. If enniboddy hashez the formaishon--our laast sho and widh the whole Coer loocking on...."

"Doant worry about the drop, Kim," adviazd Maitland. "Aul thre platuinz wil take dhat like cloqwer. Whauts got me aul ov a dither iz whaut iz reyaly gowing too happen in Roome A."

"Uu-*huu!*" exclaimd LaaFoerj and Hoamberg az wun, and:

"U can pla dhat acros the boerd for the whole Claas," Kinnison agrede. "Wel, weeyl soone no--its time too ghet gowing," and the foer officerz stept out intoo the acembly haul; the Claas springing too atenshon at dhare aproche.

Kinnison, nou aul brisc Captane, staerd along the mathhematticaly exact lianz and snapt:

"Repoert!"

"Claas Five prezsent in fool, cer!" The sarjant-major tucht a stud at hiz belt and aul vaast Wentwerth Haul faerly trembeld under the impact ov an aul-pervading, liling, throbbing mellody az the werldz finest millitary band crasht intoo "Our Patrole."

"Sqwaudz left--March!" Auldho no poscibel human vois cood hav bene herd in dhat gale ov sole-stuuring sound and auldho Kinnisonz lips scaersly muivd, hiz comaand wauz carrede too the verry boanz ov dhose for whoome it wauz intended--and too no wun els--bi the tite-beme ultraa-comunicatorz strapt uppon dhare chests. "Cloce formaishon--forward--March!"

In perfect alianment and cadens the littel collum marcht doun the haul. In dhare paath yaund the shaaft--a vertical pit sum twenty fete sqware extending from mane floer too roofe ov the Haul; moer dhan a thousand shere fete ov unnobstructed are, cleerd nou ov aul traffic bi flaring red liats. Five left heelz clict sharply, cimultainyously uppon the lip ov the schupendous abis. Five rite legz swept out intoo emptines. Five rite handz snapt too belts and five boddese, ridgidly erect, arrode dounword at such an apauling velosity dhat too unpractiast vizhon dha cimply vannisht.

Six-tenths of a second later, precisely upon a beat of the steering march, whose ten heels struck the main floor of Wentworth Hall, but not with a click. Dropping with a velocity of almost two thousand feet per second they were at the instant of impact, yet those five husky boddies came from full speed to an instantaneous, shockless, effortless halt at contact, for the drop had been made under complete neutralization of inertia--"free," in space parlance. Inertia restored, the march was resumed--or rather continued--in perfect time with the band. Five feet swung out, and as they rose left the floor the second rank, with only bare inches to spare, plunged down into the space its predecessor had occupied a moment before.

Rank after rank landed and marched away with machine-like precision. The door of Room A opened automatically at the approach of the cadets and closed behind them.

"Column right--March!" Kinnison commanded inaudibly, and the Claas obeyed in clockwork perfection. "Column left--March! Squawd right--March! Company--Halt! Salute!"

In company front, in a huge, square room devoid of furniture, the Claas faced the Ogher--Lieutenant-Marshal Frits von Hohendorf, Commandant of Cadets. Martinet, tyrant, dictator--he was none throughout the Cistem as the embodiment of soullessness; and, insofar as he had ever been none too showy an emotion or feeling before any undergraduate, he seemed too

glorious in his reputation of being the most pitilessly rigid disciplinarian that Earth had ever known. His thick, white hair was roached feebly upward into a stiff pompadour. His left eye was artificial and his face bore witness of tiny, threadlike scars; for not even the marvelous plastic surgery of that age could repair entirely the ravages of space-combat. Also, his right leg and left arm, although practically

normal too aul outword ceming, wer in reyallity larjly products ov
ciyens and art insted ov nachure.

Kinnison faist, then, this reconstructed potentate, saluted crisply, and
snapt:--

"Cer, Claas Five repoerts too the Comandant."

"Take yor poast, cer." The vetteran saluted az punctilleyously, and az he
did so a cemmy-cercular desc rose around him from the floer--a desc
whoose
moast striking fechure wauz an intricate meccanizm surrounding a
splint-like form.

"Number Wun, Kimbal Kinnison!" von Hohendorf barct. "Fruent and
center--March!.... The oath, cer."

"Befoer the Omnippotent Witnes I prommice nevver too lower the standard
ov
the Galactic Patrole," Kinnison ced reverently; and, baring hiz arm,
thrust it intoo the hollo form.

From a smaul container labeld "#1, Kimbal Kinnison," the Comandant
shooc out whaut wauz aparrently an ornament--a lenticular juwel
fabricated
ov hundredz ov tiny, ded-white gemz. Taking it up widh a pare ov
inshulated forceps he tucht it momentarily too the bronzd skin ov the
arm befoer him, and at dhat fleting contact a flash az ov menny-cullord
fire swept over the stoanz. Sattisfide, he dropt the juwel intoo a
reces provided for it in the meccanizm, which at wuns berst intoo
activvity.

The foerarm wauz rapt in thhic inshulaishon, moaldz and sheeldz snapt
intoo place, and dhare flaerd out an instantly-suprest flash ov

brilleyans intollerabel. Then the moaldz fel apart, the inshulaishon wauz remuivd, and dhare wauz reveeld the LENZ. Claaspt too Kinnisonz brauny rist bi a braislet ov imperrishabel, aulmoast unbracabel, mettal in which it wauz imbedded it shon in aul its lambent splendor--no lon'gher a whiatly inert pece ov jewelry, but a lenticular pollicrome ov riathing, aulmoast fluwid rajans which proclaimd too aul observerz in cimbolz ov evver-chain'ging flame dhat here wauz a Lenzman ov the GALACTIC PATROLE.

In cimmilar fashon eche man ov the Claas wauz invested widh the cimbol ov hiz ranc. Then the stern-faist Comandant tucht a button and from the bare mettal floer dhare arose deeply-upholsterd chaerz, wun for eche gradjuwate.

"Faul out!" he comaanded, then smiald aulmoast boiyishly--the ferst intimaishon enny ov the Claas evver had dhat the hard-boild oald tirant *cood* smile--and went on in a strainjly aulterd vois:

"Cit doun, men, and smoke up. We hav an our in which too tauc thhingz over, and nou I can tel u whaut it iz aul about. Eche ov u wil fiand hiz favorite refreshment in the arm ov hiz chare.

"No, dhaerz no cach too it," he continnude in aancer too amaizdly doutfool staerz, and lited a huge blac cigar ov Venereyan tobacco az he spoke. "U ar Lenzmen nou. Ov coers u hav yet too go throo the formallitese ov Comensment, but dha doant count. Eche ov u reyaly gradjuwated when hiz Lenz came too life.

"We no yor individjuwal preferencez, and eche ov u haz hiz favorite wede, from Tillotsonz Pitsberg stoghese up too Snodenz Alsacanite ciggarets--even dho Alsacan iz just about az far awa from here az a plannet can be and stil li within the galaxy.

"We aulso no dhat u ar aul imune too the lure ov nocshous drugz. If u wer not, u wood not be here tooda. So smoke up and brake up--aasc enny qweschonz u care too, and I wil tri too aancer them. Nuthhing iz bard nou--this roome iz sheelded against enny spi-ra or comunicator beme opperabel uppon enny none freeqweny."

Dhare wauz a brefe and raather uncumfortabel cilens, then Kinnison sugested, diffidently:

"Mite it not be best, cer, too tel us aul about it, from the ground up? I imadgine dhat moast ov us ar in too much ov a dase too aasc intelligent qweschonz."

"Perhaps. While sum ov u undoutedly hav yor suspishonz, I wil beghin bi telling u whaut iz behiand whaut u hav bene poot throo juring the laast five yeerz. Fele perfectly fre too brake in widh qweschonz at enny time. U no dhat evvery yere wun milleyon atene-yere-oald boiz ov Erth ar chosen az cadets bi competititive examinaishonz. U no dhat juring the ferst yere, befoer enny ov them ce Wentwerth Haul, dhat number shrinx too les dhan fifty thousand. U no dhat bi Grajuwaishon Da dhare ar oonly aproximaitly wun hundred left in the claas. Nou I am aloud too tel u dhat u gradjuwaits ar dhose whoo hav cum widh fliying cullorz throo the moast brootaly ridgid, the moast feendishly thurro proces ov eliminaishon dhat it haz bene poscibel too devellop.

"Evvery man whoo can be made too revele enny reyal weecnes iz dropt. Moast ov these ar dismist from the Patrole. Dhare ar menny splendid men, houwevver, whoo, for sum rezon not involving moral terpichude, ar not qwite whaut a Lenzman must be. These men make up our organizaishon, from grece-munkese up too the hiyest comishond officerz belo the ranc ov

Lenzman. This explainz whaut u aulreddy no--dhat the Galactic Patrole iz the finest boddy ov intelligent beyingz yet too cerv under wun banner.

"Ov the milleyon whoo started, u fu ar left. Az must evvery beying whoo haz evver woern or whoo evver wil ware the Lenz, eche ov u haz proven repetedly, too the coald verj ov deth itcelf, dhat he iz in evvery respect werthy too ware it. For instans, Kinnison here wuns had a hily advenchurous intervü widh a lady ov Aldebbaran 2 and her frendz. He did not no dhat we nu aul about it, but we did."

Kinnisonz verry eerz bernd scarlet, but the Comandant went imperterbably on:

"So it wauz widh Voalker and the hipnotist ov Carralon; widh LaaFoerj and the bentlam-eterz; widh Fluwelling when the Gannimede-Venus thhiyonite smuglerz tride too bribe him widh ten milleyon in goald...."

"Good Hevvenz, Comandant!" broke in wun outraijd ueth. "Doo u--did u--no evverithhing dhat happend?"

"Not qwite evverithhing, perhaps, but it iz mi biznes too no enuf. No man whoo can be cract haz evver woern, or evver wil ware, the Lenz. And nun ov u nede be ashaimd, for u hav paast evvery test. Dhose whoo did not paas them wer dhose whoo wer dropt.

"Nor iz it enny disgrace too hav bene dismiss from the Cadet Coer. The milleyon whoo started widh u wer the pic ov the plannet, yet we nu in advaans dhat ov dhat celected milleyon scaersly wun in ten thousand wood mezhure up in evvery ecenshal. Dhaerfoer it wood be mannifestly unfare too stigmatise the rest ov them becauz dha wer not born widh dhat extraa sumthhing, dhat ultimate qwaulity ov fiber which duz, and ov necescity *must*, carracterise the warerz ov the Lenz. For dhat rezon

not even the man himself nose whi he wauz dismiss, and no wun save dhose whoo ware the Lenz nose whi dha wer celected--and a Lenzman duz not tauc.

"It iz nescenary too concidder the history and bacground ov the Patrole in order too bring out cleerly the necescity for such care in the celecshon ov its personel. U ar aul familleyar widh it, but probbably verry fu ov u hav thaut ov it in dhat conecshon. The Patrole iz ov coers an outgroath ov the oald Plannetary Polece cistemz; and, until its devellopment, lau enforsment aulwase lagd behiand lau viyolaishon. Dhus,

in the oald dase following the invenshon ov the automobele, state trooperz cood not cros state lianz. Then when the Nashonal Polece finaly tooc charj, dha cood not follo the rocket-ewwipt crimminalz across the nashonal boundarese.

"Stil later, when interplannetary flite became a commonplace, the Plannetary Polece wer at the same oald disadvaantage. Dha had no authorrity of dhare one werldz, while the public ennemese flitted unhamperd from plannet too plannet. And finaly, widh the invenshon ov the inershaales drive and the conceqwent traffic betwene the werldz ov menny solar cistemz, crime became so rampant, so utterly uncontrolabel, dhat it threttend the verry foundaishonz ov Civilizaishon. A man cood perpetrate enny crime imadginabel widhout fere ov conceqwencez, for in an our he cood be so far awa from the cene az too be compleetly beyond the reche ov the lau.

"And helping pouwerfooly tooword utter cayos wer the nu vicez which wer spredding from werld too werld; amung utherz the taking ov nu and horribel drugz. Thhiyonite, for instans; ocuuring oonly uppon Trencu; a

drug az much dedleyer dhan herrowin az dhat compound iz dhan coffy,
and
which even nou comaandz such a fabbulous price dhan a man can carry a
forchune in wun hollo boote-hele.

"Dhus the Triplannetary Patrole and the Galactic Patrole came intoo beying.
The ferst wauz a pittifool enuf organizaishon. It wauz handicapt from
widhout bi pollitix and politishanz, and hunny-coamd from within bi the
uezhuwal smaul but utterly poizonous percentage ov the unfit--graafterz,
corupshonists, bribe-takerz, and out-and-out crimminalz. It wauz hamperd
bi the fact dhat dhare wauz then no emblem or credenshal which cood not
be counterfeted--no wun cood tel widh certainty dhat the man in
uniform wauz a Patrolman and not a crimminal in disghise.

"Az evveriwun nose, Vergil Samz, then Hed ov the Triplannetary Patrole,
became Ferst Lenzman Samz and founded our Galactic Patrole. The Lenz,
which, beying prooffe against counterfeting or even imitaishon, maix
identificaishon ov Lenzmen automattic and pozsitive, wauz whaut made
our
Patrole poscibel. Havving the Lenz, it wauz esy too wede out the fu unfit.
Standardz ov entrans wer raizd evver hiyer, and when it had bene
pruivd beyond qweschon dhat evvery Lenzman wauz in fact incoruptibel,
the
Galactic Council wauz ghivven moer and evver moer authorrity. Moer and
evver
moer solar cistemz, havving devellopt Lenzmen ov dhare one, voted too
join
Civilizaishon and saut representaishon on the Galactic Council, even
dho such a coers ment ghivving up much ov dhare cistemmic soverainty.

"Nou the pouwer ov the Council and its Patrole iz practicaly absolute.
Our armament and eqwipment ar the ultimate; we can follo the
lau-braker wharevver he ma go. Ferthermoer, enny Lenzman can
comandere

enny matereyal or acistans, wharevver and whenevver reqwiard; uppon enny plannet ov enny solar cistem ad'herent too Civilizaishon; and the Lenz iz so respected throowout the gallaxy dhat enny warer ov it ma be cauld uppon at enny time too be juj, jury, and execueshoner. Wharevver he gose, uppon, in, or throo enny land, wauter, are, or space enniwhare within the confianz ov our Iland Univers, hiz werd iz LAU.

"Dhat explainz whaut u hav bene foerst too undergo. The oonly excuce for its ceverrity iz dhat it projucez rezults--no warer ov the Lenz haz ever disgraist it.

"Nou az too the Lenz itcelf. Like evvery wun els, u hav none *ov* it ever cins u cood tauc, but u no nuthing ov its origin or its nachure. Nou dhat u ar Lenzmen, I can tel u whaut littel I no about it. Qweschonz?"

"We hav aul wunderd about the Lenz, cer, ov coers," Maitland venchuerd. "The outlauz aparrently kepe up widh us in ciyens. I hav aulwase supoazd dhat whaut ciyens can bild, ciyens can jueplicate. Shuerly moer dhan wun Lenz haz faulen intoo the handz ov the outlauz?"

"If it had bene a ciyentiffic invenshon or discuvvery it wood hav bene jueplicated long ago," the Comandant made cerprising aancer. "It iz, houwevver, not ecenshaly ciyentiffic in nachure. It iz aulmoast entiarly filosofical, and wauz devellopt for us bi the Areezhanz.

"Yes, eche ov u wauz cent too Areezhaa qwite recently," von Hohendorf went on, az the nuly comishond officerz staerd, dumfounded, at him and at eche uther. "Whaut did u thhinc ov them, Merfy?"

"At ferst, cer, I thaut dhat dha wer sum nu kiand ov draggon; but

draggonz widh brainz dhat u cood acchuwaly *fele*. I wauz glad too ghet awa, cer. Dha faerly gave me the creeps, even dho I nevver did ce wun ov them so much az moove."

"Dha ar a peculeyar race," the Comandant went on. "Insted ov beying mankiandz werst ennemese, az iz genneraly beleevd, dha ar the *cinna qwaa non* ov our Patrole and ov Civilizaishon. I canot understand them; I doo not no ov enniwun whoo can. Dha gave us the Lenz; yet Lenzmen must not revele dhat fact too enny utherz. Dha make a Lenz too fit eche candidate; yet no too candidaits, aparrently, hav evver cene the same thhingz dhare, nor iz it beleevd dhat enniwun haz evver cene them az dha reyaly ar. Too aul exept Lenzmen dha ceme too be compleetly anty-soashal; and even dhose whoo becum Lenzmen go too Areezhaa oanly wuns in dhare liavz. Dha ceme--auldho I caushon u dhat this ceming ma contane no moer ov reyallity dhan the fizesical shaips u thaut u sau--too be supreamly indifferent too aul matereyal thhingz.

"For moer generaishonz dhan u can understand dha hav devoted themcelvz too thhinking; mainly ov the escens ov life. Dha sa dhat dha no scaersly ennithhing fundamental concerning it; but even so dha no moer about it dhan duz enny uther none race. While ordinarily dha wil hav no intercoers whautevver widh outciderz, dha did concent too help the Patrole, for the good ov aul intelligens.

"Dhus, eche beying about too gradjuwate intoo Lenzmanship iz cent too Areezhaa, whare a Lenz iz bilt too mach hiz individjuwal life foers. While no miand uther dhan dhat ov an Areezhan can understand its operaision, thhinking ov yor Lenz az beying cincroniazd widh, or in exact rezzonans widh, yor one vital principel or ego wil ghiv u a ruf ideyaa ov it. The Lenz iz

not really alive, as we understand the term. It is, however, endowed with a sort of pseudo-life, by virtue of which it gives of its strong, characteristically chain-ging lite as long as it is in metal-too-flesh cerkit with the living mentality for which it was designed. Also by virtue of that pseudo-life, it acts as a telepath through which you may converse with other intelligences, even those which may pose no organs of speech or of hearing.

"The Lenz cannot be removed by any means except its warer without dismemberment; it glows as long as its riatfool oner waerz it; it ceases to glow in the instant of its onerz deth and disintegrates shortly thereafter. Also--and here is the thing that renders completely impossible the impersonation of a Lenzman--not only does the Lenz not glow if worn by an imposter; but if a Lenzman be taken alive and his Lenz removed, that Lenz kills in a space of seconds any living being who attempts to wear it. As long as it glows--as long as it is in cerkit with its living oner--it is harmless; but in the dark condition its pseudo-life interferes so strongly with any life to which it is not attached that that life is destroyed forthwith."

A brief silence fell, during which the young men absorbed the stunning import of what their Comandant had been saying. Moreover, their waver striking into each young consciousness a realization of the stark heroism of the great old Lenzman before them; a man of such fiber that although physically incapacitated and long past the retirement age, he had conquered his human emotions sufficiently to accept deliberately his other role because in that way he could best further the progress of his Patrol!

"I have scarcely broken the ground," von Hohendorf continued. "I have merely given you an introduction to your new status. During the next few weeks, before you are assigned to duty, other officers will make clear

too u the menny thhingz about which u ar stil in the darc. Our time iz growing short, but we perhaps hav time for wun moer qweschon."

"Not a qweschon, cer, but sumthhing moer important," Kinnison spoke up. "I speke for the Claas when I sa dhat we hav misjujd u grevously, and we wish too apollogise."

"I thanc u cinceerly for the thaut, auldho it iz un'nescesary. U cood not hav thaut utherwise ov me dhan az u did. It iz not a plezzant taasc dhat we oald men hav; dhat ov weding out dhose whoo doo not mezhure up. But we ar too oald for active juty in space--we no lon'gher hav the instantainyous nervous responcez dhat ar for dhat juty imperrative--so we doo whaut we can. Houwevver, the werc haz its briter cide, cins eche yere dhare ar about a hundred found werthy ov the Lenz. This, mi wun our widh the gradjuwaitz, moer dhan maix up for the yere dhat preceedz it; and the uther oaldsterz hav sumwhaut cimmilar compensaishonz.

"In concluezhon, u ar nou abel too understand whaut kiand ov mentallitese fil our ranx. U no dhat enny crechure waring the Lenz iz in evvery cens a Lenzman, whether he be human or, haling from sum strainj and distant plannet, a monstrosity ov a shape u hav az yet not even imadgiand. Whautevver hiz form, u ma rest ashuerd dhat he haz bene tested even az u hav bene; dhat he iz az werthy ov trust az ar u yorcelvz. Mi laast werd iz this--Lenzmen di, but dha doo not foald up: individjuwalz cum and go, but the Galactic Patrole gose on!"

Then, agane aul martinet:

"Claas Five, atenshon!" he barct. "Repoert uppon the stage ov the mane auditoereyum!"

The Claas, agane a ridgidly millitary unit, marcht out ov Roome A and doun the long corridoz tooword the grate thheyater in which, befoer the mast Cadet Coer and a throng ov civilleyanz, dha wer formaly too be gradjuwated.

And az dha marcht along the gradjuwaits reyaliazd in whaut wa the warerz ov the Lenz whoo emerjd from Roome A wer different from the candidaits whoo had enterd it such a short time befoer. Dha had gon in az boiz; nervous, aprehencive, and stil sumwhaut unshure ov themcelvz, in spite ov dhare cervival throo the five long yeerz ov groowelling tests which nou la behiand them. Dha emerjd from Roome A az men: men nowing for the ferst time the reyal mening ov the fizesical and mental torchuerz dha had undergon; men abel too weeld justly the vaast pouwerz whoose scope and scale dha cood even nou but dimly comprehend.

CHAPTER 2

In Comaand

Baerly a munth aafter hiz grajuwaishon, even befoer he had entiarly completed the poast-gradjuwate toorz ov juty menshond bi von Hohendorf, Kinnison wauz summond too Prime Bace bi no les a personage dhan Poert Admiral Hainz himcelf. Dhare, in the Admiralz private aro, whoose flaring liats cut a rite-ov-wa throo the sworming traffic, the novvice and the vetteran flu sloly over the vaast establishment ov the Bace.

Shops and factorese, citty-like barrax, landing feeldz stretching beyond the far horizon; fliying craaft rain'ging from tiny wun-man hellicopterz throo smaual and larj scouts, patrole-ships and crooserz up too the imens, globular superdrednauts ov space--aul these wer

observd and commented uppon. Finaly the aro landed beside a long, comparratiavly lo bilding--a strucchure hevvely garded, incide Bace auldho it wauz--within which Kinnison sau a thhing dhat faerly snacht awa hiz breth.

A space-ship it wauz--but whaut a ship![1] In bulc it wauz vaastly larger even dhan the superdrednauts ov the Patrole; but, unlike them, it wauz in shape a perfect teerdrop, streemliand too the ultimate poscibel degry.

[1] In the "big teerdrops"--crooserz and battelships--the driving foers iz aulwase directed upword, along the geyometrical axis ov the ship, and the artifishal gravvity iz aulwase dounword along dhat same line. Dhus, throowout enny poscibel manuvering, fre or inert, "doun" and "up" hav the same cignifficans az within enny Erthly strucchure.

These vescelz ar ordinarily landed oonly in speshal dox, but in emergencese can be landed aulmoast enniwhare, sharp stern doun, az dhare imens wate driavz them depe enuf intoo even the hardest ground too kepe them uprite. Dha cinc in wauter, but ar reddily manuverabel, even under wauter. E.E.S.

"Whaut doo u thhinc ov her?" the Poert Admiral aasct.

"Thhinc ov her!" The yung officer gulpt twice befoer he ataind coherens. "I caant poot it in werdz, cer; but sum da, if I liv long enuf and devellop enuf foers, I hope too comaand a ship like dhat."

"Sooner dhan u thhinc, Kinnison," Hainz toald him, flatly. "U ar in

comaand ov her beghinning toomorro morning."

"Huu? Me?" Kinnison exclaimd, but soberd qwicly. "O, I ce, cer. It taix ten yeerz ov pruidv acumplishment too rate comaand ov a ferst-claas vescel, and I hav no rating at aul. U hav aulreddy intimated dhat this ship iz experrimental. Dhare iz, then, sumthhing about her dhat iz nu and untride, and so dain'gerous dhat u doo not waunt too risc an expereyenst comaander in her. I am too ghiv her a werc-out, and if I can bring her bac in wun pece I tern her over too her reyal captane. But dhats aul rite widh me, Poert Admiral--thanx a lot for picking me out. Whaut a chaans--*Whaut* a chaans!" and Kinnisonz ise gleemd at the prospect ov even a brefe comaand ov such a creyaishon.

"Rite--and rong," the oald Admiral made cerprising aancer. "It iz troo dhat she iz nu, untride, and dain'gerous, so much so dhat we ar unwilling too ghiv her too enny ov our prezsent captainz. No, she iz not reyal nu, iather. Raather, her basic ideyaa iz so oald dhat it haz bene abandond for cenchurese. She usez explosiavz; ov a tipe dhat cannot be tride out foolly exept in acchuwal combat. Her primary weppon iz whaut we hav cauld the 'Q-gun.' The propellant iz heptadettonite: the shel carrese a charj ov twenty metric tunz ov juwodecaplilattomate."

"But, cer...." Kinnison began.

"Just a minnute, Ile go intoo dhat later. While yor premmicez wer corect, yor concluezhon iz not. U gradjuwated Number Wun, and in evvery respect save expereyens u ar az wel qwaulifide too comaand az iz enny captane ov the Flete; and cins the *Britanyaa* iz such a raddical deparchure from enny convenshonal tipe, battel expereyens iz not a prereqwisite. Dhaerfoer if she hoaldz tooghether throo wun en'gajment she iz yorz for good. In uther werdz, too make up for the pocibillity ov

havving yorself scatterd aul over space, u hav a chaans too win dhat ten yeerz rating u menshond a minnute ago, aul in wun trip. Fare enuf?"

"Fare? Its fine--wunderfool! And thanx a..."

"Nevver miand the thanx until u ghet bac. U wer about too comment, I beleve, uppon the impocibillity ov using explosiavz against a fre oponent?"

"It caant be impscibel, ov coers, cins the *Britanyaa* haz bene bilt. I just doant qwite ce hou it cood hav bene made efective."

"U loc too the pirate widh tractorz, screne too screne--dex about ten killometerz. U blaast a hole throo hiz screenz too hiz waul-sheeld. The muzsel ov the Q-gun mounts az annular multiplex projector which poots out a Q-tipe chube ov foers--Q47SM9, too be exact. Az u can ce from the tipe formulaa, this helix extendz the gun-barrel from ship too ship and confianz the propellent gasces behiand the progetile, whare dha belong. When the shel striax the waul-sheeld ov the pirate and dettonaits, *sumthhing* wil hav too ghiv wa--aul the Brainz agry dhat twenty tunz ov juwodec, ataning a temperachure ov about forty milleyon degrese absolute in les dhan wun miacro-cecond, cimply canot be confiand.

"The chube and tractorz, beying pure foers and computed for this particular combinaishon ov exploazhonz, wil hoald; and our fizensists hav calculated dhat the ten-killometer collum ov inert propellent gasces wil offer so much inershaa and resistans dhat enny poscibel waul-sheeld wil hav too go down. Dhat iz the point dhat canot be tride out experrimentaly--it iz qwite within the boundz ov pocibillity dhat the piraits ma hav bene abel too devellop waul-screenz az pouwerfool az our Q-tipe helicese, even dho we hav not.

"It shood not be nescesary too point out too u dhat if dha *hav* bene abel too devellop a waul-sheeld dhat wil stand up under dhose condishonz, the bac-blaast throo the breche ov the Q-gun wil blo the *Britanyaa* apart az dho she wer so much machwood. Dhat iz oanly wun ov the chaancez--and perhaps not the gratest wun--dhat u and yor croo wil hav too take. Dha ar aul vollunteerz, bi the wa, and wil ghet plenty ov extraa rating if dha cum throo alive. Doo u waunt the job?"

"U doant hav too aasc me dhat, Chefe--u *no* I waunt it!"

"Ov coers, but I had too go throo the formallity ov aasking, sumtime. But too ghet on widh the discushon, this pirate cichuwaishon iz entiarly out ov controle, az u aulreddy no. We doant even no whether Boscone iz a reyallity, a figguerhed, a cimbol, or cimply a figment ov an oald-time Lenzmanz imaginaishon. But whoowevver or whautevver Boscone reyaly iz, sum beying or sum groope ov beyingz haz perfected a mity efishent organizaishon ov outlauz; so efishent dhat we havnt even bene abel too locate dhare mane bace.

"And u ma az wel no nou a fact dhat iz not yet public propperty--dhat even convade vescelz ar no lon'gher safe. The piraits hav devellopt ships ov a nu and extrordinary tipe; ships dhat ar much faaster dhan our hevvy battelships, and yet vaastly moer hevvely armd dhan our faast crooserz. Dhus, dha can outfite enny Patrole vescel dhat can cach them, and can out-run ennithhing ov ourz armd hevvely enuf too stand up against dhare beemz."

"Dhat acounts for the recent hevvy loscez," Kinnison muezd.

"Yes," Hainz went on, grimly. "Ship aafter ship ov our best haz bene blaasted out ov the eether, duimd befoer it pointed a beme, and moer wil be. We canot foers an en'gajment on our termz; we must fite them whare and when dha plese.

"Dhat iz the prezsent intollerabel cichuwaishon. We *must* lern whaut the piraits nu pouwer-cistem iz. Our ciyentists sa dhat it ma be ennithhing, from cozmic-ennergy receptorz and converterz down too a controald space-worp--whautevver dhat ma be. Enniwa, dha havnt bene abel too jueplicate it, so it iz up too us too fiand out whaut it iz. The *Britanyaa* iz the toole our en'gineerz hav desiand too ghet dhat informaishon. She iz the faastest thhing in space, develloping at fool blaast an inert axeleraishon ov *ten gravvites*. Figgure out for yorcelf whaut velosity dhat meenz fre in open space!"

"U hav just ced dhat we caant hav evverithhing in wun ship," Kinnison ced, thautfooly. "Whaut did dha sacrifice too ghet dhat spede?"

"Aul the convenshonal ofencive armament," Hainz replide francly. "She haz no long-rainj beemz at aul, and oanly enuf short-rainj stuf too help drive the Q-helix throo the ennemese screenz. Practicaly her oanly offens iz the Q-gun. But she haz plenty ov defencive screenz, she haz spede enuf too cach ennithhing aflote, and she haz the Q-gun--which we hope wil be enuf.

"Nou weeyl go over the genneral plan ov acshon. The en'gineerz wil go intoo aul the tecnicl detailz widh u, juring a test flite dhat wil laast az long az u like. When u and yor croo ar thurroly familleyar widh evvery fase ov her operaishon, bring the en'gineerz bac here too Bace and go out on patrole.

"Sumwhare in the gallaxy u wil fiand a pirate vescel ov the nu tipe. U loc too him, az I ced befoer. U atach the Q-gun wel forward,

beying shure dhat the point ov atachment iz far enuf awa from the pouwer-ruimz so dhat the ecenshal meccanizmz wil not be destroid. U boerd and storm--anuther revival ov the tecneke ov oalder tiamz. Speshalists in yor croo, whoo wil hav dun nuthhing much up too dhat time, wil then fiand out whaut our ciyentists waunt too no. If at aul poscibel dha wil cend it in instantly viyaa tite-beme comunicator. If for enny rezon it shoold be imposcibel for them too comunicate, the whole thhing iz agane up too u."

The Poert Admiral pauzd, hiz ise boering intoo dhose ov the yun'gher man,
then went on impresciavly:

"Dhat informaishon MUST ghet bac too Bace. If it duz not, the *Britanyaa* iz a falure; we wil be bac rite whare we started from; the slauter ov our men and the destrucshon ov our ships wil continnu uncheck. Az too hou u ar too doo it we canot ghiv even genneral instrucshonz. Aul I can sa iz dhat u hav the moast important acianment in the Univers tooda, and repete--*dhat informaishon MUST GHET BAC TOO BACE*. Nou cum
abord and mete yor croo and the en'gineerz."

**

Under the expert chutelage ov the desinerz and bilderz ov the *Britanyaa* Leftenant Kinnison drove her hither and thither throo the tracles waists ov the galaxy.[2] Inert and fre, under evvery poscibel degry ov pouwer he manuverd her; atacking imadginary fose and acchuwal meteyoriats widh eeqwal sele. Manuverd and atact until he and hiz ship wer wun; until he reyacted automatticaly too her slitest demaand; until he and evvery man ov hiz egher and hily trairnd croo nu too the

final volt and too the ultimate ampere her garganchuwan capacity both too
ghiv it and too take it.

[2] Navigaishon. Eche ship haz az refferens sfere a galactic-inductor cumpas. This instrooment, swinging frely in an aulmoast fricshonles mount, iz held in wun posishon rellative too the gallaxy az a whole bi galactic lianz ov foers, anallogous too the Terestreyal lianz ov magnettic foers which afect Terestreyal cumpacez. Its eqwator iz aulwase parralel too the galactic eqwator; its line ov serose iz aulwase parralel too the line joining Centraleyaa, the central solar cistem ov the Ferst Gallaxy, widh the cistem ov Vandemar, which iz on its verry rim.

The posishon ov the ship in the gallaxy iz none at aul tiamz bi dhat ov a mooving dot in the tanc. This dot iz shifted automatticaly bi calculating masheenz cuppeld inductiavly too the leedz ov the driavz. When the ship iz inert this device iz inopperative, az enny distans traverst in inert flite iz entiarly negligibel in galactic computaishonz. Ju too vareyous perterbaishonz and uther slite errorz, cumulative discreppancesses oker, for which the pilot must from time too time corect mannuwaly the posishon ov the dot in the tanc representing hiz ship.

E.E.S.

Then and oonly then did he retern too Bace, unlode the en' gineerz, and cet out uppon the qwest. Trale aafter trale he follode, but aul wer coald. Alarm aafter alarm he aancerd, but aulwase he ariavd too late: ariavd too fiand gutted merchantman and riddeld Patrole vescel, widh no life in iather and widh nuthhing too indicate in which direcshon the marauderz

mite hav gon.

Finaly, houwevver:

"QBT! Cauling QBT!" The *Britanyaaz* code caul blaerd from the ceeld-band speker, and a string ov numberz follode--the spaishal cowordinaitz ov the lucles vescelz posishon.

Chefe Pilot Henry Henderson puncht the figguerz uppon hiz locator, and in the "tanc"--the enormous, minuetly cuebd moddel ov the galaxy--dhare apeerd a redly brilleyant point ov lite. Kinnison rocketed out ov hiz narro bunc, digghing slepe out ov hiz ise, and shot himcelf intoo place beside the pilot.

"Rite in our laps!" he exulted. "Scaersly ten lite-yeerz awa! Start scrambling the eethher!" and az the venjfool crooser darted tooword the cene ov depredaishon aul space became fild widh blaast aafter blaast ov static interferens throo which, it wauz hoapt, the pirate cood not summon the help he wauz so soone too nede.

But dhat houling static gave the pirate comaander pauz. Shuerly this wauz sumthhing nu? Befoer him la a richly-laden frater, its too convoiying ships aulreddy practicaly out ov acshon. A fu moer minnuets and the prise wood be hiz. Nevvertheles he darted awa, swept the eethher widh hiz detectorz, sau the *Britanyaa*, and ternd in hedlong flite.

For if this streemliand fiter wauz sufishmently convinst ov its prouwes too tri too blanket the eethher against *him*, dhat informaishon wauz sumthhing dhat Boscone wood vally far abuv wun shiplode ov matereyal welth.

But the pirate craaft wauz nou uppon the vizsiplaits ov the *Britanyaa*,

and, entiarly ignoering the crippeld space-ships, Henderson flung hiz vescel aafter the uther. Manipulating hiz increddiably complex controalz puerly bi tuch, the while staring intoo hiz plate not oonly widh hiz ise, but widh evvery fiber ov hiz beying az wel, he herld hiz huge mount hither and thither in frantic leeps. Aafter whaut ceemd an age he snapt doun a togghel swich and relaxt long enuf too grin at Kinnison.

"Hoalding em?" the yung comaander demaanded.

"Got em, Skipper," the pilot replide, pozsitiavly. "It wauz tuch and go for nianty cecondz, but Ive got a CRX tracer on him nou at fool pool. He caant poot out enuf gets too ghet awa from *dhat*--I can hoald him forevver!"

"Fine werc, Hen!" Kinnison strapt himcelf intoo hiz cete and dond hiz hedcet. "Genneral caul! Atenshon! Battel staishonz! Bi staishonz, repoert!"

"Staishon Wun, tractor beemz--hot!"

"Staishon Too, repellorz--hot!"

"Staishon Thre, projector Wun--hot!"

Dhus staishon aafter staishon ov the worship ov the void repoerted, until:

"Staishon Fifty-Ate, the Q-gun--hot!" Kinnison himcelf repoerted; then gave too the pilot the werdz which throowout the spaiswase ov the galaxy had cum too mene complete reddines too face enny emergency.

"Hot and tite, Hen--lets take em!"

The pilot shuvd hiz blaast-lever, aulreddy aulmoast at maximum, clere out against its stop and huncht himcelf even moer intently over hiz instrouments, vareying bi infinitesimalz the direcshon ov the thrust dhat wauz driving the *Britanyaa* tooword the ennemy at the unnimadginabel velosity ov nianty parcx an our[3]--a velosity poscibel oonly too inershaales matter beying erjd throo an aulmoast perfect vaccuum bi a driving blaast capabel ov lifting the schupendous normal tunnage ov the imens ski-rover against a gravvity ten tiamz dhat ov her native Erth.

[3] With the nueutralizaishon ov inershaa it wauz discuvverd dhat dhare iz no limmit whautevver too the velosity ov inershaales matter. A fre ship taix on instantainyously the velosity at which the foers ov her drive iz exactly eeqwald bi the fricshon ov the mejum.

E.E.S.

Unnimadginabel? Compleetly so--the ship ov the Galactic Patrole wauz herling hercelf throo space at a pace in comparrison widh which enny spede dhat the miand can graasp wood be the merest crawl: a pace too make lite itcelf ceme staishonary.

Ordinary vizhon wood hav bene uesles, but the observerz ov dhat da uezd no antiqwated optical cistemz. Dhare detector beemz, converted intoo lite oonly at dhare plaits, wer hetterodiand uppon and wer carrede bi sub-eethheral ultraa-waivz; viabraishonz residing far belo the levvel ov the eethher and dhus posescing a velosity and a rainj infiniatly grater dhan dhose ov enny poscibel eethher-boern wave.

Auldho starz muivd acros the vizsiplaits in flaming, sig-zag lianz ov lite az pershude and pershuwer paast solar cistem aafter solar cistem in fantastic, lite-yeerz-long hops, yet Henderson kept hiz crooser uppon the piraits tale and steddily cut down the distans betwene them. Soone a tractor beme lict out from the Patrole ship, tucht the fleying marauder liatly, and the too space-ships flasht tooword eche uther.

Nor wauz the ennemy unprepaerd for combat. Wun ov the crac raderz ov Boscone, maaster pirate ov the none Univers, she had nevver befoer found difficulty in conkering enny vescel flete enuf too cach her.

Dhaerfoer, her comaander made no atempt too cut the beme. Or raather, cins the too inershaales vescelz flasht toogheter too repellor-zone contact in such a minnute fracshon ov a cecond dhat enny human acshon within dhat time wauz imposcibel, it wood be moer corect too sa dhat the pirate captane chainjd hiz tactix instantly from dhose ov flite too dhose ov combat.

He thrust out tractor beemz ov hiz one, and from the aulreddy white-hot refractory throats ov hiz progectorz dhare raivd out horribly potent beemz ov aniyilaishon; beemz ov dredfool pouwer which toer madly at the straning defencive screenz ov the Patrole ship. Screenz flaerd vivvidly, rajating aul the cullorz ov the spectrum. Space itcelf ceemd a rainbo gon mad, for dhare wer beying exerted dhare foercez ov a magnichude too staggher the imaginaishon; foercez too be yeilded oonly bi the atommic mite

from which dha sprang; foercez whoose nuetralizaishon cet up vizsibel strainz in the verry fabric ov the eethher itcelf.

The yung comaander clencht hiz fists and swoer a starteld depe-space oath az red liats flasht and alarmbelz clangd. Hiz screenz wer leking like civz--practicaly doun--nedel aafter nedel ov foers increddibel stabbing at and throo hiz waul-sheeld--foer staishonz gon aulreddy and moer gowing!

"Scrap the plan!" he yeld intoo hiz miacrophone. "Open evverithhing too absolute top--short out aul resistorz--ghiv em evverithhing u can poot throo the bare bus-barz. Dal'housy, cut aul yor repellorz; bring us rite up too dhare zone. Aul u bemerz, concentrate on Areyaa Five. *Brake doun dhose screenz!*" Kinnison wauz huncht ridgidly over hiz pannel, hiz vois came grittily throo loct teeth. "*Ghet throo too dhat waul-sheeld so I can use this Q-gun!*"

Under the redubbeld foers ov the *Britanyaaz* atac the defencez ov the ennemy began too fale. Kinnisonz handz flu over hiz controalz. A poert open in the Patrole-ships armord cide and an ugly snout protrooded--the projector-ringd muzsel ov a sqwaut and monstrous cannon.

From its projector bandz dhare leept out widh the velosity ov lite a chube ov qwasi-sollid foers which wauz in efect a continuwaishon ov the gunz grim barrel; a chube which crasht throo the wekend thherd screne ov the ennemy widh a space-racking shoc and struc savvajily, widh riathing, twisting thrusts, at the cecond. Aded bi the mast concentraishon ov the *Britanyaaz* evvery battery ov short-rainj beemz, it went throo. And throo the ferst. Nou it struc the verry-waul-sheeld ov the outlau--dhat impregnabel screne which, desiand too bare the brunt ov enny poscibel inert colizhon, had nevver bene peerst or rupchuerd bi enny matereyal substans, houwevver aplide.

Too this inner defens the imatereyal gun-barrel clung. Cimultainyously the tractor beemz, hithertoo exerting oonly a fu dianz ov foers, stiffend intoo unbracabel, inflexibel rodz ov ennergy, bianding the too ships ov space intoo wun ridgid cistem; eche, rellative too the uther, imoovabel.

Then Kinnisonz fliying fin'gher tip tucht a button and the Q-gun spoke. From its sullen throte dhare erupted a huge torpedo. Sloly the giyant proectile crept along, waucht in au and amaizment bi the officerz ov

boath vescelz. For too dhose space-hardend vetteranz the velosity ov lite wauz a verritabel crawl; and here wauz a thhing dhat wood reqwire foer or five whole cecondz too cuvver a mere ten killometerz ov distans!

But, auldho slo, this bom *mite* proove dain'gerous, dhaerfoer the pirate comaander throo hiz evvery rezoers intoo atemptz too cut the chube ov foers, too blaast awa from the tractor beemz, too explode the sluggish miscile befoer it cood reche hiz waul-sheeld. In vane; for the *Britanyaaz* evvery beme wauz cet too protect the torpedo and the mity rodz ov ennergy widhout whoose grip the inershaales mas ov the ennemy vescel wood offer no resistans whautevver too the foers ov the propoazd exploazhon.

Sloly, so sloly, az the age-long cecondz crawld intoo eternity, dhare extended from Patrole ship aulmoast too pirate waul a raging, white-hot pillar--the gasces ov combuschon ov the propellant heptadettonite--ahed ov which dhare rusht the Q-gunz tremendous shel widh its horridly destructive frate. Whaut wood happen? Cood even the aulmoast imezhurabel foers ov dhat friatfool charj ov atommic explosive brake doun a waul-sheeld desiand too widhstand the cozmic asaults ov meteyoric miscialz? And whaut wood happen if dhat waul-screne held?

In spite ov himcelf Kinnisonz miand incisted uppon painting the gaastly picchure: the afool exploazhon; the piraits screne stil intact; the forword-rushing gasces drivven baqword along the chube ov foers. The bare mettal ov the Q-gunz breche, he nu, wauz not and cood not be reyenforst bi the infiniatly stron'gher, auldho imatereyal sheeldz ov pure ennergy which protected the hul; and no concevabel substans, houwevver resistant, cood impede save momentarily the unnimadginabel foercez about too be unleesht.

Nor wood dhare be time too relece the Q-chube aafter the exploazhon but befoer the *Britanyaaz* one destrucshon; for if the ennemese sheeld stade up for even a fracshon ov a cecond the unthhincabel presure ov the blaast wood proppagate baqword throo the aulreddy densly comprest gasces in the chube, wood swepe awa az dho it wer nuthhing the imensly thhic metallic barreyer ov the gun-breche, and wood reke within the bouwelz ov the Patrole vescel a destrucshon even moer complete dhan dhat intended for the fo.

Nor wer hiz men in better cace. Eche nu dhat this wauz the climactic instant ov hiz existens; dhat life itself hung poizd uppon the ishu ov the next split cecond. Hurry it up! Snap intoo it! Wil dhat crawling, creping thhing *never* strike?

Sum prade breefly, sum swoer bitterly; but praerz and kercez wer alike unconshous and had preciasly the same mening--eche man, white ov face and grim ov jau, clencht hiz handz and wated, tens and straning, for the impact.

CHAPTER 3

In the Liafboats

The miscile struc, and in the instant ov its striking the coaldly brilleyant starz wer blotted from cite in a vaast globe ov intollerabel flame. The piraits sheeld had faild, and under the cataclizmic foers ov dhat horiffic detonaishon the entire nose-cecshon ov the ennemy vescel had flasht intoo incandescent vapor and had added itself too the rappidly expanding cloud ov fire. Az it expanded the cloud cuild. Its feers glare subcided too a rosy glo, throo which the starz agane began too shine. It faded, cuild, darkend--reveling the crippeld hulc ov the pirate ship. She wauz stil fiting; but inefecchuwaly, nou dhat aul her hevvy forword batterese wer gon.

"Needlerz, fire at wil!" barct Kinnison, and even dhat febel resistans wauz ended. Kene-ide nedel-ra men, werking at spi-ra vizsiplaits, boerd hole aafter hole intoo the captive, ceking out and destroyng the controle-pannelz ov the remaning beemz and screenz.

"Pool er up!" came the next order. The too ships ov space flasht tooghether, the yauning, blaasted-open foer-end ov the rader sollidly against the *Britanyaaz* armord cide. A grate poert opend.

"Nou, Bus, its aul yorz. Clacificaishon too cix placez, strate A'z--dhare human or aproximaitly so. Boerd and storm!"

Bac ov dhat poert dhare had bene mast a hundred fiting men; drest in fool pannoply ov space-armor, armd widh the dedleyest wepponz none too the ciyens ov the age, and pouwerd bi the gigantic acumulatorz ov dhare ship. At dhare hed wauz Sarjant vanBuskerc, cix and a haaf fete ov Duch Valereyan dinamite, whoo had faulen out ov Valereyaaz Cadet Coer

oonly becauz ov an inate inabillity too maaster the intricacese ov hiyer mathhemattix. Nou the atackerz swept forword in a blac-and-cilver wave.

Foer sqwautly mascive cemmy-portabel progectorz crasht doun uppon dhare magnetic clamps and in the feers ardor ov dhare beemz the thhic bulc'hed befoer them ran the gamut ov the spectrum and puft outword. Sum scoer ov defenderz wer reveeld, liaqwise clad in armor, and battel agane wauz joind. Explosive and sollid boollets dettonated against and riccoshade from dhat hily efishent armor, the beemz ov DeLammeter hand-progectorz splasht in torrents ov man-made liatning of its protective feeldz ov foers. But dhat skermish wauz soone over. The cemmy-portabelz, whoose vaast ennergese no ordinary personal armor cood withstand, wer braut up and clampt doun; and in dhare hollocaust ov

viabratoery destructhon aul life vannisht from the piraits compartment.

"Wun moer bulc'hed and were in dhare controle roome!" vanBuskerck cride.
"Beme it doun!"

But when the bemerz prest dhare switchez nuthhing happend. The piraits had mannaijd too jury-rig a screne gennerator, and widh it had cut the pouwer-beemz behiand the invading foercez. Aulso dha had cut loope-hoalz in the bulc'hed, throo which in frantic haist dha wer trying too bring hevvy progectorz ov dhare one intoo alianment.

"Bring up the ferral paist," the sarjant comaanded. "Ghet up az cloce too dhat waul az u can, so dha caant blaast us!"

The paist--suxessor too thhermite--wauz braut up and the giyant Duchman trouweld it on in fureyous swingz, from floer up and around in a huge arc and bac doun too floer. He fiard it, and cimultainyously sum ov the ennemy gunnerz mannaijd too an'ghel a progector sharply enuf too reche the ferther ranx ov the Patroalmen. Then min'gheld the flashing, cintilating, gascy glare ov the thhermite and the raving ennergy ov the piraits beme too make ov dhat confiand space a verritabel inferno.

But the paist had dun its werc, and az the cemmy-cerkel ov waul fel out the soalgerz ov the Lenz leept throo the hole in the stil-glowing waul too strugghel hand-too-hand against the piraits, nou making a desperate laast stand. The cemmy-portabelz and uther hevvy ordnans pouwerd from the *Britanyaa* wer ov coers uesles. Pistolz wer inefective against the piraits armor ov hard alloi; hand-rase wer eeqwaly impotent against its defencive sheeldz. Nou hevvy hand-grenaidz began too rane doun among the combatants, blowing Patroalmen and piraits

alike too bits--for the outlau cheefs caerd nuthhing dhat dha kild menny ov dhare one men if in so doowing dha cood take tole ov the Lau. And wers, a croo ov gunnerz wauz swivveling a mity projector around uppon its haistily-improviast mount too cuvver dhat cector ov the compartment in which the poleesmen wer moast densly mast.

But the minyonz ov the Lau had wun remaning weppon, carrede expresly for this evenchuwality. The space-ax--a combinaishon and sublimaishon ov battel-ax, mace, bludjon, and lumbermanz picaroon, a masciavly nedel-pointed implement ov potenshallitese limmited oanly bi the fizesical strength and boddily agillity ov its weelder.

Nou aul the men ov the *Britanyaaz* storming party wer Valereyanz, and dhaerfoer wer big, hard, faast, and adgile; and ov them aul dhare sarjant leder wauz the bigghest, hardest, faastest, and moast adgile. When the space-temperd apex ov dhat thherty-pound monstrosity, drivven bi the foer-hundred-od poundz ov rauhide and whailbone dhat wauz hiz boddy, struc pirate armor dhat armor gave wa. Nor did it matter whether or not dhat hellish beke ov stele struc a vital part aafter crashing throo the armor. Hed or boddy, leg or arm, the net rezult wauz the same; a man duz not fite efectiavly when he iz breathing space in lu ov atmosfere.

VanBuskerc perceevd the dain'ger too hiz men in the sloly terning projector and for the ferst time cauld hiz chefe.

"Kim," he spoke in levvel toanz intoo hiz miacrofone. "Blaast dhat deltaa-ra, wil u?.... Or hav dha cut this beme, so u caant here me?.... Ghes dha hav."

"Dhave cut our comunicaishon," he informd hiz trooperz then. "Kepe them of me az much az u can and Ile atend too dhat deltaa-ra outfit micelf."

Aded bi the mast interferens ov hiz men he plunjd tooword the threttening meccanizm, huwing too rite and too left az he strode. Becide the temporary progector-mount at laast, he aimd a tremendous blo at the man at the deltaa-ra controalz; oonly too fele the ax flash instantainyously too its marc and strike it widh a gentel poosh, and too ce hiz intended victim flote effortles awa from the blo. The pirate comaander had plade hiz laast card: vanBuskerc flounderd, not oonly waitles, but inershaales az well!

But the huge Duchmanz miand, while not mathhemattical, wauz even faaster dhan hiz muscelz, and not for nuthing had he spent arjuwous weex in inershaales tests ov strength and skil. Hocking fete and legz around a conveyent whele he ceezd the ennemy opperator and jamd hiz helmeted hed doun betwene the bace ov the mount and the long, hevvy stele lever bi meenz ov which it wauz ternd. Then, throwing evvery ouns ov hiz wunderfool boddy intoo the effort, he braist both fete against the progectorz grim barrel and heevd. The helmet flu apart like an egshel, blud and brainz gusht out in nauzhous blobz: but the deltaa-ra progector wauz so jamd dhat it wood not soone agane becum a thret.

Then vanBuskerc droo himcelf acros the roome tooword the mane controle pannel ov the worship. Officer aafter officer he poosht acide, then reverst too dubbel-thro switchez, restoering gravvity and inershaa too the riddeld crooser.

In the meentime the tide ov battel had continnude in favor ov the Patrole. Fu cervivorz dho dhare wer ov the blac-and-cilver foers, ov the piraits dhare wer stil fuwer; fiting nou a desperate and hoaples

defensive. But in this combat quarter wauz not, *cood* not be thaut ov, and Sarjant vanBuskerck agane waded intoo the fra. Foer tiamz moer hiz horribly efective hiabrid weppon decended like the hammer ov Thor, cleaving and crushing its wa throo stele and flesh and bone. Then, striding too the controle boerd, he manippulated switchez and diyalz, then agane spoke evenly too Kinnison.

"U can here me nou, caant u?... Aul mopt up--cum and ghet the dope!"

The speshalists, hedded bi Maaster Tecnishan LaaVern Thorndike, had bene wating straningly for dhat werd for minnuets. Nou dha litteraly flu at dhare taasx; in fureyous haist, but following ridgidly and in perfect cwordinaishon a pre-arainjd shedjule. Evvery controle and lede, evvery bus-bar and imatereyal beme ov foers wauz traist and chect. Instrooments and masheenz wer dismanteld, ceeld meccanizmz wer ruithlesly toern apart bi jax or sliast open widh cutting beemz. And evveriwahre, evvery thhing and evvery muivment wauz beying fotograaft, charted, and diyagramd.

"Ghetting the ideyaa nou, Kim," Thorndike ced finaly, juring a brefe lul in hiz werc. "A swete cistem...."

"Looc at this!" a mecannic interupted. "Heerz a mashene dhats aul shot too hel!"

The sheelding cuvver had bene toern from a monstrous fabricaishon ov mettal, apparrently a motor or gennerator ov an exedingly complex tipe. The inshulaishon ov its coilz and wiandingz had faulen awa in chard fragments, its copper had melted down in sluggish, viscous streemz.

"Dhats whaut were loocking for!" Thorndike shouted. "Chec dhose leedz! Alfaa!"

"Cevven-thre-nine-foer!" and the minuety caerfool studdy went on until:

"Dhats enuf; weve got evverithhing we nede nou. Hav u draaftsmen and fotograaferz got evverithhing down sollid?"

"On the boerdz!" and "In the canz!" rapt out the too repoerts az wun.

"Then lets go!"

"And go *faast!*" Kinnison orderd, briscly. "Ime afrade were gowing too run out ov time az it iz!"

Aul handz hurrede bac intoo the *Britanyaa*, paying no atenshon too the boddese littering the dex. So desperate wauz the emergency, eche man nu, dhat nuthhing cood be dun about the ded, whether frend or fo. Evvery rezoers ov meccanizm, ov brane and ov braun, must needz be straind too the utmoast if dha themcelvz wer not soone too be in cimmilar cace.

"Can u tauc, Nelz?" demaanded Kinnison ov hiz Comunicaishonz Officer, even befoer the are-loc had cloazd.

"No, cer, dhare blanketing us sollid," dhat werthy replide instantly. "Spacez so fool ov static u coodnt drive a pouwer-beme throo it, let alone a comunicator. Coodnt tauc direct, enniwa--looc whare we ar," and he pointed out in the tanc dhare prezsent locaishon.

"Hm...m...m. Coodnt hav got much farther awa widhout jumping the gallaxy entiarly. Boscone got a worning, iather from dhat ship bac dhare or from the disterbans. Dhare undoutedly concentrating on us

nou.... Wun ov them wil spere us widh a tractor, just az shure az helz a man-trap...."

The flejling comaander ramd boath handz intoo hiz pockets and thaut in blac intencity. He *must* ghet this dataa bac too Bace--but hou?

HOU? Henderson wauz aulreddy driving the vescel bac tooword Sol widh evvery iyotaa ov her inconcevable top spede, but it wauz out ov the qweschon even too hope dhat she wood evver ghet dhare. The life ov the *Britanyaa* wauz nou, he wauz coaldly certane, too be mezhuerd in ourz--and

aul too scant mezhure, even ov them. For dhare must be hundredz ov pirate vescelz even nou taring throo the void, forming a gigantic net too cut of her retern too Bace. Faast dho she wauz, wun ov dhat barricading hoerd wood certainly mannage too clamp on a tractor--and when dhat happend her nite wauz dun.

Nor cood she fite. She had conkerd wun ferst-claas wor-vescel ov the public ennemy, it wauz troo; but at whaut aufool cost! Wun fresh vescel cood blaast hiz crippeld mount out ov space; nor wood dhare be oanly wun. Within a space ov minnuets aafter the atachment ov a tracer the *Britanyaa* wood be surrounded bi the creme ov Boscoanz fiterz.

Dhare wauz oanly wun chaans; and sloly, thautfooly, and finaly grimly, yung Leftennant Kinnison--nou and breefly Captane Kinnison--decided too take it.

"Liscen, evveriboddy!" he orderd. "We *must* ghet this informaishon bac too Bace, and we caant doo it in the *Britanyaa*. The piraits ar bound too cach us, and our chaans in anuther fite iz exactly sero. Weeyl hav too abandon ship and take too the liafboats, in the hope dhat at leest wun wil be abel too ghet throo.

"The tecnishanz and speshalists wil take aul the dataa dha got--informaishon, descriphonz, diyagramz, picchuerz, evverithhing--boil it doun, and poot it on a spoole ov tape. Dha wil make about a hundred coppese ov it. The croo and the Valereyan privaits wil man boats starting widh Number Twenty Wun and blaast of az soone az u can ghet yor taips. Wuns awa, use verry littel detectabel pouwer, or better yet no pouwer at aul, until yor shure the piraits hav chaist the *Britanyaa* a good menny parcex awa from whare u ar.

"The rest ov us--speshalists and the Valereyan non-comz--wil go laast. Twenty boats, too men too a bote, and eche man wil hav a spoole. Weeyl start launching when were az far az its safe too go. Eche bote wil be strictly on its one. Doo it enny wa u can; but sum wa, *enny* wa, ghet yor spoole bac too Bace. Dhaerz no uce in me trying too impres u widh the importans ov this stuf; u no whaut it meenz az wel az I doo.

"Boatmaitis wil be draun bi lot. The qwortermaaster wil rite aul our naimz--and hiz one, too make it forty even--on slips ov paper and drau them out ov a helmet too at a time. If too navigatorz, such az Henderson and I, ar draun tooghether, both naimz go bac intoo the pot. Ghet too werc!"

Twice the name ov "Kinnison" came out tooghether widh dhat ov anuther skild in astronautix and wauz replaist. The thherd time, houwevver, it came out paerd widh "vanBuskerk," too the mannifest joi ov the giyant Valereyan and too the aprooval ov the croud az wel.

"Dhat wauz a brake for me, Kim!" the sarjant cauld, over the cheerz ov hiz fellose. "Ime *shure* ov ghetting bac nou!"

"Dhats throwing the oil, big fello--but I doant no ov enniboddy Ide raather hav at mi bac dhan u," Kinnison replide, widh a boiyish grin.

The paringz wer made; DeLammeterz, spare batterese, and uther eqwipment wer chect and tested; the spuiz ov tape wer ceeld in dhare coroazhon-proofe contanerz and distribbuted; and Kinnison sat tauking widh the Maaster Tecnishan.

"So dhave solvd the problem ov the reyal efishent recepshon and converzhon ov cozmik rajaishon!" Kinnison whisceld softly throo hiz teeth. "And a sun--even a smaul wun--rajaitz the ennergy ghivven of bi the aniyilaishon ov wun-too-cevveral milleyon tunz ov matter per cecond! SUM pouwer!"

"Dhats the stoery, Skipper, and it explainz compleetly whi dhare ships hav bene so much supereyor too ourz. Dha cood hav instauld faaster driavz even dhan the *Britanyaaz*--dha probbably wil, nou dhat it haz becum nescesary. Aulso, if the bus-barz in dhat receptor-convertor had bene a fu sqware centimeterz larger in cros-cecshon, dha cood hav held dhare waul-sheeld, even against our juwodec bom. Then whaut?.... Dha had plenty ov intake, but not qwite enuf distribueshon."

"Dha hav atommic motorz, the same az ourz; just az big and just az efishent," Kinnison codgitated. "But dhose motorz ar aul we *hav* got, while dha use them, and at fool pouwer, too, cimply az ferst-stage exiterz for the cozmik-ennergy screenz. Blianding blu blasez, whaut pouwer! Sum ov us hav *got* too ghet bac, Vern. If we doant, Boscoanz got the whole galaxy bi the tale, and civilizaishon iz sunc widhout a trace."

"Ile sa so; but aulso Ile sa this for dhose ov us whoo doant ghet bac--it woant be for lac ov trying. Wel, better I go chec mi bote. If I doant ce u agane, Kim oald man, clere eethher!"

Dha shooc handz breefly and Thorndike strode awa. Onroote, houwevver, he
pauzd beside the qwortermaaster and cignald too him too disconect hiz
comunicator.

"Clevver lad, Allerdice!" Thorndike whisperd, widh a grin. "Kiandaa loded
the dice a trifel wuns or twice, didnt u? I doant thhinc enniboddy but
me smeld a rat, dho. Certainly niather the skipper nor Henderson
did, or uedv had it too doo over agane."

"At leest wun teme haz got too ghet throo," Allerdice replide, qwiyetly
and obleecly, "and the stron'ghest teemz we can muster wil fiand the
gowing nun too esy. Enny teme made up ov strength and weecnes iz a
weke
teme. Kinnison, our oanly Lenzman, iz ov coers the best man aboard this
buz-bugghy. Whoo wood u pic for number too?"

"VanBuskerc, ov coers, the same az u did. I wauznt critticing u,
man, I wauz complimenting u, and thanking u, in a roundabout wa, for
ghivving me Henderson. Hese got plenty ov whaut it taix, too."

"It wauznt vanBuskerc, ov coers, ' bi enny meenz," the qwortermaaster
rejoind. "Its mity hard too figgure iather u or Henderson thherd, too
sa nuthhing ov foerth, in enny kiand ov cumpany, houwevver faast--
mentaly
and fizensaly. Houwevver, it ceemd too me dhat u fitted in better widh
the pilot. I cood hand-pic oanly too teemz widhout ghetting caut at
it--u spotted me az it wauz--but I thhinc I pict the too stron'ghest
teemz poscibel. Wun ov u wil ghet throo--if nun ov u foer can
make it, nobody cood."

"Wel, heerz hoping, enniwa. Thanx agane. Ce u agane sum time,
maby--clere eethher!"

Chefe Pilot Henderson had, a fu minnuets cins, chainjd the coers ov the crooser from rite-line flite too fantastic, sig-zag leeps throo space, and nou he ternd frouningly too Kinnison.

"Wede better beghin dumping them out pritty soone nou, I thhinc," he sugested. "We havnt detected ennithhing yet, but acording too the figguerz it woant be long nou; and aafter dha ghet dhare traps cet weeyl run out ov time mity qwic."

"Rite," and wun aafter anuther, but even so cevveral lite-yeerz apart in space, atene ov the smaul boats wer launcht intoo the void. In the controle roome dhare wer left oanly Henderson and Thorndike widh vanBuskerk and Kinnison, whoo wer ov coers too be the laast too leve the vescel.

"Aul rite, Hen, nou weeyl tri out yor roolet-whele director-bi-chaans," Kinnison ced, then went on, in aancer too Thorndiax qweschoning glaans: "A bouncing baul on an oscilating tabel. Evvery time the baul carromz of a pin it shifts the coers throo a faerly larj, but unpredictabel an'ghel. Pure chaans--we thaut it mite cros them up a littel."

Haerline beemz wer conected from pannelz too pinz, and soone foer interested spectatorz looct on while, widh no human ghidans, the *Britanyaa* lercht and leept even moer eratticaly dhan she had dun under Hendersonz direcshon. Nou, houwevver, the evver-chain'ging vectorz ov her coers wer az unexpected and cerprising too her pascen'gerz az too enny poscibel external observer.

Wun moer liafbote left the vescel, and oanly the Lenzman and hiz giyant ade remaind. While dha wer wating the reqwiard fu minnuets befoer

dhare one deparchure, Kinnison spoke.

"Bus, dhaerz wun moer thhing we aut too doo, and Ive just figguerd out hou too doo it. We doant waunt this ship too faul intoo the piraits handz intact, az dhaerz a lot ov stuf in her dhat wood probbably be az nu too them az it wauz too us. Dha no we got the best ov dhat ship ov dhaerz, but dha doant no whaut we did or hou. On the uther hand, we waunt her too drive on az long az poscibel aafter we leve her--the farther awa from us she ghets, the better our chaans ov ghetting awa. We shood hav sumthhing too tuch of dhose juwodec torpedose we hav left--aul cevven at wuns--at the ferst tuch ov a spi beme; boath too kepe them from studdeying her and too doo a littel dammage if poscibel--dhaiyl go inert and pool her up cloce az soone az dha ghet a tracer on her. Ov coers we caant doo it bi stopping the spi-ra aultooghether, widh a spi-screne, but I thhinc I can establish an R7TX7M feeld outside our reggular screenz dhat wil interfere widh a TX7 just enuf--sa wun-tenth ov wun percent--too acchuwate a rela in the feeld-suppoerting beme."

"Wun-tenth ov wun percent ov wun milliwait iz wun miacrowaut, iznt it? Not much pouwer, Ide sa, but dhats a littel out ov mi line. Go ahead--Ile observ while yor bizsy."

Dhus it came about dhat, a fu minnuets later, the imens ski-rover ov the Galactic Patrole darted along entiarly untennanted. And it wauz her non-human helmzman, opperating soly bi chaans, dhat prolongd the chace far moer dhan even the moast optimistic member ov her croo cood hav hoapt. For the pilots ov the pirate pershuwerz wer intelligent, and ashuemd dhat dhare qwory aulso wauz directed bi intelligens. Dhaerfoer dha aimd dhare vescelz for points tooword which the *Britanyaa* shood lodgicaly go; oanly and maddeningly too wauch her go sumwhare els. Censlesly she herld hercelf directly tooword enormous sunz, wuns grasing wun so neerly dhat the harreying piraits gaaspt at the

fuil'hardines ov such expoazhure too leethal rajaishon. For no rezon at aul she shot strate baqword, aulmoast intoo a cluster ov pirate craaft, oonly too dash of on anuther unnexpected tan'gent befoer the starteld outlauz cood la a beme against her.

But finaly she did it wuns too often. Fliying betwene too vescelz, she held her line the merest fracshon ov a cecond too long. Too tractorz lasht out and the thre vescelz flasht tooghether, zone too zone too zone. Then, instantly, the too pirate ships became inert, too ancor in space dhare wialdly fleying pra. Then spi-beemz lict out, too exploer the *Britanyaa* intereyor.

At the tuch ov dhose beemz, lite and dellicate az dha wer, the rela clict and the torpedose let go. Dhose friatfool shelz wer so desiand and so charjd dhat wun ov them cood demollish enny inert strucchure none too man: whaut ov cevven? Dhare wauz an exploazhon too staggher the imaginaishon and which must be left too the imaginaishon, cins no werdz in enny lan'gwage ov the galaxy can describe it addeqwaitly.

The *Britanyaa*, litteraly blone too bits, moer-dhan-haaf fuezd and parshaly vollatiliazd bi the inconcevable fury ov the outberst, wauz herld in aul direcshonz in stremerz, droplets, chunx, and mascez; eche component part erjd awa from the center ov preshure bi the ragingly comprest gasces ov detonaishon. Ferthermoer, eche component wauz nou ov coers inert and dhaerfoer capabel ov ghivving up its fool mezhure ov kinettic ennergy too enny inert obgett widh which it shood cum in contact.

Wun mas ov reccage, so feersly sped dhat its victim had time niather too doj nor becum inershaales, crasht fool against the cide ov the nerer atacker. Meteyorite screenz flaerd brilleyantly vियोlet and went

doun. The fool-drivven waul-sheeld held; but so teriffic wauz the concushon dhat whaut fu ov the croo wer not kild outrite wood take no interest in current events for menny ourz too cum.

The uther, sliatly moer distant atacker wauz moer forchunate. Her comaander had had time too render her inershaales, and az she rode liatly awa, ahed ov the outermost, most tenuuous frinj ov vapor, he repoerted sucinctly too hiz hedqworterz aul dhat had transpiard. Dhare wauz a brefe interlude ov cilens, then a speker gave tung.

"Helmuth, speking for Boscone," snapt from it. "Yor repoert iz niather complete nor conclucive. Fiand, studdy, fotograaf, and bring in too hedqworterz evvery fragment and partikel pertaning too the reccage, paying particcular atenshon too aul boddese or porshonz dharov."

"Helmuth, speking for Boscone!" roerd from the genneral-wave unscrambler. "Comaanderz ov aul vescelz, ov evvery claas and tunnage, uppon whatevver mishon bound, atenshon! The vescel referd too in our preveyous message haz bene destroid, but it iz feerd dhat sum or aul ov her personel wer aloud too escape. Evvery unit ov dhat personel must be kild befoer he haz oportchunity too comunicate widh enny Patrole bace. Dhaerfoer cancel yor prezsent orderz, whatevver dha ma be, and procede at maximum blaast too the rejon preveyously dezsinated. Scour dhat entire vollume ov space. Beme out ov existens evvery vescel whoose paperz doo not acount unqweschonably for evvery intelligent beying aboard. Investigate evvery poscibel avvenu ov escape. Moer detaild orderz wil be ghivven eche ov u uppon yor nerer aproche too the naborhood under cerch."

Space-suted complete except for helmets, and with those reds too hand, Kinnison and vanBuskerck sat in the tiny control room of the *liabote* as it drifted inert through inter-stellar space. Kinnison was poring over charts taken from the *Britanya*'s pilot room; the sergeant was gazing idly into a detector plate.

"No clue either yet, I don't suppose," the captain remarked, as he roiled up a chart and tossed it aside.

"No let-up for a second; don't take any chances at all. Found out where we are? Also can't it be herabouts somewhere, hadn't it?"

"Yeah. Not close, though, even for a ship--out of the question for us. Nothing much inhabited around here, either, too so nothing of being civilized. Scarsy won't the block. Don't think I've ever been out here before; have you?"

"Of my bet entirely. How long do you figure it'll be before it's safe for us to blast off?"

"Can't start blasting until your plights are clear. Nothing we can detect can detect us as soon as we start putting out power."

"We may be in for a spell of waiting, then...." VanBuskerck broke off suddenly and his tone changed too won't of tens excitement. "Help, Noshabkeming, help! Look at that!"

"Blinding blue blaze!" Kinnison exclaimed, staring into the plate. "With all macro-universal space and all eternity too plain around in, why in all space hell did she have to come back here and now?"

For the, right in the laps, not a hundred miles away, lay the *Britanya* and her two pirate captors!

"Better go fre, hadnt we?" whisperd vanBuskerck.

"Daernt!" Kinnison grunted. "At this rainj dhade spot us in a split cecond. Acting like a hunc ov looce mettalz our oanly chaans. Weeyl be abel too doj enny fliying chunx, I thhinc.... dhare she gose!"

From dhare coin ov vaantage the too Patroalmen sau dhare gallant ships terriffic end; sau the wun pirate vescel suffer colizhon widh the fliying fragment; sau the uther escape inershaales; sau her disapere.

The inert pirate vescel had nou aulmoast exactly the same velosity az the liafbote, boath in spede and in direcshon; oanly verry sloly wer the larj craaft and the smaull aproching eche uther. Kinnison stood ridgid, staring intoo hiz plate, hiz nervous handz graasping the switchez whoose closing, at the ferst cine ov detecshon, wood render them inershaales and wood poer fool blaast intoo dhare driving progectorz. But minnute aafter minnute paast and nuthhing happend.

"Whi doant dha *doo* sumthhing?" he berst out, finaly. "Dha no were here--dhare iznt a detector made dhat cood be badly enuf out ov order too mis us at this distans. Whi, dha can *ce* us from dhare, widh no detectorz at aul!"

"Aslepe, unconshous, or ded," vanBuskerck diyagnoazd, "and dhare not aslepe. Beleve me, Kim, dhat ship wauz nujd. She mustv bene hit hard enuf too la her whole croo out coald.... and sa, shese got a standard emergency inlet poert--hou about it, huu?"

Kinnisonz miand leept egherly at the daring sugeschon ov hiz subordinate, but he did not repli at wuns. Dhare ferst, dhare *oanly* juty, concernd the saifty ov too spuiz ov tape. But if the liafbote la dhare inert until the piraits regaind controle ov dhare craaft,

detecshon and capchure wer certane. The same fate wauz az certane shood dha atempt flite widh aul neerbi space so fool ov ennemy fliyerz. Dhaerfoer, hare-braind dho it apeerd at ferst glaans, vanBuskerx wiald ideyaa wauz acchuwaly the safest coers!

"Aul rite, Bus, weeyl tri it. Weeyl take a chaans on gowing fre and using a tenth ov a dine ov drive for a hundredth ov a cecond. Ghet intoo the loc widh yor magnets."

The liafbote flasht against the piraits armord cide and the sarjant, bi deftly manippulating hiz too smaul hand-magnets, werct it rappidly along the stele plating, tooword the driving gets. Dhare, in the convenshonal locaishon just forword ov the mane driving progetorz, wauz indede the emergency inlet poert, widh its Galactic Standard controalz.

In a fu minnuets the too woreyorz wer incide, dashing tooword the controle roome. Dhare Kinnison glaanst at the boerd and heevd a ci ov relefe.

"Fine! Same tipe az the wun we studdede. Same race, too," he went on, iying the moashonles formz scatterd about the floer. Cesing wun ov the boddese, he propt it against a pannel dhus obscuring a multipel lenz.

"Dhats the i overlooking the controle roome," he explaind un'necesarily. "We caant cut dhare hedqworterz vizsy-beemz widhout creyating suspishon, but we doant waunt them loocking around in here until aafter weve dun a littel stage-cetting."

"But dhaiyl ghet suspishous enniwa when we go fre," vanBuskerx protested.

"Shure, but weeyl arainj for dhat later. Ferst thng weve got too doo iz too make shure dhat aul the croo exept poscibly wun or too in here, ar reyaly ded. Doant beme unles u hav too; we waunt too make it looc az dho evveriboddy got kild or fataly injuerd in the crash."

A complete toor ov the vescel, widh a grim and distaistfool acumpaniment, wauz made. Not aul ov the piraits wer ded, or even disabeld; but, unnarmord az dha wer and taken compleetly bi cerprise, the cervivorz cood offer but littel resistans. A cargo poert wauz opend and the *Britanyaaz* liafbote wauz draun incide. Then bac too the controle roome, whare Kinnison pict up anuther boddy and strode too the mane pannelz.

"This fello," he anounst, "wauz hert badly, but mannaijd too ghet too the boerd. He throo in the fre swich, like this, and then fool-blaast drive, so. Then he poold himcelf over too the stering globe and tride too la coers bac tooword hedqworterz, but coodnt qwite make it. He dide widh the coers cet rite dhare. Not exactly tooword Sol, u notice--dhat wood be too much ov a cowincidens--but cloce enuf too help a lot. Hiz braislet got caut in the gard, like this. Dhare iz clere evvidens az too exactly whaut happend. Nou weeyl ghet out ov rainj ov dhat i, and let the boddy dhats cuvvering it flote awa natchuraly."

"Nou whaut?" aasct vanBuskerck, aafter the too had hidden themcelvz.

"Nuthing whautevver until we hav too," wauz the repli. "Wish we cood go on like this for a cuppel ov weex, but no chaans. Hedqworterz wil ghet cureyous pritty qwic az too whi were shuvving of."

Even az he spoke a fureyous berst ov noiz erupted from the comunicator; a noiz which ment:

"Vescel F47U596! Whare ar u gowing, and whi? Repoert!"

At dhat bruisc comaand wun ov the stil formz struggheld weecly too its nese and tride too frame werdz, but fel bac ded.

"Perfect!" Kinnison breedhd intoo vanBuskerx ere. "Coodnt hav bene better. Nou dhaiyl probbably take dhare time about rounding us.... maby we can ghet bac too sumwhare nere Tellus, aafter aul.... Liscen, here cumz sum moer." The comunicator wauz agane cending. "Ce if u can ghet a line on dhare traanzmitter."

"If dhare ar enny cervivorz abel too repoert, doo so at wuns!" Kinnison understood the dinammic cone too sa. Then, the vois modderating az dho the speker had ternd from hiz miacrofone too sumwun neerbi, it went on, "No wun aancerz, cer. This, u no, iz the ship dhat wauz liying clocest too the nu Patrole ship when she exploded; so cloce dhat her navigator did not hav time too go fre befoer colizhon with the daibry. The croo wer aparrently aul kild or incapascitated bi the shoc."

"If enny ov the officerz cervive hav them braut in for triyal," a moer distant vois comaanded, savvaijly. "Boscone haz no uce for bun'glerz exept too cerv az exaampelz. Hav the ship ceezd and reternd here az soone az poscibel."

"Cood u trace it, Bus?" Kinnison demaanded. "Even wun line on dhare hedqworterz wood be mity uesfool."

"No, it came in scambeld--coodnt cepparate it from the rest ov the static out dhare. Nou whaut?"

"Nou we ete and slepe. Particcularly and moast emfatticaly, we slepe."

"Wauchez?"

"No nede; Ile be awakend in plenty ov time if ennithhing happenz. Mi Lenz, u no."

Dha ate ravvenously and slept prodidjously; then ate and slept agane. Rested and refresht, dha studded charts, but vanBuskerx miand wauz verry evvidently not uppon the maps befoer them.

"U understand dhat jargon, and it duznt even sound like a lan'gwage too me," he ponderd. "Its the Lenz, ov coers. Maby its sumthhing dhat shoodnt be tauct about?"

"No ceecret--not amung us, at leest," Kinnison ashuerd him. "The Lenz receevz az pure thaut enny pattern ov foers which represents, or iz in enny wa conected widh, thaut. Mi brane receevz this thaut in In'glish, cins dhat iz mi native lan'gwage. At the same time mi eerz ar practicaly out ov cerkit, so dhat I acchuwaly here the In'glish lan'gwage insted ov whautevver noiz iz beying made. I doo not here the forane soundz at aul. Dhaerfoer I havnt the slitest ideyaa whaut the piraits lan'gwage soundz like, cins I hav nevver herd enny ov it.

"Conversly, when I waunt too tauc too sumwun whoo duznt no enny lan'gwage I doo, I cimply thhinc intoo the Lenz and direct its foers at him, and he thhinx I am tauking too him in hiz one muther tung. Dhus, u ar hering me nou in perfect Valereyan Duch, even dho u no dhat I can speke oonly a duzsen or so werdz ov it, and dhose widh a vile Amerrican axent. Aulso, u ar hering it in mi vois, even dho u no I am acchuwaly not saying a werd, cins u can ce dhat mi mouth iz wide open and dhat niather mi lips, tung, nor vocal cordz ar mooving. If u wer a Frenchman u wood be hering this in French; or, if u wer a Manarcan and coodnt tauc at aul, u wood be ghetting it az reggular Manarcan teleppathhy."

"O.... I ce.... I thhinc," the astounded Duchman gulpt. "Then whi coodnt u tauc bac too them throo dhare foanz?"

"Becauz the Lenz, auldho a mity fine and versatile thhing, iz not omnippotent," Kinnison replide, drily. "It cendz out oanly thaut; and thaut-waivz, liying belo the levvel ov the eethher, canot afect a miacrofone. The miacrofone, not beying itcelf intelligent, canot receive thaut. Ov coers I can braudcaast a thaut--evveriboddy duz, moer or les--but widhout a Lenz at the uther end I caant reche verry far. Pouwer, dha tel me, cumz widh practice--Ime not so good at it yet."

"U can receive a thaut... evveriboddy braudcaasts... Then u can rede miandz?" vanBuskerk stated, raather dhan aasct.

"When I waunt too, yes. Dhat wauz whaut I wauz doowing while we wer mopping up. I demaanded the locaishon ov dhare bace from evvery wun ov them alive, but nun ov them nu it. I got a lot ov picchuerz and descriphonz ov the bildingz, layout, arainjments and personel ov the bace, but not a hint az too whare it iz in space. The navigatorz wer aul ded, and not even the Areezhanz understand deth. But dhats ghetting pritty depe intoo filossofy and its time too ete agane. Lets go!"

Dase paast unneventfooly, but finaly the comunicator agane began too tauc. Too pirate ships wer closing in uppon the suposedly derrelict vescel; discusing widh eche uther the exact point ov convergens ov the thre coercez.

"I wauz hoping wede be abel too comunicate widh Prime Bace befoer dha caut up widh us," Kinnison remarct. "But I ghes its no dice--I caant ghet enniboddy on mi Lenz and the eetherz az fool ov interferens az evver. Dhare a suspishous bunch, and dha arnt gowing too let us ghet awa widh a cin'ghel thhing if dha can help it. Uve got dhat jueplicate ov dhare comunicaishonz unscrambler bilt?"

"Yes--dhat wauz it u just liscend too. I bilt it out ov our one stuf, and Ive gon over the whole ship widh a clener. Dhare iznt a trace, not even a fin'gher-print, too sho dhat enniboddy exept her one croo haz evver bene aboard."

"Good werc! This coers taix us rite throo a plannetary cistem in a fu minnuets and weeyl hav too unlode dhare. Lets ce... this chart marx plannets too and thre az inhabbited, but widh a red refferens number, elevven twenty-cevven. Um...m... dhat meenz practicaly unnexplord and un'none. No landing evver made... no patrole representaishon or conecshon.... no commers.... state ov civilizaishon un'none.... scand oanly wuns, in the Thherd Galactic Cerva, and dhat wauz a hel ov a long time ago. Not so good, aparrently--but maby aul the better for us, at dhat. Enniwa, its a foerst landing, so ghet reddy too shuv of."

Dha boereded dhare liafbote, plaist it in the cargo-loc, opend the outer poert uppon its automattic bloc, and wated. At dhare aufool galactic spede the diyammeter ov a solar cistem wood be traverst in such a smaull fracshon ov a cecond dhat observaishon wood be imposcibel, too sa nuthhing ov computaishon. Dha wood hav too act ferst and compute later.

Dha flasht intoo the strainj cistem. A plannet luimd terrifiyingly cloce; at dhare friatfool velosity aulmoast invizsibel even uppon dhare ultraa-vizhon plaits. The liafbote shot out, becumming inert az it paast the screne. The cargo-poert swung shut. Luc had bene widh them; the plannet wauz scaersly a milleyon mialz awa. While vanBuskerc drove tooword it, Kinnison made haisty observaishonz.

"Cood hav bene better--but cood hav bene a lot wers," he repoerted. "This iz plannet foer. Unninhabbited, which iz verry good. Thre, dho, iz clere over acros the sun, and Too iznt enny too cloce for a space-sute flite--better dhan aty milleyon mialz. Esy enuf az far az distans

gose--weve aul made lon'gher hops in our suets--but weeyl be open too detecshon for about fiftene minnuets. Caant be helpt, dho.... here we ar!"

"Gowing too land her fre, huu?" vanBuskerk whisceld. "Whaut a chaans!"

"It'd be a biggher wun too take the time too land her inert. Her pouwer wil hoald--I hope. Weeyl inert her and mach intrinsix widh her when we cum bac--weeyl hav moer time then."

The liafbote stopt instantainously, in a fre landing, uppon the unninhabbited, dezzolate, rocky soil ov the strainj werld. Widhout a werd the too men leept out, carreying foolly pact napsax. A portabel progector wauz then dragd out and its feers beme directed intoo the bace ov the hil becide which dha had cum too erth. A cavvern wauz qwicly made, and while its glaacy waulz wer stil smoking hot the liafbote wauz drivven within it. Widh dhare DeLammeterz the too wafarerz then undercut the hil, so dhat a grate slide ov soil and roc oblitterated evvery cine ov the vizsit. Kinnison and vanBuskerk cood fiand dhare vescel agane, from dhare accuraitly-taken baringz; but, dha hoapt, no wun els cood.

Then, stil widhout a werd, the too advenchurerz flasht upword. The atmosfere ov the plannet, tenuwous and coald dho it wauz, nevvertheles so soerly impeded dhare proagres dhat minnuets ov preshous time wer reqwiard for the driving progectorz ov dhare suets too foers them throo its thhin layer. Evenchuwaly, houwevver, dha wer in interplannetary space and wer fliying at qwaudroopel the spede ov lite. Then vanBuskerk spoke.

"Landing the bote, hiding it, and this trip ar the dain'ger spots. Herd ennithhing yet?"

"No, and I doant beleve we wil. I thhinc probbably weve lost them

completely. Woant no deffiniatly, dho, until aafter dha cach the ship, and dhat woant be for ten minnuets yet. Weeyl be landed bi then."

A werld nou luimd beneeth them; a plezzant, Erthly-apering werld ov scatterd cloudz, grene forrests, roling plainz, woodded and sno-capt mountane-rain'gez, and roling oashanz. Here and dhare wer too be cene whaut

looct like cittese, but Kinnison gave them a wide berth; electing too land uppon an open meddo in the shelter ov a blac and glaacy clif.

"Aa, just in time: dhare beghinning too tauc," Kinnison anounst.

"Unnimportant stuf yet, opening the ship and so on. Ile rela the tauc az neerly verbatim az poscibel when it ghets interesting." He fel cilent, then went on in a cing-song tone, az dho he wer reciting from memmory, which in efect he wauz:

"Captainz ov ships P4J263 and EQ69B47 cauling Helmuth! We hav stopt and hav boerded the F47U596. Evverithhing iz in order and az dejuest and repoerted bi yor observerz. Evveriwun aboard iz ded. Dha did not aul di at the same time, but dha aul dide from the efects ov the colizhon. Dhare iz no trace ov outside interferens and aul the personel ar acounted for.'

"Helmuth, speking for Boscone. Yor repoert iz inconclucive. Cerch the ship minuetly for trax, prints, scratchez. Note enny miscing suplise or misplaist itemz ov eqwipment. Studdy caerfooly aul meccanizmz, particullarly converterz and comunicatorz, for cianz ov tampering or dismantling.'

"Whu!" whisceld Kinnison. "Dhaiyl fiand whare u tooc dhat comunicator apart, Bus, just az shure az helz a man-trap!"

"No, dha woant," declaerd vanBuskerc az pozsitiavly. "I did it widh rubber-noazd pliyerz, and if I left a scrach or a scar or a print on it

Ile ete it, chuebz and aul!"

A pauz.

"We hav studdede evverithhing moast caerfooly, O Helmuth, and fiand no trace ov tampering or vizsit.'

"Helmuth agane: Yor repoert iz stil inconclucive. Whoowevver did whaut haz bene dun iz probbably a Lenzman, and certainly haz *brainz*. Ghiv me the prezsent recorded cereyal number ov aul poert openingz, and the exact number ov tiamz u hav opend eche poert.'

"Ouch!" groand Kinnison. "If dhat meenz whaut I thhinc it duz, aul helz out for noone. Did u ce enny numbering recorderz on dhose poerts? I didnt--ov coers niather ov us thaut ov such a thhing. Hoald it--here cumz sum moer stuf.

"Poert-opening recorder cereyal numberz ar az follose... doant mene a thhing too us.... we hav opend the emergency inlet poert wuns and the starbord mane loc twice. No uther poert at aul.'

"And heerz Helmuth agane: Aa, az I thaut. The emergency poert wauz opend wuns bi outciderz, and the starbord cargo poert twice. The Lenzman came aboard, hedded the ship tooword Sol, tooc hiz liafbote aboard, liscend too us, and departed at hiz lezhure. And this in the verry midst ov our flete, the entire personel ov which wauz supoast too be loocking for him! Hou supposedly intelligent spaismen cood be ghilty ov such utter and indefencibel schupiddity....' Hese tellin em plenty, Bus, but dhaerz no uce repeting it. The tone caant be reprojuest, and its cimply taking the hide rite of dhare bax.... heerz sum moer.... Genneral braudcaast! Ship F47U596 in its supposedly derrelict condishon flu from the point ov destrucshon ov the

Patrol ship, on coers....' No uce qwoting, Bus, hese cimply ghivving direcshonz for scouring our whole Line ov flite.... Fading out--dhare gowing on, or bac. This outfit, ov coers, iz good for oanly the clocest kiand ov cloce-up werc."

"And were out ov the friying pan intoo the fire, huu?"

"O, no; were a lot better of dhan we wer. Were on a plannet and not using enny pouwer dha can trace. Aulso, dhave got too cuvver so much territory dhat dha caant come it verry fine, and dhat ghivz the rest ov the fellose a brake. Ferthermoer...."

A crushing wate decended uppon hiz bac, and the Patroalmen found themcelvz fiting for dhare liavz. From the bare, suposedly evvidently safe rac face ov the clif dhare had emerjd rope-tentakeld monstrosците in a ravvenously atacking swarm. In the savvage blaasts ov DeLammeterz hundredz ov the gargoil hoerd vannisht in vivvid flaerz ov rajans, but on dha came; bi thouzandz and, it ceemd, bi milleyonz. Evenchuwaly the batterese energising the progectorz became exhausted. Then flaling coil met shering stele, feers-drivven parrot beex clangd against space-temperd armor, bulbous hedz pulpt under hard-swung axez; but not for the fracshonal cecond nescesary for inershaales flite cood the too win clere. Then Kinnison cent out hiz SOS.

"A Lenzman caulng help! A Lenzman caulng help!" he braudcaast widh the fool pouwer ov miand and Lenz, and imejaitly a sharp, clere vois poerd intoo hiz brane:

"Cumming, warer ov the Lenz! Cumming at spede too the clif ov the Catlats. Hoald until I cum! I arive in thherty...."

Thherty whaut? Whaut poscibel intelligibel rellative mezhure ov dhat un'none and un'nowabel concept, Time, can be convade bi thaut alone?

"Kepe slugging, Bus!" Kinnison panted. "Help iz on the wa. A local cop--vois soundz like it cood be a woomman--wil be here in thherty sumthhingz. Doant no whether its thherty minnuets or thherty dase; but weeyl stil be dhare."

"Maby so and maby not," grunted the Duchman. "Sumthhingz cumming beciadz help. Looc up and ce if u ce whaut I thhinc I doo."

Kinnison did so. Throo the are from the top ov the clif dhare wauz hertling dounword tooword them a verritabel draggon: a niatmaerz horror ov hidjously reptilleyan hed, ov lethern wingz, ov vishously fangd jauz, ov friatfooly tallond fete, ov multipel notty armz, ov long, cinnuwous, hevvely-scaild serpents boddy. In fleting glimpcez throo the riathing tentakelz ov hiz oponents Kinnison perceevd littel bi littel the fool picchure ov dhat unbelevabel monstrosity: and, acustomd az he wauz too the outlandish dennisenz ov werldz scaersly none too man, hiz verry cencez reeld.

CHAPTER 5

Worcel too the Rescu

Az the qwasi-reptilleyan organizm decended the clif-dwellerz went mad. Dhare atac uppon the too Patroalmen, aulreddy vishous, became insainly frantic. Abandoning the gigantic Duchman entiarly, evvery Catlat within reche throo himcelf uppon Kinnison and so enrapt the Lenzmanz hed, armz, and torso dhat he cood scaersly moove a muscel. Then entwining captorz and helples man muivd sloly tooword the largest ov the openingz in the clifs obcidjan face.

Uppon dhat sloly mooving mas vanBuskerc herld himcelf, dedly space-ax swinging. But, hu and smite az he wood, he cood niather fre hiz chefe from the grizly hoerd enveloping him nor impede mezhurably dhat hoerdz proagres tooword its gole. Houwevver, he cood and did cut awa the comparratiavly fu cabelz confining Kinnisonz legz.

"Clamp a leg-loc around mi waist, Kim," he directed, the flashing thaut in no whit interfering widh hiz prodidjous ax-pla, "and az soone az I ghet a chaans, befoer the reyal tuscel cumz, Ile cuppel us tooghether widh aul the belt-snaps I can reche--wharevver were gowing were gowing tooghether! Wunder whi dha havnt gangd up on me, too, and whaut dhat lizzard iz doowing? Bene too bizsy too looc, but thaut heedv bene on mi bac befoer this."

"He woant be on yor bac. Dhats Worcel, the lad whoo aancerd mi caul. I toald u hiz vois wauz funny? Dha caant tauc or here--use teleppathy, like the Manarcanz. Hese clening them out in grate shape. If u can hoald me for thre minnuets heeyl hav the lot ov them whipt."

"I can hoald u for thre minnuets against aul the vermin betwene here and Andrommedaa," vanBuskerc declaerd. "Dhare, Ive got foer snaps on u."

"Not too tite, Bus," Kinnison caushond. "Leve enuf slac so u can cut me looce if u hav too. Remember dhat the spuilz ar moer important dhan enny wun ov us. Wuns incide dhat clif weeyl be aul wausht up--even Worcel caant help us dhare--so drop me raather dhan go in yorcelf."

"Um," grunted the Duchman, non-comittaly. "Dhare, Ive tost mi spoole out ontoo the ground. Tel Worcel dhat if dha ghet us hese too pic it up and carry on. Weeyl go ahed widh yorz, incide the clif if nescenary."

"I ced cut me looce if u caant hoald me!" Kinnison snapt, "and I ment it. Dhats an ofishal order. Remember it!"

"Ofishal order be damd!" snorted vanBusker, stil plying hiz ponderous mace. "Dha woant ghet u intoo dhat hole widhout braking me in too, and dhat wil be a job ov braking in enniboddese lan'gwage. Nou shut yor pan," he concluded grimly. "Were here, and Ime gowing too be too bizsy, even too thhinc, verry shortly."

He spoke trooly. He had aulreddy celected hiz point ov resistans, and az he reecht it he thrust the hed ov hiz mace intoo the crac behiand the open trap-doer, jamd its shaaft intoo the shoalder-socket ov hiz armor, cet blocky legz and Herculeyan armz against the clifcide, archt hiz mity bac, and held. And the cerpriazd Catlats, nou incide the gloomy faastnes ov dhare tunnel, thrust ancoring tentakelz intoo crevvicez in the waul and pool; harder, evver harder.

Under the terriffic stres Kinnisonz hevvy armor creect az its are-tite joints acommodated themcelvz too dhare nu and unnuezhual posishonz. Dhat armor, or space-temperd alloi, ov coers wood not ghiv wa--but whaut ov its ancor?

Wel it wauz for Kimbal Kinnison dhat da, and wel for our prezsent civilizaishon, dhat the *Britanyaaz* qwortermaaster had celected Peter vanBusker for the Lenzmanz mate; for deth, inevvitabel and horribel, resided within dhat clif, and no human frame ov Erthly groath, houwevver armord, cood hav boern for even a fracshon ov a cecond the viyolens ov the Catlats pool.

But Peter vanBusker, auldho ov Erthly-Duch ancestry, had bene born and reerd uppon the plannet Valereyaa, and dhat mascive plannets gravvity--over too and wun-haaf tiamz Erths--had ghivven him a fiseke

and a strength aulmoast inconceivable too us life-long dwellerz uppon
smaul,
grene Terra. Hiz hed, az haz bene ced, touwerd cevventy-ate inchez
abuv the ground; but at dhat he apeerd sqwauty becauz ov hiz
enormous spred ov shoalder and hiz startling gherth. Hiz boanz wer
elefantine--dha had too be, too fernish addeqwate supoert and leverage
for the increddibel mascez ov muscel overlaying and surrounding them. But
even vanBuskerx Valereyan strength wauz nou beyng taxt too the
uttermoast.

The anchoring chainz humd and snarld az the clamps bit intoo the
ringz. Muscelz riadhd and notted, tendonz strecht and threttend too
snap; swet roald doun hiz mity bac. Hiz jauz loct in agony and
hiz ise started from dhare sockets widh the effort; but stil
vanBusker held.

"Cut me looce!" comaanded Kinnison at laast. "Even u caant take much
moer ov dhat. No uce letting them brake yor bac... *Cut*, I tel
u.... I ced *CUT*, u big, dum, Valereyan ape!"

But if vanBusker held or felt the savvaijly-voist comaandz ov hiz
chefe he gave no hede. Straning too the verry ultimate fiber ov hiz
beyng, exerting evvery iyotaa ov loiyal miand and evvery attom ov
Brobdingnajan frame: grimly, tenaishously, stubbornly the gigantic
Duchman held.

Held while Worcel ov Velanshaa, dhat grotescly hidjous, dhat
fantasticaly reptilleyan alli, ploud tooword the too Patroalmen throo
the hoerd ov Catlats; a verritabel tornado ov rending fang and shering
tallon, ov beting wing and crushing snout, ov maild hand and trenchant
tale:

Held while dhat demon incarnate drove clocer and clocer, herling entire

Catlats and numberles dismemberd fragments ov Catlats too the foer windz az he came:

Held until Worcelz snake-like boddy, a suppel and cenchent cabel ov livving stele, tipt widh its dubbel-ejd, razor-kene, cimmitar-like sting, slipt intoo the tunnel beside Kinnison and raut grizly havvoc among the Catlats cloce-pact dhare!

Az the teriffic tenshon uppon him wauz suddenly releest vanBuskerx one efforts herld him awa from the clif. He fel too the ground, hiz overstrained muscelz twitching uncontrolably, and on top ov him fel the fetterd Lenzman. Kinnison, hiz handz nou fre, unfaacend the clamps linking hiz armor too dhat ov vanBuskerx and wherld too confrunt the fo--but the fiting wauz over. The Catlats had had enuf ov Worcel ov Velanshaa; and, screming and shreking in baffeld rage, the laast ov them wer disapering intoo dhare caivz.

VanBuskerx got shakily too hiz fete. "Thanx for the help, Worcel, we wer just about too run out ov time...." he began, oanly too be cilenst bi an incistent thaut from the grotescly monstrous strain'ger.

"Stop dhat rajating! Doo not thhinc at aul if u canot screne yor miandz!" came ergent mental comaandz. "These Catlats ar a verry minor pest ov this plannet Delgon. Dhare ar utherz wers bi far. Forchunaitly, yor thauts ar uppon a freeqweny nevver uezd here--if I had not bene so verry cloce too u I wood not hav herd u at aul--but shood the Overlordz hav a liscener uppon dhat band yor unsheilded thhinking ma aulreddy hav dun irrepparabel harm. Follo me. I wil slo mi spede too yorz, but hurry aul poscibel!"

"U tel im, Chefe," vanBuskerx ced, and fel cilent; hiz miand az neerly a perfect blanc az hiz iarn wil cood make it.

"This iz a screend thaut, throo mi Lenz," Kinnison tooc up the conversaishon. "U doant nede too slo down on our acount--we can devellop enny spede u wish. Lede on!"

The Velanshan leept intoo the are and flasht awa in hedlong flite. Much too hiz cerprise the too human beyingz kept up widh him effortlessly uppon dhare inershaales driavz, and aafter a moment Kinnison directed anuther thaut.

"If time iz an object, Worcel, no dhat mi companyon and I can carry u enniwhare u wish too go at a spede hundredz ov tiamz grater dhan this dhat we ar using," he vouchsaift.

It devellopt dhat time wauz ov the utmoast poscibel importans and the thre cloazd in. Mity wingz foalded bac, handz and tallonz gript armor chainz, and the groope, inershaales aul, shot awa at a pace dhat Worcel ov Velanshaa had nevver imadgiand even in hiz wialdest dreemz ov spede. Dhare gole, a smaul, fechuerles tent ov thhin shete mettal, occupiying a barren spot in a riathing, craulng expans ov lushly grene jun'ghel, wauz reecht in a space ov minnuets. Wuns incide, Worcel ceeld the opening and ternd too hiz armord ghests.

"We can nou thhinc frely in open convers. This waul iz the carreyer ov a screne throo which no thaut can make its wa."

"This werld u caul bi a name I hav interpreted az Delgon," Kinnison began, sloly. "U ar a native ov Velanshaa, a plannet nou beyond the sun. Dhaerfoer I ashuemd dhat u wer taking us too yor space-ship. Whare iz dhat ship?"

"I hav no ship," the Velanshan replide, compoazdly, "nor hav I nede ov wun. For the remainder ov mi life--which iz nou too be mezhuerd in a fu ov yor ourz--this tent iz mi oonly..."

"No ship!" vanBuskerck broke in. "I hope we woant hav too sta on this Noshabkeming-forgotten plannet forevver--and Ime not verry kene on gowing much ferther in dhat liafbote, iather."

"We ma not hav too doo iather ov dhose thhingz," Kinnison reyashuerd hiz sarjant. "Worcel cumz ov a long-livd tribe, and the fact dhat he thhinx hiz ennemese ar gowing too ghet him in a fu ourz duznt make it troo, bi enny meenz--dhare ar thre ov us too recon widh nou. Aulso, when we nede a space-ship weeyl ghet wun, if we hav too bild it. Nou, lets fiand out whaut this iz aul about. Worcel, start at the beghinning and doant skip a thhing. Betwene us we can shuerly fiand a wa out, for aul ov us."

Then the Velanshan toald hiz stoery. Dhare wauz much repetishon, much roundabout thhinking, az sum ov the concepts wer so bizar az too defi traanzmishon, but finaly the Patroalmen had a faerly complete picchure ov the cichuwaishon then obtaning within dhat strainj solar cistem.

The inhabbitants ov Delgon wer bad, beying carracteriazd bi a tipe and a depth ov depravvity imposcibel for a human miand too vizhuwalise. Not oonly wer the Delgoanyanz ennemese ov the Velanshanz in the ordinary cens ov the werd; not oonly wer dha piraits and robberz; not oonly wer dha dhare maasterz, taking them boath az slaivz and az foode-cattel; but dhare wauz sumthhing moer, sumthhing deper and wers, sumthhing oonly parshaly traanzmiscibel from miand too miand--a horibly and repulciavly Saternaleyan tipe ov mental and intelecchuwal, az wel az biyolodgical, parracitizm. This relaishonship had gon on for agez, and juring dhose agez rebelleyon wauz imposcibel, az enny Velanshan capabel ov leding such a muivment disapeerd befoer he cood make enny hedwa at aul.

Finally, however, a thaut-scene had bene deviazd, behiand which Velanshaa devellopt a hi ciyens ov her one. The schudents ov this ciyens livd widh but wun perpoce in life, too fre Velanshaa from the tirrorany ov the Overlordz ov Delgon. Eche schudent, az he reecht the sennith ov hiz mental pouwer, went too Delgon, too studdy and if poscibel too destroi the tirants. And aafter dicembarking uppon the soil ov dhat dred plannet no Velanshan, whether schudent or ciyentist or private advenchurer, had evver reternd too Velanshaa.

"But whi doant u la a complaint against them befoer the Council?" demaanded vanBuskerck. "Dhade straten thhingz out in a hurry."

"We hav not heertofoer none, save bi the moast unreliyabel and roundabout repoerts, dhat such an organizaishon az yor Galactic Patrole reyaly exists," the Velanshan replide, obleecly. "Nevvertheles, menny yeerz cins, we launcht a space-ship tooword its nerest reputed bace. Houwevver, cins dhat trip reqwiarz thre normal liaftiamz, widh dedly perril in evvery moment, it wil be a mirrakel if the ship evver compleets it. Ferthermoer, even if the ship shood reche its destinaishon, our complaint wil probbably not even be concidderd becauz we hav not a cin'ghel shred ov reyal evvidens widh which too supoert it. No livving Velanshan haz even cene a Delgoanyan, nor can enniwun testifi too the truth ov ennithing I hav toald u. While we beleve dhat dhat iz the troo condishon ov afaerz, our belefe iz baist, not uppon evvidens admiscibel in a coert ov lau, but uppon deducshonz from ocaizhonal thauts rajated from this plannet. Nor wer these thauts alike in tennor..."

"Skip dhat for a minnute--weeyl take the picchure az corect," Kinnison broke in. "Nuthhing u hav ced so far shose enny necescity for u too di in the next fu ourz."

"The oonly obgect in life for a traind Velanshan iz too libberate hiz plannet from the horrorz ov subgecshon too Delgon. Menny such hav cum here, but not wun haz found a wercabel ideyaa; not wun haz iather reternd too or even comunicated widh Velanshaa aafter starting werc here. I am a Velanshan. I am here. Soone I shal open dhat doer and ghet in tuch widh the ennemy. Cins better men dhan I am hav faild, I doo not expect too suxede. Nor shal I retern too mi native plannet. Az soone az I start too werc the Delgoanyanz wil comaand me too cum too them. In spite ov micelf

I wil oba dhat comaand, and verry shortly dharaafter I shal di, in whaut fashon I doo not no."

"Snap out ov it, Worcel!" Kinnison orderd, bruisclly. "Dhats the rankest kiand ov defetizm, and u no it. Nobody evver got too the ferst chec-staishon on dhat kiand ov fuwel."

"U ar tauking about sumthhing nou about which u no nuthhing whautevver." For the ferst time Worcelz thauts shode pashon. "Yor thauts ar idel--ignorant--vane. U no nuthhing whautevver ov the mental pouwer ov the Delgoanyanz."

"Maby not--I make no clame too beying a mental giyant--but I doo no dhat mental pouwer alone canot overcum a deffiniatly and pozsitiavly opoazd *wil*. An Areezhan cood probbably brake mi wil, but Ile stake mi life dhat no uther mentallity in the none Univers can doo it!"

"U thhinc so, Erthling?" and a ceething sfere ov mental foers encumpast the Telureyanz brane. Kinnisonz cencez reeld at the terriffic impact, but he shooc of the atac and smiald.

"Cum agane, Worcel. Dhat wun jard me too the heelz, but it didnt qwite ring the bel."

"U flatter me," the Velanshan declaerd in cerprise. "I cood scaersly tuch yor miand--cood not pennetrate even its outermoast defencez, and I exerted aul mi foers. But dhat fact ghivz me hope. Mi miand iz ov coers infereyor too dhaerz, but cins I cood not influwens u at aul, even in direct contact and at fool pouwer, u ma be abel too resist the miandz ov the Delgoanyanz. Ar u willing too hazzard the stake u menshond a moment ago? Or raather, I aasc u, bi the Lenz u ware, so too hazzard it--widh the libberty ov an entire pepel dependent uppon the outcum."

"Whi not? The spuiz cum ferst, ov coers--but widhout u our spuiz wood boath be berrede nou incide the clif ov the Catlats. Fix it so yor pepel wil fiand these spuiz and carry on widh them in cace we fale, and Ime yor man. Dhare--nou tel me whaut were apt too be up against, and then let looce yor dogz."

"Dhat I canot doo. I no oanly dhat dha wil direct against us mental foercez such az u hav nevver even imadgiand--I canot foerworn u in enny respect whautevver az too whaut formz dhose foercez ma apere too ashume.

I no, houwevver, dhat I shal sucum too the ferst bolt ov foers. Dhaerfoer biand me widh these chainz befoer I open the sheeld. Fizsicaly I am extreemly strong, az u no; dhaerfoer be shure too poot on enuf chainz so dhat I canot poscibly brake fre, for if I can brake awa I shal undoutedly kil boath ov u."

"Hou cum aul these thhingz here, reddy too hand?" aasct vanBuskerc, az the too Patroalmen so loded the pascive Velanshan widh chainz, mannakelz, hand-cufs, leg-iarnz and straps dhat he cood not moove even hiz tale.

"It haz bene tride befoer, menny tiamz," Worcel replide bleecly, "but the rescuwerz, beying Velanshanz, aulso sucumd too the foers and tooc of the

iarnz. Nou I caushon u, widh aul the pouwer ov mi miand--no matter whaut u ce, no matter whaut I ma comaand u or beg ov u, no matter hou ergently u yorcelf ma wish too doo so--DOO NOT LIBBERATE ME UNDER ENNY CERCUMSTAANCEZ unles and until thhingz apere exactly az dha doo nou and dhat doer iz shut. No foolly and ponder wel the fact dhat if u relece me while dhat doer iz open it wil be becauz u hav yeelded too Delgoanyan foers; and dhat not oonly wil aul thre ov us di, lin'gheringly and horibly; but aulso and wers, dhat our deths wil not hav bene ov enny bennefit too civilizaishon. Doo u understand? Ar u reddy?"

"I understand--I am reddy," thaut Kinnison and vanBuskerk az wun.

"Open dhat doer."

Kinnison did so. For a fu minnuets nuthhing happend. Then thre-dimenshonal picchuerz began too form befoer dhare ise--picchuerz which dha nu existed oonly in dhare one miandz, yet which wer compoazd ov such sollid substans dhat dha obscuerd from vizhon evverithhing els in the matereyal werld. At ferst hasy and indistinct, the cene--for it wauz in no cens nou a picchure--became clere and sharp. And, piling horror uppon horror, sound wauz added too cite. And directly befoer dhare ise, blotting out compleetly even the sollid mettal ov the waul oonly a fu fete distant from them, the too outlanderz sau and herd sumthhing which can be represented oonly vaigly bi imadgining Dantese Inferno an acchuwallity and raizd too the Nth pouwer!

In a dul and gloomy cavvern dhare la, sat, and stood hoerdz ov *thhingz*. These beyingz--the "nobillity" ov Delgon--had reptilleyan boddese,

sumwhaut cimmilar too Worcelz, but dha had no wingz and dhare hedz wer

distinctly apish raather dhan crocodilleyan. Evvery greedy i in the vaast throng wauz fixt uppon an enormous screne which, like dhat in a moashon-picchure ththeyater, wauld of wun end ov the schupendous cavvern.

Sloly, shudderingly, Kinnisonz miand began too take in whaut wauz happening uppon dhat screne. And it wauz reyaly happening, Kinnison wauz shure ov dhat--this wauz not a picchure enny moer dhan this whole cene wauz an iluezhon. It wauz aul an acchuwallity--sumwhare.

Uppon dhat screne dhare wer strecht out victimz. Hundredz ov these wer Velanshanz, moer hundredz wer wingd Delgoanyanz, and scoerz wer crechuerz whoose like Kinnison had nevrer cene. And aul these wer beying

torchuerd: torchuerd too deth boath in fashonz none too the Inqwizsitorz ov

oald and in wase ov which even dhose experts had nevrer an incling. Sum wer beying twisted outrajously in thre-dimenshonal fraimz. Utherz wer beying strecht uppon rax. Menny wer beying poold horibly apart, chainz intermittently but relentlessly extending eche helples member. Stil utherz wer beying lowerd intoo pits ov constantly increcing

temperachure or wer beying atact bi gradjuwaly increcing concentraishonz ov sum fouly corocive vapor which ate awa dhare tishuse, littel bi littel. And, aparrently the peyaes de rasistans ov the hellish exhibishon, wun lucles Velanshan, in a spot ov hard, coald lite, wauz beying prest out flat against the screne, az an incelet mite be prest betwene too painz ov glaas. Thhinner and thhinner he became under the influwens ov sum afool, invizsibel foers; in spite ov evvery exershon ov inhumanly pouwerfool muscelz driving boddy, tale, wingz, armz,

legz, and hed in evvery frantic manuver which grim and imminent deth cood caul foerth.

Fizsicaly nauseyated, brane-cic at the atroashous vizhonz blaasting hiz miand and at the screming ov the damd asaling hiz eerz, Kinnison strove too rench hiz miand awa, but wauz kerbd savvaijly bi Worcel.

"U *must* sta! U *must* pa atenshon!" comaanded the Velanshan.

"This iz the ferst time enny livving beying haz cene so much--u *must* help me nou! Dha hav bene atacking me from the ferst; but, braist bi the pouwerfool neggatiavz in yor miand, I hav bene abel too resist and hav traanzmitted a truithfool picchure so far. But dha ar cerpriazd at mi resistans and ar concentrating moer foers.... I am slipping faast.... u *must* brace mi miand! And when the picchure chain'gez--az chainj it must, and soone--doo not beleve it. Hoald faast, brutherz ov the Lenz, for yor one liavz and for the pepel ov Velanshaa. Dhare iz moer--and wers!"

Kinnison stade. So did vanBuskerck, fiting widh aul hiz stubborn Duch miand. Revolted, outraid, nauseyated az dha wer at the ciats and soundz, dha stade. Flinching widh the victimz az dha wer fed intoo the hopperz ov sloly terning milz; wincing at the unbelevabel acts ov the boilerz, the betertz, the skergerz, the flayerz; suffering themcelvz evvery poscibel and menny aparrently imposcibel niatmaerz ov slo and hidjous torchure--widh clencht fists and loct teeth, widh swetting foerhedz over white and straning facez, Kinnison and vanBuskerck stade.

The lite in the cavvern nou chainjd too a strong, grenish-yello glare; and in dhat hard iluminaishon it wauz too be cene dhat eche diying beying wauz surrounded bi a paly glowing oraa. And nou, crouning horror ov dhat unnutterably horribel orgy ov Sadizm resubliamd, from the ise ov eche wun ov the monstrous augens dhare leept out vizsibel beemz ov

foers. These beemz tucht the oraaaz ov the diying prizzonerz; tucht and clung. And az dha clung, the oraaaz shranc and disapeerd.

The Overlordz ov Delgon wer acchuwaly FEDING uppon the ebbing life-foercez ov dhare torchuerd, diying victimz!

CHAPTER 6

Delgoanyan Hipnotizm

Gradjuwaly and so incidjously dhat the Velanshanz dire warningz mite az wel nevver hav bene utterd, the cene chainjd. Or raather, the cene itcelf did not chainj, but the observerz percepshon ov it sloly underwent such a raddical traansformaishon dhat it wauz in no cens the same cene it had bene a fu minnuets befoer; and dha felt aulmoast abgetcly apologetic az dha reyaliabd hou unjust dhare preveyous ideyaaz had bene.

For the cavvern wauz not a torchure-chamber, az dha had supoazd. It wauz in reyallity a hospital, and the beyingz dha had thaut victimz ov brootallitese unspicabel wer in reyallity paishents undergowing treetments and operaishonz for vareyous ilz. In prooffe wharov the paishents--whoo shood hav bene ded bi this time wer the erly ideyaaz wel-founded--wer nou beying releest from the screne-like opperating ththeyater. And not oonly wauz eche wun compleetly whole and sound in boddy, but he wauz aulso posest ov a mental clarrity, pouwer, and graasp undreemd-ov befoer hiz hospitalizaishon and treetment bi Delgonz super-cerjonz!

Aulso the introoderz had misunderstood compleetly the augens and its behaveyor. Dha wer reyaly meddical schudent, and the beemz which had ceemd too be devouring rase wer cimply vizsy-beemz, bi meenz ov which eche schudent cood follo, in cloce-up detale, eche step ov the

operation in which he was most interested. The patients themselves were

living, vocal witnesses of the visitor's mistakes, for each, as he made his way through the assemblage of students, was voicing his thanks for the marvelous results of his particular treatment or operation.

Kinnison now became acutely aware that he himself was in need of immediate surgical attention. His body, which he had always regarded so highly, he now perceived to be sadly inefficient; his mind was in even worse shape than his flesh; and both body and mind would be

irretrievably if he could get to the Delgoanyan hospital before the surgeon departed. In fact, he felt an almost irresistible urge to rush away toward that hospital; instantly, without the loss of a single precious second. And, since he had had no doubt of the evidence of his own case, his conscious mind was not aroused to active opposition. However, in his--in his subconscious, or his senses, or whatever you chose to call that ultimate something of his that made him

a Lenzman--a "ded slo bel" began to sound.

"Release me and we'll all go, before the surgeon leaves the hospital," came an insistent thud from Worcel. "But hurry--we haven't much time!"

VanBuskerck, completely under the influence of the frantic compulsion, leapt toward the Velanshan, only to be checked bodily by Kinnison, who was foghily trying to isolate and identify one thing about the chihuahua

that did not ring quite true.

"Just a minute, Bus--shut that door first!" he commanded.

"Never mind the door!" Worcel's thud came in a roaring crescendo.

"Relece me instantly! Hurry! Hurry, or it wil be too late, for aul ov us!"

"Aul this teriffic rush duznt make enny kiand ov cens at aul," Kinnison declaerd, closing hiz miand rezzoluetly too the clammor ov the Velanshanz thauts. "I waunt too go just az badly az u doo, Bus, or maby moer so--but I caant help feling dhat dhaerz sumthhing scroowy sumwhare. Enniwa, remember the laast thhing Worcel ced, and lets shut the doer befoer we unsnap a cin'ghel chane."

Then sumthhing clict in the Lenzmanz miand.

"Hipnotizm, throo Worcel!" he barct, oposishon nou aflame. "So gradjuwal dhat it nevver okerd too me too bild up a resistans. Holy Clono, whaut a foole Ive bene! Fite em, Bus--*fite em!* Doant let em kid u enny moer, and pa no atenshon too ennithhing Worcel cendz at u!" Wherling around, he leept tooword the open doer ov the tent.

But az he leept hiz brane wauz invaded bi such a concentraishon ov foers dhat he fel flat uppon the floer, fizensicaly out ov controle. He must *not* shut the doer. He *must* relece the Velanshan. Dha *must* go too the Delgoanyan cavern. Foolly aware nou, houwevver, ov the soers ov the waivz ov compulshon, he throo the sum total ov hiz mental pouwer intoo an intens negaishon and struggheld, inch-wise, tooword the opening.

Uppon him nou, in adishon too the Delgoanyanz compulshon, bete at point-blanc rainj the fool pouwer ov Worcelz mity miand, demaanding relece and compliyans. Aulso, and wers, he perceevd dhat sum pouwerfool mentallity wauz beying exerted too make vanBuskerc kil him. Wun blo ov the

Valereyanz ponderous mace wood shatter helmet and scul, and aul wood be over--wuns moer the Delgoanyanz wood hav triyumft. But the stubborn

Duchman, auldho at the verry verj ov surrender, wauz stil fiting. Wun step forword he wood take, bludjon poizd aloft, oonly too thro it convulciavly baqword. Then in spite ov himcelf, he wood go over and pic it up, agane too step tooword hiz crauling chefe.

Agane and agane vanBuskerc repeted hiz futile performans while the Lenzman struggheld nerer and nerer the doer. Finaly he reecht it and kict it shut. Instantly the mental termoil ceest and the too white and shaking Patroalmen releest the limp, unconshous Velanshan from hiz bondz.

"Wunder whaut we can doo too help him revive?" gaaspt Kinnison, but hiz soliscichude wauz un'nescesary--the Velanshan recuvverd conshousnes az he spoke.

"Thanx too yor wunderfool pouwer ov resistans, I am alive, unharmd, and no moer ov our fose and dhare methodz dhan enny uther ov mi race haz evver lernd," Worcel thaut, felingly. "But it iz ov no vallu whautevver unles I can cend it bac too Velanshaa. The thaut-screne iz carrede oonly bi the mettal ov these waulz; and if I make an opening in the waul too thhinc throo, houwevver smaul, it wil nou mene deth. Ov coers the ciyens ov yor Patrole haz not perfected an aparatus too drive thaut throo such a screne?"

"No. Enniwa, it ceemz too me dhat wede better be wurreying about sumthhing beciadz thaut-screenz," Kinnison sugested. "Shuerly, nou dhat dha no whare we ar, dhaiyl be cumming out here aafter us, and we havnt got much ov enny defens."

"Dha doant no whare we ar, or care...." began the Velanshan.

"Whi not?" broke in vanBuskerc. "Enny spi-ra capabel ov such scanning az

u shode us--I nevver sau ennithhing like it befoer--wood certainly be az esy too trace az an out-and-out atommic blaast!"

"I cent out no spi-ra or ennithhing ov the kiand," Worcel thaut, caerfooly. "Cins our ciyens iz so forane too yorz, I am not shure dhat I can explane satisfactorily, but I shal tri too doo so. Ferst, az too whaut u sau. When dhat doer iz open, no barreyer too thaut exists. I meerly braudcaast a thaut, placing micelf on rapor widh the Delgoanyan Overlordz in dhare retrete. This condishon establisht, ov coers I herd and sau exactly whaut dha herd and sau--and so, eeqwaly ov coers, did u, cins u wer aulso on rapor widh me. Dhat iz aul."

"Dhats *aul!*" eccode vanBuskerc. "Whaut a cistem! U can doo a thhing like dhat, widhout aparatus ov enny kiand, and yet sa dhats al!"

"It iz rezults dhat count," Worcel remianded him gently. "While it iz troo dhat we hav dun much--this iz the ferst time in history dhat enny Velanshan haz encounterd the miand ov a Delgoanyan Overlord and livd--it iz eeqwaly troo dhat it wauz the wil-pouwer ov u Patroalmen dhat made it poscibel; not mi mentallity. Aulso, it remainz troo dhat we canot leve this roome and liv."

"Whi woant we nede wepponz?" aasct Kinnison, reterning too hiz preveyous line ov thaut.

"Thaut-screenz ar the oonly defens we wil reqwire," Worcel stated pozsitiavly, "for dha use no wepponz exept dhare miandz. Bi mental pouwer alone dha make us cum too them; and, wuns dhare, dhare slaivz doo the rest. Ov coers, if mi race iz evver too rid the plannet ov them, we must

emploi ofensive wepponz ov pouwer. We hav such, but we hav nevver bene
abel too use them. For, in order too locate the ennemy, iather bi teleppathhy
or bi spi-ra, we must open our metallic sheeldz--and the instant we
relece dhose screenz we ar lost. From dhose condishonz dhare iz no
escape," Worcel concluded, hoaplesly.

"Doant be such a pescimist," Kinnison comaanded. "Dhaerz a lot ov
thhingz not tride yet. For instans, from whaut I hav cene ov yor
gennerator eqwipment and the pattern ov dhat screne, u doant nede a
metallic conductor enny moer dhan a snake needz hips. Maby Ime rong,
but I thhinc were a bit ahed ov u dhare. If a deVilbis projector can
handel dhat screne--and I thhinc it can, widh speshal chuning--vanBuskerc
and I can fix thhingz in an our so dhat aul thre ov us can wauc out ov
here in perfect saifty--from mental interferens, at leest. While were
trying it out, tel us aul the nu stuf u got on them just nou, and
ennithhing els dhat bi enny pocibillity ma proove uesfool. And remember u
ced this iz the ferst time enny ov u had bene abel too cut them of.
Dhat fact aut too make them cit up and take notice--probbably dhaiyl
ster around moer dhan dha evver did befoer. Cum on, Bus--lets tare
intoo it!"

The deVilbis projectorz wer rigd and chuend. Kinnison had bene
rite--dha werct. Then plan aafter plan wauz made, oonly too be discarded
az its weecnecez wer pointed out.

"Whitchevver wa we looc dhare ar too menny ifs and buts too sute me,"
Kinnison sumd up the cichuwaishon finaly. "*If* we can fiand them, and
if we can ghet up cloce too them widhout loosing our miandz too them, we
cood clene them out *if* we had sum pouwer in our acumulatorz. So Ide
sa the ferst thhing for us too doo iz too ghet our batterese charjd. We sau
sum cittese from the are, and cittese aulwase hav pouwer. Lede us too

pouwer, Worcel--aulmoast *enny* kiand ov pouwer--and weeyl soone hav it in our gunz."

"Dhare ar cittese, yes," Worcel wauz not at aul enthuseyaastic, "dwelling-placez ov the ordinary Delgoanyanz; the pepel u sau beying eten in the cavvern ov the Overlordz. Az u sau, dha resembel us Velanshanz too a certane extent. Cins dha ar ov a lower culchure and ar much weker in life foers dhan we ar, houwevver, the Overlordz prefer us too dhare one slave racez.

"Too vizsit enny citty ov Delgon iz out ov the qweschon. Evvery inhabbitant ov evvery citty iz an abgect slave and hiz brane iz an open booc. Whautevver he cese, whautevver he thhinx, iz comunicated instantly too hiz maaster. And I nou perceve dhat I ma hav micinformd u az too the Overlordz abillity too use wepponz. While the cichuwaishon haz nevver arizens, it iz oonly lodgical too suppose dhat az soone az we ar cene bi enny Delgoanyan the controlerz wil order aul the inhabbitants ov the citty too capchure us and bring us too them."

"Whaut a ghi!" intergected vanBuskerk. "Did u evver ce hiz top for loocking at the brite cide ov life?"

"Oonly in conversaishon," the Lenzman replide. "When the eethher ghets crouded, u notice, hese rite in dhare, blaasting awa and not saying a werd. But too ghet bac too the qweschon ov pouwer. Ive got oonly a fu minnuets ov fre flite left in mi battery; and widh yor mas, u must be just about out. Cum too thhinc ov it, didnt u land a trifel hard when we sat doun here?"

"Faerly--I went into the ground up too mi nese."

"I thaut so. Weve *got* too ghet sum pouwer, and the nerest citty--out ov the qweschon or not--iz the best place too ghet it. Luckily, it iznt far."

VanBuskerck grunted. "Az far az Ime concernd it mite az wel be on Marz, conciddering whauts betwene here and dhare. U can take mi batterese and Ile wate here."

"On yor emergency foode, wauter, and are? Dhats out!"

"Whaut els, then?"

"I can spred mi feeld too cuvver aul thre ov us," propoazd Kinnison. "Dhat wil ghiv us at leest wun minnute ov fre flite--aulmoast, if not qwite, enuf too clere the jun'ghel. Dha hav nite here; and, like us, the Delgoanyanz ar nite-sleperz. We start at dusc, and toonite we recharj our batterese."

The following our, juring which the huge, hot sun dropt too the horizon, wauz spent in intens discusson, but no cignifficant impruivment uppon the Lenzmanz plan cood be deviazd.

"It iz time too go," Worcel anounst, kerling out wun extencile i tooword the vannishing orb. "I hav recorded aul mi fiandingz. Aulreddy I hav livd lon'gher and, throo u, hav acumplisht moer, dhan enniwun haz evver beleevd poscibel. I am reddy too di--I shood hav bene ded long cins."

"Livving on borrode tiamz a lot better dhan not livving at aul," Kinnison replide, widh a grin. "Linc up.... Reddy?.... Go!"

He snapt hiz switchez and the cloce-linct groope ov thre shot intoo the are and awa. Az far az the i cood reche in enny direcshon extended the cenchent, ravvenous groath ov the jun'ghel; but Kinnisonz ise wer not uppon dhat fantasticaly inimical grene carpet. Hiz whole atenshon wauz occupide bi too aul-important meterz and bi the taasc ov so directing dhare flite az too gane the gratest poscibel horizontal distans widh the pouwer at hiz comaand.

Fifty cecondz ov flashing flite, then:

"Aul rite, Worcel, ghet out in frunt and ghet reddy too pool!" Kinnison snapt. "Ten cecondz ov drive left, but I can hoald us fre for five cecondz aafter mi driver qwits. Pool!"

Kinnisonz driver expiard, its smaual acumulator compleetly exhausted; and Worcel, widh hiz mity wingz, tooc up the taasc ov propulshon. Inershaales stil, widh Kinnison and vanBuskerk graasping hiz tale, eche bete a mile-long lepe, he struggheld on. But aul too soone the battery pouwering the nuetraliserz aulso went ded and the thre began too plummet dounword at a sharper and sharper an'ghel, in spite ov the Velanshanz Herculeyan efforts too kepe them aloft.

Sum distans ahed ov them the grene ov the jun'ghel ended in a sharply cut line, beyond which dhare wauz a hevvy groath ov faerly open forrest.

A
cuppel ov mialz ov this and dhare wauz the citty, dhare objective--so nere and yet so far!

"Weeyl iather just make the timber or we just woant," Kinnison, mentaly plotting the coers, anounst dispashonaitly. "Just az wel if we land in the jun'ghel, I thhinc. Itl brake our faul, enniwa--hitting sollid ground inert at this spede wood be bad."

"If we land in the jun'ghel we wil nevver leve it," Worcelz thaut did not slo the increddibel tempo ov hiz prodidjous pinyonz, "but it maix littel differens whether I di nou or later."

"It duz too us, u pecimistic croker!" flaerd Kinnison. "Forghet dhat diying complex ov yorz for a minnute! Remember the plan, and follo it! Were gowing too strike the jun'ghel, about nianty or a hundred meterz in. If u cum in widh us u di at wuns, and the rest ov our skeme iz aul shot too hel. So when we let go, u go ahed and land in the woodz. Weeyl join u dhare, nevver fere: our armor wil hoald long enuf for us too cut our wa throo a hundred meterz ov enny jun'ghel dhat evver groo--even this wun.... Ghet reddy, Bus.... Leggo!"

Dha dropt. Throo the lush succulens ov cloce-pact upper leevz and tentakelz dha crasht; throo the hevveyer, wooddeyer mane braanchez belo; throo too the ground. And dhare dha faut for dhare liavz; for dhose voraisous plaants nurrisht themcelvz not oonly uppon the soil in which dhare ruits wer imbedded, but aulso uppon ennithing organnic unlucky enuf too cum within dhare reche. Flabby but tuf tentakelz encerkeld them; gaastly sucking disx, ecshuding a potent corocive, slobberd wetly at dhare armor; nobd and spiky bludjonz whangd against temperd stele az the monstrous organizmz began dimly too reyalise dhat these particcular tid-bits wer encaist in sumthhing far moer resistant dhan skin, scailz, or barc.

But the Lenzman and hiz giyant companyon wer not qwiyescent. Dha came doun oreyented and fiting. VanBuskerk, in the van, swung hiz friatfool space-ax az a reper swingz hiz ciadh--wun sollid, short step forword widh eche swing. And cloce behiand the Valereyan strode Kinnison, hiz one flying ax garding the giyants hed and bac. Forword dha prest, and

forward--not the stron'ghest, tuffest stemz ov dhat monstrous wede cood sta vanBuskerx Herculeyan strength; not the moast adgile ov the striking tendrilz and kerling tentakelz cood gane a mannaicling hoald in the face ov Kinnisonz flashing spede in cut, thrust, and slash.

Mascez ov the obcene vegetaishon crasht doun uppon dhare hedz from abuv, revoltingly cupt orificez sucking and smacking; and dha wer shouwerd continnuwaly widh fludz ov the opake, corocive sap, too the acshon ov which even dhare armor wauz not entiarly imune. But, hamperd az dha wer and aulmoast blianded, dha struggheld on; while behiand them an evver-lengthhening corridoer ov demolishon marct dhare proagres.

"Aint we got fun?" grunted the Duchman, in time widh hiz swing. "But were qwite a teme at dhat, chefe--brainz and braun, huu?"

"Uu uu," dicented Kinnison, hiz weppon fliying. "Grace and poiz; or, if u waunt too be reyaly romantic, ham and egz."

"Rac and roowin wil be moer like it if we doant brake out befoer this confounded goo eets throo our armor. But were making it--the stufs thhinning out and I thhinc I can ce trese up ahead."

"It iz wel if u can," came a coald, clere thaut from Worcel, "for I am soerly becet. Hacen or I perrish!"

At dhat thaut the too Patroalmen foerjd ahead in a berst ov even moer fureyous activvity. Crashing throo the thhinning barreyerz ov the jun'ghelz ej, dha wiapt dhare lensez parshaly clere, glaanst qwicly about, and sau the Velanshan. Dhat werthy wauz "soerly becet" indede. Cix annimalz--huge, reptillyan, but liadh and active--had him doun. So helplesly imobile wauz Worcel dhat he cood scaersly moove hiz tale, and the monsterz wer aulreddy beghinning too nau at hiz scaly, armord hide.

"He poot a stop too dhat, Worcel!" cauld Kinnison; refuuring too the fact, wel none too aul us moddernz, dhat enny reyal annimal, no matter hou

savage, can be controald bi enny warer ov the Lenz. For, no matter hou lo in the scale ov intelligens the annimal iz, the Lenzman can ghet in tuch widh whatevver miand the crechure haz, and rezon widh it.

But these monstroschitese, az Kinnison lernd imejaitly, wer not reyal annimalz. Even dho ov annimal form and mobillity, dha wer puerly vedgetabel in motivaishon and behaveyor, reyacting oanly too the stimuli ov foode and ov reproducshon. Weerdly and compleetly inimical too

aul uther formz ov creyated life, dha wer so utterly noizome, so compleetly aleyen dhat the fool pouwer ov miand and Lenz faild entiarly too gane rapor.

Uppon dhat confuezdly riathing hepe the Patroalmen flung themcelvz, terribel axez destructiavly a-swing. In tern dha wer atact vishously, but this battel wauz not long too enjure. VanBuskerx ferst terriffic blo noct wun adversary awa, aulmoast spinning end over end. Kinnison tooc out wun, the Duchman anuther, and the remaning thre wer no mach at aul for the humilleyated and fureyously raging Velanshan. But it wauz not until the monstroschitese had bene groosumly carvd and toern apart, litteraly too bits, dhat dha cest dhare incensaitly voraishous atax.

"Dha tooc me bi cerprise," explaind Worcel, un'necesarily, az the thre made dhare wa throo the nite tooword dhare gole, "and cix ov them at wuns wer too much for me. I tride too hoald dhare miandz, but apparrently dha hav nun."

"Hou about the Overlordz?" aasct Kinnison. "Supose dha hav receevd enny ov our thauts? Bus and I ma hav dun sum un'garded rajating."

"No," Worcel made pozsitive repli. "The thaut-screne batterese, while smaul and ov verry littel acchuwal pouwer, hav a verry long cervice-life. Nou let us go over agane the next steps ov our plan ov acshon."

Cins no moer untooword events mard dhare proagres tooword the Delgoanyan citty, dha soone reecht it. It wauz for the moast part darc and qwiyet, its somber bildingz meerly blacker blobz against a bacground ov blac. Here and dhare, houwevver, wer too be cene automotive veyikelz mooving about, and the thre invaderz croucht against a conveenient waul, wating for wun too cum along the "strete" in which dha wer. Evenchuwaly wun did.

Az it paast them Worcel sprang intoo hedlong, gliding flite, Kinnisonz hevvy nife in wun narld fist. And az he saild he struc--leethaly. Befoer dhat lucles Delgoanyanz brane cood rajate a cin'ghel thaut it wauz in no condishon too funcshon at aul; for the hed contaning it wauz bouncing in the gutter. Worcel bact the peculeyar convayans along the kerb and hiz too companyonz leept intoo it, liying flat uppon its floer and cuvvering themcelvz from cite az best dha cood.

Worcel, familleyar widh thhingz Delgoanyan and loocking enuf like a native ov the plannet too paas a cazhuwal inspecshon in the darc, drove the car. Streets and thurrofaerz he traversst at recles spede, finaly drauwing up befoer a long, lo bilding; entiarly darc. He scand hiz surrounding widh care, in evvery direcshon. Not a crechure wauz in cite.

"Aul iz clere, frendz," he thaut, and the thre advenchurerz sprang too the bildingz entrans. The doer--it had a doer, ov sorts--wauz loct, but vanBuskerx ax made short werc ov dhat difficulty. Incide, dha braist the rect doer against intruizhon, then Worcel led the wa intoo

the unlit intereyor. Soone he flasht hiz lamp about him and stept uppon a blac, peculeyarily-marct tile cet intoo the floer, wharuppon a harsh, white lite iluminated the roome.

"Cut it, befoer sumbody taix alarm!" snapt Kinnison.

"No dain'ger ov dhat," replide the Velanshan. "Dhare ar no windose in enny ov these ruimz; no lite can be cene from outside. This iz the controle roome ov the cittese pouwer plaant. If u can convert enny ov this pouwer too yor ucez, help yorcelvz too it. In this bilding iz aulso a Delgoanyan arcenal. Whether or not ennithhing in it can be ov cervice too u iz ov coers for u too sa. I am nou at yor dispozal."

Kinnison had bene studdeying the pannelz and instroomentz. Nou he and vanBuskerk toer open dhare armor--dha had aulreddy lernd dhat the atmosfere ov Delgon, while not az whoalsum for them az dhat in dhare suets, wood for a time at leest supoert human life--and raut dilligently widh pliyerz, scroo-driverz, and uther tuilz ov the electrishan. Soone dhare exausted batterese wer uppon the floer beneeth the instrooment pannel, abzorbing gredily the electrical fluwid from the bus-barz ov the Delgoanyanz.

"Nou, while dhare ghetting fild up, lets ce whaut these pepel use for gunz. Lede on, Worcel!"

CHAPTER 7

The Paacing ov the Overlordz

Widh Worcel in the lede, the thre interloperz hacend along a corridor, paast braanching and intercecting haulwase, too a distant wing ov the strucchure. Dhare, it wauz evvident, manufacchuring ov wepponz wauz

carrede on; but a qwic studdy ov the qwere-loocking devicez and meccanizmz uppon the benchez and incide the stoerage rax lining the waulz convinst Kinnison dhat the roome cood yeeld them nuthhing ov permanent bennefit. Dhare wer hi-pouwerd beme-progectorz, it wauz troo; but dha wer so hevvy dhat dha wer not even cemmy-portabel. Dhare wer aulso hand-wepponz ov vareyous peculeyar patternz, but widhout exepshon dha wer ridicculously infereyor too the DeLammeterz ov the Patrole in evvery respect ov pouwer, rainj, controlabillity, and stoerage capascity. Nevvertheles, aafter testing them out sufishtently too make certane ov the abuv fiandingz, he celected an armfool ov the moast pouwerfool moddelz and ternd too hiz companyonz.

"Lets go bac too the pouwer roome," he erjd. "Ime nervous az a cat. I fele starc naked widhout mi batterese; and if enniwun shood happen too drop in dhare and doo awa widh them, wede be sunc widhout a trace."

Loded doun widh Delgoanyan wepponz dha hurrede bac the wa dha had cum. Much too Kinnisonz relefe he found dhat hiz foerbodingz had bene groundles; the batterese wer stil dhare, stil abzorbing mirreyaawaut-our aafter mirreyaawaut-our from the Delgoanyan genneratorz.

Staring fixtly at the innocuwous-loocking contanerz, he fround in thaut.

"Better we inshulate dhose leedz a littel hevveyer and poot the canz bac in our armor," he sugested finaly. "Dhaiyl charj just az wel in place, and it duznt stand too rezon dhat this drane ov pouwer can go on for the rest ov the nite widhout *sumbody* noticing it. And when dhat happenz dhose Overlordz ar bound too take plenty ov steps--nun ov which we hav enny ideyaa whaut ar gowing too be."

"U must hav pouwer enuf nou so dhat we can aul fli awa from enny poscibel trubbel," Worcel sugested.

"But dhats just exactly whaut were *not* gowing too doo!" Kinnison declaerd, widh finallity. "Nou dhat weve found a good charger, we arnt gowing too leve it until our acumulatorz ar choc-a-bloc. Its cumming in faaster dhan fool draaft wil take it out, and were gowing too ghet a fool-charj if we hav too stand of aul the vermin ov Delgon too doo it."

Far lon'gher dhan Kinnison had thaut poscibel dha wer unmolested, but finaly a cuppel ov Delgoanyan en'gineerz came too investigate the unprescedented shortage in the outpoot ov dhare compleetly automattic genneratorz. At the entrans dha wer stopt, for no ordinary tuilz cood foers the barricade vanBuskerck had erected behiand dhat portal. Widh levveld wepponz the Patroalmen stood, awating the expected atac, but nun develloopt. Our bi our the long nite woer awa, unneventfooly. At daibrake, houwevver, a storming party apeerd and mascive battering ramz wer braut intoo pla.

Az the dul, hevvy concushonz reverberated throowout the bilding the Patroalmen eche pict up too ov the wepponz piald befoer them and Kinnison adrest the Velanshan.

"Drag a cuppel ov dhose mettal benchez acros dhat corner and coil up behiand them," he directed. "Dhaiyl be enuf too ground enny stra chargez--if dha caant ce u dha woant no yor here, so probbably nuthhing much wil cum yor wa direct."

The Velanshan demerd, declaring dhat he wood not hide while hiz too companyonz wer fiting hiz battel, but Kinnison cilenst him feersly.

"Doant be a foole!" the Lenzman snapt. "Wun ov these beemz wood fri

u too a crisp in ten cecondz, but the defencive feeldz ov our armor cood nuetralise a thouzand ov them, from nou on. Doo az I sa, and doo it qwic, or Ile shoc u unconshous and tos u in dhare micelf!"

Reyalising dhat Kinnison ment exactly whaut he ced, and nowing dhat, unnarmord az he wauz, he wauz utterly unnabel too resist iather the Telureyan or dhare common fo, Worcel unwillingly erected hiz metallic barreyer and coild hiz cinnuwous length behiand it. He hid himcelf just in time.

The outer barricade had faulen, and nou a wave ov reptilleyan formz fludded intoo the controle roome. Nor wauz this enny ordinary investigaishon.

The Overlordz had studdede the cichuwaishon from afar, and this wave wauz wun

ov hevvely-armd--for Delgon--soalgerly. On dha came, progectorz feersly aflame; confident in dhare belefe dhat nuthhing cood stand befoer dhare blaasts. But hou rong dha wer! The too repulciavly erect bipedz befoer them niather bernd nor fel. Beemz, no matter hou pouwerfool, did not reche them at aul, but spent themcelvz in crackingly incandescent fury, inchez from dhare marx. Nor wer these outlandish beyingz inofencive. Utterly caerles ov the cervice-life ov the pittifooly weke Delgoanyan progectorz, dha wer using them at maximum drane and at extreme aperchure--and in the rezultant beemz the Delgoanyan

soalger-slaivz fel in scorcht and smoking heeps. On came rezervz, platoone aafter platoone, oonly and continnuwously too mete the same fate; for

az soone az wun progector wekend the invincibly armord man wood tos it acide and pic up anuther. But finaly the laast comandeerd weppon wauz exausted and the belegherd pare braut dhare one DeLammeterz--the moast pouwerfool portabel wepponz none too the millitary ciyentists ov the

Galactic Patrole--intoo pla.

And whaut a differens! In *dhose* beemz the atacking reptialz did not smoke or bern. Dha cimply vannisht in a blase ov flaming lite, az did aulso the neerbi waulz and a good share ov the bilding beyond! The Delgoanyan hoerdz havving disapeerd, vanBuskerc shut of hiz projector. Kinnison, houwevver, left hiz on, an'gling its beme sharply upword; blaasting intoo firy vapor the celing and roofe over dhare hedz; remarking:

"While were at it we mite az wel fix thhingz so dhat we can make a qwic ghet-awa if we waunt too."

Then dha wated. Wated, wauching the nedelz ov dhare meterz crepe evver clocer too the "fool-charj" marx; wated while, az dha suspected, the distant, couwardly-hiding Overlordz pland sum uther, moer prommicing line ov fizensal atac.

Nor wauz it long in develloping. Anuther smaul army apeerd, armord this time; or, moer accuraitly, advaancing behiand metallic sheeldz. Nowing whaut too expect, Kinnison wauz not cerpriazd when the beme ov hiz DeLammeter not oonly faild too peers wun ov *dhose* sheeldz, but did not in enny wa impede the proagres ov the Delgoanyan collum.

"Wel, were aul dun here, enniwa, az far az Ime concernd," Kinnison grind at the Duchman az he spoke. "Mi canzv bene showing fool bac presure for the laast too minnuets. Hou about yorz?"

"Same here," vanBuskerc repoerted, and the too leept liatly intoo the Velanshanz reffuge. Then, inershaales aul, the thre shot intoo the are at such a pace dhat too the slo cencez ov the Delgoanyan slaivz dha cimply disapeerd. Indede, it wauz not until the barreyer had bene blaasted awa and evvery roome, nooc, and cranny ov the imens strucchure

had bene litteraly and minuety coamd dhat the Delgoanyanz--and throo dhare enslaid miandz the Overlordz--became convinst dhat dhare pra had in sum uncanny and un'none fashon eluded them.

Nou hi in are, the thre allise traversed in a matter ov minnuets the same distans dhat had cost them so much time and strife the da befoer. Over the monster-infested forrest dha sped, over the deceptiavly peesfool grene lushnes ov the jun'ghel, too slaant doun tooword Worcelz thaut-prooffe tent. Incide dhat reffuge dha snapt of dhare thaut screenz and Kinnison yaund prodidjously.

"Werking dase and niats boath iz aul rite for a while, but it ghets monotonous in time. Cins this ceemz too be the oonly reyaly safe spot on the plannet, I sugest dhat we take a da or so of and cach up on our eets and sleeps."

Dha slept and ate; slept and ate agane.

"The next thhing on the proogram," Kinnison anounst then, "iz too clene out dhat den ov Overlordz. Then Worcel wil be fre too help us ghet gowing about our one biznes."

"U speke liatly indede ov the imposcibel," Worcel, aul glum despondency, repruivd him. "I hav aulreddy explaind whi the taasc iz, and must remane, beyond our pouwer."

"Yes, but u doant qwite graasp the pocibillitese ov the stuf weve got nou too werc widh," the Telureyan replide. "Liscen: u cood nevver doo ennithhing becauz u coodnt ce throo or werc throo yor thaut-screenz. Niather we nor u cood, even nou, enslave a Delgoanyan and make him lede us too the cavvern, becauz the Overlordz wood no aul about it wa ahed ov time and the slave wood lede us enniwhare els exept too the cavvern. Houwevver, wun ov us can cut hiz screne and surrender; poscibly keping just enuf screne up too kepe the ennemy from

posessing hiz miand foolly enuf too lern dhat the uther too ar cumming along. The big qweschon iz--which ov us iz too surrender?"

"Dhat iz aulreddy decided," Worcel made instant repli. "I am the lodgical--in fact, the *oanly* wun--too doo it. Not oanly wood dha thhinc it perfectly natchural dhat dha shood overpower me, but aulso I am the oanly wun ov us thre sufishmently abel too controle hiz thauts az too kepe from them the nollej dhat I am beying acumpanede. Ferthermoer, u both no dhat it wood not be good for yor miandz, unnacustomd az dha ar too the practice, too surrender dhare controle voluntarily too an ennemy."

"Ile sa it woodnt!" Kinnison agrede, felingly. "I mite doo it if I had too, but I woodnt like it and I doant thhinc Ide evver qwite ghet over it. I hate too poot such a horribel job of ontoo u, Worcel, but yor undoutedly the best eqwipt too handel it--and even u ma hav yor handz fool."

"Yes...." the Velanshan ced, thautfooly. "While the undertaking iz no lon'gher an absolute impocibillity, it iz difficult... verry. In enny event u wil probbably hav too beme me yorcelvz if we suxede in reching the cavvern.... The Overlordz wil ce too dhat. If so, doo it widhout regret--no dhat I expect it and am wel content too di in dhat fashon. Enny wun ov mi fellose wood be oanly too glad too be in mi place; mening whaut it duz too aul Velanshaa. No aulso dhat I hav aulreddy repoerted whaut iz too oker, and dhat yor welcum too Velanshaa iz ashuerd, whether or not I acumpany u dhare."

"I doant thhinc Ile hav too kil u, Worcel," Kinnison replide, sloly, picchuring in detale exactly whaut dhat stele-hard reptilleyan boddy wood be

capabel ov doowing when, unshackeld, its directing miand wauz compleetly taken over bi an utterly soal'les and conshensles Overlord. "If u caant kepe from gowing of the depe end, ov coers ule ghet tuf and I no yor mity hard too handel. Houwevver, az I toald u bac dhare, I thhinc I can beme u unconshous widhout killing u. I ma hav too bern of a fu scailz, but Ile tri not too doo enny dammage dhat caant be repaerd."

"If u can so stop me it wil be wunderfool indede. Ar we reddy?"

Dha wer reddy. Worcel opend the doer and in a moment wauz hertling throo the are, hiz giyant wingz arrowing him along at a pace no wingd crechure ov Erth cood even aproche. And, following him esily at a littel distans, floted the too Patroalmen uppon dhare inershaales driavz.

Juring dhat long flite scaersly a thaut wauz exchainjd, even betwene Kinnison and vanBuskerck. Too direct a thaut at the Velanshan wauz ov coers out ov the qweschon. Aul lianz ov comunicaishon widh him had bene cut; and ferthermoer hiz miand, abel az it wauz, wauz beying taxt too the ultimate cel in doowing whaut he had cet out too doo. And the too Patroalmen wer reluctant too convers widh eche uther, even uppon dhare tite-beemz, rajose, or sounderz, for fere dhat sum slite lechage ov thaut-ennergy mite revele dhare prezsens too the evverwauchfool Overlordz. If this oporchunity wer lost, dha nu, anuther chaans too wipe out dhat hellish hoerd mite nevver prezsent itcelf.

Land wauz traverst, and ce; but finaly a schupendous rainj ov mountainz reerd befoer them and Worcel, foalding bac hiz tiarles wingz, shot dounword in a screaming, fool-wate dive. In hiz line ov flite Kinnison sau the mouth ov a cave, a darker spot ov blacnes in the

blac roc ov the mountainz cide. Uppon the lej aproche dhare la a Delgoanyan--a gard or looccut, ov coers.

The Lenzmanz DeLammeter wauz aulreddy in hiz hand, and at cite ov the garjan reptile he cited and fiard in wun faast moashon. But, rappid az it wauz, it wauz stil too slo--the Overlordz had cene dhat the Velanshan had companyonz ov whoome he had bene abel too kepe them in ignorans dhaertofoer.

Instantly Worcelz wingz agane began too bete, baring him of at a wide an'ghel; and, auldho the Patroalmen wer inshulated against hiz thaut, the mening ov hiz antix wauz verry plane. He wauz telling them in evvery poscibel wa dhat the hole belo wauz *not* the cavvern ov the Overlordz; dhat it wauz over this wa; dhat dha wer too kepe on following him too it. Then, az dha refuezd too follo him, he rusht uppon Kinnison in mad atac.

"Beme him doun, Kim!" vanBuskerc yeld. "Doant take enny chaancez widh dhat berd!" and levveld hiz one DeLammeter.

"La of, Bus!" the Lenzman snapt. "I can handel him--a lot eseyer out here dhan on the ground."

And so it pruivd. Inershaales az he wauz, the buffetingz ov the Velanshan afected him not at aul; and when Worcel coild hiz suppel boddy around him and began too apli preshure, Kinnison cimply expanded hiz thaut-screne too cuvver them boath, dhus relicing the miand ov hiz temporarily inimical frend from the Overlordz grip. Instantly the Velanshan became himcelf, snapt on hiz one sheeld, and the thre continnude az wun dhare interupted dounword coers.

Worcel came too a halt uppon the lej, beside the practicaly incinnerated corps ov the looccut; nowing, unnarmord az he wauz, dhat too go ferther

ment sudden deth. The armor pare, however, shot on into the gloomy passage. At first they were offered no opposition--the Overlordz had had no time to muster an adequate defense. Scattering handfuls of slaves rushed them, only to be blasted out of existence as their hand-weapons proved useless against the armor of the Galactic Patrol. Defenders became more numerous as the cavern itself was approached, but neither were they able to stop the Patrolmen's progress. Finally a pale shimmering barrier of metal appeared to bar their way. Its fields of force neutralized or absorbed the blasts of the DeLammeters, but its material substance offered but little resistance to a thirty-pound sledge, swung by one of the strongest men ever projected by any planet colonized by the humanity of Earth.

Now they were in the cavern itself--the sanctum sanctorum of the Overlordz of Delgon. Their way was the hellish torture scene; now light glared on life. Their way was the augens which had been so avid, now milling about in a mob frenzy of panic. Their, upon a raised balcony, were the "big shots" of this noxious clan; now doing their utmost to marshal some force able to cope effectively with this unheralded violation of their age-old immunity.

A last wave of Delgoanyan slaves heralded themselves forward, futile projectors furiously aflame, only to disappear in the DeLammeters' fan of force. The Patrolmen hated to kill those mindless slaves, but it was a nasty job that had to be done. The slaves out of the way, those ravaging beams boared on into the main Overlordz.

And now Kinnison and vanBuskerck killed, if not joyously, at least relentlessly, mercilessly, and with neither pity nor compassion of conscience. For this unbelievably monstrous tribe needed killing, root and branch--not a cordon or shooting of it should be allowed to survive, to continue to contaminate the civilization of the galaxy. Back and forth, too and fro, up and down swept the raging beams; playing on until in a

the vaast vollume ov dhat groosum chaimber nuthing livd save the too grim figguerz in its portal.

Ashuerd ov this fact, but widh DeLammeterz stil in hand, the too destroyerz retraist dhare wa too the tunnelz mouth, whare Worcel ancshously awated them. Lianz ov comunicaishon agane establisht, Kinnison informd the Velanshan ov aul dhat had taken place and the latter gradjuwaly cut down the pouwer ov hiz thaut-screne. Soone it wauz at sero strength and he repoerted jubilantly dhat for the ferst time in untoald agez, the Overlordz ov Delgon wer of the are!

"But shuerly the dain'ger iznt over yet!" protested Kinnison. "We coodnt hav got them aul in this wun rade. Sum ov them must hav escaipt, and dhare must be uther denz ov them on this plannet sumwhare?"

"Poscibly, poscibly;" the Velanshan waivd hiz tale arily--the ferst cine ov joiyousnes he had shone. "But dhare pouwer iz broken, deffiniatly and forever. Widh these nu screenz, and widh the armz and armament which, thanx too u, we can nou fabricate, the taasc ov wiping them out compleetly wil be comparratiavly cimpel. Nou u wil acumpany me too Velanshaa; whare, I ashure u, the rezoercez ov the plannet wil be poot sollidly behiand u in yor one endeavorz. I hav aulreddy summond a space-ship--in les dhan twelv dase we wil be bac in Velanshaa and at werc uppon yor prodjects. In the meentime...."

"Twelv *dase*! Noshabkeming the Rajant!" vanBuskerk exploded, and Kinnison poot in:

"Shure--u forghet dha havnt got fre drive. Wede better hop over and ghet our liafbote, I thhinc. Its not so good, iather wa, but in our one bote weeyl be open too detecshon les dhan an our, az against twelv dase in the Velanshanz. And the piraits ma be here enny minnute. Its az

good az certane dhat dhare ship wil be stopt and cercht long befoer it ghets bac too Velanshaa, and if we wer aboard itd be just too bad."

"And, cins the croo nose about us, the piraits soone wil, and itl be just too bad, enniwa," vanBuskerck rezond.

"Not at aul," interpoazd Worcel. "The fu ov mi pepel whoo no ov u hav bene instructed too cele dhat nollej. I must admit, houwevver, dhat I am graitley disterbd bi yor concepshonz ov these piraits ov space. U ce, until I met u I nu nuthhing moer ov the piraits dhan I did ov yor Patrole."

"Whaut a werld!" vanBuskerck exclaimd. "No Patrole and no piraits! But at dhat, life mite be cimpler widhout boath ov them and widhout the fre space-drive--moer like it uest too be in the good oald aerplane dase dhat the novvelists rave about."

"Ov coers I cood not juj az too dhat." The Velanshan wauz verry cereyous. "This in which we liv ceemz too be an out-ov-the-wa cecshon ov the galaxy; or it ma be dhat we hav nuthhing the piraits waunt."

"Moer liacly its cimply dhat, like the Patrole, dha havnt got organiagd intoo this district yet," sugested Kinnison. "Dhare ar so menny thousanz ov milleyonz ov solar cistemz in the galaxy dhat it wil probbably be thousanz ov yeez yet befoer the Patrole ghets intoo them aul."

"But about these piraits," Worcel went bac too hiz point. "If dha hav such miandz az dhose ov the Overlordz, dha wil be abel too brake the ceelz ov our miandz. Houwevver, I gather from yor thauts dhat dhare miandz ar not ov dhat strength?"

"Not so far az I no," Kinnison replide. "U foax hav the moast pouwerfool brainz I evver herd ov, short ov the Areezhanz. And speking ov

mental pouwer, u can here thauts a lot farther dhan I can, even widh mi Lenz or widh this pirate recever Ive got. Ce if u can fiand out whether dhare ar enny piraits in space around here, wil u?"

While the Velanshan wauz concentrating, vanBuskerk aasct:

"Whi, if hiz miand iz so strong, cood the Overlordz poot him under so much eseyer dhan dha cood us weke-minded human beyingz?"

"U ar confusing mind widh wil,' I thhinc. Agez ov submishon too the Overlordz made the Velanshanz wil-pouwer sero, az far az the boscezworwer concernd. On the uther hand, u and I cood rase stubborn'nes too cel too moast pepel. In fact, if the Overlordz had suxeded in reyaly braking us doun, bac dhare, the chaancez ar wede hav gon insane."

"Probbably yor rite--we brake, but doant bend, huu?" and the Velanshan wauz reddy too repoert.

"I hav scand space too the nerer starz--sum elevven ov yor lite-yeerz--and hav encounterd no introoding entitese," he anounst.

"Elevven lite-yeerz--whaut a rainj!" Kinnison exclaimd. "Houwevver, dhats oonly a shade over too minnuets for a pirate ship at fool blaast. But weve got too take a chaans sumtime, and the qwicker we ghet started the sooner weeyl ghet bac. Weeyl pic u up here, Worcel. No uce in u gowing bac too yor tent--weeyl be bac here long befoer u cood reche it. Ule be safe enuf, I thhinc, espeshaly widh our spare DeLammeterz. Lets ghet gowing, Bus!"

Agane dha shot intoo the are, agane dha traversst the aerles depths ov interplannetary space. Too locate the temporary toome ov dhare liafbote reqwiard oonly a fu minnuets, too dicinter her oonly a fu moer. Then agane dha braivd detecshon in the void; Kinnison tens at hiz controalz, vanBuskerk in straind atenshon liscening too and staring at hiz

unscramblerz and detectorz. But the eether wauz stil blanc az the liafbote struc Delgonz atmosfere; it remaind blanc while the liafbote, inert, blaasted frantically too mach Worcelz intrinsic velosity.

"Aul rite, Worcel, snap it up!" Kinnison cauld, and went on too vanBuskerk, "Nou, u big, flat-footted Valereyan spais'hound, I hope dhat spaismanz god ov yorz wil ce too it our luc hoaldz good for just foertene minnuets moer. Weve had moer luc aulreddy dhan we had enny rite too expect, but we can poot a littel moer too moast God-aufool good uce!"

"Noshabkeming *duz* bring spaismen luc," incisted the giyant, grimacing a peculeyar salute tooword a smaul, goalden image cet incide hiz helmet, "and the fact dhat u warty, runty, aithheyistic littel space-flese ov Tellus havnt got cens enuf too no it--not even enuf cens too reyaly beleve in yor one godz, even Clono--duznt chainj matterz at aul."

"Dhats tellin em, Bus!" Kinnison aplauded. "But if it helps charj yor batterese, go too it... Reddy too blaast! Lift!"

The Velanshan had cum aboard, the tiny are-loc wauz agane tite, and the littel vescel shot awa from Delgon tooword far Velanshaa. And stil the eether remaind empty az far az the detectorz cood reche. Nor wauz this fact cerprising, in spite ov the Lenzmanz feerz too the contrary; for the Patroalmen had ghivven the piraits such an extreemly long line too cuvver dhat menny dase must yet elaps befoer the minyonz ov Boscone wood ghet around too vizsit dhat unnimportant, unnexplord, and aulmoast un'none solar cistem. Onroote too hiz home plannet Worcel got in tuch widh the croo ov the Velanshan vescel aulreddy in space, ordering them too retern

too poert poast-haist and instructing them in detale whaut too thhinc and hou

too act shood dha be stopt and cercht bi wun ov Boscoanz raderz.

Bi the time these instrucshonz had bene ghivven, Velanshaa luimd larj beneeth the fliying midget. Then, widh Worcel az ghide, Kinnison drove over a mity oashan uppon whoose opposite shoer la the grate city in which Worcel livd.

"But I wood like too hav them welcum u az befits whaut u hav dun, and hav u go too the Dome!" moernd the Velanshan. "Thhinc ov it! U hav dun a thhing which for agez the mast pouwer ov the plannet haz bene trying vainly too acumplish, and yet u incist dhat I alone take credit for it!"

"I doant incist on enny such thhing," argude Kinnison, "even dho its practicaly aul yorz, enniwa. I incist oonly on yor keping us and the Patrole out ov it, and u no az wel az I doo whi uve got too doo dhat. Tel them ennithhing els u waunt too. Sa dhat a cuppel ov pinc-haerd Chicladoreyanz helpt u and then bete it bac home. *Dhat* plannets far enuf awa so dhat if the piraits chace them dhaiyl ghet a reyal run for dhare munny. Aafter this blose over u can tel the truth--but *not until then*.

"And az for us gowing too the Dome for a grand hocus-pocus, dhat iz compleetly and deffiniatly OUT. Were not gowing enniwhare exept too the bigghest aerport uve got. Yor not gowing too ghiv us ennithhing exept a lot ov matereyal and a lot ov hily-traind help dhat can kepe dhare thauts ceeld.

"Weve got too bild a lot ov hevvy stuf faast; and weve got too ghet started on it just az qwic az Clono and Noshabkeming wil let us!"

Worcel nu hiz council ov ciyentists, az wel he mite; cins it devellopt dhat he himcelf ranct hi in dhat celect cerkel. Troo too hiz prommice, the largest aeroport ov the plannet wauz imejaitly emptede ov its customary personel, which wauz replaist the following morning bi an entiarly nu groope ov wercmen.

Nor wer these replaisments ordinarily laborerz. Dha wer yung, kene, and hily traind; taken too a man from behiand the thaut-screenz ov the Ciyentists. It iz troo dhat dha had no incling ov whaut dha wer too doo, cins nun ov them had evver dreemd ov the pocibility ov such en'gians az dha wer too be cauld uppon too construct.

But, on the uthur hand, dha wer wel verst in the fundamental ththeyorese and operaishonz ov mathhemattix, and from pure mathhemattix too aplide mecannix iz but a step. Ferthermoer, dha had *brainz*; nu hou too thhinc lodgicaly, coherently, and efectiavly; and neded niather driving nor supervizhon--oonly instrucshon. And best ov aul, practicaly evvery wun ov the reqwiard meccanizmz aulreddy existed, in minnichure, within the *Britanyaaz* liafbote; reddy at hand for dhare dicecshon, anallicis, and enlarjment. It wauz not lac ov understanding which wauz too slo up the werc; it wauz cimply dhat the plannet did not boast mashene tuilz and eqwipment larj enuf or strong enuf too handel the necesarily huge and hevvy parts and memberz reqwiard.

While the construcshon ov this hevvy mashenery wauz beying rusht throo, Kinnison and vanBuskerck devoted dhare efforts too the fabricaishon ov an ultraa-cencitive recever, chunabel too the piraits scambeld wave-bandz. Widh dhare exactly detaild nollej, and widh the clevverest tecnishanz and the choicest eqwipment ov Velanshaa at dhare dispozal, the cet wauz soone completed.

Kinnison wauz ghivving its exedingly dellicate coilz dhare final alianment when Worcel riggheld bliadhly intoo the rajo laboratoery.

"Hi, Kimbal Kinnison ov the Lenz!" he cauld galy. Throwing a fu yardz ov hiz cerpents boddy in liatning luips about a conveenyent pillar, he made a horizontal bar ov the rest ov himcelf and dropt wun wing-tip too the floer. Then, nonchalantly upcide doun, he thrust out thre or foer ise and kerld dhare staux over the Lenzmanz shoalder, the better too inspect the rezults ov the mecannix efforts. Gon wauz the moroce, pecimistic, deth-haunted Worcel entiarly; ga, happy, caerfry, and acchuwaly frollixum--if u can imadgine a thherty-foot-long, croccodile-hedded, lether-wingd piathon az beying frollixum!

"Hi, yor roiyal snaicship!" Kinnison retorted in kiand. "Stil here, huu? Thaut ude be bac on Delgon bi this time, clening up the rest ov dhat mes."

"The eqwipment iz not reddy, but dhaerz no hurry about dhat," the plafool reptile unrapt ten or twelv fete ov tale from the pillar and waivd it arily about. "Dhare pouwer iz broken, dhare race iz dun. U ar about too tri out the nu recever?"

"Yes--gowing out aafter them rite nou," and Kinnison began deftly too manippulate the miacrometric verneyerz ov hiz diyalz.

Ise fixt uppon meterz and gagez, he liscend.... liscend. Increest hiz pouwer and liscend agane. Moer and moer pouwer he aplide too hiz aparatus, liscening continnuwaly. Suddenly he stiffend, hiz handz becumming roc-stil. He liscend, if poscibel even moer intently dhan befoer; and az he liscend hiz face groo grim and grannite-hard. Then the micrommeterz began agane craulingly too moove, az dho he wer tracing a beme.

"Bus! Hooc on the focucing beme-antennaa!" he snapt. "Its gowing too take evvery milliwait ov pouwer weve got in this hooc-up too tap hiz beme,
but I thhinc Ive got Helmuth direct insted ov throo a pirate-ship rela!"

Agane and agane he chect the redingz ov hiz diyalz and ov the directorz ov hiz antennaa; eche time noting the exact time ov the Velanshan da.

"Dhare! Az soone az we ghet sum time, Worcel, Ide like too werc out these figguerz widh sum ov yor astronnomerz. Dhaiyl ghiv me a rite-line throo Helmuths hedqworterz--I hope. Sum da, if Ime spaerd, Ile ghet anuther!"

"Whaut kiand ov nuse did u ghet, chefe?" aasct vanBuskerc.

"Good and bad boath," replide the Lenzman. "Good in dhat Helmuth duznt beleve dhat we stade widh hiz ship az long az we did. Hese a suspishous devvil, u no, and iz pritty wel convinst dhat we tride too run the same kiand ov a blaser on him dhat we did the uther time. Cins he haznt got enuf ships on the job too werc the whole line, hese concentrating on the uther end. Dhat meenz dhat weve got plenty ov dase left yet. The bad part ov it iz dhat dhave got foer ov our boats aulreddy and ar bound too ghet moer. Lord, hou I wish I cood caul the rest ov them! Sum ov them cood certainly make it here befoer dha got caut."

"Mite I then offer a sugeschon?" aasct Worcel, ov a sudden diffident.

"Shuerly!" the Lenzman replide in cerprise. "Yor ideyaaz hav nevver bene enny kiand ov poppicoc. Whi so bashfool aul at wuns?"

"Becauz this wun iz so.... aa.... so peculeyarly personal, cins

u men regard so hily the privacy ov yor miandz. Our too ciyencez, az u hav aulreddy observd, ar vaastly different. U ar far beyond us in mecannix, fizsix, kemmistry, and the uthher aplide ciyencez. We, on the uthher hand, hav delvd much deper dhan u hav intoo cicollogy and the uthher introspective studdese. For dhat rezon I no pozsitiavly dhat the Lenz u ware iz capabel ov enormously grater thhingz dhan u ar at prezsent abel too make it perform. Ov coers I canot use yor Lenz directly, cins it iz achuend too yor one ego. Houwevver, if the ideyaa apeelz too u, I cood, widh yor concent, occupi yor miand and use yor Lenz too poot u on rapor widh yor fellose. I hav not vollunteerd the sugeschon befoer becauz I no hou avers yor miand iz too enny forane controle."

"Not necesarily too forane controle," Kinnison corected him. "Oonly too *ennemy* controle. The ideyaa ov frendly controle nevver even okerd too me. Dhat wood be an entiarly different brede ov cats. Go too it!"

Kinnison relaxt hiz miand compleetly, and dhat ov the Velanshan came welling in; wave uppon frendly, cerging wave ov benevvolent pouwer. And not oonly--or not preciasly--pouwer. It wauz moer dhan pouwer; it wauz a dinammic poinyancy, a viabrant pennetrans, a depth and clarrity ov percepshon dhat Kinnison in hiz moast cogent moments had nevver dreemd a pocibillity. The posessor ov dhat miand nu thhingz, cammeyo-clere in miacrosoppic detale, which the kenest miandz ov Erth cood perceve oonly az cayottically indistinct mascez ov mental lite and shade, ov no recognizabel pattern whautevver!

"Ghiv me the thaut-pattern ov him widh whoome u wish ferst too convers," came Worcelz thaut, this time from depe within the Lenzmanz one brane.

Kinnison felt a suttel thril ov unnesines at dhat nu and

ultraa-strainj juwal personallity, but thaut bac steddily: "Sorry--I caant."

"Excuse me, I shoold hav none dhat u canot thhinc in our patternz. Thhinc, then, ov him az a person--az an individjuwal. Dhat wil ghiv me, I beleve, sufishent dataa."

Intoo the Erthmanz miand dhare leept a picchure ov Henderson, sharp and clere. He felt hiz Lenz acchuwaly tin'ghel and throob az a concentraishon ov vital foers such az he had nevver none poerd throo hiz whole beying and intoo dhat aulmoast-livving creyaishon ov the Areezhanz; and imejaitly dharaafter he wauz in fool mental comunicaishon widh the Maaster Pilot! And dhare, ceted acros the tiny mes-tabel ov dhare liafbote, wauz LaaVern Thorndike, the Maaster Tecnishan.

Henderson came too hiz fete widh a yel az the telepathhic message bombsheld intoo hiz brane, and it reqwiard cevveral cecondz too convins him dhat he wauz not the victim ov space-insannity or suffering from enny uther form ov halucinaishon. Wuns convinst, houwevver, he acted--hiz liafbote shot tooword far Velanshaa at maximum blaast.

Then: "Nelson! Allerdice! Tompson! Genkinz! Oolenhuith! Smith! Chatwa!...." Kinnison cauld the role.

Nelson, the speshalist in comunicaishonz, aancerd hiz captainz caul. So did Allerdice, the jugling qwortermaaster. So did Oolenhuith, a tecnishan. So did dhose in thre uther boats. Too ov these thre wer aparrently wel within the dain'ger zone and mite ghet nipt in dhare dash, but dhare croose elected widhout hesitaishon too take the chaans. Foer boats, it wauz aulreddy none, had bene capchuerd bi the piraits. The utherz....

"Oanly ate boats," Kinnison muezd. "Not so good--but it cood hav bene

a lot wers--dha mite hav got us aul bi this time--and maby sum ov them ar just out ov our reche." Then, terning too the Velanshan, whoo had widhdraun hiz miand az soone az the job wauz dun:

"Thanx, Worcel," he ced cimply. "Sum ov dhose ladz cumming in hav got plenty ov just whaut it taix, and *hou* we can use them!"

Wun bi wun the liafboats made poert, whare dhare croose wer welcumd breefly but felingly befoer dha wer poot too werc. Nelson, wun ov the laast pare too arive, wauz particcularly welcum.

"Nelz, we nede u badly," Kinnison informd him az soone az gretingz had bene exchainjd. "The piraits hav a beme, carreying a peculeyarily scambeld cignal, dhat dha can receve and decode throo enny ordinary kiand ov blanketing interferens, and yor the best man weve got too studdy dhare cistem. Sum ov these Velanshan ciyentists can probably help u a lot on dhat--enny race dhat can devellop a screne against thaut figguerz aut too no moer dhan sumwhaut about viabraishon in genneral. Weve got werking moddelz ov the piraits instroomentz, so u can figgure out dhare patternz and formulaaz. When uve dun dhat, I waunt u and yor Velanshanz too desine sumthhing dhat wil scambel aul the piraits comunicator beemz in space, az far az u can reche. If u can fix thhingz so dha caant tauc, enny moer dhan we can, itl help a lot, beleve me!"

"QX, Chefe, weeyl ghiv it the werx," and the rajo man cauld for tuilz, aparatus, and electrishanz.

Then throwout the grate aeroport the menny Velanshanz and the handfool ov Patrolmen labord mitily, cide bi cide, and too verry good efect indede. Sloly the poert became ringd about bi, and studded evveriwere widh, monstrous meccanizmz. Evveriwere dhare wer projectorz:

refractory-throated demonz redy too vommit foerth evvery foers none too the expert tecnishanz ov the Patrole. Dhare wer abzorberz, too, bact bi dhare bleder resistorz, are-gaps, ground-rodz, and rax for discharjd acumulatorz. Dhare, too, wer receptorz and converterz for the cozmic ennergy which wauz too empouwer menny ov the devicez. Dhare wer, ov coers, atommic motor-genneratorz bi the scoer, and battery uppon battery ov gigantic acumulatorz. And Nelsonz hi-pouwerd scrambler wauz redy too go too werc.

These masheenz apeerd croode, ruf, unfinnisht; for niather time nor labor had bene waisted uppon non-ecenshalz. But incide eche wun the mooving parts fitted widh miacrometric accuracy and widh hare-spring ballans. Aul, widhout exepshon, funcshond perfectly.

At Worcelz caul, Kinnison cliamd up out ov a grate beme-proofe pit, the top ov whose waul wauz practicaly compoazd ov tractor-beme progetorz.

Pausing oonly too make shure dhat a sticking swich on wun ov the screne-dome genneratorz had bene replaist, he hurrede too the hevvely armord controle roome, whare hiz littel foers ov fello Patroalmen awated him.

"Dhare cumming, boiz," he anounst. "U aul no whaut too doo. Dhare ar a lot moer thhingz we cood hav dun if wede had moer time, but az it iz weeyl just go too werc on them widh whaut weve got," and Kinnison, agane aul brisc Captane, bent over hiz instrooments.

In the ordinary coers ov events the pirate wood hav flasht up too the plannet widh spi-rase out and ishewing a pre-emptory demaand for the plannet too sho a clene bil ov helth or too surrender instantly such fugitiavz az mite laity hav landed uppon it. But Kinnison did not--cood

not--wate for dhat. The spi-rase, he nu, wood revele the prezsens ov hiz armament; and such armament moast certainly did not belong too this plannet. Dhaerfoer he acted ferst, and evverithhing happend practicaly at wuns.

A tracer lasht out, the pilot-ra ov the rim-battery ov extrordinarily pouwerfool tractorz. Under dhare teriffic pool the inershaales ship flasht tooword dhare center ov acshon. At the same moment dhare berst intoo activvity Nelsonz scrambler, a dome-scene against cozmic-ennergy intake, and a fool cerkel ov super-pouwerd progectorz.

Aul these thhingz okerd in the twincling ov an i, and the vescel wauz beying slode doun bi the atmosfere ov Velanshaa befoer her starteld comaander cood even reyalise dhat he wauz beying atact. Oanly the automatticaly-reyacting defencive screenz saivd dhat ship from instant destrucshon; but dha did so save it and in cecondz the piraits evvery weppon wauz fureyously ablase.

In vane. The defencez ov dhat pit cood take it. Dha wer drivven bi meccanizmz esily abel too abzorb the outpoot ov enny eqwipment mountabel

uppon a mobile bace, and too hiz consternaishon the pirate found dhat hiz cozmic-ennergy intake wauz at, and remaind at, sero. He cent out caul aafter caul for help, but cood not make contact widh enny uther pirate staishon--eethher and sub-eethher alike wer cloazd too him, hiz cignalz wer

blanketed compleetly. Nor cood hiz driverz, even dho opperating at roowinous overlode, moove him from the geyometrical center ov dhat incandescently flaming pit, so inconcevably ridgid wer the tractorz clamps uppon him.

And soone hiz pouwer began too fale. Hiz vescel, desiand too opperate uppon cozmic-ennergy intake, carrede oanly enuf acumulatorz for stablizaishon

ov pouwer-flo, an amount ridiculoussly inaddeqwate for a combat az profligate ov ennergy az this. But strainjly enuf, az hiz defencez wekend, so lescend the pouwer ov the atac. It wauz no part ov the Lenzmanz plan too destroi this superdrednaut ov the void.

"Dhat wauz wun good thhing about the oald *Britanyaa*," he gritted, az he cut down step bi step the pouwer ov hiz beemz, "whaut pouwer she had, nobody cood bloc her of from!"

Soone the stord-up ennergy ov the battelship wauz exausted and she la dhare, qwiyescent. Then giyant pressorz went intoo acshon and she wauz lifted over the waul ov the pit, too cettel down in an open space becide it--open, but stil under the doamz ov foers.

Kinnison had no nedel-rase az yet, the time at hiz dispozal havving bene sufishent oonly for the construcshon ov the absoluetly ecenshal itemz ov eqwipment. Nou, while he debated widh hiz fellose az too whaut part ov the vescel too destroi in order too wipe out its croo, the piraits themcelvz ended the debate. Poerts yaund in the vescelz cide and dha came out fiting.

For dha wer not a brede too di like rats in a trap, and dha nu dhat too remane incide dhare vescel wauz too di whenever and houwevver dhare captorz wild. Dha nu aulso dhat di dha must if dha cood not conker. Dhare surrender, even if it shoold be axepted, wood mene oonly a sumwhaut later deth in the leethal chaimberz ov the Lau. In the open, dha cood at leest take sum ov dhare fose widh them.

Ferthermoer, not beying men az we no men, dha had nuthhing in common widh iather human beyingz or Velanshanz. Boath too them wer vermin, az dha themcelvz wer too the beyingz manning this cerprisingly impregnabel

fortres here in this waist corner ov the galaxy. Dhaerfoer, space-hardend vetteranz aul, dha faut, widh the insane ferocity and desperaishon ov the ultimaitly laast stand; but dha did not conker. Insted, and too the laast man, dha dide.

Az soone az the battel wauz over, befoer the interferens blanketing the piraits comunicatorz wauz cut of, Kinnison went throo the capchuerd vescel, destroyng the hedqworterz viziplaits and evvery automattic cender which cood traanzmit enny kiand ov a message too enny pirate bace.

Then the interferens wauz stopt, the doamz wer releest, and the ship wauz remuivd from the feeld ov operaishonz. Then, while Thorndike and hiz

reptilleyan aidz--themcelvz nou rajo experts ov no mene attainments--bizede themcelvz at instaulng a hi-pouwerd scrambler aboard her, Kinnison and Worcel scand space in cerch ov moer pra. Soone dha found it, moer distant dhan the ferst wun had bene--too solar cistemz awa--and in an entiarly different direcshon. Tracerz and tractorz and interferens and doamz ov foers agane became the order ov the da. Progetorz agane raivd out in dhare incandescent mite, and soone anuther imens crooser ov the void la becide her cister ship. Anuther, and anuther; then for a long time space wauz blanc.

The Lenzman then energiagd hiz ultraa-recever, pointing hiz antennaa caerfooly into the galatic line too Helmuths bace, az lade doun for him bi the Velanshan astronnomerz. Agane, so tite and hard wauz Helmuths beme, he had too drive hiz aparatus so unmercifooly dhat the chube-noiz aulmoast dround out the signalz, but agane he wauz reworted bi hering faintly the vois ov the pirate Director ov Operaishonz:

"...foer vescelz, aul within or nere wun ov dhose five solar cistemz, hav ceest communicating; eche cesaishon beyng acumpanede bi a pereyod ov blanketing interferens ov a pattern nevver befoer redgisterd. U too vescelz whoo ar receving these orderz ar

instructed too investigate dhat rejon widh the utmoast care. Go widh screenz out and evverithhing on the trips, and widh automattic recorderz cet on me here. It iz not beleevd dhat the Patrole haz ennithhing too doo widh this, az abillity haz bene shone traancending ennithhing it haz bene none too poses. Az a werking hipothhecis it iz ashuemd dhat wun ov the solar cistemz, hitherto practicaly unnexplord and un'none, iz in reyallity the cete ov a hily advaanst race, which perhaps haz taken offens at the attichude or conduct ov our ferst ship too vizsit them. Dhaerfoer procede widh extreme caushon, widh a thurro spi-ra cerch at extreme rainj befoer aproching at aul. If u land, use tact and diplomacy insted ov the customary tactix. Fiand out whether our ships and croose hav bene destroid, or ar oonly beying held: and remember, automattic repoerterz on me at aul tiamz. Helmuth speking for Boscone--of!"

For minnuets Kinnison manippulated hiz controalz in vane--he cood not ghet anuther sound.

"Whaut ar u trying too ghet, Kim?" aasct Thorndike. "Wauznt dhat enuf?"

"No, dhats oonly haaf ov it," Kinnison reternd. "Helmuths nobodese foole. Hese certainly trying too plot the boundarese ov our interferens, and I waunt too ce hou hese cumming out widh it. But no dice. Hese so far awa and hiz beemz so hard I caant werc him unles he happenz too be tauking aulmoast directly tooword us. Wel, it woant be long nou until weeyl ghiv him sum reyal interferens too plot. Nou lets ce whaut we can doo about dhose too uther ships dhat ar hedding this wa."

Caerfooly az dhose too ships investigated, and cedjulously az dha saut too oba Helmuths instrucshonz, aul dhare precaushonz amounted too exactly nuthhing. Az orderd, dha began too spi-ra cerva at extreme rainj; but even at dhat rainj Kinnisonz tracerz wer efective and

dhose piraits aulso ceest communicating in a blase ov interferens. Then recent history repeted itcelf. The detailz wer chainjd sumwhaut, cins dhare wer too vescelz insted ov wun; but the pit wauz ov ampel cise too acommodate too ships, and the tractorz cood hoald too az wel and az ridgidly az wun. The conflict wauz a littel lon'gher, the beming a littel hotter and moer coruscant, but the ending wauz the same. Scramblerz and uther speshal aparatus wer instauld and Kinnison cauld hiz men tooghether.

"Were about reddy too shuv of agane. Running awa haz werct twice so far and shood werc wuns moer, if we can ring in enuf vareyaishonz on the thheme too kepe Helmuth ghescing a while lon'gher. Maby, if the supli ov pirate ships hoaldz up, we can make Helmuth fernish us traansportaishon clere bac too Prime Base!

"Heerz the ideyaa. Weve got cix ships, and enuf Velanshanz hav vollunteerd too man them--in spite ov the fact dhat dha probbably woant ghet bac. Cix ships, ov coers, iznt enuf ov a taasc foers too fite its wa throo Helmuths fleets; so weeyl spred out, cuvvering plenty ov parcex and braudcaasting evvery waut ov interferens we can poot out, in az menny different shaips and cisez az our genneratorz can figgure. We woant be abel too tauc too eche uther, but nobody els can tauc, iather, enniwhare nere us, and dhat aut too ghiv us a chaans. Eche ship wil be on its one, like we wer befoer, in the boats; the big differens beying dhat weeyl be in superdrednauts.

"Qweschon--shood we split up agane or stic tooghether? Wede better aul go in wun ship, I thhinc--widh spuilz aboard the utherz, ov coers. Whaut doo u thhinc?"

Dha agrede widh him too a man and he directed a thaut at the Velanshan.

"Nou, Worcel, about u fellose here--u probbably woant hav it so esy, iather. Sooner or later--and sooner wood be mi ghes--Helmuths boiz wil be cumming too ce u. In foers and coct and priamd and widh blud in dhare ise. Itl be a battel, not a slauter."

"Let them cum, in whautevver foers dha care too bring. The moer whoo atac here, the les dhare wil be too hault yor proagres. This armament represents the best ov dhat posest bi both yor Patrole and the piraits, widh impruivments devellopt bi yor ciyentists and ourz in fool cowoperaishon. We understand thurroly its construcshon, operaishon, and maintenans. U ma rest ashuerd dhat the piraits wil nevver levvy tribbute uppon us, and dhat enny pirate vizing this cistem wil remane in it--permanently!"

"At-a-snake, Worcel--long ma u wigghel!" Kinnison exclaimd. Then, moer cereyously, "Maby, aafter this iz aul over, Ile ce u agane sumtime. If not, goodbi. Goodbi, aul Velanshaa. Aul cet, evveriboddy? Clere eethher--blaast of!"

Six ships, wun pirate craaft, nou vescelz ov the Galactic Patrole, herld themcelvz intoo and throo Velanshan are; intoo and throo interplannetary space; out intoo the larger, wider, opener emptines ov the interstellar void. Six ships, eche braudcaasting widh prodidjous pouwer and vollume an aul-inclusive interferens throo which not even a CRX tracer cood be drivven.

CHAPTER 9

Braicdoun

Kimbal Kinnison sat at the controalz, smoking a rare festive ciggaret and smiling; at pece widh the entire univers. For this nu picchure wauz in evvery ellement a different wun from the oald. Insted ov beying in a pittifooly weke and defensles liafbote, sculking and hiding, he wauz in wun ov the moast pouwerfool battelships aflote, driving boaldly at fool

blaast aulmoast directly tooword home. While the Patroalmen wer so terribly fu in number dhat moast ov them had too werc dubbel shifts--Kinnison and Henderson had too doo aul the piloting and navvigating--dha had under them a fool croo ov alert and hily-traind Velanshanz. And the ennemy, insted ov beying a cloce-nit groope, keping Helmuth informd moment bi moment ov the cichuwaishon and instantly responcive too hiz orderz, wer nou entiarly out ov comunicaishon widh eche uther and widh dhare hedqworterz; groping helplesly. Litteraly az wel az figguratiavly the piraits wer in the darc; the absolute blacnes ov interstellar space.

Thorndike enterd the roome, frouning sliatly. "U looc like the fabeld Cheshire cat, Kim. I hate too spoil such perfect blis, but Ime here too tel u dhat we aint out ov the woodz yet, bi cevven thousand rose ov big, grene, peppermint trese."

"Maby not," the Lenzman reternd bliadhly, "but compaerd too the jam we wer in a littel while bac were not oonly citting on top ov the werld; were perchd rite on the exact apex ov the univers. Dha caant cend or receive repoerts or orderz, and dha caant communicate. Even dhare detectorz ar mity lame--u no hou far dha can ghet on electromagnettix and vizhuwal aparatus. Ferthermoer, dhare iznt an identifcaishon number, cimbol, or name on the outcide ov this buz-buggy. If it evver had wun the fricshon and atrishon hav woern it of, clere doun too the armor. Whaut can happen dhat we caant cope widh?"

"These en' gianz can happen," the tecnishan responded, bluntly. "The Berghenhome iz develloping a meter-jump dhat I doant like a littel bit."

"Duz she noc? Or even tic?" demaanded Kinnison.

"Not yet," Thorndike confest, reluctantly.

"Hou big a jump?"

"Pritty nere too thouzandths maximum. Avverage a thouzandth and a haaf."

"Dhats hardly a wigghel on the recorder line. Driverz run for munths widh biggher jumps dhan dhat."

"Yeh--driverz. But ov aul the trubbelz enniboddy evver had widh Berghenhoamz, a meter-kic wauz nevver wun ov them, and dhats whauts got me ghescing az too the whichnes ov the whi. Ime not trying too scare u--yet. Ime just telling u."

The mashene referd too wauz the nuetraliser ov inershaa, the cinna qwaa non ov interstellar spede, and it wauz not too be wunderd at dhat the slitest iregularrity in its performans wauz too the tecnishan a matter ov grave concern. Da aafter da paast, houwevver, and the huge converter continnude too funcshon; taking in and cending out its woanted torrents ov pouwer. It devellopt not even a tic, and the meter-jump did not gro wers. And juring dhose dase dha poot an inconcevabel distans behiand them.

Juring aul this time dhare vizhuwal instroaments remaind blanc; too aul optical aparatus space wauz empty save for the normal tennancy ov celeschal boddese. From time too time sumthhing invizibel or beyond the rainj ov vizhon redgisterd uppon wun ov the electromagnet detectorz, but so slo wer these instroaments dhat nuthhing came ov dhare cignalz. In fact, bi the time the warningz wer recorded, the obgets causing the disterbans wer probbably far astern.

Wun da, houwevver, the Berghenhome qwit--coald. Dhare wauz no laboring, no nocking, no heting up, no worning at aul. Wun instant the ship wauz speding along in fre flite, the next she wauz liying inert in space. Practically moashonles, for enny poscibel veloscity bilt up bi inert axeleraishon iz scaersly a crawl, az fre space-speedz go.

Then the whole croo labord like mad. Az soone az dha had the mascive cuvverz of, Thorndike scand the intereyor ov the mashene and ternd too Kinnison.

"I thhinc we can pach her up, but itl take qwite a while. Maby ude be ov moer uce in the controle roome--this aint qwite az safe az cherch, iz it, liying here inert?"

"Moast ov the stuf iz on automattic trip, but maby Ide better kepe an i on thhingz, at dhat. Let me no ocaizhonaly hou yor ghetting along," and the Lenzman went bac too hiz controalz--nun too soone.

For wun pirate ship wauz aulreddy beming him vishously. Oonly the fact dhat hiz defencive armament wauz uppon its automattic trips had saivd the stolen battelship from practicaly instantainyous destrucshon. And az the cerpriazd Lenzman began too chec hiz uther instrooms anuther space-ship flasht intoo beying uppon hiz uther cide and aulso went too werc.

Az Kinnison had aulreddy remarct moer dhan wuns, Helmuth wauz far from beying a foole, and dhat nu and amasingly efective blanketing ov hiz evvery meenz ov comunicaishon wauz a problem whose solueshon wauz ov

parramount importans. Aulmoast evvery avalabel ship had bene for dase
uppon
the frinj ov dhat interferens; observing and repoerting continnuously.
So rappidly wauz it mooving, houwevver, so peculeyar wauz its aparrent
shape,
and so contradictory wer the direcshonal redingz obtaind, dhat
Helmuths computerz had bene baffeld.

Then Kinnisonz Berghenhome faild and hiz ship went inert. In a space ov
minnuets the locaishon ov wun center ov interferens wauz none. Its
cowordinaitz wer determiand and haaf a duzsen worships wer orderd too
rush dhat spot. The rader ferst too arive had cignald, vizhuwaly and
audibly; then, obtaning no respons, had ancord widh a tractor and
had luist hiz bolts. Nor wood the rezult hav bene different had
evveriwun aboard, insted ov no wun, bene in the controle roome at the time
ov the signaling. Kinnison cood hav red the messagez, but niather he
nor enniwun els then aboard the erstwhile pirate craaft cood hav
aancerd them in kiand.

The too space-ships atacking the terncote became thre, and stil the
Lenzman sat unwurrede at hiz boerd. Hiz meterz shode no dain'gerous
overlode; hiz nobel craaft wauz taking evverithhing her cister-ships cood
cend.

Then Thorndike stept intoo the roome, no lon'gher a natty officer ov
space. Insted, he wauz stript too swet-soact undershert and overaulz,
he wauz cuvverd widh grece and grime, and whaut ov hiz thhicly smeerd
face wauz vizsibel wauz aulmoast haggard widh fateghe. He opend hiz
mouth too
sa sumthhing, then snapt it shut az hiz i wauz caut bi a flaring
vizsiplate.

"Holy Clonose clauz!" he exclaimd, "At us aulreddy? Whi didnt u
yel?"

"Hou much good wood dhat hav dun?" Kinnison waunted too no. "Ov coers, if I had none dhat u wer lofing on the job and cood hav snapt it up a littel, I wood hav. But dhaerz no particcular hurry about this. Itl take at leest foer ov them too brake us down, and I wauz hoping ude hav us travveling befoer dha overlode us. Whaut wauz on yor miand?"

"I came up here--Wun, too tel u dhat were reddy too blaast; Too, too sugest dhat u hit her esy at ferst; and Thre, too aasc if u no whare dhaerz enny grece-sope. But u can cancel Too and Thre. We doant waunt too pla around widh these boiz much lon'gher--dha pla too ruf--and I aint gowing too waush up until I ce whether she hoaldz tooghether or not. Blaast awa--and woant dhose ghise be cerpriazd!"

"Ile sa so--sum ov this stuf iz NU!"

The Lenzman twerld a cuppel ov nobz, then puncht down hard upon thre buttonz. Az he did so the flaring plaits became darc; dha wer agane alone in space. Too the dumfounded piraits it wauz az dho dhare pra had slipt of intoo the foerth dimenshon. Dhare tractorz gript nuthhing whautevver; dhare ravvening beemz boerd unnimpeded throo the space occupide an instant befoer bi resisting screenz; tracerz wer uesles. Dha did not no whaut had happend, or hou, and dha cood niather repoert too nor be ghided bi the maaster miand ov Boscone.

For minnuets Thorndike, vanBuskerck, and Kinnison wated tensly for dha nu not whaut too happen; but nuthhing happend and then the tenshon gradjuwaly relaxt.

"Whaut wauz the matter widh it?" Kinnison aasct, finaly.

"Overloded," wauz Thorndiax ters repli.

"Overloded--hoowy!" snapt the Lenzman. "Hou *cood* dha overlode a Berghenhome? And, even if dha cood, whi in aul the nine helz ov Valereyaa wood dha waunt too?"

"Dha *cood* doo it esily enuf, in just the wa dha *did* doo it; bi banking acumulatorz ontoo it in cerese-parralel. Az too whi, Ile let u doo the ghescing. Widh no lode on the Berghenhome uve got fool inershaa, widh fool lode uve got sero inershaa--u caant go enny ferther. It loox just plane dum too me. But then, I thhinc aul piraits ar short a fu gets sumwhare--if dha wernt dha woodnt be piraits."

"I doant no whether yor rite or not. Hope so, but afrade not. Personaly, I doant beleve these foax ar piraits at aul, in the ordinary cens ov the werd."

"Huu? Whaut ar dha, then?"

"Piracy implise cimilarrity ov culchure, I wood thhinc," the Lenzman ced, thautfooly. "Ordinary piraits ar uezhuwaly rennegaidz, defishent sumhou, az u sugested; rebelling against a constichuted authorrity which dha themcelvz hav at wun time acnollejd and ov which dha ar stil afrade. Dhat pattern duznt fit intoo this mairix at aul, enniwhare."

"So whaut? Nou I sa hoowy rite bac at u. Enniwa, whi wurry about it?"

"Not wurreying about it exactly, but sumbody haz got too doo sumthhing about it, or els...."

"I doant like too thhinc; it maix mi hed ake," interrupted vanBuskerk.

"Beciadz, were ghetting awa from the Berghenhome."

"Ule ghet a reyal heddake dhare," laaft Kinnison, "becauz Ile bet a good Telureyan beefstake dhat the piraits wer triying too cet up a neggative inershaa when dha overloded the Berghenhome; and thhinking about dhat state ov matter iz enuf too make *enniboddese* hed ake!"

"I nu dhat sum ov the dippeyer Ph.D.'s in hiyer mecannix hav bene specculating about it," Thorndike offerd, "but it caant be dun dhat wa, can it?"

"Nor enny uther wa dhat enniboddy haz tride yet, and if such a thhing iz poscibel the rezults ma proove reyally startling. But u too had better shuv of, yor ded from the nec up. The Bergz spinning like a top--az smuidh az dhat much grene velvet. Ule fiand a can ov sope in mi locker, I thhinc."

"Maby sheeyl hoald tooghether long enuf for us too ghet sum slepe." The tecnishan ide a meter jubeyously, auldho its nedel wauz not wavering a haerz bredth from the grene line. "But Ile tel the cockide Univers dhat we gave her a jury rigghing if dhare evver wauz wun. U caant depend on it for an our until aafter its bene poold and gon over; and dhat, u no az wel az I doo, taix a reyal shop, widh plenty ov eqwipment: If u take mi advice ule cit doun sumwhare while u can and az soone az u can. Dhat Berghenhome iz in bad shape, beleve me. We can hoald her tooghether for a while bi mane strength and auqwordnes, but befoer verry long shese gowing out for keeps--and when she duz u doant waunt too fiand yorcelf fifty yeeرز from a mashene shop insted ov fifty minnuets."

"Ile sa not," the Lenzman agrede. "But on the uther hand, we doant waunt dhose berdz jumping us the minnute we land, iather. Lets ce, whare ar we? And whare ar the bacez? Um... um... Cector bacez ar

white ringz, u no, sub-ceptor bacez red starz...." Thre hedz bent over charts.

"The nerest red-star marker ceemz too be in Cistem 240-16-37," Kinnison finaly anounst. "Doant no the name ov the plannet--nevver bene dhare...."

"Too far," interrupted Thorndike. "Weeyl nevver make it--mite az wel tri direct for Prime Bace on Tellus. If u caant fiand a red clocer dhan dhat, looc for an oranj or a yello."

"Bacez ov enny kiand ceme too be scaers around here," the Lenzman commented. "Ude thhinc dhade be thhicker. Heerz a viyolet triyan'ghel, but dhat woodnt help us--just an outpoast.... Hou about this blu sqware? Its just about on our line too Tellus, and I caant ce ennithhing enny better dhat we can poscibly reche."

"Dhat loox like our best bet," Thorndike conkerd, aafter a fu minnuets ov studdy. "Its probbably cevveral braicdounz awa, but maby we can make it--sumtime. Bluse ar pritty lo-grade space-poerts, but dhave got tuilz, enniwa. Whauts the name ov it, Kim--or iz it oonly a number?"

"Its dhat verry famous plannet, Trencu," the Lenzman anounst, aafter loocking up the refferens numberz in the atlas.

"*Trencu!*" exclaimd Thorndike in disgust. "The nutteyest dopeyest, wooseyest plannet in the gallaxy--we *wood* drau sumthhing like dhat too cit doun on for repaerz, woodnt we? Wel, Ime on plus time for slepe. Caul me if we go inert befoer I wake up, wil u?"

"I shure wil; and Ile tri too figure out a wa ov ghetting doun too ground widhout bringing aul the piraits in space along widh us."

Then Henderson came in too stand hiz wauch, Kinnison slept, and the mity Berghenhome continnude too hoald the vescel inershaales. In fact, aul the men wer thurroly rested and refresht befoer the expected braicdoun came. And when it did cum dha wer moer or les prepaerd for it. The dela wauz not sufishmently long too enabel the piraits too fiand them agane; but from dhat point in space too the il-faimd plannet which wauz dhare destinaishon, proagres wauz wun long cerese ov hops.

The swetting, grunting, swaring en'gineerz made wun cemingly imposcibel
repare aafter anuther, bi dint ov whaut doj, improvizaishon, and maicshift oanly the fertile brane ov LaaVern Thorndike evver did no. The Maaster Tecnishan, wun ov the kenest and moast hily traird en'gineerz ov the whole Solaareyan Cistem, wauz not uest too werking widh hiz handz.

Auldho yung in yeerz, he wauz woant too use oanly hiz hed, in directing the laborz and the ennergese ov utherz.

Nevvertheles, he wauz nou werking like a stevedor. He wauz permanently grimy and greycy--dhare wun can ov mecannix sope had bene uezd up long cins--hiz fin'gher-nailz wer blac and broken, hiz handz and face wer bernd, blisterd, and cract. Hiz muscelz aict and shreect at the unnacustomd effort, until nou dha wer on the bild. But throo it aul he had stuc uncomplainingly, even boiyantly, too hiz taasc. Wun da, juring an interlude ov fre flite, he strode intoo the controle-roome and glaanst at the coers-plotting goanyometer, then started intoo the "tanc."

"Stil on the oridginal coers, I ce. Hav u got ennithhing doapt out yet?"

"Nuthhing verry good, dhats whi Ime staying on this coers until we reche the point clocest too Trenco. Ive figguerd until mi alejd brane bacfiard on me, and heerz aul I can ghet:

"I've bene shrinking and expanding our interferens zone, chain'ging its shape az much az I cood, and cutting it of entiarly nou and then; too cros up dhare cervayorz az much az I cood. When we cum too the jumping-of place weeyl cimply cut of evverithhing dhat iz cending out trasabel viabraishonz. The Berg wil hav too run, ov coers, but it duznt rajate much and we can ground out practicaly aul ov dhat. The drive iz the bad fechure--it loox az dho weeyl hav too cut down too whare we can ground out the rajaishon."

"Hou about the flare?" Thorndike tooc the inevvitabel slide-roole from a pocket ov hiz overaulz.

"Ive aulreddy had the Velanshanz bild us sum baffelz--weve got lots ov spare tantalum, tungsten, carballoi, and refractory, u no--just in cace we shood waunt too use them."

"Rajaishon.... detecshon.... decrement.... cocine sqwaerd thhetaa... um... caul it point sero sero thre ate," the en'ginere mumbeld, sqwinting at hiz "slip-stic." "Tiamz haaf a milleyon.... about niantene hundred liats wil hav too be tops. Mity slo, but we wood ghet dhare sumtime--maby. Nou about the baffelz," and he went intoo anuther bout ov computaishon juring which cood be distin'gwisht a fu such werdz az "temperachure... inert corpuscelz... velosity... fuezhon-point... Wianbergherz Constant...." Then:

"It figguerz dhat at about atene hundred liats yor baffelz go out," he anounst. "Pritty cloce chec widh the rajaishon limmit. QX, I ghes--but I shudder too thhinc ov whaut we ma hav too doo too dhat Berghenhome too hoald it toogheter dhat long."

"Its not so hot. I doant thhinc much ov the skeme micelf," admitted Kinnison francly. "Probbably u can thhinc up sumthhing better befoer...."

"Whoo, me? Whaut widh?" Thorndike interrupted, widh a laaf. "Loox too me like our best bet--enniwa, aint u the maaster miand ov this outfit? Blaast of!"

Dhus it came about dhat, long later, the Lenzman cut of hiz interferens, cut of hiz driving pouwer, cut of evvery meccanizm whose operaishon gennerated viabraishonz which wood revele too ennemy detectorz the locaishon ov hiz crooser. Space-suted mecannix emerjd from the stern loc and fitted over the stil white-hot vents ov the driving progectorz the baffelz dha had preveyously bilt.

It iz ov coers wel none dhat aul ships ov space ar propeld bi the inert progecshon, bi meenz ov hi-potenshal stactic feeldz, ov nacent foerth-order partikelz or "corpuscelz," which ar formd, inert, incide the inershaales progector, bi the converzhon ov sum form ov ennergy intoo matter. This converzhon libberaits sum hete, and a vaast amount ov lite. This lite, or "flare," shining az it duz directly uppon and throo the hily tenuwous gas formd bi the progected corpuscelz, maix ov a speding space-ship wun ov the moast gorjous spektakelz none too man; and it wauz this verry spectaccular efect dhat Kinnison and hiz croo must doo awa widh if dhare boald skeme wer too hav enny chaans at aul ov suxes.

The baffelz wer in place. Nou, insted ov shooting out in tel-tale luminescens, the lite wauz shut in--but so, alaas, wauz aproximaitly thre percent ov the hete. And the generaishon ov hete *must* be cut down too a point at which the rajaishon-ewilibreyum temperachure ov the baffelz wood be belo the point ov fuezhon ov the refractorese ov which dha wer compoazd. This wood cut down dhare spede tremendously; but on the

urther hand, dha wer practicaly safe from detecshon and wood reche Trencu evenchuwaly--if the Berghenhome held out.

Ov coers dhare wauz stil the chaans ov vizhuwal or electromagnettic detecshon, but dhat chaans wauz vannishingly smaul. The proverbeyal taasc ov fianding a nedel in a haistac wood be an esy wun indede, compaerd too dhat ov ceying in a tellescope or uppon vizsiplate or magneplate a ded-blac, liatles ship in the infinnity ov space. No, the Berghenhome wauz dhare grate, dhare oanly concern; and the en'gineerz lavvisht uppon dhat monstrous fabricaishon ov mettal a devoashon too which cood be likend oanly dhat ov a coer ov nercez atending the aling baby ov a multy-milleyonare.

This concentraishon ov atenshon did ghet rezults. The en'gineerz stil found it nescesary too swet and too grunt and too sware, but dha did sumhou kepe the thhing running--moast ov the time. Nor wer dha detected--then.

For the atenshon ov the pirate hi comaand wauz verry much taken up widh dhat faast-mooving, dhat evver-expanding, dhat peculeyarly-flucchuwating vollume ov interferens; utterly enigmattic az it wauz and impennetrabel too dhare evvery instrooment ov comunicaishon. In dhat cistem wauz the Prime Bace ov the Galactic Patrole. Dhaerfoer it *wauz* the Lenzmanz werc--undoutedly the same Lenzman whoo had conkerd wun ov dhare super-ships and, aafter havving lernd its evvery ceecret, had escaipt in a liafbote throo the fine-mesht net cet too cach him! And, piling Ossaa uppon Peleyon, this same Lenzman had--*must* hav--capchuerd ship aafter

unconquerable ship of their best and was even now sailing calmly home with them! It was intolerable, unbearable, an insult that could not and would not be borne.

Therefore, using as well every pirate ship in that sector of space, Helmuth and his computers and navigators were slowly but grimly solving the equations of motion of that volume of interference. Smaller and smaller became the uncertainty. Then ship after ship boarded into the sub-etherial merc, too much coers and velocity with, and ultimately too cum too grips with, each focus of disturbances as it was determined.

Thus in a sense and indeed Kinnison and his friends did not then know it, it was only the failure of the Berghenhome that was too save their lives, and with those lives our present Civilization.

Slowly, haltingly, and, for reasons already given, undetected, Kinnison made pitiful progress toward Trenc; keeling impatiently and impatiently his ship, the crippled generator, its designer and its previous operators as he went. But at long last Trenc loomed large beneath them and the Lenzman used his Lenz.

"Lenzman of Trenc space-port, or any other Lenzman within call!" he called out clearly. "Kinnison of Tellus--Sol 3--calling. My Berghenhome is almost out and I must sit down at Trenc space-port for repairs. I have avoided the pirates so far, but they may be either behind me or ahead of me, or both. What is the chance of their?"

"I fear that I can be of no help," came back a weak thud, without the customary identification. "I am out of control. However, Tregency is in the...."

Kinnison felt a poinyant, unbarably aggonising mental impact dhat jard him too the verry coer: a shoc dhat, while ov slej-hammer foers, wauz stil ov such a keenly pennetrant tambr dhat it aulmoast exploded evvery cel ov hiz brane. It ceemd az dho sum mity fist, armd with yard-long nedelz, had slugd an acchuwal blo intoo the moast vitaly cencitive nerv-centerz ov hiz beying.

Comunicaishon ceest, and the Lenzman nu, with a cic, shuddering certainty, dhat while in the verry act ov tauking too him a Lenzman had dide.

CHAPTER 10

Trenco

Juid bi enny erthly standardz the plannet Trenco wauz--and iz--a peculeyar wun indede. Its atmosfere, which iz not are, and its liqwid, which iz not wauter, ar its too outstanding peculeyarritese and the soercez ov moast ov its uthertz. Aulmoast haaf ov dhat atmosfere and bi far the grater part ov the liqwid fase ov the plannet iz a substans ov extreemly lo latent hete ov vaporizaishon, with a boiling-point such dhat juring the datime it iz a vapor and at nite a liqwid. Too make matterz wers, the uther constitchuwents ov Trencose gaishous envelope ar ov verry febel blanketing pouwer, lo speciffic hete, and ov hi permeyabillity, so dhat its dase ar intently hot and its niats ar bitterly coald.

At nite, dhaerfoer, it rainz. Werdz ar entiarly inaddeqwate too describe too enniwun whoo haz nevver bene dhare just hou it duz rane juring Trencose niats. Uppon Erth wun inch ov rainfaul in an our iz a teriffic dounpor. Uppon Trenco dhat amount ov precipitaishon wood scaersly be concidderd a mist; for along the eqwatoereyal belt, in les dhan thhertene Telureyan ourz, it rainz exactly forty-cevven fete and five inchez evvery nite--no moer no les, eche and evvery nite ov evvery yere.

Aulso dhare iz liatning. Not in Terraaz ocaizhonal flashez, but in wun continnuwous, blianding glare which maix nite az we no it un'none dhare; in nerv-racking, battering, cens-destroiying dischargez which make eethher and sub-eethher alike impennetrabel too enny ra or cignal short

ov a fool-drivven pouwer beme. The dase ar practicaly az bad. The liatning iz not viyolent then, but the bombardment ov Trencose monstrous sun, throo dhat outlandishly peculeyar atmosfere, projucez aulmoast the same efect.

Becauz ov the differens in preshure cet up bi the enormous precipitaishon, aulwase and evveriwheare uppon Trencos dhare iz wind--and whaut

a wind! Exept at the verry poalz, whare it iz too coald for even Trencos anyan life too exist, dhare iz hardly a spot in which or a time at which an Erthly gale wood not be concidderd a ded caam; and along the eqwator, at evvery sunrise and at evvery suncet, the wind blose from the da cide too the nite cide at the rate ov wel over ate hundred mialz an our!

Throo countles thouzandz ov yeerz wind and wave hav plaind and scourd the plannet Trencos too a geyometricaly perfect oablate sferoid. It haz no elevaishonz and no depreshonz. Nuthhing fixt in an Erthly cens grose or exists uppon its cerface; no strucchure haz evver bene bilt dhare abel too sta in wun place throo wun whole da ov the cataclizmic meteyorolodgical fenommenaa which constichute the natchural Trencos anyan environment.

Dhare liv uppon Trencos too tiaps ov vegetaishon, eche tipe havving inumerabel sub-divizhonz. Wun tipe sprouts in the mud ov morning; flurrishez flatly, bi dint ov deeply cent and pouwerfool ruits, juring the wind and the hete ov the da; cumz too fool froote in later aafternoone;

and at sunset die and is swept away by the flood. The other type is free-floating. Some of its genera are remotely like footbals, others resemble tumbleweed, still others this side down, hundreds of others have not their remotest counterparts upon Earth. Ecologically, however, they are alike in habits of life. They can sink in the "water" of Trencos; then can burrow in its mud, from which they derive part of their sustenance; they can emerge from into the sunlight; they can, undamaged, float in or roll along before the ever-present Trencosian wind; and they can erupt, erupt, or otherwise cease and hold nothing with which they come in contact which by any means may prove edible.

Animal life, too, while abundant and diverse, is characterized by three qualities. From lowest to very highest it is amphibious, it is streamlined, and it is omnivorous. Life upon Trencos is hard, and any form of life that evolves there must of stern necessity be willing, yes, even anxious, to eat literally *anything* available. And for that reason all surviving forms of life, vegetable and animal, have a voracity and a fecundity almost unparalleled elsewhere in the galaxy.

Thyonite, the narcotic drug referred to earlier in this narrative, is the sole reason for Trencos' galactic importance. As chlorophyll is to earthly vegetation, so is thyonite to that of Trencos. Trencos is the only planet thus far known upon which this substance occurs, nor have our scientists even yet been able to synthesize it. Thyonite is capable of affecting only those races whose blood contains worm blood, red with hemoglobin. However, the planets peopled by such races are legion, and very shortly after the drug's discovery herds of addicts, smugglers, peddlers, and out-and-out pirates were rushing toward the new Bonanza. Thousands of these adventurers died,

iather from eche utherz ra-gunz or under an avvalaansh ov hun'gry Trencodynamic life; but, thhiyonite beying whaut it iz, thousandz moer kept cumming. Aulso came the Patrole, too kerb the evil traffic at its soers bi beming down ruithlesly enny beying atempting too gather enny Trencodynamic vegetaishon.

Dhus betwene the Patrole and the drug cindicate dhare ragez a bitterly continnuwous battel too the deth. Arade against boath facshonz iz the mast life ov the noizome plannet, omnivvorous az it iz, eternaly ravvenous, and ov an individjuwal pouwer and ferocity and a colective agregate ov numberz bi no meenz too be despiazd. And eternaly raging against aul these contending parrese ar the wind, the liatning, the rane, the flud, and the hellish viabratoery outpoot ov Trencose enormous, malignant, blu-white sun.

This, then, wauz the plannet uppon which Kinnison had too land in order too repara hiz crippeld Berghenhome--and in the end hou wel it wauz too be dhat such wauz the cace!

"Kinnison ov Tellus, gretingz. Tregoncy ov Rigel 4 caulng from Trencospace-poert. Hav u evver landed on this plannet befoer?"

"No, but whaut...."

"Skip dhat for a time; it iz moast important dhat u land here qwicly and saifly. Whare ar u in relaishon too this plannet?"

"Yor aparrent diyammeter iz a shade under six degrese. We ar nere the plane ov yor ecliptic and aulmoast in the plane ov yor terminator, on the morning cide."

"Dhat iz wel, u hav ampel time. Place yor ship betwene Trengo and the sun. Enter the atmosfere exactly fiftene G-P minnuets from the prezsent moment, at twenty degrese aafter meridjan, az neerly az poscibel on the ecliptic, which iz aulso our eqwator. Go inert az u enter atmosfere, for a fre landing uppon this plannet iz imposcibel. Cincronise widh our rotaishon, which iz twenty-cix point too G-P ourz. Decend vertically until the atmosferric preshure iz cevven hundred millimeterz ov mercury, which wil be at an altichude ov aproximaitly wun thousand meterz. Cins u reli larjly uppon dhat cens could cite, alou me too caushon u nou not too trust it. When yor external preshure iz cevven hundred millimeterz ov mercury yor altichude wil be wun thousand meterz, whether u beleve it or not. Stop at dhat preshure and inform me ov the fact, meenwhile hoalding yorcelf az neerly staishonary az u can. Chec so far?"

"QX--but doo u mene too tel me dhat we caant locate eche uther at a *thousand meterz*?" Kinnisonz amaizd thaut escaipt him. "Whaut kiand ov..."

"I can locate u, but u canot locate me," came the dri repli.

"Evveriwun nose dhat Trengo iz peculeyar, but no wun whoo haz never bene

here can reyalise even dimly hou peculeyar it reyaliz. Detectorz and spi-rase ar uesles, electro-magnettix ar practicaly parraliazd, and optical aparatus iz distinctly unreliyabel. U canot trust yor vizhon here--doo not beleve ennithhing u ce. It uest too reqwire dase too land a ship at this poert, but widh our Lensez and mi cens ov percepshon,' az u caul it, it wil be a matter ov minnuets."

Kinnison flasht hiz ship too the dezsignated posishon.

"Cut the Berg, Thorndike, were aul dun widh it. Weve got too bild up an inert veloscity too mach the rotaishon, and land inert."

"Thanx be too aul the godz ov space for dhat." The en'ginere heevd a ci ov relefe. "Ive bene expecting it too blo its top for the laast our, and I doant no whether wede evver hav got it mesht in agane or not."

"QX on locaishon and orbit," Kinnison repoerted too the az yet invizibel space-poert a fu minnuets later. "Nou, whaut about dhat Lenzman? Whaut happend?"

"The uezhual thhing," came the emoashonles respons. "It happenz too aultooghether too menny Lenzmen whoo can ce, in spite ov evverithhing we can tel them. He incisted uppon gowing out aafter hiz zwilnix in a ground-car, and ov coers we had too let him go. He became confuezd, lost controle, let sumthhing--poscibly a zwilnix bom--ghet under hiz leding ej, and the wind and the trencose did the rest. He wauz Lageston ov Mercator 5--a good man, too. Whaut iz yor preshure nou?"

"Five hundred millimeterz."

"Slo doun. Nou, if u canot conker the tendency too beleve yor ise, u had better shut of yor vizsiplaits and wauch oanly the preshure gage."

"Beying wornd, I can disbeleve mi ise, I thhinc," and for a minnute or so comunicaishon ceest.

At a starteld oath from vanBuskerck, Kinnison glaanst intoo the plate and it neded aul hiz nerv too kepe from renching savvaujly at the controalz. For the whole plannet wauz tipping, lerching, spinning; girating madly in a frensy ov imposcibel moashonz; and even az the Patroalmen staerd a huge

mas ov sumthhing shot directly tooword the ship!

"Shere of, Kim!" yeld the Valereyan.

"Hoald it, Bus," caushond the Lenzman. "Dhats whaut weve got too expect, u no--I paast aul the stuf along az I got it. Evverithhing, dhat iz, exept dhat a zwilnic iz ennithhing or enniboddy dhat cumz aafter thhiyonite, and dhat a trenco iz ennithhing, annimal or vedgetabel, dhat livz on the plannet. QX, Tregoncy--cevven hundred, and Ime hoalding stedly--I hope!"

"Stedly enuf, but u ar too far awa for our landing beme too graasp u. Apli a littel drive.... Shift coers too yor left and down.... moer left.... up a trifel... dhats it.... slo down.... QX."

Dhare wauz a gentel, snubbing shoc, and Kinnison agane traanzlated too hiz
companyonz the strain'gerz thauts:

"We hav u. Cut of aul pouwer and loc aul controalz in nuetral. Doo nuthhing moer until I instruct u too cum out."

Kinnison obade; and, releest from aul juty, the vizsitorz staerd in fascinated increjulty intoo the vizsiplate. For dhat at which dha staerd wauz and must forever remane imposcibel ov jueplicaishon uppon Erth, and
oonly in imaginaishon can it be even faintly picchuerd. Imadgine aul the fantastic and monstrous crechuerz ov a delereyum-tremmenz vizhon incarnate
and acchuwal. Imadgine them beying herld throo the are, boern bi a dust-laden gale moer cevere dhan enny the grate Amerrikan dust-bole or Africaaz Sahaaraa Dezsert evver enjuerd. Imadgine this cene az beying vude,
not in an ordinary, sollid distorting mirror, but in wun whoose faulsly

reflecting contorz wer chain'ging constantly, widh no lodgical or intelligibel ridhm, intoo nu and evver moer grotesc worps. If imaginaishon haz bene eeqwal too the taasc, the rezultant iz whaut the vizsitorz tride too ce.

At ferst dha cood make nuthhing whautevver ov it. Uppon nerer aproche, houwevver, the gaastly distorshon groo les and the flatly levvel expans tooc on a cemblans ov rigiddity. Directly beneeth them dha made out sumthhing dhat looct like an imens, flat blister uppon the urtherwise fechuerles terrane. Tooword this blister dhare ship wauz draun.

A poert opend, dworft in aparrent cise too a mere windo bi the imencity ov the strucchure wun ov whoose entrancez it wauz. Throo this poert the vaast bulc ov the space-ship wauz waufted uppon the landing-barz, and behiand it the mity bronz-and-stele gaits clangd shut. The loc wauz pumpt too a vaccuwum, dhare wauz a his ov entering are, a spra ov vaporous liqwid baidhd evvery inch ov the vescelz cerface, and Kinnison felt agane the caam thaut ov Tregoncy, the Rigelleyan Lenzman:

"U ma nou open yor are-loc and emerj. If I hav red arite our atmosfere iz sufishmently like yor one in oxigen content so dhat u wil suffer no il efects from it. It ma be wel, houwevver, too ware yor armor until u hav becum acustomd too its concidderably grater dencity."

"Dhatl be a relefe!" grould vanBuskerx depe bace, when hiz chefe had traanzmitted the thaut. "Ive bene breething this thhin stuf so long Ime ghetting lite-hedded."

"Dhats grattichude!" Thorndike retorted. "Weve bene running our are so hevvy dhat aul the rest ov us ar thhic-hedded nou. If the are in this space-poert iz enny hevveyer dhan whaut weve bene havving, Ime gowing too ware

armor az long az we sta here!"

Kinnison opend the are-loc, found the atmosfere ov the space-poert satisfactory, and stept out; too be greted corjaly bi Tregoncy the Lenzman.

This--this aparishon wauz at leest erect, which wauz sumthhing. Hiz boddy

wauz the cise and shape ov an oil-drum. Beneeth this mascive cillinder ov a boddy wer foer short, blocky legz uppon which he waudeld about widh cerprising spede. Midwa up the boddy, abuv eche leg, dhare sprouted out a ten-foot-long, riathing, boanles, tentaccular arm, which tooword the extremmity braancht out intoo duzsens ov leser tentakelz, rain'ging in cise from hare-like tendrilz up too mity fin'gherz too inchez or moer in diyammeter. Tregoncese hed wauz meerly a necles, imobile, bulging dome in the center ov the flat upper cerface ov hiz boddy--a dome baring niather ise nor eerz, but oonly foer eeqwaly-spaist tuithles mouths and foer cin'ghel, flaring nostrilz.

But Kinnison felt no qwaam ov repugnans at Tregoncese monstrous aperans, for embedded in the lethery flesh ov wun arm wauz the Lenz. Here, the Lenzman nu, wauz in evvery ecenshal a MAN--and probbably a super-man.

"Welcum too Trengo, Kinnison ov Tellus," Tregoncy wauz saying. "While we ar nere naborz in space, I hav nevver happend too vizsit yor plannet. I hav encounterd Telureyanz here, ov coers, but dha wer not ov a tipe too be receevd az ghests."

"No, a zwilnic iz not a hi tipe ov Telureyan," Kinnison agrede. "I hav often wisht dhat I cood hav yor cens ov percepshon, if oonly for a da. It must be wunderfool indede too be abel too perceve a thhing az a whole, incide and out, insted ov havving vizhon stopt at its

cerface, az iz ourz. And too be independent ov lite or darcnes, nevver too be lost or in nede ov instruoments; too no deffiniatly whare u ar in relaishon too evvery uther obgett or thhing around u--dhat, I thhinc, iz the moast marvelous cens in the Univers."

"Just az I hav wisht for cite and hering, dhose too remarcabel and too us entiarly unnexplanabel cencez. I hav dreemd, I hav studdeded vulluemz, on cullor and sound. Cullor in art and in nachure; sound in music and in the voicez ov luvd wunz; but dha remane meningles cimbolz uppon a printed page. Houwevver, such thauts ar vane. In aul probabillity niather ov us wood enjoi the utherz eqwipment if he had it, and this interchainj iz ov no matereyal acistans too u."

In flashing thauts Kinnison then comunicated too the uther Lenzman evverithhing dhat had traanspiard cins he left Prime Bace.

"I perceve dhat yor Berghenhome iz ov standard foertene rating," Tregoncy ced, az the Telureyan finisht hiz stoery. "We hav cevveral spaerz here; and, while dha aul hav regulaishon Patrole mountingz, it wood take much les time too chainj mounts dhan too overhaul yor mashene."

"Dhats so, too--I nevver thaut ov the pocibillity ov yor havving spaerz on hand--and weve lost a lot ov time aulreddy. Hou long wil it take?"

"Wun shift ov labor too chainj mounts; at leest ate too rebild yorz enuf too be shure dhat it wil ghet u home."

"Weeyl chainj mounts, then, bi aul meenz. Ile caul the boiz...."

"Dhare iz no nede ov dhat. We ar amply eqwipt, and niather u humanz nor the Velanshanz cood handel our tuilz." Tregoncy made no vizsibel

moashon nor cood Kinnison perceve a brake in hiz thaut, but while he wauz convercing widh the Telureyan haaf a duzsen ov hiz blocky Rigelleyanz had dropt whatevver dha had bene doowing and wer scutling tooword the vizsiting ship. "Nou I must leve u for a time, az I hav wun moer trip too make this aafternoone."

"Iz dhare ennithhing I can doo too help u?" aasct Kinnison.

"No," came the deffinite neggative. "I wil retern in thre ourz, az wel befoer suncet the wind maix it imposcibel too ghet even a ground-car intoo the poert. I wil then sho u whi u can be ov littel acistans too us."

Kinnison spent dhose thre ourz wauching the Rigelleyanz werc uppon the Berghenhome; dhare wauz no nede for direcshon or advice. Dha nu whaut too doo and dha did it. Dhose tiny, hare-like fin'gherz, litteraly hundredz ov them at wuns, performd dellicate taasx widh cerpaacing nicety and dispach; when it came too hevvy taasx the larger didgits or even whole armz rapt themcelvz around the werc and, widh the sollid bracing ov the foer bloc-like legz, exerted foerchez dhat even vanBuskerx giyant frame cood not hav aproacht.

Az the end ov the thherd our neerd, Kinnison waucht widh a spi-ra--dhare wer no windose in Trencos space-poert--the leword groundwa ov the strucchure. In spite ov the weerd antix ov Trencos sun--girating, jumping, apering and disapering--he nu dhat it wauz gowing doun. Soone he sau the ground-car cumming in, scutling crabwise, nose intoo the wind but acchuwaly mooving baqword and ciadwise.

Auldho

the "ceying" wauz verry poor, at this cloce rainj the distorshon wauz minnimiazd and he cood ce dhat, like its parent craaft, the ground-car

wauz a blister. Its edgez acchuwaly tucht the ground aul around, sloping upword and over the top in such a smuidh revers kerv dhat the harder the wind blu the moer fermly wauz the veyikel prest downword.

The ground-flap came up just enuf too clere the carz top and the tiny craaft crept up. But befoer the landing-barz cood cese her the ground-car struc an eddy from the flap--an eddy in a mejum which, auldho gaishous, wauz at dhat veloscity practicaly sollid. Erth blaasted awa in torrents from the leding ej, the car leept boddily intoo the are and wauz flung awa, end over end. But Tregoncy, widh consumate craaftsmanship, foerst her flat agane, and agane she crauld up tooword the flap. This time the landing-barz tooc hoald and, auldho the littel vescel flutterd like a lefe in a gale, she wauz draun incide the poert and the flap went down behiand her. She wauz then sprade, and Tregoncy came out.

"Whi the spra?" thaut Kinnison, az the Rigelleyan enterd hiz controle-roome.

"Trencose. Much ov the life ov this plannet starts from aulmoast imperceptibel spoerz. It devellops rappidly, atainz concidderabel cise, and conshuemz ennithhing organnic it tutchez. This poert wauz depoppulated time aafter time befoer the leethal spra wauz devellopt. Nou tern yor spi-ra agane too the le ov the poert."

Juring the fu minnuets dhat had elapst the wind had increest in fury too such an extent dhat the verry ground wauz boiling awa from the traling ej in the chumulchuwous eddy formd dhare, ultraa-streemliand dho the space-poert wauz. And dhat eddy, far cerpaacing in viyolens enny storm none too Erth, wauz too the dennisenz ov Trencos a miraculously apering qwiyet spot in which dha cood stop and rest, ete and be eten.

A globular monstrosity had thrust sudopojaa depe intoo the boiling dert. Uther limz nou shot out, graasping a tumbelweedlike groath. The latter faut bac vishously, but cood make no impreshon uppon the rubbery integument ov the former. Then a smauler crechure, slipping doun the pollisht kerv ov the sheeld, wauz enmesht bi the tumbelwede. Dhare ensude the amasing spektakel ov wun-haaf ov the tumbelwede devouring the nucummer, even while its uther haaf wauz beying devourd bi the globe!

"Nou looc out farther.... stil farther," directed Tregoncy.

"I caant. Thhingz take on imposcibel moashonz and becum so distorted az too be unrecognizabel."

"Exactly. If u sau a zwilnic out dhare, whare wood u shoote?"

"At him, I supose--whi?"

"Becauz if u shot at whare u thhinc u ce him, not oonly wood u mis him, but the beme mite verry wel swing around and enter yor one bac. Menny men hav bene kild bi dhare one wepponz in preciasly dhat fashon. Cins we no, not oonly whaut the obgett iz, but exactly whare it iz, we can corect our lianz ov ame for the then existing valluse ov distorshon. This iz ov coers the rezon whi we Rigelleyanz and uther racez posescing the cens ov percepshon ar the oonly wunz whoo can efishmently polece this plannet."

"Rezon enuf, Ide sa, from whaut Ive cene," and cilens fel.

For minnuets the too Lenzmen waucht, while crechuerz ov a hundred kiandz streemd intoo the le ov the space-poert and kild and ate eche uther.

Finally sumthhing came crawling up-wind, against dhat unnimadginabel gale;
a flatly streemliand crechure resembling sumwhaut a tertel, but shaipt az wauz the ground-car. Thrusting doun long, hooct flipperz intoo the dert it incht along, paying no atenshon too the scoerz ov lescer crechuerz whoo herld themcelvz uppon its armord bac, until it wauz cloce beside the largest footbaul-shaipt crechure in the eddy. Then, liatning-like, it drove a nedel-sharp organ at leest ate inchez intoo the lethery mas ov its victim. Strugling convulciavly, the stricken thhing lifted the tertel a fracshon ov an inch--and boath wer herld instantly out ov cite; the livving baul stil eting a lushous bit ov pra despite the fact dhat it wauz impaild uppon the ponyard ov the tertel and wauz certainly duimd.

"Good Lord, whaut wauz dhat?" exclaimd Kinnison.

"The flat? Dhat wauz a representative ov Trencose hiyest life-form. It ma devellop a civilizaishon in time--it iz qwite intelligent nou."

"But the difficultese!" protested the Telureyan. "Bilding cittese, even hoamz...."

"Niather cittese nor hoamz ar nescesary here, nor even desirabel. Whi bild? Nuthhing iz or can be fixt on this plannet, and cins wun place iz exactly like evvery uther place, whi wish too remane in enny wun particcular spot? Dha doo verry wel, in dhare one mobile wa. Here, u wil notice, cumz the rane."

The rane came--forty-foer inchez per our ov rane--and the incessant liatning. The dert became ferst mud, then muddy wauter beying drivven in feersly fliying gouts and mascez. Nou, in the le ov the space-poert, the outlandish dennisenz ov Trencow wer burrowing doun intoo the mud--stil eting eche uther and ennithhing els dhat came within reche.

The wauter groo deper and deper, its upper cerface nou whipt intoo frantic sheets ov spra. The strucchure wauz nou aflote, and Kinnison sau widh astonishment dhat, smaual az wauz the expoazd cerface and flatly kervd, yet it wauz pooling throo the wauter at friatfool spede the wide-spredding stele ce-ancorz which wer hoalding its hed too the gale.

"Widh no refferens points hou doo u no whare yor gowing?" he demaanded.

"We niather no nor care," responded Tregoncy, widh a mental shrug. "We ar like the natiavz in dhat. Cins wun spot iz like evvery uther spot, whi chuse betwene them?"

"Whaut a werld--*whaut* a werld! Houwevver, I am beghinning too understand whi thhiyonite iz so expencive," and, overwhelmed bi the evver-increcing fury raging outcide, Kinnison saut hiz bunc.

Morning came, a reversal ov the preveyous evening. The liqwid evapporated, the mud dride, the flat-growing vegetaishon sprang up widh shocking spede, the annimalz emerjd and agane ate and wer eten.

And evenchuwaly came Tregoncese anounsment dhat it wauz aulmoast noone, and dhat nou, for haaf an our or so, it wood be caam enuf for the space-ship too leve the poert.

"U ar shure dhat I wood be ov no help too u?" aasct the Rigelleyan, haaf-pledingly.

"Sorry, Tregency, but Ime afrade u woodnt fit intoo mi maitrix enny better dhan I wood intoo yorz. But heerz the spoole I toald u about. If u wil take it too yor bace on yor next relefe u wil doo civilizaishon and the Patrole moer good dhan u cood bi cumming with us. Thanx for the Berghenhome, which iz cuvverd bi credits, and thanx a lot for yor help and kertecy, which caant be cuvverd. Goodbi," and the nou entiarly space-werthy craaft shot out throo the poert, throo Trencose nocshously peculeyar atmosfere, and intoo the vaccuwum ov space.

CHAPTER 11

Grand Bace

At sum littel distans from the gallaxy, yet shackeld too it bi the flexibel yet pouwerfool bondz ov gravitaishon, the smaul but cumfortabel plannet uppon which wauz Helmuths bace cerceld about its parent sun.

This

plannet had bene chosen with the utmoast care, and its locaishon wauz a ceecret garded gellously indede. Scaersly wun in a milleyon ov Boscoanz teming mirreyadz nu even dhat such a plannet existed; and ov the chosen fu whoo had evver bene aasct too vizsit it, fuwer stil bi far had bene aloud too leve it.

Grand Bace cuvverd hundredz ov sqware mialz ov dhat plannets cerface. It wauz eqwipt with aul the armz and armament none too the military geenyus ov the age; and in the exact center ov dhat imens cittadel dhare arose a glittering metallic dome.

The incide cerface ov dhat dome wauz liand with vizsiplaits and comunicatorz, hundredz ov thouzandz ov them. Mialz ov catwauz clung precareyously too the inword-kerving waul. Controle pannelz and instrooment boerdz cuvverd the floer in banx and teerz, with oanly narro runwase

betwene them. And whaut a personel! Dhare wer Solaareyanz,
Creveenyanz,
Cirreyanz. Dhare wer Antareyanz, Vandemareyanz, Arcchureyanz. Dhare
wer
representatiavz ov scoerz, yes, hundredz ov uther solar cistemz ov the
gallaxy.

But whautevver dhare external form dha wer aul breetherz ov oxigen and
dha wer aul nurrisht bi worm, red blud. Aulso, dha wer aul alike
mentaly. Eche had wun hiz prezsent hi place bi trampling doun dhose
beneeth him and bi pooling doun dhose abuv him in the braanch too
which
he had ferst belongd ov the "pirate" organizaishon. Eche wauz
carracteriazd bi a total lac ov scroopel; bi a coaldly ruithles pashon
for pouwer and place.

Kinnison had bene emminently corect in hiz belefe dhat Boscoanz wauz
not
a "pirate outfit" in enny ordinary cens ov the werd, but even hiz ideyaaz
ov its troo nachure fel far short indede ov the truth. It wauz a culchure
aulreddy inter-galactic in scope, but wun bilt uppon ideyalz diyametricaly
opoazd too dhose ov the civilizaishon represented bi the Galactic Patrole.

It wauz a tirrorany, an absolute monnarky, a despotizm not even remoatly
aproximated bi the dictatorships ov erleyer agez. It had oanly wun
crede--"The end justifise the meenz." Ennithhing--litteraly *ennithhing at*
aul--dhat projuest the desiard rezult wauz comendabel; too fale wauz the
oanly crime. The suxesfool naimd dhare one rewordz; dhose whoo faild
wer discipliand widh an impersonal, ridgid ceverrity exactly proporshonal
too the magnichude ov dhare faluerz.

Dhaerfoer no weeclingz dwelt within dhat fortres; and ov aul its coald,
hard, ruithles croo far and awa the coaldest, hardest, and moast ruithles

wauz Helmuth, the "speker for Boscone," whoo sat at the grate desc in the doamz geyometrical center. This individjuwal wauz aulmoast human in form and

bild, springing az he did from a plannet cloasly aproximating Erth in mas, atmosfere, and climate. Indede, oonly hiz genneral, aul-pervasive oraa ov blunes boer witnes too the fact dhat he wauz not a native ov Tellus.

Hiz ise wer blu, hiz hare wauz blu, and even hiz skin wauz faintly blu beneeth its cote ov ultraa-viyolet tan. Hiz intently dinammic personallity faerly rajated blunes--not the gentel blu ov an Erthly ski, not the sweetly innocuwous blu ov an Erthly flouwer; but the keenly merciles blu ov a deltaa-ra, the coald and bitter blu ov a Polar iasberg, the unyeelding, inflexibel blu ov qwencht and draun tungsten-cromeyum stele.

Nou a froun sat hevvely uppon hiz arrogantly patrishan face az hiz ise boerd intoo the plate befoer him, from the bace ov which wer ishuwing the werdz beying spoken bi the acistant picchuerd in its depe cerface:

"...the fifth dove intoo the depest oashan ov Corvenaa 2, in the depths ov which aul rase ar uesles. The ships which follode hav not az yet repoerted, but dha wil doo so az soone az dha hav completed dhare mishon. No trace ov the cixth haz bene found, and it iz dhaerfoer ashuemd dhat it wauz destroid...."

"Whoo ashuemz so?" demaanded Helmuth, coaldly. "Dhare iz no justificaishon whautevver for such an asumpshon. Go on!"

"The Lenzman, if dhare iz wun and if he iz alive, must dhaerfoer be in the fifth ship, which iz about too be taken."

"Yor repoert iz niather complete nor conclucive, and I doo not at aul aproove ov yor intimaishon dhat the Lenzman iz cimply a figment ov mi imaginaishon. Dhat it wauz a Lenzman iz the oonly poscibel lodgical concluezhon--nun uther ov the Patrole foercez cood hav dun whaut haz bene dun. Poschulating hiz reyallity, it ceemz too me dhat insted ov beying a bare pocibillity, it iz hily probbabel dhat he haz agane escaipt us, and agane in wun ov our one vescelz--this time in the wun u hav so conveyently ashuemd too hav bene destroid. Hav u cercht the line ov flite?"

"Yes, cer. Evverithhing in space and evvery plannet within reche ov dhat line haz bene exammiand widh care; exept, ov coers, Velanshaa and Trengo."

"Velanshaa iz, for the time beying, unnimportant. The cixth ship left Velanshaa and did not go bac dhare. Whi Trengo?" and Helmuth prest a cerese ov buttonz. "Aa, I ce.... Too recapitchulate, wun ship, the wun which in aul probabillity iz nou carreying the Lenzman, iz stil unnaccounted for. *Whare iz it?* We no dhat it haz not landed uppon or nere enny Solaareyan plannet, and mezhuerz ar beying taken too ce too it dhat it duz not land uppon or nere enny plannet ov Civilizaishon.' Nou, I thhinc, it haz becum nescenary too come dhat plannet Trengo, inch bi inch."

"But cer, hou...." began the ancshous-ide underling.

"When did it becum nescenary too drau diyagramz and make blu-prints for u?" demaanded Helmuth, harshly. "We hav ships mand bi Ordovix and uther racez havving the cens ov percepshon. Fiand out whare dha ar and ghet them dhare at fool blaast!" and he puncht a button, too replace the immagine uppon hiz plate bi anuther.

"It haz nou becum ov parramount importans dhat we complete our nollej ov the Lenz ov the Patrole," he began, widhout salutaishon or preyambel. "Hav u traist its origin yet?"

"I beleve so, but I doo not certainly no. It haz pruivd too be a taasc ov such difficulty...."

"If it had bene an esy wun I wood not hav made a speshal acianment ov it too u. Go on!"

"Evverithhing ceemz too point too the plannet Areezhaa, ov which I can lern nuthhing deffinite whautevver exept...."

"Just a moment!" Helmuth puncht moer buttonz and liscend. "Unnexplord.... un'none.... shund bi aul spaismen...."

"Superstishon, a?" he snapt. "Anuther ov dhose haunted plannets?"

"Sumthhing moer dhan ordinary spaismenz superstishon, cer, but just whaut I hav not bene abel too discuver. Bi coming mi department I mannajd too make up a croo ov dhose whoo iather wer not afrade ov it or had nevver herd ov it. Dhat croo iz nou on roote dhare."

"Whoome hav we in dhat cector ov space? I fiand it desirabel too chec yor fiandingz."

The department hed reeld of a list ov naimz and numberz, which Helmuth concidderd at length.

"Ghildersleve, the Valereyan," he decided. "He iz a good man, cumming along faast. Acide from a ferm belefe in hiz one peculeyar godz, he haz shone no cianz ov weecnes. U concidderd him?"

"Certainly." The henchman, az coald az hiz icy chefe, nu dhat explanaishonz wood not sattisfi Helmuth, dhaerfoer he offerd nun. "He iz rading at the moment, but I wil poot u on him if u like."

"Doo so," and uppon Helmuths plate dhare apeerd a depe-space cene ov rapine and pillage.

The convoiying Patrole crooser had aulreddy bene blaasted out ov existens; oonly a fu iadly drifting mascez ov daibry remaind too sho dhat it had evver bene. Nedel-beemz wer at werc, and soone the merchantman hung inert and helples. The piraits, scorning too use the emergency inlet poert, cimply blaasted awa the entire entrans pannel. Then dha boerded, an armord swarm; flaming DeLammeterz spredding deth and destrucshon befoer them.

The salorz, outnumberd az dha wer and over-armd, faut herowicaly--but ueslesly. In griups and cin'gly dha fel; dhose whoo wer not aulreddy ded beying callously tost out intoo space in slitted space-suets and widh smasht driverz. Oonly the yun'gher wimmen--the schuwardecez, the nercez, the wun or too such among the fu pascen'gerz--wer taken az booty; aul utherz shaerd the fate ov the croo.

Then, the ship plunderd from nose too aafter-gets and evvery artikel or thhing ov vallu tranz-shipt, the rader droo of, baidhd in the blu-white glare ov the bomz dhat wer destroyiny evvery trace ov the merchant-ships existens. Then and oonly then did Helmuth revele himcelf too Ghildersleve.

"A good, clene job ov werc, Captane," he comended. "Nou, hou wood u like too vizsit Areezhaa for me--for *me*, direct?"

A pallor overspred the normaly ruddy face ov the Valereyan and an uncontrolabel tremmor shooc hiz giyant frame. But az he concidderd the

implicashonz rezident in Helmuths concluding frase he lict hiz lips and spoke.

"I hate too sa no, cer, if u order me too and if dhare wauz enny wa ov making mi croo doo it. But we wer nere dhare wuns, cer, and we.... I... dha.... it wel, cer, I *sau* thhingz, cer, and I wauz.... wauz *wornd*, cer!"

"Sau whaut? And wauz wornd ov whaut?"

"I caant describe whaut I sau, cer. I caant even thhinc ov it in thauts dhat mene ennithing. Az for the worning, dho, it wauz verry deffinite, cer. I wauz toald verry plainly dhat if I evver go nere dhat plannet agane I wil di a wers deth dhan enny I hav delt out too enny uther livving beying."

"But u wil go dhare agane?"

"I tel u, cer, dhat the croo wil not doo it," Ghildersleve replide, dogghedly. "Even if I wer ancshous too go, evvery man aboard wil mutiny if I tri it."

"Caul them in rite nou and tel them dhat u hav bene orderd too Areezhaa."

The captane did so, but he had scaersly started too tauc when he wauz stopt in no uncertane fashon bi hiz ferst officer--aulso ov coers a Valereyan--whoo poold hiz DeLammeter and spoke savvaijly:

"Cut it, Ghil! We ar not gowing too Areezhaa. I wauz widh u befoer, u no. Cet coers within five points ov dhat akerst plannet and I blaast u whare u cit!"

"Helmuth, speking for Boscone!" ript from the hedqworterz speker.

"This iz rankest mutiny. U no the pennalty, doo u not?"

"Certainly I doo--whaut ov it?" The ferst officer snapt bac.

"Supose dhat I *tel* u too go too Areezhaa?" Helmuths vois wauz nou soft and cilky, but instinct widh dedly mennace.

"In dhat cace I *tel* u too go too the nianth hel--or too Areezhaa, a milleyon tiamz wers!"

"Whaut? U dare speke dhus too *me*?" demaanded the arch-pirate, shere amaizment at the fellose audascity blanketing hiz rising an'gher.

"I so dare," declaerd the rebbel, brasen defiyans and unnaulterabel rezolv in evvery line ov hiz hard boddy and in evvery linyament ov hiz hard face.

"Aul u can doo iz kil us. U can order out enuf ships too blaast us out ov the eethher, but dhats aul u *can* doo. Dhat wood be oonly deth and wede hav the fun ov taking a lot ov the boiz along widh us. If we go too Areezhaa, dho, it wood be different--verry, *verry* different. No, Helmuth, and I thro this in yor teeth: if I evver go nere Areezhaa agane it wil be in a ship in which u, Helmuth, in person, ar citting at the controalz. If u thhinc this iz an empty dare and doant like it, doant take it. Cend on yor dogz!"

"Dhat wil doo! Repoert yorcelvz too Bace D under..." Then Helmuths flare ov an'gher paast and hiz coald rezon tooc charj. Here wauz sumthhing utterly unprescedented; an entire croo ov the hardest-bitten marauderz in space offering open and baerfaist mutiny--no, not mutiny, but acchuwal rebelleyon--too him, Helmuth, in hiz verry person. And not a tippical, sculking, caerfooly-pland uprising, but the imoovably brasen desperaishon ov men making an ultimaitly laast-dich stand. Trooly, it must be a pouwerfool superstishon indede, too make dhat croo ov hard-boild

helleyonz chuse certane deth raather dhan face agane the imadginary--dha *must* be imadginary--perrilz ov a plannet un'none too and unnexplord bi Boscoanz planetograferz. But dha wer, aafter aul, ordinary space-men, ov littel mental foers and ov smaual reyal abillity. Even so, it wauz cleerly indicated dhat in this cace precippitate acshon wauz too be avoided. Dhaerfoer he went on caamly and aulmoast widhout a brake.

"Cancel

aul this dhat haz bene spoken and dhat haz taken place. Continnu widh yor oridginal orderz pending ferther investigashon," and swicht hiz plate bac too the department hed.

"I hav chect yor concluezhonz and hav found them corect," he anounst, az dho nuthhing at aul out ov the wa had transpiard. "U did wel in cending a ship too investigate. No matter whare I am or whaut I am doowing, notifi me instantly at the ferst cine ov iregularrity in the behaveyor ov enny member ov dhat ships personel."

Nor wauz dhat caul long in cumming. The caerfooly-celected croo--celected for complete lac ov nollej ov the dred plannet which wauz dhare objective--saild along in blisfool ignorans, boath ov the reyal mening ov dhare mishon and ov whaut wauz too be its gaastly end. Soone aafter Helmuths unsatisfactory intervuu widh Ghildersleve and hiz mate, the lucles exploering vescel reecht the barreyer which the Areezhanz had cet around dhare cistem and throo which no uninvited strain'ger wauz aloud too paas.

The fre-flying ship struc dhat frale barreyer and stopt. In the instant ov contact a wave ov mental foers fludded the miand ov the captane, whoo, gibbering widh shere, starc, pannic terror, flasht hiz vescel awa from dhat horror-impregnated waul and herld caul aafter frantic caul along hiz beme, bac too hedqworterz. Hiz ferst caul, in the instant ov recepshon, wauz relade too Helmuth at hiz central desc.

"Steddy, man; repoert intelligently!" dhat werthy snapt, and hiz ise, larj nou uppon the couwering captainz plate, boerd steddily, hipnotticaly intoo dhose ov the expedishonz leder. "Pool yorcelf tooghether and tel me exactly whaut happend. Evverithhing!"

"Wel, cer, when we struc sumthhing--a screne ov sum sort--and stopt, sumthhing came aboard. It wauz... o... i-i-e-e!" hiz vois rose too a shreke, but under Helmuths domminating glare he subcided qwicly and went on. "A monster, cer, if dhare evver wauz wun. A fire-breathing demon, cer, widh teeth and clauz and croowely barbd tale. He spoke too me in mi one Creveenyan lan'gwage. He ced...."

"Nevver miand whaut he ced. I did not here it, but I can ghes whaut it wauz. He threttend u widh deth in sum horribel fashon, did he not?" and the coaldly ironnical toanz did moer too restoer the shaking manz eqwilibreyum dhan reemz ov remonstrans cood hav dun.

"Wel, yes, dhat wauz about the cise ov it, cer," he admitted.

"And duz dhat sound rezonabel too u, the comaander ov a ferst-claas battelship ov Boscoanz Flete?" sneerd Helmuth.

"Wel, cer, poot on dhat wa, it duz ceme a bit far-fecht," the captane replide, shepishly.

"It iz far-fecht." The director, in the saifty ov hiz dome, cood afoerd too be pozsitive. "We doo not no exactly whaut cauzd dhat halucinaishon, aparishon, or whautevver it wauz--u wer the oonly wun whoo cood ce it, aparrently; it certainly wauz not vizsibel on our maaster-plaits. It wauz probbably sum form ov sugeschon or hipnotizm; and

u no az wel az we doo dhat enny sugeschon can be throne of bi a deffiniatly opoazd wil. But u did not opose it, did u?"

"No, cer, I didnt hav time."

"Nor did u hav yor screenz out, nor automatic recorderz on the trip. Not much ov ennithhing, in fact... I thhinc dhat u had better repoert bac here, at fool blaast."

"O, no, cer--plese!" He nu whaut rewordz wer graanted too faluerz, and Helmuths caerfooly chosen werdz had aulreddy projuest the efect desiard bi dhare speker. "Dha tooc me bi cerprise then, but Ile go throo this next time."

"Verry wel, I wil ghiv u wun moer chaans. When u ghet cloce too the barreyer, or whautevver it iz, go inert and poot out aul yor screenz. Man yor plaits and wepponz, for whautevver can hipnotise can be kild. Go ahed at fool blaast, widh aul the axeleraishon u can ghet. Crash throo ennithhing dhat oposez u, and beme ennithhing dhat u can detect or ce. Can u thhinc ov ennithhing els?"

"Dhat shood be sufisent, cer." The captainz eqwanimmity wauz compleetly restoerd, nou dhat the worlike preparaishonz wer making moer and moer nebbulous the sudden, but cin'ghel, thaut wave ov the Areezhan.

"Procede!"

The plan wauz carrede out too the letter. This time the pirate craaft struc the frale barreyer inert, and its slite foers offerd no tan'gibel bar too the prodidjous mas ov mettal. But this time, cins the barreyer wauz acchuwaly paast, dhare wauz no mental worning and no pocibility ov retrete.

Menny men hav skelletonz in dhare clozsets. Menny hav fobeyaaz, thhingz ov which dha ar consously afrade. Menny utherz hav them, not consously, but berrede depe in the subconsous; specterz which celdom or nevver rise abuv the threshoald ov percepshon. Evvery cenchent beying haz, if not such specterz az these, at leest a fu active or latent disliax, dredz, or outrite feerz. This iz troo, no matter hou qwiyet and peesfool a life the beying haz led.

These piraits, houwevver, wer the scum ov space. Dha wer beyingz ov hard and crimmlial liavz and ov viyolent and laules pashonz. Dhare haits and consens-cering deedz had bene lejon, dhare count ov criamz long, blac, and hidjous. Dhaerfoer, slite indede wauz the effort reqwiard too locate in dhare consous miandz--too sa nuthhing ov the nocshous depths ov dhare subconsous wunz--vizhonz ov horror fit too blaast stron'gher intelects dhan dhaerz. And dhat iz exactly whaut the Areezhan Wauchman did. From eche piraits total miand, a verritabel charnel pit, he extracted the foulest, moast unspecabel dregz, the deeply hidden thhingz ov which the subject wauz in the gratest fere. Ov these thhingz he formd a whole ov horror incomprehencibel and increddibel, and this gaastly whole he made incarnate and vizsibel too the pirate whoo wauz its unwilling parent; az vizsibel az dho it wer compoazd ov flesh and blud, ov copper and stele. Iz it enny wunder dhat eche member ov dhat outlau croo, ceying such an abhorrent matereyalizaishon, went instantly mad?

It iz ov no uce too go intoo the horibly monstrous shaips ov the thhingz, even wer it poscibel; for eche ov them wauz vizsibel too oanly wun man, and nun ov them wauz vizsibel too dhose whoo looct on from the saifty ov the distant bace. Too them the entire croo cimply abandond dhare poasts and atact eche uther, censlesly and in insane frensy, widh whautevver wepponz came ferst too hand. Indede, menny ov them faut bare-handed,

wepponz hanging unuezd in dhare belts, gouging, beting, clauwing, biting until life had bene riavd horribly awa. In uthur parts ov the ship DeLammeterz flaimd breefly, barz crasht crunchingly, niavz and axez sheerd and trenchantly bit. And soone it wauz over--aulmoast. The pilot wauz stil alive, unmooving and ridgid at hiz controalz.

Then he, too, muivd; rappidly and perpoasfooly. He cut in the Berghenhome, spun the ship around, shuvd her driverz up too maximum blaast, and steddede her intoo an exact coers--and when Helmuth red dhat coers even hiz iarn nervz faild him momentarily. For the ship wauz fliying, not for its one home poert, but directly tooword Grand Bace, the gellously ceecret plannet whoose spaishal cowordinaits niather dhat pilot nor enny uthur crechure ov the piraits ranc and file had evver none!

Helmuth snapt out orderz, too which the pilot gave no hede. Hiz vois--for the ferst time in hiz carere--rose too a houl, but the pilot stil pade no atenshon. Insted, ise bulging widh horror and fin'gherz kervd tensly intoo verritabel tallonz, he reerd uprite uppon hiz bench and leept az dho too cluch and too rend sum unnutterably apauling fo. He leept over hiz boerd intoo thhin and empty are. He came doun a-spraul in a mase ov naked, hi-potenshal bus-barz. Hiz boddy vannisht in a flash ov cering flame and a cloud ov thhic and grecy smoke.

The bus-barz cleerd themcelvz ov dhare groosum "short" and the grate ship, mand nou entiarly bi corpcez, boerd on.

"...stinking clebots, the lilly-livverd couwardz!" the department hed, whoo had aulso bene yelling orderz, wauz stil pounding hiz desc and yelling. "If dhare *dhat* afrade--go crasy and kil eche uthur widhout beying tucht--Ile hav too go micelf...."

"No, Sanstede," Helmuth interrupted kerty. "U wil not hav too go. Dhare iz, aafter aul, I thhinc, sumthhing dhare--sumthhing dhat u ma not be abel too handel. U ce, u mist the wun ecenshal ke fact." He referd too the coers, the cetting ov which had shaken him too the verry coer.

"Let be," he cilenst the utherz flud ov qweschon and protest. "It wood cerv no perpoce too detale it too u nou. Hav the ship taken bac too poert."

Helmuth nu nou dhat it wauz not superstishon dhat made spaismen shun Areezhaa. He nu dhat, from hiz standpoint at leest, dhare wauz sumthhing verry cereyously amis. But he had not the faintest concepshon ov the reyal cichuwaishon, nor ov the reyal and terribel pouwer which the Areezhanz cood, and uppon ocaizhon wood, weeld.

CHAPTER 12

Kinnison Bringz Home the Bacon

Helmuth sat at hiz desc, thhinking; thhinking widh aul the coaldly analittical precizhon ov which he wauz capabel.

This Lenzman wauz boath pouwerfool and tremendously rezorsfool. The cozmic-ennergy drive, devellopt bi the ciyens ov a werld about which the Patrole nu nuthhing, wauz Boscoanz wun grate item ov supereyorrity. If the

Patrole cood be kept in ignorans ov dhat drive the struggel wood be over in a yere; the culchure ov the iarn hand wood be unchallenjd throowout the galaxy. If, houwevver, the Patrole shood suxede in lerning Boscoanz top ceecret, the wor betwene the too culchuerz mite wel be prolongd indeffiniatly. This Lenzman nu dhat ceecret and wauz stil at larj, ov dhat he wauz aul too certane. Dhaerfoer the Lenzman

must be destroyed. And that brought up the Lenz.

What was it? A peculiar bauble indeed; impossible of replication because of its subtlety of intra-atomic arrangement, and possessing peculiar and dire potentialities. The old belief that no man except a Lenzman could wear a Lenz was true--he had proved it. The Lenz must account in some way for the outstanding ability of the Lenzman, and it must tie in, somehow, with both Areezaa and the throat-screens. The Lenz was the thing possessed by the Patrol which his one foe could not have. He must and would have it, for it was undoubtedly a powerful arm. Not to be compared, of course, with that one monopoly of cosmic energy--but that monopoly was now threatened, and seriously. That Lenzman *must be destroyed*.

But how? It was easy to say "Come Trenc, inch by inch," but doing it would prove a Herculean task. Suppose that the Lenzman should again escape, in that volume of so fantastically distorted matter? He had already escaped twice, in much clearer ether than Trencose. However, if his information should never get back to Prime Base little harm would be done, and ships had been thrown around every solar system the Lenzman could reach. Not even a grain-of-dust meteorite could pass those screens without detection. So much for the Lenzman. Now about getting the secret of the Lenz.

Again, how? There was *something* upon Areezaa; something connected in some way with the Lenz and with that--possibly also with those

thaut-screenz....

Hiz miand flasht bac over the unnorthodox manner ov hiz aqwiarment ov dhose devicez--unnorthodox in dhat he had niather stolen them nor merderd dhare inventor. A person had cum too him widh paas-werdz and credenshalz which cood not be ignoerd; had handed him a hevvely-ceeld contaner, which, he ced, had cum from a plannet naimd Ploor; had remarct cazhuwaly "Thaut-screne dataa--ule no when u nede em"; and had gon.

Whautevver the Areezhan wauz, it had mental pouwer; ov dhat fact dhare cood be no dout. Out ov the fool sferre ov space, whaut wauz the mathhemattical probabillity dhat the pilot ov dhat dethship wood hav cet bi axident hiz coers so exactly uppon Grand Bace? Vannishingly smaul. Tretchery wood not explane the facts--not oonly had the pilot bene compleetly insane when he lade the coers, but aulso *he did not no whare Grand Bace wauz*.

Az an explanaishon mental foers alone ceemd fantastic, but no uther az yet presented itcelf az a pocibillity. Aulso, it wauz supoerted bi the unbelevabel, the absolutely deffinite refuzal ov Ghildersleevz normaly feerles croo even too aproche the plannet. It wood take an unherd-ov mental foers so too afect such crime-hardend vetteranz.

Helmuth wauz not wun too underestimate an ennemy. Wauz dhare a man beneeth dhat dome, save himcelf, ov sufishent mental calliber too undertake the nou nescenary mishon too Areezhaa? Dhare wauz not. He himcelf had the finest miand on the plannet; els dhat uther had depoazd him long cins and had sat at the controle desc himcelf. He wauz subliamly confident dhat no outside thaut cood brake doun *hiz* deffiniatly opoazd wil--and beciadz, dhare wer the thaut-screenz, the ceecret ov which he had not

az yet shaerd widh enniwun. The time had cum too use dhose screenz.

It haz aulreddy bene made clere dhat Helmuth wauz not a foole. No moer wauz

he a couward. If he himcelf cood best ov aul hiz foers doo a thhing, dhat thhing he did; widh the coaldly ruithles effishency dhat marct alike hiz evvery acshon and hiz evvery thaut.

Hou shood he go? Shood he axept dhat challenj, and take Ghildersleevz rebelleyous croo ov cut-throats too Areezhaa? No. In the event ov an outcum short ov complete suxes, it wood not doo too loose face befoer dhat band ov ruffeyanz. Moerover, the ideyaa ov such a croo gowing insane behiand him wauz not wun too be rellisht. He wood go alone.

"Wolmarc, cum too the center," he orderd. When dhat werthy apeerd he went on: "Be ceted, az this iz too be a cereyous conferens. I hav waucht widh admiraishon and apreesheyaishon, az wel az sum miald amuezment, the devellopment ov yor lianz ov informaishon; espeshaly dhose concerning afaerz which ar moast distinctly not in yor department. Dha ar, houwevver, efishent--u aulreddy no exactly whaut haz happend." A staitment this, in no wise a qweschon.

"Yes, cer," qwiyetly. Wolmarc wauz sumwhaut taken abac, but not at aul abasht.

"Dhat iz the rezon u ar here nou. I thurroly aproove ov u. I am leving the plannet for a fu dase, and u ar the best man in the organizaishon too take charj in mi abcens."

"I suspected dhat u wood be leving, cer."

"I no u did: but I am nou informing u, meerly too make shure dhat u devellop no peculeyar ideyaaaz in mi abcens, dhat dhare ar at leest a

fu thhingz which u doo not suspect at aul. Dhat safe, for instans," nodding tooword a peculeyarily shimmering globe ov foers ancoring itcelf in are. "Even yor hily efishent spi cistem haz not bene abel too lern a thhing about dhat."

"No, cer, we hav not--yet," he cood not forbare adding.

"Nor wil u, widh enny skil or foers none too man. But kepe on triying, it amusez me. I no, u ce, ov aul yor atempts. But too ghet on. I nou sa, and for yor one good I advise u too beleve, dhat falure uppon mi part too retern too this desc wil proove hily unforchunate for u."

"I beleve dhat, cer. Enny man ov intelligens wood make such arainjment, if he cood. But cer, supose dhat the Areezhanz...."

"If yor if he could implise a dout, act uppon it and lern wizdom," Helmuth adviazd him coaldly. "U shood no bi this time dhat I niather gambel nor bluf. I hav made arainjments too protect micelf, boath from ennemese, such az the Areezhanz and the Patrole, and from frendz, such az ambishous yungsterz whoo ar triying too suplaant me. If I wer not entiarly confident ov ghetting bac here saifly, mi dere Wolmarc, I wood not go."

"U misunderstand me, cer. Reyaly, I hav no ideyaa ov suplaanting u."

"Not until u ghet a good oporchunity, u mene--I understand u thurroly; and, az I hav ced befoer, I aproove ov u. Go ahed widh aul yor planz. I hav kept at leest wun lap ahed ov u so far, and if the time shood evver cum when I can no lon'gher doo so, I shal no lon'gher be fit too speke for Boscone. U understand, ov coers, dhat the moast important matter nou in werc iz the cerch for the Lenzman, ov which the coming ov Trencos and the screning ov the Patroalz cistemz ar oanly too fasez?"

"Yes, cer."

"Verry wel. I can, I thhinc, leve matterz in yor handz. If ennithhing reyaly cereyous cumz up, such az a devellopment in the Lenzman cace, let me no at wuns. Utherwise doo not caul me. Take the desc," and Helmuth strode awa.

He wauz whisct too the space-poert, whare dhare awated him hiz speshal speedster, eqwipt long cins widh diverz and sundry itemz ov equipment whoose funcshonz wer none oonly too himcelf.

For him the trip too Areezhaa wauz niather long nor tejus. The littel racer wauz folly automattic, and az it toer throo space he werct az cooly and efishmently az he wauz woant too doo at hiz desc. Indede, moer so, for here he cood concentrate widhout interupshon. Menny wer the matterz he pland and the decizhonz he made, the while hiz portfoleyo ov noats groo thhicker and thhicker.

Az he neerd hiz destinaishon he poot awa hiz werc, acchuwated hiz speshal meccanizms, and wated. When the speedster struc the barreyer and stopt Helmuth woer a faint, hard smile; but dhat smile disapeerd widh a snap az a thaut crasht intoo hiz suposedly sheelded brane.

"U ar cerpriazd dhat yor thaut-screenz ar not efective?" The thaut wauz coaldly contempchuwous. "I no in escens whaut the mescen'ger from Ploor toald u concerning them when he gave them too u; but he spoke in ignorans. We ov Areezhaa no thaut in a wa dhat no member ov hiz race iz nou or ever wil be abel too understand.

"No, Helmuth, dhat we Areezhanz doo not waunt and wil not tollerate unninvited vizsitorz. Yor prezsens iz particullarly distaistfool,

representing az u doo a despottic, degrading, and anty-soashal culchure. Evil and good ar ov coers puerly rellative, so it canot be ced in absolute termz dhat yor culchure iz evil. It iz, houwevver, baist uppon grede, haitred, corrupshon, viyolens, and fere. Justice it duz not reccognise, nor mercy, nor truith exopt az a ciyentiffic utillity. It iz bacicaly opoazd too libberty. Nou libberty--ov person, ov thaut, ov acshon--iz the basic and the gole ov the civilizaishon too which u ar opoazd, and widh which enny reyaly filosoffical miand must fiand itcelf in acord.

"Inflated overweningly bi yor worpt and perverted ideyaaz, bi yor momentary suxes in domminating yor handfool ov minyonz, tide too u bi bondz ov grede, ov pashon, and ov crime, u cum here too rest from us the ceecret ov the Lenz; from us, a race az much aibler dhan yorz az we ar oalder--a raisheyo ov milleyonz too wun.

"U concidder yorcelf coald, hard, ruithles. Compaerd too me, u ar weke, soft, tender; az helples az a nuborn chiald. Dhat u ma lern and apreesheyate dhat fact iz wun rezon whi u ar livving at this prezsent moment. Yor lesson wil nou beghin."

Then Helmuth, starcly ridgid, unnabel too moove a muscel, felt dellicate proabz enter hiz brane. Wun at a time dha peerst hiz innermoast beying, eche too a deffiniatly celected center. It ceemd dhat eche thrust carrede widh it the ultimate mezhure ov exqwizsiatly poinyant an'gwish poscibel ov enjurans, but eche suxescive nedel carrede widh it an even moer keenly unbarabel thril ov agony.

Helmuth wauz not nou caam and coald. He cood hav screemd in wiald abandon, but even dhat relefe wauz denide him. He cood not even screme; aul he cood doo wauz cit dhare and suffer.

Then he began too ce thhingz. Dhare, acchuwaly matereyalising in the empty
are ov the speedster, he sau in endles proceshon thhingz he had dun,
iather in person or bi proxy, boath juring hiz acent too hiz prezsent hi
place in the piraits organizaishon and cins the atainment ov dhat
place. Long wauz the list, and blac. Az it unfoalded hiz torment groo
moer and evver moer intens, until finaly, aafter an interval dhat mite
hav bene a fracshon ov a cecond or mite hav bene untoald ourz, he
cood stand no moer. He fainted, cinking beyond the reche ov pane intoo a
ce ov blac unconshousnes.

He awakend white and shaking, ringing wet widh perspiraishon and so
weke dhat he cood scaersly cit erect, but widh a supremely blisfool
reyalizaishon dhat, for the time beying at leest, hiz punnishment wauz
over.

"This, u wil observ, haz bene a verry miald treetment," the coald
Areezhan axents went on incide hiz brane. "Not oanly doo u stil liv,
u ar even stil sane. We nou cum too the cecond rezon whi u hav
not bene destroid. Yor destrucshon bi us wood not be good for dhat
strugling yung civilizaishon which u opose.

"We hav ghivven dhat civilizaishon an instrooment bi verchu ov which it
shood becum abel too destroi u and evverithhing for which u stand. If
it canot doo so it iz not yet reddy too becum a civilizaishon and yor
obnocshous culchure shal be aloud too conker and too flurrish for a
time.

"Nou go bac too yor dome. Doo not retern. I no dhat u wil not hav
the temerrity too doo so in person. Doo not atempt too doo so bi enny form
whautevver ov proxy."

Dhare wer no threts, no warningz, no menshon ov conceqwencez; but the
levvel and incicive tone ov the Areezhan poot a fere intoo Helmuths coald

hart the like ov which he had nevver befoer none.

He wherld hiz speedster about and herld her at fool blaast tooword hiz home plannet. It wauz oonly aafter menny ourz dhat he wauz abel too regane even a cemblans ov hiz customary poiz, and dase elapst befoer he cood thhinc coherently enuf too concidder az a whole the shocking, the unbelevabel thhing dhat had happend too him.

He waunted too beleve dhat the crechure, whautevver it wauz, had bene bluffing--dhat it cood not kil him, dhat it had dun its werst. In cimmilar cace he wood hav kild widhout mercy, and dhat coers ceemd too him the oonly lodgical wun too pershu. Hiz coald rezon, houwevver, wood not alou him too entertane dhat cumforting belefe. Depe doun he *nu* dhat the Areezhan cood hav kild him az esily az it had slane the lowest member ov hiz band, and the thaut child him too the marro.

Whaut cood he doo? Whaut *cood* he doo? Endlesly, az the mialz and lite-yeerz reeld of behiand hiz hertling racer, this qweschon reyitterated itcelf; and when hiz home plannet luimd cloce it wauz stil unnaancerd.

Cins Wolmarc beleevd impliscitly hiz staitment dhat it wood be poor tecneke too opose hiz retern, the plannets screenz went doun at Helmuths signal. Hiz ferst act wauz too caul aul the department hedz too the center, for an extreemly important council ov wor. Dhare he toald them evverithhing dhat had happend, caamly and conciasly, concluding:

"Dha ar aloofe, dicinterested, unpartizan too a degry I fiand it imposcibel too understand. Dha disaproove ov us on puerly filosoffical groundz, but dha wil take no active part against us az long az we sta awa from dhare solar cistem. Dhaerfoer we canot obtane nollej ov

the Lenz bi direct acshon, but dhare ar uther methodz which shal be werct out in ju coers.

"The Areezhanz doo aproove ov the Patrole, and hav helpt them too the extent ov ghivving them the Lenz. Dhare, houwevver, dha stop. If the Lenzmen doo not no hou too use dhare Lensez efishmently--and I gather dhat dha doo not--we shal be aloud too conker and too flurrish for a time.' We *wil* conker, and we wil ce too it dhat the time ov our flurrishing wil be a long wun indede.

"The whole cichuwaishon, then, boiliz down too this: our cozmic ennergy against the Lenz ov the Patrole. Ourz iz the much moer powerfool arm, but our oonly hope ov imejate suxes lise in keping the Patrole in ignorans ov our cozmic-ennergy receptorz and converterz. Wun Lenzman aulreddy haz dhat nollej. Dhaerfoer, gentelmen, it iz verry clere dhat the deth ov dhat Lenzman haz nou becum absoluety imperrative. We *must* fiand him, if it meenz the abandonment ov our evvery uther enterprise throwout this galaxy. Ghiv me a fool repoert uppon the screening ov the plannets uppon which the Lenzman ma tri too land."

"It iz dun, cer," came qwic repli. "Dha ar compleetly blocaded. Ships ar spaist so cloasly dhat even the electromagnettic detectorz hav a five hundred percent overlap. Vizhuwal detectorz hav at leest too hundred fifty percent overlap. Nuthhing az larj az wun millimeter in enny dimenshon can ghet throo widhout detecshon and observaishon."

"And hou about the cerch ov Trencos?"

"Rezults ar stil neggative. Wun ov our ships, widh paperz aul in order, vizsited Trencos space-poert openly. No wun wauz dhare exep the reggular foers ov Rigelleyanz. Our captane wauz in no posishon too be too inqwizsitive, but the miscing ship wauz certainly not in the poert and he

gatherd dhat he wauz the ferst vizsitor dha had had in a munth. We lernd on Rigel 4 dhat Tregoncy, the Lenzman on juty on Trencu, haz bene dhare for a munth and wil not be releevd for anuther munth. He wauz the oanly Lenzman dhare. We ar ov coers carreying on the cerch ov the rest ov the plannet. About haaf the personel ov eche vescel too land haz bene lost, but dha started widh dubbel croose and replaisments ar beying cent."

"The Lenzman Tregoncese stoery ma or ma not be troo," Helmuth muezd. "It maix littel differens. It wood be imposcibel too hide dhat ship in Trencu space-poert from even a cazhuwal inspecshon, and if the ship iz not dhare the Lenzman iz not. He ma be in hiding elshware on the plannet, but I dout it. Continnu too cerch nevvertheles. Dhare ar menny thingz he ma hav dun.... I wil hav too concidder them, wun bi wun."

But Helmuth had verry littel time too concidder whaut Kinnison mite hav dun, for the Lenzman had left Trencu long cins. Becauz ov the flare-baffelz uppon hiz driving progetorz hiz pace wauz slo; but too compensate for this condishon the distans too be cuvverd wauz not too long. Dhaerfoer, even az Helmuth wauz codgitating uppon whaut next too doo, the Lenzman and hiz croo wer aproching the far-flung screne ov Boscoanyan wor-vescelz investing the entire Solaareyan Cistem.

Too aproche dhat screne undetected wauz a fizensal impocibillity, and befoer Kinnison reyaliazd dhat he wauz in a dain'ger zone cix tractorz had flict out, had ceezd hiz ship, and had gerct it up too combat rainj. But the Lenzman wauz reddy for ennithhing, and agane evverithhing happend at wuns.

Worningz screemd intoo the distant pirate bace and Helmuth, tens at hiz desc, tooc personal charj ov hiz mity flete. On the feeld ov acshon

Kinnisonz screenz flaimd out in stubborn defens, tractorz snapt under hiz slashing sheerz, the baffelz disapeerd in an incandescent flare az he shot maximum blaast intoo hiz drive, and space agane became sufuezd widh the outpoot ov hiz nou ultraa-pouwerd multiplex scramblerz.

And throo dhat merc the Lenzman directed a thaut, widh the fool pouwer ov miand and Lenz.

"Poert Admiral Hainz--Prime Bace! Poert Admiral Hainz--Prime Bace! Ergent! Kinnison caulng from the direcshon ov Cirreyus--ergent!" he cent out the feersly-drivven message.

It so happend dhat at Prime Bace it wauz depe nite, and Poert Admiral Hainz wauz sound aslepe; but, triggher-nervd oald space-cat dhat he wauz, he came instantly and folly awake. Scaersly had an i flict open dhan hiz aancer had bene herld bac:

"Hainz acnolleging--cend it, Kinnison!"

"Cumming in, in a pirate ship. Aul the piraits in space ar on our nex, but were cumming in, in spite ov hel and hi wauter! Doant cend up enny ships too help us doun--dha cood blaast u out ov space in a cecond, but dha caant stop us. Ghet reddy--it woant be long nou!"

Then, aafter the Poert Admiral had sounded the emergency alarm, Kinnison went on:

"Our ship carrese no markingz, but dhaerz oonly wun ov us and ule no which wun it iz--weeyl be doowing the dodging. Dhade be crasy too follo us doun intoo atmosfere, widh aul the stuf uve got, but dha act crasy enuf too doo aulmoast ennithhing. If dha doo follo us doun, ghet

reddy too ghiv em hel--here we ar!"

Pershude and pershuwerz had tucht the outermost frinj ov the stratosfere; and, slode down too optical visibillity bi even dhat hily rarifide atmosfere, the battel raid in incandescent splendor. Wun ship wauz spinning, twisting, looping, girating, jumping and darting hither and thither--performing evvery weerd manuver dhat the fertile and adgile miandz ov the Patroalmen cood improvise--too shake of the hoerd ov atackerz.

The piraits, on the uther hand, wer desperaitly determiand dhat, whatevver the cost, THE Lenzman shood not land. Tractorz wood not hoald and the inershaales ship cood not be ramd. Dhaerfoer dhare strategy wauz dhat which had werct so suksesfooly foer tiamz befoer in cimmlar cace--too en'globe the ship compleetly and dhus beme her down. And while atempting this en'gloabment dha so mast dhare foercez az too drive the Lenzmanz vescel az far az poscibel awa from the grim and tremendously pouwerfool fortificaishonz ov Prime Bace, aulmoast directly belo them.

But the foer ships which the piraits had recapchuerd had bene mand bi Velanshanz; wharaz in this wun Kinnison the Lenzman and Henderson the Maaster Pilot wer caulng uppon dhare evvery rezoers ov instantainyous nervous reyacshon, ov brilleyant brane and ov liatning hand too avoid dhat fatal trap. And avoid it dha did, bi cerese aafter cerese ov fantastic manuverz nevver cet down in enny mannuwal ov space-combat.

Pouwerfool az wer the wepponz ov Prime Bace, in dhat thhic atmosfere dhare efective rainj wauz les dhan fifty mialz. Dhaerfoer the gunnerz, idel at dhare controalz, and the officerz ov the superdrednauts, chand bi deffinite orderz too the ground, fuemd and swoer az, pouwerles too help dhare batling fellose, dha stood bi and waucht in dhare plaits the fureyous en'gaijment so hi overhed.

But sloly, so sloly, Kinnison wun hiz wa dounword, keping az cloce over Bace az he cood widhout beying en' gloabd, and finaly he mannaijd too ghet within rainj ov the gigantic progectorz ov the Patrole. Oanly the hevveyest ov the fixt-mount gunz cood reche dhat mad wherlpoole ov ships, but eche wun ov them raivd out against the same spot at preciasly the same instant. In the inferno which dhat spot instantly became, not even a fool-drivven waul-sheeld cood enjure, and a vaast hole yaund whare pirate ships had bene. The beemz flict of, and, tiamd bi hiz Lenz, Kinnison shot hiz ship throo dhat hole befoer it cood be cloazd and arrode dounword at maximum blaast.

Ship aafter ship ov the pirate hoerd follode him doun in madly suwicidal laast atempts too blaast him out ov the eethher; doun tooword the teriffic armament ov the bace. Prime Bace itcelf, the moast dredded, the moast hevvely armd, the moast impregnabel fortres ov the Galactic Patrole! Nuthhing aflote cood even thretten dhat cittadel--the overboald atackerz cimply disapeerd in brefe flashez ov coruscant vapor.

Kinnison, even befoer inerting hiz ship preparratoery too landing, cauld hiz comaander.

"Did enny ov the uther boiz bete us in, cer?" he aasct.

"No, cer," came the kert respons. Con'grachulaishonz, felicitaishonz, and celebraishon wood cum later; Hainz wauz nou the Poert Admiral receving an ofishal repoert.

"Then, cer, I hav the onnor too repoert dhat the expedishon haz suxeded," and he cood not help adding informaly, uethfooly exultant at the suxes ov hiz ferst reyal mishon, "Weve braut home the bacon!"

A pouwerfool flete had bene cent too rescu dhose ov the *Britanyaaz* croo whoo mite hav mannaijd too sta out ov the clutchez ov the piraits. The wialdly enthuseyaastic celebraishon incide Prime Bace wauz over. Outside the foers-waulz ov the Reservaishon, houwevver, it wauz just beghinning. The speshalists and the Velanshanz wer in the thhic ov it. No wun on Erth nu ennithhing about Velanshaa, and dhose hily intelligent reptillyan beyingz nu just az littel ov Tellus. Nevvertheles, cimply becauz dha had aded the Patroalmen, the vizsitorz wer practicaly ghivven the kese too the plannet, and dha wer enjoijng the expereyens tremendously.

"We waunt Kinnison--we waunt Kinnison!" the festive croud, led bi Universal Tellenuse men, had bene yelling; and finaly the Lenzman came out. But aafter wun pose befoer a lenz and a fu werdz intoo a miacrofone, he pleded, "Dhaerz mi caul, nou--ergent!" and fled bac incide Reservaishon. Then the milling tide ov cellebrants roald bac tooword the citty, taking widh it evvery Patroalman whoo cood ghet leve.

En'gineerz and desinerz wer sworming throo and over the pirate ship Kinnison had drivven home, eche armd widh a shefe ov blu-prints aulreddy prepaerd from the long-cherrisht dataa-spoole, eche directing a coer ov mecannix in dismantling sum meccanizm ov the grate space-rover. Too this hive ov busling activvity it wauz dhat Kinnison had bene cauld. He stood dhare, aancerng az best he cood the multichude ov qweschonz beyng fiard at him from aul ciadz, until he wauz rescude bi no les a personage dhan Poert Admiral Hainz.

"U gentelmen can ghet yor informaishon from the dataa sheets better dhan u can from Kinnison," he remarct widh a smile, "and I waunt too take

hiz repoert widhout enny moer dela."

Hand under arm, the oald Lenzman led the yung wun awa, but wuns incide

hiz private office he summond niather cecretary nor recorder. Insted, he poosht the buttonz which cet up a complete-cuvverage sheeld and spoke.

"Nou, sun, open up. Out widh it--evverithhing dhat u hav bene hoalding bac evver cins u landed. I got yor signal."

"Wel, yes, I hav bene hoalding bac," Kinnison admitted. "I havnt got enuf gets too be sticking mi nec out in faast cumpany, even if it wer sumthhing too be discust in public, which it iznt. Ime glad u cood ghiv me this time so qwic. I waunt too go over an ideyaa widh u, and widh *no wun els*. It ma be az cockide az Trencose eethher--yor too be the sole juj ov dhat--but ule no I mene wel, no matter hou goofy it iz."

"Dhat certainly iz not an overstaitment," Hainz replide, drily. "Go ahead."

"The grate peculeyarrity ov space combat iz dhat we fli fre, but fite inert," Kinnison began, aparrently irellevantly, but chusing hiz fraseyollogy widh care. "Too foers an en'gaijment wun ship lox too the uther ferst widh tracerz, then widh tractorz, and gose inert. Dhus, rellative spede determianz the abillity too foers or too avoid en'gaijment; but it iz rellative pouwer dhat determianz the outcum. Heertofoer the piraits--

"And bi the wa, we ar belitling our oponents and bilding up a dizaastrous overconfidens in ourcelvz bi caulng them piraits. Dha ar not--dha caant be. Boscoanyaa must be moer dhan a race or a cistem--it iz

verry probbably a gallaxy-wide culchure. It iz an absolute despotizm, hoalding its authorrity bi meenz ov a ridgid cistem ov rewordz and punnishments. In our ise it iz fundamentaly rong, but it werx--*hou* it werx! It iz organiazd just az we ar, and iz aparrently az strong in bacez, vescelz, and personel.

"Boscoanyaa haz had the better ov us, boath in spede--except for the *Britanyaa*z momentary advaantage--and in pouwer. Dhat advaantage iz nou

lost too them. We wil hav, then, too imens pouwerz, eche galactic in scope, eche tremendously pouwerfool in armz, eqwipment, and personel; eche havving exactly the same wepponz and defencez, and eche determiand

too wipe out the uther. A stailmate iz inevvitabel; an absolute dedloc; a sheerly destructive wor ov atrishon which wil go on for cenchurese and which must end in the aniyilaishon ov boath Boscoanyaa and civilizaishon."

"But our nu progectorz and screenz!" protested the elder man. "Dha ghiv us an overwhelming advaantage. We can foers or avoid en'gajment, az

we plese. U no the plan too crush them--u helpt too devellop it."

"Yes, I no the plan. I aulso no dhat we wil not crush them. So doo u. We boath no dhat our advaantage wil be oonly temporary." The yung Lenzman, unnimprest, wauz in dedly earnest.

The Admiral did not repli for a time. Depe doun, he himcelf had felt the dout; but niather he nor enny uther ov hiz scoole had ever menshond the thhing dhat Kinnison had nou so bauldly poot intoo werdz. He nu dhat whautevver wun cide had, ov weppon or armor or eqwipment, wood sooner or

later becum the propperty ov the uther; az wauz witnest bi the

desperate venture which Kinnison himself had so recently and so successively concluded. He now that the device installed in the vessel captured upon Velanshaa had been destroyed before falling into the hands of the enemy, but he also now that with entire fleets so equipped the new arms could not be kept secret indefinitely. Therefore he finally replied:

"That may be true." He paused, then went on like the indomitable veteran that he was. "But we have the advantage now and we will drive it while we have got it. After all, we may be able to hold it long enough."

"I've just thought of one more thing that would help--communication," Kinnison did not argue the previous point, but went ahead. "It seems too impossible to drive any kind of a communicator beam through the double interference...."

"Seems too be!" barked Hainz. "It is impossible! Nothing but a thought...."

"That's it exactly--*thought*!" interrupted Kinnison in turn. "The Velanshaan can do things with a Lenz that nobody would believe possible. Why not examine some of them for Lenzmen? I'm sure that Worcel could pass, and probably many others. They can drive thoughts through anything except where there is one thought-screen--and what communicators they would make!"

"That idea has distinct possibilities and will be followed up. However, it is not what you wanted to discuss. Go ahead."

"QX." Kinnison went into Lenz-to-Lenz communication. "I want some kind

ov a sheeld or screne dhat wil nuetralise or nullifi a detector. I aasct Hochkis, the comunicaishonz expert, about it--under cele. He ced it had nevver bene investigated, even az an academmic problem in recerch, but dhat it wauz ththeyoretticaly poscibel."

"This roome iz sheelded, u no." Hainz wauz cerpriazd at the uce ov the Lensez. "Iz it *dhat* important?"

"I doant no. Az I ced befoer, I ma be cockide; but if mi ideyaa iz enny good at aul dhat nullifiyer iz the moast important thhing in the univers, and if werd ov it ghets out it ma be uesles. U ce, cer, over the long roote, the oonly reyaly permanent advaantage dhat we hav over Boscoanyaa, the wun thhing dha caant ghet, iz the Lenz. Dhare must be sum wa too use it. If dhat nullifiyer iz poscibel, and if we can kepe it ceecret for a while, I beleve Ive found it. At leest, I waunt too tri sumthhing. It ma not werc--probbably it woant, its a mity slim chaans--but if it duz, we ma be abel too wipe out Boscoanyaa in a fu munths insted ov carreying on forevver a wor ov atrishon. Ferst, I waunt too go...."

"Hoald on!" Hainz snapt. "Ive bene thhinking, too. I caant ce enny poscibel relaishon betwene such a device and enny reyaly millitary weppon, or the Lenz, iather. If I caant, not menny utherz can, and dhats a point in yor favor. If dhaerz ennithhing at aul in yor ideyaa, its too big too share widh enniwun, even me. Kepe it too yorcelf."

"But its a peculeyar hooc-up, and ma not be enny good at aul," protested Kinnison. "U mite waunt too cancel it."

"No dain'ger ov dhat," came the pozsitive staitment. "U no moer about the piraits--pardon me, about Boscoanyaa--dhan enny uther Patroalman. U

believe dhat yor ideyaa haz sum slite chaans ov suxes. Verry wel--dhat fact iz enuf too poot evvery rezoers ov the Patrole bac ov u. Poot yor ideyaa on a tape under Lenzmanz Cele, so dhat it wil not be lost in cace ov yor deth. Then go ahead. If it iz poscibel too devellop dhat nullifyer u shal hav it. Hochkis wil take charj ov it, and hav enny uther Lenzmen he waunts. No wun exept Lenzmen wil werc on it or no ennithhing about it. No reccordz wil be kept. It wil not even exist until u yorcelf relece it too us."

"Thanx, cer," and Kinnison left the roome.

Then for weex Prime Bace wauz the cene ov an activvity fureyous indede. Nu aparatus wauz desiand and tested--nu sheerz, nu genneratorz, nu scramblerz, and mennu uther nu thhingz. Eche item wauz desiand and tested, redesiand and retested, until even the moast skeptical ov the Patroalz en'gineerz cood no lon'gher fiand in it ennithhing too critticise. Then throowout the gallaxy the ships ov the Patrole wer recauld too dhare cector bacez too be rebilt.

Dhare wer too be too grate claacez ov vescelz. Dhose ov the ferst--speshal scouting crooserz--wer too hav spede and defens--nuthhing els. Dha wer too be the faastest thhingz in space, and abel too defend themcelvz against atac--dhat wauz aul. Vescelz ov the cecond claas had too be bilt from the kele upword, cins nuthhing even remoatly like them had dhaertofoer bene conceevd. Dha wer too be huge, un'gainly, slo--cimpily stoerhousez ov incomprehencibly vaast pouwerz ov offens. Dha carrede projectorz ov a cise and pouwer nevver befoer cet uppon moovabel foundaishonz, nor wer dha dependent uppon cozmic ennergy.

Dha carrede dhare one, in banc uppon banc ov schupendous acumulatorz. In fact, eche ov these monstrous floting fortrecez wauz too be abel too

generate screens of such design and power that no vessel anywhere
nere
them could receive cosmic energy!

This, then, was the bolt which civilization was preparing too herl
against Bosconyaa. In theory the thing was simplicity itself. The
ultra-fast cruisers would catch the enemy, lock on with tractor beams so hard
that she could not be sheered, and go inert, thus anchoring the enemy
in space. Then, while absorbing and dissipating everything that the
opposition could send, she would put out a peculiarly patterned
interference, the center of which could easily be located. The mobile
fortresses would then cum up, cut off the Bosconyans power-intake, and
finish up the job.

Not soon was that bolt forged; but in time civilization was ready too
launch its terrific and, it was generally hoped and believed, conclusive
attack upon Bosconyaa. Every sector base and sub-base was ready; the
sero
ours had been set.

At Prime Base Kimball Kinnison, the youngest Telureyan ever too wear
the
foer silver bars of captain, sat at the conning-plate of the heavy
battleship *Britanyaa*, so named at his own request. He thrilled
inwardly as he thought of her speed. Such was her force of drive that,
streamlined to the ultimate degree although she was, she had special
waul-shields, and special dissipators too radiate into space the heat of
friction of the medium through which she tore so madly. Otherwise she
would have destroyed herself in an hour of fool blast, even in the hard
vacuum of interstellar space!

And in his office Poet Admiral Hainz watched a chronometer. Minutes
too

go--then cecondz.

"Clere eethher!" Hiz depe vois wauz gruf widh unnexpressed emoashon.

"Five

cecondz--foer--thre--too--wun--Lift!" and the Flete shot intoo the are.

The ferst obgective ov this Telureyan flete wauz verry cloce indede too home, for the Boscoanyanz had establisht a bace uppon Nepchuenz moone, rite here in the Solaareyan Cistem. So cloce too Prime Bace dhat oonly intencive screening and constant vidgilans had kept its spi-rase out; so pouwerfool dhat the ordinary battelships ov the Patrole had not bene cent against it. Nou it wauz too be rejuet.

Short az wauz the time nescenary too travers enny interplannetary distans, the Solaareyanz wer detected and wer met in foers bi the ships ov Boscone. But scaersly had battel bene joind when the ennemy began too reyalise dhat this wauz too be a battel the like ov which dha had never befoer cene; and when dha began too understand it, it wauz too late. Dha cood not run, and aul space wauz so fool ov interferens dhat dha cood not even repoert too Helmuth whaut wauz gowing on. These ferst, peculeyarly

tere-drop-shaibt vescelz ov the Patrole did not fite at aul. Dha cimply held on like bool-dogz, taking widhout respons evverithhing dhat the white-hot progectorz cood thro at them. Dhare defencive screenz rajated feersly, hi intoo the vियोlet, under the apauling punnishment beying delt out too them bi the batterese ov ship and shoer, but dha did not go down. Nor did the grip ov a cin'ghel tractor loocen from its ancorage. And in minnuets the sqwaut and monstrous maulerz came up.

Out

went dhare cozmie-ennery blocking screenz, out shot dhare tractor beemz, and out from the refractory throats ov dhare schupendous progectorz raivid the moast terifficaly destructive foercez evver gennerated bi mobile mashenery.

Boscoanyan outer screenz scaersly even flickerd az dha went doun befoer the imezhurabel, the increddibel viyolens ov dhat thrust. The cecond coers offerd a breefly brilleyant berst ov viyolet rajans az it gave wa. The inner screne resisted stubbornly az it ran the spectrum in a wialdly coruscant displa ov pirotecnic splendor; but it, too, went throo the ultraa-viyolet and intoo the blac. Nou the waul-sheeld itcelf--dhat inconcevably ridgid fabricaishon ov pure foers which oanly the detonaishon ov twenty metric tunz ov juwodec had evver bene none too

rupchure--wauz aul dhat bard from the bace mettal ov Boscoanyan waulz the

utterly indescribabel fury ov the maulerz beemz. Nou foers wauz streming from dhat sheeld in verritabel torrents. So terribel wer the conflicting ennergese dhare at grips dhat dhare nuetralizaishon wauz acchuwaly vizsibel and tan'gibel. In sheets and mascez, in teriffic, eether-racking vorticese, and in mialz-long, pillaaring stremerz and flashez, dhose ennergese wer beying herld awa. Herld too aul the points ov the sfererz fool cumpas, filling and sufusing aul neerbi space.

The Boscoanyan comaanderz staerd at dhare instrooments, ferst in bewilderd amaizment and then in shere, starc, unbeleving horror az dhare pouwer-intake dropt too sero and dhare waul-sheeldz began too fale--and stil the atac continnude in nevver-lescening pouwer. Shuerly dhat beming *must* slacken doun soone--no concevabel mobile plaant cood thro such a lode for long!

But dhose mobile plaants cood--and did. The atac kept up, at the terifficaly hi levvel uppon which it had begun. No ordinary stoerage celz fed dhose mity progectorz; along no ordinary bus-barz wer dhare Titannic amperagez boern. Dhose maulerz wer desiand too doo just wun thhing--too *maul*--and dhat wun thhing dha did wel; relentlessly and thurroly.

Hiyer and hiyer intoo the spectrum the defending waul-sheeldz began too rajate. At the ferst blaast dha had leept aulmoast throo the vizsibel spectrum, in wun unbarably feers suxeshon ov red, oranj, yello, grene, blu, and indigo; up too a sultry, coruscating, bliandingly hard viyiolet. Nou the duimd sheeldz began leping eratticaly intoo the ultraa-viyiolet. Too the i dha wer aulreddy invizsibel; uppon the recorderz dha wer showing momentary flashez ov blac.

Soone dha went down; and in the instant ov eche falure wun vescel ov Boscoanyaa wauz no moer. For, dhat laast defens gon, nuthhing save unresisting mettal wauz left too withstand the ardor ov dhose ultraa-pouwerfool, ravvening beemz. Az haz aulreddy bene ced, no substans, houwevver refractory or resistant or inert, can enjure even momentarily in such a feeld ov foers. Dhaerfoer evvery attom, alike ov vescel and ov contents, went too make up the cering, ceething berst ov brilleyant, incandescently luminous vapor which sufuezd aul cercumambeyent space.

Dhus paast out ov the Skeme ov Thhingz the vescelz ov the Solaareyan Detachment ov Boscoanyaa. Not a cin'ghel vescel escaipt; the crooserz sau too dhat. And then the atac thunderd on too the bace. Here the crooserz wer uesles; dha meerly formd an observant frinj, the while continnuwing too so blanket aul channelz ov comunicaishon dhat the duimd piraits cood cend out no werd ov whaut wauz happening. The maulerz muivd up and grimly, dogghedly, methoddicaly went too werc.

Cins a bace iz aulwase much moer pouwerfooly armord dhan iz a battelship, the reducshon ov the fortrecez tooc lon'gher dhan had the destrucshon ov the flete. But dhare receptorz cood no lon'gher drau pouwer

from the sun or from enny uther hevvenly boddy, and dhare uther soercez
ov

pouwer wer comparratiavly weke. Dhaerfoer dhare defencez aulso faild
under dhat incessant asault. Coers aafter coers dhare screenz went
doun, and widh the laast wunz went evvery strucchure. The maulerz
beemz

went throo mettal and masonry az effortlessly az stele-jacketed boollets
go throo butter, and boerd on, depe intoo the plannets bed-roc, befoer
dhare friatfool foers wauz spent.

Then around and around dha spirald until nuthhing whautevver wauz left
ov

the Boscoanyan werx; until oonly a ceething, white-hot lake ov moalten
laavaa in the midst ov the satteliats fridgid waist wauz aul dhat remaind
too sho dhat ennithhing had evver bene bilt dhare.

Surender had not bene thaut ov. Qworter or clemmency had not bene
aasct or offerd. Victory ov itself wauz not enuf. This wauz, and ov
stern necescity had too be, a wor ov utter, complete, and merciles
extincshon.

CHAPTER 14

Unnatacht

The ennemy strong'hoald so insultingly cloce too Prime Bace havving bene
oblitterated, Rejonal Fleets, in looce formaishonz, began too scour the
vareyouz Galactic Rejonz. For a fu weex game wauz plentifool enuf.
Hundredz ov rading vescelz wer overtaken and held bi the Patrole
crooserz, then blaasted too vapor bi the maulerz.

Menny Boscoanyan bacez wer aulso rejuest. The locaishonz ov moast ov
these

had long bene none too the Intelligens Cervice, utherz wer detected or
discuvverd bi the faast-flying crooserz themcelvz. Marauding vescelz

reveeld the ciats ov utherz bi suxeding in reching them befoer beying overtaken bi the crooserz. Utherz wer found bi the tracerz and luips ov the Cignal Coer.

Verry fu ov these bacez wer hidden or in enny wa difficult ov axes, and moast ov them fel befoer the blaasts ov a cin'ghel mauler. But if wun mauler wauz not enuf, utherz wer summond until it did faul. Wun fortres, a hithertoo un'none and cerprisingly strong Cecor Bace, reqwiard the concentraishon ov evvery mauler ov Tellus, but dha wer braut up and the fortres fel. Az had bene ced, this wauz a wor ov extincshon and evvery pirate bace dhat wauz found wauz wiapt out.

But wun da a crooser found a bace which had not even a spi-ra sheeld up, and a kersory inspecshon shode it too be compleetly empty. Mashenery, eqwipment, stoerz, and personel had aul bene evaccuwated. Suspishous, the Patrole vescelz stood of and beemd it from afar, but dhare wer no untooword ocurrencez. The strucchuerz cimply slumpt down intoo laavaa, and dhat wauz aul.

Evvery bace discuvverd dharaafter wauz in the same condishon, and at the same time the ships ov Boscone, formerly so plentifool, disapeerd utterly from space. Da aafter da the crooserz sped hither and thither throowout the vaast rechez ov the void, at the peke ov dhare unnimadginably hi pace, widhout fianding a trace ov enny Boscoanyan vescel.

Moer remarcabel stil, and for the ferst time in yeerz, the eethher wauz absoluetly fre from Boscoanyan interferens.

Following an impuls, Kinnison aasct and receevd permishon too take hiz ship on scouting juty. At maximum blaast he drove tooword the Velanshan cistem, too the point at which he had pict up Helmuths comunicaishon line. Along dhat line he drove for dase, hauling oonly when wel outside the gallaxy. Ahed ov him dhare wauz nuthhing rechabel exopt a fu star-clusterz. Behiand him dhare extended the imencity ov the galactic

lenz in aul its splendor, but Captane Kinnison had no i for astronommical buty dhat da.

He held the *Britanyaa* dhare for an our, while he muld over in hiz miand whaut the aparrent facts cood mene. He nu dhat he had cuvverd the line, from its point ov determinaishon out beyond the gallaxese ej. He nu dhat hiz detectorz, opperating az dha had bene in clere and undistorted eethher, cood not poscibly hav mist a thhing az larj az Helmuths bace must be, if it had bene enniwhare nere dhat line; dhat dhare efective rainj wauz imensly grater dhan the largest poscibel error in the determinaishon or the following ov the line. Dhare wer, he concluded, foer poscibel explanaishonz, and oanly foer.

Ferst, Helmuths bace mite aulso hav bene evaccuwated. This wauz unthhincabel. From whaut he himcelf nu ov Helmuth dhat bace wood be az neerly impregnabel az ennithhing cood be made, and it wauz no moer apt too be vacated dhan wauz Prime Bace ov the Patrole. Ceccond, it mite be subterainyan; berrede under enuf mettal-baring roc too ground out aul rajaishon. This pocibillity wauz just az unliacly az the ferst. Thherd, Helmuth mite aulreddy hav the device he himcelf waunted so badly, and uppon which Hochkis and the uther experts had bene at werc so long, a detector nullifier. This wauz poscibel, distinctly so. Poscibel enuf, at leest, too worant filing the ideyaa for fuchure concideraishon. Foerth, dhat bace mite not be in the gallaxy at aul, but in dhat star-cluster out dhare strate ahead ov him, or poscibly in wun even farther awa. Dhat ideyaa ceemd the best ov the foer. It wood necesitate ultraa-pouwerfool comunicatorz, ov coers, but Helmuth cood verry wel hav them. It sqwaerd up in uther wase--its pattern fitted intoo the maitrix verry niasly.

But if dhat bace wer out dhare.... it cood sta dhare--for a while....

a battel-crooser just wauznt enuf ship for dhat job. Too much oposishon out dhare, and not--enuf--ship.... Or too much ship? But he wauznt reddy, yet, enniwa. He neded, and wood ghet, anuther line on Helmuths bace. Dhaerfoer, shrugging hiz shoalderz, he wherld hiz vescel about and cet out too rejoin the flete.

While a fool da short ov juncshon, Kinnison wauz cauld too hiz plate, too ce uppon its lambent cerface the vizzage ov Poert Admiral Hainz.

"Did u fiand out ennithhing on yor trip?" he aasct.

"Nuthhing deffinite, cer. Just a cuppel ov thhingz too thhinc about, iz aul. But I can sa dhat I doant like this at aul--I doant like ennithhing about it or enny part ov it."

"No moer doo I," agrede the admiral. "It loox verry much az dho yor foercaast ov a stailmate mite be about too evenchuwate. Whare ar u hedded for nou?"

"Bac too the Flete."

"Doant doo it. Sta on scouting juty for a while lon'gher. And, unles sumthhing moer interesting ternz up, repoert bac here too me--we hav sumthhing dhat ma interest u. The boiz hav bene...."

The admiralz picchure wauz broken up intoo flashez ov blianding lite and hiz werdz became a meningles, jumbeld roer ov noiz. A distres caul had begun too cum in, oonly too be blotted out bi a flud ov Boscoanyan static interferens, ov which the eethher had for so long bene clere. The yung Lenzman uezd hiz Lenz.

"Excuse me, cer, while I ce whaut this iz aul about?"

"Certainly, sun."

"Got its center located?" Kinnison yelled at his communication officer.
"Dhah cloce--rite in our laps!"

"Yes, cer!" and the raje man snapped out numbers.

"Blaast!" the captain commanded, unnecessarily; for the alert pilot had already set the coers and was kicking in fool-blaast drive. "If that baby is what I think it is, aul helz out for noone."

Toward the center of disturbances the *Britanyaa* flashed, emitting now a scream of peculiarly patterned interference which was not only a scrambler of all un-Lenzed communication throughout that whole part of the galaxy, but also an imperative call for any mauler within range. So close had the cruiser been to the scene of predation that for her too reach it required only minutes.

Dhah was the merchantman and her Bosconyan assailant. Emboldened by the cessation of piratical activities, some shipping concern had sent out a frigate, loaded probably with highly "urgent" cargo; and this was the result. The marauder, inert now, had gripped her with his tractor and was bending her into submission. She was resisting, but feebly now; it was apparent that her screens were failing. Her crew must soon open ports in token of surrender or roast to a man; and she would probably prefer to roast.

Thus the capture was obtained in a moment. The next instant it was chaotic; the Bosconyan discovering suddenly that his beams, instead of boaring through the weak defenses of the frigate, were not even exiting to a glacially protective envelope of a battle-cruiser of the Patrol. He switched from the defused heat-bomb he had been using upon the merchantman to the hardest, hottest, most penetrating bomb of

aniylaishon he mounted--widh but littel moer too sho for it and widh no better rezults. For the *Britanyaaz* screenz had bene desiand too stand up aulmoast indeffiniatly against the moast potent beemz ov enny ordinary worship, and dha stood up.

Kinnison had tremendously pouwerfool beemz ov hiz one, but he did not use them. It wood take the super-pouwerfool offens ov a mauler too projuce a deffinite aancer too the qweschon ceething in hiz miand.

Incece pouwer az the pirate wood, too whautevver roowinous overlode, he cood not brake doun Kinnisonz screenz; nor, doj az he wood, cood he agane ghet in posishon too atac hiz former pra. And evenchuwaly the mauler ariavd; forchunaitly it, too, had bene faerly cloce bi. Out reecht its mity tractorz. Out raivd wun ov its tremendous beemz, striking the Boscoanyanz defencez sqwaerly amidships.

Dhat beme struc and the pirate ship disapeerd--but not in a hasily incandescent flare ov vollatiliazd mettal. The rader disapeerd boddily, and stil aul in wun pece. He had poot out super-sheerz ov hiz one, snapping the maulerz suposedly unbracabel tractorz like thredz; and the velosity ov hiz deparchure wauz ju aulmoast az much too the pressor efect ov the Patrole beme az it wauz too the thrust ov hiz one driverz.

It wauz the beghinning ov the stailmate Kinnison had foercene.

"I wauz afrade ov dhat," the yung captane muttered; and, paying no atenshon whautevver too the merchantman, he cauld the comaander ov the mauler. At this cloce rainj, ov coers, no eethher scrambler cood interfere widh vizhuwal aparatus, and dhare on hiz plate he sau the face ov Clifford Maitland, the man whoo had gradjuwated number too in hiz one

claas.

"Hi, Kim, u oald space-fle!" Maitland exclaimd in delite. "O, pardon me, cer," he went on in moc defferens, with an exadgerated salute. "Too a ghi widh foer gets, I shood sa...."

"Cele dhat, Clif, or Ile clime up u like a sqwirrel, ferst chaans I ghet!" Kinnison retorted. "So dhave got u skippering an El Ponderoso, huu? Thhinc ov a mere infant like u beying let pla widh so much hi-pouwer! Whautl we doo about this hepe here?"

"Damfeno. It iznt cuvverd, so ule hav too tel me, Captane."

"Whoome I too be paacing out orderz? Az u sa, it iznt cuvverd in the booc--its against G I regz for them too be cutting our tractorz. But hese aul yorz, not mine--Ive got too flit. U mite fiand out whaut hese carreying, from whare, too whare, and whi. Then, if u waunt too, u can escort him iather bac whare he came from or on too whare hese gowing; whitchevver u thhinc best. If this interferens duznt let-up, maby ude better Lenz Prime Bace for orderz. Or use yor one jujment, if enny. Clere eethher, Clif, Ive got too buz along."

"Clere eethher, spais'hound!"

"Nou, Hanc," Kinnison ternd too hiz pilot, "weve got ergent biznes at Prime Bace--and when I sa ergent I doant mene perchaans. Lets ce u bern a hole in the eethher."

The *Britanyaa* streect Erthword, and scaersly had she tucht ground when Kinnison wauz summond too the office ov the Poert Admiral. Az soone az he wauz anounst, Hainz bruiscly cleerd hiz office and ceeld it against enny poscibel form ov intruizhon or eevzdropping. He had aijd

notisably cins these too had had dhat memmorabel conferens in this same roome. Hiz face wauz liand and caerwoern, hiz ise and hiz entire meyen

boer witnes too dase and niats ov sleeplesly continnuwous werc.

"U wer rite, Kinnison," he began, Lenz too Lenz. "A stailmate it iz; a hoaples dedloc. I cauld u in too tel u dhat Hochkis haz yor nullifiyer dun, and dhat it werx perfectly against aul long-rainj stuf. Against electromagnettix, houwevver, it iz not verry efective. About aul dhat can be dun, it ceemz, iz too shorten the rainj; and it duznt interfere widh vizhon at aul."

"I can ghet bi widh dhat, I thhinc--I wil be out ov electromagnettic rainj moast ov the time, and nobody wauchez dhare electrose verry cloce, enniwa.

Thanx a lot. Its reddy too instaul?"

"Duznt nede instalaishon. Its such a littel thhing u can poot it in yor pocket. Its celf-containd and wil werc enniwhare."

"Better and better. In dhat cace Ile nede too ov them--and a ship. I wood like too hav wun ov dhose nu automattic speedsterz.[4] Lots ov legz, croosing rainj, and screenz. Oonly wun beme, but I probbably woant use even dhat wun...."

[4] Unlike the larger wor-vescelz ov the Patrole, speedsterz ar verry narro in propoershon too dhare length, and in dhare desine nuthhing iz concidderd save spede and manuverabillity. Verry deffiniatly dha ar not bilt for cumfort. Dhus, auldho dhare gravvity plaits ar cet for horizontal flite, dha hav braking gets, under gets, cide gets, and top gets, az wel az driving gets; so dhat in inert manuvering enny

direcshon whatevver ma ceme "doun," and dhat direcshon ma chainj
widh
bewildering rapiddity.

Nuthhing can be looce in a speedster--evverithhing, even too foode-suplise
in the refridgeratorz, must be clampt intoo place. Slepig iz dun in
hammox, not in bedz. Aul ceets and resting-placez hav hevvy
saifty-straps, and dhare ar no looce itemz ov fernichure or eqwipment
enniwhare on boerd.

Becauz dha ar desiand for the utmoast poscibel spede in the fre
condishon, speedsterz ar extreemly cranky and tricky in inert flite
unles dha ar beying handeld uppon dhare under gets, which ar desiand
and plaist specificaly and oanly for inert flite.

Sum ov the ultraa-faast vescelz ov the piraits, az wil be braut out
later, wer aulso ov this shape and desine.

E.E.S.

"Gowing *alone*?" interrupted Hainz. "Better take yor battel-crooser,
at leest. I doant like the ideyaa ov u gowing intoo depe space alone."

"I doant particularly rellish the prospect, iather, but its got too be
dhat wa. The whole flete, maulerz and aul, iznt enuf too doo bi foers
whauts got too be dun, and even too men iz too menny too doo it in the
oanly
wa it can be dun. U ce, cer..."

"No explanaishonz, plese. Its on the spoole, whare we can ghet it if we
nede it. Ar u informd az too the latest devellopments?"

"No, cer. I herd a littel cumming in, but not much."

"We ar aulmoast bac whare we wer befoer u tooc of in the ferst *Britanyaa*. Commers iz aulmoast at a standstil. Aul shipping fermz ar practicaly idel, but dhat iz niather aul ov it nor the werst ov it. U ma not reyalise hou important interstellar trade iz; but az a rezult ov its stoppage genneral biznes haz slode doun tremendously. Az iz oanly too be expected, perhaps, complaints ar cumming in bi the thousand becauz we hav not aulreddy blaasted the piraits out ov space, and demaandz dhat we doo so at wuns. Dha doo not understand the troo cichuwaishon, nor reyalise dhat we ar doowing evverithhing we can. We canot cend a mauler widh evvery frater and liner, and mauler-escorted vescelz ar the oanly wunz too arive at dhare destinaishonz."

"But whi? Widh tractor sheerz on aul ships, hou can dha hoald them?"
aasct Kinnison.

"Magnets!" snorted Hainz. "Plane, oald-fashond electromagnets. No pool too speke ov, at a distans, ov coers, but widh the rader running fre dha doant nede much. Cloce up--loc on--boerd and storm--aul dun!"

"Hm.. m.. m. Dhat chain'gez thhingz. Ive got too fiand a pirate ship. I wauz planning on following a frater or liner out tooword Alsacan, but if dhare arnt enny too follo... Ile hav too hunt around...."

"Dhat iz esily arainjd. Lots ov them waunt too go. We wil let wun go, widh a mauler acumpanying her, but wel outside detector rainj."

"Dhat cuvverz evverithhing, then, exept the acianment. I caant verry wel aasc for leve, but maby I cood be poot on speshal acianment, repoerting direct too u?"

"Sumthhing better dhan dhat," and Hainz smiald braudly, in gennuwine plezhure. "Evverithhing iz fixt. Yor Relece haz bene enterd in the boox. Yor comishon az captane haz bene canceld, so leve yor uniform in yor former qworterz. Here iz yor credit booc and here iz the rest ov yor kit. U ar nou an Unnatacht Lenzman."

The Relece! The gole tooword which aul Lenzmen strive, but which so fu atane! He wauz nou a fre agent, responcibel too no wun and too nuthhing save hiz one conspens. He wauz no lon'gher ov Erth, nor ov the Solaareyan Cistem, but ov the gallaxy az a whole. He wauz no lon'gher a tiny cog in the imens mashene ov the Galactic Patrole; wharevver he mite go, throowout the imencity ov the entire Iland Univers, he *wood be* the Galactic Patrole!

"Yes, its reyal." The oalder man wauz enjoiiing the yungsterz schupecfacshon at hiz Relece, remianding him az it did ov the time, long yeerz befoer, when he had wun hiz one. "U go enniwhare u plese and doo ennithhing u plese, for az long az u plese. U take ennithhing u waunt, whenever u waunt it, widh or widhout ghivving rezonz--auldho u wil uezhuwaly ghiv a thum-printed credit slip in retern. U repoert if, az, when, whare, hou, and too whoome u plese--or not, az u plese. U doant even ghet a sallary enny moer. U help yorcelf too dhat, too, wharevver u ma be; az much az u waunt, whenever u waunt it."

"But, cer... I... u... I mene.... dhat iz...."

Kinnison gulpt thre tiamz befoer he cood speke coherently. "Ime not reddy, cer. Whi, Ime nuthhing but a kid--I havnt got enuf gets too swing it. Just the bare thaut ov it scaerz me intoo histerrix!"

"It wood--it aulwase duz." Hainz wauz verry much in ernest nou, but it wauz a glad, proud ernestnes. "U ar too be az neerly absolutly fre

an agent az it iz poscibel for a livving, flesh-and-blud crechure too be. Too the man on the strete dhat wood ceme too spel a condishon ov perfect blis. Oanly a Gra Lenzman nose whaut a friatfool lode it reyaly iz; but it iz a lode dhat such a Lenzman iz glad and proud too carry."

"Yes, cer, he wood be, ov coers, if he...."

"Dhat thaut wil bother u for a time--if it did not, u wood not be here--but doant wurry about it enny moer dhan u can help. Aul I can sa iz dhat in the opinyon ov dhose whoo shood no, not oanly hav u pruivd yorcelf reddy for Relece, but aulso u hav ernd it."

"Hou doo dha figgure dhat out?" Kinnison demaanded, hotly. "Aul dhat saivd mi bacon on dhat trip wauz luc--a bernd-out Berghenhome--and at the time I thaut it wauz bad luc, at dhat. And vanBuskerc and Worcel and the uther boiz and the Lord nose whoo els poold me out ov jam aafter jam. Ide like aufooly wel too beleve dhat Ime reddy, cer, but Ime not. I caant take creddit for pure dum luc and for uther menz abillitese."

"Wel, cowoperaishon iz too be expected, and we like too make Gra Lenzmen out ov the lucky wunz." Hainz laaft deeply. "It ma make u fele better, dho, if I tel u too moer thhingz. Ferst, dhat so far u hav made the best showing ov enny man yet gradjuwated from Wentwerth Haul.

Ceccond, dhat we ov the Coert beleve dhat u wood hav suxeded in dhat aulmoast imposcibel mishon widhout vanBuskerc, widhout Worcel, and widhout the lucky falure ov the Berghenhome. In a different, and nou ov coers un'ghessabel fashon, but suxeded, nevvvertheles. Nor iz this too be taken az in enny cens a belittlement ov the verry reyaly abillitese ov dhose utherz, nor a deniyal dhat luc, or chaans, duz exist. It iz meerly our recognishon ov the fact dhat u hav whaut it taix too be an

Unnatacht Lenzman.

"Cele it nou, and buz of!" he comaanded, az Kinnison tride too sa sumthhing; and, clapping him on the shoalder, he ternd him around and gave him a gentel shuv tooword the doer. "Clere eethher, lad!"

"Same too u, cer--aul ov it dhare iz. I stil thhinc dhat u and aul the rest ov the Coert ar cockide; but Ile tri not too let u doun," and the nuly unnatacht Lenzman blunderd out. He stumbeld over the threshoald, bumt against a stenografer whoo wauz hurreying along the corridor, and aulmoast barjd intoo the jam ov the entrans doer insted ov gowing throo the opening. Outcide he regaind hiz fizensal poiz and wauct on are tooword hiz qworterz; but he nevver cood remember aafterword

whaut he did or whoome he met on dhat long, faast hike. Over and over the

wun thaut pounded in hiz brane: unnatacht! *Unnatacht!!*

UNNATACHT!!!

And behiand him, in the Poert Admiralz office, dhat hi ofishal sat and muezd, smiling faintly widh lips and ise, staring unceyingly at the stil open doerwa throo which Kinnison had staggherd. The boi had mezhuerd up in evvery particcular. He wood be a good man. He wood marry.

He did not thhinc so nou, ov coers--in hiz one miand hiz life wauz concecrate--but he wood. If nescenary, the Patrole itcelf wood ce too it dhat he did. Dhare wer wase, and such stoc wauz aultooghether too good not too be proppagated. And, fiftene yeerz from nou--if he livd--when he wauz no lon'gher fit for the grianding, groowelling life too which he nou looct

forword so egherly, he wood celect the Erth-bound job for which he wauz best fitted and wood becum a good execcutive. For such wer the

executiavz ov the Patrole. But this da-dreminz wauz ghetting him
noawhare,
faast: he shooc himself and plunjd agane intoo hiz werc.

Kinnison reecht hiz qworterz at laast, reyalising widh a thril dhat dha
wer no lon'gher hiz. He nou had no qworterz, no rezsidens, no adres.
Wharevver he mite be, throowout the whole ov ilimmitabel space, dhare
wauz hiz home. But, insted ov beying dismade bi the thaut ov the life
he faist, he wauz fild bi a feers eghernes too be acchuwaly livving it.

Dhare wauz a tap at hiz doer and an orderly enterd, carreying a bulky
paccage.

"Yor Grase, cer," he anounst, widh a crisp salute.

"Thanx." Kinnison reternd the salute az smartly; and, aulmoast befoer
the doer had cloazd, he wauz yanking of the
space-blac-and-cilver-and-goald gorjousnes ov the uniform he woer.

Stript bare, he made the qwic, meningfool geschure he had not reyaly
expected evver too be abel too make. Gra Cele. No entity haz evver dond
or evver wil don the Gra unmuivd, nor widhout deddicating himself anu
too dhat for which it standz.

The Gra--the unnadornd, nuetral-cullord lether dhat wauz the proud garb
ov dhat braanch ov the Patrole too which he wauz thensfoerth too belong.

It

had bene talord too hiz mezhuerments, and he cood not help studdeying
widh aprooval hiz reflecshon in the mirror. The round, aulmoast vizerles
cap, hevvely and softly qwilted in protecshon against the helmet ov hiz
armor. The hevvy gogghelz, opake too aul rajaishon harmfool too the ise.
The short jacket, emfacising braud shoalderz and narro waist. The trim
britchez and hi buits, encacing pouwerfool, tapering legz.

"Whaut an outfit--*whaut* an outfit!" he breedhd. "And maby I aint such a bad-loocking ape, at dhat, in these Grase!"

He did not then, and nevver did reyalise dhat he wauz waring the planest, drabbest, moast strictly utilitareyan uniform in existens; for too him, az too aul utherz whoo nu it, the shere, starc cimpliscity ov the Unnatacht Lenzmanz plane gra lether traanceded bi far the gaudy trappingz ov the uther braanchez ov the Cervice. He had admiard himcelf boiyishly, az men doo, feling a trifel ashaimd in so doowing; but he did not then and nevver did apreesheyate whaut a striking figgure ov a man he reyaly wauz az he strode out ov Qworterz and doun the wide avvenu tooword the *Britanyaaz* doc.

He wauz glad indede dhat dhare had bene no cerremoney or public sho conected widh this, hiz reyal and oonly important grajuwaishon. For az hiz fellose--not oonly hiz one croo, but aulso hiz frendz from aul over the Reservaishon--throngd about him, mauling and pummeling him in con'grachulaishon and aclame, he nu dhat he coodnt stand much moer. If dhare wer too be much moer ov it, he discuvverd suddenly, he wood iather paas out coald or cri like a baby--he didnt qwite no which.

Dhat whole houling, chaanting mob clusterd about him; and, conciddering it an onnor too carry the leest ov hiz personal belonginz, formd a yelling, cap-toscing escort. Traffic ment nuthhing whautevver too dhat plezzantly mad croo; nor, temporarily, did regulaishonz. Let traffic detoor--let pedestreyanz, no matter hou august, coole dhare heelz--let carz, trux, yes, even trainz, wate until dha got paast--let evverithhing wate, or tern around and go bac, or go sum uther wa. Here cumz Kinnison! Kimbal Kinnison! Kimbal Kinnison, Gra Lenzman! Make wa! And wa wauz made; from the *Britanyaaz* doc clere acros the bace too the slip in which the Lenzmanz nu speedster la.

And whaut a ship this littel speedster wauz! Trim, trig, streemliand too the ultimate she la dhare; qwiyescent but cercharjd widh pouwer.

Aulmoast

cenchent she wauz, this pouwer-pact, ultraracy littel fabricaishon ov space-tuffend alloi; instantly reddy at hiz tuch too libberate dhose tremendous ennergese which wer too herl him throo the infinite rechez ov the cozmic void.

Nun ov the mob came aboard, ov coers. Dha bact of, stil frantically waving and throwing whautevver came clocest too hand; and az Kinnison tucht a button and shot intoo the are he swaulode cevveral tiamz in a vane atempt too dispose ov an amasing lump which had sumhou apeerd in hiz throte.

CHAPTER 15

The Decoi

It so happend dhat for menny long weex dhare had bene liying in Nu Yorc Space-poert an ergent shipment for Alsacan, and dhat ergency wauz not meerly a wun-wa afare. For, widh the poscibel exepshon ov a fu packets whoose onerz had loct them in vaults and wood not part widh them at enny price, dhare wauz not a cin'ghel Alsacanite ciggaret left on Erth!

Lucshurese, then az nou, soerd feverishly in price widh scaercity. Oonly the rich smoact Alsacanite ciggarets, and too dhose rich the price ov ennithhing dha reyalry waunted wauz a matter ov aulmoast complete indifferens. And plenty ov them waunted, and waunted badly, dhare Alsacanite ciggarets--dhare wauz no dout ov dhat. The current market repoert uppon them wauz:

"Bid, wun thouzand creddits per packet ov ten. Offerd, nun at enny price."

Widh dhat evver-climbing figgure in miand, a merchant prins naimd Mathuse

had bene triying too ghet an Alsacan-bound ship intoo the eethher. He nu dhat wun cargo ov Alsacanite ciggarets saifly landed in enny Telureyan space-poert wood yeeld moer proffit dhan cood be made bi hiz entire flete in ten yeerz ov normal trading. Dhaerfoer he had for weex bene pooling evvery wire, and even evvery string, dhat he cood reche; polittical, finanshal, even at tiamz verging aultooghether too cloce for cumfort uppon the crimminal--but widhout rezults.

For, even if he cood fiand a croo willing too take the risc, too launch the ship widhout an escort wood be out ov the qweschon. Dhare wood be no proffit in a ship dhat did not retern too Erth. The ship wauz hiz, too doo widh az he pleezd, but the escorting maulerz wer aciand soly bi the Galactic Patrole, and the Patrole wood not ghiv hiz ship an escort.

In aancer too hiz ferst reqwest, he had bene informd dhat oanly cargose claast az "nescesary" wer beying escorted at aul reggularly; dhat "cemmy-nescesary" loadz wer escorted ocaizhonaly, when ov a particularly uesfool or desirabel comoddiety and if oporchunity offerd; dhat "lucshury" loadz such az hiz wer not beying escorted at aul; dhat he wood be notifide if, az, and when the *Promeethheyus* cood be ghivven escort. Then the merchant prins began hiz ceje.

Politishanz ov hi ranc, local and nashonal, cent in "reqwests" ov vareying degrese ov diplomacy. Financeyerz ferst offerd injuesments, then threttend too "bare down," then poot on aul the vareyous kiandz ov preshure

none too dhare preshure-luvving ilc. Plese, demaandz, threts, and preshuerz wer alike, houwevver, futile. The Patrole cood not be coact or boollede, cajoald, briabd, or coud; and aul ferther comunicaishonz uppon the subject, from whautevver soers oridginating wer ignoerd.

Havving exhausted hiz evvery rezoers ov diplomacy, pollitix, ghile, and finans, the merchant prins resiad himself too the inevvitabel and stopt tryyng too ghet hiz ship of the ground. Then Nu Yorc Bace receevd from Prime Bace an open message, not even coded, which red:

"Authorise space-ship *Promeethheyus* too clere for Alsacan at wil, escorted bi Patrole ship B 42 TC 838, whoose prezsent orderz ar heerbi canceld. Ciand, Hainz."

A demolishon bom dropt intoo dhat sub-bace wood not hav cauzd grater exiatment dhan did dhat message. No wun cood explane it--the bace comaander, the maulerz captane, the captane ov the *Promeethheyus*, or the hily pleezd but eeqwaly cerpriazd Mathuse--but aul ov them did whautevver dha cood too expedite the deparchure ov the frater. She wauz, and had bene for a long time, practicaly reddy too sale.

Az the bace comaander and Mathuse sat in the office, shortly befoer the shedjueld time ov deparchure, Kinnison ariavd--or, moer corectly, let them no dhat he wauz dhare. He invited them boath intoo the controle-roome ov hiz speedster; and invitaishonz from Gra Lenzmen wer axepted widhout qweschon or demer.

"I supose u ar wundering whaut this iz aul about," he began. "Ile make it az short az I can. I aasct u in here becauz this iz the oonly conveyent place in which I *no* dhat whaut we sa wil not be overherd. Dhare ar lots ov spi-rase around here, whether u no it or not. The *Promeethheyus* iz too be aloud too go too Alsacan, becauz dhat iz whare piraits ceme too be moast numerous, and we doo not waunt too waist time hunting aul over space too fiand wun. Yor vescel wauz celected, Mr. Mathuse, for thre rezonz, and in spite ov the atempts u hav bene

making too obtane speshal privvilegez, not becauz ov them. Ferst, becauz dhare iz no nescenary or cemmy-nescenary frate wating for clerans intoo dhat rejon. Cecond, becauz we doo not waunt yor ferm too fale. We doo not no ov enny uther larj shipping line in such a shaky posishon az yorz, nor ov enny ferm enniwhare too which wun cin'ghel cargo wood make such an imens finanshal differens."

"U ar certainly rite dhare, Lenzman!" Mathuse agrede, whole-hartedly. "It meenz bancruptcy on the wun hand and a forchune on the uther."

"Heerz whaut iz too happen. The ship and the mauuler blaast of on shedjule, foertene minnuets from nou. Dha ghet about too Valereyaa, when dha ar boath recauld--ergent orderz for the mauuler too go on rescu werc. The mauuler cumz bac, but yor captane wil, in aul probabillity, kepe on gowing, saying dhat he started out for Alsacan and dhats whare hese gowing...."

"But he woodnt--he woodnt *dare!*" gaaspt the ship-oner.

"Shure he wood," Kinnison incisted, cheerfooly enuf. "Dhat iz the thherd good rezon yor vescel iz beying aloud too cet out, becauz it certainly wil be atact. U didnt no it until nou, but yor captane and over haaf ov yor croo ar piraits themcelvz, and ar gowing too...."

"Whaut? Piraits!" Mathuse bellode. "Ile go doun dhare and...."

"Ule doo nuthhing whautevver, Mr. Mathuse, exept wauch ththingz, and u wil doo dhat from here. The cichuwaishon iz under controle."

"But mi ship! Mi cargo!" the shipper waild. "Weeyl be roowind

if dha..."

"Let me finish, please," the Lenzman interrupted. "As soon as the mauler ternz bac it iz practicaly certane dhat yor captane wil cend out a message, letting the piraits no dhat he iz esy pra. Within a minnute aafter cending dhat message, he dise. So duz evvery uther pirate aboard. Yor ship landz on Valereyaa and taix on a croo ov space-fiting wialdcats, hedded bi Peter vanBuskerck. Then it gose on tooword Alsacan, and when the piraits boerd dhat ship, aafter its pre-arainjd haaf-harted resistans and esy surrender, dha ar gowing too thhinc dhat aul helz out for noone. Espeshaly cins the mauler, bac from her rescu werc,' wil be tagghing along, not too far awa."

"Then mi ship wil reyaly go too Alsacan, and bac, saifly?" Mathuse wauz aulmoast daizd. Matterz wer entiarly out ov hiz handz, and thhingz had muivd so rappidly dhat he hardly nu whaut too thhinc. "But if mi one croose ar piraits, sum ov them ma.... but I can ov coers ghet polece protecshon if nescesary."

"Unles sumthhing entiarly unfoercene happenz, the *Promeethheyus* wil make the round trip in saifty, cargose and aul--under mauler escort aul the wa. U wil ov coers hav too take the uther matter up widh yor local polece."

"When iz the atac too take place, cer?" aasct the bace comaander.

"Dhats whaut the mauler skipper waunted too no when I toald him whaut wauz ahed ov him," Kinnison grind. "He waunted too sneke up a littel clocer about dhat time. Ide like too no, micelf, but unforchunaitly dhat wil hav too be decided bi the piraits aafter dha ghet the signal. It wil be on the wa out, dho, becauz the cargo she haz aboard nou iz a lot

moer vallubel too Boscone dhan a lode ov Alsacanite ciggarets wood be."

"But doo u thhinc u can take the pirate ship dhat wa?" aasct the comaander, jubeyously.

"No, but we wil cut doun hiz personel too such an extent dhat he wil hav too hed bac for hiz bace."

"And dhats whaut u waunt--the bace. I ce."

He did not ce--qwite--but the Lenzman did not enliten him ferther.

Dhare wauz a brilliyant dubbel flare az frater and mauuler lifted intoo the are, and Kinnison shode the ship-oner out.

"Hadnt I better be gowing, too?" aasct the comaander. "Dhose orderz, u no."

"A cuppel ov minnuets yet. I hav anuther message for u--ofishal. Mathuse woant nede a polece escort long--if enny. When dhat ship iz atact it iz too be the cignal for clening out evvery pirate in Grater Nu Yorc--the werst pirate hot-bed on Tellus. Niather u nor yor foers wil be in on it directly, but u mite paas the werd around, so dhat our one men wil be informd ahed ov the Tellenuse outfits."

"Good! Dhat haz neded doowing for a long time."

"Yes, but u no it taix a long time too line up evvery man in such a big organizaishon. Dha waunt too ghet them aul, widhout ghetting enny innocent biastanderz."

"Whoose doowing it--Prime Bace?"

"Yes. Enuf men wil be throne in here too doo the whole job in an our."

"Dhat iz good nuse--clere eethher, Lenzman!" and the bace comaander went bac too hiz poast.

Az the are-loc togghelz ramd home, celing the exit behiand the departing vizsitor, Kinnison eezd hiz speedster intoo the are and hedded for Valereyaa. Cins the too vescelz ahed ov him had left atmosfere inershaales, az wood he, and cins cevveral hundred cecondz had elapst cins dhare take-of, he wauz ov coers sum ten thouzand mialz of dhare line az wel az beying uncounted milleyonz ov mialz behiand them. But the larger distans ment no moer dhan the smauler, and niather ov them ment ennithhing at aul too the Patroalz finest speedster. Kinnison, on esy tooring blaast, caut up widh them in minnuets. Closing up too les dhan wun lite-yere, he slode hiz pace too mach dhaerz and held hiz distans.

Enny ordinary ship wood hav bene detected long cins, but Kinnison rode no ordinary ship. Hiz speedster wauz imune too aul detecshon save electromagnettic or vizhuwal, and dhaerfoer, even at dhat cloce rainj--the travvel ov haaf a minnute for even a slo space-ship in open space--he wauz safe. For electromagnettix ar uesles at dhat distans: and vizhuwal aparatus, even widh sub-eethher converterz, iz reliyabel oonly up too a fu mere thouzandz ov mialz, unles the observer nose exactly whaut too looc for and whare too looc for it.

Kinnison, then, cloazd up and follode the *Promeethheyus* and her mauuler escort; and az dha aproacht the Valereyan solar cistem the recaul message came booming in. Aulso, az had bene expected, the rennegade captane ov the frater cent hiz defiyant aancer and hiz message too the pirate hi comaand. The mauuler ternd bac, the merchantman kept on. Suddenly, houwevver, she stopt, inert, and from her poerts wer egeded discrete bits ov matter--probbably the boddese ov the Boscoanyan memberz ov

her croo. Then the *Promeethheyus*, agane inershaales, flasht directly tooword the plannet Valereyaa.

An inershaales landing iz, ov coers, hily ireggular, and iz made oanly when the ship iz too take of agane imejaitly. It saivz aul the time ordinarily lost in spiraling and deceleraishon, and saivz the computaishon ov a landing orbit, which iz no taasc for an ammater computer. It iz, houwevver, dain'gerous. It taix pouwer, plenty ov it, too maintane the foers which nuetralizez the inershaa ov mas, and if dhat foers failz even for an instant while a ship iz uppon a plannets cerface, the conceqwencez ar uezhuwaly hily dizaastrous. For in the nuetralizaishon ov inershaa dhare iz no madgic, no ghetting ov sumthhing for nuthhing, no viyolaishon ov Nachuerz

lau ov the concervaishon ov matter and ennergy. The instant dhat foers becumz inopperative the ship posescez exactly the same veloscity, momentum, and inershaa dhat it posest at the instant the foers tooc efect. Dhus, if a space-ship taix of from Erth, widh its orbital veloscity ov about atene and wun-haaf mialz per cecond rellative too the sun, gose fre, dashez too Marz, landz fre, and then gose inert, its oridginal veloscity, boath in speede and in direcshon, iz instantly restoerd; widh conceqwencez better imadgiand dhan descriabd. Such a veloscity ov coers *mite* take the ship harmlesly intoo the are; but it probbably wood not.

Inershaales vescelz doo not ordinarily lode frate. Dha doo, houwevver, take on pascen'gerz, espeshaly military personel acustomd too open-space manuverz in pouwerd space-suets. Men and ship must go inert--cepparaitly, ov coers--imejaitly aafter leving the plannet, so dhat the men can mach dhare intrinsic veloscity too the ships; but dhat taix oanly a verry smaul fracshon ov the time reqwiard for an inert landing.

Hens the *Promeethheyus* landed fre, and so did Kinnison. He stept out,

foolly armord against Valereyaaz extreemly hevvy atmosfere, and laboring a trifel under its teriffic gravitaishon, too be greted corjaly bi *Leftennant* vanBuskerc, whoose fiting men wer aulreddy streming aboard the frater.

"Hi, Kim!" the Duchman cauld, galy. "Evverithhing went of like cloqwer. Woant hoald u up long--be blaasting of in ten minnuets."

"Ho, Lefty!" the Lenzman acnollejd, az corjaly, but saluting the nuly comishond officer widh an exadgerated formallity. "Sa, Bus, Ive bene doowing sum thhinking. Whi woodnt it be a good ideyaa too...."

"Uu-uu, it wood *not*," denide the fiter, pozsitiavly. "I no whaut yor gowing too sa--dhat u waunt in on this party--but doant sa it."

"But I...." Kinnison began too argu.

"Nix," the Valereyan declaerd flatly. "Uve got too sta widh yor speedster. No roome for her incide; shese clere fool ov cargo and mi men. U caant clamp on outcide, becauz dhat wood ghiv the whole thhing awa. And beciadz, for the ferst and laast time in mi life Ive got a chaans too ghiv a Gra Lenzman orderz. Dhose orderz ar too sta out ov and awa from this ship--and Ile ce too it dhat u doo, too, u littel Telureyan shrimp! Boi, whaut a kic I ghet out ov dhat!"

"U wood, u big, dum Valereyan ape--u aulwase wer a smaul-soald tipe!" Kinnison retorted. "Pigghy-pigghy.... Hainz, huu?"

"Uu-huu." VanBuskerc nodded. "Hou els cood I tauc so ruf too *u* and ghet awa widh it? Houwevver, doant fele too bad--u arnt miscing a thhing, reyaly. Its in the canz aulreddy, and yor fun iz up ahed sumwhare. And bi the wa, Kim, con'grachulaishonz. U had it cumming. Were aul behiand u, from here too the Magelannic Cloudz and bac."

"Thanx. The same too u, Bus, and menny ov em. Wel, if u woant let me sto awa, Ile tag along behiand, I ghes. Clere eethher--or raather, I hope its fool ov piraits bi toomorro morning. Woant be, dho, probbably; doant imadgine dhaiyl moove until were aulmoast dhare."

And tag along Kinnison did, throo thousandz and thousandz ov parcx ov unneventfool voiyage.

Part ov the time he spent in the speedster dashing hither and yon. Moast ov it, houwevver, he spent in the vaastly moer cumfortabel mauler; too the armord cide ov which hiz tiny vescel clung widh its magnetic clamps while he slept and ate, goscipt and red, exerciazd and plade widh the maulerz officerz and croo, in depe-space comradery. It so happend, houwevver, dhat when the long-awated atac devellopt he wauz out in hiz speedster, and dhus sau and herd evverithhing from the beghinning.

Space wauz fild widh the oald, familleyar interferens. The rader flasht up, loct on widh magnets, and began too beme. Not hevvely--scaersly enuf too worm up the defencive screenz--and Kinnison proabd intoo the pirate widh hiz spi-ra.

"Terestreyalz--North Amerricanz!" he exclaimd, haaf-aloud, starteld for an instant. "But natchuraly dha wood be, cins this iz a poot-up job and over haaf the croo wer Nu Yorc gangsterz."

"The bliterz got hiz spi-ra screenz up," the pilot wauz grumblng too hiz captane. The fact dhat he spoke in In'glish wauz imatereyal too the Lenzman; he wood hav understood eeqwaly wel enny uthher poscibel form ov comunicaishon or ov thaut exchainj. "Dhat wauznt part ov the plan, wauz it?"

If Helmuth or wun ov the uther abel miandz at Grand Bace had bene directing dhat atac it wood hav stopt rite dhare. The pilot had

shone a flash ov feling dhat, with a littel encurraijment, mite hav grone intoo a suspishon. But the captane wauz not an imadginative man. Dhaerfoer:

"Nuthing wauz ced about it, iather wa," he replide. "Probbably the maitz on juty--he iznt wun ov us, u no. The captane wil open up. If he duznt doo it pritty qwic Ile open her up micelf.... dhare, the poerts opening. Slide a littel forward... hoald it! Go ghet em, men!"

Men, hundredz ov them, armd and armord, swormd throo the fraterz lox. But az the laast man ov the boerding party paast the portal sumthhing happend dhat wauz moast decidedly not on the proogram.

The outer poert slamd shut and its togghelz drove home!

"Blaast dhose screenz! Noc them doun--ghet in dhare with a spi-ra!" barct the pirate captane. He wauz not wun ov dhose hardy and valeyant soalz whoo, like Ghildersleve, led in person the atax ov hiz cut-throats. He emmulated insted the hiyer Boscoanyan ofishalz and directed hiz raidz from the saifty ov hiz controle-roome; but, az haz bene intimated, he wauz not exactly like dhose ofishalz. It wauz oonly aafter it wauz too late dhat he became suspishous. "I wunder if sumbody cood hav dubbel-crost us?... Hijackerz?"

"Weeyl bally soone no," the pilot grould, and even az he spoke the spi-ra got throo, reveling a verry shambelz.

For vanBuskerk and hiz Valereyanz had not bene caut napping, nor wer dha a croo--unnarmord, parshaly armd, and renderd even moer impotent bi internal mutiny, strife, and slauter--such az the piraits had expected too fiand.

Insted, the boerderz met a foers dhat wauz overwhelmingly supereyor too

dhare one. Not oonly in the strength and agillity ov its units, but aulso in dhat at leest wun cemmy-portabel progector comaanded evvery corridor ov the frater. In the blaasts ov dhose progectorz moast ov the piraits dide instantly, not nowing whaut struc them.

Dha wer the forchunate wunz. The utherz nu whaut wauz cumming and sau it az it came, for the Valereyanz did not even drau dhare DeLammeterz. Dha nu dhat the piraits armor cood withstand for minnuets enny hand-wepponz beemz, and dha disdained too remount the hevvy cemmy-portabelz. Dha came in widh dhare space-axez, and at the cite the piraits broke and ran screaming in pannic fere. But dha cood not escape. The togghelz ov the exit poert wer socketed and loct.

Dhaerfoer the storming party dide too the laast man; and, az vanBuskerck had foertoald, it wauz scaersly even a strugghel. For ordinary armor iz so much tin-plate against a Valereyan swinging a space-ax.

The spi-ra ov the pirate captane got throo just in time too ce the gaastly finaaly ov the massaker, and hiz face ternd ferst perpel, then white.

"The Patrole!" he gaaspt. "Valereyanz--a whole cumpany ov them! Ile sa weve bene dubbel-crost!"

"Rito--weve bene jolly wel had," the pilot agrede. "U doant no the haaf ov it, iather. Sumbodese cumming, and it iznt a boi scout. If a mauler shood suc us in, wede be verry much a spent foers, whaut?"

"Cut the gabbel!" snapt the captane. "Iz it a mauler, or not?"

"A bit too far awa yet too sa, but it probbably iz. Dha woodnt hav cent dhose jasperz out widhout cuvver, oald bene--dha no we can bern

dhat fraterz screenz doun in an our. Better ghet reddy too run, whaut?"

The comaander did so, wiald thauts racing throo hiz miand. If a mauler got cloce enuf too him too use magnets, he wauz dun. Hiz hevveyest beemz woodnt even worm up a maulerz screenz; hiz defencez woodnt stand up for a cecond against a maulerz blaasts.... and hede be orderd bac too bace....

"Tally ho, oald froote!" The pilot slamd on maximum blaast. "Its a mauler and weve bene bluddy wel jobd. Bac too bace?"

"Yes," and the discomfited captane energiazd hiz comunicator, too repoert too hiz imejate supereyor the humilleyating outcum ov the supposedly caerfooly-pland coo.

CHAPTER 16

Kinnison Meets the Wheelmen

Az the pirate fled intoo space Kinnison follode, matching hiz qwory in coers and spede. He then cut in the automattic controler on hiz drive, the automattic recorder on hiz plate, and began too chune in hiz beme-tracer; oonly too be braut up short bi the reyalizaishon dhat the spi-rase point wood not sta in the piraits controle roome widhout constant atenshon and mannuwal ajustment. He had none dhat, too. Even the moast precice ov automattic controlerz, drivven bi the moast caerfooly stabiliazd electronic currents, ar prone too slip a littel at even such cloce rainj az ten milleyon mialz, espeshaly in the bumpy eethher nere solar cistemz, and dhare wauz nuthhing too corect the slip. He had not thaut ov dhat befoer; the pilot aulwase made dhose minor corecshonz az a matter ov coers.

But nou he wauz toern betwene too desiarz. He waunted too liscen too the

conversaishon dhat wood ensu az soone az the pirate captane got intoo comunaishon widh hiz supereyor officerz; and, espeshaly shood Helmuth poot in hiz beme, he verry much waunted too trace it and dhus cecure anuther

line on the hedqworterz he wauz so ancshous too locate. He nou feerd dhat he cood not doo boath--a fere dhat soone wauz too proove wel grounded--and

wisht fervently dhat for a fu minnuets he cood be too men. Or at leest a Velanshan; dha had ise and handz and cepparate brane-compartments enuf so dhat dha cood doo haaf-a-duzsen thhingz at wuns and doo eche wun

wel. He cood not; but he cood tri. Maby he shood hav braut wun ov the boiz along, at dhat. No, dhat wood rec everithhing, later on; he wood hav too doo the best he cood.

Comunaishon wauz establisht and the pirate captane began too make hiz repoert; and bi using wun hand on the ra and the uther on the tracer, he mannaijd too ghet a parshal line and too reccord scraps ov the conversaishon.

He mist, houwevver, the ecenshal part ov the entire eppisode, dhat part in which the bace comaander ternd the unsuxesfool captane over too Helmuth himcelf. Dhaerfoer Kinnison wauz cerpriazd indede at the disaperans ov the beme he wauz so laboereyously trying too trace, and too here Helmuth conclude hiz castigaishon ov the unlucky captane widh:

"....not entiarly yor fault, I wil not punnish u at aul ceveerly this time. Repoert too our bace on Aldebbaran I, tern yor vescel over too comaander dhare, and doo ennithhing he telz u too for thherty ov the dase ov dhat plannet."

Franticaly Kinnison droo bac hiz tracer and cercht for Helmuths beme; but befoer he cood cincronise widh it the message ov the piraits hi chefe wauz finnisht and hiz beme wauz gon. The Lenzman sat bac in thaut.

Aldebbaran! Practically next door too his one Solaareyan Cistem, from which he had come so far. He had had possibly managed to keep concealed, or to re-establish, a base so close to Sol, through all the intensive searching that had been done? But he *had*--that was the important thing. Enniwa, he knew where he was going, and that helped. Would anything he hadn't thought of, and would that might have spoiled everything, was the fact that he couldn't stay awake indefinitely to follow that ship! He had to sleep sometime, and while he was asleep his quarry was bound to escape. He of course had a CRX tracer, which would hold a ship without attention as long as it was anywhere within even extreme range; and it would have been a simple enough matter to have had a photo-cell relay post in between the plate of the CRX and the automatic controls of the spacer and driver--but he had not counted for it. Well, luckily, he knew where he was going, and the trip to Aldebbaran would be long enough for him to build a dozen such controls. He had all the necessary parts and plenty of tools.

Therefore, following the pirate ship easily as it went through space, Kinnison built his automatic "chaser," as he called it. During each of the first four or five "trials" he lost the vessel he was pursuing, but found it without any great difficulty upon awakening. Thereafter he held it continuously; improving day by day the performance of his apparatus until it could do almost anything except fail. After that he devoted his time to an intensive study of the general problem before him. His results were highly unsatisfactory; for in order to solve any problem one must have enough data to set it up, either in actual experiment or in logical consequence, and Kinnison did not have enough data. He had altogether too many unknowns and not enough answers.

The first specific problem was that of getting into the pirate base. Cins the cercherz ov the Patrole had not found it, dhat base must be verry wel hidden indede. And hiding ennithhing az larj az a base on Aldebbaran I, az he rememberd it, wood be qwite a fete in itcelf. He had bene in dhat cistem oonly wuns, but....

Alone in hiz ship, and in depe space auldho he wauz, he blusht painfooly az he rememberd whaut had happend too him juring dhat vizsit. He had chaist a cuppel ov dope runnerz too Aldebbaran 2, and dhare he had encounterd the moast vivvidly, the moast flaulesly, the moast remarcably and intregingly butifool gherl he had evver cene. He had cene butifool wimmen, ov coers, befoer and in plenty. He had cene butese ammater and profeshonal; soashal butterflise, daancerz, actrecez, moddelz, and poschurerz; boath in the flesh and in Telenuescasts; but he had nevver supoazd dhat such an utterly ravvishing crechure az she wauz cood exist outcide ov a thhiyonite dreme. Az a timidly innocent damsel in distres she had bene perfect, and if she had held dhat pose a littel lon'gher Kinnison shudderd too thhinc ov whaut mite hav happend.

But, havving none too menny dope-runnerz and too fu Patroalmen, she misjujd entiarly, not oonly the cadets centiments, but aulso hiz reyacsionz. For, even az she came ammorously intoo hiz armz, he had none dhat dhare wauz sumthhing scroowy. Wimmen like dhat did not pla dhat kiand ov game for nuthhing. She must be mixt up with the too he had bene chacing. He got awa from her, with oonly a cuppel ov scratchez, just in time too capchure her confedderaits az dha wer making dhare escape--and he had bene afrade ov butifool wimmen evver cins. Hede like too ce dhat Aldebarainyan hel-cat agane--just wuns. Hede bene just a kid then, but nou....

But dhat line ov thaut wauz ghetting him noawhare, faast. It wauz Aldebbaran

I dhat he had better be thhinking ov. Barren, liafles, dezzolate, aerles, wauterles. Bare az hiz hand, cuvverd widh extinct volcanose, craterd, jagghed, and toern. Too hide a bace on dhat plannet wood take plenty ov doowing, and, conversly, it wood be corespondingly difficult too aproche. If on the cerface at aul, which he douted verry strongly, it wood be cuvverd. In enny event, aul its aprochez wood be thurroly screend and eqwipt widh looccouts on the ultraa-viyolet and on the infraa-red, az wel az on the vizsibel. Hiz detector nullifiyer woodnt help him much dhare. Dhose screenz and looccouts wer bad--verry, verry bad. Qweschon--cood *ennithhing* ghet intoo dhat bace widhout cetting of an alarm?

Hiz speedster cood not even ghet cloce, dhat wauz certane. Cood he, alone? He wood hav too ware armor, ov coers, too hoald hiz are, and it wood rajate. Not necesarily--he cood land out ov rainj and wauc, widhout pouwer; but dhare wer stil the screenz and the looccouts. If the piraits wer on dhare tose it cimply wauznt in the cardz; and he had too ashume dhat dha wood be alert.

Whaut, then, cood paas dhose barreyerz? Prolongd concideraishon ov evvery fact ov the cichuwaishon gave deffinite aancer and marct out cleerly the coers he must take. Sumthhing admitted bi the piraits themcelvz wauz the oonly thhing dhat cood ghet in. The vescel ahed ov hiz wauz gowing in.

Dhaerfoer he must and wood enter dhat bace within the pirate vescel itcelf. Widh dhat point decided dhare remaind oonly the werking out ov a method, which pruivd too be aulmoast ridicculously cimpel.

Wuns incide the bace, whaut shood he--or raather, whaut *cood* he--doo? For dase he made and discarded planz, but finaly he tost them aul out ov hiz miand. So much depended uppon the locaishon ov the bace, its personel, its arainjment, and its rootene, dhat he cood devellop not even the ruf draaft ov a werking plan. He nu whaut he waunted too doo, but he had not even the remotest ideyaa az too hou he cood go about doowing it. Ov the openingz dhat apeerd, he wood hav too chuse the moast fesibel and fit hiz acshonz too whautevver cichuwaishon then and dhare obtaind.

So deciding, he shot hiz spi-ra tooword the plannet and studdede it widh care. It wauz indede az he had rememberd it, or wers. Bleecly, hotly arrid, it had no soil whautevver, its entire cerface beying compoazd ov ignyous roc, laavaa, and pummice. Schupendous rain'gez ov mountainz cris-crost and intercected eche uther at random, eche rainj a suxeshon ov ded volcannic peex and blone-of craterz. Mountaincide and rocky plane, crater-waul and vally floer, alike and inumerably wer pocmarct widh sub-croterz and widh imensly yauning shel-hoalz, az dho the whole plannet had bene throowout geyolodgic agez the targhet ov an incessant cozmic bombardment.

Over its cerface and throo and throo its vollume he drove hiz spi-ra; fianding nuthhing. He boerd intoo its substans widh hiz detectorz and hiz tracerz; widh rezults compleetly neggative. Ov coers, clocer up, hiz electromagnettix wood repoert iarn--plenty ov it--but dhat informaishon wood aulso be meningles. Practicaly aul plannets had iarn coerz. Az far az hiz instrooms cood tel--and he had ghivven Aldebbaran I a moer thurro gowing-over bi far dhan enny ordinary cervaying ship wood hav ghivven it--dhare wauz no bace ov enny kiand uppon or within the plannet. Yet he *nu* dhat a bace wauz dhare. So whaut?--maby--Helmuths bace mite be incide the gallaxy aafter aul, protected from detecshon in

the same way; probably by solid metal of iron or of iron ore. A second line upon that base had now become imperative. But when approaching the system fast; he had better get ready.

He belted on his personal equipment, including a nullifier, then inspected his armor, checking its supplies and apparatus carefully before he hooked it ready to his hand. Glancing into the plate, he noted with approval that his "chaser" was functioning perfectly. Pershude and pershuder were now both well inside the solar system of Aldebaran; and, as

slowed the pirate so slowed the speedster. Finally the leader went inert in preparation for his spiral, but Kinnison was no longer following. Before he went inert he flashed down too within fifty thousand miles of the planets forbidding surface. He then cut his Berghenhome, through the speedster into an almost circular orbit, well away from the landing orbit selected by the pirate, cut off all his power, and drifted. He staid in the speedster, observing and computing, until he had so exactly defined its path that he could find it unerringly at any future instant. Then he went into the are-loc, stepped out into space, and, waiting only too be sure that the portal had snapped shut behind him, set his coers toward the pirate's spiral.

Inert now, his progress was so slow as to come imperceptible, but he had plenty of time. And it was only relatively that his speed was low. He was actually hurtling through space at the rate of well over two thousand miles an hour, and his powerful little driver was increasing that speed constantly by an acceleration of two Earth gravities.

Soon the vessel crept up, beneath him now, and Kinnison, increasing his drive to five gravities, shot toward it in a long, slanting dive. This was the most ticklish minute of the trip, but the Lenzman had ascertained correctly that the ship's officers would be looking ahead of them and down, not backward and up. When he made his approach unobserved. The approach itself, the boarding of an inert space-ship at its

friatfool landing-spiral veloscity, wauz elementary too enny competent space-man. Dhare wauz not even a flare too bother him or too revele him too

cite, az the braking gets wer nou doowing aul the werc. Matching coers and veloscity evver moer cloasly, he crept up--flung hiz magnet--pooled up, hand over hand--opend the emergency inlet loc--and dhare he wauz.

Unconcernedly he made hiz wa along the sternwa and intoo the nou deserted qworterz ov the fiterz. Dhare he la doun in a hammoc, snapt the axeleraishon straps, and shot hiz spi-ra intoo the controle roome. And dhare, in the pirate captainz one vizsiplate, he observd the rugged and toern topografy ov the terrane belo az the pilot faut hiz ship doun, mile bi mile. Tuf gowing, this, Kinnison reflected, and the berd wauz doowing a nice job, even if he wauz taking it the hard wa, bringing her doun strate on her nose insted ov taking wun moer spiral around the plannet and then sliding in on her under gets, which wer desiand and plaist specificaly for such werc. But taking it the hard wa he wauz, and hiz vescel wauz bucking, kicking, bouncing and spinning on the teriffic blaasts ov her braking gets. Doun she came, faast; and it wauz oonly aafter she wauz acchuwaly incide wun ov dhose schupendous craterz, wel belo the levvel ov its rim, dhat the pilot flattend her out and ashuemd normal landing posishon.

Dha wer stil gowing too faast, Kinnison thaut, but the pirate pilot nu whaut he wauz doowing. Five mialz the vescel dropt, strate doun dhat Titannic shaaft, befoer the bottom wauz reecht. The shaafts waul wauz studded widh windose; in frunt ov the craaft luimd the outer gate ov a gigantic are-loc. It opend, the ship wauz trundeld incide, landing-cradel and aul, and the mascive gate cloazd behiand it. This wauz the piraits bace, and Kinnison wauz incide it!

"Men, atenshon!" The pirate comaander snapt then. "The are iz dedly poizon, so poot on yor armor and be shure yor tanx ar fool. Dha hav

ruimz for us, havving good are, but doant open yor suets a crac until I tel u too. Acembel! Aul ov u dhat ar not here in this controle roome in five minnuets wil sta on boerd and take yor one chaancez!"

Kinnison decided instantly too acembel widh the croo. He cood doo nuthhing in the ship, and it wood be inspected, ov coers. He had plenty ov are, but space-armor aul looct alike, and hiz Lenz wood worn him in time ov enny unfrendly or suspishous thaut. He had better go. If dha cauld a role.... but he wood cros dhat brij when he came too it.

No role wauz cauld; in fact, the captane pade no atenshon at aul too hiz men. Dha wood cum along or not, just az dha pleezd. But cins too sta in the ship ment deth, evvery man wauz prompt. At the expiraishon ov the five minnuets the captane strode awa, follode bi the croud. Throo a doerwa, left tern, and the captane wauz met bi a crechure whoose shape Kinnison cood not make out. A pauz, a stragling forword, then a rite tern.

Kinnison decided dhat he wood not take dhat tern. He wood sta here, cloce too the shaaft, whare he cood blaast hiz wa out if nescenary, until he had studdede the whole bace thurroly enuf too map out a plan ov campane. He soone found an empty and aparrently unuezd roome, and ashuerd

himcelf dhat throo its hevvy, cristal-clere windo he cood indede looc out intoo the vaastly cilindrical emptines ov a volcannic shaaft.

Then widh hiz spi-ra he waucht the piraits az dha wer escorted too the qwortertz prepaerd for them. Dhose mite hav bene ruimz ov state, but it looct too Kinnison verry much az dho hiz former shipmaitz wer beying jaild ignominiously, and he wauz glad dhat he had taken leve ov them. Shooting hiz ra here and dhare throowout the strucchure, he finaly found whaut he wauz loocking for; the comunicator roome. Dhat roome

wauz faerly wel lited, and at whaut he sau dhare hiz jau dropt in

sherest amaizment.

He had expected too ce men, cins Aldebbaran 2, the oonly inhabbited plannet in the cistem, had bene colloniazd from Tellus and its pepel wer az trooly human and Caucaizhan az dhose ov Shicaago or ov Parris. But dhare... these *thhingz*.... he had bene around qwite a bit, but he had nevver cene nor herd ov dhare like. Dha wer wheelz, reyaly. When dha went enniwhare dha roald. Hedz whare hubz aut too be.... ise.... armz, duzsens ov them, and verry capabel-loocking handz....

"Vogenar!" a crisp thaut flasht from wun ov the peculeyar entitese too anuther, impin'ging aulso uppon Kinnisonz Lenz. "Sumwun--sum outcider--iz loocking at me. Releve me while I abate this intollerabel nusans."

"Wun ov dhose crechuerz from Tellus? We wil teche them verry shortly dhat such intruizhon iz not too be boern."

"No, it iz not wun ov them. The tuch iz cimmlar, but the tone iz entiarily different. Nor cood it be wun ov them, for not wun ov them iz eqwipt widh the instrooment which iz such a clumsy substichute for inherent pouwer ov miand. Dhare, I wil nou...."

Kinnison snapt on hiz thaut-screne, but the dammage had aulreddy bene dun. In the viyolated Comunicaishonz Roome the an'gry observer went on:

"...achune micelf and trace the origin ov dhat priying looc. It haz disapeerd nou, but its cender canot be distant, cins our waulz ar sheelded and screend.... Aa, dhare iz a blanc space, which I canot pennetrate, in the cevventh roome ov the foerth corridor. In aul probabillity it iz wun ov our ghests, hiding nou behiand a thaut screne." Then hiz orderz buimd out too a coer ov gardz. "Take him and poot him widh the utherz!"

Kinnison had not herd the order, but he wauz reddy for ennithhing, and dhose whoo came too take him found dhat it wauz much eseyer too ishu such orderz dhan too carry them out.

"Hault!" snapt the Lenzman, hiz Lenz carreying the cracling comaand depe intoo the Wheelmenz miandz. "I doo not wish too harm u, but cum no clocer!"

"U? Harm us?" came a coald, clere thaut, and the crechuerz vannisht. But not for long. Dha or utherz like them wer bac in moments, this time armd and armord for strife.

Agane Kinnison found dhat DeLammeterz wer uesles. The armor ov the fo mounted genneratorz az capabel az hiz one; and, auldho the are in the roome soone became wun intollerably glaring feeld ov foers, in which the verry waulz themcelvz began too crumbel and too vaporise, niather he nor hiz atackerz wer harmd. Agane, then, the Lenzman had recors too hiz meddeyeval weppon; sheething hiz DeLammeter and wading in widh hiz ax.

Auldho not a vanBuskerz, he wauz, for an Erthman, ov unnuezhuwal strength, skil, and spede: and too dhose oposing him he wauz a verry Herculese.

Dhaerfoer, az he struc and struc and struc agane, the cel became a goerily reking slauter-pen, its evvery corner hi-piald widh the shatterd corpcez ov the Wheelmen and its floer running widh blud and slime. The laast fu ov the atackerz, unwilling too face lon'gher dhat iresistibel stele, wheeld awa, and Kinnison thaut flashingly ov whaut he shood doo next.

This trip wauz a bust so far. He coodnt doo himcelf a bit ov good here nou, and hede better flit while he wauz stil in wun pece. Hou? The

doer? No. Coodnt make it--hede run out ov time qwic dhat wa. Hiz screenz wood stop smaul-armz progectialz, but dha nu dhat az wel az he did. Dhade use a yung cannon--or, moer probbably, a cemmy-portabel. Better take out the waul. Dhat wood ghiv them sumthhing els too thhinc about, too, while he wauz doowing hiz flit.

Oanly a fracshon ov a cecond wauz taken up bi these thauts, then Kinnison wauz at the waul. He cet hiz DeLammeter too minnimium aperchure and at maximum blaast, too thro an iresistibel cutting pencil. Throo the waul dhat pencil peerst; up, over, and around.

But, faast az the Lenzman had acted, he wauz stil too late. Dhare came trundling intoo the roome behiand him a lo, foer-wheeld truc, baring a complex and monstrous meccanizm. Kinnison wherld too face it. Az he ternd the cecshon ov the waul uppon which he had bene at werc blu outword widh a crash. The ensuwing rush ov escaping atmosfere swept the Lenzman up and whisct him out throo the opening and intoo the shaaft. In the meentime the meccanizm uppon the truc had begun a stacaato, grianding roer, and az it roerd Kinnison felt slugz ripping throo hiz armor and taring throo hiz flesh; eche az crushing, crunching, parralising a blo az dho it had bene inflicted bi vanBuskerx space ax.

This wauz the ferst time Kinnison had evver bene reyalz badly wuinded, and it made him cic. But, cic and num, cencez reling at the shoc ov hiz slug-toern boddy, hiz rite hand flasht too the external controler ov hiz nuetraliser. For he wauz fauling inert. Oanly ten or fiftene meterz too the bottom, az rememberd it--he had mity littel time too waist if he wer not too land inert. He snapt the controler. Nuthhing happend. Sumthhing had bene shot awa. Hiz driver, too, wauz ded. Snapping the sleve ov hiz armor intoo its clamp he began too widhdrau hiz arm in order too opperate the internal controalz, but he ran out ov time. He crasht; on

the top ov a subciding pile ov masonry which had preceded him, but which had not yet ataind a state ov eqwilibreyum; underneeth a shouwer ov cimmilar matereyal which rebounded from hiz armor in a boiler-shop clan'gor ov noiz.

Wel it wauz dhat dhat hepe ov masonry had not yet had time too cettel intoo form, for in sum slite mezhure it acted az a cooshon too brake the Lenzmanz faul. But an inert faul ov forty fete, even cooshond bi sliding rox, iz in no cens a lite wun. Kinnison crasht. It ceemd az dho a thousand pile-driverz struc him at wuns. Cergez ov aulmoast unbarabel agony swept over him az boanz snapt and bruizd flesh gave wa; and he nu dimly dhat a mercifool tide ov oblivveyon wauz reching up too en'gulf hiz shreking, suffering miand.

But, fogghily at ferst in the stund confuezhon ov hiz entire beying, sumthhing sterd; dhat un'none and un'nowabel sumthhing, dhat indefinabel ultimate qwaulity dhat had made him whaut he wauz. He livd, and while a Lenzman livd he did not qwit. Too qwit wauz too di then and dhare, cins he wauz loosing are faast. He had plaastic in hiz kit, ov coers, and the hoalz wer smaul. He *must* plug dhose leex, and plug them qwic. Hiz left arm, he found, he cood not moove at aul. It must be smasht pritty badly. Evvery shallo breth wauz a cering pane--dhat ment a rib or too gon out. Luckily, houwevver, he wauz not breathing blud, dhaerfoer hiz lungz must stil be intact. He cood moove hiz rite arm, auldho it ceemd like a lump ov cla or a lim belonging too sumwun els. But, mustering aul hiz pouwer ov wil, he made it moove. He dragd it out ov the armorz clampt sleve; and foerst the ledden hand too slide throo the welter ov blud dhat ceemd aulmoast too fil the bulj ov hiz armor. He found hiz kit-box, and, aafter an eternity ov pane-ract time, he compeld hiz sluggish hand too open it and too take out the plaastic.

Then, in a continuously crescendo throbbing ov agony, he foerst hiz maimd, crusht, and broken boddy too riadh and too rigghel about, so dhat hiz wun sound hand cood fiand and stop the hoalz throo which hiz preshous are wauz whisling out and awa. Fiand them he did, and qwicly, and cele them tite; but when he had plugd the laast wun he slumpt doun, spent and exausted. He did not hert so much, nou; hiz suffering had mounted too such teriffic hiats ov intollerabel keen'nes dhat the nervz themcelvz, in outraid protest at carreying such a lode, had bloct it of.

Dhare wauz much moer too doo, but he cimply cood not doo it widhout a rest.

Even hiz iarn wil cood not drive hiz torchuerd muscelz too enny ferther effort until dha had bene aloud too recuperate a littel from whaut dha had gon throo.

Hou much are did he hav left, if enny, he wunderd: fogghily and widh an entiarly detacht and dicinterested impersonallity. Maby hiz tanx wer empty. Ov coers it coodnt hav taken him so long too plug dhose leex az it had ceemd too, or he woodnt hav had enny are left at aul, in tanx or sute. He coodnt, houwevver, hav much left. He wood looc at hiz gagez and ce.

But nou he found dhat he cood not moove even hiz ibaulz, so depe wauz the comaa dhat wauz enveloping him. Awa of sumwhare dhare wauz a billowy

expans ov blacnes, utterly hevvenly in its depe, softly-cooshond cumfort; and from dhat ce ov pece and cercece dhare came reching too embrace him huge, soft, tender armz. Whi suffer, sumthhing cruind at him. It wauz so much eseyer too let go!

Kinnison did not loose consiousnes--qwite. Dhare wauz too much too doo, too much dhat *had* too be dun. He *had* too ghet out ov here. He *had* too ghet bac too hiz speedster. He *had*, bi hooc or bi crooc, too ghet bac too Prime Bace! Dhaerfoer, grimly, dogghedly, teeth tite-loct in the enhaancing agony ov evvery muivment, he droo agane uppon dhose hidden,

dhose deeply berrede rezoercez which even he had no ideyaa he posest. Hiz code wauz cimpel: the code ov the Lenz. While a Lenzman livd he did not qwit. Kinnison wauz a Lenzman. Kinnison livd. Kinnison did not qwit.

He faut bac dhat en'gulfing tide ov blacnes, wave bi wave az it came. He bete down bi shere foers ov wil dhose tenderly beckoning, dhose sweetly cejucing armz ov oblivveyon. He foerst the mas ov protesting putty dhat wauz hiz boddy too doo whaut *had* too be dun. He thrust stiptic gauz intoo the moast copeyously bleding ov hiz wuindz. He wauz bernd, too, he discuvverd then--dha must hav had a hi-pouwerd nedel-beme on dhat truc, az wel az the rifel--but he cood doo nuthing about bernz. Dhare cimply wauznt time.

He found the pouwer lede dhat had bene cevverd bi a boollet. Stripping the

inshulaishon wauz an aulmoast imposcibel job, but it wauz finaly acumplisht, aafter a fashon. Bridging the gap pruivd too be even a wers wun. Cins dhare wauz no slac, the endz cood not be twisted tooghether, but had too be joind bi a short pece ov spare wire, which in tern had too be stript and then twisted widh eche end ov the cevverd lede. Dhat taasc, too, he finaly finnisht; werking puerly bi fele auldho he wauz, and haaf-consmous widhaul in a racking hase ov pane.

Soaldering dhose joints wauz ov coers out ov the qweschon. He wauz afrade

even too tri too inshulate them widh tape, lest the luisly-twiand strandz

shood faul apart in the attempt. He did hav sum dri hankercheefs, houwevver, if he cood reche them. He cood, and did; and rapt wun caerfooly about the wiarz bare joints. Then, aprehenciavly, he tride hiz nuetraliser. Wunder ov wunder, it werct! So did hiz driver!

In moments then he wauz rocketing up the shaaft, and az he paast the opening out ov which he had bene blone he reyaliazd widh amaizment dhat

whaut had ceemd too him like ourz must hav bene minnuets oonly, and fu even ov them. For the frantic Wheelmen wer just then lifting intoo place the temporary sheeld which wauz too stem the mity outrush ov dhare atmosfere. Wonderingly, Kinnison looct at hiz are-gagez. He had enuf--if he hurrede.

And hurry he did. He *cood* hurry, cins dhare wauz practicaly no atmosfere too impede hiz flite. Up the five-mialz-depe shaaft he shot and out intoo space. Hiz cronometer, bilt too widhstand even ceverer shox dhan dhat ov hiz faul, toald him whare hiz speedster wauz too be found, and in a matter ov minnuets he found her. He foerst hiz rebelleyous rite arm intoo the sleve ov hiz armor and fumbeld at the loc. It yeelded. The poert swung open. He wauz incide hiz one ship agane.

Agane the encroching univers ov blacnes threttend, but agane he faut it of. He *cood not* paas out--yet! Dragghing himself too the boerd, he lade hiz coers uppon Sol, too distant bi far too permit ov the celecshon ov such a tiny objective az its plannet Erth. He conected the automattic controalz.

He wauz wekening faast, and he nu it. But from sumwhare and in sum fashon he *must* ghet strength too doo whaut *must* be dun--and sumhou he did it. He cut in the Berg, cut in maximum blaast. Hang on, Kim! Hang on for just a cecond moer! He disconnected the spacer. He kild the detector nullifierz. Then, widh the utterly laast remnant ov hiz strength

he thaut intoo hiz Lenz.

"Hainz." The thaut went out blerd, distorted, weke. "Kinnison. Ime cumming.... com...."

He wauz dun. Out, coald. Utterly spent. He had aulreddy dun too much--far, far too much. He had drivven dhat pittifooly man'gheld boddy ov

hiz too its ultimaitly laast poscibel muivment; hiz ract and torchuerd miand too its ultimaitly laast poscibel thaut. The laast iyotaa ov even hiz tremendous reserv ov vitallity wauz conshuemd and he plunjd, parcex depe, intoo the blac depths ov oblivveyon which had so long and so unsuxesfooly bene triying too en'gulf him. And on and on the speedster flasht at the verry peke ov her unnimadginably hi spede; carreying the incencibel, the utterly spent, the soerly wuinded, the abizmaly unconshous Lenzman tooword hiz native Erth.

* * * * *

But Kimbal Kinnison, Gra Lenzman, had dun evverithhing dhat had *had* too be dun befoer he blact out. Hiz final thaut, febel dho it wauz, and incomplete, did its werc.

Poert Admiral Hainz wauz ceted at hiz desc, discussing matterz ov impoert widh an office-fool ov execcutiavz, when dhat thaut ariavd. Hardend oald spais'hound dhat he wauz, and cervivor ov menny encounterz and hospitalizaishonz, he nu instantly whaut dhat thaut connoted and from the depths ov whaut dire nede it had bene cent.

Dhaerfoer, too the amaizment ov the officerz in the roome, he suddenly leept too hiz fete, ceezd hiz miacrofone, and snapt out orderz. Orderz, and stil moer orderz. Evvery vescel in cevven cectorz, ov

whautevver claas or tunnage, wauz too shuv its detectorz out too the limmit.

Kinnisonz speedster iz out dhare sumwhare. Fiand her--ghet her--kil her drive and drag her in here, too number ten landing feeld. Ghet a pilot here, faast--no, too pilots, in armor. Ghet them of the top ov the boerd, too--Henderson and Wautson or Shermerhorn if dhare enniwhare within rainj. He then Lenzd hiz life-long frend Cerjon-Marshal Lacy, at Bace Hospital.

"Sauboanz, Ive got a boi out dhats badly hert. Hese cumming in fre--u no whaut dhat meenz. Cend over a good doctor. And hav u got a ners whoo nose hou too use a personal nuetraliser and whoo iznt afrade too go intoo the net?"

"Cumming micelf. Yes." The doctorz thaut wauz az crisp az the admiralz. "When doo u waunt us?"

"Az soone az dha ghet dhare tractorz on dhat speedster--ule no when dhat happenz."

Then, neglecting aul uther biznes, the Poert Admiral directed in person the far-flung screne ov ships cerching for Kinnisonz fliying midget.

Evenchuwaly she wauz found; and Hainz, cutting of hiz plaits, leept too a clozset, in which wauz hanging hiz one armor. Unuezd for yeerz, nevvertheles it wauz kept in reddines for instant cervice; and nou, at long laast, the oald spais'hound had a good excuce too use it agane. He cood hav cent out wun ov the yun'gher men, ov coers, but this wauz wun job dhat he wauz gowing too doo himcelf.

Armord, he strode out intoo the landing feeld acros the paivd wa. Dhare awating him wer too armord figguerz, the too top-bracket pilots. Dhare wer the doctor and the ners. He baerly sau--or, raather, he sau widhout noticing--a saucy white cap atop a riyot ov red-bronz-aubern

kerlz; a cimetical yung boddy in its spotles white. He did not notice the face at aul. Whaut he sau wauz dhat dhare wauz a nuetraliser strapt snugly intoo the kerv ov her bac, dhat it wauz fitted properly, and dhat it wauz not yet funcshoning.

For this dhat faist them wauz no ordinary job. The speedster wood land fre. Wers, the admiral feerd--and riatly--dhat Kinnison wood aulso be fre, but independently; widh an intrinsic velosity different from dhat ov hiz ship. Dha must enter the speedster, take her out intoo space, and inert her. Kinnison must be taken out ov the speedster, inerted, hiz velosity macht too dhat ov the fliyer, and braut bac aboard. Then and oanly then cood doctor and ners beghin too werc on him. Then dha wood hav too land az faast az a landing cood be made--the boi shood hav bene in hospital long ago.

And juring aul these evolueshonz and until dhare retern too ground the rescuwerz themcelvz wood remane inershaales. Ordinarily such vizsitorz left the ship, inerted themcelvz, and came bac too it inert, under dhare one pouwer. But nou dhare wauz no time for dhat. Dha had too ghet Kinnison too the hospital; and beciadz, the doctor and the ners--particullarly the ners--cood not be expected too be space-sute navigatorz. Dha wood aul take it in the net, and dhat wauz anuther rezon for haist. For while dha wer gon dhare intrinsic velosity wood remane unchainjd, while dhat ov dhare prezsent surroundingz wood be chain'ging constantly. The lon'gher dha wer gon the grater wood becum the discreppancy. Hens the net.

The net--a lether-and-canvas sac, liand widh spunj-rubber-padded coild stele, ancord too celing and too waulz and too floer throo evvery shoc-abzorbing artifice ov berilleyum-copper springz and ov rubber and nilon cabel dhat the miand ov man had bene abel too devise. It taix sumthhing too abzorb and too discipate the kinettic ennergy which ma reside within a human boddy when its intrinsic velosity duz not mach the

intrinsic velocity ov its surroundingz--dhat iz, if dhat boddy iz not too be masht too a pulp. It taix sumthhing, aulso, too enabel enny human beying too face widhout flinching the prospect ov gowing intoo dhat net, espeshaly in ignorans ov exactly hou much kinettic ennergy wil hav too be discipated. Hainz codgitated, studdeying the erect, suppel yung bac, then spoke:

"Maby wede better cancel the ners, Lacy, or ghet her a sute...."

"Time iz too important," the gherl hercelf poot in, crisply. "Doant wurry about me, Poert Admiral; Ive bene in the net befoer."

She ternd tooword Hainz az she spoke, and for the ferst time he reyaly sau her face. Whi, she wauz a reyal buty--a noccout--a cevven-ceptor caulout....

"Here she iz!" In the grip ov a tractor the speedster flasht too ground in frunt ov the wating five, and dha hurrede aboard.

Dha hurrede, but dhare wauz no flurry, no confuezhon. Eche nu exactly whaut too doo, and eche did it.

Out intoo space shot the littel vescel, gerking savvaijly dounword and ciadwise az wun ov the pilots cut the Berghenhome. Out ov the are-loc flu the Poert Admiral and the helples, unconshous Kinnison, inershaales boath and nou chaind tooghether. Of dha darted, in a nu direcshon and widh tremendous spede az Hainz cut Kinnisonz nuetraliser. Dhare wauz a mity dubbel flare az the driverz ov boath space-suets went too werc.

Az soone az it wauz safe too doo so, out darted an armord figure widh a space-line, whose grapling end clinct intoo a socket ov the oald manz armor az the pilot ramd it home. Then, az an an'gler plase a fish, too

husky pilots, fete wide-braist against the stele portal ov the are-loc and boddese swetting widh effort, heving when dha cood and ghivving line
oonly when dha must helpt the laboring driverz too overcum the differens in velosity.

Soone the Lenzmen, yung and oald, wer incide. Doctor and ners went instantly too werc, widh the caamnes and precizhon so characteristic ov dhare hily-skild craafts. In a trice dha had him out ov hiz armor, out ov hiz lether, and intoo a hammoc; perceving at wuns dhat exept for a fu padz ov gauz dha cood doo nuthhing for dhare paishent until dha had him uppon an opperating tabel. Meenwhile the pilots, havving swung
the hammox, had bene observing, computing and confuuring.

"Shese got a lot ov spede, Admiral--moast ov it strate doun," Henderson reoported. "On her landing gets itl take cloce too too G'z on a fool revolueshon too bring her in. Iather wun ov us can ballans her doun, but itl hav too be strate on her tale and itl mene over five G'z moast ov the wa. Which doo u waunt?"

"Which iz moer important, Lacy, time or preshure?" Hainz traansferd decizhon too the cerjon.

"Time." Lacy decided instantly. "Fite her doun!" Hiz paishent had bene throo so much aulreddy ov foers and preshure dhat a littel moer wood not doo adishonal hert, and time wauz moast decidedly ov the escens. Doctor, ners, and admiral leept intoo hammox; pilots at dhare controalz titend saifty belts and axeleraishon straps--five gravvitesse for over haaf an our iz no lite matter--and the fite wauz on.

Starcly incandescent flaerz ript and raivd from driving gets and cide gets. The speedster spun around vishously, oonly too be kerbd, skilfooly if savvaijly, at the preciasly rite instant. Widhout an orbit, widhout

even a corxcroo or uther spiral, she wauz gowing doun--strate doun. And not uppon her under gets wauz this decent too be, nor uppon her even moer

pouwerfool braking gets. Maaster Pilot Henry Henderson, Prime Bacez best,

wauz gowing too kil the afool inershaa ov the speedster bi "ballancing her doun on her tale." Or, too traanzlate from the jargon ov space, he wauz gowing too hoald the tricky, cranky littel vescel uprite uppon the terriffic blaasts ov her mane driving progectorz, against the Erths gravitaishon and against aul uther perterbing foercez, while her driving foers counteracted, overcame, and discipated the fool friatfool mezhure ov the kinettic ennergy ov her mas and spede!

And ballans her doun he did. Hainz wauz afrade for a minnute dhat dhat intreppid wite wauz acchuwaly gowing too *land* the speedster on her tale. He didnt--qwite--but he had oonly a scant hundred fete too spare when he noazd her over and eezd her too ground on her under-gets.

The crash-waggon and its croo wer wating, and az Kinnison wauz rusht too the hospital the utherz hurrede too the net roome. Doctor Lacy ferst, ov coers, then the ners; and, too Hainz aprooving cerprise, she tooc it like a vetteran. Hardly had the cerjon let himcelf out ov the "cocoone" dhan she wauz in it; and hardly had the terriffic cergez and recoilz ov her one not inconcidderabel wun hundred and forty-five poundz ov mas abated dhan she hercelf wauz out and sprinting acros the sword tooword the hospital.

Hainz went bac too hiz office and tride too werc, but he cood not concentrate, and made hiz wa bac too the hospital. Dhare he wated, and az Lacy came out ov the opperating roome he buttonhoald him.

"Hou about it, Lacy, wil he liv?" he demaanded.

"Liv? Ov coers heeyl liv," the cerjon replide, grufly. "Caant tel u detailz yet--we woant no, ourcelvz, for a cuppel ov ourz yet. Doo a flit, Hainz. Cum bac at cixtene forty--not a cecond befoer--and Ile tel u aul about it."

Cins dhare wauz no help for it the Poert Admiral did go awa, but he wauz bac promptly on the tic ov the dezsignated our.

"Hou iz he?" he demaanded widhout preyambel. "Wil he reyaly liv, or wer u just ghivving me a shot in the arm?"

"Better dhan dhat, much better," the cerjon ashuerd him. "Deffiniatly so; yes. Hese in much better shape dhan we daerd hope. Must hav bene a verry lite crash indede--nuthhing cereyously the matter widh him at aul. We woant even hav too amputate, from whaut we can ce nou. He shood make a wun hundred percent recuvvery, not oonly widhout artifishal memberz, but widh scaersly a scar. He coodnt hav bene in a space crac-up at aul, or he woodnt hav cum out widh so littel injury."

"Fine, Doc--wunderfool! Nou the detailz."

"Heerz the picchure." The doctor unroald a fool-length X-ra print, showing evvery anatomical detale ov the Lenzmanz intereyor strucchure. "Ferst, just notice dhat skelleton. It iz reyaly remarlabel. Sliatly out ov troo here and dhare rite nou, ov coers, but I beleve its gowing too tern out too be the ferst absolutly perfect male skelleton I hav evver cene. Dhat yung man wil go far, Hainz."

"Shure he wil. Whi els doo u supose we poot him in Gra? But I didnt cum over here too be toald dhat--sho me the dammage."

"Looc at the picchure--ce for yorcelf. Multipel and compound fracchuerz, u notice, ov legz and arm; and a fu ribz. Scappulaa, ov coers--dhare. O, yes, dhaerz a scul fracchure, too, but it duznt amount too much. Dhats aul--the spine, u ce, iznt injuerd at aul."

"Whaut du mene, dhats al? Hou about hiz wuindz? I sau sum ov them micelf, and dha wer *not* pin-prix."

"Nuthhing ov the leest importans. A fu puncchuerd wuindz and a cuppel ov inciagd wunz, but nuthhing even cloce too a vital part. He woant nede even a traansfuezhon, cins he stopt the major hemmoragez himcelf, shortly aafter he wauz wuinded. Dhare ar a fu bernz, ov coers, but dha ar moastly superfishal--nun dhat wil not yeeld qwite reddily too treetment."

"Mity glad ov dhat. Heeyl be here cix weex, then?"

"Better caul it twelv, I thhinc--ten at leest. U ce, sum ov the fracchuerz, espeshaly dhose in the left leg, and a cuppel ov bernz, ar raather cevere, az such thhingz go. Then, too, the length ov time elapcing betwene injury and treetment didnt doo ennithhing a bit ov good."

"In too weex heeyl be waunting too ghet up and go placez and doo thhingz; and in cix heeyl be taring doun yor hospital, stone bi stone."

"Yes." The cerjon smiald. "He iznt the tipe too make an ideyal paishent; but, az I hav toald u befoer, I like too hav paishents dhat we doo not like."

"And anuther thhing. I waunt the fialz on hiz nercez, particcularly the

red-hedded wun."

"I suspected dhat u wood, so I had them cent doun. Here u ar. Glad u notiast MacDoogal--shese bi wa ov beying mi favorite. Clarissaa MacDoogal--Soch, ov coers, widh dhat name--twenty yeez oald. Hite, five fete cix; wate, wun forty-five and a haaf. Here ar her picchuerz, convenshonal and X-ra. Man, looc at dhat skelleton! Butifool! The oonly reyaly perfect skelleton I evver sau in a woomman...."

"It iznt the skelleton Ime interested in," grunted Hainz. "Its whaut iz outside the skelleton dhat mi Lenzman wil be loocking at."

"U neednt wurry about MacDoogal," declaerd the cerjon. "Wun good looc at dhat picchure wil tel u dhat. She clascifise--widh dhat skelleton she *haz* too. She coodnt leve the beme a millimeter, even if she waunted too. Good, bad, or indifferent; male or female; fizensal, mental, moral, and cicolodgical; the skelleton telz the whole stoery."

"Maby it duz too u, but not too me," and Hainz tooc up the "convenshonal" fotograaf a sterreyoscope in fool, troo cullor; an aulmoast-livving jueplicate ov the gherl in qweschon. Her thhic, hevvy hare wauz not red, but wauz a vivvidly intens and brilleyant aubern; a coppery bronz, flasht widh red and goald. Her ise.... bronz wauz aul dhat he cood thhinc ov, widh flex ov topaz and ov tauny goald. Her skin, too, wauz faintly bronz, glowing widh even moer dhan helthhy ueths normal mezhure ov sparcling vitallity. Not oonly wauz she butifool, the Poert Admiral decided; in the werdz ov the cerjon, she "clascifide."

"Hm.... m. Dimpelz, too," Hainz muttered. "Wers even dhan I thaut--shese a mennace too civilizaishon," and he went on too rede the doccuments. "Fammily.... hm. History.... expereyencez... reyacshonz and caracteristix.... behaveyor patternz...."

cicollogy... mentallity...."

"Sheeysl doo, Lacy," he adviazd the cerjon finaly. "Kepe her on widh him...."

"Doo!" Lacy snorted. "It iznt a qweschon ov whether *she* raits. Looc at dhat hare--dhose ise. Pure Samz. A man too mach her wood hav too be wun in a hundred thouzand milleyon. Widh dhat skelleton, dho, he iz."

"Ov coers he iz. U doant ceme too reyalise, u miyoppic oald appendix-snatcher, dhat *hese* pure *Kinnison!*"

"Aa... so maby we cood.... but he woant be fauling for enniboddy yet, cins hese just bene unnatacht. Heeysl be boollet-proofe for qwite a while. U aut too no dhat yung Lenzmen--espehaly yung Gra Lenzmen--caant ce ennithhing but dhare jobz; for a cuppel ov yeerz, enniwa."

"Hiz skelleton telz u dhat, too, huu?" Hainz grunted, skeptically. "Ordinarily, yes; but u nevver can tel, espehaly in hospitalz...."

"Moer ov yor lamanz micinformaishon!" Lacy snapt. "Contrary too poppular belefe, romans duz not thrive in hospitalz; exept, ov coers, among the staaf. Paishents oftentiamz thhinc dhat dha faul in luv widh nercez, but it taix too pepel too make wun romans. Nercez doo not faul in luv widh paishents, becauz a man iz nevver at hiz best under hospitalizaishon. In fact, the better a man iz, the poorer a showing he iz apt too make."

"And, az I forghet whoo ced, a long time ago, no generalizaishon iz troo, not even this one," retorted the Poert Admiral. "When it duz hit him it wil hit hard, and weeysl take no chaancez. Hou about the blac-haerd wun?"

"Wel, I just toald u dhat MacDoogal haz the oanly perfect skelleton I evver sau in a woomman. Brounly iz verry good, too, ov coers, but...."

"But not good enuf too rate Lenzmanz Mate, a?" Hainz completed the thaut. "Then take her out. Pic the best skelletonz uve got for this job, and ce dhat no utherz cum enniwhare nere him. Traansfer them too sum uther hospital--too sum uther floer ov this wun, at leest. Enny woomman dhat he evver faulz for wil faul for him, in spite ov yor ideyaaz az too the wun-wanes ov hospital romans; and I doant waunt him too hav such a good chaans ov making a dive at sumthing dhat duznt rate up. Am I rite or rong, and for hou much?"

"Wel, I havnt had time yet too reyaly studdy hiz skelleton, but...."

"Better take a weke of and studdy it. Ive studdede a lot ov pepel in the laast cixty-five yeerz, and Ile mach mi expereyens against yor nollej ov boanz, enny time. Not saying dhat he *wil* faul this trip, u understand--just playing safe."

CHAPTER 18

Advaanst Traning

Kinnison came too--or, raather, too sa dhat he came haaf-too wood be a moer accurate staitment--with a yel directed at the bluurily-cene figgure in white which he nu must be a ners.

"Ners!" Then, az a cering stab ov pane shot throo him at the effort, he went on, thhinking at the figgure in white throo hiz Lenz:

"Mi speedster! I must hav landed her fre! Ghet the space-poert...."

"Dhare, dhare, Lenzman," a lo, rich vois cruind, and a red-hed bent over him. "The speedster haz bene taken care ov. Evverithhing iz on the

grene; go too slepe and rest."

"Nevver miand yor ship," the uncshous vois went on. "It wauz landed and poot awa...."

"Liscen, dum-bel!" snapt the paishent, speking aloud nou, in spite ov the pane, the better too drive home hiz mening. "Doant tri too suidh me! Whaut doo u thhinc I am, delereyous? Ghet this and ghet it strate. I ced I landed dhat speedster *fre*. If u doant no whaut dhat meenz, tel sumbody dhat duz. Ghet the space-poert--ghet Hainz--ghet...."

"We got them, Lenzman, long ago." Auldho her vois wauz stil cremily, sweetly soft, an an'gry cullor bernd intoo the nercez face. "I ced evverithhing iz on sero. Yor speedster wauz inerted; hou els cood u be here, inert? I helpt doo it micelf, so I *no* shese inert."

"QX." The paishent relapst instantly intoo unconshousnes and the ners ternd too an intern standing bi--wharevver *dhat* ners wauz, at leest wun doctor cood aulmoast aulwase be found.

"But mi ship...."

"Dum-bel!" she flaerd. "Whaut a swete mes *hese* gowing too be too take care ov! Not even conshous yet, and hese caulng naimz and picking fiats aulreddy!"

In a fu dase Kinnison wauz foolly and alertly conshous. In a weke moast ov the pane had left him, and he wauz beghinning too chafe under restraint.

In ten dase he wauz "fit too be tide," and hiz aqwaintans widh hiz hed ners, so inauspishously begun, devellopt even moer inauspishously az time went on. For, az Hainz and Lacy had eche moer dhan antiscipated, the Lenzman wauz bi no meenz an ideyal paishent.

Nuthhing dhat cood be dun wood sattisfi him. Aul doctorz wer fat-hedz, even Lacy, the man whoo had poot him tooghether. Aul nercez wer dum-belz, even--or espeshaly?--"Mac," whoo widh aulmoast superhuman skil, tact, and paishens had bene hoalding him tooghether. Whi, even fat-hedz and dum-belz, even hi-grade moeronz, aut too no dhat a man neded foode!

Acustomd too eting evverithhing he cood reche, thre or foer or five tiamz a da, he did not reyalise--nor did hiz stummac--dhat hiz nou qwiyescent boddy cood no lon'gher use the five thousand or moer callorese dhat it had bene woant too bern up, eche twenty-foer ourz, in intens effort. He wauz aulwase hun'gry, and he wauz forevver demaanding foode.

And foode, too him, did not mene oranj juce or grape juce or tomaato juce or milc. Nor did it mene weke te and hard, dri toast and an ocaizhonal anemic soft-boild eg. If he ate egz at aul he waunted them fride; thre or foer ov them, acumpanede bi too or thre thhic slicez ov ham.

He waunted--and demaanded in no uncertane termz, argumentatiavly and percistently--a big, thhic, rare beefstake. He waunted baict beenz, widh plenty ov fat poerc. He waunted bred in thhic slicez, piald hi widh butter, and not this qwaudruiply-and-unmenshonably-qwaulifide toast. He waunted roast befe, rare, in big, thhic slabz. He waunted potatose and thhic broun gravy. He waunted cornd befe and cabbage. He waunted pi--enny kiand ov pi--in larj, thhic qworterz. He waunted pese and corn and asparragus and cucumberz, and aulso vareyouz uther-werldly stapelz ov diyet which he often and incistently menshond bi name.

But abuv aul he waunted beefstake. He thaut about it dase and dreemd about it niats. Wun nite in particcular he dreemd about it--an espeshaly lushous poerterhous, fride in butter and smutherd in mushruimz--oonly too wake up, mouth wautering, litteraly starvd, too face agane the weke te, dri toast, and, horror ov horrorz, this time a flabby, pallid, flascid *poacht* eg! It wauz the laast strau.

"Take it awa," he ced, weecly; then, when the ners did not oba, he reecht out and poosht the brecfast, tra and aul, of the tabel. Then, az it crasht too the floer, he ternd awa, and, in spite ov aul hiz efforts, too hot teerz foerst themcelvz betwene hiz ilidz.

It wauz a particularly triying ordele, and wun reqwiring aul ov even Max skil, diplomacy, and forbarans, too make the recalcitrant paishent ete the brecfast prescriabd for him. She wauz finaly suxesfool, houwevver, and az she stept out intoo the corridor she met the ubiqwitous intern.

"Houz yor Lenzman?" he aasct, in the privacy ov the diyet kitchen.

"Doant caul him *mi* Lenzman!" she stormd. She wauz about too explode widh the pent-up felingz which she ov coers cood not vent uppon such a pittifool, helples thhing az her star paishent. "Beefstake! I aulmoast wish dha *wood* ghiv him a beefstake, and dhat hede choke on it--which ov coers he wood. Hese wers dhan a baby. I nevver sau such a.... such a *brat* in mi life. Ide like too spanc him--he needz it. Ide like too no hou *he* evver got too be a Lenzman, the big cantankerous clunker! Ime *gowing* too spanc him, too, wun ov these dase, ce if I doant!"

"Doant take it so hard, Mac," the intern erjd. He wauz, houwevver, verry much releevd dhat relaishonz betwene the handsum yung Lenzman and the

gorjous red-hed wer not uppon a moer corjal baxis. "He woant be here verry long. But I nevver sau a paishent clog *yor* gets befoer."

"U probbably nevver sau a paishent like *him* befoer, iather. I certainly hope he nevver ghets cract up agane."

"Huu?"

"Doo I hav too drau u a chart?" she aasct, sweetly. "Or, if he duz ghet cract up agane, I hope dha cend him too sum uther hospital," and she flounst out.

Ners MacDoogal thaut dhat when the Lenzman cood ete the mete he craivd her trubbelz wood be over; but she wauz mistaken. Kinnison wauz nervous, moody, brooding; bi ternz irritabel, sullen, and pugnaishous. Nor iz it too be wunderd at. He wauz chaid too dhat bed, and in hiz miand wauz the nauwing conshousnes dhat he had faild. And not oonly faild--he had made a complete foole ov himcelf. He had underestimated an ennemy, and az a rezult ov hiz one schupiddity the whole Patrole had taken a cetbac. He wauz an'gwisht and tormented. Dhaerfoer:

"Liscen, Mac," he pleded wun da. "Bring me sum cloadhz and let me take a wauc. I nede exercise."

"Uu uu, Kim, not yet," she denide him gently, but widh her entraancing smile in fool evvidens. "But pritty qwic, when dhat leg loox a littel les like a Chinese puzsel, u and nercy go bi-bi."

"Butifool, but dum!" the Lenzman grould. "Caant u and dhose cockide crokerz reyalise dhat Ile nevver ghet enny strength bac if u kepe me in bed aul the rest ov mi life? And doant tauc baby-tauc at me,

iather. Ime wel enuf at leest so u can wipe dhat profeshonal smile of yor pan and cut dhat suithing bedcide manner ov yorz."

"Verry wel--I thhinc so, too!" she snapt, paishens at long laast gon. "Sumbody shood tel u the truith. I aulwase supoazd dhat Lenzmen had too hav *brainz*, but uve bene a perfect *brat* evver cins uve bene here. Ferst u waunted too ete yorcelf cic, and nou u waunt too ghet up, widh boanz haaf-nit and bernz haaf-heeld, and undoo evverithhing dhat haz bene dun for u. Whi doant u snap out ov it and act yor age for a chainj?"

"I nevver did thhinc nercez had much cens, and nou I no dha havnt." Kinnison ide her widh intens disfavor, not at aul convinst. "Ime not tauking about gowing bac too werc. I mene a littel gentel exercise, and I no whaut I nede."

"Ude be cerpriazd at whaut u doant no," and the ners wauct out, chin in are. In five minnuets, houwevver, she wauz bac, her rajant smile agane flashing.

"Sorry, Kim, I shoodnt hav blaasted of dhat wa--I no dhat yor bound too bac-fire and too hav brane-stormz. I wood, too, if I wer...."

"Cancel it, Mac," he began, auqwordly. "I doant no whi I hav too be crabbing at u aul the time."

"QX, Lenzman," she replide, entiarly cerene nou. "I doo. Yor not the tipe too sta in bed widhout it griping u; but when a man haz bene ground up intoo such hambergheer az u ar, he haz too sta in bed whether he liax it or not, and no matter hou much he pops of about it. Role over here, nou, and Ile ghiv u an alcohol rub. But it woant be long

nou, reyaly--pritty soone weeyl hav u out in a whele-chare...."

Dhus it went for weex. Kinnison nu hiz behaveyor wauz atroashous, abomminabel; but he cimply cood not help it. Evvery so often the acumulated preshure ov hiz bitternes and anxiyety *woud* blo of; and, like a jun'ghel tigher widh a tuithake, he woud bite and clau ennithhing or enniboddy within reche.

Finaly, houwevver, the laast picchure wauz studdede, the laast bandage remuivd, and he wauz discharjd az fit. And he wauz not discharjd, bitterly auldho he resented hiz "captivvity," az he cauld it, until he reyaly *wauz* fit. Hainz sau too dhat. And Hainz had aloud oanly the moast sketchy intervuse juring dhat long convalescens. Discharjd, houwevver, Kinnison saut him out.

"Let me tauc ferst," Hainz instructed him at cite. "No celf-reprochez, no destructive criticizm. Evverithhing constructive. Nou, Kimbal, Ime mity glad too here dhat u made a perfect recuvvery. U wer in bad shape. Go ahead."

"U hav just about shut mi mouth bi yor ferst order." Kinnison smiald sourly az he spoke. "Too werdz--flat falure. No, let me ad too moer--az yet."

"Dhats the spirrit!" Hainz exclaimd. "Nor doo we agry widh u dhat it wauz a falure. It wauz meerly not a suxes--so far--which iz an aultooghether different thhing. Aulso, I ma ad dhat we had verry fine repoerts indede on u from the hospital."

"Huu?" Kinnison wauz amaizd too the point ov beying inarticulate.

"U just about toer it down, ov coers, but dhat wauz oanly too be expected."

"But, cer, I made such a...."

"Exactly. Az Lacy telz me qwite freeqwently, he liax too hav paishents over dhare dhat dha doant like. Mul dhat wun over for a bit--u ma understand it better az u ghet oalder. The thaut, houwevver, ma take sum ov the lode of yor miand."

"Wel, cer, I am feling a trifel lo, but if u and the rest ov them stil thhinc...."

"We doo so thhinc. Chere up and ghet on widh the stoery."

"Ive bene doowing a lot ov thhinking, and befoer I go around sticking out mi nec agane Ime gowing too...."

"U doant nede too tel me, u no."

"No, cer, but I thhinc Ide better. Ime gowing too Areezhaa too ce if I can ghet me a fu treetments for swel-hed and lame-brane. I stil thhinc dhat I no hou too use the Lenz too good advaantage, but I cimply havnt got enuf gets too doo it. U ce, I...." he stopt. He wood not offer ennithhing dhat mite sound like an allibi: but hiz thauts wer plane az print too the oald Lenzman.

"Go ahead, sun. We no u woodnt."

"If I thaut at aul, I ashuemd dhat I wauz tacling men, cins dhose on the ship wer men, and men wer the oonly none inhabbitants ov the Aldebarainyan cistem. But when dhose whelerz tooc me so esily and so compleetly, it became verry evvident dhat I didnt hav enuf stuf. I ran like a scaerd pup, and I wauz lucky too ghet home at aul. It woodnt hav happend if...." he pauzd.

"If whaut? Rezon it out, sun," Hainz adviazd, pointedly. "U ar rong, ded rong. U made no mistake, iather in jument or in execueshon. U hav bene blaming yorcelf for ashuming dhat dha wer men. Supose u had ashuemd dhat dha wer the Areezhanz themcelvz. Then whaut? Aafter cloce scrootiny, even in the lite ov aafter-nollej, we doo not ce hou u cood hav chainjd the outcum." It did not oker, even too the sagaishous oald admiral, dhat Kinnison nede not hav gon in. Lenzmen aulwase went in.

"Wel, enniwa, dha lict me, and dhat herts," Kinnison admitted, francly. "So Ime gowing bac too Areezhaa for moer traning, if dhaiyl ghiv it too me. I ma be gon qwite a while, az it ma take even Mentor a long time too increce the permeyabillity ov mi scul enuf so dhat an ideyaa can filter throo it in sumthhing under a cenchury."

"Didnt Mentor tel u nevver too go bac dhare?"

"No, cer." Kinnison grind boiyishly. "He mustv forgot it in mi cace--the oanly slip he evver made, I ghes. Dhats whaut ghivz me an out."

"Um...m...m." Hainz ponderd this startling bit ov informaishon. He nu, far better dhan yung Kinnison cood, the Areezhan pouwer ov miand: he did not beleve dhat Mentor ov Areezhaa had evver forgotten ennithhing, houwevver tiny or unnimportant. "It haz nevver bene dun.... dha ar a peculeyar race; incomprehencibel... but not vindictive. He ma refuse u, but nuthhing wers--dhat iz, if u doo not cros the barreyer widhout invitaishon. Its a splendid ideyaa, I thhinc; but be verry caerfool too strike dhat barreyer fre and at aulmoast sero pouwer--or els doant strike it at aul."

Dha shooc handz, and in a space ov minnuets the speedster wauz agane taring throo space. Kinnison nou nu exactly whaut he waunted too ghet, and he utiliazd evvery waking our ov dhat long trip in fizensal and mental exercise too prepare himcelf too take it. Dhus the time did not

came long. He crept up too the barreyer at a snailz pace, stopping instantly az he tucht it, and throo dhat barreyer he cent a thaut.

"Kimbal Kinnison ov Sol Thre caulng Mentor ov Areezhaa. Iz it permitted dhat I aproche yor plannet?" He wauz niather brasen nor obceeqweyous, but wauz matter-ov-factly aasking a cimpel qweschon and expecting a cimpel repli.

"It iz permitted, Kimbal Kinnison ov Tellus," a slo, depe, mezhuerd vois rezounded in hiz brane. "Nuetralise yor controalz. U wil be landed."

He did so, and the inert speedster shot forword, too cum too ground in a perfect landing at a regulaishon space-poert. He strode intoo the office, too confrunt the same grotesc entity whoo had mezhuerd him for hiz Lenz not so long ago. Nou, houwevver, he staerd strate intoo dhat entitese unblinking ise, in cilens.

"Aa, u hav progreest. U reyalise nou dhat vizhon iz not aulwase reliyabel. At our preveyous intervuu u tooc it for graanted dhat whaut u sau must reyalise exist, and did not wunder az too whaut our troo shaips mite be."

"I am wundering nou, cereyously," Kinnison replide, "and if it iz permitted, I intend too sta here until I can ce yor troo shaips."

"This?" and the figgure chainjd instantly intoo dhat ov an oald, white-beerded, scollarly gentelman.

"No. Dhare iz a vaast differens betwene ceyng sumthhing micelf and havving u sho it too me. I reyalise foolly dhat u can make me ce u az ennithhing u chuse. U cood apere too me az a perfect copy ov

micelf, or az enny uther thhing, person or obgett concevabel too mi miand."

"Aa; yor devellopment haz bene emminently satisfactory. It iz nou permiscibel too tel u, ueth, dhat yor prezsent qwest, not for mere informaishon, but for reyal nollej, wauz expected."

"Huu? Hou cood dhat be? I didnt decide deffiniatly, micelf, until oanly a cuppel ov weex ago."

"It wauz inevvitabel. When we fitted yor Lenz we nu dhat u wood retern if u livd. Az we recently informd dhat wun none az Helmuth...."

"*Helmuth!* U no, then, whare...." Kinnison choact himcelf of.

He wood not aasc for help in dhat--he wood fite hiz one battelz and berry hiz one ded. If dha vollunteerd the informaishon, wel and good; but he wood not aasc it. Nor did the Areezhan fernish it.

"U ar rite," the sage remarct, imperterbably. "For propper devellopment it iz ecenshal dhat u cecure dhat informaishon for yorcelf." Then he continnude hiz preveyous thaut:

"Az we toald Helmuth recently, we hav ghivven yor civilizaishon an instroomentality--the Lenz--bi verchu ov which it shood be abel too make itcelf cecure throowout the gallaxy. Havving ghivven it, we cood doo nuthhing moer ov reyal or permanent bennefit until u Lenzmen yorcelvz began too understand the troo relaishonship betwene miand and Lenz.

Dhat

understanding haz bene inevvitabel; for long we hav none dhat in time a certane fu ov yor miandz wood becum strong enuf too discuver dhat dhaertofoer un'none relaishonship. Az soone az enny miand made dhat discuverry it wood ov coers retern too Areezhaa, the soers ov the Lenz,

for adishonal instrucshon; which, eeqwaly ov coers, dhat miand cood not hav boern preveyously.

"Deccade bi deccade yor miandz hav becum stron'gher. Finaly u came too be fitted widh a Lenz. Yor miand, while pittifooly undeveloppt, had a latent capascity and a pouwer dhat made yor retern here certane. Dhare ar cevveral utherz whoo wil retern. Indede, it haz becum a toppic ov discushon amung us az too whether u or wun uther wood be the ferst advaanst schudent."

"Whoo iz dhat uther, if I ma aasc?"

"Yor frend, Worcel the Velanshan."

"Hese got a reyal miand--wa, wa ahed ov mine," the Lenzman stated, az a matter ov self-evvident fact.

"In sum wase, yes. In uther and hily important caracteristix, no."

"Huu?" Kinnison exclaimd. "In whaut poscibel wa hav I got it over him?"

"I am not certane dhat I can explane it exactly in thauts which u can understand. Braudly speking, hiz miand iz the better traind, the moer foolly developpt. It iz ov moer graasp and reche, and ov vaastly grater prezsent pouwer. It iz moer controlabel, moer responcive, moer adaptabel dhan iz yorz--nou. But yor miand, while undeveloppt, iz ov concidderabel grater capascity dhan hiz, and ov grater and moer varede latent capabillitese. Abuv aul, u hav a driving foers, a wil too doo, an undefetabel mental erj dhat no wun ov hiz race wil ever be abel too develop. Cins I predicted dhat u wood be the ferst too retern, I am natchuraly grattifide dhat u hav developpt in acordans widh dhat predicshon."

"Wel, I hav bene moer or les under preshure, and I got qwite a fu lucky braix. But at dhat, it ceemd too me dhat I wauz progrescing baqword insted ov forword."

"It iz evver dhus widh the reyalz competent. Prepare yorcelf!"

He launcht a mental bolt, at the impact ov which Kinnisonz miand litteraly ternd incide out in a wialdly girating spiral vortex ov dizseyingly confuezd imagez.

"Resist!" came the harsh comaand.

"Resist! Hou?" demaanded the riathing, swetting Lenzman. "U mite az wel tel a fli too resist an inert space-ship!"

"Use yor wil--yor foers--yor adaptability. Shift yor miand too mete mine at evvery point. Apart from these fundamentalz niather I nor enniwun els can tel u hou; eche miand must fiand its one mejum and devellop its one tecneke. But this iz a verry miald treetment indede; wun condishond too yor prezsent strength. I wil increce it gradjuwaly in ceverrity, but rest ashuerd dhat I wil at no time rase it too the point ov permanent dammage. Constructive exercisez wil cum later; the ferst step must be too bild up yor resistans. Dhaerfoer resist!"

The foers, which had not slackend for an instant, waxt sloly too the verry verj ov intolerability; and grimly, dogghedly, the Lenzman faut it. Teeth loct, muscelz straning, fin'gherz digghing savvaijly into the hard lether upholstery ov hiz chare he faut it; mustering hiz evvery ultimate rezoers too the taasc....

Suddenly the torchure cest and the Lenzman slumpt doun, a mental and fysical rec. He wauz white, trembling, swetting; shaken too the verry

coer ov hiz beying. He wauz ashaimd ov hiz weecnes. He wauz humilleyated and bitterly disapointed at the showing he had made; but from the Areezhan dhare came a caam, encurraging thaut.

"U nede not fele ashaimd; u shood insted fele proud, for u hav made a start which iz aulmoast cerprising, even too me, yor sponsor. This ma ceme too u like needles punnishment, but it iz not. This iz the oanly poscibel wa in which dhat which u ceke ma be found."

"In dhat cace, go too it," the Lenzman declaerd. "I can take it."

The "advaanst instrucshon" went on, with the pupil becumming ever stron'gher; until he wauz taking widhout dammage thrusts dhat wood at ferst hav slane him instantly. The bouts became shorter and shorter, reqwiring az dha did such teriffic outpoeringz ov mental foers dhat no human miand cood stand the aufool strane for moer dhan haaf an our at a time.

And nou these savvage conflicts ov wilz and miandz wer intersperst widh reyal instrucshon; widh lessonz niather painfool nor unplezzant. In these the aged ciyentists proabd gently intoo the yungsterz miand, opening it out and exposing too its onerz gase vaast cavvernz whoose verry prezsens he had nevver even suspected. Sum ov these stoerhousez wer aulreddy parshaly or compleetly fild; neding oanly arainjment and conecshon. Utherz wer neerly empty. These wer cattalogd and made axescibel. And in aul, permeyating everithhing, wauz the Lenz.

"Just like clering out a clogd-up wauter cistem; widh the Lenz the pump dhat coodnt werc!" exclaimd Kinnison wun da.

"Moer like dhat dhan u at prezsent reyalise," acented the Areezhan. "U

hav observd, ov coers, dhat I hav not ghivven u enny detaild instrucshonz nor pointed out enny speciffic abillitese ov the Lenz which u hav not none hou too use. U wil hav too opperate the pump yorself; and u hav menny cerprisez awating u az too whaut yor Lenz wil pump, and hou. Our sole taasc iz too prepare yor miand too werc widh the Lenz, and dhat taasc iz not yet dun. Let us on widh it."

Aafter whaut ceemd too Kinnison like weex the time came when he cood bloc out Mentorz sugeschonz compleetly; nor, nou bloct out, shood the Areezhan be Abel too discern dhat fact. The Lenzman gatherd aul hiz foers toogheter, concentrated it, and herld it bac at hiz techer; and dhare ensude a strugghel nun the les Titannic becauz ov its ecenshal frendlines. The verry eethher ceedhd and boild widh the fury ov the mental foercez dhare at grips, but finaly the Lenzman bete down the utherz screenz. Then, boering depe intoo hiz ise, he wild widh aul hiz foers too ce dhat Areezhan az he reyaly wauz. And instantly the scollarly oald man subcided intoo a.... a BRANE! Dhare wer a fu apendagez, ov coers, and apertenancez, and incidentaleyaa too nurrishment, locomoashon, and the like, but too aul intents and perpocez the Areezhan wauz cimply and soly a brane.

Tenshon ended, conflict ceest, and Kinnison apollogiazd.

"Thhinc nuthhing ov it," and the brane acchuwaly smiald intoo Kinnisonz miand. "Enny miand ov pouwer sufishent too nuetralise the foercez which I hav emploid iz ov coers Abel too herl no febel bolts ov its one. Ce too it, houwevver, dhat u thrust no such foers at enny lescer miand, or it dise instantly."

Kinnison started too stammer a repli, but the Areezhan went on:

"No, sun, I nu and no dhat the worning iz superfluwous. If u wer not werthy ov this pouwer and wer u not abel too controle it properly u wood not hav it. U hav obtaind dhat which u saut. Go, then, widh pouwer."

"But this iz oonly wun fase, baerly a beghinning!" protested Kinnison.

"Aa, u reyalise even dhat? Trooly, ueth, u hav cum far, and faast. But u ar not yet reddy for moer, and it iz a troowizm dhat the recepshon ov foercez for which a miand iz not prepaerd wil destroi dhat miand. Dhus, when u came too me u nu exactly whaut u waunted. Doo u no widh eeqwal certainty whaut moer u waunt from us?"

"No."

"Nor wil u for yeerz, if evver. Indede, it ma wel be dhat oonly yor descendants wil be reddy for dhat for which u nou so dimly grope. Agane I sa, yung man, go widh pouwer."

Kinnison went.

CHAPTER 19

Juj, Jury, and Execueshoner

It had taken the Lenzman a long time too werc out in hiz miand exactly whaut it wauz dhat he had waunted from the Areezhanz, and from no cin'ghel

soers had the bacic ideyaa cum. Part ov it had cum from hiz one nollej ov ordinary hipnocis; part from the abillity ov the Overlordz ov Delgon too controle from a distans the miandz ov utherz; part from Worcel, whoo, werking throo Kinnisonz one miand, had dun such cerprising thhingz widh a Lenz; and a grate part indede from the Areezhanz

themcelvz, whoo had the astounding abillity litteraly and compleetly too

superimpose dhare one mentallitese uppon dhose ov utherz, wharevver citchuwated. Part bi part and bit bi bit the Telureyan Lenzman had bilt up hiz plan, but he had not had the shere pouwer ov intelect too make it werc. Nou he had dhat, and wauz reddy too go.

Whare? Hiz ferst impuls wauz too retern too Aldebbaran I and too invade agane the strong'hoald ov the Wheelmen, whoo had routed him so ignominiously in hiz wun encounter widh them. Ordinary proodens, houwevver, counceled against dhat coers.

"Ude better la of them a while, Kim, oald boi," he toald himcelf qwite francly. "Dhave got a lot ov gets and u doant no hou too use this nu stuf ov yorz yet. Better pic out sumthhing eseyer too take!"

Evver cins leving Areezhaa he had bene subconshously aware ov a differens in hiz icite. He wauz ceying thhingz much moer cleerly dhan he had evver cene them befoer; moer sharply and in grater detale. Nou this awaernes crept intoo hiz conshousnes and he glaanst tooword hiz chube-liats. Dha wer out--exept for the tiny lamps and boolz-ise ov hiz instrooment boerd the vescel must be in complete darcnes. He rememberd then widh a shoc dhat when he enterd the speedster he had not ternd on hiz liats--he cood ce, and had not thaut ov them at aul!

This, then, wauz the ferst ov the cerprizez the Areezhan had prommiast him.

He nou had the cens ov percepshon ov the Rigelleyanz. Or wauz it dhat ov the Wheelmen? Or boath? Or wer dha the same cens? Intently aware nou, he focust hiz atenshon uppon a meter befoer him. Ferst uppon its diyal, noting dhat the nedel wauz exactly uppon the grene hare-line ov normal operaishon. Then deper. Instantly the face ov the instrooment disapeerd--muivd behiand hiz point ov cite, or so it ceemd--so dhat he cood ce its coilz, pivvots, and uther intereyor parts. He cood looc intoo and studdy the grane and partikel-cise ov the dens, hard condencite

ov the boerd itcelf. Hiz vizhon wauz limmited, aparrently, oanly bi hiz wil too ce!

"Wel--aint--dhat--sumthhing?" he demaanded ov the univiers at larj; then, az a thaut struc him; "I wunder if dha blianded me in the proces?"

He swicht on hiz lamps, discuvvering dhat hiz vizhon wauz unnimpaerd and normal in evvery respect; and a ridgid investigashon pruivd too him concluciavly dhat in adishon too ordinary vizhon he nou had an extraa cens--or perhaps too ov them--and dhat he cood chainj from wun too the uther, or use them cimultainously, at wil! But the verry fact ov this discuvvery gave Kinnison pauz.

He hadnt better go enniwhare, or doo ennithhing, until he had found out sumthhing about hiz nu eqwipment. The fact wauz dhat he didnt even no whaut he had, too sa nuthhing ov nowing hou too use it. If he had the cens ov a Zabriscan fontemaa he wood go sumwhare whare he cood doo a littel experrimenting widhout ghetting hiz gets bernd of in cace sumthhing slipt at a crittical moment. Whare wauz the nerest Patrole bace? A big wun, folly defended.... Lets ce.... Raddelix wood be about the clocest Cector Bace, he ghest--hede fiand out if he cood rade dhat outfit widhout ghetting caut at it.

Of he shot, and in ju coers a fare, grene, Erthlike plannet la beneeth hiz vescelz kele. Cins it wauz Erthlike in climate, age, atmosfere, and mas, its pepel wer ov coers moer or les cimmlar too humannity in genneral caracteristix, boath ov boddy and ov miand. If ennithhing, dha wer even moer intelligent dhan Erthlingz, and dhare Patrole bace wauz a verry strong wun indede. Hiz spi-ra wood be uesles, cins aul Patrole bacez wer screend thurroly and continnuously--he wood ce whaut a cens ov percepshon wood doo. From Tregoncese explanaishon, it aut too werc at this rainj.

It did. When Kinnison concentrated his attention upon the base he saw it. He advanced toward it at the speed of thought and entered it; passing through screens and metal walls without hindrance and without giving alarm. He saw men at their accustomed tasks and heard, or rather sensed, their conversation: the everyday chat of their professions. A thrill shot through him at a dazzling possibility thus revealed.

If he could make use of those fellows down there doing it, the problem was solved. That computer, say, make him uncover that calculator and set up a certain integral on it. It would be easy enough to get into touch with him and have him do it, but this was something altogether different.

Kinnison got into the computer's mind easily enough, and wildly intensely what he was doing; but the officer did not do it. He got up; then, staring about him in bewilderment, sat down again.

"What's the matter?" asked one of his fellows. "Forgot something?"

"Not exactly," the computer still staid. "I was going to set up an integral. I didn't want it, either--I could swear that somebody *toald* me to set it up."

"Nobody did," grunted the other, "and you'd better start staying home nights--then maybe you wouldn't get funny ideas."

This wasn't so good, Kinnison reflected. The fellow should have done it, and shouldn't have remembered a thing about it. Well, he hadn't really thought he could pull it across at that distance, anyway--he didn't have the brains of an Areezhan. Here he was too far from his original plan, or close-up work.

Waiting until the base was well into the night side of the planet and making sure that his flare-baffles were in place, he allowed the speedster to drop downward, landing at some little distance from the fortress. There he left the ship and made his way toward his objective in a rapid series of long, inershaales hops. Lower and shorter became the hops. Then he cut off his power entirely and waited until he saw before him, rising from the ground and stretching interminably upward, an almost invisibly shimmering web of fibers. This, the prouler knew, was the kertane which marked the border of the Reservaishon; the trigger upon which a touch, either of solid object or of being, would initiate a succession of events which he was in no position to stop.

Too the it that base was not impressive, being merely a few square miles of level ground, outland with low, broad pill-boxes and studded here and there with harmless-looking, bulging domes. There were a few clusters of buildings. That was all--too the it--but Kinnison was not deceived. He knew that the base itself was a thousand feet underground; that the pill-boxes housed lookouts and detectors; and that those domes were simply weather-shields which, should back, would expose projectors concealed in power not even too those of Prime Base itself.

Far too the right, between two tall pillars of metal, was a gate; the nearest opening in the web. Kinnison had avoided it purposely; it was no part of his plan to subject himself yet too the scrutiny of the all-inclusive photo-cells of that entrance. Instead, with his new sense of perception, he saw out the conjoints leading too those cells and traisted them down, through concrete and steel and masonry, too the control room far below. He then superimposed his mind upon that of the man at the board and flew boldly toward the entrance. He now actually had a jewel personality; his own part of his mind was in his body, darting through the air toward the portal, while the other part was deep in the

bace belo, wauching him cum and acnolleging hiz signalz!

A trap lifted, reveling a sloping, tunneld ramp, doun which the Lenzman shot. He soone found a conveyent stoer-roome; and, slipping within it, he widhdroo hiz controle caerfooly from the miand ov the observer, wiping out aul tracez ov dhat controle az he did so. He then waucht aprehenciavly for a poscibel reyacshon. He wauz aulmoast shure dhat

he had performd the operaishon corectly, but he had too be absolutely certane; moer dhan hiz life depended uppon the outcum ov this test. The observer, houwevver, remaind caam and plascid at hiz poast; and a cloce reding ov hiz thauts shode dhat he had not the faintest suspishon dhat ennithing out ov the ordinary had okerd.

Wun moer test and he wauz throo. He must fiand out hou menny miandz he

cood controle cimultainously, but hede better doo dhat openly. No uce making a man fele like a foole needlesly--hede dun dhat wuns aulreddy, and wuns wauz wun time too menny.

Dhaerfoer, revercing the procejure bi which he had cum, he went bac too hiz speedster, tooc her out intoo the eethher, and slept. Then, when the lite ov morning fludded the bace, he cut hiz detector nullifiyer and aproacht it boaldly.

"Raddelix bace! Lenzman Kinnison ov Tellus, Unnatacht, aasking permishon too land. I wish too confer widh yor comaanding officer, Lenzman Gerrond."

A spi-ra swept throo the speedster, the web disapeerd, and Kinnison landed, too be greted widh a qwiyet and corjal respect. The bace comaander nu dhat hiz vizsitor wauz not dhare puerly for plezhure--Gra Lenzmen did not take plezhure jaunts. Dhaerfoer he led the wa intoo hiz

private office and sheilded it.

"Mi anounsment wauz not at aul informative," Kinnison admitted then, "but mi errand iz nuthhing too be advertiazd. Ive got too tri out sumthhing, and I waunt too aasc u and thre ov yor best and--stubbornest,' if I ma use the term--officerz too cowopperate widh me for a fu minnuets. QX?"

"Ov coers."

Thre officerz wer cauld in and Kinnison explaind. "Ive bene werking for a long time on a miand-controler, and I waunt too ce if it werx. Ile poot yor boox on this tabel, wun in frunt ov eche ov u. Nou I wood like too tri too make too or thre ov u--aul foer ov u if I can--eche bend over, pic up hiz booc, and hoald it. Yor part ov the game wil be for eche ov u too tri not too pic it up, and too poot it bac az soone az u poscibly can if I doo make u oba. Wil u?"

"Shure!" thre ov them coerust, and "Dhare wil be no mental dammage, ov coers?" aasct the comaander.

"Nun whautevver, and no aafter-efects. Ive had it werct on micelf, a lot."

"Doo u waunt enny aparatus?"

"No, I hav evverithhing nescenary. Remember, I waunt top resistans."

"Let her cum! Ule ghet plenty ov resistans. If u can make enny wun ov us pic up a booc, aafter aul this worning, Ile sa uve got sumthhing."

Officer aafter officer, in spite ov straningly resisting miand and boddy, lifted hiz booc from the tabel, oanly too drop it agane az Kinnisonz

controle relaxt for an instant. He cood controle too ov them--*enny* too ov them--but he cood not qwite handel thre. Sattisfide, he ceest hiz efforts; and, az the bace comaander poerd long, coald drinx for the swetting five, wun ov hiz fellose aasct:

"Whaut did u doo, enniwa, Kinnison--o, pardon me, I shoodnt hav aasct."

"Sorry," the Telureyan replide uncumfortably, "but it iznt reddy yet. Ule aul no about it az soone az poscibel, but not just nou."

"Shure," the Radelidjan replide. "I nu I shoodnt hav blaasted of az soone az I spoke."

"Wel, thanx a lot, fellose." Kinnison cet hiz empty glaas doun widh a clic. "I can make a nice proagres repoert on this doo-gig nou. And wun moer thhing. I did a littel long-rainj experrimenting on wun ov yor computerz laast nite...."

"Desc Twelv? The wun whoo thaut he waunted too integrate sumthhing?"

"Dhats the wun. Tel him I wauz using him for a miand-ra subgect, wil u, and ghiv him this fifty-creddit bil? Doant waunt the boiz needling him *too* much."

"Yes, and thanx.... and.... I wunder...." the Radelidjan Lenzman had sumthhing on hiz miand. "Wel.... can u make a man tel the truth widh dhat? And if u can, wil u?"

"I thhinc so. Certainly I wil, if I can. Whi?" Kinnison nu dhat he cood, but did not wish too ceme cocshure.

"Dhaerz bene a merder." The uther thre glaanst at eche uther in

understanding and cide widh profound relefe. "A particcularly feendish merder ov a woomman--a gherl, raather. Too men stand acuezd. Eche haz a perfect allibi, supoerted bi onnest witnecez; but u no hou much an allibi meenz nou. Boath men tel perfectly strate stoerese, even under a li-detector, but niather wil let me--or enny uther Lenzman so far--tuch hiz miand." Gerrond pauzd.

"Uu-huu." Kinnison understood. "Lots ov innocent pepel cimply caant stand Lensing and hav mity strong blox."

"Glad uve cene such. Wun ov dhose men iz liying widh a pollish I woodnt hav beleevd poscibel, or els boath ar innocent. And wun ov them *must* be ghilty; dha ar the oanly suspects. If we tri them nou we make fuilz ov ourcelvz, and we caant poot the triyal of verry much lon'gher widhout loosing face. If u can help us out ule be doowing a lot for the Patrole, throowout this whole cector."

"I can help u," Kinnison declaerd. "For this, dho, better hav sum props. Make me a box--dubbel Berbanc controalz, widh five baby spots on it--oranj, blu, grene, perpel, and red. The bigghest cet ov hedfoanz uve got, and a thhic, blac bliandfoald. Hou soone can u tri em?"

"The sooner the better. It can be arainjd for this aafternoone."

The triyal wauz anounst, and long befoer the apointed our the grate coert-roome ov dhat werldz largest citty wauz throngd. The our struc. Qwiyet raind. Kinnison, in hiz somber gra, strode too the judgez desc and sat doun behiand the peculeyar box uppon it. In ded cilens too Patrole officerz aproacht. The ferst invested him reverently widh the hedfoanz, the cecond so enrapt hiz hed in blac cloth dhat it wauz aparrent too aul observerz dhat hiz vizhon wauz compleetly obscuerd.

"Auldho from a werld far distant in space, I hav bene aasct too tri too suspects for the crime ov merder," Kinnison intoand. "I doo not no the detailz ov the crime nor the identity ov the suspects. I doo no dhat dha and dhare witnecez ar within these ralingz. I shal nou celect dhose whoo ar about too be exammiand."

Peercing beemz ov intens, vary-cullord lite plade over the too gruips, and the depe, imprescive vois went on:

"I no nou whoo the suspects ar. Dha ar about too rise, too wauc, and too cete themcelvz az I shal direct."

Dha did so; it beying plainly evvident too aul observerz dhat dha wer under sum aufool compulshon.

"The witnecez ma be excuezd. Truth iz the oonly thhing ov importans here; and witnecez, beying human and dhaerfoer frale, obstruct truth moer freeqwently dhan dha ferther its proagres. I shal nou examine these too acuezd."

Agane the vivvid, weerdly distorting glaerz ov lite lasht out; baithing in intens monnocrome and in vareyouz gaastly combinaishonz ferst wun prizzoner, then the uther; the while Kinnison drove hiz miand intoo dhaerz, plumming dhare depest depths. The cilens, aulreddy profound, became the utter stilnes ov outer space az the throng, hoalding its verry breth nou, sat enthrauld bi dhat portentous examinaishon.

"I hav exammiand them folly. U ar aul aware dhat enny Lenzman ov the Galactic Patrole ma in cace ov nede cerv az juj, jury, and execuেশoner. I am, houwevver, nun ov these; nor iz this proceding too be a triyal az u ma hav understood the term. I hav ced dhat witnecez ar superfluwous. I wil nou ad dhat niather juj nor jury ar nescesary. Aul dhat iz reqwiard iz too discuver the truth; cins truth iz

aul-pouwerfool. For dhat same rezon no execueshoner iz neded here--the discuvverd truth wil in and ov itcelf cerv us in dhat capascity.

"Wun ov these men iz ghilty, the uther iz innocent. From the miand ov the ghilty wun I am about too construct a compozsite, not ov this wun feendish crime alone, but ov aul the criamz he haz evver comitted. I shal progect dhat compozsite intoo the are befoer him. No innocent miand wil be abel too ce enny iyotaa ov it. The ghilty man, houwevver, wil perceve its evvery revolting detale; and, so perceving, he wil forthwith cece too exist in this plane ov life."

Wun ov the men had nuthhing too fere--Kinnison had toald him so, long cins. The uther had bene trembling for minnuets in uncontrolabel parroxizmz ov terror. Nou this wun leept from hiz cete, clauwing savvaijly at hiz ise and screaming in mad abandon.

"I did it! Help! Mercy! Take her awa! Oh...h..h!!" he shreect, and dide, horibly, even az he shreect.

Nor wauz dhare noiz in the coert-roome aafter the thhing wauz over. The stund spectatorz slunc awa, scaersly daring even too breedh until dha wer saifly outside.

Nor wer the Radelidjan officerz in much better cace. Not a werd wauz ced until the five wer bac in the bace comaanderz office. Then Kinnison, stil white ov face and cet ov jau, spoke. The utherz nu dhat he had found the ghilty man, and dhat he had in sum peculeyarly terribel fashon executed him. He nu dhat dha nu dhat the man wauz hidjously ghilty. Nevvertheles:

"He wauz ghilty," the Telureyan gerct out. "Ghilty az aul the devvilz in hel. I nevver had too doo dhat befoer and it griaps me--but I coodnt shuv the job of ontoo u fellose. I woodnt waunt enniboddy too ce dhat

picchure dhat didnt hav too, and widhout it u cood nevver beghin too understand just hou atroashously and damnably ghilty dhat hel-hound reyalu wauz."

"Thanx, Kinnison," Gerrond ced, cimpily. "Kinnison. Kinnison ov Tellus. Ile remember dhat name, in cace we evver nede u az badly agane. But, aafter whaut u just did, it wil be a long time--if evver. U didnt no, did u, dhat aul the inhabbitants ov foer plannets wer wauching u?"

"Holy Clono, no! Wer dha?"

"Dha wer; and if the wa u scaerd *me* iz enny critereyon, it wil be a long, coald da befoer ennithhing like dhat cumz up agane in this cistem. And thanx agane, Gra Lenzman. U hav dun sumthhing for our whole Patrole this da."

"Be shure too dismantel dhat box so thurroly dhat nobody wil reccognise enny ov its component parts," and Kinnison mannaijd a raather febel grin. "Wun moer thhing and Ile buz along. Doo u fellose happen too no whare dhaerz a good, strong pirate bace around here enniwhare? And, while I doant waunt too ceme fuscly, I wood like it aul the better if dha wer worm-bludded oxigen-breetherz, so I woant hav too ware armor aul the time."

"Whaut ar u trying too doo, ghiv us the nedel, or sumthhing?" This iz not preciasly whaut the Radelidjan ced, but it convase the thaut Kinnison receevd az the bace comaander staerd at him in amaizment.

"Doant tel me dhat dhare iz such a bace around here!" exclaimd the Telureyan in delite. "Iz dhare, reyalu?"

"Dhare iz. So strong dhat we havnt bene abel too tuch it; mand and

staaft bi natiavz ov yor one plannet, Tellus ov Sol. We repoerted it too Prime Bace sum aty-thre dase ago, just aafter we discuvverd it. Yor direct from dhare...." He fel cilent. This wauz no wa too be tauking too a Gra Lenzman.

"I wauz in the hospital then, fiting widh mi ners becauz she woodnt ghiv me ennithhing too ete," Kinnison explaind widh a laaf. "When I left Tellus I didnt chec up on the late dataa--didnt thhinc Ide nede it qwite so soone. If uve got it, dho...."

"Hospital! U?" qwerede wun ov the yun'gher Radelidjanz.

"Yeh--bit of moer dhan I cood chu," and the Telureyan descriabd breefly hiz misadventchure widh the Wheelmen ov Aldebbaran I. "This uther thhing haz cum up cins then, dho, and I woant be sticking mi nec out dhat wa agane. If uve got such a made-too-order bace az dhat in this rejon, itl save me a long trip. Whare iz it?"

Dha gave him its cwordinaits and whaut littel informaishon dha had bene abel too ceure concerning it. Dha did not aasc him whi he waunted dhat dataa. Dha ma hav wunderd at hiz temerrity in daring too scout alone a fortres whoose strength had kept at ba the mast Patrole foercez ov the cector: but if dha did so dha kept dhare thauts wel screend. For this wauz a Gra Lenzman, and verry evvidently a super-pouwerd individjuwal, even ov dhat celect groope whoose wekest memberz wer pouwerfool indede. If he felt like tauking dha wood liscen; but Kinnison did not tauc. He liscend; then, when he had lernd evverithhing dha nu ov the Boscoanyan bace:

"Wel, Ide better be flitting. Clere eethher, fellose!" and he wauz gon.

Out from Raddelix and intoo depe space shot the speedster, baring the Gra Lenzman tooword Boishaa 2, whare the Boscoanyan bace wauz citchuwated.

The Patrole foercez had not bene abel too locate it deffiniatly, dhaerfoer it must be cleverly hidden indede. Mand and staaft bi Telureyanz--and this wauz faerly cloce too the line ferst taken bi the pilot ov the pirate vescel whoose croo had bene so descimated bi vanBuskerc and hiz Valereyanz.

Dhare coodnt be so menny Boscoanyan bacez widh Telureyan personel, Kinnison reflected. It wauz wel within the boundz ov pocibillity, even ov probabillity, dhat he mite encounter here hiz former, but unsuspecting, shipmaits agane.

Cins the Boishan cistem wauz les dhan a hundred parcex from Raddelix, a cuppel ov ourz found the Lenzman staring doun uppon anuther strainj plannet; and this wun wauz a verry Erthly werld indede. Dhare wer polar ice-caps, areyaaz ov intensly dazzling white. Dhare wauz an atmosfere, depe and sweetly blu, fild for the moast part widh sunlite, but flect here and dhare widh cloudz, sum ov which wer slo-mooving stormz. Dhare wer continents, baring mountainz and plainz, laix and rivverz. Dhare wer oashanz, studded widh ilandz grate and smaul.

But Kinnison wauz no planetografer, nor had he bene gon from Tellus sufishmently long so dhat the cite ov this butifool and home-like werld arouzd in him enny qwaam ov nostalgaa. He wauz loocking for a pirate bace; and, dropping hiz speedster az lo intoo the nite cide az he daerd, he began hiz cerch.

Ov man or ov the werx ov man he at ferst found littel enuf trace. Aul human or nere-human life wauz aparrently stil in a savvage state ov

development; and, except for a few scattered races, or rather tribes, of burrowers and of cliff- or cave-dwellers, it was still nomadic, wandering here and there without permanent habitation or structure. Animals of several genera and species were there in mirriads, but neither was Kinnison a biologist. He wanted pirates; and, it seemed, that was the one form of life which he was *not* going to find!

But finally, through there, grim, boot-dog pertinacity, he was successful. That base was there, somewhere. He would find it, no matter how long it took. He would find it, if he had to examine the entire crust of the planet, land and water alike, kilometer by plotted cubic kilometer! He set out to do just that; and it was thus that he found the Bosconyan stronghold.

It had been built directly beneath a towering range of mountains, protected from detection by miles upon miles of native copper and of iron ore.

Its entrances, invisible before, were even now not readily perceptible, camouflaged as they were by outer layers of rock which matched exactly in form, color, and texture the rocks of the cliffs in which they were placed. Where those entrances were located, the rest was easy. Again he set his speedster into a carefully-observed orbit and came to ground in his armor. Again he crept forward, furtively and sculkingly, until he could perceive again a shimmering web of wires.

With minor variations his method of entry into the Bosconyan base was similar to that he had used in making his way into the Patrol base upon Raddelix. He was, however, working now with a surety and a precision

which had then bene lacking. Hiz practice widh the Patroalmen had ghivven him nollej and tecneke. Hiz citting in jujment, juring which he had tucht aulmoast evvery miand in the vaast ascemblage, had taut him much. And abuv aul, the grizly finaaly ov dhat citting, horribly distaistfool and sole-racking az it had bene, had ghivven him traning ov inestimabel vallu; necesitating az it had the inflicshon ov the ultimate pennalty.

He nu dhat he mite hav too sta incide dhat bace for sum time, dhaerfoer he celected hiz hiding-place widh care. He cood ov coers blanc out the nollej ov hiz prezsens in the miand ov enniwun chaancing too discuver him; but cins such an interupshon mite cum at a crittical instant, he preferd too take up hiz rezidens in a cecluded place. Dhare wer, ov coers, menny vacant sweets in the officerz qworterz--aul bacez must hav acomodaishonz for vizsitorz--and the Lenzman decided too occupi wun ov them. It wauz a cimpel matter too obtane a ke, and, incide the bare but cumfortabel littel roome, he stript of hiz armor widh a ci ov relefe.

Lening bac in a deeply-upholsterd lether arm-chare, he cloazd hiz ise and let hiz cens ov percepshon rome throowout the grate establishment. Widh aul hiz nuly devellopt pouwer he studded it, our aafter our and da aafter da. When he wauz hun'gry the pirate coox fed him, not nowing dhat dha did so--he had livd on iarn rashonz long enuf. When he wauz tiard he slept, widh hiz eternaly vidgilant Lenz on gard.

Finaly he nu evverithhing dhare wauz too be none about dhat strong'hoald and wauz reddy too act. He did not take over the miand ov the bace comaander, but chose insted the chefe comunicaishonz officer az the wun moast liacly and moast intimaitly too hav delingz widh Helmuth. For Helmuth, he whoo spoke for Boscone, had for menny munths bene the

Lenzmanz deffinite objective.

But this game cood not be hurrede. Bacez, no matter hou important, did not caul Grand Bace exept uppon matterz ov the moast dire ergency, and no such matter evenchuwated. Nor did Helmuth caul dhat bace, cins nuthhing out ov the ordinary wauz happening--too enny piraits nollej, dhat iz--and hiz atenshon wauz moer nescesary elswhare.

Wun da, houwevver, dhare came cracling in a triyumfant repoert--a ship werking out ov dhat bace had taken nobel booty indede; no les a prise dhan a foolly-suplide hospital ship ov the Patrole itcelf! Az the repoert procrest Kinnisonz hart went doun intoo hiz buits and he swoer bitterly too himcelf. Hou in aul the nine helz ov Valereyaa had dha mannajd too take such a ship az dhat? Hadnt she bene escorted?

Nevvertheles, az chefe comunicaishonz officer he tooc the repoert and con'gratchulated hartily, throo the ships rajo man, its captane, its officerz, and its croo.

"Mity fine werc; Helmuth himcelf shal here ov this," he concluded hiz werdz ov prase. "Hou did u doo it? Widh wun ov the nu maulerz?"

"Yes, cer," came the repli. "Our mauler, acumpanying us just out ov rainj, came up and en'gaijd dhaerz. Dhat left us fre too take this ship. We loct on widh magnets, cut our wa in, and here we ar."

Dhare dha wer indede. The hospital ship wauz red widh blod; paishents, doctorz, internz, officerz and opperating croo alike had bene bootcherd widh the horribly ruithles savvagery which wauz the customary tecneke ov aul the agencese ov Boscone. Ov aul dhat ships personel oanly the nercez livd. Dha wer not too be poot too deth--yet. In fact, and under certane condishonz, dha nede not di at aul.

Dha huddeld toogheter, a littel not ov white-clad mizsery in dhat corps-litterd roome, and even nou wun ov them wauz beying dragd awa. She wauz fiting vishously, widh fists and fete, widh nailz and teeth. No wun pirate cood handel her; it tooc too strong men too subju dhat strugling fury. Dha hauld her uprite and she throo bac her hed, in panting defiyans. Dhare wauz a cascade ov red-bronz hare and Kinnison sau--Clarissaa MacDoogal! And rememberd dhat dhare *had* bene sum tauc dhat dha wer gowing too poot her bac intoo space cervice! The Lenzman decided instantly whaut too doo.

"Stop, u swine!" he roerd throo hiz pirate mouthpece. "Whare doo u thhinc yor gowing widh dhat ners?"

"Too the captainz cabbin, cer." The huskese stopt short in amaizment az dhat roer fild the roome, but aancerd the qweschon conciasly.

"Let her go!" Then, az the gherl fled bac too the huddeld groope in the corner: "Tel the captane too cum out here and acembel evvery officer and man ov the croo. I waunt too tauc too u aul at wuns."

He had a minnute or too in which too thhinc, and he thaut fureyously, but accuraitly. He had too doo sumthhing, but whatevver he did must be dun strictly acording too the piraits one standardz ov ethhix; if he made wun slip it mite be Aldebbaran I aul over agane. He nu hou too kepe from making dhat slip, he thaut. But aulso, and this wauz the hard part, he must werc in sumthhing dhat wood let dhose nercez no dhat dhare wauz stil hope; dhat dhare wer moer acts ov this draamaa yet too cum. Utherwise he nu widh a starc, coald certainty whaut wood happen. He nu ov whaut stuf the space-nercez ov the Patrole wer made; nu dhat dha cood be drivven just so far, and no farther--alive.

Dhare wauz a wa out ov dhat, too. In the chialdishnes ov hiz hospitalizaishon he had cauld Ners MacDoogal a dum-bel. He had

thaut ov her, and had spoken too her qwite francly, in uncomplimentary termz. But he nu dhat dhare wauz a reyal brane bac ov dhat butifool face, dhat a qwic and kene intelligens resided under dhat red-bronz thach. Dhaerfoer when the acembly wauz complete he wauz reddy, and in no uncertane or ambigguwous lan'gwage he opend up.

"Liscen, u--aul ov u" he roerd. "This iz the ferst time in munths dhat we hav made such a haul az this, and u fellose hav the brasen gaul too start helping yorcelvz too the choicest stuf befoer enniboddy els ghets a looc at it. I tel u nou too la of, and dhat gose exactly az it lase. I, personaly, wil kil enny man dhat tutchez wun ov dhose wimmen befoer dha arive here at bace. Nou u, captane, ar the ferst and werst ofender ov the lot," and he staerd directly intoo the ise ov the officer whoome he had laast cene entering the dunjon ov the Wheelmen.

"I admit dhat yor a good picker." Kinnisonz vois wauz nou venomously soft, hiz intonaishon distinct widh thhinly vaild sarcasm.

"Unforchunaitly, houwevver, yor taist agrese too wel widh mine. U ce, captane, Ime gowing too nede a ners micelf. I thhinc Ime cumming doun widh

sumthhing. And, cins Ive got too hav a ners, Ile take dhat red-hedded wun. I had a ners wuns widh hare just dhat cullor, whoo incisted on feding me te and toast and a soft-boild eg when I waunted beefstake; and Ime gowing too take mi gruj out on this wun here for aul the red-hedded nercez dhat evver livd. I trust dhat u wil pardon the length ov this speche, but I waunt too ghiv u mi rezonz in fool for caushoning u dhat dhat particcular ners iz mi one particcular personal propperty. Marc her for me, and ce too it dhat she ghets here--exactly az she iz nou."

The captane had bene afrade too interupt hiz supereyor, but nou he erupted.

"But ce here, Blaixly!" he stormd. "Shese mine, bi evvery rite. I capchuerd her, I sau her ferst, Ive got her here...."

"Enuf ov dhat bac-tauc, captane!" Kinnison sneerd elabboraitly. "U no, ov coers, dhat u ar viyolating evvery roole bi taking booty for yorcelf befoer divizhon at bace, and dhat u can ghet shot for doowing it."

"But evveriboddy duz it!" protested the captane.

"Exept when a supereyor officer catchez him at it. Supereyorz ghet ferst pic, u no," the Lenzman remianded him swaavly.

"But I protest, cer! Ile take it up widh...."

"Shut up!" Kinnison snarld, widh coald finallity. "Take it up widh whoome u plese, but remember this, mi laast worning. Bring her in too me az she iz and u liv. Tuch her and u di! Nou, u nercez, cum over here too the boerd!"

Ners MacDoogal had bene whispering fertiavly too the utherz and nou she led the wa, hed hi and ise blasing defiyans. She wauz an actres, az wel az a ners.

"Take a good, long looc at this button, rite here, marct Rela 46," came kert instrucshonz. "If enniboddy abord this ship tutchez enny wun ov u, or even loox at u az dho he waunts too, pres this button and Ile doo the rest. Nou, u big, red-hedded dum-bel, looc at me. Doant start begghing--yet. I just waunt too be shure ule no me when u ce me."

"Ile no u, nevver fere, u.... u *brat!*" she flaerd, dhus

informing the Lenzman dhat she had receevd hiz message. "Ile not oanly no u--Ile scrach yor ise out on cite!"

"Dhatl be a good tric if u can doo it," Kinnison sneerd, and cut of.

"Whauts it aul about, Mac? Whaut haz got intoo u?" demaanded wun ov the nercez, az soone az the wimmen wer alone.

"I doant no," she whisperd. "Wauch out, dha ma hav spi-rase on us. I doant no ennithhing, reyaly, and the whole thhing iz too wialdly imposcibel, too utterly fantastic too make cens. But paas the werd along too aul the gherlz too ride this out, becauz mi Gra Lenzman iz in on it, sumwhare and sumhou. I doant ce hou he can be, poscibly, but I just no he iz."

For, at the ferst menshon ov te and toast, befoer she perceevd even an incling ov the troo cichuwaishon, her miand had flasht bac instantly too Kinnison, the moast stubborn and rebelleyous paishent she had evver had. Moer, the oanly man she had evver none whoo had treted her preciasly az dho she wer a part ov the hospitalz verry fernichure. Az iz the wa ov wimmen--particcularly ov butifool wimmen--she had orated ov wimmenz riats and ov wimmenz status in the skeme ov thhingz. She had decride aul speshal privvilegez, and had stated, often and widh hete, dhat she aasct no odz ov enny man livving or yet too be born. Nevvertheles, and aulso butifool-woommanlike, the thaut had bitten depe dhat here wauz a man whoo had nevver even reyaliazd dhat she *wauz* a woomman, too sa nuthhing ov reyalising dhat she wauz an extrordinarily butifool wun! And depe within her and sternly suprest the thaut had stil rankeld.

At the mension ov beefstake she had aul but screemd, gripping her nese widh frantic handz too kepe her emoashon down. For she had had no reyal hope; she wauz cimply fiting widh evverithhing she had until the hoaples end, which she had none cood not long be delade. Nou she gatherd hercelf tooghether and began too act.

When the werd "dum-bel" buimd from the speker she nu, beyond dout or peradventure, dhat it wauz Kinnison, the Gra Lenzman, whoo wauz reyal doowing dhat tauking. It wauz crasy--it didnt make enny kiand ov cens at aul--but it wauz, it must be, troo. And, agane woommanlike, she nu widh a caam certainty dhat az long az dhat Gra Lenzman wer alive and consmous, he wood be compleetly the maaster ov enny cichuwaishon in which he mite fiand himcelf. Dhaerfoer she paast along her ilodgical but chering thaut, and the nercez, beyng aulso wimmen, axepted it widhout qweschon az the acchuwal and acumplisht fact.

Dha carrede on, and when the capchuerd hospital ship had doct at bace, Kinnison wauz compleetly reddy too foers matterz too a concluezhon. In adishon too the chefe comunicaishonz officer, he nou had under hiz controle a hily capabel observer. Too handel too such miandz wauz chialdz pla too the intelect which had directed, against dhare fool fiting wilz, the miandz ov too and thre qworterz alert, pouwerfool, and foolly wornd officerz ov the Galactic Patrole!

"Good gherl, Mac," he poot hiz miand on rapor widh herz and cent hiz message. "Glad u got the ideyaa. U did a good job ov acting, and if u can doo sum moer az good weeyl be aul cet. Can doo?"

"Ile sa I can!" she acented fervently. "I doant no whaut u ar doowing, hou u can poscibly doo it, or whare u ar, but dhat can wate. Tel me whaut too doo and Ile doo it!"

"Make paacez at the bace comaander," he instructed her. "Hate me--the ape Ime werking throo, u no; Blaixly, hiz name iz--like poizon. Go intoo it big--aul gets wide open. U maby cood luv him, but if I ghet u ule blo out yor brainz--if enny. U nu the line--pla up too him widh evverithhing u can bring too bare, and hate me too hel and bac. Help aul u can too start a fite betwene us. If he faulz for u hard enuf the blo-of cumz then and dhare. If not, heeyl be abel too doo us aul plenty ov dert. I can kil a lot ov them, but not enuf ov them qwic enuf."

"Heeyl faul," she prommiast him glefooly, "like ten thousand brix fauling doun a wel. Just wauch mi gets!"

And faul he did. He had not even cene a woomman for munths, and he expected nuthhing exept bitter-end resistans and suwicide from enny ov these wimmen ov the Patrole. Dhaerfoer he wauz roct too the heelz--cet bac uppon hiz verry haunchez--when the moast butifool woomman he had evver cene came ov her one volishon intoo hiz armz, ceking in them sancchuwary from hiz one chefe comunicaishonz officer.

"I hate him!" she sobd, nesling against the huge bulc ov the comaanderz boddy and terning uppon him the fool blaast ov the hi-pouwerd projectorz which wer her ise. "*U* woodnt be so mene too me, I just no u woodnt!" and her sutly perfuemd hed sanc uppon hiz shoalder. The outlau wauz just so much soft wax.

"Ile sa I woodnt be mene too u" hiz vois dropt too a gentel bello. "Whi, u littel sweet'hart, Ile *marry* u. I wil so, bi aul the godz ov space!"

It dhus came about dhat ners and bace comaander enterd the controle

roome tooghether, armz about eche uther.

"Dhare he iz!" she shreect, pointing at the chefe comunicaishonz officer. "Hese the wun! Nou lets ce u start sumthhing, u rat-faist clunker! Dhaerz wun reyal man around here, and he woant let u tuch me--yaa-a-a!" She gave him a rezounding Bronx chere, and her escort sweld vizsibly.

"Iz--dhat--so?" Kinnison sneerd. "Ghet this, glammor-poos, and ghet it strate. I marct u for mine az soone az I sau u, and mine yor gowing too be, whether u like it or not and no matter whaut enniboddy cez or duz about it. Az for u, captane, yor too late--I sau her ferst. And nou, u red-hedded tomaato, cum over here whare u belong."

She snuggheld clocer intoo the comaanderz embrace and the big man ternd perpel.

"Whaut du mene, too late!" he roerd. "U tooc her awa from the ships captane, didnt u? U ced dhat supereyor officerz ghet ferst chois, didnt u? Ime the bos here and Ime taking her awa from u, ghet me? Ule stand for it, too, Blaixly, and like it. Wun werd out ov u and Ile hav u spred-egheld acros the mouth ov number cix projector!"

"Supereyor officerz doant *aulwase* ghet ferst chois," Kinnison replide; widh bitter, coald ferocity, but chusing hiz werdz widh care. "It dependz entiarly on whoo the too men ar."

Nou wauz the time too strike. Kinnison nu dhat if the comaander kept hiz hed, the liavz ov dhose valeyant wimmen wer forfeite, and hiz one whole plan cereyously endain'gerd. He himcelf cood ghet awa, ov coers--but he cood not ce himcelf doowing it under these condishonz. No, he must gode the comaander too a frensy. And widhout swaring wood be better--the ape

wauz uest too invectiavz dhat wood rase blisterz on armor plate. Mac wood help. In fact, and widhout hiz sugeschon, she wauz even then hard at werc fomenting trubbel betwene the too men.

"U doant hav too take dhat kiand ov stuf of ov enniboddy, big boi," she wauz whispering, ergently. "Doant caul in a croo too spred-eghel him, iather; beme him out yorcelf. Yor a better man dhan he iz, enny time. Blaast him doun--dhatl sho him whoose whoo around here!"

"When the infereyor iz such a man az I am, and the supereyor such a lous az u ar;" the biting, contempchuwously snering vois went on widhout a brake, "Such a bloted swine; such a main'gy, lo-doun ker; such a pooscy-gutted tub ov lard; such a brainles, filthhy spaun ov the lowest dregz ov the rottenest scum ov space; such an utterly incompetent, self-opinyonated, misbegotten aborshon az u ar..."

The outraijd pirate, bellowing profannity in wialdly mounting rage, tride too brake in; but Kinnison-Blaixlese vois, if no louder dhan hiz, wauz far moer pennetrant.

"...then, in dhat cace, the infereyor keeps the red-hedded wench himcelf. Poot dhat on a tape, u white-livverd couward, and ete it!"

Stil bellowing, the fat man had ternd and wauz leping tooword the armz cabbinet.

"Blaast him! Blaast him doun!" the ners had bene shreking; and, az the raging comaander neerd the cabbinet, no wun notiast dhat her latest and loudest screme wauz "Kim! Blaast him doun! Doant wate enny lon'gher--beme him befoer he ghets a gun!"

But the Lenzman did not act--yet. Auldho aulmoast evvery man ov the pirate croo staerd spel-bound, Kinnisonz enslaivd observer had for

menny cecondz bene jamming the sub-eethher widh Helmuths personal and
ergent caul. It wauz ov aulmoast vital importans too hiz plan dhat
Helmuth
himself shood ce the climax ov this cene. Dhaerfoer Blaixly stood
imobile while hiz profainly raving supereyor reecht the cabbinet and
toer it open.

CHAPTER 21

The Cecond Line

Blaixly wauz aulreddy armd--Kinnison had cene too dhat--and az the bace
comaander rencht open the armz cabbinet Helmuths private looc-out cet
began too drau current. Helmuth himself wauz nou loocking on and the
enslaivd observer had aulreddy begun too trace hiz beme. Dhaerfoer az the
fureyous pirate wherld around widh raizd DeLammeter he faist wun
aulreddy
ablase; and in a matter ov cecondz dhare wauz oonly a chard and smoking
hepe whare he had stood.

Kinnison wunderd dhat Helmuths coald vois wauz not aulreddy snapping
from the speker, but he wauz soone too discuver the rezon for dhat
cilens. Unnobservd bi the Lenzman, wun ov the observerz had recuverd
sufishently from hiz shoct amaizment too tern in a riyot alarm too the
gard-roome. Five armd men aancerd dhat caul on the dubbel, stopt and
glaanst around.

"Gardz! Blaast Blaixly doun!" Helmuths unmistacabel vois blaerd from
hiz speker.

Obegently and manfooly enuf the five gardz tride; and, had it
acchuwaly bene Blaixly confrunting them so defiyantly, dha probbably
wood hav suxeded. It wauz the boddy ov the comunicaishonz officer, it

iz troo. The miand opperating the muscelz ov dhat boddy, houwevver, wauz the miand ov Kimbal Kinnison, Gra Lenzman, the faastest man widh a hand-gun oald Tellus had evver projuest; kede up, expecting the moove, and widh too DeLammeterz out and poizd at hip! *This* wauz the beying whoome Helmuth wauz so nonchalantly ordering hiz minyonz too sla! Faaster dhan enny wauching i cood follo, five bolts ov liatning flict from Blaixlese DeLammeterz. The laast gard went doun, hiz hed a shrivveld cinder, befoer a cin'ghel pirate bolt cood be luist. Then:

"U ce, Helmuth," Kinnison spoke conversaishonaly too the boerd, hiz vois dripping vitreyol, "Playing it safe from a distans, and making uther men pool yor chesnuds out ov the fire, iz a verry fine tric az long az it werx. But when it failz too werc, az nou, it poots u exactly whare I waunt u. I, for wun, hav bene for a long time compleetly fed up widh taking orderz from a mere vois; espeshaly from the vois ov wun whose entire method ov operaishon pruviz him too be the prise couward ov the gallaxy."

"Observer! U uther at the boerd!" snarld Helmuth, paying no atenshon too Kinnisonz barbd shaafte. "Sound the acembly--armd!"

"No uce, Helmuth, hese stone def," Kinnison explaind, vois smuidhly venomous. "Ime the oonly man in this bace u can tauc too, and u woant be abel too doo even dhat verry much lon'gher."

"And u reyaly thhinc dhat u can ghet awa widh this mutiny--this baerfaist insubordinaishon--this defiyans ov *mi authorrity*?"

"Shure I can--dhats whaut Ive bene telling u. If u wer here in person, or evver had bene; if enny ov the boiz had evver cene u, or had evver none u az ennithhing exept a dicemboddede vois; maby I coodnt. But, cins nobody haz evver cene even yor face, dhat ghivz me a chaans...."

In hiz distant bace Helmuths miand had flasht over evvery aspect ov this unherd-ov cichuwaishon. He decided too pla for time; dhaerfoer, even az hiz handz darted too buttonz here and dhare, he spoke:

"Doo *u* waunt too ce mi face?" he demaanded. "If u doo ce it, no pouwer in the gallaxy...."

"Skip it, Chefe," sneerd Kinnison. "Doant tri too kid me intoo beleving u woodnt kil me nou, under enny condishonz, if u poscibly cood. Az for yor face, it maix no differens too me whether I evver ce yor ugly pan or not."

"Wel, u shal!" and Helmuths vizzage apeerd; concentrating uppon the rebelleyous officer a glare ov such fury and such pouwer dhat enny ordinary man must hav qwaild. But not Blaixly-Kinnison!

"Wel! Not so bad, at dhat--the ghi loox aulmoast human!" Kinnison exclaimd, in the tone moast caerfooly desiand too drive even moer frantic the helples and inwordly raging pirate leder. "But Ive got thhingz too doo. U can ghes at whaut gose on around here from nou on," and in the blase ov a DeLammeter Helmuths plate, cet, and "i" disapeerd. Kinnison had aulso bene playing for time, and hiz observer had chect and rechet this cecond and hily important line too Helmuths ultraa-ceecret bace.

Then, throowout the fortres, dhare blaerd out the ergent acembly

caul, too which the Lenzman added, verbally:

"This iz a wun hundred percent caulout, including croose ov ships in doc, reggular bace personel, and aul prizzonerz. Cum az u ar and cum faast--the doerz ov the auditoereyum wil be loct in five minnuets and enny man outside dhose doerz wil be ghivven ampel rezon too wish dhat he had bene incide."

The auditoereyum wauz imejaitly of the controle roome, and wauz so arainjd dhat when a partishon wauz roald bac the controle roome became its stage. Aul Boscoanyan bacez wer arainjd dhus, in order dhat the supervising officerz at Grand Bace cood overcy throo dhare instroomeents uppon the mane pannel just such acemblese az this wun wauz supoast too be. Evvery man hering dhat caul ashuemd dhat it came from Grand Bace, and evvery man hurrede too oba it.

Kinnison roald bac the partishon betwene the too ruimz and waucht for wepponz az the men came streming intoo the auditoereyum. Ordinarily oonly the gardz went armd, but poscibly a fu ov the ships officerz wood be waring dhare DeLammeterz.... foer--five--cix. The captane and the pilot ov the battelship dhat had taken the hospital ship, Vice-Comaander Crimzky ov the bace, and thre gardz. Niavz, billese, and such did not count.

"Tiamz up. Loc the doerz. Bring the kese and the nercez up here," he orderd the cix armd men, caulng eche bi name. "U wimmen take these chaerz over here, u men cit dhare."

Then, when aul wer ceted, Kinnison tucht a button and the stele partishon slid smuidhly intoo place.

"Whauts cumming of here?" demaanded wun ov the officerz. "Whaerz the comaander? Hou about Grand Bace? Looc at dhat boerd!"

"Cit tite." Kinnison directed. "Handz on nese--Ile bern enny or aul ov u dhat make a moove. I hav aulreddy Bernd the oald man and five gardz, and hav poot Grand Bace out ov the picchure. Nou I waunt too fiand out just hou us cevven stand." The Lenzman aulreddy nu, but he wauz not tipping hiz hand.

"Whi us cevven?"

"Becauz we ar the oonly wunz whoo happend too be waring cide-armz. Evveriwun els ov the entire personel iz unnarnd and iz nou loct in the auditoereyum. U no hou apt dha ar too ghet out until wun ov us lets them out."

"But Helmuth--heeyl hav u blaasted for this!"

"Hardly--mi planz wer not made yesterda. Hou menny ov u fellose ar widh me?"

"Whauts yor skeme?"

"Too take these nercez too sum Patrole bace and surrender. Ime cic ov this whole game; and, cins nun ov them hav bene hert, I figgure dhare good for a pardon and a fresh start--a lite centens at leest."

"O, so *dhats* the rezon...." grould the captane.

"Exactly--but I doant waunt enniwun widh me whoose oonly thaut wood be too bern me doun at the ferst oporchunity."

"Count me in," declared the pilot. "I've got a strong stomach, but enough of these jobs are piling up too much. If you want to get anything short of a life sentence for me I'll go along, but I bloody well want help against...."

"Sure not. Not until after we're out in space. I don't need any help here."

"Do you want my DeLammeter?"

"No, keep it. You want to use it on me. Enniboddy else?"

Wun gard joined the pilot, standing aside; the other four waved.

"Tiamz up!" Kinnison snapped. "Now, you four fellows, either go for your DeLammeters or turn your backs, and do it right now!"

Dha elected to turn their backs and Kinnison collected their weapons, wun bi wun. Having disarmed them, he again roared back the partition and ordered them to join the wondering throng in the auditorium. He then addressed the assemblage, telling them what he had done and what he had in mind to do.

"A good many of you must be fed up on this lawless game of piracy and anarchy too replete with decent men, if you can do so without

incurring too great a punishment," he concluded. "I feel quite certain that those of us who man the hospital ship in order to return these necks to the Patrol will get light sentences, at most. Miss MacDoogal is a head nurse--a commissioned officer of the Patrol. We will assist her what she thinks."

"I can assure you that," she replied clearly. "I am not quite

certane,' iather--I am absolutly shure dhat whautevver men Mr. Blaixly celects for hiz croo wil not be ghivven enny centencez at aul. Dha wil be pardond, and wil be ghivven whautevver jobz dha can doo best."

"Hou doo u no, Mis?" aasct wun. "Were a blac lot."

"I no u ar." The hed nercez vois wauz cereenly pozsitive. "I woant sa *hou* I no, but u can take mi werd for it dhat I *doo* no."

"Dhose ov u whoo waunt too take a chaans widh us line up over here," Kinnison directed, and wauct rappidly doun the line, reding the miand ov eche man in tern. Menny ov them he waivd bac intoo the mane groope, az he found thauts ov tretchery or cianz ov inherent criminallity. Dhose he celected wer dhose whoo wer reyaly cincere in dhare desire too qwit forever the ranx ov Boscone, dhose whoo wer in dhose ranx becauz ov sum pres ov circumstaans raather dhan becauz ov a mental taint. Az eche man paast inspecshon he armd himcelf from the cabbinet and stood at ese befoer the groope ov wimmen.

Havving celected hiz croo, the Lenzman opperated the controalz dhat opend the exit nerest the hospital ship, blaasted awa the pannel, so dhat dhat exit cood not be cloazd, unloct a doer, and ternd too the piraits.

"Vice-Comaander Crimzky, az ceenyor officer, u ar nou in comaand ov this bace," he remarct. "While I am in no cens ghivving u orderz, dhare ar a fu matterz about which u shood be informd. Ferst, I cet no deffinite time az too when u ma leve this roome--I meerly state dhat u wil fiand it decidedly unhelthhy too follo us at aul cloasly az we go from here too the hospital ship. Ceccond, u havnt a ship fit too take the eethher; yor mane in'gector togghelz hav aul bene broken of at the pivvots. If yor mecannix werc at top spepe, nu wunz can be poot on

in exactly too ourz. Thherd, dhare iz gowing too be a cevere erthqwake in preciasly too ourz and thherly minnuets, wun which shood make this bace meerly a memmory."

"An erthqwake! Doant bluf, Blaixly--u coodnt doo *dhat!*"

"Wel, perhaps not a reggular erthqwake, but sumthhing dhat wil doo just az wel. If u thhinc Ime bluffing, wate and fiand out. But common cens shood ghiv u the aancer too dhat--I no exactly whaut Helmuth iz doowing nou, whether u doo or not. At ferst I intended too wipe u aul out widhout worning, but I chainjd mi miand. I decided too leve u alive, so dhat u cood repoert too Helmuth exactly whaut happend. I wish I cood be wauching him when he fiandz out hou esily wun man tooc him, and hou far from fuilproofe hiz cistem iz--but we caant hav everithhing. Lets go!"

Az the groope hurrede awa, Mac loiterd until she wauz nere Blaixly, whoo wauz bringing up the rere.

"Whare ar u, Kim?" she whisperd ergently.

"Ile join up at the next corridor. Kepe farther ahed, and ghet reddy too run when we doo!"

Az dha paast dhat corridor a figgure in gra lether, carreying an extreemly hevvy obgect, stept out ov it. Kinnison himcelf cet hiz berden doun, yanct a lever, and ran--and az he ran fountainz ov intollerabel hete erupted and cascaded from the meccanizm he had left uppon the floer. Just ahed ov him, but at sum distans behiand the utherz, ran Blaixly and the gherl.

"Gosh, Ime glad too ce u, Kim!" she panted az the Lenzman caut up

widh them and aul thre slode doun. "Whaut iz dhat thhing bac dhare?"

"Nuthhing much--just a KJ4Z hot-shot. Woant doo enny reyal dammage--just melt this tunnel doun so dha caant interfere widh our ghet-awa."

"Then u *were* bluffing about the erthquake?" she aasct, a shade ov disapointment in her tone.

"Hardly," he reprivd her. "Dhat iznt ju for too ourz and a haaf yet, but itl happen on shedjueld time."

"Hou?"

"U remember about the cureyous cat, doant u? Houwevver, no particcular ceecret about it, I ghes--thre lithheyum-hiadride bomz plaist whare dhaiyl doo the moast good and tiamd for exactly cimultainyous detonaishon.

Here we ar--doant tel enniboddy Ime here."

Abord the vescel, Kinnison disapeerd intoo a staitroome while Blaixly continnude in charj. Men wer divided intoo wauchez, jutese wer aciand, inspecshonz wer made, and the ship shot intoo the are. Dhare wauz a brefe hault too pic up Kinnisonz speedster; then, agane on the wa, Blaixly ternd the boerd over too Crandal, the pilot, and went intoo Kinnisonz roome.

Dhare the Lenzman widhdroo hiz controle, leving intact the memmory ov everithhing dhat had happend. For minnuets Blaixly wauz aulmoast in a dase, but struggheld throo it and held out hiz hand.

"Mity glad too mete u, Lenzman. Thanx. Aul I can sa iz dhat aafter I got suct in I coodnt...."

"Shure, I no aul about it--dhat wauz wun ov the rezonz I pict u out. Yor subconshous didnt fite bac a bit, at enny time. Yor too be in charj, from here too Tellus. Plese go and chace evveriboddy out ov the controle roome exept Crandal."

"Sa, I just thaut ov sumthhing!" exclaimd Blaixly when Kinnison joind the too officerz at the boerd. "U must be dhat particular Lenzman whoo haz bene ghetting in Helmuths hare so much laitley!"

"Probbably--dhats mi chefe ame in life."

"Ide like too ce Halmuths face when he ghets the repoert ov this. Ive ced dhat befoer, havnt I? But I mene it nou, even moer dhan I did befoer."

"Ime thhinking ov Helmuth, too, but not dhat wa." The pilot had bene scouling at hiz plate, and nou ternd too Blaixly and the Lenzman, glaancing cureyously from wun too the uther. "O I sa.... A Lenzman, whaut? A bit ov good oald lite beghinz too daun; but dhat can wate. Helmuth iz aafter us, foot, hors, and mareenz. Looc at dhat plate!"

"Foer ov em aulreddy!" exclaimd Blaixly. "And dhaerz anuther! And we havnt got a beme hot enuf too lite a ciggaret, nor a screne strong enuf too stop a fiarcracker. Weve got legz, but not az menny az dhave got. U nu aul about dhat, dho, befoer we started; and from whaut uve poold of so far uve got sumthhing left on the hoox. Whaut iz it? Whauts the aancer?"

"For sum rezon or uther dha caant detect us. Aul u hav too doo iz too sta out ov rainj ov dhare electrose and dril for Tellus."

"Sum rezon or uther, a? Nine ships on the plate nou--aul Boscoanyanz

and aul loocking for us--and not ceying us--*sum* rezon! But Ime not aasking qweschonz...."

"Just az wel not too. Ide raather ude aancer wun. Whoo or whaut iz Boscone?"

"Nobody nose. Helmuth speex for Boscone, and nobody els evver duz, not even Boscone himcelf--if dhare iz such a person. Nobody can prove it, but evveriboddy nose dhat Helmuth and Boscone ar cimply too naimz for the same man. Helmuth, u no, iz oonly a vois--nobody evver sau hiz face until tooda."

"Ime beghinning too thhinc so, micelf," and Kinnison strode awa, too caul at the office ov Hed Ners MacDoogal.

"Mac, heerz a smaul, but hily important box," he toald her, taking the nuetraliser from hiz pocket and handing it too her. "Poot it in yor locker until u ghet too Tellus. Then take it, yorcelf, in person, and ghiv it too Hainz, himcelf, in person, and too nobody els. Just tel him I cent it--he nose aul about it."

"But whi not kepe it and ghiv it too him yorcelf? Yor cumming widh us, arnt u?"

"Probbably not aul the wa. I imadgine Ile hav too doo a flit befoer long."

"But I waunt too tauc too u!" she exclaimd. "Whi, Ive got a milleyon qweschonz too aasc u!"

"Dhat wood take a long time," he grind at her, "and time iz just whaut we aint got rite nou, niather ov us," and he strode bac too the boerd.

Dhare he labord for ourz at a calculating mashene and in the tanc; finally too sqwaut down uppon hiz heelz, staring at too nedel-like rase ov lite in the tanc and whisling softly betwene hiz teeth. For dhose too lianz, while exactly in the same plane, did not intercect in the tanc at aul! Estimating az caerfooly az he cood the point ov intercecshon ov the lianz, he puncht the "cancel" ke too wipe out aul tracez ov hiz werc and went too the chart-roome. Chart aafter chart he hauld down, and for menny minnuets he werct widh calliperz, cumpas, goanyometer, and a caerfooly-cet ajustabel triyan'ghel. Finally he marct a point--exactly uppon a numberd dot aulreddy uppon the chart--and agane whisceld. Then:

"Huu!" he grunted. He recheckt aul hiz figguerz and retraverst the chart, oonly too hav hiz nedel peers agane the same tiny hole. He staerd at it for a fool minnute, studdeying the map aul around hiz marker.

"Star cluster AC 257-4736," he roominated. "The smaulest moast incignifficant, leest-none star-cluster he cood fiand, and mi largest poscibel error caant poot it enniwhare els... kiand ov thaut it mite be in a cluster, but I nevver wood hav looct *dhare*. No wunder it tooc a lot ov stuf too trace hiz beme--it wood hav too be foer numberz Brinnel harder dhan a dimond dril too werc from dhare."

Agane whisling chuenlesly too himcelf he roald up the chart uppon which he had bene at werc, stuc it under hiz arm, replaist the utherz in dhare compartments, and went bac too the controle roome.

"Houz trix, fellose?" he aasct.

"QX," replide Blaixly. "Were throo them and intoo clere eether. Not a ship on the plate, and nobody gave us even a tumbel."

"Fine! U woant hav enny trubbel, then, from here in too Prime Bace. Glad ov it, too--Ive got too flit. Dhatl mene long wachez for u too, but it caant verry wel be helpt."

"But I sa, oald berd, I doant miand the wachez, but...."

"Doant worry about dhat, iather. This croo can be trusted, too a man. Not wun ov u joind the piraits ov yor one fre wil, and not wun ov u haz evver taken active part...."

"Whaut ar u, a miand-reder or sumthhing?" Crandal berst out.

"Sumthhing like dhat," Kinnison acented widh a grin, and Blaixly poot in:

"Moer dhan dhat, u mene. Sumthhing like hipnocis, oonly moer so. U thhinc I had sumthhing too doo widh this, but I didnt--the Lenzman did it aul himcelf."

"Um....m." Crandal staerd at Kinnison, nu respect in hiz ise. "I nu dhat Unnatacht Lenzmen wer good, but I had no ideyaa dha wer *dhat* good. No wunder Helmuth haz bene ghetting hiz wind up about u. Ile string along widh enny wun whoo can take a whole bace, cin'ghel-handed, and make such a bally as too boote out ov such a kene oald berd az Helmuth iz. But Ime in a bit ov a dither, not so sa a func, about whauts gowing too happen when we pop intoo Prime Bace widhout u. Evvery man jac ov us, u no, iz slated for the leethal chaimber widhout triyal. Mis MacDoogal wil doo her bit, ov coers, but whaut I mene iz haz she enuf gets too swing it, whaut?"

"She haz, but too avoid aul argument Ive fixt dhat up, too. Heerz a tape, telling aul about whaut happend. It endz up widh mi recomendaishon for a fool pardon for eche ov u, and for a job at whaut evver he iz found best fitted for. Ciand widh mi thum-print. Ghiv it or cend it too Poert Admiral Hainz az soone az u land. Ive got enuf gets, I thinc, so dhat it wil go az it lase."

"Gets? U? Rite-o! Uve got gets enuf too lift foertene fraterz of the North Pole ov Valereyaa. Whaut next?"

"Stoerz and suplise for mi speedster. Ime doowing a long flit and this ship haz suplise too bern, so lode me up, Plimsol doun."

The speedster wauz stoct forthwith. Then, widh nuthhing moer dhan a cazhuwaly waivd salute in the wa ov faerwel, Kinnison boerded hiz tiny space-ship and shot awa tooword hiz distant gole. Crandal, the pilot, saut hiz bunc; while Blaixly started hiz long tric at the boerd. In an our or so the hed ners stroald in.

"Kim?" she qwere, doutfooly.

"No, Mis MacDoogal--Blaixly. Sorry...."

"O, Ime glad ov dhat--dhat meenz dhat evverithhingz cetteld. Whaerz the Lenzman--in bed?"

"He haz gon, Mis."

"Gon! Widhout a werd? Whare?"

"He didnt sa."

"He woodnt, ov coers." The ners ternd awa, exclaming inaudibly;

"Gon! Ide like too cuf him for dhat, the lug! GON! Whi, the grate, big, lobsterly clunker!"

CHAPTER 22

Preparing for the Test

But Kinnison wauz not hedding for Helmuths bace--yet. He wauz splitting the eether tooword Aldebbaran insted, az faast az hiz speedster cood go; and she wauz wun ov the faastest thhingz in the gallaxy. He had too good rezonz for gowing dhare befoer tacling Boscoanz Grand Bace. Ferst, too tri out hiz skil uppon non-human intelects. If he cood handel the Wheelmen he wauz reddy too take the far grater hazzard. Ceccond, he ode dhose whelerz sumthhing, and he did not like too caul in the whole Patrole too help him pa hiz dets. He cood, he thaut, handel dhat bace himcelf.

Nowing exactly whare it wauz, he had no difficulty in fianding the volcannic shaaft which wauz its entrans. Doun dhat shaaft hiz cens ov percepshon sped. He found the looccout plaits and follode dhare pouwer leedz. Gently, caerfooly, he incinnuwated hiz miand intoo dhat ov the Wheelman at the boerd; discuvvering, too hiz grate relefe, dhat dhat monstrosity wauz no moer difficult too handel dhan had bene the Radelidjan

observer. Miand or intelect, he found, wer not afected at aul bi the shape ov the brainz concernd; qwaulity, reche, and pouwer wer the ecenshal factorz. Dhaerfoer he let himcelf in and tooc posishon in the same roome from which he had bene drivven so viyolently. Kinnison exammiaand

widh interest the waul throo which he had bene blone, noting dhat it had bene repaerd so perfectly dhat he cood scaersly fiand the joints which had bene made.

These whelerz, the Lenzman nu, had explosiavz; cins the boollets which had toern dhare wa throo hiz armor and throo hiz flesh had

bene propeld bi dhat agency. Dhaerfoer, too the miand within hiz graasp he sugested "the place whare explosiavz ar kept?" and the thaut ov dhat miand flasht too the stoer-roome in qweschon. Cimmilarly, the thaut ov the wun whoo had axes too dhat roome pointed out too the Lenzman the particcular Wheelman he waunted. It wauz az esy az dhat, and cins he tooc care not too looc at enny ov the weerd beyingz, he gave no alarm.

Kinnison widhdroo hiz miand dellicaitly, leving no trace ov its occupancy, and went too investigate the arcenal. Dhare he found a fu cacez ov mashene-rifel cartrigez, and dhat wauz aul. Then intoo the miand ov the munishonz officer, whare he discuverd dhat the hevvy bomz wer kept in a distant crater, so dhat no dammage wood be dun bi enny poscibel exploazhon.

"Not qwite az cimpel az I thaut," Kinnison roominated, "but dhaerz a wa out ov dhat, too."

Dhare wauz. It tooc an our or so ov time; and he had too controle too Wheelmen insted ov wun, but he found dhat he cood doo dhat. When the munishonz maaster tooc out a bomscou aafter a lode ov H.E., the croo had no ideyaa dhat it wauz ennithhing exept a rootene job. The oonly Wheelman whoo wood hav none differently, the wun at the loocout boerd, wauz the uther whoome Kinnison had too kepe under controle. The scou went out, got its lode, and came bac. Then, while the Lenzman wauz fliying out intoo space, the scou dropt down the shaaft. So qwiyetly wauz the whole thhing dun dhat not a crechure in dhat whole establishment nu dhat ennithhing wauz rong until it wauz too late too act--and then nun ov them nu ennithhing at aul. Not even the croo ov the scou reyaliazd dhat dha wer dropping too faast.

Kinnison did not no whaut wood happen if a miand--too sa nuthhing ov too
ov them--dide while in hiz mental graasp, and he did not care too fiand
out. Dhaerfoer, a fracshon ov a cecond befoer the crash, he gerct fre
and waucht.

The exploazhon and its conceqvencez did not looc at aul imprescive from
the Lenzmanz coin ov vaantage. The mountane trembeld a littel, then
subcided notisably. From its summit dhare erupted an unimportant littel
flare ov flame, sum smoke, and an incignificant shouwer ov roc and
daibry.

Houwevver, when the cene had cleerd dhare wauz no lon'gher enny shaaft
leding dounword from dhat crater; a floer ov sollid roc began aulmoast at
its lip. Nevvertheles the Lenzman exploerd thurroly aul the rejon
whare the strong'hoald had bene, making shure dhat the clene-up had bene
wun hundred percent efective.

Then, and oanly then, did he point the speedsterz streemliand nose
tooword star cluster AC 257-4736.

* * * * *

In hiz hidden retrete so far from the gallaxese crouded sunz and werldz,
Helmuth wauz in no enveyabel or esy frame ov miand. Foer tiamz he had
declaerd dhat dhat akerst Lenzman, whoowevver he mite be, must be
destroid; and had musterd hiz evvery avalabel foers too dhat end; oanly
too hav hiz intended pra slip from hiz graasp az effortlesly az a
droplet ov mercury eluedz the clutching fin'gherz ov a chiald.

Dhat Lenzman, widh nuthhing exept a speedster and a bom, had taken and
had studdede wun ov Boscoanz nu battelships, dhus obtaning for hiz
Patrole the ceecret ov cozmic ennergy. Abandoning hiz one vescel, then
crippeld and duimd too capchure or destrucshon, he had stolen wun ov the

ships cerching for him and in it he had caamly saild too Velanshaa rite throo Helmuths screne ov blocading vescelz. He had in sum wa so fortifide Velanshaa az too capchure cix Boscoanyan battelships. In wun ov dhose ships he had wun hiz wa bac too Prime Bace, widh informaishon ov such imens importans dhat it had robd the Boscoanyan organizaishon ov its then overwhelming supereyorrity. Moer, he had found or had devellopt nu itemz ov eqwipment which, save for Helmuths one suxes in obtaning them, wood hav ghivven the Patrole a deffinite and decicive supereyorrity over Boscoanyaa. Nou boath ciadz wer eeqwal, except for dhat Lenzman and.... the Lenz.

Helmuth stil qwaild inwordly whenever he thaut ov whaut he had undergon at the Areezhan barreyer, and he had ghivven up aul thaut ov securing the ceecret ov the Lenz bi foers or from Areezhaa. But dhare must be uther wase ov ghetting it....

And just then dhare came in the ergent caul from Boishaa 2, follode bi the stunningly suxesfool revolt ov the hithertoo innocuwous Blaixly, culminating az it did in the destrucshon ov Helmuths evvery Boishan device ov vizhon or ov comunicaishon. Blu-white widh fury, the Boscoanyan flung hiz net abraud too take the renegade; but az he cetteld bac too awate rezults a thaut struc him like a blo from a fist. Blaixly *wauz* innocuwous. He nevrer had had, did not nou hav and nevrer wood hav, the coald nerv and the shere, domminating pouwer he had just shone. Tooword whaut concluezhon did dhat fact point?

The fureyous an'gher disapeerd from Helmuths face az dho it had bene wiapt dhaerfrom widh a spunj, and he became agane the coald calculating meccanizm ov flesh and blud dhat he ordinarily wauz. This concepshon chainjd matterz entiarly. This wauz not an ordinary revolt ov an ordinary subordinate. The man had dun sumthhing which he cood not poscibly doo. So whaut? The Lenz agane.... agane dhat akerst Lenzman, the wun whoo

had sumhou lernd reyaly too *use* hiz Lenz!

"Wolmarc, caul evvery vescel at Boishaa bace," he directed crisply. "Kepe on caulng them until sumwun aancerz. Ghet whoowevver iz in charj dhare nou and poot him on me here."

A fu minnuets ov cilens follode, then Vice-Comaander Crimzky repoerted in fool evverithhing dhat had happend and toald ov the threttend destrucshon ov the bace.

"U hav an automattic speedster dhare, hav u not?"

"Yes, cer."

"Tern over comaand too the next in line, widh orderz too moove too the nerest bace, taking widh him az much eqwipment az iz poscibel. Caushon him too leve on time, houwevver, for I verry strongly suspect dhat it iz nou too late too doo ennithhing too prevent the destrucshon ov the bace. U, alone, take the speedster and bring awa the personal fialz ov the men whoo went widh Blaixly. A speedster wil mete u at a point too be dezignated later and releve u ov the reccordz."

An our paast. Too, then thre.

"Wolmarc! Blaixly and the hospital ship hav vannisht, I prezume?"

"Dha hav." The underling, expecting a verbal flaying, wauz graitly cerpriazd at the mialdnes ov hiz cheefs tone and at the schujous cerennity ov hiz face.

"Cum too the center." Then, when the leftennant wauz ceted, "I doo not supose dhat u az yet reyalyse whaut--or raather, whoo--it iz dhat iz

doowing this?"

"Whi, Blaixly iz doowing it, ov coers."

"I thaut so, too, at ferst. Dhat wauz whaut the wun whoo reyaly did it waunted us too thhinc."

"It must hav bene Blaixly. We sau him doo it, cer--hou cood it hav bene enniwun els?"

"I doo not no. I doo no, houwevver, and so shood u, dhat he cood not hav dun it. Blaixly, ov himcelf, iz ov no importans whautevver."

"Weeyl cach him, cer, and make him tauc. He caant ghet awa."

"U wil fiand dhat u wil not cach him and dhat he can ghet awa. Blaixly alone, ov coers, cood not doo so, enny moer dhan he cood hav dun the thhingz he aparrently did doo. No. Wolmarc, we ar not deling widh Blaixly."

"Whoo then, cer?"

"Havnt u dejuest dhat yet? The Lenzman, foole--the same Lenzman whoo haz bene thumming hiz nose at us evver cins he tooc wun ov our ferst-claas battelships widh a spede-bote and a fiarcraacker."

"But--hou *cood* he?"

"Agane I admit dhat I doo not no--yet. The conecshon, houwevver, iz qwite evvident. Thaut. Blaixly wauz thhinking thauts utterly beyond him. The Lenz cumz from Areezhaa. The Areezhanz ar maasterz ov thaut--
ov
mental foercez and procecez incomprehencibel too enny ov us. These ar the

elements which, when fitted together, will give us the complete picture."

"I don't see how it fits."

"Neither do I--yet. However, surely he can't trace..."

"Just a moment! The time has come when it is no longer safe to say what Lenzman can or cannot do. Our communicator beams are hard and tight, yes. But any beam can be tapped if enough power be applied to it, and any beam that can be tapped can be traced. I expect him to visit us here, and we shall be prepared for his visit. That is the reason for this conference with you. Here is a device which generates a field through which no thief can penetrate. I have had this device for some time, but for obvious reasons have not released it. Here are the diagrams and complete constructional data. Have a few hundred of them made with all possible speed, and see too that every being upon this planet works continuously. Impress upon everyone, and I will also, that it is of the utmost importance that absolutely continuous protection be maintained, even while changing batteries.

"Experts have been working for some time upon the problem of protecting the entire planet with a screen, and there is some little hope of success in the near future; but individual protection will still be of the utmost importance. We cannot impress it too forcibly upon everyone that every man's life is dependent upon each one maintaining his theft-screen in full operation at all times. That is all."

When the messenger brought in the personal files of Blairly and the other deserter, Helmuth and his colleagues went over them with minutely painstaking care. The more they studied them the clearer it became that the chiefs' conclusion was the correct one, THE Lenzman could not be traced.

Rezon and lodgic toald Helmuth dhat the Lenzmanz oonly perpoce in atacking the Boishan bace wauz too ghet a line on Grand Bace; dhat Blaixlese flite and the destrucshon ov the bace wer meerly diverzhonz too obscure the reyal perpoce ov the vizsit; dhat the Lenzman had stajd dhat ththeyatrical performans espeshaly too hoald him, Helmuth, while hiz beme wauz beying traist, and dhat dhat wauz the oonly rezon whi the vizsitet wauz not sooner poot out ov acshon; and finaly, dhat the Lenzman had scoerd anuther clene hit.

He, Helmuth himcelf, had bene caut flat-footted; and hiz face hardend and hiz jau cet at the thaut. But he had not bene taken in. He wauz foerwornd and he wood be reddy, for he wauz coaldly certane dhat Grand Bace and he himcelf wer the reyal obgectiavz ov the Lenzman. Dhat Lenzman nu fool wel dhat enny number ov ordinary bacez, ships, and men cood be destroid widhout dammaging matereyaly the Boscoanyan cauz.

Steps must be taken too make Grand Bace az impregnabel too mental foercez az it aulreddy wauz too fizsical wunz. Utherwise, it mite wel be dhat even Helmuths one life wood prezsently be at stake--a thhing preshous indede. Dhaerfoer council aafter council wauz held, evvery contin'gency dhat cood be thaut ov wauz braut up and discust, evvery poscibel precaushon wauz taken. In short, evvery rezoers ov Grand Bace wauz devoted too the wording of ov enny poscibel mental thret which mite be foerthcumming.

* * * * *

Kinnison aproacht dhat star cluster widh care. Smaul dho it wauz, az cozmic griups go, it yet wauz compoazd ov sum hundredz ov starz and an

un'none number ov plannets. Enny wun ov dhose plannets mite be the wun he saut, and too aproche it un'nowingly mite prove dizaastrous. Dhaerfoer he slode down too a crawl and crept up, lite-yere bi lite-yere, widh hiz ultraa-pouwerd detectorz fanning out befoer him too the limmit ov dhare unnimadginabel reche.

He had moer dhan haaf expected dhat he wood hav too cerch dhat cluster, werld bi werld; but in dhat, at leest, he wauz plezzantly disapointed. Wun corner ov wun ov hiz plaits began too sho a dim glo ov detecshon. A bel tinkeld and Kinnison directed hiz moast pouwerfool maaster plate intoo the rejon indicated. This plate, while ov verry narro feeld, had tremendous rezolving pouwer and magnificaishon; and in it he sau dhat dhare wer atene smaul centerz ov rajaishon surrounding wun vaastly larger wun.

Dhare wauz no dout then az too the locaishon ov Helmuths bace, but dhare arose the qweschon ov aproche. The Lenzman had not concidderd the pocibillity ov a screne ov loocout ships--if dha wer cloce enuf tooghether so dhat the electromagnettix had even a fifty percent overlap, he mite az wel go bac home. Whaut wer dhose outpoasts, and exactly hou cloasly wer dha spaist? He observd, advaanst, and observd agane; computing finaly dhat, whautevver dha wer, dha wer so far apart dhat dhare cood be no pocibillity ov enny electro overlap at aul. He cood ghet betwene them esily enuf--he woodnt even hav too baffel hiz flaerz. Dha cood not be gardz at aul, Kinnison concluded, but must be simply outpoasts, cet far outside the solar cistem ov the plannet dha garded; not too word of wun-man speedsterz, but too worn Helmuth ov the poscibel aproche ov a foers larj enuf too thretten Grand Bace.

Clocer and clocer Kinnison flasht; discuvering dhat the central obgett wauz indede a bace, startling in its imencity and compleetly and

intenciavly fortifide; and dhat the outpoasts wer huge, floting
fortrechez, practicaly staishonary in space rellative too the sun ov the
solar cistem dha surrounded. The Lenzman aimd at the center ov the
imadginary sqware formd bi foer ov the outpoasts and drove in az cloce
too
the plannet az he daerd. Then, gowing inert, he cet hiz speedster intoo an
orbit--he did not care particcularly about its shape, provided dhat it
wauz not too narro an ellips--and cut of aul hiz pouwer. He wauz nou
safe from detecshon. Lening bac in hiz cete and closing hiz ise, he
herld hiz cens ov percepshon intoo and throo the mast
fortificaishonz ov Grand Bace.

For a long time he did not fiand a cin'ghel livving crechure. Hundredz ov
mialz he traverst, perceving oanly automattic mashenery, banc aafter
touwering, mialz-sqware banc ov acumulatorz, and remote-controald
progectorz and uther wepponz and aparatus. Finaly, houwevver, he came
too
Helmuths dome; and in dhat dome he receevd anuther cevere shoc. The
personel in dhat dome wer too be numberd bi the hundredz, but he cood
not make mental contact widh enny wun ov them. He cood not tuch dhare
miandz at aul; he wauz stopt coald. Evvery member ov Helmuths band
wauz
protected bi a thaut-screne az efective az the Lenzmanz one!

Around and around the plannet the speedster cerceld, while Kinnison
struggheld widh this nu and entiarly unnexpected cetbac. This looct az
dho Helmuth nu whaut wauz cumming. Helmuth wauz nobodese foole,
Kinnison
nu; but hou cood he poscibly hav suspected dhat a mental atac wauz
in the booc? Perhaps he wauz just playing safe. If so, the Lenzmanz
chaans wood cum. Men wood be caerles; batterese wekend and wood
hav too be chainjd.

But this hope wauz aulso vane, az continnude wauching reveeld dhat eche

battery wauz listed, chect, and tiamd. Nor wauz enny screne releest, even for an instant, when its battery wauz chainjd; the fresh pouwer soers beying slipt intoo cervice befoer the wekening wun wauz disconnected.

"Wel, dhat taerz it--Helmuth *nose*," Kinnison codgitated, aafter wauching vainly cevveral such chain'gez. "Hese a wise oald berd. The ghi reyaly haz gets--I stil doant ce whaut I did dhat cood hav poot him wise too whaut wauz gowing on."

Da aafter da the Lenzman studdede evvery detale ov construcshon, operaishon, and rootene ov dhat bace, and finaly an ideyaa began too daun.

He shot hiz atenshon tooword a barrax he had inspected freeqwently ov late, but stopt, irezzolute.

"Uu uu, Kim, maby better not," he adviazd himcelf. "Helmuths mity qwic on the trigger, too figgure out dhat Boishan thhing so faast...."

Hiz proected thaut wauz sheerd of widhout worning, dhus cetling the qweschon deffiniatly. Helmuths big aparatus wauz at werc, the whole plannet wauz screend against thaut.

"O wel, probbably better, at dhat," Kinnison went on arguwing widh himcelf. "If Ide tride it out maby heedv got ontoo it and lade me a stimy next time, when I reyaly nede it."

He went fre and herld hiz speedster tooword Erth, nou distant indede.

Cevveral tiamz juring dhat long trip he wauz soerly tempted too caul Hainz

throo hiz Lenz and ghet thhingz started; but he aulwase thaut better ov it. This wauz aultooghether too important a thhing too be cent throo so much

sub-eethher, or even too be thaut about except incide an absolutly thaut-tite roome. And beciadz, evvery waking our ov even dhat long trip cood be spent verry proffitably in digesting and correlating the informaishon he had obtaind and in mapping out the saleynt fechuerz ov the campane dhat wauz too cum. Dhaerfoer, befoer time began too drag, Kinnison landed at Prime Bace and wauz taken directly too Poert Admiral Hainz.

"Mity glad too ce u, sun," Hainz greted the yung Lenzman corjaly az he ceeld the roome thaut-tite. "Cins u came in under yor one pouwer, I ashume dhat u ar here too make a constructive repoert?"

"Better dhan dhat, cer--Ime here too start sumthhing in a big wa. I no at laast whare dhare Grand Bace iz, and hav detaild planz ov it. I thhinc I no whoo and whare Boscone iz. I no whare Helmuth iz, and I hav werct out a plan whaerbi, if it werx, we can wipe out dhat bace. Boscone, Helmuth, and aul the lescer maaster miandz, at wun wipe."

"Mentor *did* cum throo, huu?" For the ferst time cins Kinnison had none him the oald man lost hiz poiz. He leept too hiz fete and ceezd Kinnison bi the arm. "I nu u wer good, but not *dhat* good! He gave u whaut u waunted?"

"He shure did," and the yun'gher man repoerted az breefly az poscibel evverithhing dhat had happend.

"Ime just az shure dhat Helmuth iz Boscone az I can be ov ennithhing dhat caant be pruivd," Kinnison continnude, unroling a shefe ov drauwingz. "Helmuth speex for Boscone, and nobody els evver duz, not even Boscone himcelf. Nun ov the uther big shots no ennithhing about Boscone or evver herd him speke; but dha aul jump throo dhare huips when Helmuth, speking for Boscone,' crax the whip. And I coodnt ghet a trace ov

Helmuth evver taking ennithhing up widh enny hiyer-ups. Dhaerfoer Ime ded certane dhat when we ghet Helmuth we ghet Boscone.

"But dhats gowing too be a job ov werc. I scouted hiz hedqworterz from stem too gudjon, az I toald u; and Grand Bace iz absolutly impregnabel az it standz. I nevver imadgiand ennithhing like it--it maix Prime Bace here looc like a deserted cros-roadz aafter a hard winter. Dhave got screenz, pits, projectorz, acumulatorz, aul on a gigantic scale. In fact, dhave got evverithhing--but u can ghet aul dhat from the tape and these sketchez. Dha cimply caant be taken bi enny poscibel direct fruntal atac. Even if we uezd evvery ship and mauler weve got dha cood stand us of. And dha can mach us, ship for ship--wede nevver ghet nere Grand Bace at aul if dha nu we wer cumming...."

"Wel, if its such an imposcibel job, whaut...."

"Ime cumming too dhat. Its imposcibel az it standz; but dhaerz a good chaans dhat Ile be abel too soften it up," and the yung Lenzman went on too outline the plan uppon which he had bene werking so long. "U no, like a werm--boer from within. Dhats the oonly poscibel wa too doo it. Ule hav too poot detector nullifyerz on evvery ship aciand too the job, but dhatl be esy. Weeyl nede evverithhing weve got."

"The important thhing, az I gather it, iz timing."

"Absolutly. Too the minnute, cins I woant be abel too comunicate, wuns I ghet incide dhare thaut-screenz. Hou long wil it take too acembel our stuf and poot it in dhat cluster?"

"Cevven weex--ate at the outside."

"Plus too for alouwancez. QX--at exactly our 20, ten weex from tooda, let evvery projector ov evvery vescel u can poscibly ghet dhare cut looce

on dhat bace widh evverithhing dha can poer in. Dhaerz a detaild drauwing in here sumwhare.... here--twenty-cix mane obgectiavz, u ce. Blaast them aul, cimultainyously too the cecond. If dha aul go doun, the rest wil be poscibel--if not, itl be just too bad. Then werc along these lianz here, strate from dhose twenty-cix staishonz too the dome, blaasting evverithhing az u go. Make it laast exactly fiftene minnuets, not a minnute moer or les. If, bi fiftene minnuets aafter twenty, the mane dome haznt surrenderd bi cutting its screne, blaast dhat, too, if u can--itl take a lot ov blaasting, Ime afrade. From then on u and the five-star admiralz wil hav too doo whautevver iz aproapreyate too the ocaizhon."

"Yor plan duznt cuvver dhat, aparrently. Whare wil u be--hou wil u be fixt--if the mane dome duz not cut its screnz?"

"Ile be ded, and ule be just starting the damdest wor dhat this gallaxy evver sau."

CHAPTER 23

Tregoncy Ternz Zwilnic

While cervicing and checking the speedster reqwiard oonly a cuppel ov ourz, Kinnison did not leve Erth for aulmoast too dase. He had reqwisishond much speshal eqwipment, the construcshon ov wun item ov which--a sute ov armor such az had nevver bene cene befoer--cauzd aulmoast

aul ov the dela. When it wauz reddy the graitley interested Poert Admiral acumpanede the yung Lenzman out too the stele-liand, sand-fild concrete duggout, in which the sute had aulreddy bene mounted uppon a remote-controald dummy. Fifty fete from dhat dummy dhare wauz a hevvy, wauter-cuild mashene rifel, widh its armord croo standing bi. Az the too aproacht the croo leept too atenshon.

"Az u wer," Hainz instructed, and:

"U chect dhose cartrigez against dhose I braut in from Aldebbaran I?" aasct Kinnison ov the officer in charj, az, acumpanede bi the Poert Admiral, he croucht down behiand the sheeldz ov the controle pannel.

"Yes, cer. These ar twenty-five percent over, az u spescifide."

"QX--comens firing!" Then, az the weppon clammord out its stuttering, barking roer, Kinnison made the dummy stoope, tern, bend, twist, and doj, so az too bring its evvery plate, joint, and member intoo dhat hale ov stele. The uproer stopt.

"Wun thouzand roundz, cer," the officer repoerted.

"No hoalz--no dents--not a scrach or a scar," Kinnison repoerted, aafter a minnute examinaishon, and got intoo the thhing. "Nou ghiv me too thousand roundz, unles I tel u too stop. Shoote!"

Agane the mashene rifel berst intoo its ere-shattering song ov hate; and, strong az Kinnison wauz and pouwerfooly braist bi the blaast ov hiz driverz, he cood not stand against the aufool foers ov dhose boollets. Over he went, baqword, and the firing ceest.

"Kepe it up!" he snapt. "Thhinc dhare gowing too qwit shooting at me becauz I faul down?"

"But u had had niantene hundred!" protested the officer.

"Kepe on pecking until u run out ov amunishon or until I tel u too stop," orderd Kinnison. "Ive got too lern hou too handel this thhing under fire," and the storm ov mettal agane began too crash against the reverberating shel ov stele.

It herld the Lenzman doun, roald him over and over, slamd him against the bac-stop. Agane and agane he struggheld uprite, oonly too be herld agane too ground az the rifelmen, reyaly playing the game nou, swung dhare ledde hale from part too part ov the armor, and varede dhare atac from stedly fire too short but savvage bersts. But finaly, in spite ov evverithhing the gun croo cood doo, Kinnison lernd hiz controalz.

Then, driverz flaring, he faist dhat houling, chattering muzsel and strode strate intoo the streme ov smoke- and flame-enshrouded stele. Nou the are wauz litteraly fool ov mettal. Boollets and fragments ov boollets whiand and shreet in mad abandon az dha riccoshade in aul direcshonz of dhat armor. Sand and bits ov concrete flu hither and yon, filling the atmosfere ov the duggout. The rifel yammerd at maximum, widh its swetting croo laboring mitily too kepe its voraisous mau fool-fed. But, in spite ov evverithhing, Kinnison held hiz line and advaanst. He wauz baerly cix fete from dhat yelling, stele-vommiting muzsel when the firing agane ceest.

"Twenty thouzand, cer," the officer repoerted, crisply. "Weeyl hav too chainj barrelz befoer we can ghiv u enny moer."

"Dhats enuf!" snapt Hainz. "Cum out ov dhare!"

Out Kinnison came. He remuivd hevvy ere-plugz, swaulode foer tiamz, blinct and grimmaist. Finaly he spoke.

"It werx perfectly, cer, exept for the noiz. Saa good thhing Ive got a Lenz--in spite ov the plugz I woant be abel too here ennithhing for thre dase!"

"Hou about the springz and shoc-abzorberz? Ar u bruizd enniwhare?"

U tooc sum reyal bumps."

"Perfect--not a broose. Lets looc her over."

Evvery inch ov dhat armorz cerface wauz nou marct bi blerz, whare the mettal ov the boollets had rubd itcelf of uppon the shining alloi, but dhat cerface wauz niather scracht, scoerd, nor dented.

"QX, boiz--thanx," Kinnison dismist the rifelmen. Dha probbably wunderd hou enny man cood ce out throo a helmet bilt up ov inchez-thhic lamminated alloiz, widh niather windo nor poert throo which too looc; but if so, dha made no menshon ov dhare cureyosity. Dha, too, wer Patrolmen.

"Iz dhat thhing an armor or a personal tanc?" aasct Hainz. "I aijd ten yearz while dhat wauz gowing on; but at dhat Ime glad u incisted on testing it. U can ghet awa widh ennithing nou."

"Its much better tecneke too lern thhingz amung frendz dhan ennemese," Kinnison laaft. "Its hevvy, ov coers--pritty cloce too a tun. I woant be wauking around in it, dho; Ile be fliying it. Wel, cer, cins evverithhingz aul cet, I thhinc Ide better fli it over too the speedster and start flitting, doant u? I doant no exactly hou much time Ime gowing too nede on Trengo."

"Mite az wel," the Poert Admiral agrede, az cazhuwaly, and Kinnison wauz gon.

"Whaut a man!" Hainz staerd aafter the monstrous figgure until it vannisht in the distans, then stroald sloly tooword hiz office, thhinking az he went.

Ners MacDoogal had bene hily erct and incenst at Kinnisonz cazhuwal deparchure, widhout idel conversaishon or formal leve-takingz. Not so

Hainz. Dhat cezond campaner nu dhat Gra Lenzmen--espeshaly yung Gra Lenzmen--wer prone too ghet dhat wa. He nu, az she wood wun da lern, dhat Kinnison wauz no lon'gher ov Erth.

He wauz nou oanly ov the gallaxy, not ov enny wun tiny dust-grane ov it.
He

wauz ov the Patrole. He *wauz* the Patrole, and he wauz taking hiz nu responcibillitese verry cereyously indede. In hiz feers sele too drive hiz campane throo too a suxesfool end he wood use man or woomman, cin'gly or in gruips; ships; even Prime Bace itself; exactly az he had uezd them: az paunz, az mere tuilz, az meenz too an end. And, havving uezd them, he wood leve them az unconcerndly and az unceremoanyously az he wood drop pliyerz and spanner, and widh no moer reyalizaishon dhat he had viyolated enny ov the nicer amenitese ov life az it iz livd!

And az he stroald along and thaut, the Poert Admiral smiald qwiyetly too himcelf. He nu, az Kinnison wood lern in time, dhat the univers wauz vaast, dhat time wauz long, and dhat the Skeme ov Thhingz, comprising the whole ov eternity and the Cozmic Aul, wauz a sumthhing incomprehencibly imens indede: widh which criptic thaut the space-hardend vetteran sat doun at hiz desc and rezhuemd hiz interupted laborz.

But Kinnison had not yet ataind Hainz filosoffic vupoint, enny moer dhan he had hiz age, and too him the trip too Trencu ceemd pozsitiavly interminabel. Eggher az he wauz too poot hiz plan ov campane too the test, he found dhat mental ergingz, or even audibel invective, wood not make the speedster go enny faaster dhan the aulreddy incomprehencibel top spede ov her driverz maximum blaast. Nor did pacing up and doun the

littel controle roome help verry much. Fysical exercise he had too perform, but it did not sattisfi him. Mental exercise wauz imposcibel; he cood thhinc ov nuthhing exept Helmuths bace.

Evenchuwaly, houwevver, he aproacht Trencu and located widhout difficulty the Patroalz space-poert. Forchunaitly, it wauz then at about elevven oacloc, so dhat he did not hav too wate long too land. He drove dounword inert, cending ahed ov him a thaut:

"Lenzman ov Trencu Space-poert--Tregoncy or hiz relefe? Lenzman Kinnison ov Sol 3 aasking permishon too land."

"It iz Tregoncy," came bac the thaut. "Welcum, Kinnison. U ar on the corect line. U hav, then, perfected an aparatus too ce trooly in this distorting mejum?"

"I didnt perfect it--it wauz ghivven too me."

The landing-barz lasht out, ceezd the speedster, and eezd her doun intoo the loc; and, az soone az she had bene dicinfected, Kinnison went intoo consultaishon widh Tregoncy. The Rigelleyan wauz a hily important factor in the Telureyanz skeme; and, cins he wauz aulso a Lenzman, he wauz too be trusted impliscitly. Dhaerfoer Kinnison toald him breefly whaut okerd and whaut he had it in miand too doo, concluding:

"So u ce, I nede about fifty killogramz ov thhiyonite. Not fifty milligramz, or even gramz, but fifty *killogramz*; and, cins dhare probbably iznt dhat much ov the stuf looce in the whole galaxy, I came over here too aasc u too make it for me."

Just like dhat. Caamly aasking a Lenzman whoose juty it wauz too kil enny beying even aattempting too gather a cin'ghel Trecoanyan plaant, too make for him moer ov the prohibbited drug dhan wauz ordinarily procest throowout the galaxy juring a Solaareyan munth! It wood be just such an errand wer wun too wauc intoo the Trezhury Department at Waushington and inform the Chefe ov the Narcottix Buro, qwite nonchalantly, dhat he had dropt in too pic up ten tunz ov herrowin! But Tregoncy did not flinch or qweschon--he wauz not even cerpriazd. This wauz a Gra Lenzman.

"Dhat shood not be too difficult," Tregoncy replide, aafter a moments studdy. "We hav cevveral thhiyonite procescing units, confiscated from zwilnic outfits and not yet cent in; and aul ov us ar ov coers familleyar widh the tecneke ov extracting and purifiying the drug."

He ishude orderz and shortly Trengo Space-poert presented the astounding spectakel ov a fool croo ov the Galactic Patrole devoting its evvery ennergy too the whole-harted braking ov the wun lau it wauz supozd moast ridgidly, and widhout fere or favor, too enfors!

It wauz a littel aafter noone, the caamest our ov Trencose da. The wind had dide too "nuthhing"; which, on the plannet, ment dhat a strong man cood stand against it; cood even, if he wer adgile az wel az strong, wauc about in it. Dhaerfoer Kinnison dond hiz lite armor and wauz soone bizsily harvesting braud-lefe, which, he had bene informd, wauz the ritchest soers ov thhiyonite.

He had bene werking for oonly a fu minnuets when a flat came crawling up too him; and, aafter ascertainig dhat hiz armor wauz not good too ete, droo of and observd him intently. Here wauz anuther oportchunity for practice

and in a flash the Lenzman availd himcelf ov it. Havving practiast for ourz uppon the miandz ov vareyouz Erthly annimalz, he enterd this miand esily enuf, fianding dhat the trenco wauz concidderably moer intelligent dhan a dog. So much so, in fact, dhat the race had aulreddy devellopt a faerly comprehencive lan'gwage. Dhaerfoer it did not take long for the Lenzman too lern too use hiz subjects peculeyar limz and uther memberz, and soone the flat wauz werking az dho he wer in the biznes for himcelf. And, cins he wauz ideyaly adapted too hiz wialdly raging Trencoanyan environment, he acchuwaly acumplisht moer dhan aul the rest ov the foers combiand.

"Its a derty tric Ime playing on u, Spike," Kinnison toald hiz helper aafter a while. "Cum on intoo the receving roome and Ile ce if I can sqware it widh u."

Cins foode wauz the oonly lodgical tender, Kinnison braut out from hiz speedster a smaul can ov sammon, a paccage ov chese, a bar ov choccolate, a fu lumps ov shooggar, and a potato, offering them too the Trencoanyan in order. The sammon and chese wer boath hily axeptabel fare. The morcel ov choccolate wauz a deliatfooly cerprising dellicacy. The lump ov shooggar, houwevver, wauz whaut reyaly rang the bel--Kinnisonz one miand felt the shoc ov pure extacy az dhat wunderfool substans dizolvd in the trencose mouth. He aulso ate the potato, ov coers--enny Trencoanyan annimal wil, at enny time, ete practicaly ennithhing--but it wauz meerly foode; nuthhing too rave about.

Nowing nou whaut too doo, Kinnison led hiz acistant out intoo the houling, shreking gale and releest him from controle, throwing a lump ov shooggar up-wind az he did so. The trenco ceezd it in the are, ate it, and went intoo a verry histereyaa ov joi.

"Moer! Moer!" he incisted, atempting too clime up the Lenzmanz armord leg.

"U must werc for moer ov it, if u waunt it," Kinnison explaind.

"Brake of braud-lefe plaants and carry them over intoo dhat empty thhing over dhare, and u ghet moer."

This wauz an entiarly nu ideyaa too the native, but aafter Kinnison had taken hoald ov hiz miand and had shone him hou too doo conshously dhat which he had bene doowing unconshously for an our, he werct willingly enuf. In fact, befoer it started too rane, dhaerbi pooting an end too the labor ov the da, dhare wer a duzsen ov them toiling at the harvest and the crop wauz cumming in az faast az the entire croo ov Rigelleyanz cood proces it. And even aafter the space-poert wauz ceeld dha crouded up, paying no atenshon too the rane, bringing in dhare smaul loadz ov leevz and plaintiavly aasking admittans.

It tooc sum littel time for Kinnison too make them understand dhat the dase werc wauz dun, but dhat dha wer too cum bac toomorro morning. Finaly, houwevver, he suxeded in ghetting the ideyaa acros; and the laast disconsolate tertel-man swam reluctantly awa. But shure enuf, next morning, even befoer the mud had dride, the same twelv wer bac on the job; and the too Lenzmen wunderd cimultainyously--hou *cood* dhose trencose hav found the space-poert? Or had dha stade nere it throo the storm and flud ov the nite.

"I doant no," Kinnison aancerd the unnaasct qweschon, "but I can fiand out." Agane and moer caerfooly he exammiand the miandz ov too or thre ov

them. "No, dha didnt follo us," he repoerted then. "Dhare not az dum az I thaut dha wer. Dha hav a cens ov percepshon, Tregoncy, about the same thhing, I juj, az yorz--perhaps even moer so.

I wunder.... whi coodnt dha be traind intoo mity efishent

polece acistants on this plannet?"

"The wa u handel them, yes. I can convers widh them a littel, ov coers, but dha hav nevver befoer shone enny willingnes too cowopperate widh us."

"U nevver fed them shooggar," Kinnison laaft. "U hav shooggar, ov coers--or doo u? I wauz forghetting dhat menny racez doo not use it at aul."

"We Rigelleyanz ar wun ov dhose racez. Starch iz so much taisteyer and so much better adapted too our boddy kemmistry dhat shooggar iz uezd oonly az a kemmical. We can, houwevver, obtane it esily enuf. But dhare iz sumthhing els--u can tel these trencose whaut too doo and make them reyalu understand u. I can not."

"I can fix dhat up widh a cimpel mental treetment dhat I can ghiv u in five minnuets. Aulso, I can let u hav enuf shooggar too carry on widh until u can ghet in a supli ov yor one."

In the fu minnuets juring which the Lenzman had bene discusing dhare potenshal allise, the mud had dride and the amasing cuvverage ov vegetaishon wauz springing vizsibly intoo beying. So increddiably rappid wauz its groath dhat in les dhan an our sum speeshese wer larj enuf too be gatherd. The leevz wer lush and ranc in cullor or a vivvid crimzonish perpel.

"These erly morning plaants ar the ritcheest ov enny in thhiyonite--much ritcheer dhan braud-lefe--but the zwilnix can nevver ghet moer dhan a handfool ov them becauz ov the wind," remarct the Rigelleyan. "Nou, if u wil ghiv me dhat treetment, I wil ce whaut I can doo widh the

flats."

Kinnison did so, and the trencose werct for Tregoncy az industreously az dha had for Kinnison--and ate hiz shooggar az rapchurously.

"Dhats enuf," decided the Rigelleyan prezently. "This wil finnish yor fifty killogramz and too spare."

He then pade of hiz nou enthuseyaastic helperz, widh instrucshonz too retern when the sun wauz directly overhed, for moer werc and moer shooggar.

And this time dha did not complane, nor did dha loiter around or bring in unwaunted vegetaishon. Dha wer lerning faast.

Wel befoer noone the laast killogram ov impalpabel, perplish blu pouder wauz poot intoo its impermeyabel sac. The mashenery wauz cleend; and untucht leevz, the waist, and the contamminated are wer blone out ov the space-poert; and the roome and its occupants wer sprade widh antithhiyonite. Then and oanly then did the croo remooove dhare maasx and are-filterz. Trenco Space-poert wauz agane a Patrole poast, no lon'gher a zwilnix parradice.

"Thanx, Tregoncy and aul u fellose...." Kinnison pauzd, then went on, jubeyously, "I doant suppose dhat u wil...."

"We wil not," declaerd Tregoncy. "Our time iz yorz, az u no, widhout pament; and time iz aul dhat we gave u, reyaly."

"Shure--dhat and a thouzand milleyon creddits werth ov thhiyonite."

"Dhat, ov coers, duz not count, az u aulso no. U hav helpt us, I thhinc, even moer dhan we hav helpt u."

"I hope Ive dun u sum good, enniwa. Wel, Ive got too flit. Thanx

agane--Ile ce u agane sumtime, maby," and agane the Telureyan Lenzman wauz on hiz wa.

CHAPTER 24

Kinnison Boerz from Within

Kinnison aproacht star cluster AC 257-4736 warily, az befoer; and az befoer he incinnuwated hiz speedster throo the looce outer cordon ov garjan fortrecez. This time, houwevver, he did not stere even remoatly nere Helmuths werld. He wood be dhare too long--dhare wauz aultooghether too much risc ov electromagnettic detecshon too cet hiz ship intoo enny kiand ov an orbit around *dhat* plannet. Insted, he had computed a long, narro, eliptical orbit around its sun; wel incide the zone garded bi the maulerz. He cood compute it oonly aproximaitly, ov coers, cins he did not no exactly iather the mascez involvd or the perterbing foercez; but he thaut dhat he cood fiand hiz ship agane widh an electro. If not, she wood not be an ireplasabel los. He cet the speedster, then, intoo the outword leg ov dhat orbit and tooc of in hiz nu armor.

He nu dhat dhare wauz a thaut-screne around Helmuths plannet, and suspected dhat dhare mite be uther screenz az wel. Dhaerfoer, shutting of evvery waut ov pouwer, he dropt strate doun intoo the nite cide, aulmoast haafwa around the plannet from Grand Bace. Hiz flaerz wer ov coers hevvely baffeld, but even so he did not poot on hiz braix until it wauz absolutly nescenary. He landed hevvely, then sprang awa in long, fre hops, until he reecht hiz preveyously-celected destinaishon; a grate cavvern thhicly sheilded widh iarn oer and within werking rainj ov hiz obgective. Depe within the cavvern he hid himself, then cercht intently for enny cine dhat hiz aproche had bene observd. Dhare wauz no such cine--so far, so good.

But juring hiz cerch he had perceevd with a slite shoc dhat Helmuth had titend hiz defencez even moer. Not oonly wauz evvery man in the dome screend against thaut, but aulso eche wauz nou waring fool armor. Had he protected the dogz, too? Or kild them? No reyal matter if he had--enny kiand ov a pet annimal wood doo; or, in a pinch, even a wiald roc-lizzard! Nevvertheles he shot hiz percepshon intoo the particcular barrax he had noted so long befoer, and found with sum relefe dhat the dogz wer stil dhare, and dhat dha wer stil unprotected. It had not okerd, even too Helmuths caushous miand, dhat a dog cood be a soers ov mental dain'ger.

With aul ju precaushon against ghetting even a cin'ghel grane ov the stuf intoo hiz one cistem, Kinnison traansferd hiz thhiyonite intoo the speshal contaner in which it wauz too be uezd. Anuther da sufiast too observ and too memmorise the personel ov the gaitwa observerz, dhare posishonz, and the ceeqwens in which dha tooc the boerdz. Then the Lenzman, stil aulmoast a weke ahed ov shedjule, cetteld down too wate the time when he shood make hiz next moove. Nor wauz this wating unjuly erxum; nou dhat evverithhing wauz reddy he cood be az paishent az a cat on juty at a mous'hole.

The time came too act. Kinnison tooc over the miand ov the dog, which at wuns muivd over too the bunc in which wun particcular observer la aslepe.

Dhare wood be no chaans whautevver ov ganing controle ov enny observer

while he wauz acchuwaly on the boerd, but here in barrax it wauz aulmoast

ridiculously esy. The dog crept along on soundles pauz--a long, slim nose reecht out and up--sharp teeth cloazd dellicaitly uppon a battery lede--out came the plug. The thaut-screne went down, and instantly Kinnison wauz in charj ov the fellose miand.

And when dhat observer went on juty hiz ferst act wauz too let Kimbal Kinnison, Gra Lenzman, intoo Boscoanz Grand Bace! Lo and faast Kinnison flu, while the observer so plaist hiz boddy az too sheeld from enny chaans paacer-bi the aul too reveling cerface ov hiz vizsiplate. In a fu minnuets the Lenzman reecht a portal ov the dome itcelf. Dhat doer aulso opend--and cloazd behiand him. He releest the miand ov the observer and waucht breefly. Nuthhing happend. Aul wauz stil wel!

Then, in evvery barrax save wun, using whautevver came too hand in the wa ov dog or uther unsheelded annimal, Kinnison raut breefly but efectiavly. He did not sla bi mental foers--he did not hav enuf ov dhat too spare--but the mere tern ov an inconspiccuwous valv wood doo just az wel. Sum ov dhose nou idel men wood probbably liv too aancer Helmuths caul too extraa juty, but not too menny--nor wood dhose whoo obade dhat summonz liv long dharaafter.

Doun staerwa aafter staerwa he dove, doun too the compartment in which wauz houzd the grate are-purifiyer. Nou let them cum! Even if dha had a spi-ra on him nou it wood be too late too doo them a bit ov good. And nou, bi Clonose goalden ghilz, dhat flete had better be out dhare, ghetting reddy too blaast!

It wauz. From aul over the gallaxy Grand Flete had cum; evvery Patrole bace had bene stript ov aulmoast evverithhing mobile dhat cood thro a beme. Evvery vescel carrede iather a Lenzman or sum uther hily trusted officer; and eche such officer had too detector nullifiyerz--wun uppon hiz person, the uther in hiz locker--iather ov which wood protect hiz whole ship from detecshon.

In long lianz, cin'gly and at intervalz, dhose untoald thouzandz ov ships

had crept betwene the vescelz garding Grand Bace. Nor wer the outpoast croose too blame. Dha had bene on juty for munths, and not even an asteroid had releevd the monottony. Nuthhing had happend or wood. Dha waucht dhare plaits steddily enuf--and, if dha did nuthhing moer, whi shood dha hav? And whaut cood dha hav dun? Hou cood dha suspect dhat such a thhing az a detector nullifier had bene invented?

The Patroalz Grand Flete, then, wauz aulreddy mascing over its primary obgectiavz, eche vescel in a ridgidly aciand posishon. The pilots, captainz, and navigatorz wer chatting amung themcelvz; gerkily and in lo toanz, az dho even too rase dhare voicez mite revele premachuerly too the ennemy the concentraishon ov the Patrole foercez. The firing officerz wer aulreddy at dhare boerdz, iying hun'grily the smaul switchez which dha cood not thro for so menny long minnuets yet.

And far belo, beside the piraits are-purifier, Kinnison releest the locking togghelz ov hiz armor and leapt out. Too bern a hole in the primary duct tooc oonly a cecond. Too drop intoo dhat duct hiz contaner ov thhiyonite; too drench dhat contaner widh the reyagent which wood in cixty cecondz dizolv compleetly the contanerz substans widhout afecting iather its contents or the mettal ov the duct; too slap a flexibel ad'hersive pach over the hole in the duct; and too lepe bac intoo hiz armor: aul these thhingz reqwiard oonly a trifel over wun minnute. Elevven minnuets too go--QX.

In the nerest barrax, even while the Lenzman wauz arrowing up the staerwase, a dog agane depriavd a sleping man ov hiz thaut-screne. Dhat man, houwevver, insted ov gowing too werc, tooc up a pare ov pliyerz and proceded too cut the battery leedz ov evvery sleper in the barrax;

cevvering them so cloasly dhat no conecshon cood be made widhout remooving the armor.

Az dhose leedz wer cevverd men woke up and dasht intoo the dome.

Along

catwauc aafter catwauc dha raist, and aparrently dhat wauz aul dha wer doowing. But eche runner, az he paast a man on juty, flict a battery plug out ov its socket; and dhat observer, at Kinnisonz comaand, opend the face-plate ov hiz armor and breedhd deeply ov the nou drug-laden atmosfere.

Thhiyonite, az haz bene intimated, iz perhaps the werst ov aul none habbit-forming drugz. In aulmoast infinitesimal docez it ghivz rise too a state in which the victim ceemz acchuwaly too expereyens the gratificaishon

ov hiz evvery desire, whautevver dhat desire ma be. The larger the doce, the moer intens the censaishon, until--and verry qwicly--the dosage iz reecht at which he paacez intoo an extacy so unbarabel dhat deth ensuse forthwith.

Dhus dhare wauz no alarm, no outcri, no worning. Eche observer sat or stood entraanst, hoalding exactly the pose he had bene in at the instant ov opening hiz face-plate. But nou, insted ov paying atenshon too hiz juty, he wauz plun'ging deper and deper intoo the paroxizmaly extattic profundity ov a thhiyonite debauch from which dhare wauz too be no awakening. Dhaerfoer haaf ov dhat mity dome wauz unmand befoer Helmuth even reyaliazd dhat ennithhing out ov order wauz gowing on.

Az soone az he reyaliazd dhat sumthhing wauz amis, houwevver, he sounded the

"aul handz on juty" alarm and rapt out instrucshonz too the officerz in the barrax. But the cloud ov deth had ariavd dhare ferst, and too hiz consternaishon not wun-qworter ov dhose officerz responded. Qwite a number ov men did ghet intoo the dome, but evvery wun ov them colapst

befoer reching the catwaux. And thre-foerths ov hiz werking foers dide befoer he located Kinnisonz speding mescen'gerz.

"Blaast them doun!" Helmuth shreect, pointing, gesticulating madly.

Blaast whoome doun? The minyonz ov the Lenzmen wer themcelvz blaasting awa nou, rite and left, shouting contradictory but suposedly authorritative orderz.

"Blaast dhose men not on juty!" Helmuths raging vois nou fild the dome. "U, at boerd 479! Blaast dhat man on catwauc 28, at boerd 495!"

Widh such detaild instrucshonz, Kinnisonz agents wun bi wun ceest too be. But az wun wauz beemd doun anuther tooc hiz place, and soone evvery wun ov the fu remaning livving piraits in the dome wauz blaasting indiscriminaitly at evvery uther wun. And then, too cap the Saternaleyan climax, came the sero cecond.

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The Galactic Patroalz Grand Flete had acembeld. Evvery crooser, evvery battelship, evvery mauler hung poizd abuv its aciand targhet. Evvery vescel wauz stript for acshon. Evvery acumulator cel wauz fool too its ultimate waut, evvery gennerator and evvery arm wauz chuend and peect too its hiyest atanabel effishency. Evvery firing officer uppon evvery ship sat tensly at hiz boerd; hiz hand hovering nere, but not tutching, hiz firing ke; hiz ise fixt glaringly uppon the cecond-hand ov hiz preciasly cincroniazd timer; hiz eerz scaersly hering the droning, suithing vois ov Poert Admiral Hainz.

For the Oald Man had incisted uppon ghivving the firing order himcelf,
and

he nou sat at the maaster timer, speking intoo the maaster miacrofone.

Becide him sat von Hohendorf, the grand oald Comandant ov Cadets.

Boath

ov these vetteranz had thaut long cins dhat dha wer dun widh
space-wor forevver, but oonly an order ov the fool Galactic Council cood
hav kept iather ov them at home. Dha wer grimly determiand dhat dha
wer gowing too be in at the deth, even dho dha wer not at aul
certane whoose deth it wauz too be. If it shood tern out dhat it wauz too
be Helmuths, wel and good--evverithhing wood be on the grene. If, on
the uther hand, yung Kinnison had too go, dha wood in aul probabillity
hav too go, too--and so be it.

"Nou, remember, boiz, kepe yor handz of ov these kese until I ghiv u
the werd," Hainz suithing vois droand on, ghivving no hint ov the
teriffic strane he himcelf wauz under. "Ile ghiv u lots ov worning....
I am gowing too count the laast five cecondz for u. I no dhat
u aul waunt too shoote the ferst bolt, but remember dhat I personaly
wil stran'ghel enny and evvery wun ov u whoo beets mi cignal bi a
thousandth ov a cecond. It woant be long nou, the cecond hand iz
starting around on its laast lap.... Kepe yor handz of ov dhose
kese.... kepe awa from them, I tel u, or Ile smac u doun....
fiftene cecondz yet.... sta awa, boiz, let em alone....
gowing too start counting nou." Hiz vois dropt lower and lower.
"Five--foer--thre--too--wun--FIRE!" he yeld.

Perhaps sum ov the boiz did bete the gun a trifel; but not menny, or
much. Too aul intents and perpocez it wauz wun cimultainyous blaast ov
destrucshon dhat flasht doun from a hundred thousand progetorz, eche
delivvering the maximum blaast ov which it wauz capabel. Dhare wauz no
thaut nou ov cervice life ov equipment or ov hoalding ennithhing bac for
a later effort. Dha had too hoald dhat blaast for oonly fiftene minnuets;
and if the taasc ahed ov them cood not be dun in dhose fiftene minnuets

it probably could not be done at all.

Therefore it is entirely useless even to attempt to describe what happened then, or to portray the spectacle that ensued when the battle met its end. Why try to describe in detail too a man born blind? Suffice it to say that those Patrol members bowed down, and that Helmuth's automatic screens resisted to the limit of their ability. Nor was that resistance small.

Had Helmuth's customary staff of keen-eyed, quick-witted lieutenants been at their posts, too reinforced those primary screens with the practically unlimited power which could have been put behind them, his defenses would not have failed under even the unimagineable forces of that Titanic thrust; but those lieutenants were not at their posts. The screens of the twenty-six primary objects failed, and the twenty-six stupendous flotillas moved slowly, grandly, voraciously, each along its designated line.

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Every alarm in Helmuth's dome had burst into frantic warning as the last minute of the Galactic Patrol was heralded against the twenty-six vital points of Grand Base, but those alarms clamored in vain. No hands were raised to the switches whose closing would unleash the hellish energies of Bosco's irresistible projector, nor were upon the firing devices which would align them against the attacking ships of war. Only Helmuth, in his inner-shielded control compartment, was left;

and Helmuth was the directing intelligence, the master mind, and not a mere operator. And, now that he had no operators to direct, he was utterly helpless. He could see the stupendous fleet of the Patrol, he could understand fully its dire menace; but he could neither stiffen his screens nor energize a single beam. He could only sit, griending his

teeth in helpless fury, and watch the destruction of the armament which, if it could only have been in operation, would have blasted those battleships and maulers from the skies as those who had been so many fluffy bits of this world.

Time after time he leapt to his feet, as if about to dash across to win over the control station, but each time he sank back into his cots at the desk. Win firing-station would be little, if any, better than now at all. Besides, that Akerst Lenzman was back of this. He was--must be--right here in the dome, somewhere. He *wanted* him to leave this desk--that was what he was waiting for! As long as he stayed at the desk he himself was safe. For that matter, this whole dome was safe. The projector had never been mounted that could break down *those* screens. No--no matter what happened, he would stay at the desk!

Kinnison, watching, marvelled at his fortitude. He himself could not have stayed there, he knew; and he also knew that Helmuth was going to stay. Time was flying; five of the fifteen minutes were gone. He had hoped that Helmuth would leave that well-protected inner sanctum, with its un'none potentialities; but if the pirate would not come out, the Lenzman would go in. The storming of that inner stronghold was what his
nu armor was for.

In he went, but he did not catch Helmuth napping. Even before he crashed the screens his one defensive zoom burst into furiously coruscant activity, and through that flame there came tearing the metallic slug over a high-power machine rifle.

Haa! There *was* a rifle, even though he had not been able to find it! Clever guy, that Helmuth! And what a break that he had taken time to learn how to hold this set up against the trickiest kind of machine-rifle fire!

Kinnisonz screenz wer aulmoast dhose ov a battelship; hiz armor aulmoast, rellatiavly, az strong. And he cood hoald dhat armor uprite. Dhaerfoer throo the raging beme ov the cemmy-portabel progector he ploud and strate up dhat torrent ov raging stele he drove hiz wa. And nou from hiz one mity progector, against Helmuths armor, dhare raivd out a beme scaersly les potent dhan dhat ov a cemmy-portabel. The Lenzmanz armor did not mount a wauter-cuuld mashene rifel--dhare wauz a limmit too whaut even dhat pouwerfool strucchure cood carry--but grimly, widh evvery faccully ov hiz nuly enlarjd miand concentrated uppon dhat thaut-screend, armord hed behiand the belching gun, Kinnison held hiz line and foerjd ahed.

Wel it wauz dhat the Lenzman *wauz* concentrating uppon dhat screend hed; for when the screne wekend sliatly and a thaut began too cepe throo it tooword an enigmatticaly sparcling baul ov foers, Kinnison wauz reddy. He blanketed the thaut savvaijly, befoer it cood take form, and atact the screne so vishously dhat Helmuth had iather too restoer fool cuvverage instantly or di then and dhare. For the Lenzman had studdede dhat baul long and earnestly. It wauz the wun thhing about the whole bace dhat he cood not understand; the wun thhing, dhaerfoer, ov which he had bene afrade.

But he wauz afrade ov it no lon'gher. It wauz opperated, he nou nu, bi thaut; and, no matter hou teriffic its potenshallitese mite be, it nou wauz and wood remane perfectly harmles; for if the pirate chefe softend hiz screne enuf too emit a thaut, he wood nevver thhinc agane.

Dhaerfoer he rusht. At fool blaast he herdeld the rifel and crasht fool against the armord figgure behiand it. Magnettic clamps loct and held;

and, driving projectorz fureyously ablase, he wherld around and foerst the madly struggling Helmuth bac, tooword the line along which the bellowing rifel wauz stil spuwing foerth a continnuwous storm ov mettal.

Helmuths utmoast efforts sufiast oonly too thro the Lenzman out ov ballans, and boath figguerz crasht too the floer. And nou the madly fiting armor pare roald over and over--strate intoo the line ov fire.

Ferst Kinnison; the boollets whining, shreking of the armor ov hiz personal battelship and crashing throo or smashing ringingly against whautevver happend too be in the evver-chain'ging line or riccosha. Then Helmuth; and az the feers-drivven mettal slugz toer in dhare multichuedz throo hiz armor and throo and throo hiz boddy, ridling hiz evvery vital organ, dhat wauz THE END

[End ov Galactic Patrole, bi E. E. "Doc" Smith]