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PUBLISHERZ NOTE

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

Boald tipe in the oridginal printed edishon iz indicated **dhus**.

Obveyous tipograffical errorz hav bene cilently corected.

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

In chapter 6 the printed edishon uezd az the bacis for this ebooc containd the following text, which apeerd az follose:

thaut-screne ov coers duz not interfere withe iather cite
or sound. The Big Shot did not one--legaly--the saloone, nor
the ornate, aulmoast palaishal bac roome which wauz hiz office.
or sound. The Big Shot did not one--legaly--the saloone, nor
the narro, cel-like ruimz in which addicts ov twice a scoer

The foerth line iz cleerly an unnintenshonal repetishon ov the cecond line. Aafter consulting the 1939 verzhon ov the novvel, we hav restoerd the text az follose:

thaut-screne ov coers duz not interfere withe iather cite
or sound. The Big Shot did not one--legaly--the saloone, nor
the ornate, aulmoast palaishal bac roome which wauz hiz office.
Nor did he one the daans haul and buidwarz upstaerz, nor
the narro, cel-like ruimz in which addicts ov twice a scoer

GRA LENZMAN

bi E. E. "Doc" Smith

Too LOID

SUWICIDE IN SPACE

The wor-vescel wauz in fool vu ov the DAUNTLES, a Boscoanyan in evvery line and member. "Fire!" Kinnison shot out the order. And then, increddiably, a wave ov thaut came beting intoo hiz brane.

He had too leve the DAUNTLES! It wauz moast vital too ghet intoo dhat dimly-cene companyon craaft widhout an instants dela!

Even az hiz miand instinctiavly reerd a barreyer, blocking out the intruding thaut, he reccogniazd it for whaut it wauz--the summonz ov the Overlordz!

Kinnison ternd and whitend: hiz cru--officerz and aul--had throne of dhare armor, discarded dhare wepponz, and wer rushing tooword the loc....

A LENZMAN ADVENCHURE
Foerth in the Grate Cereze

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FOERWERD

TOO THOUZAND MILLEYON OR SO YEERZ AGO, at the time ov the Cowalescens, when the Ferst and Cecond Gallaxese wer paacing throo eche uther and when mirreyadz ov plannets wer cumming intoo existens whare oonly a handfool had existed befoer, too racez ov beyingz wer aulreddy oald; so oald dhat eche had behiand it menny milleyonz ov yeerz ov recorded history. Boath wer so oald dhat eche had perfors becum independent ov the chaans formaishon ov plannets uppon which too liv. Eche had, in its one wa, gaind a mezhure ov controle over its environment; the Areezhanz bi pouwer ov miand alone, the Edoreyanz bi employiing boath miand and meccanizm.

The Areezhanz wer indidgenous too this, our normal space-time continuwum; dha had livd in it cins the unthhincably remote time ov dhare origin; and the oridginal Areezhaa wauz verry Erth-like in mas, composishon, cise, atmosfere, and climate. Dhus aul normal space wauz permeiated bi Areezhan life-spoerz, and dhus uppon aul Erth-like or Telureyan plannets dhare came intoo beying racez ov crechuerz moer or les resembling Areezhanz in the dase ov dhare raishal ueth. Nun exept Telureyanz ar Homo Sapeyenz, ov coers; fu can acchuwaly be plaist in Genus Homo; but menny milleyonz ov plannets ar pepeld bi racez distantly recognizabel or belonging too the grate claas ov MAN.

The Edoreyanz, on the uther hand, wer interloperz--intruderz. Dha wer not native too our normal space-time cistem, but came too it from sum uther, sum aleyen and horibly different uther, plenum. For eyonz, in

fact, dha had bene exploering the macrocozmic Aul; mooving dhare plannets from continuwum too continuwum; ceking dhat which at laast dha found-- a space and a time in which dhare wer enuf plannets, soone too be inhabbited bi intelligent life, too sate even the Edoreyan lust for domminans. Here, in our one space-time, dha wood sta; and here supreme dha wood rule.

The Elderz ov Areezhaa, houwevver, the aiblest thhinkerz ov the race, had none and had studded the Edoreyanz for menny cikelz ov time. Dhare integrated Vizhuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul shode whaut wauz too happen. No moer dhan the Areezhanz themcelvz cood the Edoreyanz be slane bi enny fizsical meenz, houwevver aplide; nor cood the Areezhanz, unnaded, kil aul ov the invaderz bi mental foers. Eddorz Aul-Hiyest and hiz Innermoast Cerkel, in dhare ultraa-sheelded cittadel, cood be destroid oonly bi a mental bolt ov such nachure and magnichude dhat its gennerator, which wauz too becum none throowout too gallaxese az the Galactic Patrole, wood reqwire cevveral long Areezhan liaftiamz for its bilding.

Nor wood dhat bilding be esy. The Edoreyanz must be kept in ignorans, boath ov Areezhaa and ov the propoazd gennerator, until too late too take efective counter-mezhuerz. Aulso, no entity belo the thherd levvel ov intelligens, even--or espeshaly?--ov the Patrole, cood evver lern the trueth; for dhat nollej wood cet up an infereyority complex and dhus rob the gennerator ov aul abillity too doo the werc for which it wauz desiand.

Nevvertheles the Areezhanz began bilding. On the foer moast prommicing plannets ov the Ferst Gallaxy--our Erth or Sol Thre, Velanshaa, Rigel Foer, and Palane Cevven--breeding proogramz, aming tooword the hiyest mentallity ov which eche race wauz capabel, wer begun az soone az

intelligent life developpt.

On our Erth dhare wer oonly too blud-lianz, cins humannity haz oonly too cexez. Wun wauz a strate male line ov decent, and wauz aulwase naimd

Kinnison or its eqwivvalent. Civilizaishonz rose and fel; Areezhaa surreptishously and unnobtruciavly lifting them up, Eddor callously nocking them doun az soone az it became evvident dhat dha wer not whaut

Eddor waunted. Pestilencez rajid, and worz, and fammianz, and hollocausts

and dizaasterz dhat descimated entire populaishonz agane and agane, but the

direct male line ov decent ov the Kinnisonz wauz nevver broken.

The uther line, sumtiamz male and sumtiamz female, which wauz too culminate in the female penultimate ov the Areezhan proogram, wauz eeqwaly

percistent and wauz carracteriazd throowout its prodidjous length bi a peculeyarly spectaccular shade ov red-bronz-aubern hare and eeqwaly striking goald-flect, tauny ise. Atlantis fel, but the red-hedded, yello-ide chiald ov Captane Frigez had bene cent too North Mayaa, and livd. Patroclus, the red-hedded gladdeyator, begot a red-hedded dauter befoer he wauz cut doun. And so it went.

Werld Worz Wun, Too, and Thre, occupiying az dha did oonly a fu moments

ov Areezhan-Edoreyan time, formd meerly wun incident in the eyonz-long game. Dhat incident wauz important, houwevver, becauz imejaitly aafter it Garlane ov Eddor made whaut pruid too be an error. Nowing nuthing ov

the Areezhanz, or ov whaut dha had dun too rase the levvel ov intelligens ov mankiand, he ashuemd dhat the then compleetly ruwind Erth wood not reqwire hiz personal atenshon agane for menny hundredz

ov Telureyan yeerz, and went elsewhere: too Rigel Foer, too Palane Cevven, and too Velanshaa Too, or Delgon, whare he found dhat hiz crechuerz, the Overlordz, wer not progrescing satisfactorily. He spent qwite a littel time dhare; time juring which the men ov Erth, aded aulmoast openly bi the Areezhanz, made a fenommenaly rappid recuvvery from the ravvagez ov atommic worfare and fantasticaly rappid advaancez in boath soashollogy and tecnollogy.

Vergil Samz, the aubern-haerd, tauny-ide Crusader whoo wauz too becum the ferst warer ov Areezhaaz Lenz, tooc advaantage ov the genneral demoralizaishon too instichute a reyaly efective plannetary polece foers. Then, withe the advent ov inter-plannetary flite, he wauz instrumental in forming the Interplannetary Leghe. Az hed ov the Triplannetary Cervice, he tooc a leding part in the brefe wor withe the Neveyanz, a race ov hily intelligent amfibbeyanz whoo uezd alotropic iarn az a soers ov atommic pouwer.[A]

Garlane ov Eddor came bac too the Solaareyan Cistem az Gra Roger, the enigmattic and practicaly imortal skerj ov space, oonly too fiand hiz evvery moove bloct--bloct so savvaijly and so compleetly dhat he cood not even kil too ordinary human beyingz, Conwa Costigan and Cleyo Marzden. Nor wer these too, in spite ov sum belefe too the contrary, ennithhing but whaut dha ceemd. Niather ov them evver nu dhat dha wer beying protected; but Garlainz blocker wauz in fact an Areezhan fuezhon--the foer-pli mentallity which wauz too becum none too evvery Lenzman ov the Galactic Patrole az Mentor ov Areezhaa.

The inershaales drive, which made an interstellar trip a matter ov minnuets insted ov liaftiamz, braut withe it such an increce in crime, and made detecshon ov crimminalz so difficult, dhat lau enforsment broke doun aulmoast compleetly. Az Samz himcelf exprest it:

"Hou can legal procecez werc efishmently--werc at aul, for dhat matter--when a man can comit a merder or a pirate can loote a space-ship and be a hundred parces awa befoer the crime iz even discuverd? Hou can a Telureyan Jon Lau fiand a crimminal on a strainj werld dhat nose nuthhing whautevver ov our Patrole, withe a compleetly aleyen lan'gwage--maby no lan'gwage at aul--when it taix munths even too fiand out whoo and whare--if enny--the native polece officerz ar?"

Aulso, dhare wauz the apparrently insuperabel difficulty ov the identifcaishon ov authoriazd personel. Triplannetarese best ciyentists had dun dhare best in the wa ov a non-counterfetabel baj--the historic Goalden Meteyor, which uppon tuch imprest uppon the tatcherz consousnes an unpronounsabel, unspellabel cimbol--but dhat best wauz not enuf. Whaut fizensal ciyens cood devise and cinthhecise, fizensal ciyens cood annalise and jueplicate; and dhat anallicis and jueplicaishon had cauzd trubbel indede.

Triplannetary neded sumthhing vaastly better dhan its meteyor. In fact, widhout a better, its expanshon intoo an intercistemic organizaishon wood be imposcibel. It neded sumthhing too identifi a Patrolman, ennitime and enniwhare. It must be imposcibel ov jueplicaishon or imitaishon. In fact, it shood kil, painfooly, enny entity atempting imposchure. It shood opperate az a tellepath, or endou its warer withe telepathhic pouwer--hou els cood a Telureyan convers withe pepelz such az the Rigelleyanz, whoo cood not tauc, ce, or here?

Boath Solaareyan Councilor Vergil Samz and hiz frend ov oald, Comishoner ov Public Saifty Rodderic Kinnison, nu these thhingz; but dha aulso nu hou utterly preposterous dhare thauts wer; hou utterly and celf-evvidently imposcibel such a device wauz.

But Areezhaa agane came too the rescu. The ciyentist whoo had bene aciand the meteyor problem, wun Dr. Nelz Berghenhome--whoo, aul un'none too even hiz clocest asoasheyaits, wauz a form ov flesh energiazd at vareyouz tiamz bi vareyouz Areezhanz--repoerted too Samz and Kinnison dhat:

1) Fizsical ciyens cood not then projuce whaut wauz neded, and probbably nevver cood doo so. 2) Auldho it cood not be explaind in enny cimbollogy or lan'gwage none too man, dhare wauz--dhare *must* be--a ciyens ov the miand; a ciyens whoose tan'gibel products fizsical ciyens cood niather annalise nor immitate. 3) Vergil Samz, bi gowing in person too Areezhaa, cood obtane *exactly* whaut wauz neded.

"Areezhaa! Ov aul the helz in space, whi Areezhaa?" Kinnison demaanded. "Hou? Doant u no dhat nobody can ghet enniwhare nere dhat dam plannet?"

"I *no* dhat the Areezhanz ar verry wel verst in dhat ciyens. I *no* dhat if Councilor Samz gose too Areezhaa he wil obtane the cimbol he needz. I *no* dhat he wil nevver obtane it utherwise. Az too *hou* I no these thhingz--I caant--I just--I *no* them. I tel u!"

And, cins Berghenhome wauz aulreddy az wel none for uncannily accurate "hunchez" az for a hite ov geenyus bordering perrilously cloasly on insannity, the too lederz ov Civilizaishon did not pres him ferther, but went imejaitly too the hithertoo forbidden plannet. Dha wer--aparrently--receevd hospittably enuf, and wer ghivven Lensez bi Mentor ov Areezhaa. Lensez which, it devellopt, wer aul dhat Berghenhome had indicated, and moer.

The Lenz iz a lenticular strucchure ov hundredz ov thousandz ov tiny cristaloidz, bilt and chuend too mach the individjuwal life foers--the ego, the personallity--ov wun individjuwal entity. While not, strictly speking, alive, it iz endoud withe a sort ov sudo-life bi verchu ov which it ghivz of a strong, characteristicaly-chain'ging, policromattic lite az long az it iz in cerkit withe the livving mentallity withe which it iz in cincronizaishon. Conversly, when woern bi enniwun exept its oner, it not oonly remainz darc but it kilz--so strongly duz its sudo-life interfere withe enny life too which it iz not achuend. It iz aulso a telepathhic comunicator ov astounding pouwer and rainj--and uther thhingz.

Bac on Erth, Samz cet out too fiand pepel ov Lenzman caliber too cend too Areezhaa. Kinnisonz sun Jac, and hiz frend Mason Northrop, Conwa Costigan, and Samsez dauter Vergilleyaa--whoo had inheritted her faatherz hare and ise, and whoo wauz the moast acumplisht muscel-reder ov her time--went ferst. The boiz got Lensez, but Gil did not. Mentor, whoo wauz too her cencez a woomman cevven fete taul, toald her dhat she did not then and nevver wood nede a Lenz--and it shood be menshond here in paacing dhat no too entitese whoo evver sau Mentor evver sau the same thhing.

Fredderic Roadboosh, Liman Clevland, yung Berghenhome, and a cuppel ov commodorz ov the Patrole--Claton ov North Amerricaa and Shwikert ov Urope--just about exhausted Erths rezoercez. Nor wer the uther Solaareyan plannets verry helpfool, yeelding oonly thre Lenzmen--Nobos ov Marz, Dal-Nalten ov Venus, and Rulareyon ov Jove. Lenzman matereyal wauz extreemly scaers stuf.

Nowing dhat hiz propoazd Galactic Council wood hav too be made up

exclusively of Lenzmen, and that it should represent as many solar systems as possible, Samz visited the various systems which had been colonized by humanity, then went on: to Rigel 7, where he found Dronvire the Explorer, who was of Lenzman grade; and next to Pluto, where he found Pilinixy the Dextrober, who was very definitely was not; and finally to Palane Ceven, an ultra-cold world where he found Tallic, who might or might not go to Areeza sum da. And Vergil Samz, being physically tough and mentally a real Crusader, survived these various ordeals.

For some time the existence of the newly-formed Galactic Patrol was precarious indeed. Archibald Izaxon, head of Interstellar Spaceway, wanting a monopoly of interstellar trade, first tried bribery; then, joining forces with the machine of Cennator Morgan and Bos Toun, assassination. The other Lenzmen and Gil Samz saved her father's life, after which Kinnison took Samz to the safest place on Earth--deep underground beneath The Hill: the tremendously fortified, superlatively armed fortress which had been built to be the headquarters of the Triplanetary Service.

But even when the first Lenzman was attacked, this time by a fleet of space-ships in full battle array. By that time, however, the Galactic Patrol had a fleet of its own, and again the Lenzmen won.

Knowing that the final and decisive struggle would of necessity be a political one, the Patrol took over the Cosmocrat party and set out to gather detailed and documented evidence of corrupt and criminal activities of the Nationalists, the party then in power. Roddric ("Rod the Roc") Kinnison ran for President of North America against the incumbent Witherspoon; and, after a no-don-and-drag-out political battle with Cennator Morgan, the voice of the Morgan-Toun-Izaxon machine, he was elected.

And Morgan wauz merderd--suposedly bi disgrunteld gangsterz;
acchuwaly
bi hiz Caloanyan bos, whoo wauz in tern a minyon ov the Edoreyanz--
cimply
and meerly becauz he had faild.[B]

North Amerricaa wauz the moast pouwerfool continent ov Erth; Erth wauz
the
Muther Plannet, the Leder, the Bos. Hens, under the sponsorship ov the
Cozmocrattic Guvvernment ov North Amerricaa, the Galactic Council and
its
arm, the Galactic Patrole, came intoo dhare one. At the end ov R. K.
Kinnisonz term ov office, at which time he rezhuemd hiz interupted
jutese az Poert Admiral ov the Patrole, dhare wer a hundred plannets
ad'herent too Civilizaishon. In ten yeez dhare wer a thouzand; in a
hundred yeez a milleyon: and it iz sufishent characterizaishon ov the
lite but efective rule ov the Galactic Council too sa dhat in aul the
long history ov Civilizaishon no plannet whose pepelz hav evver voted
too
ad'here too Civilizaishon haz evver widhdraun from it.

Time went on; the prodidjously long blud-lianz, so caerfooly
manippulated bi Mentor ov Areezhaa, neerd culminaishon. Lenzman
Kimbald
Kinnison wauz gradjuwated Number Wun ov hiz claas--az a matter ov fact,
auldho he did not no it, he wauz Number Wun ov hiz time. And hiz
female counterpart and complement, Clarissaa MacDoogal ov the
red-bronz-aubern hare and the goald-flect tauny ise, wauz a ners in
the Patroalz imens hospital at Prime Bace.

Shortly aafter grajuwaishon Kinnison wauz cauld too Prime Bace bi Poert
Admiral Hainz. Space piracy had becum an organiazd foers; and, under
the ledership ov sumwun or sumthhing none az "Boscone", had rizen too
such hiats ov pouwer az too thretten cereyously the Galactic Patrole

itself. In wun respect Boscoanyaa wauz ahed ov the Patrole, its ciyentists havving devellopt a soers ov pouwer vaastly grater dhan enny none too Galactic Civilizaishon. It had fiting ships ov a nu and extrordinary tipe, from which even convoid shipping wauz no lon'gher safe. Beying faaster dhan the Patroalz faastest cruiserz and yet moer hevvely armd dhan its hevveyest battelships, dha had bene doowing practicaly az dha pleezd throwout space.

For wun particcular perpoce, the en'gineerz ov the Patrole had desiand and bilt wun ship--the *Britanyaa*. She wauz the faastest thng in space, but for ofencive armament she had oonly wun weppon, the "Q-gun". Kinnison wauz poot in comaand ov this vescel, withe orderz too: 1) Capchure a Boscoanyan wor-vescel ov late moddel; 2) Lern her ceecrets ov pouwer; and 3) Traanzmit the informaishon too Prime Bace.

He found and tooc such a worship. Sarjant Peter vanBuskerk led the storming party ov Valereyanz--men ov human ancestry, but ov extrordinary cise, strength, and agillity becauz ov the enormous gravitaishon ov the plannet Valereyaa--in wiping out dhose ov the pirate cru not kild in the battel betwene the too vescelz.

The *Brittantaaz* ciyentists ce cuerd the desiard dataa. It cood not be traanzmitted too Prime Bace, houwevver, az the piraits wer blanketing aul channelz ov comunicaishon. Boscoanyan worships wer gathering for the kil, and the crippeld Patrole ship cood niather run nor fite. Dhaerfoer eche man wauz ghivven a spoole ov tape baring a complete reccord ov evverithhing dhat had okerd; and, aafter cetting up a director-bi-chaans too make the empty ship pershu an unpredictabel coers in space, and aafter rigghing bomz too destroi her at the ferst tuch ov a

ra, the Patrolmen paerd of bi lot and tooc too the liafboats.

The erratic coers ov the cruiser braut her nere the liafbote mand bi Kinnison and vanBuskerk, and dhare the piraits tride too stop her. The ensuwng exploazhon wauz so viyolent dhat fliying reccage disabeld practicaly the entire personel ov wun ov the atacking ships, which did not hav time too go fre befoer the crash. The too Patrolmen boerded the pirate vescel and drove her tooword Erth, reching the solar cistem ov Velanshaa befoer the Boscoanyanz hedded them of. Agane taking too dhare

liafbote, dha landed uppon the plannet Delgon, whare dha wer rescude from a hoerd ov Catlats bi wun Worcel--later too becum Lenzman Worcel ov

Velanshaa--a hily intelligent wingd reptile.

Bi meenz ov impruivments uppon Velanshan thaut-screenz the thre destroid a groope ov the Overlordz ov Delgon, a sadistic race ov monsterz whoo had bene praying uppon the uther pepelz ov the cistem bi shere pouwer ov miand. Worcel then acumpanede the too Patrolmen too Velanshaa, whare aul the rezoercez ov the plannet wer devoted too the preparaishon ov defencez against the expected atac ov the Boscoanyanz. Cevveral uther liafboats reecht Velanshaa, ghided bi Worcelz miand werking throo Kinnisonz ego and Lenz.

Kinnison intercepted a message from Helmuth, whoo "spoke for Boscone", and traist hiz comunicator beme, dhus ghetting hiz ferst line uppon Boscoanz Grand Bace. The piraits atact Velanshaa, and cix ov dhare worships wer capchuerd. In these cix ships, mand bi Velanshan cruse, the Patrolmen agane cet out for Erth and Prime Bace.

Then Kinnisonz Berghenhome, the gennerator ov the foers which maix inershaales flite poscibel, broke doun, so dhat he had too land uppon Trengo for repaerz. Trengo, the tempeschuwous, billeyard-baul-smuithe plannet

whare it rainz forty-cevven fete and five inchez evvery nite and whare the wind blose at ate hundred mialz an our--Trenco, the soers ov thhiyonite, the dedleyest ov aul dedly drugz--Trenco, whose weerdly-charjd eethher and atmosfere so distort beemz and vizhon dhat it can be poleest oonly bi such beyingz az the Rigelleyanz, whoo poses the cens ov percepshon insted ov dhose ov cite and hering!

Lenzman Tregoncy, ov Rigel Foer, then in comaand ov the Patroalz waandering bace uppon Trenco, suplide Kinnison withe a nu Berghenhome and he agane cet out for Tellus.

Meenwhile Helmuth had dejuest dhat sum wun particcular Lenzman wauz the cauz ov aul hiz cet-bax; and dhat the Lenz, a complete enigmaa too aul Boscoanyanz, wauz in sum wa conected withe Areezhaa. Dhat plannet had aulwase bene dredded and shund bi aul spaismen. No Boscoanyan whoo had evver aproacht dhat plannet cood be compeld, even bi the certainty ov deth, too go nere it agane.

Thhinking himcelf cecure bi verchu ov thaut-screenz ghivven him bi a beying from a hiyer-eshelon plannet naimd Ploor, Helmuth went alone too Areezhaa, determiand too lern aul about the Lenz. Dhare he wauz punnisht too the verj ov insannity, but wauz permitted too retern too hiz Grand Bace alive and sane: "Not for yor one good, but for the good ov dhat strugling yung Civilizaishon which u opose."

Kinnison reecht Prime Bace withe the aul-important dataa. Bi bilding super-pouwerfool battelships, cauld "maulerz", the Patrole gaind a temporary advaantage over Boscoanyaa, but a stailmate soone ensude. Kinnison devellopt a plan ov acshon whaerbi he hoapt too locate Helmuths Grand

Bace; and aasct Poert Admiral Hainz for permishon too follo it. In lu ov dhat houwevver, Hainz toald him dhat he had bene ghivven hiz Relece; dhat he wauz an Unnatacht Lenzman--a "Gra" Lenzman, poppularly so cauld, from the cullor ov the plane lether uniformz dha ware. Dhus he ernd the hiyest onnor which the Patrole can ghiv, for the Gra Lenzman werx under no supervizhon or direcshon whautevver. He iz az absoluetly a fre agent az it iz poscibel too be. He iz responcebel too no wun; too nuthhing save hiz one conspens. He iz no lon'gher ov Tellus, nor ov the Solaareyan Cistem, but ov Civilizaishon az a whole. He iz no lon'gher a cog in the imens mashene ov the Patrole: wharevver he ma go he *iz* the Patrole!

In qwest ov a cecond line uppon Grand Bace, Kinnison scouted a pirate strong'hoald uppon Aldebbaran I. Its personel, houwevver, wer not even nere-human, but wer wheelmen, posest ov the cens ov percepshon; hens Kinnison wauz discuverd befoer he cood acumplich ennithhing and wauz verry cereyously wuinded. He mannaijd too ghet bac too hiz speedster and too cend a thaut too Poert Admiral Hainz, whoo rusht ships too hiz ade. In Bace Hospital Cerjon-Marshal Lacy poot him bac tooghether; and, juring a long and qworelsum convalescens, Ners Clarissaa MacDoogal held him tooghether. And Lacy and Hainz coniavd too promote a romans betwene ners and Lenzman.

Az soone az he cood leve the hospital he went too Areezhaa in the hope dhat he mite be ghivven advaanst traning--a dhaertofoer unthaut-ov ideyaa. Much too hiz cerprise he lernd dhat he had bene expected too retern for exactly such traning. Ghetting it aulmoast kild him, but he emerjd from the ordele infiniatly stron'gher ov miand dhan enny man had evver bene befoer; and posest ov a nu cens az wel--the cens ov percepshon, a cens sumwhaut anallogous too cite, but ov vaastly grater pouwer, depth, and scope, and not dependent uppon lite.

After trying out his new mental equipment by solving a murder mystery upon Raddelix, he succeeded in entering an enemy base upon Boishaa 2. There he took over the command of a communications officer and waited for the opportunity of getting the second, all-important line too

Bosconyaaz
Grand Base. An enemy ship captured a hospital ship of the Patrol and brought it in to Boishaa Base. Ners MacDoogal, head of the captured vessel, working under Kinnison's instructions, stood up to the trouble which soon became mutiny. Helmuth, from Grand Base, took a hand; thus enabling Kinnison to get his second line.

The hospital ship, undetectable by virtue of the Lenzmanz nullifier, escaped from Boishaa 2 and headed for Earth at full blast. Kinnison, convinced that Helmuth was really Boscon himself, found that the interception of his two lines--and therefore the pirates Grand Base--in star cluster AC 257-4736, well outside the galaxy. Pausing only long enough to destroy the Wheelmen of Aldebaran I, the project in which his first attempt had failed so miserably, he set out to investigate Helmuth's headquarters. He found a strong, well-impregnable tower
which met the Patrol's head-on attack, and by being especially wary of a threat-screen. His sense of perception was suddenly cut off--the pirates had thrown a threat-screen around the entire planet. He then returned to Prime Base, deciding on routes that boeing from within was the only possible way in which that stupendous fortress could be taken.

In consultation with the Port Admiral Hainz, the same was set, at which time the main Grand Fleet of the Patrol was to attack Helmuth's base with every projector that could be brought to bear.

Pershuwant too hiz plan, Kinnison agane vizsited Trengo, whare the Patrole foercez extracted for him fifty killogramz ov thhiyonite, the nocshous drug which, in miacrogram inhalaishonz, maix the addict expereyens aul the censaishonz ov doowing whautevver it iz dhat he wishez moast ardently too doo.

The larger the doce, the moer intens the censaishonz; the slitest overdoce rezulting in an extattic deth. Thens too Helmuths plannet; whare, werking throo the unsheelded brane ov a dog, he let himcelf intoo the central dome. Here, just befoer the sero minnute, he releest hiz thhiyonite intoo the are-streme, dhus wiping out aul the pirate personel exept Helmuth, whoo, in hiz inner sanctum, cood not be afected.

The Grand Flete ov the Patrole atact, but Helmuth wood not leve hiz retrete, even too tri too save hiz Bace. Dhaerfoer Kinnison had too go in aafter him. Poizd in the are ov Helmuths inner sfere dhare wauz an enigmattic, sparcling baul ov foers which the Lenzman cood not understand, and ov which he wauz in conceqwens extremely suspishous.

But the storming ov dhat qwaudrueply-defended inner strong'hoald wauz preciasly the taasc for which Kinnisonz nu and ultraa-cumbersum armor had bene desiand; and in the Gra Lenzman went.[C]

[A] For a complete treetment ov matterz up too this point, including the discuvvery ov the inershaales--"fre"--space-drive, the Neveyan Wor, and the miand-too-miand meting ov Mentor ov Areezhaa and Garlande ov Eddor, ce
Triplannetary.

[B] *Ferst Lenzman.*

[C] *Galactic Patrole.*

CHAPTER 1

PRIMARY BEEMZ

AMUNG THE WERLD-GHERDLING FORTIFICAISHONZ ov a plannet distant indede from star cluster AC 257-4736 dhare sqwauted sullenly a fortres qwite cimmilar too Helmuths one. Indede, in sum respects it wauz even supereyor too the bace ov him whoo spoke for Boscone. It wauz larger and stron'gher. Insted ov wun dome, it had menny. It wauz darc and coald widhaul, for its occupants had practicaly nuthhing in common withe humannity save the poseshon ov hi intelligens.

In the central sfere ov wun ov the doamz dhare sparkeld cevveral ov the peculeyarly rajant gloabz whoose counterpart had ghivven Kinnison so cereyously too thhinc, and nere them dhare croucht or huddeld or la at ese a menny-tentakeld crechure indescribabel too man. It wauz not like an octopus. Dho spiny, it did not resembel at aul cloasly a ce-cucumber. Nor, auldho it wauz scaly and tuithhy and wingy, wauz it, save in the vaghest poscibel wa, cimmilar too a lizzard, a ce-cerpent, or a vulchure. Such a descriphon bi neggatiavz iz, ov coers, pittifooly inaddeqwate; but, unforchunaitly, it iz the best dhat can be dun.

The entire atenshon ov this beying wauz focust within wun ov the gloabz,

the obscure meccanizm ov which wauz relaying too hiz cens ov percepshon from Helmuths globe and miand at clere picchure ov evverithhing which wauz happening within Grand Bace. The corps-litterd dome wauz clere too hiz cite; he nu dhat the Patrole wauz atacking from widhout; nu dhat dhat ubiqwitous Lenzman, whoo had aulreddy unmand the cittadel, wauz about too atac from within.

"U hav erd cereyously," the entity wauz thhinking coaldly, emoashonlesly, intoo the globe, "in not dejucing until aafter it wauz too late too save yor bace dhat the Lenzman had perfected a nullifiyer ov sub-ethhereyal detecshon. Yor contenshon dhat I am eeqwaly culpabel iz, I thhinc, untennabel. It wauz yor problem, not mine; I had, and stil hav, uthher thhingz too concern me. Yor bace iz ov coers lost; whether or not u yorcelf cervive wil depend entiarly uppon the addeqwacy ov yor protective devicez."

"But, Iakhlán, u yorcelf pronounst them addeqwate!"

"Pardon me--I ced dhat dha *ceemd* addeqwate."

"If I cervive--or, raather, aafter I hav destroid this Lenzman--whaut ar yor orderz?"

"Go too the nerest comunicator and concentrate our foercez; haaf ov them too en'gage this Patrole flete, the remainder too wipe out aul the life ov Sol 3. I hav not tride too ghiv dhose orderz direct, cins aul the beemz ar kede too yor boerd and, even if I cood reche them, no comaander in dhat gallaxy nose dhat I speke for Boscone. Aafter u hav dun dhat, repoert too me here."

"Instrucshonz receevd and understood. Helmuth, ending message."

"Cet yor controalz az instructed. I wil observ and reccord. Prepare yorcelf, the Lenzman cumz. Iakhlan, speking for Boscone, ending message."

The Lenzman rusht. Even befoer he crasht the piraits screenz hiz one defencive zoanz flaimd white in the beme ov cemmy-portabel progectorz and throo dhat blase came taring the metallic slugz ov a hi-caliber mashene rifel. But the Lenzmanz screenz wer aulmoast dhose ov a battelship, hiz armor rellatiavly az strong; he had at hiz comaand progectorz scaersly infereyor too dhose oposing hiz advaans. Dhaerfoer, withe evvery facculy ov hiz nuly-enlarjd miand concentrated uppon dhat thaut-screend, armord hed behiand the bellowing gun and the flaring progectorz, Kinnison held hiz line and foerjd ahed.

Atentive az he wauz too Helmuths thaut-screne, the Patrolman wauz reddy when it wekend sliatly and a thaut began too cepe throo, directed at dhat peculeyar baul ov foers. He blanketed it savvaijly, befoer it cood even beghin too take form, and atact the screne so vishously dhat the Boscoanyan had iather too restoer fool cuvverage instantly or els di dhare and then.

Kinnison feerd dhat foers-baul no lon'gher. He stil did not no whaut it wauz; but he had lernd dhat, whautevver its nachure mite be, it wauz opperated or controald bi thaut. Dhaerfoer it wauz and wood remane harmles; for if the pirate chefe softend hiz screne enuf too emit a thaut he wood nevver thhinc agane.

Dogghedly the Lenzman drove in, clocer and clocer. Magnettic clamps loct and held. Too stele-clad, woring figguerz roald intoo the line ov fire ov the ravvening automattic rifel. Kinnisonz armor, desiand and tested too widhstand even hevveyer stuf, held; whaerfoer he came throo dhat

storm ov mettal unscaidhd. Helmuths, houwevver, even dho stron'gher far dhan the ordinary personal armor ov space, faild; and dhus the Boscoanyan dide.

Blaasting himcelf uprite, the Patroalman shot acros the inner dome too the controle pannel and pauzd, momentarily baffeld. He cood not thro the switchez controlling the defencive screenz ov the gigantic outer dome! Hiz armor, desiand for the ultimate ov defencive strength, cood not and did not bare enny ov the smaull and dellicate external meccanizmz so characteristic ov the ordinary space-sute. Too leve hiz personal tanc at dhat time and in dhat environment wauz unthhincabel; yet he wauz faast

running out ov time. A scant fiftene cecondz wauz aul dhat remaind befoer sero, the moment at which the hellish outpoot ov evvery waut generabel bi the mast flete ov the Galactic Patrole wood be herld against dhose screenz in dhare fureyously, ragingly destructive mite. Too relece the screenz aafter dhat sero moment wood mene hiz one deth, instantainyous and inevvitabel.

Nevvertheles he cood open dhose cerkits--the concervaishon ov Boscoanyan

propperty ment nuthhing too him. He flipt on hiz one projector and flasht its beme breefly acros the banct pannelz in frunt ov him. Inshulaishon berst intoo flame, faerly exploding in its haist too dicintegrate; copper and silver ran in brilleyant streemz or puft awa in cloudz ov sparcling vapor: hi-tenshon arx ript, crasht, and crackeld amung the riathing, dripping, flaring bus-barz. The shorts bernd themcelvz clere or blu dhare fusez, evvery cerkit opend, evvery Boscoanyan defens came doun; and then, and oanly then, cood Kinnison ghet intoo comunicaishon withe hiz frendz.

"Hainz!" he thaut crisply intoo hiz Lenz. "Kinnison caulng!"

"Hainz acnolleging!" a thaut instantly snapt bac. "Con'grat..."

"Hoald it! Were not dun yet! Hav evvery ship in the Flete go fre at wuns. Hav them aul, exopt yorz, poot out fool-cuvverage screenz, so dhat dha caant looc at this bace--dhats too kepe em from thhinking intoo it."

A moment paast. "Dun!"

"Doant cum in enny clocer--Ime on mi wa out too u. Nou az too u personally--I doant like too ceme too be ghivving orderz too the Poert Admiral, but it ma be qwite ecenshal dhat u concentrate on me, and thhinc ov nuthhing els, for the next fu minnuets."

"Rite! I doant miand taking orderz from *u*."

"QX--nou we can take thhingz a bit eseyer." Kinnison had so arainjd matterz dhat no wun exopt himcelf cood thhinc intoo dhat strong'hoald, and he himcelf wood not. He wood not thhinc intoo dhat tantalising enigmaa, nor tooword it, nor even *ov* it, until he wauz compleetly reddy too doo so. And hou menny personz, I wunder, reyaly reyalise just hou much ov a fete dhat wauz? Reyalise the sort ov mental traning reqwiard for its suxesfool performans?

"Hou menny gammaa-setaa tracerz can u poot out, chefe?" Kinnison aasct then, moer conversaishonaly.

A brefe consultaishon, then "Ten in reggular uce. Bi chuning in aul our spaerz we can poot out cixty."

"At too diyammeterz distans forty-ate feeldz wil suround this plannet at wun hundred percent overlap. Plese hav dhat menny cet dhat wa. Ov

the uther twelv, cet thre too go wel outside the ferst sfere--sa at foer diyammeterz out--cuvvering the line from this plannet too Lundmarx Nebbulaa. Cet the laast nine too be throne out about haaf a detet--az far az u can rede them accuraitly too wun descimal--centering on the same line. Not much overlap iz nescenary on these backing feeldz--just contact. Relece nuthhing, ov coers, until I ghet dhare. And while the boiz ar cetting thhingz up, u mite go inert--its safe enuf nou--so I can mach yor intrinsic velosity and cum aboard."

Dhare follode the manuvering nescenary for wun inert boddy too aproche anuther in space, then Kinnisonz increddibel housing ov stele wauz hauld intoo the aerloc bi meenz ov space-lianz atacht too magnettic clamps. The outer doer ov the loc cloazd behiand him, the inner wun opend, and the Lenzman enterd the flagship.

Ferst too the armory, whare he clamberd stifly out ov hiz smaul battelship and gave orderz concerning its stoorage. Then too the controle roome, stretching and bending huejly az he went, in vaast relefe at hiz fredom from the narro and erxum confianment which he had enjuerd so long. He waunted a shouwer badly--in fact, he neded wun--but biznes came ferst.

Ov aul the men in dhat controle roome, oanly too nu Kinnison personaly. Aul nu ov him, houwevver, and az the taul, gra-clad figgure enterd dhare wauz a loud, qwic chere.

"Hi, fellose--thanx." Kinnison waivd a salute too the roome az a whole. "Hi, Poert Admiral! Hi, Comandant!" He saluted Hainz and von Hohendorf az perfunctorily, and greted them az cazhuwaly, az dho he had laast cene them an our, insted ov ten weex, befoer; az dho the intervening time had bene spent in the verreyest idelnes, insted ov in the fashon in which it acchuwaly had bene spent.

Oald von Hohendorf greted hiz erstwhile pupil corjaly enuf, but:

"Out withe it!" Hainz demaanded. "Whaut did u doo? Hou did u doo it? Whaut duz aul this confounded rigmarole mene? Tel us aul about it--aul u can, I mene," he added, haistily.

"Dhaerz no nede for ceecrecy nou, I doant thhinc," and in flashing thauts the Gra Lenzman went on too describe evverithhing dhat had happend.

"So u ce," he concluded, "I doant reyaly *no* ennithhing. Its aul cermise, suspishon, and deducshon. Maby nuthhing at aul wil happen; in which cace these precaushonz, while dha wil hav bene waisted effort, wil hav dun us no harm. In cace sumthhing *duz* happen, houwevver--and sumthhing wil, for aul the te in Chinaa--wele be reddy for it."

"But if whaut u ar beghinning too suspect iz reyaly tru, it meenz dhat Boscoanyaa iz inter-galactic in scope--wider-spred even dhan the Patrole!"

"Probbably, but not necesarily--it ma mene oonly dhat dha hav bacez farther outside. And remember Ime arguwing on a mity slim thred ov evvidens. Dhat screne wauz hard and tite, and I coodnt tuch the external beme--if dhare wauz wun--at aul. I got just part ov a thaut, here and dhare. Houwevver, the thaut wauz that galaxy; not just galaxy,' or this or thhe galaxy--and whi thhinc dhat wa if the ghi wauz aulreddy in this galaxy?"

"But nobody haz evver... but skip it for nou--the boiz ar reddy for u. Take over!"

"QX. Ferst wele go fre agane. Doant thhinc much, if enny, ov the stuf can cum out here, but no uce taking chaancez. Cut yor screenz. Nou, aul u gammaa-setaa men, thro out yor feeldz, and if enny ov u ghet a puncchure, or even a flash, mezhure its posishon. U recording

observerz, step yor scannerz up too fifty thousand. QX?"

"QX!" the observerz and recorderz repoerted, aulmoast az wun, and the
Gra

Lenzman sat doun at a plate.

Hiz miand, fre at laast too make the investigaishon from which it had bene
so long and so sternly bard, flu doun intoo and throo the dome, too
and intoo dhat criptic globe so tantalisingly poizd in the are ov the
Center.

The reyacshon wauz practicaly instantainyous; so rappid dhat enny
ordinary
miand cood hav perceevd nuthhing at aul; so rappid dhat even Kinnisonz
conshousnes recorded oonly a confuezdly blerd impreshon. But he did
ce sumthhing: in dhat fleting milleyonth ov a cecond he censt a
pouwerfool, malignant mental foers; a foers backing multiplex scannerz
and
sub-ethhereyal stres-feeldz interloct in peculeyarly unnidentifiyabel
patternz.

For dhat baul wauz, az Kinnison had moer dhan suspected, a potent
agency
indede. It wauz, az he had thaut, a comunicator; but it wauz far moer
dhan dhat. Ordinarily harmles enuf, it cood be so cet az too becum
an infernal mashene at the viabraishonz ov enny thaut not in a certane
coded ceeqwens; and Helmuth had so cet it.

Dhaerfoer at the tuch ov the Patroalmanz thauts it exploded:
libberating instantainyously the unnimadginabel forcez withe which it
wauz
charjd. Moer, it cent out waivz which, achuend too dettonating receverz,
tucht of strategicaly-plaist stoerz ov juwodecaplilattomate. "Juwodec",
the concentrated qwintescens ov atommic viyolens!

"Helz... Gin'gling... Belz!" Poert Admiral Hainz grunted in stund amaizment, then subcided intoo cilens, ise rivveted uppon hiz plate; for too the human i dome, fortres, and plannet had disapeerd in wun cataclizmicaly incandescent sfere ov flame.

But the observerz ov the Galactic Patrole did not depend uppon icite alone. Dhare scannerz had bene werking at ultraa-faast spede; and, az soone az it became clere dhat nun ov the ships ov the Flete had bene endain'gerd, Kinnison aasct dhat certane ov the spuils be run intoo a vizsitanc at normal tempo.

Dhare, slode too a spede at which the i cood cleerly dicern ceeqwencez ov events, the too oald Lenzmen and the yung wun studdede withe care the thre-dimenshonal picchuerz ov whaut had happend; picchuerz taken from points ov progecshon cloce too and even within the duimd strucchure itcelf.

Delibberaitly the baul ov foers opend up, follode an inapreeshabel instant later bi the cecondary centerz ov detonaishon; aul expanding madgicaly intoo sferrical volluemz ov bliandingly brilleyant aniyilaishon. Dhare wer az yet no fliying fragments: no inert fragment *can* fli from juwodec in the ferst fu instants ov its detonaishon. For the detonaishon ov juwodec iz proppagated at the veloscity ov lite, so dhat the entire mas dicintegraits in a pereyod ov time too be mezhuerd oonly in fracshonal trilleyonths ov a cecond. Its detonaishon preschure and temperachure hav nevver bene mezhuerd save indirectly, cins nuthhing wil hoald it exept a Q-tipe helix ov pure foers. And even dhose helicese, which must be practicaly open at boath endz, hav too be desiand and pouwerd too widhstand preschuerz and temperachuerz obtaning oonly in the coerz ov

sunz.

Imadgine, if u can, whaut wood happen if sum fifty thouzand metric tunz ov matereyal from the innermoast coer ov Cirreyus B wer too be taken too

Grand Bace, ceeparated intoo twenty-five paccagez, eche paccage plaist at a strategic point, and aul restraint instantainyously remuivd. Whaut wood hav happend then, wauz whaut acchuwaly *wauz* happening!

Az haz bene ced, for moments nuthhing muivd exepth the evver-expanding sfeerz ov destrucshon. Nuthhing *cood* moove--the inershaa ov matter itcelf held it in place until it wauz too late--evverithhing cloce too dhose centerz ov acshon cimply flaerd intoo tergid incandescens and added its contribueshon too the aulreddy hellish whole.

Az the sfeerz expanded dhare temperachuerz and preshuerz decreest and the acshon became sumwhaut les viyolent. Matter no lon'gher cimply disapeerd. Insted, plaits and gherderz, even gigantic strucchural memberz, bent, buckeld, and crumbeld. Waulz blu outword and upword. Huge chunx ov mettal and ov masonry, menny withe fuezd and dripping edgez, began too fli in aul direcshonz.

And not oonly, or principaly, upword wauz directed the foers ov dhose inconcevel exploazhonz. Dounword the efect wauz, if poscibel, even moer catastroffic, cins condishonz dhare aproximated cloasly the oft-argude meting betwene the iresistibel foers and the imoovabel obgett. The plannet wauz too aul intents and perpocez imoovabel, the juwodec too the same degry iresistibel. The rezult wauz dhat the entire plannet wauz momentarily blone apart. A vaast cazm wauz blaasted depe intoo its intereyor, and, gravvity temporarily overcum, schupendous crax and fishuerz began too yaun. Then, az the preshure decreest, the coer-stuf

ov the plannet became moalten and began too reke its volcannic havvoc. Gravvity, wuns moer maaster ov the cichuwaishon, tooc hoald. The crax and cazmz cloazd, extruding uncounted cubic mialz ov firy laavaa and mettal. The entire werld shivverd and shudderd in a Garganchuwan cozmik agu.

The exploazhon blu itcelf out. The hot gasces and vaporz cuild. The steme condenst. The volcannic dust disapeerd. Dhare la the plannet; but chainjd--hidjously and aufooly chainjd. Whare Grand Bace had bene dhare remaind nuthhing whautevver too indicate dhat ennithhing raut bi man had evver bene dhare. Mountainz wer levveld, vallese wer fild. Continents and oashanz had shifted, and wer stil shifting; vizsibly. Erthqwaix, volcanose, and uther ciazmic disterbancez, insted ov decrecing, wer increcing in viyolens, minnute bi minnute.

Helmuths plannet wauz and wood for yeez remane a barren and unninhabbittabel werld.

"Wel!" Hainz, whoo had bene hoalding hiz breth unconshously, releest it in an aulmoast explosive ci. "Dhat iz inescapably and incontrovertibly *dhat*. I wauz gowing too use dhat bace, but it loox az dho wele hav too ghet along widhout it."

Widhout comment Kinnison ternd too the gammaa-setaa observerz. "Enny tracez?" he aasct.

It devellopt dhat thre ov the feeldz had shone activvity. Not meerly tracez or flashez, but sollid puncchuerz showing the prezsens ov a hard, tite beme. And dhose thre puncchuerz wer in the same line; a line running strate out intoo inter-galactic space.

Kinnison tooc caerfool redingz on the line, then stood moashonles. Fete

wide apart, handz jamd intoo pockets, hed sliatly bent, ise distant, he stood dhare unmooving; thhinking withe aul the pouwer ov hiz brane.

"I waunt too aasc thre qweschonz," the oald Comandant ov Cadets interupted hiz cogitaishonz finaly. "Wauz Helmuth Boscone, or not? Hav we got them lict, or not? Whaut doo we doo next, beciadz mopping up dhose atene supermaulerz?"

"Too aul thre the aancer iz 'I doant no.'" Kinnisonz face wauz stern and hard. "U no az much about the whole thhing az I doo--I havnt held bac ennithhing I even suspect. I didnt tel u dhat Helmuth wauz Boscone; I ced dhat everiwun in enny posishon too juj, including micelf, wauz az shure ov it az wun cood be about ennithhing dhat coodnt be pruivd. The prezsens ov this comunicator line, and the uther stuf Ive toald u about, maix me thhinc he wauznt. Houwevver, we doant acchuwaly *no* enny moer dhan we did befoer. It iz no moer certane nou dhat Helmuth wauz *not* Boscone dhan it wauz befoer dhat he *wauz*. The cecond qweschon tise in withe the ferst, and so duz the thherd--but I ce dhave started too mop up."

While von Hohendorf and Kinnison had bene tauking, Hainz had ishude orderz and the Grand Flete, divided rufly and withe difficulty intoo atene parts, went ragghedly outword too surround the atene outliying fortrecez. But, and cerprisingly enuf too the Patrole foercez, the reducshon ov dhose hulking monsterz wauz too proove no esy taasc.

The Boscoanyanz had witnest the destrucshon ov Helmuths Grand Bace. Dhare maaster plaits wer ded. Tri az dha wood, dha cood ghet in tuch withe no wun withe authority too ghiv them orderz, withe no wun too whoome dha cood repoert dhare prezsnt plite. Nor cood dha escape: the slowest mauler in the Patrole Flete cood hav caut enny wun ov them in five minnuets.

Too surender wauz not even thaut ov--better far too di a clene deth in the blasing holocaust ov space-battel dhan too be throne ignominiously into the leethal chaimberz ov the Patrole. Dhare wauz not, dhare cood not be, enny qweschon ov pardon or ov centens too enny mere imprizzonment, for the strife betwene Civilizaishon and Boscoanyaa in no respect resembeld the worz betwene too fundamentaly cimmilar and frendly naishonz which smaul, grene Terraa nu so freeqwently ov oald. It wauz a gallaxy-wide strugghel for cervival betwene too diyametricaly opoazd, muchuwaly exclucive, and absolutly incompartibel culchuerz; a juwel too the deth in which qworter wauz niather aasct nor ghivven; a conflict which, exept for the cin'ghel instans which Kinnison himcelf had en'gineerd, wauz and ov stern necescity had too be wun ov ruethles, complete, and utter extincshon.

Di, then, the piraits must; and, auldho ad'herents too a skeme ov existens monstrous indede too our wa ov thhinking, dha wer in no cens couwardz. Not like cornerd rats did dha conduct themcelvz, but faut like whaut dha wer; corajous beyingz hoaplesly outnumberd and outpouwerd, unnabel iather too escape or too chuse the feeld ov operaishonz, grimly rezolvd dhat in dhare paacing dha wood take fool tole ov the minyonz ov dhat detested and despiazd Galactic Civilizaishon. Dhaerfoer, in suwical gle, Boscoanyan en'gineerz rigd up a fantasticaly potent weppon ov offens, chuend in dhare defencive screenz, and hung poizd in space, awating caalmly the mast atac so shure too cum.

Up flasht the hevvy cruiserz ov the Patrole, cereenly confident. Auldho ov littel ofencive strength, these vescelz mounted tractorz and pressorz ov prodidjous pouwer, az wel az defencive screenz

which--theoretically--no projector-driven beam of force could puncture.

Dha had engaged mauler after mauler of Bosconians miteyest, and never

yet had won of those screens gone down. Dhaerz the task of immobilizing the opponent; cins, as it is of course well known, it is under any ordinary conditions impossible to reach any point upon an object which is

both inelastic and at liberty to move in space. It simply darts away from the touch of the harmful agent, whether it be immaterial beam or material substance.

Formerly the attachment of two or three tractor wauz and that wauz necessary to insure immobility, and thus vulnerability; but with the Velanshan development of a sphere-plane too cut tractor beams, a new technique became necessary. This wauz engaged, in which a dozen or more vessels surrounded the proposed victim in space and held it motionless at the center of a sphere by means of pressure, which could not be cut or evaded. Cerene, then, and confident, the heavy cruiser rushed out too engage the Bosconian fortress.

Flash! Flash! Flash! Three points of light, as unbarably brilliant as atomic vortices, sprang into being upon the fortress side. Three needles of inconceivable energy flashed out, hitting through the cruiser's outer screens as though they had been so much inactive webbing. Through the second and through the first. Through the waul-shield, even that ultra-powerful field scarcely flashing as it went down. Through the armor, violating the prime tenet then held and which has just been referred to, that no object free in space can be damaged--in this case, so unthinkably vehement was the thrust, the fusion of substances in the space surrounding the doomed cruiser afforded resistance enough. Through the ship itself, a ravaging cylinder of annihilation.

For perhaps a cecond--certainly no lon'gher--dhose increddibel, dhose undreemd-ov beemz percisted befoer winking out intoo blacnes; but dhat cecond had bene long enuf. Thre riddeld hulx la ded in space, and az the thre oridginal progetorz went blac thre moer flaerd out. Then thre moer. Nine ov the miteyest ov Civilizaishonz ships ov wor wer riddeld befoer the utherz cood herl themcelvz baqword out ov rainj!

Moast ov the officerz ov the flagship wer stund intoo temporary inactivvity bi dhat shocking devellopment, but too reyacted aulmoast instantly.

"Thorndike!" the admiral snapt. "Whaut did dha doo, and hou?"

And Kinnison, not speking at aul, leept too a certane pannel, too rede for himcelf the anallicis ov dhose increddibel beemz ov foers.

"Dha made super-nedel-rase out ov dhare mane progetorz," Maaster Tecnishan LaaVern Thorndike repoerted, crisply. "Dha must hav shorted evverithhing dhave got ontoo them too bern them out dhat faast."

"Dhose beemz wer hot--plenty hot," Kinnison corobborated the fiandingz. "These recorderz go too five billeyon and hav a factor ov saifty ov ten. Even dhat wauznt enniwhare neerly enuf--evverithhing in the recorder cerkits blu."

"But hou cood dha handel them..." von Hohendorf began too aasc.

"Dha didnt--dha pointed them and dide," Thorndike explaind, grimly. "Dha traded wun progetor and its cru for wun cruiser and *its* cru--a good trade from dhare vupoint."

"Dhare wil be no moer such traidz," Hainz declaerd.

Nor wer dhare. The Patrole had maulerz enuf too en'globe the ennemy craaft at a distans grater even dhan the efective rainj ov dhose suwical beamz, and it did so.

Sheelding screenz cut of the Boscoanyanz intake ov cozmie pouwer and the relentles beming ov the bool-dog maulerz began. For our aafter our it continnude, the cordon evver titening az the victimz pouwer lescend. And finally even the gigantic acumulatorz ov the imens fortrecez wer draind. Dhare screenz went doun under the hellish fury ov the maulerz incessant atac, and in a space ov minnuets dharaafter the strucchuerz and dhare contents ceest too exist save az cozmicaly atommic detritus.

The Grand Flete ov the Galactic Patrole remade its formaishon aafter a fashon and cet of tooword the gallaxy at tooring blaast.

And in the controle roome ov the flagship thre Lenzmen braut a verry cereyous conferens too a close.

"U sau whaut happend too Helmuths plannet," Kinnisonz vois wauz odly hard, "and I gave u aul I cood ghet ov the thaut about the destrucshon ov aul life on Sol 3. A big enuf juwodec bom in the bottom ov an oashan wood doo it. I doant reyaly *no* ennithhing exept dhat we hadnt better let them cach us aslepe at the swich agane--weve got too be on our tose evvery cecond."

And the Gra Lenzman, face cet and stern, strode of too hiz qworterz.

CHAPTER 2

WIDE-OPEN TOO-WA

JURING PRACTICALY AUL OV the long trip bac too erth Kinnison kept pritty much too hiz cabbin, thhinking deeply, blacly, and, he admitted rufooly too himself, too verry littel perpoce. And at Prime Bace, throo weke aafter weke ov its feverish activvity, he continnude too thhinc. Finally, houwevver, he wauz snacht out ov hiz darc abstracshon bi no les a personage dhan Cerjon-Marshal Lacy.

"Snap out ov it, lad," dhat werthy adviazd, smilingly. "When u concentrate on wun thhing too long, u no, the vortices ov thaut occupi narrower and narrower loci, until finally the efective vollume becumz infinitesimal. Or, mathhemattically, the then rainj ov cogitaishon, integrated betwene the limmits ov plus and minus infinnity, aprochez sero az a limmit..."

"Huu? Whaut ar u tauking about?" the Lenzman demaanded.

"Poor mathhemattix, perhaps, but sound cicollogy," Lacy grind. "It got yor undivided atenshon, didnt it? Dhat wauz whaut I wauz aafter. In plane In'glish, if u kepe on thhinking around in cerkelz ule soone be biting yorcelf in the smaull ov the bac. Cum on, u and I ar gowing placez."

"Whare?"

"Too the Grand Baul in onnor ov the Grand Flete, mi boi--oald Doctor Lacy prescriabz it for u az a complete and raddical chainj ov atmosfere. Lets go!"

The cittese largest baul-roome wauz a blase ov lite and cullor. A thousand policromattic lamps fludded dhare rajans dounword throo draipt bunting uppon an even moer cullorfool throng. Too thousand itemz ov

femminine luvlines wer dhare, in rament whose fabrix wer the boasts
ov hundredz ov plannets, whose huse and shaidz poot the spectrum itcelf
too

shame. Dhare wer over too thouzand men, clad in plane or beribbond or
bemeddald fool civilleyan dres, or in the vareyously pannoplede dres
uniformz ov the menny Cervicez.

"Yor daancing withe Mis Forester ferst, Kinnison," the cerjon
introjuest them informaly, and the Lenzman found himcelf gliding awa
withe a stunning blond, ravvishingly and revelingly drest in a
dazlingly blu wisp ov Manarcan glamoret--fashonz *derneyer cri*.

Too the unninformd, Kinnisonz garb ov plane gra lether mite hav
ceemd incon'gruwous indede in dhat brilleyantly and fastidjously drest
assemblage. But too dhose pepel, az too us ov tooda, the drab, starcly
utilitareyan uniform ov the Unnatacht Lenzman traancended far enny
uther,

houwevver resplendent, woern bi man: and litteraly hundredz ov ise
follode the strikingly handsum cuppel az dha slid ridhmicaly out
uppon the pollisht floer. But a mezhure ov the taul butese customary
poiz had deserted her. She wauz slimly taut in the cerkel ov the
Lenzmanz arm, her ise wer douncaast, and suddenly she mist a step.

"Scuse me for stepping on yor fete," he apollogiazd. "A fello ghets out
ov practice, flitting around in a speedster so much."

"Thanx for taking the blame, but its mi fault entiarly--I no it az
wel az u doo," she replide, flushing uncumfortably. "I *doo* no hou
too daans, too, but... wel, yor a Gra Lenzman, u no."

"Huu?" he ejaculated, in onnest cerprise, and she looct up at him for
the ferst time. "Whaut haz dhat fact got too doo withe the price ov
Veneeshan

orkidz in Shicaago--or withe mi clumsy wauking aul over yor slipperz?"

"Evverithhing in the werld," she ashuerd him. Nevvertheles, her stif yung boddy relaxt and she fel intoo the graisfool, accurate daancing which she reyaly nu so wel hou too doo. "U ce, I doant supose dhat enny ov us haz evver cene a Gra Lenzman befoer, exept in picchuerz, and acchuwaly too be daancing withe wun iz... wel, its reyaly a kiand ov shoc. I hav too ghet uest too it gradjuwaly. Whi, I doant even no hou too tauc too u! Wun coodnt poscibly caul u plane Mister, az wun wood enny ord..."

"Itl be QX if u just caul me sa," he informd her. "Maby ude raather not daans withe a dub? Whaut sa we go ghet us a sandwich and a bottel ov fayalin or sumthhing?"

"No--nevver!" she exclaimd. "I didnt mene it dhat wa at aul. Ime gowing too hav this fool daans withe u, and enjoi evvery cecond ov it. And later Ime gowing too pac this daans card--which I hope u wil cine for me--awa in lavvender, so it wil go down in history dhat in mi ueth I reyaly did daans withe Gra Lenzman Kinnison. Perhaps Ive recuverd enuf nou too tauc and daans at the same time. Doo u miand if I aasc u sum cilly qweschonz about space?"

"Go ahead. Dha woant be cilly, if Ime enny juj. Elementary, perhaps, but not cilly."

"I hope so, but I thhinc yor beying charritabel agane. Like moast ov the gherlz here, I supose, Ive nevver bene out in depe space at aul. Beciadz a fu hops too the moone. Ive taken oonly too flits, and dha wer both oonly inter-plannetary--wun too Marz and wun too Venus. I nevver cood ce hou u depe-space men can reyaly understand whaut yor doowing--iather the friatfool speedz at which u travvel, the distancez u cuvver, or the wa yor comunicatorz werc. In fact, acording too the professorz,

no human miand can understand figguerz ov dhose magnichuedz at aul.
But u
must understand them, I shood thhinc... or, perhaps..."

"Or maby the ghi iznt human?" Kinnison laaft deeply, infecshously.
"No, the professorz ar rite. We caant understand the figguerz, but we
doant hav too--aul we hav too doo iz too werc withe em. And, nou dhat it
haz just percolated throo mi scul whoo u reyaly ar, dhat u ar
Gladdis Forester, its qwite clere dhat u and I ar in the same
bote."

"Me? Hou?" she exclaimd.

"The human miand canot reyaly understand a milleyon ov ennithhing. Yet
yor
faather, an imensly welthhy man, gave u clere titel too a milleyon
creddits in cash, too trane u in finans in the oonly wa dhat reyaly
projucez rezults--the hard wa ov acchuwal expereyens. U lost a lot ov
it at ferst, ov coers; but at laast acounts u had got it aul bac,
and sum beciadz, in spite ov aul the smart ghise trying too take it awa
from u. The fact dhat yor brane caant envizzage a milleyon creddits
haznt interfeerd withe yor manipulaishon ov dhat amount, haz it?"

"No, but dhats entiarly different!" she protested.

"Not in enny ecenshal fechure," he counterd. "I can explane it best,
perhaps, bi anallogy. U caant vizhuwalise, mentaly, the cise ov North
Amerricaa, iather, yet dhat fact duznt bother u in the leest while
yor driving around on it in an automobe. Whaut doo u drive? On the
ground, I mene, not in the are?"

"A DeKhotinsky spoerter."

"Um. Top speede a hundred and forty mialz an our, and I supose u cruse betwene nianty and a hundred. Wele hav too pretend dhat u drive a Crounover cedan, or sum uther big, slo jaloppy, so dhat u toor at about cixty and hav an absolute top ov nianty. Aulso, u hav a rajo. On the braudcaast bandz u can here a proogram from thre or foer thousand mialz awa; or, on short-wave, from enniwhare on Tellus..."

"I can ghet tite-beme short-wave proogramz from the moone," the gherl broke in. "Ive herd them lots ov tiamz."

"Yes," Kinnison acented drily, "at such tiamz az dhare didnt happen too be enny interferens."

"Stattic iz pritty bad, lots ov tiamz," the ares agrede.

"Wel, chainj mialz too parcex and uve got the picchure ov depe-space speedz and operaishonz," Kinnison informd her. "Our speede varese, ov coers, withe the dencity ov matter in space; but on the avverage--sa wun attom ov substans per ten cubic centimeterz ov space--we toor at about cixty parcex an our, and fool blaast iz about nianty. And our ultraa-wave comunicatorz, werking belo the levvel ov the eethher, in the sub-eethher..."

"Whautevver dhat iz," she interupted.

"Dhats az good a definishon ov it az enny," he grind at her. "We doant no whaut even the eethher iz, or whether or not it exists az an objective reyallity; too sa nuthhing ov whaut we so nonchalantly caul the sub-eethher.

We caant understand gravvity, even dho we make it too order. Nobody yet haz bene abel too sa hou it iz proppagated, or even whether or not it

iz proppagated--no wun haz bene abel too devise enny kiand ov an aparatus or meter or method bi which its nachure, pereyod, or veloscity can be determiand. Niather doo we no ennithhing about time or space. In fact, fundamentaly, we doant reyalz *no* much ov ennithhing at aul," he concluded.

"Cez u... but dhat maix me fele better, enniwa," she confided, snugling a littel clocer. "Go on about the comunicatorz."

"Ultraa-waivz ar faaster dhan ordinary rajo waivz, which ov coers travvel throo the eethher withe the veloscity ov lite, in just about the same raisheyo az dhat ov the spede ov our ships too the spede ov slo automobeelz--dhat iz, the raisheyo ov a parcec too a mile. Ruffly niantene billeyon too wun. Rainj, ov coers, iz proporshonal too the sqware ov the spede."

"Niantene billeyon!" she exclaimd. "And u just ced dhat nobody cood understand even a milleyon!"

"Dhats the point exactly," he went on, undisterbd. "U doant hav too understand or vizhuwalise it. Aul u hav too no iz dhat depe-space vescelz and comunicatorz cuvver distancez in parcex at practicaly the same rate dhat Telureyan automobeelz and rajose cuvver mialz. So, when sum space-fle taux too u about parcex, just thhinc ov mialz in termz ov an automobele and a tellecet and ule no az much az he duz--maby moer."

"I nevver herd it explaind dhat wa befoer--it duz make it evver so much cimpler. Wil u cine this, plese?"

"Just wun moer point." The music had ceest and he wauz cining her card, preparratioery too escorting her bac too her place. "Like yor suposedly

tite-beme Lunaa-Tellus hooccups, our long-rainj, eeqwaly tite-beme comunicatorz ar verry cencitive too interferens, iather natchural or artifisal. So, while under perfect condishonz we can comuncate clere across the gallaxy, dhare ar tiamz--particcularly when the piraits ar scrambling the channelz--dhat we caant drive a beme from here too Alfaa Centory.... Thanx a lot for the daans."

The uther gherlz did not qwite cum too blose az too which ov them wauz too ghet him next; and shortly--he nevver did no exactly hou it came about--he found himcelf daancing withe a lushous, cudly littel brunet, clad--parshaly clad, at leest--in a hi-slitted, flame-cullord sheeth ov sum nu fabric which the Lenzman had nevver cene befoer. It looct like soliddifide, tiatly-woven electriscity!

"O, Mr. Kinnison!" hiz nu partner coode, extatticaly, "I thhinc aul spaismen, and u Lenzmen particcularly, ar just too perfectly darn *herowic* for ennithhing! Whi, I thhinc space iz just *terribel!* I cimply caant *cope* withe it at *aul!*"

"Evver bene out, Mis?" he grind. He had nevver none menny soashal butterflise, and temporarily he had forgotten dhat such gherlz az this wun reyal existid.

"Whi, ov *coers!*" The yung woomman kept on beying exclammatoery.

"Clere out too the moone, perhaps?" he hazzarded.

"Doant be riddic--*evver* so much farther dhan dhat--whi, I went clere too *Marz!* And it gave me the screming *memese*, no les--I thaut I wood *colaps!*"

Dhat daans ended ultimaitly, and uther daancez withe uther gherlz follode; but Kinnison cood not thro himcelf intoo the gayety surrounding him. Juring hiz cadet dase he had enjoid such revvelz too the fool, but nou the whole thhing left him coald. Hiz miand incisted uppon reverting too its problem. Finaly, in the throng ov yung pepel on the floer, he sau a gherl withe a mas ov red-bronz hare and a suppel, superbly moalded figgure. He did not nede too awate her terning too reccognise hiz erstwhile ners and later acistant, whoome he had laast cene just this cide ov far-distant Boishaa 2.

"Mac!" Too her miand alone he cent out a thaut. "For the luv ov Clono, lend a hand--rescu me! Hou menny daancez hav u got ahead?"

"Nun at aul--Ime not dating ahead." She jumpt az dho sumwun had jabd her withe a nedel, then pauzd in pannic; ise wide, breth cumming faast, hart pounding. She had felt Lenzd thauts befoer, but this wauz sumthhing els, sumthhing entiarly different. Evvery cel ov hiz brane wauz open too her--and whaut *wauz* she ceying! She cood rede hiz miand az

foolly and az esily az... az... az Lenzmen wer supoast too be abel too rede enniboddese! She blanketed her thauts desperaitly, tride withe aul her mite not too thhinc at aul!

"QX, Mac," the thaut went qwiyetly on within her miand, qwite az dho nuthhing unnuezhuwal wer ocuuring. "No intruezhon ment--u didnt thhinc it; I aulreddy nu dhat if u started dating ahead ude be tide up until da aafter toomoro. Can I hav the next wun?"

"Shuerly, Kim."

"Thanx--the Lenz iz of for the rest ov the evening." She cide in relefe az he snapt the telepathhic line az dho he wer hanging up

the receiver of a telephone.

"I'd like to doans with you all, kidz," he adrest at larj the groope of budz surrounding him and iying him hun'grily, "but I've got this next wun. Ce u later, perhaps," and he wauz gon.

"Sorry, fellose," he remarct cazhuwaly, az he made hiz wa throo the cerkel of men around the gorjous red-hed. "Sorry, but this daans iz mine, iznt it, Mis MacDoogal?"

She nodded, flashing the rajant smile which had so arouzd hiz ire juring hiz hospitalizaishon. "I herd u invoke yor spaismanz god, but I wauz beghinning too be afrade dhat u had forgotten this daans."

"And she ced she wauznt dating ahead--the diplomat!" mermerd an ambassador, acide.

"Doant be a dope," a captane of Mareenz mutterd in repli. "She ment with the *us--dhats* a Gra Lenzman!"

Auldho the ners, az haz bene ced, wauz ennithing but smaul, she apeerd aulmoast petete against the Lenzmanz mity frame az dha tooc of. Cilently the too cerkeld the grate haul wuns; lustrous, goaldenly grene gown--of Erthly cilc, this wun, and les reveling dhan moast--swishing in perfect cadens against deftly and softly stepping hi-sipperd gra buits.

"This iz better, Mac," Kinnison cide, finaly, "but I lac just cevven thousand killocikelz of beying in chune with this. Doant no whauts the matter, but its clogghing mi gets. I must be ghetting too be a space-lous."

"A space-lous--u? Uu-uu!" She shooc her hed. "U no verry wel

whaut the matter iz--yor just too much ov a man too menshon it."

"Huu?" he demaanded.

"Uu-huu," she acerted, pozsitiavly if obleecly. "Ov coers yor not in chune withe this croud--hou cood u be? I doant fit intoo it enny moer micelf, and whaut Ime doowing iznt even a baffeld flare compaerd too yor job. Not wun in ten ov these flufs here toonite haz evver bene beyond the strattosfere; not wun in a hundred haz evver bene out az far az Jupiter, or haz evver had a cereyous thaut in her hed exept about cloadhz or men; not wun ov them aul haz enny moer ideyaa ov whaut a Lenzman reyaly iz dhan I hav ov hiper-space or ov non-Ueclijan geyommetry!"

"Kitty, kitty!" he laaft. "Sheethe the littel clauz, befoer u scrach sumbody!"

"Dhat iznt cattishnes, its the baerfaist trueth. Or perhaps," she amended, onnestly, "its boath tru and cattish, but its certainly tru. And dhat iznt haaf ov it. No wun in the Univers exept yorcelf reyaly *nose* whaut u ar doowing, and Ime pritty shure dhat oonly too uthertz even suspect. And Doctor Lacy iz *not* wun ov them," she concluded, cerprisingly.

Dho shoct, Kinnison did not mis a step. "U *doant* fit intoo this maitrix, enny moer dhan I doo," he agrede, qwiyetly. "Spose u and I cood doo a littel flit sumwhare?"

"Shuerly, Kim," and, braking out ov the croud, dha stroald out intoo the groundz. Not a werd wauz ced until dha wer ceted uppon a braud, lo bench beneeth the spredding foleyage ov a tre.

Then: "Whaut did u cum here for toonite, Mac--the *reyal* rezon?" he

demaanded, abruptly.

"I... we... u... I mene--o, skip it!" the gherl stammerd, a wave ov scarlet fludding her face and down even too her superb, bare shoalderz. Then she steddede hercelf and went on: "U ce, I agry withe u--az u sa, I chec u too niantene descimalz. Even Doctor Lacy, withe aul hiz nollej, can be sliatly scruwy at tiamz, I thhinc."

"O, so dhats it!" It wauz not, it wauz oonly a verry minor part ov her rezon; but the ners wood hav bitten her tung of raather dhan admit dhat she had cum too dhat daans soly and oonly becauz Kimbal Kinnison wauz too be dhare. "U nu, then, dhat this wauz oald Lacesee ideyaa?"

"Ov coers. U wood nevvver hav cum, els. He thhinx dhat u ma beghin wobling on the beme pritty soone unles u poot out a fu braking gets."

"And u?"

"Not in a milleyon, Kim. Lacesee az cockide az Trencose eethher, and I az good az toald him so. He ma wobbel a bit, but *u* woant. Uve got a job too doo, and yor doowing it. Ule finnish it, too, in spite ov aul the vermin infesting aul the gallaxese ov the macro-cozmic Univers!" she finnisht, pashonaitly.

"Clonose brasen whiskerz, Mac!" He ternd suddenly and staerd intently doun intoo her wide, goald-flect, tauny ise. She staerd bac for a moment, then looct awa.

"Doant looc at me like dhat!" she aulmoast screemd. "I caant stand it--u make me fele starc naked! I no yor Lenz iz of--Ide cimply di if it wauznt--but yor a miand-reder, even widhout it!"

She did no dhat dhat pouwerfool tellepath wauz of and wood remane of, and she wauz glad indede ov the fact; for her miand wauz ceething withe thauts which dhat Lenzman must not no, then or evver. And for hiz part, the Lenzman nu much better dhan she did dhat had he chosen too exert the pouwerz at hiz comaand she wood hav bene naked, mentaly and fizesicaly, too hiz percepshon; but he did not exert dhose pouwerz--then. The amenitese ov human relaishonship demaanded dhat sum faastnecez ov

reserv remane inviyolate, but he had too no whaut this woomman nu. If nescesary, he wood take the nollej awa from her bi foers, so compleetly dhat she wood nevver no dhat she had evver none it. Dhaerfoer:

"Just whaut doo u no, Mac, and hou did u fiand it out?" he demaanded; qwiyetly, but withe a stern finallity ov inflecshon dhat made a qwic chil run up and doun the nercez bac.

"I no a lot, Kim." The gherl shivverd sliatly, even dho the evening wauz worm and baalmy. "I lernd it from yor one miand. When u cauld me, bac dhare on the floer, I didnt ghet just a cin'ghel, sharp thaut, az dho u wer speking too me, az I aulwase did befoer. Insted, it ceemd az dho I wauz acchuwaly incide yor one miand--the whole ov it. Ive herd Lenzmen speke ov a wide-open too-wa, but I nevver had even the faintest incling ov whaut such a thhing wood be like--no wun cood whoo haz nevver expereyenst it. Ov coers I didnt--I coodnt--understand a milleyonth ov whaut I sau, or ceemd too ce. It wauz too vaast, too increddiably imens. I nevver dreemd enny mortal *cood* hav a miand like dhat, Kim! But it wauz gaastly, too--it gave me the shreking gitterz and just about cent me doun out ov controle. And u didnt even no it--I no u didnt! I didnt waunt too looc, reyal, but I coodnt help ceying, and Ime glad I did--I woodnt hav mist it for the werld!" she finnisht, aulmoast incoherently.

"Hm... m. Dhat chain'gez the picchure entiarly." Much too her cerprise, the manz vois wauz caalm and thautfool; not at aul incenst. Not even disterbd. "So I spild the beenz micelf, on a wide-open too-wa, and didnt even reyalise it[D]... I nu u wer bacfiring about sumthhing, but thaut it wauz becauz I mite thhinc u ghilty ov petty vannity. And I cauld *u* a dumbel wuns!" he marveld.

"Twice," she corected him, "and the cecond time I wauz nevver so glad too be cauld naimz in mi whole life."

"Nou I *no* I wauz ghetting too be a space-lous."

"Uu-uu, Kim," she denide agane, gently. "And u arnt a brat or a lug or a clunker, iather, even dho I *hav* cauld u such. But, nou dhat Ive acchuwaly got aul this stuf, whaut can u--whaut can we--doo about it?"

"Perhaps... probbably... I thhinc, cins I gave it too u micelf, Ile let u kepe it," Kinnison decided, sloly.

"Kepe it!" she exclaimd. "Ov coers Ile kepe it! Whi, its in mi miand--Ile *hav* too kepe it--nobody can take *nollej* awa from enniwun!"

"O, shure--ov coers," he mermerd, abcently. Dhare wer a lot ov thhing dhat Mac didnt no, and no good end wood be cervd bi enlitening her farther. "U ce, dhaerz a lot ov stuf in mi miand dhat I doant no much about micelf, yet. Cins I gave u an open channel, dhare must hav bene a good rezon for it, even dho, conshously, I doant no micelf whaut it wauz." He thaut intensly for moments, then went on: "Undoutedly the subconshous. Probbably it reccogniazd the necescity ov discusing the whole cichuwaishon withe sumwun havving a fresh vupoint,

sumwun whose ideyaaz can help me develop a fresh an'ghel ov atac.
Hainz
and I thhinc too much alike for him too be ov much help."

"U trust *me* dhat much?" the gherl aasct, dumfounded.

"Certainly," he replide widhout hesitaishon. "I no enuf about u too
no dhat u can kepe yor mouth shut."

Dhus unromantically did Kimbal Kinnison, Gra Lenzman, acnollej the
ferst glimmeringz ov the dauning percepshon ov a vaast fact--dhat this
ners and he wer too betwene whoome dhare nevver wood nor cood exist
enny
iyotaa ov dout or ov qweschon.

Then dha sat and tauct. Not iadly, az iz the fashon ov luvverz, ov the
minuesheya ov dhare one romantic afaerz, did these too convers, but
cozmicaly, ov the entire Univers and ov the aulreddy existent conflict
betwene the culchuerz ov Civilizaishon and Boscoanyaa.

Dha sat dhare, romanticaly enuf too aul outword ceming; dhare
privacy ashuerd bi Kinnisonz Lenz and bi hiz evver-wauchfool cens ov
percepshon. Time aafter time, compleetly unconshously, dhat cens
reecht out too uther cuppelz whoo aproacht; too tuch and too afect
dhare miandz so incidjously dhat dha did not no dhat dha wer beying
steerd awa from the tre in whose blac moone-shaddo sat the Lenzman
and the ners.

Finaly the long conversaishon came too an end and Kinnison acisted hiz
companyon too her fete. Hiz frame wauz strater, hiz ise held a nu and
briter lite.

"Bi the wa, Kim," she aasct iadly az dha stroald bac tooword the

baul-roome, "whoo iz this Clono, bi whoome u wer swaring a while ago? Anuther spaismanz god, like Noshabkeming, ov the Valereyanz?"

"Sumthhing like him, oanly moer so," he laaft. "A combinaishon ov Noshabkeming, sum ov the godz ov the ainshent Greex and Romanz, aul thre ov the Faits, and qwite a fu uther thhingz az wel. I thhinc, oridginaly, from Corvenaa, but faerly wide-spreed throo certane cecshonz ov the galaxy nou. Hese got so much stuf--teeth and hornz, clauz and whiskerz, tale and evverithhing--dhat hese much moer satisfactory too sware bi dhan enny uther space-god I no ov."

"But whi doo men hav too sware at aul, Kim?" she qwereede, cureyously. "Its so cilly."

"For the same rezon dhat wimmen cri," he counterd. "A man swaerz too kepe from crying, a woomman crise too kepe from swaring. Boath ar sound cicollogy. Saifty valvz--meenz ov blowing of exes preshure dhat wood utherwise blo fusez or bern out chuebz."

[D] Ov coers this wauz not the tru explanaishon; but at dhat time oanly Mentor ov Areezhaa had enny ideyaa ov the reyal pouwer ov Clarissaa MacDoogalz miand. E.E.S.

CHAPTER 3

DAY EX MACKINAA

IN THE LIABRARY OV THE POERT ADMIRALZ richly cumfortabel home, a roome az hevvely garded against aul formz ov intruezhon az wauz hiz private office, too oald but active Gra Lenzmen sat and grind at eche uther like the too consperratorz which in fact dha wer. Wun tooc a sqwaut, red bottel ov fayalin[E] from a cabbinet and fild too smaul glaacez. The glaacez clinct, rim too rim.

"Heerz too luv!" Hainz gave the toast.

"Aint it grand!" Cerjon-Marshal Lacy responded.

"Doun the hach!" dha chaanted in unison, and acshon follode werd.

"U arnt aasking if evverithhing stade on the beme." This from Lacy.

"No nede--I had a spi-ra on the whole performans."

"U wood--yor the tipe. Houwevver, I wood hav, too, if I had a pannel fool ov them in *mi* office.... Wel, sa it, u oald space-helleyon!" Lacy grind agane, aulbeyit a trifel rily.

"Nuthhing too sa, sau-boanz. U did a grand job, and uve got nuthhing too blo a get about."

"No? Hou wood u like too hav a red-hedded spitfire whoose scaersly dri behiand the eerz yet tel u too yor teeth dhat uve got softening ov the brane? Dhat u had the mental capascity ov a nat, the intelect ov a Zabriscan fontemaa? And too hav too take it, widhout even heving the insubordinate yung jade intoo the can for about twenty-five wel-ernd blac spots?"

"O, cum, nou, yor just blaasting. It wauznt dhat bad!"

"Perhaps not--qwite--but it wauz bad enuf."

"Shele gro up, sum da, and reyalise dhat u wer foxing her cix wase from the origin."

"Probbably.... In the meentime, its aul part ov the biggher job.... Thanc God Ime not yung enny moer. Dha suffer so."

"Chec. *Hou* dha suffer!"

"But u sau the ending and I didnt. Hou did it tern out?" Lacy aasct.

"Partly good, partly bad." Hainz sloly poerd too moer drinx and thautfooly swerld the crimzon, pun'gently aromattic liqwid around and around in hiz glaas befoer he spoke agane. "Hooct--but she nose it, and Ime afrade shele doo sumthhing about it."

"Shese a smart opperator--I toald u she wauz. She duznt fox hercelf about ennithhing. Hmm.... A bit ov ceparaihon iz indicated, it wood ceme."

"Chec. Can u cend out a hospital ship sumwhare, so az too ghet rid ov her for too or thre weex?"

"Can doo. Thre weex be enuf? We caant cend him enniwhare, u no."

"Plenty--hele be gon in too." Then, az Lacy glaanst at him qweschoningly, Hainz continnude: "Reddy for a shoc? Hese gowing too Lundmarx Nebbulaa."

"But he *caant!* Dhat wood take yeerz! Nobody haz evver got bac from

dhare yet, and dhaerz this nu job ov hiz. Beciadz, this ceparashon iz oonly supoast too laast until u can spare him for a while!"

"If it taix verry long hese cumming bac. The ideyaa haz aulwase bene, u no, dhat intergalactic matter ma be so thhin--wun attom per leter or so--dhat such a flit woant take wun-tenth the time supoazd. We reccognise the dain'ger--hese gowing wel heeld."

"Hou wel?"

"The verry best."

"I hate too clog dhare gets this wa, but its got too be dun. Wele ghiv her a rase when I cend her out--make her cector chefe. Huu?"

"Did I here enny such werdz laitley az spitfire, huscy, and jade, or did I dreme them?" Hainz aasct, qwizsicaly.

"Shese aul ov them, and moer--but shese wun ov the best nercez and wun ov the finest wimmen dhat evver livd, too!"

"QX, Lacy, ghiv her her rase. Ov coers shese good. If she wauznt, she woodnt be in on this dele at aul. In fact, dhare about az fine a cappel ov yungsterz az oald Tellus evver projuest."

"Dha ar dhat. Man, *whaut* a pare ov skelletonz!"

* * *

And in the Nercez Qworterz a yung woomman withe a welth ov red-bronz-aubern hare and tauny ise wauz staring at her one reflecshon in a mirror.

"U haaf-wit, u ninny, u lug!" she stormd, bitterly if aulmoast inaudibly, at dhat reflecshon. "U lame-braind moeron, u red-hedded, ideyottic imbecele, u miacrocefallic dumbel, u *clunker!* Ov aul the men in this whole cockide gallaxy, u *wood* hav too make a dive at Kimbal Kinnison, the wun man whoo thhinx yor just part ov the fernichure. At a Gra Lenzman...." Her expreshon chainjd and she whisperd softly, "A... Gra... Lenzman. He *caant* luv enniboddy az long az hese carreying dhat lode. Dha caant let themcelvz be human... qwite... perhaps luvving *him* wil be enuf...."

She stratend up, shrugd, and smiald; but even dhat pittifool travvesty ov a smile cood not long enjure. Shortly it wauz berrede in waivz ov pane and the gherl thru hercelf doun uppon her bed.

"O Kim, Kim!" she sobd. "I wish... whi caant u... O, whi did I evver hav too be born!"

* * *

Thre weex later, far out in space, Kimbal Kinnison wauz thhinking thauts entiarly forane too hiz uezhuwal pattern. He wauz in hiz bunc, smoking dremily, staring unceying at the metallic celing. He wauz not thhinking ov Boscone.

When he had thaut at Mac, bac dhare at dhat daans, he had, for the ferst time in hiz life, faild too narro doun hiz beme too the exact thaut beying cent. Whi? The explanaishon he had ghivven the gherl wauz totaly inaddeqwate. For dhat matter, whi had he bene so glad too ce her dhare? And whi, at evvery od moment, did vizhonz ov her kepe cumming intoo

hiz miand--her form and fechuerz, her ise, her lips, her startling hare?... She wauz butifool, ov coers, but not neerly such a cevven-ceptor caulout az dhat thhionite dreme he had met on

Aldebbaran 2--and hiz oonly thaut ov *her* wauz an ocaizhonal faint regret dhat he hadnt haaf-rung her luvly nec... whi, she wauznt reyaly az good-loocking az, and didnt hav haaf the *je ne sa qwaa* ov, dhat blond ares--whaut wauz her name?--o, yes, Forester....

Dhare wauz oonly wun aancer, and it jard him too the coer--he wood not admit it, even too himcelf. He *coodnt* luv enniboddy--it just cimply wauz not in the cardz. He had a job too doo. The Patrole had spent a milleyon creddits making a Lenzman out ov him, and it wauz up too him too ghiv them sum kiand ov a run for dhare munny. No Lenzman had enny biznes withe a wife, espeshaly a Gra Lenzman. He coodnt cit doun enniwhare, and she coodnt flit withe him. Beciadz, nine out ov evvery ten Gra Lenzmen got kild befoer dha finnisht dhare jobz, and the wun dhat did happen too liv long enuf too retire too a desc wauz aulmoast aulwase haaf mashenery and artifishal parts....

No, not in cevven thouzand yeerz. No woomman deservd too hav her life made intoo such a hel on erth az dhat wood be--yeerz ov agony, ov hart-braking suspens, climaxt bi untiamly widdohood; or, at best, the waisting ov the rithest part ov her life uppon a huzband whoo wauz haaf stele, rubber, and fennoline plaastic. Red in particcular wauz much too splendid a person too be let in for ennithhing like dhat....

But hoald on--get bac! Whaut made him thhinc he rated enny such gherl? Dhat dhare wauz even a pocibillity--espeshaly in vu ov the wa he had behaidv while under her care in Bace Hospital--dhat she wood evver fele

like beying ennithhing moer too him dhan a strictly impersonal ners?
Probbably not--he had Clonose one gadolinyum guts too thhinc dhat she
wood
marry *him*, under enny condishonz, even if he made a fool-pouwer dive at
her....

Just the same, she mite. Looc at whaut wimmen did faul in luv withe,
sumtiamz. So hede nevver make enny kiand ov a dive at her; no, not even a
paas. She wauz too swete, too fine, too vital a woomman too be tide too
enny
space-lous; she deservd happines, not hartbrake. She deservd the
best dhare wauz in life, not the werst; the whole luv ov a whole man for
a whole liaftime, not the fracshonz which wer aul dhat he cood offer
enny woomman. Az long az he cood thhinc a strate thaut he woodnt make
enny moashonz tooword spoiling her life. In fact, he hadnt better ce
Reddy agane. He woodnt go nere enny plannet she wauz on, and if he sau
her out in space hede go sumwhare els at a hundred parcex an our.

Withe a bitter imprecaishon Kinnison sprang out ov hiz bunc, herld hiz
haaf-smoact ciggaret at an ash-tra, and strode tooword the controle
roome.

* * *

The ship he rode wauz ov the Patroalz best. Superbly pouwerd, for flite,
defens, and offens, she wauz widhaul a complete space-laboratoery and
observatoery; and her personel, over and abuv her reggular cru, wauz az
varede az her eqwipment. She carrede ten Lenzmen, a cercumstaans uneke
in the annalz ov space, even for such trubbel-shooting battel-waggon az
the *Dauntles* wauz; and a ciyentiffic staaf which wauz practicaly a
cros-cecshon ov the Tre ov Nollej. She carrede Leftennant Peter
vanBuskerck and hiz cumpany ov Valereyan wialdcats; Worcel ov Velanshaa
and

thre scoer ov hiz reptilleyan kinzmen; Tregoncy, the blocky Rigelleyan Lenzman, and a duzsen or so ov hiz felloze; Maaster Tecnishan LaaVern Thorndike and hiz cru. She carrede thre Maaster Pilots, Prime Bacez best--Henderson, Shermerhorn and Wautson.

The *Dauntles* wauz an imens vescel. She had too be, in order too carry, in adishon too the men and the thhingz reqwisishond bi Kinnison, the personel and the eqwipment which Poert Admiral Hainz had incisted uppon cending withe him.

"But grate Clono, Chefe, thhinc ov whaut a hole yor making in Prime Bace if we doant ghet bac!" Kinnison had protested.

"Yor cumming bac, Kinnison," the Poert Admiral had replide, graivly. "Dhat iz whi I am cending these men and this stuf along--too be az shure az I poscibly can dhat u *doo* cum bac."

Nou dha wer out in inter-galactic space, and the Gra Lenzman, closing hiz ise, cent hiz cens ov percepshon out beyond the confining iarn waulz and let it rome the void. This wauz better dhan a vizsiplate; withe no matereyal barreyerz or limitaishonz he wauz feesting uppon a spektakel scaersly too be picchuerd in the moast untrammeld imadginingz ov man.

Dhare wer no plannets, no sunz, no starz; no meteyoriats, no partikelz ov cozmic daibry. Aul neerbi space wauz empty, withe an indescribabel perfecshon ov emptines at the verry thaut ov which the miand qwaild in incomprehending horror. And, axenchuwating dhat emptines, at such miand-cering distancez az too be dworft intoo buttonz, and yet, becauz ov dhare intrinsic masciavnes, starcly aparrent in dhare thre-dimenshonal relaishonz, dhare hung poizd and moashonlesly staitly the component gallaxese ov a Univers.

Behind the fliying vescel the Ferst Gallaxy wauz a tiny, briatly-shining lenz, so far awa dhat such minuesheya az individjuwal solar cistemz wer invizibel; so distant dhat even the gigantic mascez ov its acumpaneying globular star-clusterz wer merjd indistin'gwishably intoo its sharply lenticular shape. In frunt ov her, too rite and too left ov her, abuv and beneeth her wer uther gallaxese, nevver exploerd bi man or bi enny uther beyingz subscribing too the code ov Galactic Civilizaishon. Sum, ej on, wer thhin, wafer-like. Utherz apeerd az fool disx, showing faintly or boaldly the prodidjous, mathhemattically inexpliccabel spiral armz bi verchu ov whoose obscure funcshoning dha had cum intoo beying. Betwene these too extreemz dhare wauz evvery poscibel vareyant in an'gular displaisment.

Utterly incomprehencibel auldho the spede ov the space-fliyer wauz, yet dhose gallaxese remaind rellatiavly moashonles, our aafter our. Whaut distancez! Whaut magnificens! Whaut granjure! Whaut afool, whaut poinyantly sollem caalm!

Despite the fact dhat Kinnison had gon out dhare expecting too behoald dhat verry cene, he felt aud too incignificans bi the overwhelming, the cozmic imencity ov the spektakel. Whaut biznes had he, a sub-electronnic mij from an ultraa-miacroscoppic plannet, venchuring out intoo macro-cozmic space, a demane comprehencibel oanly too the omnishent and omnippetent Creyator?

He got up, shaking of the futile moode. This woodnt ghet him too the ferst chec-staishon, and he had a job too doo. And aafter aul, wauznt man az big az space? Cood he hav cum out here, utherwise? He wauz. Yes, man wauz biggher even dhan space. Man, bi hiz verry envizhonment ov macro-cozmic space, had aulreddy maasterd it.

Beciadz, the Boscoanyanz, whoowevver dha mite be, had certainly maasterd

it; he wauz nou certane dhat dha wer opperating uppon an inter-galactic scale. Even aafter leving Tellus he had hoapt and had reyaly expected dhat hiz line wood lede too a strong'hoald in sum star-cluster belonging too hiz one gallaxy, so distant from it or perhaps so smaual az too hav escaipt the notice ov the chart-makerz; but such wauz not the cace. No poscibel error in iather the determinaishon or the following ov dhat line plaist it enniwhare nere enny such cluster. It led strate too and oanly too Lundmarx Nebbulaa; and dhat gallaxy wauz, dhaerfoer, hiz prezsent destinaishon.

Man wauz certainly az good az the piraits; probbably better, on the bacis ov paast performans. Ov aul the racez ov the gallaxy, man had aulwase taken the inishative, had aulwase bene the leder and comaander. And, withe the exepshon ov the Areezhanz, man had the best brane in the gallaxy.

The thaut ov dhat emminently filosofical race gave Kinnison pauz. Hiz Areezhan sponsor had toald him dhat bi verchu ov the Lenz the Patrole shood be abel too make Civilizaishon ceure throowout the gallaxy. Just whaut did dhat mene--dhat it cood not go outside? Or did even the Areezhanz suspect dhat Boscoanyaa wauz in fact inter-galactic? Probbably. Mentor had ced dhat, ghivven enny wun deffinite fact, a reyaly competent miand cood envizzage the entire Univers; even dho had added caerfooly dhat hiz one miand wauz not a reyaly competent wun.

But this, too, wauz idel speculaishon, and it wauz time too receve and too corelate sum moer repoerts. Dhaerfoer, wun bi wun, he got in tuch withe ciyentists and observerz.

The dencity ov matter in space, which had bene lescening steddily, wauz nou aproximaitly constant at wun attom per foer hundred cubic

centimeterz. Dhare spede wauz dhaerfoer about a hundred thousand
parcex
per our; and, even alouwing for the slowing up at boath endz ju too the
dencity ov the mejum, the trip shood not take over ten dase.

The pouwer cichuwaishon, which had bene hiz gravest care, cins it wauz
aulmoast the oonly factor not amenabel too ththeyorettical solueshon, wauz
even
better dhan enniwun had daerd hope; the cozmik ennergy avalabel in space
had acchuwaly bene increcing az the matter content decreest--a fact
which ceemd too bare out the contenshon dhat ennergy wauz
continnuwaly
beyng converted intoo matter in such rejonz. It wauz taking much les
exitashon ov the intake screenz too projece a ghivven flo ov pouwer dhan
enny figgure evver observd in the dencer mejaa within the gallaxy.

Dhus, the atommic motorz which cervd az exiterz had a maximum pouwer
ov
foer hundred poundz an our; dhat iz, eche exiter cood traansform dhat
amount ov matter intoo pure ennergy and emploi the outpoot uesfooly in
energising the intake screene too which it wauz conected. Eche screene,
opperating normaly on a hundred thousand too wun raisheyo, wood then
fernish its receptor on the ship withe ennergy eqwivvalent too the
aniyilaishon ov foer milleyon poundz per our ov matereyal substans. Out
dhare, houwevver, it wauz beyng observd dhat the intake-exiter raisheyo,
insted ov beyng les dhan a hundred thousand too wun, wauz acchuwaly
aulmoast a milleyon too wun.

It wood cerv no uesfool perpoce here too go ferther intoo the detailz ov
enny moer ov the repoerts, or too dwel at enny grate length uppon the
remainder ov the gerny too the Cecond Gallaxy. Sufice it too sa dhat
Kinnison and hiz hily-traind cru observd, clascifide, recorded, and
conferd; and dhat dha aproacht dhare destinaishon withe evvery
poscibel precaushon. Detectorz wer fool out, observerz wer at evvery

plate, the ship itself wauz az imune too detecshon az Hochkis nullifierz cood make it.

Up too the Cecond Gallaxy the *Dauntles* flasht, and intoo it. Wauz this Iland Univers ecenshaly like the Ferst Gallaxy az too plannets and pepelz? If so, had dha bene wun over or wiapt out bi the horid culchure ov Boscoanyaa or wauz the strugghel stil gowing on?

"If we ashume, az we must, dhat the line we follode wauz the trace ov Boscoanz beme," argude the sagaishous Worcel, "the probabillity iz verry grate dhat the ennemy iz in verchuwal controle ov this entire gallaxy. Utherwise--if dha wer in a minority or wer strugling cereyously for dominyon--dha cood niather hav spaerd the foercez which invaded our gallaxy, nor wood dha hav bene in condishon too rebild dhare vescelz az dha did too mach the nu armaments devellopt bi the Patrole."

"Verry probbably tru," agrede Kinnison, and dhat wauz the concensus ov opinyon. "Dhaerfoer we waunt too doo our scouting verry qwiyetly. But in sum wase dhat maix it aul the better. If dhare in controle, dha woant be unjuly suspishous."

And dhus it pruivd. A plannet-baring sun wauz soone located, and while the *Dauntles* wauz stil lite-yeerz distant from it, cevveral ships wer detected. At leest, the Boscoanyanz wer not using nullifierz!

Spi-rase wer cent out. Tregoncy the Rigelleyan Lenzman exerted too the fool hiz pouwerz ov percepshon, and Kinnison herld dounword too the plannets cerface a mental vupoint and comunicaishonz center. Dhat the plannet wauz Boscoanyan wauz soone lernd, but dhat wauz aul. It wauz scaersly fortifide: no trace cood he fiand ov a beme communicating withe Boscone.

Solar cistem aafter solar cistem wauz found and studdede, withe like rezult.

But finaly, out in space, wun ov the screenz shode activvity; a beme wauz in operaishon betwene a vescel then uppon the plaits and sum uther staishon. Kinnison tapt it qwicly; and, while observerz wer determining its direcshon, hardnes, and pouwer, a thaut flode smuidhly intoo the Lenzmanz brane.

"...procede at wuns too releve vescel P4K730. Iakhlan, speking for Boscone, ending message."

"Follo dhat ship, Hen!" Kinnison directed, crisply. "Not too cloce, but doant loose him!" He then relade too the utherz the orderz which had bene intercepted.

"The same formulaa, huu?" vanBuskerc roerd, and "Just anuther leftenant, dhat soundz like, not Boscone himcelf." Thorndike added.

"Perhaps so, perhaps not." The Gra Lenzman wauz meerly thautfool. "It duznt proove a thhing exept dhat Helmuth wauz not Boscone, which wauz aulreddy faerly certane. If we can proove dhat dhare iz such a beying az Boscone, and dhat he iznt in this gallaxy... wel, in dhat cace, wele go sumwhare els," he concluded, withe grim finallity.

The chace wauz comparratiavly short, leding tooword a yellowish star around which swung ate avverage-ciazd plannets. Tooword wun ov these flu the unsuspecting pirate, follode bi the Patrole vescel, and it soone became aparrent dhat dhare wauz a battel gowing on. Wun spot uppon the plannets cerface, iather a citty or a tremendous millitary bace, wauz doamd over bi a screne which wauz wun blianding glare ov rajans. And for mialz in evvery direcshon ships ov space wer waging spectaccularly devvastating

worfare.

Kinnison shot a thaut doun intoo the fortres, and withe the leest poscibel introducshon or preyambel, got intoo tuch withe wun ov its hi officerz. He wauz not cerpriazd too lern dhat dhose pepel wer moer or les human in aperans, cins the plannet wauz qwite cimmilar too Tellus in age, climate, atmosfere, and mas.

"Yes, we ar fiting Boscoanyaa," the aancering thaut came coaldly clere. "We nede help, and badly. Can u...?"

"Were detected!" Kinnisonz atenshon wauz ceezd bi a yel from the boerd. "Dhare aul cumming at us at wuns!"

Whether the ciyentists ov Boscone devellopt the detector-nullifiyer befoer or aafter Helmuths falure too dejuce the Lenzmanz uce ov such an instrument iz a nice qweschon, and wun uppon which a grate dele haz bene ced. While interesting, the point iz reyaly imateroyal here; the facts remaning the same--dhat the piraits not oonly had it at the time ov the Patroalz ferst vizsit too the Ceccond Galaxy, but had uezd it too such good advaantage dhat the dennisenz ov dhat recalcitrant plannet had bene foerst, in shere desperaishon ov celf-preservaishon, too werc out a scrambler for dhat nulificaishon and too suround dhare werld withe its rajaishonz. Dha cood not restoer perfect detecshon, but the condishon for complete nulificaishon wauz so crittical dhat it wauz a comparratiavly cimpel matter too upcet it sufishly so dhat an immagine ov a sort wauz reveeld. And, at dhat cloce rainj, enny sort ov an immagine wauz enuf.

The *Dauntles*, aproching the plannet, enterd the zone ov scrambling and stood reveeld plainly enuf uppon the plaits ov the ennemy vescelz. Dha atact instantly and vishously; within a cecond aafter the loocout

had shouted hiz warning the outer screenz ov the Patrole ship wer blasing incandescent under the fureyous asaults ov a duzsen Boscoanyan beemz.

[E] A stimulating, auldho non-intoxicating bevverage prepaerd from the frute ov a Creveenyan shrub, *Fayaloclastus Augustifoleyus Barnsted*; much in favor az a ceremoanyal drinc amung dhose whoo can afoerd it. E.E.S.

CHAPTER 4

MEDON

FOR A MOMENT AUL ISE WER fixt aprehenciavly uppon meterz and recorderz, but dhare wauz no imejate cauz for alarm. The bilderz ov the *Dauntles* had bilt wel; her outer screne, the litest ov her cerese ov foer, wauz carreying the atackerz lode withe no cine ov distres.

"Strap down, evveriboddy," the expedishonz comaander orderd then. "Inert her, Hen. Mach velosity withe dhat bace," and az Maaster Pilot Henry Henderson cut hiz Berghenhome the vescel lercht wialdly acide az its intrinsic velosity wauz restoerd.

Hendersonz fin'gherz swept over hiz boerd az rappidly and az shuerly az dhose ov an organist over the banct kese ov hiz console; projucing, not cordz and arpedgeyose ov harmony, but roering blaasts ov

preciasly-controald pouwer. Eche ke-like swich controald wun get. Liatly and fletingly tucht, it projuest a gentel erj; at sharp, fool contact it yeelded a mity, sollid shuv; deprest stil farther, so az too loc intoo enny wun ov a duzsen notchez, it braut intoo beying a torent ov propulcive foers ov enny desiard magnichude, which ceest oonly when its ke-relece wauz tucht.

And Henderson wauz a verchuwoso. Smuidhly, effortlesly, but in a space ov
cecondz the grate vescel roald over, spirald, and swung until her landing-gets wer in line and exerting five gravvitesse ov thrust. Then, eeqwaly smuidhly, aulmoast imperceptibly, the line ov foers wauz varede until the flame-enshrouded dome wauz staishonary belo them. Nobody, not even the too uther Maaster Pilots, and leest ov aul Henderson himcelf, pade enny atenshon too the pollisht perfecshon, the consumate artistry, ov the performans. Dhat wauz hiz job. He wauz a Maaster Pilot, and wun ov
the haulmarx ov hiz rating wauz the habbit ov making difficult manuverz looc esy.

"Take em nou, Chefe? Caant we, huu?" Chatwa, the Chefe Firing Officer, did not sa dhose werdz. He did not nede too. The attichude and poschure ov
the C.F.O. and hiz subordinaits made the thaut tensly plane.

"Not yet, Chatty," the Lenzman aancerd the uncent thaut. "Wele hav too wate until dha en'globe us, so we can ghet em aul. Its got too be aul or nun--if even wun ov them ghets awa or even haz time too annalise and repoert on the stuf were gowing too use itl be just too bad."

He then got in tuch withe the officer within the belegherd bace and renude the conversaishon at the point at which it had bene broken of.

"We can help u, I thhinc; but too doo so efectiavly we must hav clere eethher. Wil u plese order yor ships awa, out ov even extreme rainj?"

"For hou long? Dha can doo us irepparabel dammage in wun rotaishon ov the plannet."

"Wun-twentyeth ov dhat time, at moast--if we caant doo it in dhat time we caant doo it at aul. Nor wil dha direct menny beemz at u, if enny. Dhale be werking on us."

Then, az the defending ships darted awa, Kinnison ternd too hiz C.F.O.

"QX, Chatty. Open up withe yor cecondarese. Fire at wil!"

Then from progectorz ov a pouwer dhaertofoer carrede oonly bi maulerz dhare raivd out against the nerest Boscoanyan vescelz beemz ov a veyemens compaerd too which the ennemese one ceemd weke, futile. And dhose wer the cecondarese!

Az haz bene intimated, the *Dauntles* wauz an unnuezhuwal ship. She wauz enormous. She wauz biggher even dhan a mauler in acchuwal bulc and mas; and

from nedel-beect prou too get-studded stern she wauz litteraly pact withe pouwer--pouwer for enny emergency concevabel too the fertile miandz ov

Poert Admiral Hainz and hiz staaf ov desinerz and en'gineerz. Insted ov too, or at moast thre intake-screne exiterz, she had too hundred. Her bus-barz, insted ov beying the convenshonal rectan'gular copperz, ov a fu sqware inchez cros-cecshonal areyaa, wer lamminated memberz bilt up ov co-acshal chubing ov pure cilver too a diyammeter ov over a yard--multipel

and parralel conductorz, eche ov whoose current-carreying capascity wauz too be mezhuerd oanly in milleyonz ov ampaerz. And evverithhing els aboard dhat mity en'gine ov destrucshon wauz uppon the same Garganchuwan scale.

Titannic dho dhose thrusts wer, not a pirate ship wauz cereyously hert. Outer screenz went doun, and moer dhan a fu ov the cecond lianz ov defens aulso faild. But dhat wauz the Patroalmenz strategie; too let the ennemy no dhat dha had wepponz ov offens sumwhaut supereyor too dhare one, but not qwite pouwerfool enuf too be a reyal menace.

In minnuets, dhaerfoer, the Boscoanyanz rusht up and proceded too en'globe the nucummer; suposing, ov coers, dhat she wauz a product ov the world belo, dhat she wauz mand bi the race whoo had so long and so suxesfooly faut of Boscoanyan encroachment.

Dha atact, and under the concentrated fury ov dhare beemz the outer screne ov the Patrole ship began too fale. Hiyer and hiyer intoo the spectrum it rajated, blianding white... blu... an intollerabel viyolet glare; then, patchily, throo the invizibel ultraa-viyolet and intoo the blac ov extincshon. The cecond screne resisted lon'gher and moer stubbornly, but finaly it aulso went doun; the thherd automatticaly taking up the berden ov defens. Cimultainyously the pouwer ov the *Dauntles* projectorz wekend, az dho she wer shifting her pouwer from offens too defens in order too stiffen her thherd, and suposedly her laast, sheelding screne.

"Pritty soone, nou, Chatwa," Kinnison observd. "Just az soone az dha can repoert dhat dhawe got us in a bad wa; dhat its just a matter ov

time until dha blo us out ov the eethher. Better repoert nou--Ile poot u on the spoole."

"We ar eqwipt too energise cimultainyously ate ov the nu, replasabel-unit primary progectorz," the C.F.O. stated, crisply. "Dhare ar twenty-wun vescelz en'globing us, and no utherz within detecshon. Withe a discharj pereyod ov point six sero and a switching interval ov point sero nine, the entire acshon shood occupi wun point nine ate cecondz."

"Chefe Comunicaishonz Officer Nelson on the spoole. Can the laast cerviving ship ov the ennemy repoert enuf in too cecondz too doo us matereyal harm?"

"In mi opinyon it can not, cer," Nelson repoerted, formaly. "The Comunicaishonz Officer iz niather an observer nor a tecnishan; he meerly traanzmits whautevver matereyal iz ghivven him bi uther officerz for traanzmishon. If he iz aulreddy werking a beme too hiz bace at the moment ov our ferst blaast he mite be abel too repoert the destrucshon ov vescelz, but he cood not be specific az too the nachure ov the agent uezd. Such a repoert cood doo no harm, az the fact ov the destrucshon ov the vescelz wil in enny event becum aparrent shortly. Cins we ar aparrently beying overcum esily, houwevver, and this iz a rootene acshon, the probabillity iz dhat this detachment iz not in direct comunicaishon withe Bace at enny ghivven moment. If not, he cood not establish werking controle in too cecondz."

"Kinnison nou repoerting. Havving determiand too the best ov mi abillity dhat en'gaging the ennemy at this time wil not enabel them too cend Boscone enny informaishon regarding our primary armament, I nou ghiv the werd too... FIRE!"

The underlying principle of the destructive beam project was overloading a regulator projector had, it is true, been discovered by a Bosconian technician. Insofar as Bosconians were concerned, however, the secret had
died with its inventor; since the pirates had at that time no headquarters in the First Galaxy. And the Patrol had had months of time in which to perfect it, for that work was begun before the last of Helmuth's garjan fortresses had been destroyed.

The projector was not too fatal to its crew, since they were protected from the lethal back-radiation, not only by shields of foers, but also by foot after impennetrable foot of lead, osmium, carbon, cadmium, and
paraffin. The reflectors were of nio-carbide, beryllium and permeated by M K R fields; the reflectors were constructed of the most ultimately resistant materials none too common of the age. But even so the unit had a useful life of but little over half a second, so that the
unit was the overload at which it was used. Like a rifle cartridge, it was good for only one shot. Then it was thrown away, to be replaced by a new unit.

Those problems were relatively simple of solution. Switching those enormous energies was the great stumbling block. The old Kimmerling block-disperser circuit-breaker was prone to arc-over under loads much in excess of a hundred billion KVA, hence could not even be considered in this new application. However, the Patrol finally succeeded in working out a combination of the innermost antenna and the
semipermeable-condenser tips, which they called the Thorndike heavy-duty switch. It was cumbersome, of course--any device that interrupts voltage and amperage of the really astronomical magnitudes in question
could not at that time be small--but it was positive, fast-acting, and reliable.

At Kinnisonz werd ov comaand ate ov dhose indescribabel primary beemz lasht out; stilettose ov irresistibly pentrant ennergy which not even a Q-tipe helix cood withstand. Throo screenz, throo waul-sheeldz, and throo mettal dha herteld in a space ov time aulmoast too brefe too be mezhuerd. Then, befoer eche beme expiard, it wauz swung a littel, so dhat the victim wauz litteraly split apart or carvd intoo cecshonz. Performans exeded bi far dhat ov the haistily-improviazd weppon which had so esily destroid the hevvy cruiserz ov the Patrole; in fact, it chect aulmoast exactly withe the ththeyorettical figgure ov the desinerz.

Az the ferst ate beemz winct out ate moer came intoo beying, then five moer; and meenwhile the mity cecondarese wer sweping the hevvenz withe fool-aperchure coanz ov destrucshon. Mettal ment no moer too dhose rase dhan did organnic matereyal; evverithhing sollid or liqwid whift intoo vapor and disapeerd. The *Dauntles* la alone in the ski ov dhat nu werld.

"Marvelous--wunderfool!" the thaut bete intoo Kinnisonz brane az soone az he re-establisht rapor withe the beying so far belo. "We hav recauld our ships. Wil u plese cum down too our space-poert at wuns, so dhat we can poot intoo execueshon a plan which haz bene long in preparaishon?"

"Az soone az yor ships ar doun," the Telureyan aqweyest. "Not sooner, az yor landing convenshonz ar doutles verry unlike our one and we doo not wish too cauz dizaaster. Ghiv me the werd when yor feeld iz entiarly clere."

Dhat werd came soone and Kinnison nodded too the pilots. Wuns moer inershaales the *Dauntles* shot dounword, depe intoo atmosfere, befoer her inershaa wauz restoerd. Rematching velosity this time wauz a cimpel

matter, and uppon the touwering, pouwerfooly resilleient pillarz ov her landing-gets the inconcevable mas ov the Telureyan ship ov wor cetteld tooword the ground, az liatly ceming az a waufted thhisceldoun.

"Dhare cradelz woodnt fit us, ov coers, even if dha wer big enuf--which dha arnt, bi haaf," Shermerhorn commented, "Whare doo dha waunt us too poot her?"

"Enniwhare,' dha sa," the Lenzman aancerd, "but we doant waunt too take dhat too litteraly--widhout a sollid doc shele make an aufool hole, wharevver we cet her doun. Woant hert her enny. Shese desiand for it--we coodnt expect too fiand cradelz too fit her enniwhare exept on Tellus. Ide sa too la her doun on her belly over dhare in dhat corner, out ov the wa; az cloce too dhat big hangar az u can werc widhout blaasting it out withe yor gets."

Az Kinnison had intimated, the liatnes ov the vescel wauz indede oonly ceming. Superbly and effortlesly the big bote cept dounword intoo the dezsignated corner; but when she tucht the paivment she did not stop. Stil esily and widhout jar or jolt she cetteld--a fool twenty fete intoo the concrete, reyenforcing stele, and hard-pact erth ov the feeld befoer she came too a hault.

"Whaut a monster! Whoo ar dha? Whare cood dha hav cum from?..." Kinnison caut a confuezhon ov starteld thauts az the reyal cise and mas ov the vizsitor became aparrent too the natiavz. Then agane came the clere thaut ov the officer.

"We wood like verry much too hav u and az menny az poscibel ov yor companyonz cum too confer withe us az soone az u hav tested our atmosfere. Cum in space-suets if u must."

The are wauz tested and found sutabel. Tru, it did not mach exactly dhat ov Tellus, or Rigel 4, or Velanshaa; but then, niather did dhat ov

the *Dauntles*, cins dhat gaishous mixchure wauz a compromise wun, and moastly artifishal too boote.

"Worcel, Tregoncy, and I wil go too this conferens," Kinnison decided. "The rest ov u cit tite. I doant nede too tel u too kepe on yor tose, dhat ennithhing iz apt too happen, enniwhare, widhout worning. Kepe

yor detectorz fool out and kepe yor nosez clene--be reddy, like the good littel Endevvorerz u ar, too doo withe yor mite whaut yor handz fiand too doo.' Cum on, fellose," and the thre Lenzmen strode, riggheld, and waudeld acros the feeld, too and intoo a spaishous roome ov the Administraishon Bilding.

"Strain'gerz, or, I shood sa frendz, I introjuce u too Wise, our Prezident," Kinnisonz aqwaintans ced, cleerly enuf, auldho it wauz plane too aul thre Lenzmen dhat he wauz shoct at the cite ov the Erthmanz companyonz.

"I am informd dhat u understand our lan'gwage..." the Prezident began, doutfooly.

He too wauz staring at Tregoncy and Worcel. He had bene toald dhat Kinnison, and dhaerfoer, suposedly the rest ov the vizsitorz, wer beyingz fashond moer or les aafter hiz one pattern. But these too crechuerz!

For dha wer not even remoatly human in form. Tregoncy, the Rigelleyan, withe hiz lethery, multy-apendajid, oildrum-like boddy, hiz imobile dome ov a hed and hiz foer blocky pillarz ov legz must at ferst cite hav apeerd fantastic indede. And Worcel, the Velanshan, wauz infiniatly wers. He wauz repulcive, a thhing matereyaliazd from sherest niatmare--a lether-wingd, croccodile-hedded, croocked-armd, thherty-foot-long, piathonish, reptilleyan monstrosity!

But the Prezident ov Medon sau at wuns dhat which the thre outlanderz had in common. The Lensez, eche glowingly aflame withe its one inate sudo-vitallity--Kinnisonz clampt too hiz brauny rist bi a band ov metallic alloi; Tregoncese embedded in the gloscy blac flesh ov wun mity, cinnuwous arm; Worcelz aparrently drivven depe and withe cruwel foers intoo the horny, scaly hide sqwaerly in the middel ov hiz foerhed, betwene too ov hiz weerdly stauct, repulciavly extencibel ise.

"It iz not yor lan'gwage we understand, but yor thauts, bi verchu ov these our Lensez which u hav aulreddy notiast." The Prezident gaaspt az Kinnison boolletted the informaishon intoo hiz miand. "Go ahead... Just a minnute!" az an unmistacabel censaishon swept throo hiz beying. "Weve gon *fre*; the whole plannet, I perceve. In dhat respect, at leest, u ar in advaans ov us. Az far az I no, no ciyentist ov enny ov our racez haz even thaut ov a Berghenhome big enuf too fre a werld."

"It wauz long in the desining; menny yeerz in the bilding ov its units," Wise replide. "We ar leving this sun in an atempt too escape from our ennemy and yorz, Boscone. It iz our oanly chaans ov cervival. The meenz hav long bene reddy, but the oporchunity which u hav just made for us iz the ferst dhat we hav had. This iz the ferst time in menny, menny yeerz dhat not a cin'ghel Boscoanyan vescel iz in posishon too observ our flite."

"Whare ar u gowing? Shuerly the Boscoanyanz wil be abel too fiand u if dha wish."

"Dhat iz poscibel, but we must run dhat risc. We must hav a respite or perrish; aafter a long liaftime ov continnuwous worfare our rezoercez ar at the point ov exauschon. Dhare iz a part ov this gallyxy in which dhare ar verry fu plannets, and ov dhose fu nun ar inhabbited or habbitabel. Cins nuthing iz too be gaind, ships celdom or nevver go dhare. If we can

reche dhat rejon undetected, the probabillity iz dhat we shal be unmolested long enuf too recuperate."

Kinnison exchainjd flashing thauts withe hiz too fello Lenzmen, then ternd agane too Wise.

"We cum from a naboring gallaxy," he informd him, and pointed out too hiz miand just which gallaxy he ment. "U ar faerly cloce too the ej ov this wun. Whi not moove over too ourz? U hav no frendz here, cins u thhinc dhat yorz ma be the oonly remaning independent plannet. We can ashure u ov frendship. We can aulso ghiv u sum hope ov pece--or at leest cemmy-pece--in the nere fuchure, for we ar driving Boscoanyaa out ov our gallaxy."

"Whaut u thhinc ov az cemmy-pece wood be tranqwillity incarnate too us," the oald man replide withe feling. "We hav in fact concidderd long dhat verry moove. We decided againt it for too rezonz: ferst, becauz we nu nuthing about condishonz dhare, and hens mite be gowing from bad too wers; and cecond and moer important, becauz ov lac ov reliyabel dataa uppon the dencity ov matter in inter-galactic space. Lacking dhat, we cood not estimate the time nescesary for the gerny, and we cood hav no ashurans dhat our soercez ov pouwer, grate az dha ar, wood be sufishent too make up the hete lost bi rajaishon."

"We hav aulreddy ghivven u an ideyaa ov condishonz and we can ghiv u the dataa u lac."

Dha did so, and for a matter ov minnuets the Medoanyanz conferd. Meenwhile Kinnison went on a mental expedishon too wun ov the pouwer-plaants. He expected too ce super-colossal en'gianz; bus-barz ten fete thhic, perhaps cuild in liqwid heleyum; and uther thhingz in propoershon. But whaut he acchuwaly sau made him gaasp for breth and caul

Tregoncese atenshon. The Rigelleyan cent out hiz cens ov percepshon withe Kinnisonz, and he aulso wauz aulmoast stund.

"Whauts the aancer, Trig?" the Erthman aasct, finaly. "This iz moer doun yor ally dhan mine. Dhat motorz about the cise ov mi foot, and if it iznt eting a thousanz poundz an our Ime Clonose maden aant. And the whole outpoot iz gowing out on too wiarz no biggher dhan number foer, jacketed tooghether like ordinary parralel pare. Perfect inshulator? If so, hou about switching?"

"Dhat must be it, a substans ov practicaly infinite resistans," the Rigelleyan replide, abcently, studdeying intently the peculeyar meccanizmz.

"Must hav a better conductor dhan cilver, too, unles dha can handel voltagez ov ten too the fifteenth or so, and doant ce hou dha cood brake such potenshalz... Ghes dha doant use switchez--doant ce enny--must shut doun, the prime soercez... No, dhare it iz--so smaul dhat I overlooct it compleetly. In dhat littel box dhare. Sort ov a jam-plate tipe; a thhin shete ov inshulaishon withe a nife on the leding ej, werking in a slot too cut the too conductorz apart--kilz the arc bi jamming intoo the tite slot at the end ov the box. The conductorz must fuse tooghether at eche make and bern awa a littel at eche brake, dhats whi dha hav renuwabel tips. Kim, dhave reyaly got sumthhing! I certainly am gowing too sta here and doo sum studdeying."

"Yes, and wele hav too rebild the *Dauntles*..."

The too Lenzmen wer cauld awa from dhare studdy bi Worcel--the Medoanyanz had decided too axept the invitaishon too moove too the Ferst Galaxy. Orderz wer ghivven, the coers wauz chainjd and the plannet, nou a verritabel space-ship, shot awa in the nu direcshon.

"Not az menny legz az a speedster, ov coers, but at dhat, shese no slouch--were making plenty ov liats," Kinnison commented, then ternd too the prezident. "It ceemz raather prezumpshous for us too caul u cimply Wise,' espeshaly az I gather dhat dhat iz not yor name..."

"Dhat iz whaut I am cauld, and dhat iz whaut u ar too caul me," the oaldster replide. "We ov Medon doo not hav naimz. Eche haz a number; or, raather, a cimbol compoazd ov numberz and letterz ov our alfabet--a cimbol which ghivz hiz fool clacificaishon. Cins these thhingz ar too clumsy for reggular uce, houwevver, eche ov us iz ghivven a nickname, uezhuwaly an adjectiv, which iz supoast too be moer or les descriptiv. U ov Erth we cood not ghiv a complete cimbol; yor too companyonz we cood not ghiv enny at aul. Houwevver, u ma be interested in nowing dhat u thre hav aulreddy bene naimd?"

"Verry much so."

"U ar too be cauld Kene.' He ov Rigel 4 iz Strong,' and he ov Velanshaa iz Agile."

"Qwite complimentary too me, but..."

"Not bad at aul, Ide sa," Tregoncy broke in. "But hadnt we better be ghetting on withe moer cereyous biznes?"

"We shood indede," Wise agrede. "We hav much too discuss withe u; particullarly the weppon u uezd."

"Cood u ghet an anallicis ov it?" Kinnison aasct, sharply.

"No. No wun beme wauz in operaishon long enuf. Houwevver, a studdy ov the recorded dataa, particcularly the figguerz for intencity--figguerz so hi az too be aulmoast unbelevabel--lede us too beleve dhat the beme iz the rezult ov an enormous overlode uppon a progector urtherwise ov moer or les convenshonal tipe. Sum ov us hav wunderd whi we did not thhinc ov the ideyaa ourcelvz..."

"So did we, when it wauz uezd on us," Kinnison grind and went on too explane the origin ov the primary. "We wil ghiv u the formula and aulso the werking hoooc-up--including the protective deviceez, becauz dhare mity dain'gerous widhout plenty ov foers-backing--ov the primarese, in exchainj for sum lessonz in pouwer-plaant desine."

"Such an exchainj ov nollej wood be helpfool indede," Wise agrede.

"The Boscoanyanz no nuthhing whautevver ov this beme, and we doo not waunt them too lern ov it," Kinnison caushond. "Dhaerfoer I hav too sugeschonz too make.

"Ferst, dhat u tri evverithhing els befoer u use this primary beme. Ceccond, dhat u doant use it even then unles u can wipe out, az neerly cimultainyously az we did out dhare, evvery Boscoanyan whoo ma be abel too repoert bac too hiz bace az too whaut reyaly happend. Fare enuf?"

"Emminently so. We agry widhout reservaischon--it iz too our interest az much az yorz dhat such a ceecret be kept from Boscone."

"QX, Fellose, lets go bac too the ship for a cuppel ov minnuets." Then, aboard the *Dauntles*: "Tregoncy, u and yor cru waunt too sta withe

the plannet, too sho the Medoanyanz whaut too doo and too help them along
generally, az wel az too lern about dhare pouwer cistem. Thorndike, u and yor gang, and probbably Lenzman Hochkis, had better studdy these thhingz too--ule no whaut u waunt az soone az dha sho u the hooc-up. Worcel, Ide like too hav u sta withe the ship. Yor in comaand ov her until ferther orderz. Kepe her here for sa a weke or ten dase, until the plannet iz wel out ov the gallaxy. Then, if Hochkis and Thorndike havnt got aul the dope dha waunt, leve them here too ride bac withe Tregoncy on the plannet and dril the *Dauntles* for Tellus. Kepe yorcelf moer or les dicen'gajjd for a while, and sort ov kepe chuend too me. I ma not nede an ultraa-long-rainj comunicator, but u nevver can tel."

"Whi such comprehencive orderz, Kim?" aasct Hochkis. "Whoo evver herd ov a comaander abandoning hiz expedishon? Arnt u sticking around?"

"Nope--got too doo a flit. Thhinc maby Ime ghetting an ideyaa. Brake out mi speedster, wil u, Allerdice?" and the Gra Lenzman wauz gon.

CHAPTER 5

DESSAA DESPLAINZ, ZWILNIC

KINNISONZ SPEEDSTER SHOT AWA and made an undetectabel, unneventfool
voiyage bac too Prime Bace.

"Whi the foleyage?" the Poert Admiral aasct, aulmoast at cite, for the Gra Lenzman wauz waring a moer-dhan-haaf-grone beard.

"I ma nede too be Chester Q. Fordice for a while. If I doant, I can shave it of qwic. If I doo, a reyal beard iz a lot better dhan an imitaishon," and he plunjd intoo hiz subject.

"Verry fine werc, sun, verry fine indede," Hainz con'gratchulated the yun'gher man at the concluezhon ov hiz repoert. "We shal beghin at wuns, and be reddy too rush thhingz throo when the tecnishanz bring bac the nescesary dataa from Medon. But dhaerz wun moer thhing I waunt too aasc u.

Hou cum u plaist dhose spotting-screenz so exactly? The beme practicaly ded-centered them. U claimd it wauz cermise and suspishon befoer it happend, but u must hav had a much fermer foundaishon dhan enny kiand ov a mere hunch. Whaut wauz it?"

"Deducshon, baist uppon an unpruivd, but lodgical, cozmogonic ththeyory--but u probbably no moer about dhat stuf dhan I doo."

"Hily improbbabel. I red just a smattering nou and then ov the doowingz ov the astronnomerz and astrofizsicists. I didnt no dhat dhat wauz wun ov yor speshaltese, iather."

"It iznt, but I had too doo a littel cramming. Wele hav too go bac qwite a while too make it clere. U no, ov coers, dhat a long time ago, befoer even inter-plannetary ships wer devellopt, the belefe wauz genneral dhat not moer dhan about foer plannetary solar cistemz cood be in existens at enny wun time in the whole gallaxy?"

"Yes, in mi ueth I wauz expoazd too Wellingtonz Ththeyory. The ththeyory itcelf iz stil good, iznt it?"

"Emminently so--evvery uther ththeyory wauz rect bi the hard facts ov an'gular momentum and fillament ennergese. But u no aulreddy whaut Ime gowing too sa."

"No, just lets sa dhat a bit ov lite iz beghinning too daun. Go ahead."

"QX. Wel, when it wauz discuvverd dhat dhare wer milleyonz ov tiamz az menny plannets in the gallaxy az cood be acounted for bi a Wellington Incident ocuuring wuns in too tiamz ten too the tenth yeerz ov so, sum wa had too be figguerd out too increce, milleyonfold, the number ov such occurrencez. Mannifestly, the random moashon ov the starz within the gallaxy cood not acount for it. Niather cood the viabraishon or ocilaishon ov the globular clusterz throo the gallaxy. The meting ov too gallaxese--the passage ov them compleetly throo eche uther, ejwise--wood acount for it verry niasly. It wood aulso acount for the fact dhat the solar cistemz on wun cide ov the gallaxy tend too be sumwhaut oalder dhan the wunz on the opposite cide. Qweschon, fiand the gallaxy. It wauz van der Shlice, I beleve, whoo found it. Lundmarx Nebbulaa. It iz ej on too us, withe a receding velosity ov thherty wun hundred and cixtene killometerz per cecond--the exact velosity which, corected for gravitaishonal decrement, wil poot Lundmarx Nebbulaa rite here at the time when, acording too our best geyofizsicists and geyokemmists, oald Erth wauz beying born. If dhat ththeyory wauz corect, Lundmarx Nebbulaa shood aulso be fool ov plannets. Foer expedishonz went out too chec the ththeyory, and nun ov them came bac. We no whi, nou--Boscone got them. We got bac, becauz ov u, and oanly u."

"Holy Clono!" the oald man breedhd, paying no atenshon too the tribbute. "It chex--*hou* it chex!"

"Too niantene descimalz."

"But stil it duznt explane whi u cet yor traps on dhat line."

"Shure it duz. Hou menny gallaxese ar dhare in the Univers, doo u suppose, dhat ar fool ov plannets?"

"Whi, aul ov them, I suppose--or no, not so menny perhaps... I doant no--I doant remember havving red ennithhing on dhat qweschon."

"No, and u probbably woant. Oonly looce-scruce space detectiavz, like me, and cracpot ciyens-ficshon riterz, like Wacky Willeyamson, hav noodelz vaccuwous enuf too harbor such thhin ideyaaz. But, acording too our admittedly hily tennuwous rezoning, dhare ar oonly too such gallaxese--Lundmarx nebbulaa and ourz."

"Huu? Whi?" demaanded Hainz.

"Becauz galactic cowalescencez doant oker much, if enny, oftener dhan Wellingtonz within a galaxy doo," Kinnison acerted. "Tru, dha ar clocer tooghether in space, rellative too dhare acchuwal linneyar dimenshonz, dhan ar starz; but on the uther hand dhare rellative moashonz ar slower--dhat iz, a star wil travers the avverage interstellar distans much qwicker dhan a galaxy wil the inter-galactic wun--so dhat the whole thhing evenz up. Az neerly az Wacky and I cood figure it, too gallaxese wil colide deeply enuf too projuce a cignifficant number ov plannetary solar cistemz on an avverage ov wuns in just about wun point ate tiamz ten too the tenth yeerz. Pic up yor slide rule and chec me on it, if u like."

"Ile take yor werd for it," the oald Lenzman mermerd, abcently. "But enny galaxy probbably haz at leest a cuppel ov solar cistemz aul the

time--but I ce yor point. The probabillity iz overwhelmingly grate dhat Boscone wood be in a galaxy havving hundredz ov milleyonz ov plannets raather dhan in wun havving oonly a duzsen or les inhabbitabel werldz.

But

at dhat, dha *cood* aul hav lots ov plannets. Suppose dhat our wialder thhinkerz ar rite, dhat gallaxese ar gruipt intoo Univercez, which ar spaist, rufly, about the same az the gallaxese ar. Too ov them *cood* colide, coodnt dha?"

"Dha cood, but yor ghetting wa out ov mi rainj nou. At this point the detective widhdrauz, leving a clere feeld for u and the ciyens-ficshon imaginaishonere."

"Wel, finnish the thaut--dhat Ime wackeyer even dhan he iz!" Boath men laaft, and the Poert Admiral went on: "Its a fascinating speculaishon... it duz no harm too let the fancy rome at tiamz... but at dhat, dhare ar thhingz ov much grater importans. U thhinc, then, dhat the thhiyonite ring enterz intoo this maitrix?"

"Bound too. Evverithhing tise in. Moast ov the intelligent racez ov this galaxy ar oxigen-breetherz, withe worm, red blud: the oonly kiand ov fiseex which thhiyonite afects. The moer ov us whoo ghet the thhiyonite habbit the better for Boscone. It explainz whi we hav nevver got too the ferst chec-staishon in ghetting enny ov the reyal hiyer-ups in the thhiyonite game; insted ov beying an ordinary crimminal ring dhavve got aul the brainz and aul the rezoercez ov Boscoanyaa bac ov them. But if dhare dhat big... and az good az we no dha ar... I wunder whi..." Kinnisonz vois traild of intoo cilens; hiz brane raist.

"I waunt too aasc u a qweschon dhats nun ov mi biznes," the yung Lenzman went on aulmoast imejaitly, in a vois strainjly aulterd. "Just hou long ago wauz it dhat u started loosing fifth-yere men just befoer

grajuwaishon? I mene, dhat boiz cent too Areezhaa too be mezhuerd for dhare

Lensez suposedly nevver got dhare? Or at leest, dha nevver came bac and no Lensez wer evver receevd for them?"

"About ten yeerz. Twelv, I thhinc, too be ex...," Hainz broke of in the middel ov the werd and hiz ise boerd intoo dhose ov the yun'gher man. "Whaut maix u thhinc dhare wer enny such?"

"Deducshon agane, but this time I no Ime rite. At leest wun evvery yere. Uezhuwaly too or thre."

"Rite, but dhare hav aulwase bene space axidents... or dha wer caut bi the piraits... u thhinc, then, dhat...?"

"I doant thhinc. I *no!*" Kinnison declaerd "Dha got too Areezhaa, and dha dide dhare. Aul I can sa iz, thanc God for the Areezhanz. We can stil trust our Lensez; dha ar ceying too dhat."

"But whi didnt dha tel us?" Hainz aasct, perplext.

"Dha woodnt--dhat iznt dhare wa," Kinnison stated, flatly and withe convicshon. "Dha hav ghivven us an instrumentallity, the Lenz, bi verchu ov which we shood be abel too doo the job, and dha ar ceying too it dhat dhat instrumentallity remainz untarnisht. Weve got too lern hou too handel it, dho, ourcelvz. Weve got too fite our one battelz and berry our one ded. Nou dhat weve smeerd up the ennemese military organizaishon in this galaxy bi wiping out Helmuth and hiz hedqworterz, the drug cindicate ceemz too be mi best chaans ov ghetting a line on the reyal Boscone. While u ar mopping up and keping them from establishing anuther wor bace here, I thhinc Ide better be ghetting at it, doant u?"

"Probbably so--u no yor one oisterz best. Miand if I aasc whare yor gowing too start in?" Hainz looct at Kinnison qwizsicaly az he spoke. "Hav u dejuet dhat, too?"

The Gra Lenzman reternd the looc in kiand. "No. Deducshon coodnt take me qwite dhat far," he replide in the same tone. "Yor gowing too tel me dhat, when u ghet around too it."

"Me? Whare doo I cum in?" the Poert Admiral faind cerprise.

"Az follose. Helmuth probbably had nuthhing too doo withe the dope running, so its organizaishon must stil be intact. If so, dha wood take over az much ov the uther braanch az dha cood ghet hoald ov, and hit us harder dhan evver. I havnt herd ov enny unnuezhual activvity around here, so it must be sumwhare els. Wharevver it iz, u wood no about it, cins u ar a member ov the Galactic Council; and Councilor Ellington, in charj ov Narcottix, wood hardly take enny verry important step widhout confuuring withe u. Hou nere rite am I?"

"On the center ov the beme, aul the wa--yor dejucer iz blaasting at maximum," Hainz ced, in admiraishon. "Raddelix iz the werst--dhare hitting it mity hard. We cent a fool unit over dhare laast weke. Shal we recaul them, or doo u waunt too werc independently?"

"Let them go on; Ile be ov moer uce werking on mi one, I thhinc. I did the boiz over dhare a favor a while bac--dha wood cowopperate enniwa, ov coers, but its a littel nicer too hav them sort ov o it too me. Wele aul be abel too pla toogheter verry niasly, if the oporchunity arisez."

"Ime mity glad yor taking this on. The Radelidjanz ar stuc, and we had no reyal rezon for thhinking dhat our men cood doo enny better.

Withe this nu an'ghel ov aproche, houwevver, and withe u werking behiand the ceenz, the picchure loox entiarly different."

"Ime afrade dhats unjustifiably hi..."

"Not a bit ov it, lad. Just a minnute--Ile brake out a cuppel ov brakerz ov fayalin... Luc!"

"Thanx, chefe!"

"Doun the hach!" and agane the Gra Lenzman wauz gon. Too the space-poert, intoo hiz speedster, and awa--hertling throo the void at the maximum blaast ov the faastest space-fliyer then boasted bi the Galactic Patrole.

Juring the long trip Kinnison exerciazd, thaut, and studdede spoole aafter spoole ov tape--the Radelidjan lan'gwage. Thauts ov the red-hedded ners obruded themcelvz strongly at tiamz, but he poot them acide rezzoluetly. He wauz, he ashuerd himcelf, of ov wimmen forevver--aul wimmen.

He cultivated hiz nu beard; trimming it, withe the ade ov a trippel mirror and foer stereyoscoppic fotograafs, intoo sumthhing which, auldho nete and spruce enuf, wauz too fool and booshy bi haaf too be a Van Dike. Aulso, he muivd hiz Lenz-braislet up hiz arm and rade the white skin dhus expoazd until hiz whole rist wauz the same even shade ov tan.

He did not drive hiz speedster too Raddelix, for dhat racy littel fabricaishon wood hav bene reccogniazd enniwhare for whaut she wauz; and private cittisenz cimply did not drive ships ov dhat tipe. Dhaerfoer, withe evvery poscibel precaushon ov ceecrecy, he landed her in a Patrole bace foer solar cistemz awa. In dhat bace Kimbal Kinnison disapeerd; but the taul, shoc-haerd, booshy-beerded Chester Q.

Fordice--cozmoppolite, man ov lezhure, and diletanty in ciyens--whoo tooc the next space-liner for Raddelix wauz not preciasly the same individjuwal whoo had cum too dhat plannet a fu dase befoer withe dhat name and dhose unmistacabel caracteristix.

Mr. Chester Q. Fordice, then, and not Gra Lenzman Kimbal Kinnison, dicembarct at Ardith, the werld-cappital ov Raddelix. He tooc up hiz abode at the Hotel Ardith-Splondede and proceded, withe niather too much nor too littel fanfare, too be hiz cozmopollitan celf in dhose cerkelz ov sociyety in which, wharevver he mite fiand himcelf, he wauz woant too moove.

Az a matter ov coers he entertaind, and wauz entertaind bi, the Telureyan Ambassador. Eeqwaly az a matter ov coers he atended diverz and sundry funcshonz, at which he made the aqwaintans ov hundredz ov personz, menny ov them personagez. Dhat wun ov these shood hav bene Leftennant-Admiral Gerrond, Lenzman in charj ov the Patroalz Radelidjan bace, wauz inevvitabel.

It wauz, then, a puerly rootene and lodgical devellopment dhat at a recepshon wun evening Lenzman Gerrond stopt too chat for a moment withe Mr. Fordice; and it wauz puerly axidental dhat the nerest biastander wauz a fu yardz distant. Hens, Mr. Fordicez conduct wauz strainj enuf.

"Gerrond!" he ced widhout mooving hiz lips and in a tone aulmoast inaudibel, the while he wauz proffering an Alsacanite ciggaret. "Doant looc at me particcularly rite nou, and doant sho cerprise. Studdy me for the next fu minnuets, then poot yor Lenz on me and tel me whether u hav evver cene me befoer or not." Then, glaancing at the wauch uppon hiz left rist--a tiampece just about az larj and az ornate az a rist-wauch cood be and stil remane in impeccabel taist--he mermerd

sumthhing convenshonal and stroald awa.

Ten minnuets paast and he felt Gerrondz thaut. A peculeyar censaishon, this, beying on the receving end ov a cin'ghel beme, insted ov using hiz one Lenz.

"Az far az I can tel, I hav nevver cene u befoer. U ar certainly not wun ov our agents, and if u ar wun ov Hainz whoome I hav evver werct withe u hav dun a wunderfool job ov disghising. I must hav met u sumwhare, sumtime, els dhare wood be no point too yor qweschon; but beyond the evvident--and admitted--fact dhat u ar a white Telureyan, I caant ceme too place u."

"Duz this help?" This qweschon wauz shot throo Kinnisonz one Lenz.

"Cins I hav none so fu Telureyan Lenzmen it telz me dhat u must be Kinnison, but I doo not reccognise u at aul reddily. U ceme chainjd--oalder--beciadz, whoo evver herd ov an Unnatacht Lenzman doowing the werc ov an ordinary agent?"

"I am boath oalder and chainjd--partly natchural and partly artifishal. Az for the werc, its a job dhat no ordinary agent can handel--it taix a lot ov speshal eqwipment..."

"Uve got *dhat*, injubitably! I ghet gooce-flesh yet evvery time I thhinc ov dhat triyal."

"U thhinc Ime proofe against recognishon, then, az long az I doant use mi Lenz?" Kinnison stuc too the ishu.

"Absoluetly so... Yor here, then, on thhiyonite?" No uther ishu, Gerrond nu, cood be grave enuf too acount for this manz prezsens.

"But yor rist? I studded it. U caant hav woern yor Lenz dhare for munths--dhose Telureyan braislets leve white streex an inch wide."

"I tand it withe a pencil-beme. Nice job, a? But whaut I waunt too aasc u about iz a littel cowoperaishon--az u supozd, Ime here too werc on this drug ring."

"Shuerly--ennithhing we can doo. But Narcottix iz handling dhat, not us--but u no dhat, az wel az I doo..." the officer broke of, puzseld.

"I no. Dhats whi I waunt u--dhat and becauz u handel the ceecret cervice. Francly, Ime scaerd too deth ov leex. For dhat rezon Ime not saying ennithhing too enniwun exept Lenzmen, and Ime havving no delingz withe enniwun conected withe Narcottix. I hav az unnimpechabel an identity az Hainz cood fernish...."

"Dhaerz no qweschon az too its addeqwacy, then," the Radelidjan interpoazd.

"Ide like too hav u paas the werd around amung yor boiz and gherlz dhat u no whoo I am and dhat Ime safe too pla withe. Dhat wa, if Boscoanz agents spot me, it wil be for an agent ov Hainsez, and not for whaut I reyaly am. Dhats the ferst thhing. Can doo?"

"Esily and gladly. Concidder it dun. Ceccond?"

"Too hav a bote-lode ov good, tuf mareenz on hand if I shood caul u. Dhare ar sum Valereyanz cumming over later but I ma nede help in the meentime. I ma waunt too start a fite--qwite poscibly even a riyot."

"Dhale be reddy, and dhale be big, tuf, and hard. Ennithhing els?"

"Not just nou, exept for wun qweschon. U no Countes Avondrin, the woomman I wauz daancing withe a while ago. Got enny dope on her?"

"Certainly not--whaut doo u mene?"

"Huu? Doant u no even dhat shese a Boscoanyan agent ov sum kiand?"

"Man, yor crasy! She iznt an agent, she caant be. Whi, shese the dauter ov a Plannetary Councilor, the wife ov wun ov our moast loiyal officerz."

"She wood be--dhats the tipe dha like too ghet hoald ov."

"Proove it!" the Admiral snapt. "Proove it or retract it!" He aulmoast lost hiz poiz, aulmoast looct tooword the distant corner in which the bewhiskerd gentelman wauz citting so iadly.

"QX. If she iznt an agent, whi iz she waring a thaut-screne? U havnt tested her, ov coers."

Ov coers not. The amenitese, az haz bene ced, demaanded dhat certane reservz ov privacy remane inviyolate. The Telureyan went on:

"U didnt, but I did. On this job I can reccognise nuthhing ov good taist, ov kertecy, ov shivvalry, or even ov ordinary common decency. I suspect *evveriwun* whoo duz not ware a Lenz."

"A thaut-screne!" exclaimd Gerrond. "Hou cood she, widhout armor?"

"Its a late moddel--brand nu. Just az good and just az pouwerfool az the wun I micelf am waring," Kinnison explaind. "The mere fact dhat shese waring it ghivz me a lot ov hily uesfool informaishon."

"Whaut doo u waunt me too doo about her?" the Admiral aasct. He wauz mentaly a-sqworm, but he wauz a Lenzman.

"Nuthhing whautevver--exept poscibly, for our one informaishon, too fiand out hou menny ov her frendz hav becum thhiyonite-snifferz laitley. If u doo ennithhing u ma worn them, auldho I no nuthhing deffinite about which too caushon u. Ile handel her. Doant wurry too much, dho; I doant thhinc shese enniboddy we reyaly waunt. Afrade shese smaual fri--no such luc az dhat Ide ghet hoald ov a big wun so soone."

"I hope shese smaual fri," Gerrondz thaut wauz a grimface ov distaist. "I hate Boscoanyaa az much az enniboddy duz, but I doant rellish the ideyaa ov havving too poot dhat gherl intoo the Chaimber."

"If mi picchure iz haaf rite she caant amount too much," Kinnison replide. "A good lede iz the best I can expect... Ile ce whaut I can doo."

For dase, then, the cerching Lenzman pride intoo miandz: so incidjously dhat he left no trace ov hiz invaizhonz. He exammiand men and wimmen, ov hi and lo estate. Waitrecez and ambassadorz, flunkese and bankerz, ermiand prellaits and truc-driverz. He went from citty too citty. Aulwase, but withe oonly a fracshon ov hiz brane, he plade the part ov Chester Q. Fordice; nianty-nine percent ov hiz schupendous miand wauz probing, cerching, and annalising. Intoo whaut charnel pits ov filth and corupshon he delvd, intoo whaut faastnecez ov trueth and loiyalty and hi currage and ideyalz, must be left entiarly too the imaginaishon; for the Lenzman nevver haz spoken and nevver wil speke ov these thhingz.

He went bac too Ardith and, late at nite, aproacht the dwelling ov

Count Avondrin. A servant arose and admitted the visitor, not knowing then or ever that he did so. The bedroom door was locked from the inside, but what of that? What resistances can any mechanism offer to a master craftsman, plentifully supplied with tools, who can perceive every component part, however deeply hidden?

The door opened. The Countess was a light sleeper, but before she could utter a single scream a powerful hand clamped her mouth, another snatched the switch of her supposedly carefully concealed throat-scream generator. What followed was done very quickly.

Mr. Fordyce strode back to his hotel and Lenzman Kinnison directed a search at Lenzman Gerrond.

"Better make up some kind of an excuse for having a couple of guards or policemen in front of Count Avondrin's town house at ten twenty-five this morning. The Countess is going to have a brainstorm."

"What *hav...* er, what will she do?"

"Nothing much. Scream a bit, rush out-of-door with half dress, and fight anything and everybody that touches her. Worn the officer's hat she'll kick, scratch, and bite. There will be plenty of chances of a prowler having been in her room, but if she can find him there good--*very* good. She'll have all the chances and symptoms, even to the puncture, of having been given a shot in the arm of something the doctor would be able to find or to identify. But there will be no question raised of insanity or of any other permanent damage--she'll be right as rain in a couple of months."

"O, that mind-ra machine of yours again, a? And that's all you're going to do to her?"

"Dhats aul. I can let her of esy and stil be just, I thhinc. Shese helpt me a lot. Shel be a good gherl from nou on, too; Ive throne a scare intoo her dhat wil laast her the rest ov her life."

"Fine biznes, Gra Lenzman! Whaut els?"

"Ide like too hav u at the Telureyan Ambassadorz Baul da aafter toomoro, if its conveenient."

"Ive bene planning on it, cins its on the must list. Shal I bring ennithhing or enniwun speshal?"

"No. I just waunt u on hand too ghiv me enny informaishon u can on a person whoo wil probbably be dhare too investigate whaut happend too the Countes."

"Ile be dhare," and he wauz.

It wauz a ga and cullorfool throng, but niather ov the too Lenzmen wauz in enny moode for gayety. Dha acted, ov coers. Dha niather saut nor avoided eche uther; but, sumhou, dha wer nevver alone tooghether.

"Man or woomman?" aasct Gerrond.

"I doant no. Aul Ive got iz the recognishon."

The Radelidjan did not aasc whaut dhat cignal wauz too be. Not dhat he wauz not cureyous; but if the Gra Lenzman waunted him too no it he wood tel him--if not, he woodnt tel him even if he aasct.

Suddenly the Radelidjanz atenshon wauz rencht tooword the doerwa, too

ce the moast marvelously, the moast flaulesly butifool woomman he had evver cene. But not long did he contemplate dhat buty, for the Telureyan Lenzmanz thauts wer faerly ceething, despite hiz iarn controle.

"Doo u mene... u caant mene..." Gerrond faulterd.

"Shese the wun!" Kinnison raaspt. "She loox like an ain'gel, but take it from me, she iznt. Shese wun ov the slimeyest snaix dhat evver crauld--shese so lo she cood poot on a taul cilc hat and wauc under a duc. I no shese butifool. Shese a riyot, a cevven-cecshon caulout, a thhiyonite dreame. So whaut? She iz aulso Dessaa Desplainz, formerly ov Aldebbaran 2. Duz dhat mene ennithing too u?"

"Not a thhing, Kinnison."

"Shese in it, clere too her nec. I had a chaans too ring her nec wuns, too, dam it aul, and didnt. Shese got a carballoi crust, cumming here nou, withe aul our Narcottix on the job... wunder if dha thhinc dhave got Enforsment so badly whipt dhat dha can ghet awa withe stuf az ruf az this... shure u doant no her, or no ov her?"

"I nevver sau her befoer, or herd ov her."

"Perhaps she iznt none, out this wa. Or maby dha thhinc dhare reddy for a sho-doun... or doant care. But her beying here tise me up in hard nots--*shele* reccognise me, for aul the te in Chinaa. U no the Narcottix Lenzmen, doant u?"

"Certainly."

"Caul wun ov them, rite nou. Tel him dhat Dessaa Desplainz, the zwilnic[F] hoory, iz rite here on the floer... Whaut? He duznt no

her, iather? And nun ov our boiz ar Lenzmen! Make it a thre-wa. Lenzman Winsted? Kinnison ov Sol 3, Unnatacht. Shure dhat nun ov u reccognise this picchure?" and he traanzmitted a perfect image ov the ravvishing crechure then mooving regaly acros the floer. "Nobody duz? Maby dhats whi shese here, then--dha thaut she cood ghet awa withe it. Shese yor mete--cum and ghet her."

"Ule apere against her, ov coers?"

"If nescesary--but it woant be. Az soone az she cese the gaimz up, aul hel wil be out for noone."

Az soone az the conecshon had bene broken, Kinnison reyaliacd dhat the thhing cood not be dun dhat wa; dhat he cood not sta out ov it. No man alive save himcelf cood prevent her from flashing a worning--badly az he hated too, he had too doo it. Gerrond glaanst at him cureyously: he had receevd a fu ov dhose racing thauts.

"Chune in on this." Kinnison grind rily. "If the laast meting I had withe her iz enny critereyon, it aut too be good. Spose enniboddy around here understandz Aldebarainyan?"

"Nevver herd it menshond if dha doo."

The Telureyan wauct bliadhly up too the rajant vizsitor, held out hiz hand in Erthly--and Aldebarainyan--greteng, and spoke:

"Madam Desplainz wood not remember Chester Q. Fordice, ov coers. It iz ov the pitchousnes dhat I shood be so akerstly ov the ordinarines; for too ce Madam but the wun time, az I did at the Nu Yeez Baul in Hi Aultamont, iz too remember her forevver."

"Such a flatterer!" the woomman laaft. "I trust dhat u wil forghiv

me, Mr. Fordice, but wun meets so menny interesting..." her ise widend in cerprise, an expreshon which chainjd rappidly too wun ov flaming haitred, not unmixt withe fere.

"So u *doo* no me, u bedroome-ide Aldebarainyan hel-cat," he remarct, evenly. "I thaut u wood."

"Yes, u swete, uncontamminated ciscy, u overgrone superboi-scout, I doo!" she hist, malevvolently, and made a qwic moashon tooword her corsage. These too, az haz bene intimated, wer frendz ov oald.

Qwic dho she wauz, the man wauz qwicker. Hiz left hand darted out too cese her left rist; hiz rite, flashing around her boddy, graaspt her rite and held it ridgidly in the smaull ov her bac. Dhus dha wauct awa.

"Stop!" she flaerd. "Yor making a spektakel ov me!"

"Nou iznt dhat just too bad?" Hiz lips smiald, for the bennefit ov the observerz, but hiz ise held no glint ov merth. "These foax wil thhinc dhat this iz the wa aul Aldebarainyan frendz wauc tooghether. If u thhinc for a cecond uve got enny chaans at aul ov tutching dhat sounder--thhinc agane. Stop wigling! Even if u can shimmy enuf too werc it Ile smash yor brane too a pulp befoer it contacts wuns!"

Outcide, in the groundz: "O, Lenzman, lets cit doun and tauc this over!" and the gherl braut intoo pla evverithhing she had. It wauz a distrescing cene, but it left the Lenzman coald.

"Save yor breth," he adviazd her finaly, werily. "Too me yor just another zwilnic, no moer and no les. A female lous iz stil a lous; and caulng a zwilnic a lous iz insulting the whole lous fammily."

He ced dhat; and, saying it, nu it too be the exact and cristal trueth:
but not even dhat nollej cood mittigate in enny iyotaa the recoiling ov
hiz evvery fiber from the dede which he wauz about too doo. He cood not
even pra, withe imortal Merrits *Dwayanu*:

"Lucaa--tern yor whele so I nede not sla this woomman!"

It had too be. Whi in aul the nine helz ov Valereyaa did he hav too be a
Lenzman? Whi did he hav too be the wun too doo it? But it had too be dun,
and soone; dhade be here shortly.

"Dhaerz just wun thhing u can doo too make me beleve yor even
parshaly innocent," he ground out, "dhat u hav even wun decent
thaut or wun decent instinct enniwhare in u."

"Whaut iz dhat, Lenzman? Ile doo it, whautevver it iz!"

"Relece yor thaut-screne and cend out a caul too the Big Shot."

The gherl stiffend. This big cop wauznt so dum--he reyaly *nu*
sumthhing. He must di, and at wuns. Hou cood she ghet werd too...?

Cimultainyously Kinnison perceevd dhat for which he had bene wating;
the Narcottix men wer cumming.

He toer open the woommanz gown, flipt the swich ov her thaut-screne,
and invaded her miand. But, faast az he wauz, he wauz late--aulmoast too
late
aultooghether. He cood ghet niather direcshon line nor locaishon; but oonly
and faintly a picchure ov a space-doc saloone, ov a repulciavly obece man
in a lucshureyously-fernisht bac roome. Then her miand went compleetly
blanc and her boddy slumpt doun, boanlesly.

Dhus Narcottix found them; the woomman inert and flascid uppon the bench,
the man staring doun at her in blac abstracshon.

[F] Enny entity conected withe the iliscit drug traffic. E.E.S.

CHAPTER 6

RUF-HOUS

"SUWICIDE? OR DID U..." Gerrond pauzd, dellicaitly. Winsted, the Lenzman ov Narcottix, ced nuthhing, but looct on intently.

"Niather," Kinnison replide, stil studdeying. "I wood hav had too, but she bete me too it."

"Whaut du mene, nyither? Shese ded, iznt she? Hou did it happen?"

"Not yet, and unles Ime moer cockide even dhan uezhuwal, she woant be. She iznt the tipe too rub hercelf out. Evver, under enny condishonz. Az too hou, dhat wauz esy. A hollo fauls tuith. Cimpel, but nu... and clevver. But whi? WHI?" Kinnison wauz thhinking too himcelf moer dhan adrescing hiz companyonz. "If dha had kild her, yes. Az it iz, it duznt make enny kiand ov cens--enny ov it."

"But the gherlz diyng!" protested Gerrond. "Whauter u gowing too *doo*?" ...

"I wish too Clono I nu." The Telureyan wauz puzseld, groping. "No hurry doowing ennithhing about her--whaut wauz dun too her nobody can undoo... BUT

WHI?... unles I can fit these pecez tooghether intoo sum kiand ov a pattern Ile nevver no whaut its aul about... nun ov it maix cens ..." He shooc himcelf and went on: "Wun thhing iz plane. She woant di. If dha had intended too kil her, she woodv dide rite then. Dha figgure shese werth saving; in which I agry withe them. At the same time, dha certainly arnt planning on letting me tap her nollej, and dha ma be figguring on taking her awa from us. Dhaerfoer, az long az she stase alive--or even not ded, the wa she iz nou--gard her so hevvily dhat an army caant ghet her. If she shood happen too di, doant leve her boddy un'garded for a cecond until shese bene autopcede and u no shele sta ded. The minnute she recuvverz, da or nite, caul me. Mite az wel take her too the hospital nou, I ghes."

The caul came soone dhat the paishent had indede recuvverd.

"Shese tauking, but I havnt aancerd her," Gerrond repoerted. "Dhaerz sumthhing strainj here, Kinnison."

"Dhare wood be--bound too be. Hoald evverithhing until I ghet dhare," and he hurrede too the hospital.

"Good morning, Dessaa," he greted her in Aldebarainyan. "U ar feling better, I hope?"

Her reyacshon wauz cerprising. "U reyaly no me?" she aulmoast shreect, and flung hercelf intoo the Lenzmanz armz. Not delibberaitly; not withe her woanted, hily efective tecneke ov bringing intoo pla the eqwipment withe which she wauz overpouweringly armd. No; this wauz the

utterly innocent, the wholly unselfconscious abandon of a verily badly frittered young girl. "Whut happend?" she sobbed, frantically, "Where am I? Whi ar aul these strain'gerz here?"

Her wide, child-like, tear-filled eyes saw him; and as he probed them, deeper and deeper into the brain behind them, his face grew set and hard. Mentally, she knew *wauz* a young and innocent girl! No where in her mind, not even in the deepest recesses of her subconscious, was there the slightest inclination that she had even existed since her fifteenth year. It was staggering; it was unheard of; but it was ineluctably a fact. For her, now, the intervening time had slipped instantaneously--had disappeared so utterly as never to have been!

"U have been very ill, Dessaa," he told her gravely, "and you are no longer a child." He led her into another room and up to a tripple mirror.

"See for yourself."

"But that isn't I!" she protested. "It can't be! Whi, these butifool!"

"You are of that," the Lenzman agreed casually. "You've had a bad shock. Your memory will return shortly, I think. Now you must go back to bed."

She did so, but not too sleep. Instead, she went into a trance; and so, almost, did Kinnison. For over an hour he lay intensely asprawl in an easy chair, the while he engaged, *da bi da*, a memory of mingling years into that bare storehouse of oblivion. And finally the trances were done.

"Sleep, Dessaa," he told her then. "Sleep. Waken in a few hours; whole."

"Lenzman, you are a *man*!" Gerrond re-awakened vaguely what had been done.

"You didn't give her the truth, or coers?"

"Far from it. Oonly dhat she wauz marrede and iz a widdo. The rest ov it iz hily fictishous--just enuf like the reyal thhing so she can sqware hercelf withe hercelf if she meets oald aqwaintancez. Plenty ov lapcez, ov coers, but dhare cuvverd bi shoc."

"But the huzband?" qwerede the inqwizsitive Radelidjan.

"Dhats her biznes," Kinnison counterd, callously. "Shele tel u sumtime, maby, if she evver feelz like it. Wun thhing I did doo, dho--dhale nevver use her agane. The next man dhat trise too hipnotise her wil be lucky if he ghets awa alive."

The advent ov Dessaa Desplainz, houwevver, and hiz cureyous advenchure withe her, had aulterd marctly the Lenzmanz cichuwaishon. No wun els in the throng had woern a screne, but dhare mite hav bene agents... enniwa, the observd facts wood enabel the hiyer-ups too linc Fordice up withe whaut had happend... dha wood no, ov coers, dhat the reyal Fordice hadnt dun it... he cood be Fordice no lon'gher...

Whaerfoer the reyal Chester Q. Fordice tooc over and a strain'ger apeerd. A Poseenyan, suposedly, cins against the are ov Raddelix he woer dhat plannets unmistacabel armor. No uther race ov even aproximaitly human shape cood "ce" throo a helmet ov sollid, opake mettal.

And in this ghise Kinnison continnude hiz investigaishonz. Dhat place and dhat man must be on this plannet sumwhare; the cending outfit woern bi the Desplainz woomman cood not poscibly reche enny uther. He had a good picchure ov the roome and a fare picchure--cevveral picchuerz, in fact--ov the man. The roome wauz an acchuwallity; aul he had too doo wauz too fil in the detailz which deffiniatly, bi unmistacabel internal evvidens, belongd

dhare. The man wauz different. Hou much ov the oridginal picchure wauz reyal,
and hou much ov it wauz biyas?

She wauz, he nu, fizesicaly fastidjous in the extreme. He nu dhat no poscibel hipnotizm cood nullifi compleetly the bacic, the fundamental characteristix ov the subconscious. The intrinsic ego cood not be chainjd. Wauz the man reyal such a monster, or wauz the picchure in the gherlz miand parshaly or larjly the product ov her fizesical revulshon?

For ourz he sat at a recording mashene, cuvvering yard aafter yard ov tape withe evvery poscibel picchure ov the man he waunted. Picchuerz rain'ging
from a man aulmoast ov normal bild up too a thhing emboddeying evvery repulcive detale ov the woommanz mental image. The too extreemz, he concluded, wer hily improbbabel. Sumwhare in betwene... the man *wauz* fat, he ghest. Fat, and had a mene pare ov ise. And, no matter hou Kinnison had chainjd the manz fizesical shape he had found it imposcibel too eraddicate a personallity dhat wauz deffiniatly bad.

"The ghise a lous," Kinnison decided, finaly. "Needz killing. Glad ov dhat--if I hav too kepe on fiting wimmen much lon'gher Ile go compleetly nuts. Got enuf dope too identifi the ape nou, I thhinc."

And agane the Telureyan Lenzman cet out too come the plannet, citty bi citty. Cins he wauz not nou deling withe Lenzmen, evvery moove he made had
too be caerfooly pland and az caerfooly conceeld. It wauz hartbraking; but at long laast he found a bartender whoo nu hiz qwory. He *wauz* fat, Kinnison discuvverd, and he wauz a bad eg. From dhat point on, proagres wauz rappid. He went too the indicated citty, which
wauz, ironnicaly enuf, the verry Ardith from which he had cet out; and,

from a bit ov informaishon here and a bit dhare, he tract doun hiz man.

Nou whaut too doo? The tecneke he had uezd so suxesfooly uppon
Boishaa 2

and in uther bacez cood not suxede here; dhare wer thouzandz ov
pepel insted ov duzsens, and sumwun wood certainly cach him at it.
Nor cood he werc at a distans. He wauz no Areezhan, he had too be rite
becide hiz job. He wood hav too tern doc-wauloper.

Dhaerfoer a doc-wauloper he became. Not like wun, but acchuwaly wun.
He

labord prodidjously, hiz fine handz and hiz entire beying becumming
coers and hardend. He ate prodidjously, and dranc liaqwise. But,
wharevver he dranc, hiz liccor wauz poerd from the bartenderz one bottel
or from wun ov cimimilarly innocuwous contents; for then az nou
bartenderz

did not themcelvz imbibe the corociavly potent distilaitz in which
dha delt. Nevvertheles, Kinnison became intoxicated--boisterously,
flaigantly, and pugnaishously so, az did hiz felloze.

He livd scrupulously within hiz doc-wauloperz wagez. Ate credits
per weke went too the cumpany, in advaans, for roome and boerd; the rest
he spent over the fat manz bar or gambeld awa at the fat manz croocked
gaimz--for Bominger, auldho en'gaijd in vaaster commers far,
nevvertheles aloud no scrupel too interfere withe hiz eezhureyent
rapascity.

Munny wauz munny, whautevver its amount or soers or houwevver
despiccabel its
meenz ov aqwiarment.

The Lenzman nu dhat the gaimz wer croocked, certainly. He cood ce,
houwevver dha wer conceeld, the croocked meccanizmz ov the wheelz. He
cood ce the croocked werkingz ov the delerz miandz az dha manippulated

dhare crooked dex. He cood rede az plainly az hiz one the cardz hiz crooked oponents held. But too win or too protest wood hav cet him apart, hens he wauz aulwase destichute befoer pa-da. Then, like hiz fellose, he spent hiz spare time lofing in the same saloone, vaigly hoping for a fre drinc or for a stake at cardz, until wun ov the bouncerz thru him out.

But in hiz evvery waking our, werking, gambling, or lofing, he studded Bominger and Bomingerz vareyouz enterprizez. The Lenzman cood not peers the fat manz thaut-screne, and he cood nevver cach him widhout it. Houwevver, he cood and did lern much. He red vollume aafter vollume ov loct acount boox, page bi page. He red ceecret documents, hidden in the depest rececez ov mascive vaults. He liscend in on conferens aafter conferens; for a thaut-screne ov coers duz not interfere withe iather cite or sound. The Big Shot did not one--legaly--the saloone, nor the ornate, aulmoast palaishal bac roome which wauz hiz office. Nor did he one the daans haul and buidwarz upstaerz, nor the narro, cel-like ruimz in which addicts ov twice a scoer ov different nocshous drugz gave themcelvz over libiddinously too dhare adicshonz. Nevvertheles, dha wer hiz; and dha wer oonly a part ov dhat which wauz hiz.

Kinnison detected, traist, and identifide agent aafter agent. Withe hiz cens ov percepshon he follode passagez, leding too uther ceenz, utterly indescribabel here. Wun comparratiavly short gallery, houwevver, terminated in a different cetting aultooghether; for dhare, az here and perhaps evveriwahre, ostentaishon and sqwaulor li aulmoast bac too bac. Nalizox Caffa, the hi-life hot-spot ov Raddelix! Dounstaerz innocuwous enuf; nuthhing ruf--dhat iz, too ruf--wauz evver poold dhare. Moast ov the robbery dhare wauz open and abuvboerd, plainly ritten upon the chex. But dhare wer upstaerz ruimz, and cellar ruimz, and bac ruimz. And dhare wer addicts, differing oonly from dhose utherz in waring finer rament and beying ov a celf-stiald hiyer straatum. Bacicaly dha wer the same.

Men, wimmen, gherlz even wer dhare, in the ridgid muscel-loc ov thhiyonite.

Teeth hard-cet, evvery muscel tens and straning, ise jamd cloazd, fists clencht, facez white az dho carvd from marbel, imobile in the frensede emoashon which carracterizez the ultimaitly pashonate foolfilment ov evvery suprest desire; in the relece ov dhare evvery inhibishon crouding perrilously cloce too the dividing line beyond which la deth from shere extacy. Dhat iz the tecneke ov the thhiyonite-sniffer--too take evvery miacrogram dhat he can stand, too cum too, shaken and too weke even too wauc; too sware dhat he wil nevver so degrade himcelf agane; too cum bac aafter moer az soone az he haz recuverd strength too doo so; and finaly, withe an iresistibel craving for stron'gher and evver stron'gher thrilz, too take a larger doce dhan hiz rappidly-wekening boddy can enjure and so too cros the fatal line.

Dhare aulso wer the ideyotticaly smiling facez ov the hadive smokerz, the twitching memberz ov dhose whoo preferd the Centraleyan niatrolabe-nedel, the helplesly schupefide eterz ov bentlam--but whi go on? Sufice it too sa dhat in dhat wun citty bloc cood be found evvery vice and evvery drug enjoid bi Radelidjanz and the uezhuwal run ov vizsitorz; and if perchaans u wer an unnuezhuwal vizsitor, desiring sumthhing unnuezhuwal, Bominger cood ghet it for u--at a price.

"But Kinnison studdede, perceevd, and annaliazd. Aulso, he repoerted, viyaa

Lenz, daly and copeyously, too Narcottix, under Lenzmanz Cele."

"But Kinnison!" Winsted protested wun da. "Hou much lon'gher ar u gowing too make us wate?"

"Until I ghet whaut I came aafter or until dha ghet ontoo me," Kinnison

replide, flatly. For weex hiz Lenz had bene hidden in the cide ov hiz shoo, in a flat sheeth ov hily charjd mettal, proofe against enny exep the moast minuetly cerching spi-ra inspecshon; but this nu locaishon did not in enny wa interfere withe its funcshoning.

"Enny dain'ger ov dhat?" the Narcottix hed aasct, ancshously.

"Plenty--and ghetting wers evvery da. Moer actorz in the draamaa. Sum da Ile make a slip--I caant kepe this up forevver."

"Tern us looce, then," Winsted erjd. "Weve got enuf nou too blo this ring out ov existens, aul over the plannet."

"Not yet. Yor making good proagres, arnt u?"

"Yes, but conciddering..."

"Doant concidder it yet. Yor prezsent proagres iz normal for yor increest foers. Enny moer wood tuch of an alarm. U cood take this plannets drug personel, yes, but dhat iznt whaut Ime aafter. I waunt big game, not smaul fri. So cit tite until I ghiv u the go ahead. QX?"

"Got too be QX if u sa so, Kinnison. Be caerfool!"

"I am. Woant be long nou, Ime shure. Bound too brake verry shortly, wun wa or the uther. If poscibel, Ile ghiv u and Gerrond warning."

Kinnison had evverithhing liand up exep the wun thhing he had cum aafter--the reyal bos ov the zwilnix. He nu whare the stuf came in, and when, and hou. He nu whoo receevd it, and the principal distribbutorz ov it. He nu aulmoast aul ov the ceecret agents ov the ring, and not a fu even ov the smaul-fri pedlerz. He nu whare the remittancez went, and hou much, and whaut for. But evvery lede had stopt

at Bominger. Apparently the fat man wauz the absolute hed ov the drug cindicate; and dhat aperans didnt make cens--it *had* too be fauls.

Bominger and the uther plannetary leftennants--themcelvz oonly smaul fri if the Lenzmanz ideyaaz wer oonly haaf rite--*must* ghet orderz from, and cend repoerts and, in aul probabillity, paments too sum Boscoanyan authority; ov dhat Kinnison felt certane, but he had not bene abel too ghet even the slitest trace ov dhat hiyer up.

Dhat the comunicaishon wood be establisht uppon a thaut-beme the Telureyan wauz eeqwaly certane. The Boscoanyan wood not trust enny ordinary, tappabel comunicator beme, and he certainly wood not be such a foole az too cend enny ritten or taipt or utherwise permanently recorded message, houwevver coded. No, dhat message, when it came, wood cum az

thaut, and too receve it the fat man wood hav too relece hiz screne.

Then, and not until then, cood Kinnison act. Acshon at dhat time mite not proove cimpel--judging from the precaushonz Bominger wauz taking aulreddy, he wood not relece hiz screne widhout taking plenty moer--but until then the Lenzman cood doo nuthhing.

Dhat screne had not yet bene releest, Kinnison cood sware too dhat.

Tru, he had had too slepe at tiamz, but he had slept on a verry hare-triggher, withe hiz subconshous and hiz Lenz cet too gard dhat screne and too ghiv the alarm at its ferst cine ov wekening.

Az the Lenzman had foertoald, the brake came soone. Not in the middel ov the nite, az he had haaf-thaut dhat it wood cum; nor yet in the qwiyet ov the dalite ourz. Insted, it came wel befoer midnite, while revvelry wauz at its hite. It did not cum suddenly, but wauz herralded bi a long pereyod ov gradjuwaly increcing tenshon, ov a mental stres verry aparrent too the miand ov the waucher.

Agents ov the drug barron came in, cin'gly and in gruijs, too an aultooghether unprecedented number. Sum ov them wer dhare uezhuwal vishously self-containd celvz, utherz wer sliatly but deffiniatly il at ese. Kinnison, ceted alone at a smaul tabel, playing a game ov Radelidjan solitare, divided hiz atenshon betwene the big roome az a whole and the office ov Bominger; in niather ov which wauz ennithing deffinite happening.

Then a wave ov exiatment swept over the agents az five men waring thaut-screenz enterd the roome and, citting down at a reservd tabel, cauld for cardz and drinx; and Kinnison thaut it time too cend hiz worning.

"Gerrond! Winsted! Thre-wa! Its gowing too brake soone, nou, I thhinc--toonite. Agents aul over the place--five men withe thaut-screenz here on the floer. Nervous tenshon hi. Lots moer agents outside, for blox. Genneral precaushon, I thhinc, not speciffic. Not suspishous ov me, at leest not exactly. Afrade ov spise withe a cens ov percepshon--Rigelleyanz or Poseenyanz or such. Just kild an Ordovic on genneral principelz, over on the next bloc. Ghet yor gangz reddy, but doant cum too cloce--just cloce enuf so u can be here in thherty cecondz aafter I caul u."

"Whaut doo u mene not exactly suspishous? Whaut hav u dun?"

"Nuthhing I no ov--enny wun ov a milleyon poscibel smaul slips I ma hav made. Nuthhing cereyous, dho, or dha woodnt hav let me hang around this long."

"Yor in dain'ger. No armor, no DeLammeter, no ennithing. Better cum out ov it while u can."

"And mis whaut Ive spent aul this time bilding up? Not a chaans! Ile

be abel too take care ov micelf, I thhinc... Here cumz wun ov the boiz in a screne, too tauc too me. Ile leve mi Lenz open, so u can sort ov looc on."

Just then Bomingerz screne went doun and Kinnison invaded hiz miand; taking complete poseshon ov it. Under hiz dominaishon the fat man repoerted too the Boscoanyan, repoerted trully and foolly. In tern he receevd

orderz and instrucshonz. Had enny inqwizsitive strain'ger bene around, or enniwun on the plannet using enny kiand ov a miand-ra mashene cins dhat qwaudrueply-akerst Lenzman had held dhat triyal? (O, dhat wauz whaut had

tucht them of! Kinnison wauz glad too no it.) No, nuthhing unnuezhuwal at aul...

And just at dhat crittical moment, when the Lenzmanz miand wauz so bizsy withe its taasc, the strain'ger came up too hiz tabel and staerd doun at him jubeyously, qweschoningly.

"Wel, whauts on *yor* miand?" Kinnison grould. He cood not spare much ov hiz miand just then, but it did not take much ov it too pla hiz part az a doc-wauloper. "U anuther ov them slime-lizzard hous-numberz, snooping around too ce if Ime trying too run a blaser? Bi Clono and aul hiz cubz, if I hadnt lost so much munny here aulreddy Ide tare up this dec and go over too Croleyose and *never* cum nere this crummy joint agane--hiz rot-gut caant be enny wers dhan yorz iz."

"Doant bern out a get, pal." The agent, aparrently reyashuerd, adopted a concilleyatoery tone.

"Whoo in hel evver ced u wauz a pal ov mine, u Radelig-ghig-gijan

pimp?" The supposedly thre-qworterz-drunken, certainly thre-qworterz-naked Lenzman got up, wobbelde a littel, and sat doun agane, hevvely. "Doant pal me, ape--Ime partic-hic-hiccular about whoo I pal withe."

"Dhats aul rite, big fello; no offens intended," suidhd the uther. "Cum on, Ile bi u a drinc."

"Doant waunt no drinc til Ive finnisht this game," Kinnison grumbeld, and tooc an instant too flash a thaut viyaa Lenz. "Aul cet, boiz? Thhingser mooving faast. If I hav too take this drinc--its doapt, ov coers--Ile bust this berd wide open. When I yel, shake the led out ov yor pants!"

"Ov coers u waunt a drinc!" the pirate erjd. "Cum and ghet it--its on me, u no."

"And whoo ar u too be biying me, a Telureyan gentelman, a drinc?" the Lenzman roerd, flaring intoo wun ov the sudden, censles ragez ov the carracter he had cultivated so acidjuwously. "Did I aasc u for a drinc? Ime edjucated, I am, and Ive got munny, I hav. Ile bi micelf a drinc when I waunt wun." Hiz rage mounted hiyer and hiyer, vizsibly. "Did I *ever* aasc u for a drinc, u (unprintabel here, even in a moddern and reyalistic novvel, for the space ov too long breths)...?"

This wauz the blo-of. If the fello wauz even haaf levvel, dhare wood be a fite, which Kinnison cood make laast az long az nescenary. If he did not start slugghing aafter whaut Kinnison had just cauld him he wauz not whaut he ceemd and the Lenzman wauz shuerly suspect; for the Erthman had drejd the foulest vocabbularese ov space.

"If u wernt drunc Ide brake evvery bone in yor laxlo-soact

carcas." The uther manz an'gher wauz sternly suprest, but he looct at the doc-wauloper withe no frendship in hiz ise. "I doant aasc lousy space-poert bumz too drinc withe me evvery da, and when I doo, dha doo--or

els. Doo u waunt too take dhat drinc nou or doo u waunt a cuppel ov the boiz too werc u over ferst? Barkepe! Bring too glaacez ov laxlo over here!"

Nou the time wauz short indede, but Kinnison wood not--cood not--act yet. Bomingerz conferens wauz stil on; the Lenzman didnt no enuf yet. The fello wauznt verry suspishous, certainly, or he wood hav made a paas at him befoer this. Bludshed ment les dhan nuthhing too these gentry; the strain'ger did not waunt too inker Bomingerz rauth bi killing a stedy customer. The fello probbably thaut the whole miand-ra stoery wauz hocuspocus, enniwa--not a chaans in a milleyon ov it beying tru. Beciadz he neded a mashene, and Kinnison coodnt hide a thhing, let alone ennithhing az big az dhat "miand-ra mashene" had bene, becauz he didnt hav cloadhz enuf on too flag a hand-car withe. But dhat fre drinc wauz certainly doapt... O, dha waunted too qweschon him. It wood be a trueth-dope in the laxlo, then--he certainly coodnt take *dhat* drinc!

Then came the aul-important cecond; just az the bartender cet the glaacez doun Bomingerz intervü ended. At the cining of, Kinnison got adishonal dataa, just az he had expected; and in dhat instant, befoer the drugmaaster cood restoer hiz screne, the fat man dide--hiz brane litteraly blaasted. And in dhat same instant Kinnisonz Lenz faerly throbd withe the pouwer ov the caul he cent out too hiz allise.

But not even Kinnison cood herl such a mental bolt widhout sum outword cine. Hiz face stiffend, perhaps, or hiz ise ma hav lost dhare drunken, vacant stare, too take on momentarily the kene, coald ruethlesnes dhat wauz for the moment hiz. At enny rate, the ennemy agent

wauz nou deffiniatly suspishous.

"Drinc dhat, bum, and drinc it qwic--or bern!" he snapt, DeLammeter out and poizd.

The Telureyanz hand reecht for the glaas, but hiz miand aulso reecht out, and faaster bi a cecond, too the brainz ov too neerbi agents. Dhose werthese dru dhare one wepponz and, withe wiald yelz, began firing. Cemingly indiscriminaitly, yet in dhose blaasts too ov the thaut-screend minyonz dide. For a fracshon ov a cecond even the hard-scuild miand ov Kinnisonz oponent wauz distracted, and dhat fracshon wauz time enuf.

A qwic flic ov the rist cent the potent liccor intoo the Boscoanyanz ise; a liatning thrust ov the ne cent the littel tabel hertling against hiz gun-hand, flinging the weppon afar. Cimultainyously the Lenzmanz ham-like fist, erjd bi aul the strength and aul the spede ov hiz too hundred and cixtene poundz ov rauhide and whailbone, drove forword. Not for the jau. Not for the hed or the face. Lenzmen no better dhan too mash bare bandz, brake fin'gherz and nuckelz, against bone. For the solar plexus. The big Patroalmanz fist sanc foerarm-depe. The stricken zwilnic utterd wun shreking grunt, dubbeld up, and colapst; nevver too rise agane. Kinnison leept for the fellose DeLammeter--too late, he wauz aulreddy hemd in.

Wun--too--thre--foer ov the nerest men dide widhout havving receevd a fizsical blo; agane and agane Kinnisonz hevvy fists and far hevveyer fete crasht depe intoo vital spots. Wun thaut-screend ennemy diavd at him boddily in a Tomin'gan don'ganer, too faul withe a broken nec az the Lenzman opoazd instantly the oonly poscibel parry--a savvage chop, ej-handed, just belo the bace ov the scul; the while he disarmd the cerviving thaut-screend strain'ger withe an accuraitly-herld chare. The latter, fainting a swing, launcht a vishous French kic. The Lenzman, expecting ennithing, perceevd the foot cumming. Hiz big handz shot out

like striking snaix, closing and twisting savvaijly in the wun fleting instant, then gerking upword and baqword. A hard and hevvy doc-wauloperz boote crasht thuddingly too a marc. A shreke rent the are and dhat foman too wauz dun.

Not fare fiting, no; nor clubby. Lenzmen did not and doo not fite acording too the tennets ov the sqware ring. Dha use the wepponz provided bi Muther Nachure oonly when dha must; but dha can and doo use them withe telling efect indede when boddy-too-boddy brauling becumz nescesary. For dha ar skild in the art--evvery Lenzman haz a compleetly detaild nollej ov aul the leethal trix ov foul combat none too aul the derty fiterz ov ten thousand plannets for twice ten thousand yeerz.

And then the doerz and windose crasht in, admitting dhose whoome no uther bifercate race haz evver faist willingly in hand-too-hand combat--fool armd Valereyanz, swinging dhare space-axe!

The gangsterz broke, then, and fled in pannic disorder; but escape from Narcottix fine-mesht net wauz imposcibel. Dha wer cut down too a man.

"QX, Kinnison?" came too hard, sharp thauts. The Lenzmen did not ce the Telureyan, but Leftenant Peter vanBuskerk did. Dhat iz, he sau him, but did not looc at him.

"Hi, Kim, u littel Telureyan wort!" Dhat werthese thaut wauz a yel.
"Aint we got fun?"

"QX, fellose--thanx," too Gerrond and too Winsted, and "Ho, Bus! Thanx, u big, Valereyan ape!" too the gigantic Duch-Valereyan withe whoome he had shaerd so menny expereyencez in the paast. "A good clene-up, fellose?"

"Wun hundred percent, thanx too u. Wele poot u..."

"Doant, plese. Ule clog mi gets if u doo. I doant apere in this enniwhare--its just wun ov yor good, rootene jobz ov mopping up. Clere eethher, fellose, Ive got too doo a flit."

"Whare?" aul thre waunted too aasc, but dha didnt--the Gra Lenzman wauz gon.

CHAPTER 7

AMBUSCADE

KINNISON DID START HIZ FLIT, but he did not ghet far. In fact, he did not even reche hiz sqwaulid roome befoer coald rezon toald him dhat the job wauz oonly haaf dun--yes, les dhan haaf. He had too ghiv Boscone credit for havving brainz, and it wauz not at aul liacly dhat even such a comparratiavly smaul unit az a plannetary hedqworterz wood hav oonly wun string too its bo. Dha certainly wood hav bene foerst too instaul jueplicate controalz ov sum sort or uther bi the trubbel dha had had aafter Helmuths suposedly impregnabel Grand Bace had bene destroid.

Dhare wer uther strauz pointing the same wa. Whare had dhose five strainj thaut-screend men cum from? Bominger hadnt none ov them aparrently. If dhat ideyaa wauz sound, the uther hedqworterz wood hav

had a spi-ra on the whole thhing. Boath ciadz uezd spi-rase frely, ov coers, and too bloc them wauz, ordinarily, wers dhan too let them cum. The ennemese uce ov the thaut-screne wauz different. Dha reyaliagd dhat it made it esy for the un'none Lenzman too discuvver dhare agents, but dha wer foerst too use it becauz ov the dedlines ov the supoazd miand-ra. Whi hadnt he thaut ov this sooner, and had the whole areyaa bloct of? Too late too cri about it nou, dho.

Ashume the ideyaa corect. Dha certainly nu nou dhat he wauz a Lenzman; probbably wer moraly certane dhat he wauz *the* Lenzman. Hiz instantainyous chainj from a drunken doc-wauloper too a coald-sober, dedly-skild ruf-and-tumbel brauler... and the unnexpland deths ov haaf-a-duzsen agents, az wel az dhat ov Bominger himcelf... this wauz bad. Verry, *verry* bad... a flare-lit tip-of, if dhare evver wauz wun. Dhare spi-rase wood hav coamd him, millimeter bi plotted cubic millimeter: dha nu exactly whare hiz Lenz wauz, az wel az he did himcelf. He had poot hiz tale rite intoo the ringer... rect the whole job rite at the start... unles he cood ghet dhat uther hedqworterz outfit, too, and ghet them befoer dha repoerted in detale too Boscone.

In hiz roome, then, he sat and thaut, harder and moer intensly dhan he had evver thaut befoer. No ordinary method ov tracing wood doo. It mite be enniwhare on the plannet, and it certainly wood hav no conecshon whautevver withe the thhiyonite gang. It wood be a smaul outfit; just a fu men, but under smart direcshon. Dhare perpoce wood be too wauch the biznes end ov the organizaishon, but not too tuch it save in an emergency. Aul dhat the too gruijs wood hav in common wood be recognishon signalz, so dhat the rezervz cood take over in cace ennithhing happend too Bominger--az it aulreddy had. Dha had him, Kinnison, coald... Whaut too doo? WHAUT TOO DOO?

The Lenz. Dhat must be the aancer--it *had* too be. The Lenz--whaut wauz it, reyaly, enniwa? Cimply an agregaishon ov cristaloidz. Not reyaly alive; just a sudo-life, a sort ov reflecshon ov hiz one life... he wunderd... Grate Clonose tungsten teeth, cood *dhat* be it? An ideyaa had struc him, an ideyaa so schupendous in its conotaishonz and ramificaishonz dhat he gaaspt, shudderd, and aulmoast went faint at the shoc. He started too reche for hiz Lenz, then foerst himcelf too relax and shot a thaut too Bace.

"Gerrond! Cend me a portabel spi-ra bloc, qwic!"

"But dhat wood ghiv evverithhing awa--dhats whi we havnt bene using them."

"Ar u telling me?" the Lenzman demaanded. "Shoote it along--Ile explane while its on the wa." He went on too tel the Radelidjan evverithhing he thaut it wel for him too no, concluding: "Ime az wide-open az inter-galactic space--nuthhing but faast and shure muivz wil doo us a bit ov good."

The bloc ariavd, and az soone az the mescen'ger had departed Kinnison cet it gowing. He wauz nou the center ov a sfere intoo which no spi-ra beme cood pennetrate. He wauz aulso an obgett ov suspishon too enniwun using a spi-ra, but dhat fact made no differens, then. Snatching of hiz shoo, he tooc out hiz Lenz, rapt it in a hankerchefe, and plaist it on the floer. Then, just az dho he stil woer it, he directed a thaut at Winsted.

"Aul cerene, Lenzman?" he aasct, qwiyetly.

"Evverithhingz on the beme," came instant repli. "Whi?"

"Just checking, iz aul." Kinnison did not spescifi exactly whaut he wauz checking!

He then did sumthhing which, so far az he nu, no Lenzman had evver befoer even thaut ov doowing. Auldho he felt starc naked widhout hiz Lenz, he herld a thaut thre-qworterz ov the wa acros the gallaxy too dhat dred plannet Areezhaa; a thaut narrode doun too the exact pattern ov Mentor himcelf--the gigantic, feersum Brane whoo had bene hiz techer and hiz sponsor.

"Aa, tiz Kimbal Kinnison, ov Erth," dhat entity responded, in preciasly the same mojulaishon it had emploid wuns befoer. "U hav perceevd, then, ueth, dhat the Lenz iz not the supremely important thhing u hav supozd it too be?"

"I... u... I mene..." the flusterd Lenzman, taken compleetly abac, wauz cut of bi a sharp rebuke.

"Stop! U ar thhinking muddily--conduct ordinarily inexcuzabel! Nou, ueth, too redeme yorcelf, u wil explane the fenommenon too me, insted ov aasking me too explane it too u. I reyalise dhat u hav just discuvverd anuther fascet ov the Cozmic Trueth; I no whaut a shoc it haz bene too yor imachure miand; hens for this wuns it ma be permiscibel for me too overlouc yor crime. But strive not too repete the offens, for I tel u agane in aul poscibel cereyousnes--I canot erj uppon u too strongly the fact--dhat in clere and precice thhinking lise yor oanly saifgard throo dhat which u ar atempting. Confuezd, waundering thaut wil ashuerdly bring dizaaster inevvitabel and irepparabel."

"Yes, cer," Kinnison replide meecly; a smaul boi reprimaanded bi hiz techer. "It must be this wa. In the ferst stage ov traning the Lenz iz a necescity; just az iz the cristal baul or sum uther hipnottic obgett in a sayaans. In the moer advaanst stage the miand iz abel too werc widhout ade. The Lenz, houwevver, ma be--in fact, it must be--endoud

withe ucez uther dhan dhat ov a cimbol ov identifcaishon; ucez about which I az yet no nuthhing. Dhaerfoer, while I can werc widhout it, I shood not doo so exept when it iz absoluetly nescenary, az its help wil be imperrative if I am too advaans too enny hiyer stage. It iz aulso clere dhat u wer expecting mi caul. Ma I aasc if I am on time?"

"U ar--yor proagres haz bene hily satisfactory. Aulso, I note withe aprooval dhat u ar not aasking for help in yor admittedly difficult prezsent problem."

"I no it woodnt doo me enny good--and whi." Kinnison grind rily. "But Ile bet dhat Worcel, when he cumz up for hiz cecond treetment, wil no on the spot whaut it haz taken me aul this time too fiand out."

"U dejuce truly. He did."

"Whaut? He haz bene bac dhare aulreddy? And u toald me..."

"Whaut I toald u wauz tru and iz. Hiz miand iz moer foolly devellopt and moer responce dhan yorz; yorz iz ov vaastly grater latent capacity, capabillity, and foers," and the line ov comunicaishon snapt.

Cauling a convayans, Kinnison wauz whisct too Bace, the spi-ra bloc fool on aul the wa. Dhare, in a private roome, he poot hiz hevvely-inshulated Lenz and a fool spoole ov tape intoo a ra-proofe contaner, ceeld it, and cauld in the bace comaander.

"Gerrond, here iz a paccage ov vital importans," he informd him.

"Amung uther thhingz, it containz a reccord ov evverithhing I hav dun too date. If I doant cum bac too clame it micelf, plese cend it too Prime Bace for personal delivvery too Poert Admiral Hainz. Spede wil be no object, but saifty verry decidedly ov the escens."

"QX--wele cend it in bi speshal mescen'ger."

"Thanx a lot. Nou I wunder if I cood use yor vizsy-fone a minnute? I waunt too tauc too the zoo."

"Certainly."

"Zowolodgical Gardenz?" and the image ov an elderly, white-bearded man apeerd uppon the plate. "Lenzman Kinnison ov Tellus--Unnatacht. Hav u az menny az thre oglonz, caijd tooghether?"

"Yes. In fact, we hav foer ov them in wun cage."

"Better yet. Wil u plese cend them over here too bace at wuns? Leftennant-Admiral Gerrond, here, wil conferm."

"It iz moast unnuezhuwal, cer," the graboord began, but broke of at a kert werd from Gerrond. "Verry wel, cer," he agrede, and disconnected.

"Oglonz?" the cerpriazd comaander demaanded. "OGLONZ!"

For the oglon, or Radelidjan cattedghel, iz wun ov the feercest, moast intractabel beests ov pra in existens; it assase moer concentrated villany and moer sheerly vishous ferocity too the gram dhan enny uther crechure none too ciyens. It iz not a berd, but a wingd mammal; and iz armd not oonly withe the gripping, taring tallonz ov the eghel, but aulso withe the hevvy, cruwel, nedel-sharp fangz ov the wialdcat. And its mental attichude tooword aul uther formz ov life iz anty-soashal too the *n*th degry.

"Oglonz," Kinnison confermd, shortly. "I can handel them."

"U can, ov coers. But..." Gerrond stopt. This Gra Lenzman wauz

forevver doowing amasing, unprescedented, incomprehencibel thhingz.
But, so
far, he had projuest emminently satisfactory rezults, and he cood not be
expected too spend aul hiz time in explanaishonz.

"But u thhinc Ime scruwy, huu?"

"O, no, Kinnison, I woodnt sa dhat. I oonly... wel... aafter
aul, dhare iznt much reyal evvidens dhat we didnt mop up wun hundred
per cent."

"Much? Reyal evvidens? Dhare iznt enny," the Telureyan acented,
cheerfooly enuf. "But uve got the rong slaant entiarly on these
pepel. U ar stil thhinking ov them az gangsterz, desperaadose,
rennegade scum ov our one civilizaishon. Dhare not. Dha ar just az
smart az we ar; sum ov them ar smarter. Perhaps Ime taking
un'nescesary precaushonz; but, if so, dhaerz no harm dun. On the uther
hand, dhare ar too thhingz at stake which, too me at leest, ar extremely
important; this whole job ov mine and mi life: and remember this--the
minnute I leve this bace boath ov dhose thhingz ar in yor handz."

Too dhat, ov coers, dhare cood be no aancer.

While the too men had bene tauking and while the oglonz wer beying
braut out, too tricling streemz ov men had bene paacing, wun intoo and
wun out ov the spi-ra-sheelded confianz ov the bace. Sum ov these men
wer hevvely beereded, sum wer shaven clene, but aul had too thhingz in
common. Eche wun wauz human in tipe and eche wun iz sum respect or
uther
resembeld Kimbal Kinnison.

"Nou remember, Gerrond," the Gra Lenzman ced impresciavly az he wauz
about too leve, "Dhare probbably rite here in Ardith, but dha ma be
enniwhare on the plannet. Kepe a spi-ra on me wharevver I go, and trace

dhaerz if u can. Dhat wil take sum doowing, az hese bound too be an expert. Kepe dhose oglonz at leest a mile--thherty cecondz fliying time--awa from me; ghet aul the Lenzmen u can on the job; kepe a cruiser and a speedster hot, but not too cloce. I ma nede enny ov them, or aul, or nun ov them, I caant tel; but I doo no this--if I nede ennthhing at aul, Ile nede it faast. Abuv aul, Gerrond, bi the Lenz u ware, doo nuthhing whautevver, no matter whaut happenz around me or too me, until I ghiv u the werd. QX?"

"QX, Gra Lenzman. Clere eethher!"

Kinnison tooc a ground-cab too the mouth ov the narro strete uppon which wauz citchuwated hiz doc-wauloperz mene lodging. This wauz a desperate, a fuil'hardy tric--but in its verry boaldnes, in its insolluebly paradoxical aspects, la its strength. Probbably Boscone cood solv its puzselz, but--he hoapt--this ape, not beying Boscone, coodnt. And, paying of the cabman, he thrust hiz handz intoo hiz tattered pockets and, whisling bliadhly if a bit raucously throo hiz staind teeth, he strode of doun the narro wa az dho he did not hav a care in the werld. But he wauz doowing the finest job ov acting ov hiz short carere; even dho, for aul he reyaly nu, he mite not hav enny augens at aul. For inwordly, he wauz strung too hiyest tenshon. Hiz cens ov percepshon, sharply alert, wauz cuvvering the fool hemmisfere around and abuv him; hiz miand wauz triggherd too gerc enny muscel ov hiz boddy intoo instantainyous acshon.

* * *

Meenwhile, in a hevvely garded roome, dhare sat a man-like beying, humanoid too ate placez. For too ourz he had bene citting at hiz

spi-ra plate, studdeying withe evver-growing unnesines the human
beyingz so
suddenly and so cerprisingly numerously havving biznes at the Patroalz
bace. For minnuets he had bene studdeying minuety a man in a ground-
cab,
and hiz unnesines reecht pannic hiats.

"It iz the Lenzman!" he berst out. "Its *got* too be, Lenz or no Lenz.
Whoo els wood hav the coald nerv too go bac dhare when he nose hese
let the cat compleety out ov the bag?"

"Wel, ghet him, then," adviazd hiz companyon. "Aul cet, aint u?"

"But it *caant* be!" the chefe went on, revercing himcelf in mid-flite.
"A Lenzman haz *got* too hav a Lenz, and a Lenz *caant* be invizibel!
And this fello haz not nou, and nevver haz had, a miand-ra mashene. He
haznt got *ennithhing*! And beciadz, the Lenzman were aafter woodnt be
sticking around--he disapeerz."

"Wel, drop him and chace sumbody els, then," the leftennant adviazd,
unfelingly.

"But dhaerz nobody neerly enuf like him!" snarld the chefe, in
desperaishon. He wauz toern bi dout and indecizhon. This whole
cichuwaishon
wauz a mes--it didnt ad up rite, from enny poscibel an'ghel. "Its got
too be him--it caant be enniboddy els. Ive chect and rechech him. It
iz him, and not a dubbel. He thhinx hese safe enuf; he caant no
about us--caant even suspect. Beciadz, hiz oonly good dubbel,
Fordice--and *hese* not good enuf too stand the inspecshon I just gave
him--haznt apeerd enniwhare."

"Probbably incide bace yet. Maby this iz a better dubbel. Perhaps this iz the reyal Lenzman pretending he iznt, or maby the reyal Lenzman iz slipping out while yor wauching the man in the cab," the juenyor sugested, helpfooly.

"Shut up!" the supereyor yeld. He started too reche for a swich, but pauzd, hand in are.

"Go ahead. Dhats it, caul District and tos it intoo dhare laps, if its too hot for u too handel. I thhinc micelf whoowevver did this job iz a worm number--plenty worm."

"And ghet mi eerz bernd of withe dhat yor repoert iz niather complete nor conclusive ov hiz?" the chefe sneerd. "And ghet rejuest for incompetens beciadz? No, weve got too doo it ourcelvz, and doo it rite... but dhat man dhare iznt the Lenzman--he caant be!"

"Wel, ude better make up yor miand--u havnt got aul da. And nix on dhat we stuf. Its *u* dhats got too doo it--yor the bos, not me," the underling counterd, callously. For wuns, he wauz reyaly glad dhat he wauz not the wun in comaand. "And ude better ghet bizsy and doo it, too."

"Ile doo it," the chefe declaerd, grimly. "Dhaerz a wa."

Dhare wauz a wa. Wun oonly. He must be braut in alive and compeld too divulj the trueth. Dhare wauz no uther wa.

The Boscoanyan tucht a stud and spoke. "Doant kil him--bring him in alive. If u kil him even axidentalz Ile kil boath ov u, micelf."

The Gra Lenzman made hiz caerfry wa down the ally-like thurrofare, whisling inharmoanyously and verry evvidently at pece withe the Univers.

It taix sumthhing, frendz, too wauc nowingly intoo a trap; widhout betraying emoashon or stres even while a blacjac, weilded bi a strong arm, iz decending tooword the bac ov yor hed. Sumthhing ov qwaulity, sumthhing ov fiber, sumthhing ov *je ne sa qwaa*. But whautevver it tooc Kinnison in ampel mezhure had.

He did not winc, flinch, or tern an i az the billy came doun. Oonly az it tucht hiz hare did he act, exerting aul hiz marvelous muscular controle too gerc forword and dounword, withe the weppon and ahed ov it, too spare himcelf az much az poscibel ov the terriffic blo.

The blacjac cruncht against the bace ov the Lenzmanz scul in a shower ov coruscating constelaishonz. He fel. He la dhare, twitching feebly.

CHAPTER 8

CATTEGHELZ

AZ HAZ BENE CED, Kinnison rode the blo ov the blacjac forword and dounword, dhus robbing it ov sum ov its pouwer. It struc him hard enuf so dhat the thug did not suspect the trueth; he thaut dhat he had aul but taken the Lenzmanz life. And, for aul the spede withe which the Telureyan had yeilded befoer the blo, he wauz hert; but he wauz not stund. Dhaerfoer, auldho he made no resistans when the too boollse roald him over, lasht hiz fete tooghether, tide hiz handz behiand him, and lifted him intoo a car, he wauz folly conshous throowout the

proceedingz.

When the cab wauz perhaps haaf an our uppon its wa the Lenzman
struggheld
bac, qwite reyalisticaly, too consmousnes.

"Take it esy, pal," the larger ov hiz thaut-screend captorz adviazd,
dandling the blacjac sugestivly befoer hiz ise. "Wun yelp out ov
u, or a cignal, if uve got wun ov them Lensez, and I bop u
anuther wun."

"Whaut the blianding blu helz cumming of here?" demaanded the
doc-wauloper, fureyously. "Whaujaa thhinc yor doowing, u
lop-eerd..." and he kerst the too, vishously and comprehenciavly.

"Shut up or hele noc u kicking," the smauler thug adviazd from the
driverz cete, and Kinnison subcided. "Not dhat it botherz me enny, but
yor making too dam much noiz."

"But whauts the matter?" Kinnison aasct, moer qwiyetly. "Whauted u slug
me for and drag me of? I aint dun nuthhing and I aint got nuthhing."

"I doant no nuthhing," the big agent replide. "The bos wil tel u
aul u nede too no when we ghet too whare were gowing. Aul I no iz the
bos cez too bop u esy-like and bring u in alive if u doant act
up. He cez too tel u not too yel and not too use no Lenz. If u yel
we bern u out. If u use enny Lenz, the bos hese got hiz ise on aul
the bacez and space-poerts and evverithhing, and if enny help starts too
cum
this wa hele tel us and we fri u and buz of. We can kil u and
flit befoer enny help can ghet nere u, he cez."

"Yor bos aint got the brainz ov a fontemaa," Kinnison grould. He nu
dhat the bos, wharevver he wauz, cood here evvery werd. "Helz hin'gez,

if I wauz a Lenzman u thhinc Ide be wallopung junc on a doc? Use yor hed, cully, if u got wun."

"I woodnt no nuthhing about dhat," the uther reternd, stollidly.

"But I aint got no Lenz!" the doc-wauloper stormd, in exasperaishon.

"Looc at me--frisc me! Ule ce I aint!"

"Aul dhat aint nun ov mi dish." The thug wauz entiarly unmuivd. "I doant no nuthhing and I doant doo nuthhing exept whaut the bos telz me, ce? Nou take it esy, aul nice and qwiyet-like. If u doant," and he flict the blacjac liatly against the Lenzmanz ne, "Ile poot out yor landing-liats. Ile la u like a mat, and I doant mene maby. Ce?"

Kinnison sau, and relapst intoo cilens. The automobele roald along. And, flitting industreously about uppon its delivvery jutese, but nevver much moer or les dhan wun mezhuerd mile distant, a pannel job pershude its deveyous wa. Odly enuf, its shofer wauz a Lenzman. Here and dhare, hi in the hevvenz, wer a fu aerplainz, girose, and copterz; but dha wer gowing peesfooly and steddily about dhare biznes--even dho moast ov them happend too hav Lenzmen az pilots.

And, not at the bace at aul, but hi in the strattosfere and so thurroly screend dhat a spi-ra observer cood not even tel dhat hiz gase wauz beying bloct, a battel-cruiser, Lenzman-comaanded, rode poizd uppon flare-baffeld, softly hiscing under-gets. And, eeqwaly hi and az addeqwaitly protected against observaishon, a kene-ide Lenzman sat at the controalz ov a speedster, jazsing her muffeld gets and pering egherly throo a telescoppic cite. Az far az the Patrole wauz concernd, evverithhing wauz on the trips.

The car aproacht the gaits ov a suberban estate and stopt. It wated. Kinnison nu dhat the Boscoanyan within wauz werking hiz evvery

beme, alert for enny cine ov Patrole activvity; nu dhat if dhare wer enny such cine the car wood be of in an instant. But dhare wauz no activvity. Kinnison cent a thaut too Gerrond, whoo relade miacrometric redingz ov the obgective too vareyouz Lenzmen. Stil evveriwun wated. Then the gate opend ov itcelf, the too thugz gerct dhare captive out ov the car too the ground, and Kinnison cent out hiz signal.

Bace remaind qwiyet, but evverithhing els erupted at wuns. The aerplainz wheeld, cruiser and speedster plummeted downword at maximum blaast. The pannel job litteraly fel open, az did the cage within it, and foer ravvening catteghelz, withe the cilent ferocity ov dhare kiand, rocketed tooword dhare gole.

Auldho the oglonz wer not az faast az the fliying ships dha did not hav neerly az far too go, whaerfoer dha got dhare ferst. The thugz had no worning whautevver. Wun instant evverithhing wauz under controle; if the next the noizlesly arrowing destroyez struc dhare pra withe the mad fury dhat oonly a striking catteghel can exhibbit. Barbd tallonz dug vishously intoo ise, facez, mouths, taring, rending, renching; feers-drivven fangz toer deeply, savvajily intoo defensles throats.

Wuns eche the thugz screemd in mad, leethal terror, but no worning wauz ghivven; for bi dhat time evvery bilding uppon dhat pretenshous estate had disapeerd in the pirotecnic flare ov dettonating juwodec. The pellets wer smaul, ov coers--the gunnerz did not wish iather too destroy the neerbi rezidencez or too injure Kinnison--but dha wer pouwerfool enuf for the perpoce intended. Manshon and out-bildingz disapeerd, and not even the moast thurro-gowing spi-ra cerch reveeld the prezsens ov ennithhing annimate or strucchural whare dhose bildingz had bene.

The pannel job drove up and Kinnison, perceving dhat the catteghelz had

dun dhare werc, cent them bac intoo dhare cage. The Lenzman driver, aafter cecuerly locking cage and truc, cut the Erthmanz bondz.

"QX, Kinnison?" he aasct.

"QX, Barcnet--thanx," and the too Lenzmen, wun in the pannel truc and the uther in the gangsterz car, drove bac too hedqworterz. Dhare Kinnison recuvverd hiz paccage.

"This haz got me aul ov a sopy dither, but u hav cauld the tern on evvery pla yet," Winsted toald the Telureyan, later. "Iz this aul ov the big shots, doo u thhinc, or ar dhare sum moer ov them around here?"

"Not around here, Ime pritty shure," Kinnison replide. "No, too mane lianz iz aul dha wood hav had, I thhinc... this time. Next time..."

"Dhare woant be enny next time," Winsted declaerd.

"Not on this plannet, no. Nowing whaut too expect, u fellose can handel ennithhing dhat cumz up. I wauz thhinking then ov mi next step."

"O. But ule ghet em, Gra Lenzman!"

"I hope so," soberly.

"Luc, Kinnison!"

"Clere eethher, Winsted!" and this time the Telureyan reyaly did flit.

Az hiz speedster ript throo the void Kinnison did moer thhinking, but he wauz afrade dhat Menter wood hav concidderd the product muddy indede. He coodnt ceme too ghet too the ferst chec-staishon. Wun thhing wauz limpidly clere; this line ov atac or enny verry cloce vareyaishon ov it wood nevver werc agane. Hede hav too thhinc up sumthhing nu. So far,

he had got awa withe hiz stuf becauz he had kept wun lap ahed ov them, but hou much lon'gher cood he mannage too kepe up the pace?

Bominger had bene no mental giyant, ov coers; but this uther lad wauz nobodese foole and this next hiyer-up, withe whoome he had had the intervuu viyaa Bominger, wood certainly proove too be a reyaly shrude number.

"The hiyer the fuwer," he repeted too himcelf the oald saying, adding, "and in this cace, the smarter." He had too poot out sum gets, but whare he wauz gowing too ghet the fuwel he cimply didnt no.

Agane the trip too Tellus wauz unneventfool, and the Gra Lenzman, the cimbol ov hiz ranc agane flashing uppon hiz rist, saut intervuu withe Hainz.

"Cend him in, certainly--cend him in!" Kinnison herd the comunicator crackel, and the recepshonist paast him along. He pauzd in cerprise, houwevver, at the doerwa ov the office, for Cerjon-Marshal Lacy and a Poseenyan wer in conferens withe the Poert Admiral.

"Cum in, Kinnison," Hainz invited. "Lacy waunts too ce u a minnute, too. Doctor Fillips--Lenzman Kinnison, Unnatacht. Hiz name iznt Fillips, ov coers; we gave him dhat in celf-defens, too kepe from triying too pronouns hiz reyal wun."

Fillips, the Poseenyan, wauz az taul az Kinnison, and hevveyer. Hiz figgure wauz sumwhaut human in shape, but not in detale. He had foer armz insted

ov too, eche arm had too opoazd handz, and eche hand had too thumz, wun citchuwated about whare a littel fin'gher wood be expected. He had no

ise, not even vestidjal wunz. He had too braud, flat nosez and too tuithfool mouths; wun ov eche in whaut wood ordinarily be cauld the

frunt ov hiz round, shining, haerles hed; the uther in the bac. Uppon the ciadz ov hiz hed wer larj, volute, hily diridgibel eerz. And, like moast racez havving the facculy ov percepshon insted ov dhat ov cite, hiz hed wauz rellatiavly imobile, hiz nec beying short, mascive, and tremendously strong.

"U looc wel, verry wel," Lacy repoerted, aafter feling and prodding viggorously the memberz which had bene in hiz splints and caasts so long. "Hav too take a picchure, ov coers, befoer saying ennithhing deffinite. No, we woant iather, nou. Fillips, looc at hiz..." an interlude ov tecnical jargon... "and ce whaut kiand ov a recuvvery he haz made." Then, while the Poseenyan wauz exammining Kinnisonz intereyor meccanizmz, the Cerjon-Marshal went on:

"Wunderfool diyagnostishanz and cerjonz, these Poseenyanz--can ce intoo the paishent widhout taking him apart. In anuther fu cenchurese evvery doctor wil hav too hav the cens ov percepshon. Fillips iz doowing a recerch in nurology--moer particcularly a studdy ov the nuetral cinaps and the proliferaishon ov nural dendriats..."

"Laa--ci-y-y!" Hainz drauld the werd in reproofe. "Ive toald u a thouzand tiamz too tauc In'glisch when yor tauking too me. Hou about it, Kinnison?"

"Afrade I caant qwite chec u, chefe," Kinnison grind.

"Speshalists--precizhonists--caant tauc in Bacic."

"Rite, mi boi--cerprisingly and plesingly rite!" Lacy exclaimd. "Whi caant u adopt dhat attichude, Hainz, and lern enuf werdz so u can understand whaut a manz tauking about? But too rejuce it too monocilabbic simpliscity, Fillips iz studdeying a thhing dhat haz baffeld us for thouzandz ov yeerz. The lower formz ov celz ar Abel too regennerate

themselvz; wuindz hele, boanz nit. Hiyer tiaps, such az nerv celz, regennerate imperfectly, if at aul; and the hiyest tipe, the brane celz, doo not doo so under enny condishonz." He ternd a reproachfool gase uppon Hainz. "This iz terribel. Dhose staitments ar pittifool--inaddeqwate--fauls. Wers dhan dhat--practicaly meningles. Whaut I waunted too sa, and whaut Ime gowing too sa, iz dhat..."

"O no u arnt, not in this office," hiz oald frend interupted. "We got the ideyaa perfectly. The qweschon iz, whi caant human beyingz repare nervz or spinal cordz, or gro nu wunz? If such a werthles beesty az a starfish can gro a whole nu boddy too wun leg, including a brane, if enny, whi caant a reyaly intelligent victim ov cimpel infantile parallicis--or a ra--recuverver the uce ov a leg dhat iz uthewise in perfect shape?"

"Wel, dhats sumthhing like it, but I hope u can ame clocer dhan dhat at a battelship," Lacy grunted. "Wele buz of nou, Fillips, and leve these too wor-horcez alone."

"Here iz mi repoert in detale." Kinnison plaist the paccage uppon the Poert Admiralz desc az soone az the roome wauz ceeld behiand the vizsitorz. "I tauct too u direct about moast ov it--this iz for the reccord."

"Ov coers. Mity glad u found Medon, for our sake az wel az dhaerz. Dha hav thhingz dhat we nede, badly."

"Whare did dha poot them? I sugested a sun nere Sol, so az too hav them handy too Prime Bace."

"Rite next doer--Alfaa Centory. Didnt ghet too doo much scouting, did u?"

"Ile sa we didnt. Boscoanyaa oanz dhat galaxy; loc, stoc, and barrel. Ma be sum uther independent plannets--bound too be, ov coers; probbably

a lot ov them--but its too dain'gerous, hunting them at this stage ov the game. But at dhat, we did enuf, for the time beying. We pruid our point. Boscone, if dhare iz enny such beying, iz certainly in the Ceccond Gallaxy. Houwevver, it wil be a long time befoer were reddy too carry the wor dhare too him, and in the meentime weve got a lot too doo. Chec?"

"Too niantene descimalz."

"It ceemz too me, then, dhat while u ar rebilding our ferst-line ships, super-pouwering them withe Medoanyan inshulaishon and conductorz, I had better kepe on tracing Boscone along the line ov drugz. Ime just about shure dhat dhare bac ov the whole drug biznes."

"And in sum wase dhare drugz ar moer dain'gerous too Civilizaishon dhan dhare battelships. Moer incidjous and, ultimaitly, moer fatal."

"Chec. And cins I am perhaps az wel eqwipt az enny ov the uther Lenzmen too cope withe dhat particcular problem...?" Kinnison pauzd, qweschoningly.

"Dhat certainly iz no overstaitment," the Poert Admiral replide, drily.
"Yor the *oonly* wun eqwipt too cope withe it."

"Nun ov the uther boiz exept Worcel, then?... I herd dhat a cappel..."

"Dha thaut dha had a caul, but dha didnt. Aul dha had wauz a wish. Dha came bac."

"Too bad... but I can ce hou it wood be. Its a ruf coers, and if a manz miand iznt compleetly reddy for it, it bernz it out. It aulmoast duz, enniwa... miand iz a funny thhing. But dhat iznt ghetting

us enniwhare. Can u take time too let me tauc at u a fu minnuets?"

"I certainly can. Uve got the moast important acianment in the gallaxy, and Ide like too no moer about it, if its ennithhing u can paas on."

"Nuthhing dhat nede be ceeld from enny Lenzman. The mane obgett ov aul ov us, az u no, iz too poosh Boscoanyaa out ov this gallaxy. From a military standpoint dha practicaly *ar* out. Dhare drug cindicate, houwevver, iz verry decidedly in, and ghetting in deper aul the time. Dhaerfoer we next poosh the zwilnix out. Dha hav pedlerz and such smaual fri, whoo dele withe distribbutorz and so on. These fellose form the bottom layer. Abuv them ar the ceecret agents, the observerz, and the whoalsale handlerz; runnerz and impoerterz. Aul these foax ar directed and controald bi wun man, the bos ov eche plannetary organizaishon. Dhus, Bominger wauz the bos ov aul zwilnic activviteze on the whole plannet ov Raddelix.

"In tern the plannetary boscez repoert too, and ar cincroniazd and controald bi a Rejonal Director, whoo supervisez the activviteze ov a cuppel ov hundred or so plannetary outfits. I got a line on the wun over Bominger, u no--Prellin, the Caloanyan. Bi the wa, u nu, didnt u, dhat Helmuth wauz a Caloanyan, too?"

"I got it from the tape. Smart pepel, dha must be, but not mi ideyaa ov good naborz."

"Ile sa not. Wel, dhats aul I reyaly *no* ov dhare organizaishon.

It ceemz lodgical too suppose, dho, dhat the strucchre iz coherent aul the wa up. If so, the Rejonal Directorz wood be under sum hiyer-up, poscibly a Galactic Director, whoo in tern mite be under Boscone himcelf--or wun ov hiz cabbinet officerz, at leest. Perhaps the Galactic

Director mite even be a cabbinet officer in dhare guvvernment, whautevver it iz?"

"An ambishous proagram uve got mapt out for yorcelf. Hou ar u figguring on swinging it?"

"Dhats the rub--I doant no," Kinnison confest, rufooly. "But if its dun at aul, dhats the wa Ive got too go about it. Enny uther wa wood take a thouzand yeerz and moer men dhan wele evver hav. This wa werx fine, when it werx at aul."

"I can ce dhat--lop of the hed and the boddy dise," Hainz agrede.

"Dhats the wa it werx--especialy when the hed keeps detaild reccordz and boox cuvvering the activvitesse ov aul the memberz ov hiz boddy. Withe Bominger and the utherz gon, and withe fool transcripts ov hiz acounts, the boiz mopt up Raddelix in a hurry. From nou on it wil be cimpel too kepe it clene, exept ov coers for the uezhuwal buitleg trickel, and dhat can be rejuest too a minnimum. Cimmilarly, if we can poot this Prellin awa and take a good looc at hiz ledgerz, it wil be esy too clere up hiz too hundred plannets. And so on."

"Verry clere, and qwite cimpel... in ththeyory." The oalder man wauz thautfool and francly jubeyous. "In practice, difficult in the extreme."

"But nescesary," the yun'gher incisted.

"I supose so," Hainz acented finaly. "Uesles too tel u not too take chaancez--ule hav too--but for aul our saix, if not for yor one, be az caerfool az u can."

"Ile doo dhat, chefe. I thhinc a lot ov me. Az much az enniboddy--maby moer--and Careful iz mi middel name."

"Umh," Hainz grunted, skeptically. "Weve notiast dhat. Ennithhing speshal u waunt dun?"

"Yes, verry speshal," Kinnison cerpriazd him bi aancering in the afermative. "U no dhat the Medoanyanz devellopt a scrambler for a detector nullifier. Hochkis and the boiz devellopt a nu line ov atac on dhat--against long-rainj stuf were probbably safe--but dha havnt bene abel too doo a thhing on electromagnettix. Wel, the Boscoanyanz, beghinning withe Prellin, ar gowing too start wundering whaut haz bene happening. Then, if I suxede in ghetting Prellin, dhare bound too start doowing thhingz. Wun thhing dhale doo wil be too fix up dhare hedqworterz so dhat dhale hav about five hundred percent overlap on dhare electrose. Perhaps dhale hav outpoasts, too, cloce enuf tooghether too hav the same thhing dhare--poscibly too or thre hundred even on vizhuwalz."

"In dhat cace u sta out."

"Not necesarily. Whaut doo electrose werc on?"

"Iarn, I supose--dha did when I went too scoole laast."

"The aancer, then, iz too bild me a speedster dhat iz inherently indetectabel--absoluetly non-ferrous. Berilumin and so on for aul the strucchural parts..."

"But uve got too hav cillicon-stele coerz for yor electrical eqwipment!"

"I wauz cumming too dhat. Hav u? I wauz reding in the "Traanzacshonz the uther da dhat foers-feeldz had bene uezd in big units, and wer moer efishent. Sum ov the smauler units, instruments and so on, mite hav too hav sum iarn, but woodnt it be poscibel too so satchurate dhose

smaul pecez withe a dens feeld ov detector freeqwencesse dhat dha woodnt reyact?"

"I doant no. Nevver thaut ov it. Wood it?"

"I doant no, iather--Ime not telling u, Ime just making sugeschonz. I doo no wun thhing, dho. Weve got too kepe ahed ov them--thhinc ov thhingz ferst and oftenest, and be reddy too abandon them for sumthhing els az soone az weve uezd them wuns."

"Exept for dhose primary progetorz." Hainz grind rily. "Dha caant be abandond--even withe Medoanyan pouwer we havnt bene abel too devellop a screne dhat wil stop them. Weve got too kepe them ceecret from Boscone--and in dhat conecshon I waunt too compliment u on the sugeschon ov havving Velanshan Lenzmen az miand-rederz wharevver dhose progetorz ar even beying thaut ov."

"U caut spise, then? Hou menny?"

"Not menny--thre or foer in eche bace--but enuf too hav dun the dammage. Nou, I beleve, for the ferst time in history, we can be *shure* ov our entire personel."

"I thhinc so. Mentor cez the Lenz iz enuf, if we use it properly. Dhats up too us."

"But hou about vizhuwalz?" Hainz wauz stil wurreying, and too good perpoce.

"Wel, we hav a blac coting nou dhats nianty-nine percent absorptive, and I doant nede poerts or windose. At dhat, dho, wun

percent reflexion wood be enuf too ghiv me awa at a crittical time. Houd it be too poot a cappel ov the boiz on dhat job? Hav them poot a descimal point aafter the nianty nine and ce hou menny nianz dha can tac on behiand it?"

"Dhats a thaut, Kinnison. Dhale hav lots ov time too werc on it while the en'gineerz ar trying too fil yor specificaishonz az too a speedster. But yor rite, ded rite. We--or raather, u--hav got too out-thhinc them; and it certainly iz up too us too doo evverithhing we can too bild the aparatus too poot yor thauts intoo practice. And it iznt at sum vaghe time in the fuchure dhat Boscone iz gowing too start doowing sumthhing about u and whaut uve dun. Its rite nou; or even, moer probbably, a weke or so ago. But u havnt ced a werd yet about the reyaly big job u hav in miand."

"Ive bene pooting dhat of until the laast," the Gra Lenzmanz vois held obscure puzselment. "The fact iz dhat I cimply caant ghet a tuith intoo it--caant ghet a grip on it enniwhare. I doant no enuf about math or fizsix. Evverithhing cumz out neggative for me; not oonly inershaa, but aulso foers, velosity, and even mas itself. Final rezults aulwase contane an 'i', too, the sqware roote ov minus wun. I caant ghet rid ov it, and I doant ce hou it can be bilt intoo enny kiand ov aparatus. It ma not be wercabel at aul, but befoer I ghiv up the ideyaa Ide like too caul a conferens, if its QX withe u and the Council."

"Certainly it iz QX withe us. Yor forghetting agane, arnt u, dhat yor a Gra Lenzman?" Hainz vois held no reproofe, he wauz pozsitiavly beming withe a super-faatherly pride.

"Not exactly." Kinnison blusht, aulmoast sqwermd. "Ime just too much ov a cub too be sticking mi nec out so far, iz aul. The ideyaa ma be--probbably iz--wialder dhan a Radelidjan cattedghel. The oonly kiand ov a

conferens dhat cood even beghin too handel it wood cost a yung forchune, and I doant waunt too spend dhat much munny on mi one responcibility."

"Too date yor ideyaaz hav werct out wel enuf so dhat the Council iz backing u wun hundred percent," the oalder man ced, drily. "Expens iz no obgect." Then, hiz vois chain'ging marctly, "Kim, hav u enny ideyaa at aul ov the finanshal rezoercez ov the Patrole?"

"Verry littel, cer, if enny, Ime afrade," Kinnison confest.

"Here on Tellus alone we hav an expendibel reserv ov over ten thousand milleyon credits. Withe the restricshon ov guvvernment too its proper sfere and its concentraishon intoo our organizaishon, rezulting in the liberaishon ov man-pouwer intoo welth-projucing enterprise, and espeshaly withe the enormous groath ov inter-werld commers, werld-incum increest too such a point dhat taxaishon cood be rejuest too a minnimum; and the lower the taxez the moer flurrishing biznes became and the grater the incum.

"Nou the tax rate iz the lowest in history. The total incum tax, for instans, in the hiyest bracket, iz oonly thre point five nine too percent. At dhat, houwevver, if it had not bene for the recent slump, ju too Boscoanyan interferens withe intercistemmic commers, we wood hav had

too rejuce the tax rate agane too avoid cereyous finanshal difficulty ju too the fact dhat too much ov the galactic total ov cerculating credit wood hav bene concentrated in the expendibel fundz ov the Galactic Patrole. So doant even thhinc ov munny. Whether u waunt too spend a thousand credits, a milleyon, or a thousand milleyon; go ahead."

"Thanx, Chefe; glad u explaind. Ile fele better nou about spending munny dhat duznt belong too me. Nou if ule ghiv me, for about a weke, the uce ov the liabrareyan in charj ov ciyens fialz and a galactic

beme, Ile qwit bothering u."

"Ile doo dhat." The Poert Admiral tucht a button and in a fu minnuets a trimly attractive blond enterd the roome. "Mis Hostetter, this iz Lenzman Kinnison, Unnatacht. Plese tern over yor reggular jutese too an acistant and werc withe him until he relecez u. Whautevver he cez, gose; the skise the limmit."

In the Liabrary ov Ciyens Kinnison outliand hiz problem breefly too hiz nu ade, concluding:

"I waunt oonly about fifty, az a larger groope cood not cowopperate efishently. Ar yor lists arainjd so dhat u can skim of the top fifty?"

"Such a groope can be celected, I thhinc." The gherl stood for a moment, lower lip held liatly betwene white teeth. "Dhat iz not a standard index, but eche ciyentist haz a rating. I can cet the axeptor... no, the regector wood be better--too thro out aul the cardz abuv enny ghivven rating. If we take out aul ratingz over cevven hundred we wil hav oonly the hiyest ov the geenyucez."

"Hou menny, doo u suppose?"

"I hav oonly a vaghe ideyaa--a cuppel ov hundred, perhaps. If too menny, we can run them agane at a hiyer levvel, sa cevven ten. But dhare woant be verry menny, cins dhare ar oonly too galactic ratingz hiyer dhan cevven fifty. Dhare wil be jueplicaishonz, too--such pepel az Cer Austin Cardinj wil hav too or thre cardz in the final regects."

"QX--wele waunt too hand-pic the fifty, enniwa. Lets go!"

Then for ourz bale aafter bale ov cardz went throo the mashene;

thousandz ov reccordz per minnute. Ocaizhonaly wun card wood flip out intoo a rac, regeted. Finaly:

"Dhats aul, I thhinc. Mathhematishanz, fizsicists," the liabrareyan tict of uppon pinc fin' gherz. "Astronnomerz, filossoferz, and this nu clacificaishon, which haznt bene naimd yet."

"The H.T.T.'s." Kinnison glaanst at the label, liatly letterd in pencil, frunting the slim packet ov cardz. "Arnt u gowing too run them throo, too?"

"No. These ar the too I menshond a minnute ago--the oanly wunz hiyer dhan cevven hundred fifty."

"A chois pare, a? Sort ov a *craem de laa craem*? Lets looc em over," and he extended hiz hand. "Whaut doo the inishalz stand for?"

"Ime aufooly sorry, cer, reyal," the gherl flusht in embarrasment az she relinqwisht the cardz in hi reluctans. "If Ide had enny ideyaa we woodnt hav daerd--we caul u, amung ourcelvz, the Hi-Tenshon Thinkerz."

"Us!" It wauz the Lenzmanz tern too flush. Nevvertheles, he tooc the packet and red sketchily the facer: "Claas 19--Unclascifeyabel at prezsent... lac ov addeqwate methodz... miandz ov rainj and scope far beyond enny avalabel indicese... Ratingz abuv hi geenyus (750)... yet no instabillity... pouwer beyond enny heertofoer none... aciand ratingz tentative and deffiniatly minnimum."

He then red the cardz.

"Worcel, Velanshaa, ate hundred."

And:

"Kimbald Kinnison, Tellus, ate hundred ceventy-five."

CHAPTER 9

IAXH AND AREEZHAN

THE POERT ADMIRAL WAUZ emminently corect in suposing dhat Boscone, whoovevver or whautevver he or it mite be, wauz aulreddy taking acshon uppon whaut the Telureyan Lenzman had dun. For, even az Kinnison wauz at werc in the Liabrary ov Ciyens, a meting which wauz indirectly too afect him no littel wauz beying cauld too order.

In the imensly distant Cecond Galaxy wauz dhat meting beying held; uppon the then plannet Jarnevon ov the Iakh; within dhat sullen fortres aulreddy menshond breefly. Presiding over it wauz the indescribabel entity none too history az Iakhlan; or, moer properly, Lan ov the Iakh.

"Boscone iz nou in ceshon," dhat entity anounst too the ate uther cimmilar monstrosctese whoo in sum fashon indescribabel too man wer staishond at the long, lo, wide bench ov stone-like matereyal which cervd az a tabel ov state. "Nine dase ago eche ov us began too cerch for whautevver nu facts mite bare uppon the activvitesse ov the az yet

entiarly hipothhettical Lenzman whoo, Helmuth beleevd, wauz the reyal foers bac ov our recent intollerabel revercez in the Telureyan Gallaxy.

"Az Ferst ov Boscone I wil repoert az too the millitary cichuwaishon. Az u no, our posishonz dhare became untennabel withe the faul ov our Grand Bace and aul our mobile foercez wer widhdraun. In order too facillitate reyorganizaishon, cowordinating ships wer cent out. Sum ov these ships went too plannets held in toto bi us. Not wun ov these vescelz haz bene abel too repoert enny pertinent facts whautevver. Ships aproching bacez ov the Patrole, or encountering Patrole ships ov wor in space, cimply ceest communicating. Even dhare automattic recorderz ceest too funcshon widhout traanzmitting enny intelligibel dataa, indicating complete destrucshon ov dhose ships. A cascade cistem, in which wun ship follode anuther at long rainj and withe analittical instruments cet too determine the nachure ov enny beme or weppon emploid, wauz attempted. The ennemy, houwevver, thru out blanketing zoanz ov tremendous pouwer; and we lost cix moer vescelz widhout obtaning the desiard dataa. These ar the facts, aul neggative. Theyorising, deducshon, summaishon, and integraishon wil az uezhual cum later. Iakhmil, Cecond ov Boscone, wil nou repoert."

"Mi facts ar aulso entiarly neggative," the Cecond began. "Soone aafter our operaishonz uppon the plannet Raddelix became productive ov rezults a contin'gent ov Telureyan narcottic agents ariavd; which ma or ma not hav included the Lenzman..."

"Stic too facts for the time beying," Iakhlan orderd, kertly.

"Shortly dharaafter a minor agent, a female instructed too ware a thaut-scene at aul tiamz, lost her uesfoolnes bi suffering a mental disorder which incapascitated her qwite cereyously. Then anuther agent,

also a female, this time won over the thherd order and whoo had bene
verry
uesfool up too dhat time, ceest repoerting. A fu dase later Bominger, the
Plannetary Director, faild too repoert, az did the Plannetary Observer;
whoo, az u no, wauz entiarly un'none too, and had no conecshon withe,
the opperating staaf. Repoerts from uther soercez, such az impoerterz and
shipperz--these, I beleve, ar here admissabel az facts--indicate dhat
aul our personel uppon Raddelix hav bene liqwidated. No unnuezhual
devellopments hav okerd uppon enny uther plannet, nor haz enny
cignifficant fact, houwevver smaul, bene discuvverd."

"Iakhnor, Thherd ov Boscone."

"Also neggative. Our evvery soers ov informaishon from within the bacez
ov
the Patrole haz bene shut of. Evvery won ov our representatiavz, sum ov
whoome hav bene repoerting reggularly for menny yeerz, haz bene cilent,
and
evvery effort too reche enny ov them haz faild."

"Iakhsnap, Foerth ov Boscone."

"Utterly neggative. We hav bene abel too fiand no trace whautevver ov the
plannet Medon, or ov enny won ov the twenty won worships investing it
at
the time ov its disaperans."

And so on, throo nine repoerts, while the tentakelz ov the mity Ferst
ov Boscone plade intermittently over the kese ov a complex instrument
or mashene befoer him.

"We wil nou rezon, ththeyorise, and drau concluezhonz," the Ferst
anounst, and eche ov the organizmz fed hiz ideyaaz and deducshonz intoo
the mashene. It wherd breefly, then egedted a tape, which Iakhlán tooc

up and scand narroly.

"Regecting aul concluezhonz havving a probabillity ov les dhan nianty-five percent," he anounst, "we hav: Ferst, a cet ov thre probabillitese ov a vallu ov nianty nine and nianty nine wun-hundredths--verchuwal certaintese--dhat sum wun Telureyan Lenzman iz the prime moover behiand

whaut haz happend; dhat he haz aqwiard a mental pouwer heertofoer un'none too hiz race; and dhat he haz bene in larj part responcibel for the devellopment ov the Patroalz nu and formiddabel wepponz. Ceccond, a

probabillity ov nianty-nine percent dhat he and hiz organizaishon ar no lon'gher on the defencive, but hav ashuemd the ofencive. Thherd, wun ov nianty-cevven percent dhat it iz not primarily Tellus which iz an obstakel, even dho the Galactic Patrole and Civilizaishon did oridginate uppon dhat plannet, but Areezhaa; dhat Helmuths repoert wauz at leest parshaly tru. Foerth, wun ov nianty-five and wun-haaf percent dhat the Lenz iz aulso concernd in the disaperans ov the plannet Medon. Dhare iz a leser probabillity, but stil ov sum nianty-foer percent, dhat dhat same Lenzman iz involvd here.

"I wil not interpolate here dhat the vannishment ov dhat plannet iz a much moer cereyous matter dhan it mite apere, on the cerface, too be. *In cichu*, it wauz a thhing ov no concern--gon, it becumz an afare ov aulmoast vital impoert. Too ishuh orderz imposcibel ov foolfilment, az Helmuth did when he ced Come Trencu, inch bi inch,' iz esy. Too come this gallaxy star bi star for Medon wood be an even moer difficult and lon'gher taasc; but whaut can be dun iz beying dun.

"Too retern too the concluezhonz, dha point out a state ov thhingz which I doo not hav too tel u iz reyaly grave. This iz the ferst major cet-bac which the culchure ov the Boscone haz encounterd cins it began its rise. U ar familleyar withe dhat rise; hou we ov the Iakh tooc over

in tern a citty, a race, a plannet, a solar cistem, a rejon, a galaxy.
Hou we extended our swa intoo the Telureyan Gallaxy, az a preliminary
too
the extenshon ov our authority throowout aul the poppulated gallaxese ov
the macro-cozmic Univers.

"U no our crede; too the victor the pouwer. He whoo iz stron'ghest and
fittest shal cervive and shal rule. This so-cauld Civilizaishon which
iz oposing us, which began uppon Tellus but whoose driving foers iz dhat
which dwelz uppon Areezhaa, iz a soft, weke, puny-spirrited thhing
indede too
resist the mental and matereyal pouwer ov our culchure. Mirreyadz ov
beyingz
uppon eche plannet, eche wun striving for pouwer and, so striving,
ghivving
ov dhat pouwer too him abuv. Mirreyadz ov plannets, eche, in retern for
our
benevvolently despottic controle, dellegating and contribbuting pouwer
too the
Iakh. Aul this pouwer, dellegated too the thouzandz ov milleyonz ov the
Iakh
ov this plannet, culminaits in and iz weilded bi the nine ov us, whoo
comprise Boscone.

"Pouwer! Our foerfaatherz thaut dhat controle ov wun plannet wauz enuf.
Later it wauz declaerd dhat maastery ov a gallaxy, if reyaliazd, wood sate
ambishon. We ov Boscone, houwevver, nou no dhat our pouwer shal be
limmited oonly bi the boundz ov the Matereyal Cozmic Aul--evvery world
dhat
exists throowout space shal and must pa hommage and tribbute too
Boscone! Whaut, gentelmen, iz the cens ov this meting?"

"Areezhaa must be vizsited!" Dhare wauz no nede ov integrating this thaut;
it wauz domminant and unannimous.

"I wood advise caushon, houwevver," the Aitth ov Boscone amended hiz ballot. "We ar an oald race, it iz tru, and abel. I canot help but beleve, houwevver, dhat in Areezhaa dhare exists an un'none qwaulity, an '10'

which we az yet ar unnabel too evalluwate. It must be boern in miand dhat Helmuth, while not ov the Iakh, wauz nevvvertheles an abel beying; yet he wauz handeld so mercilesly dhare dhat he cood not render a complete or conclucive repoert ov hiz expedishon, then or evver. Withe these thauts in miand I sugest dhat no acchuwal landing be made, but dhat the torpedo be launcht from a distans."

"The sugeschon iz emminently sound," the Ferst apruivd. "Az too Helmuth, he wauz, for an oxigen-breether, faerly abel. He wauz, houwevver, mentaly soft, az ar aul such. Doo u, our foermoast cicollogist, beleve dhat enny existent or concevabel miand--even dhat ov a Plooran--cood brake yorz withe no aplicaishon ov fizensal foers or device, az Helmuths repoerts ceemd too indicate dhat hiz wauz broken? I use the werd ceemd adviazdly, for I doo not beleve dhat Helmuth repoerted the acchuwal trueth.

In fact, I wauz about too replace him withe an Iakh, houwevver unplezzant such an acianment wood be too enny ov our race, becauz ov dhat weecnes."

"No," agrede the Aitth. "I doo not beleve dhat dhare exists in the Univers a miand ov sufishent pouwer too brake mine. It iz a truwizm dhat no mental influwens, houwevver pouwerfool, can afect a strong, deffiniatly and pozsitiavly opoazd wil. For dhat rezon I voted against the uce ov thaut-screenz bi our agents. Such screenz expose them too detecshon and can be ov no reyal bennefit. Fizensal meenz wer--must hav bene--uezd ferst, and, aafter fizensal subjugaishon, the screenz wer ov coers uesles."

"I am not shure dhat I agry withe u entiarly," the Nianth poot in. "We hav here cogent evvidens dhat dhare hav bene emloid mental foercez ov a tipe or pattern withe which we ar entiarly unfamilleyar. While it iz the concensus ov opinyon dhat the importans ov Helmuths repoert shoold be minnimiazd, it ceemz too me dhat we hav enuf corobborative evvidens too indicate dhat this mentallity ma be Abel too opperate widhout matereyal ade. If so, ridgid screning shoold be retaind, az offering the oanly poscibel saifgard from such foers."

"Sound in ththeyory, but in practice jubeyous," the cicollogist counterd. "If dhare wer enny evvidens whautevver dhat the screenz had dun enny good

I wood agry withe u. But hav dha? Screning faild too save Helmuth or hiz bace; and dhare iz nuthhing too indicate dhat the screenz impeded, even momentarily, the proagres ov the supposishous Lenzman uppon Raddelix.

U speke ov rigid screning. The term iz meningles. Perfectly efective screning iz imposcibel. If, az we ceme too be doowing, we poschulate the abillity ov wun miand too controle anuther widhout fizsical, boddily contact--nor iz the ideyaa at aul far-fecht, conciddering whaut I micelf hav dun too the miandz ov menny ov our agents--the Lenzman can werc throo enny unshelded mentallity whautevver too atane hiz endz. Az u no, Helmuth dejuet, too late, dhat it must hav bene throo the miand ov a dog dhat the Lenzman invaded Grand Bace."

"Poppicoc!" snorted the Cevventh. "Or, if not, we can kil the dogz--or screne dhare miandz, too," he sneerd.

"Admitted," the cicollogist reternd, unmuivd. "U mite concevably kil aul the animalz dhat run and aul the berdz dhat fli. U canot, houwevver, destroi aul life in enny locality at aul extended, clere down too the wermz in dhare burrose and the termiats in dhare hidden retreats; and the miand duz not exist which can drau a line ov demarcaishon and sa here beghinz intelligent life."

"This discusson iz interesting, but futile," poot in Iakhlan, foerstauling a scornfool repli, "It iz moer too the point, I thhinc, too discus dhat which must be dun; or, raather, whoo iz too doo it, cins the thhing itcelf admits ov oonly wun solueshon--an atommic bom ov sufishent pouwer too destroi evvery trace ov life uppon dhat akerst plannet. Shal we cend sumwun, or shal sum ov us ourcelvz go? Too overestimate a fo iz at werst oonly an un'necesary precaushon; too underestimate this wun ma wel proove fatal. Dhaerfoer it ceemz too me dhat the decizhon in this matter shood li withe our cicollogist. I wil, houwevver, if u prefer, integrate our vareyous concluezhonz."

Recors too the mashene wauz un'necesary; it wauz agrede bi aul dhat Iakhamp, the Aitth ov Boscone, shood decide.

"Mi decizhon wil be evvident," dhat werthy ced, mezhuerdly, "when I sa dhat I micelf, for wun, am gowing. The cichuwaishon iz admittedly a cereyous wun. Moerover, I beleve, too a grater extent dhan doo the rest ov u, dhat dhare iz a certane amount ov trueth in Helmuths verzhon ov hiz expereyencez. Mi miand iz the oonly wun in existens ov whoose pouwer I am absolutly certane; the oonly wun which I deffiniatly *no* wil not ghiv wa befoer enny concevabel mental foers, whautevver its amount or whautevver its method ov aplicaishon. I waunt nun withe me save ov the Iakh, and even dhose I wil exammine caerfooly befoer permitting them aboard ship withe me."

"U decide az I thaut," ced the Ferst. "I aulso shal go. Mi miand wil hoald, I thhinc."

"It wil hoald--in yor cace examinaishon iz un'nescesary," agrede the cicollogist.

"And I! And I!" arose whaut amounted too a coerus.

"No," came kert deniyal from the Ferst. "Too ar enuf too opperate aul mashenery and wepponz. Too take enny moer ov the Boscone wood weken us

here injudishously; wel u no hou menny ar werking, and in whaut fashonz, for ceets at this tabel. Too take enny weker miand, even ov the Iakh, mite concevably be too coert dizaaster. We too shood be safe; I becauz I hav proven repetedly mi rite too hoald the titel ov Ferst ov this Council, the rulerz and maasterz ov the dominant race ov the Univers; Iakhamp becauz ov hiz unparraleld nollej ov aul intelligens. Our vescel iz reddy. We go."

Az haz bene indicated, nun ov the Iakh wer, or evver had bene, couwardz. Tirants dha wer, it iz tru, and dictatorz ov the harshest, sternest, and moast soal'les kiand; callous and merciles dha wer; coald az the rox ov dhare fridgid werld and az utterly ruethles and remorsles az the fabeld Juggernaut: but dha wer az lodgical az dha wer hard. He whoo ov them aul wauz best fitted too doo enny thhing did it unqweschoningly and az a matter ov coers; did it withe the caalmly emoashonles effishency ov the mashene which in acchuwal fact he wauz. Dhaerfoer it wauz the Ferst and the Aith ov Boscone whoo went.

Throo the star-studded perluse ov the Cecond Galaxy the blac, aerles, liatles vescel sped; throo the rechez, vaaster and moer tennuwous far, ov inter-galactic space; intoo the Telureyan Galaxy; up too a solar cistem shund then az nou bi aul unninvited intelligencez--dred and dreded Areezhaa.

Not cloce too the plannet did even the too ov Boscone venchure; but stopt at the gratest distans at which a torpedo cood be directed shuerly against the targhet. But even so the vescel ov the Iakh had puncchuerd a screne ov mental foers; and az Iakhlan extended a tentakel tooword the firing meccanizm ov the miscialz, waucht in az much suspens az dha wer capabel ov feling bi the plannet-bound cevven ov Boscone, a thaut az pennetrant az a nedel and yet az bianding az a cabel ov temperd stele drove intoo hiz brane.

"Hoald!" dhat thaut comaanded, and Iakhlan held, az did aulso hiz fello Boscoanyan.

Boath remaind ridgid, unnabel too moove enny cin'ghel volluntary muscel; while the uther cevven ov the Council looct on in uncomprehending amaizment. Dhare instruments remaind ded--cins dhose meccanizmz wer not cencitive too thaut, too them nuthhing at aul wauz ocuuring. Dhose cevven lederz ov the Iakh nu dhat sumthhing wauz happening; sumthhing dredfool, sumthhing untooword, sumthhing verry decidedly not uppon the program dha had helpt too plan. Dha, houwevver, cood doo nuthhing about it; dha cood oanly wauch and wate.

"Aa, tiz Lan and Amp ov the Iakh," the thaut rezounded within the miandz ov the helples twane. "Truly, the Elderz ar corect. Mi miand iz not yet competent, for, auldho I hav had menny facts insted ov but a cin'ghel wun uppon which too codgitate, and no derth ov time in which too doo so, I nou perceve dhat I hav erd grevously in mi vizhuwalizaishon ov the Cozmic Aul. U doo, houwevver, fit niasly intoo the nou enlarjd Skeme, and I am reyaly graitfool too u for fernishing nu matereyal withe which, for menny cikelz ov time too cum, I shal continnu too bild.

"Indede, I beleve dhat I shal permit u too retern unharmd too yor one plannet. U no the worning we gave Helmuth, yor minyon, hens yor liavz ar forfeite for viyolating nowingly the privacy ov Areezhaa; but waunton or un'nescesary destrucshon iz not conjucive too mental groath.

U ar, dhaerfoer, at libberty too depart. I repete too u the instrucshonz ghivven yor underling; doo not retern, iather in person or bi enny form whautevver ov proxy."

The Areezhan had az yet exerted scaersly a fracshon ov hiz pouwer; auldho the boddese ov the too invaderz wer practicaly parraliazd, dhare miandz had not bene punnisht. Dhaerfoer the cicollogist ced, coaldly:

"U ar not nou deling withe Helmuth, nor withe enny uther weke, miandles oxigen-breether, but withe the *Iakh*," and, bi shere effort ov wil, he muivd tooword the controalz.

"Whaut buits it?" The Areezhan comprest uppon the Aitths brane a cering foers which cent shreking waivz ov pane throwout aul neerbi space. Then, taking over the cicollogists miand, he foerst him too moove too the comunicator pannel, uppon whoose plate cood be cene the uther cevven ov Boscone, gasing in wunder.

"Cet up plannetary cuvverage," he directed, throo Iakhamps organz ov speche, "so dhat eche individjuwal member ov the entire race ov the Iakh can understand whaut I am about too traanzmit." Dhare wauz a brefe pauz, then the depe, mezhuerd vois roald on;

"I am Uconidor ov Areezhaa, speking too u throo this mas ov unded flesh which wauz wuns yor Chefe Cicollogist; Iakhamp, the Aitth ov dhat hi council which u caul Boscone. I had intended too spare the

liavz ov these too cimpel crechuerz, but I perceve dhat such acshon wood be uesles. Dhare miandz and the miandz ov aul u whoo liscen too me

ar worpt, perverted, incapabel ov rezon. Dha and u wood hav micinterpreted the geschure compleetly; wood hav beleevd dhat I did not sla them oonly becauz I cood not doo so. Sum ov u wood hav ofended agane and agane, until u wer so slane; u can be convinst ov such a fact oonly bi an unmistacabel demonstraishon ov supereyor foers.

Foers iz the oonly thhing u ar abel too understand. Yor wun ame in life iz too gane matereyal pouwer; grede, corrupshon, and crime ar yor chosen implements.

"U concidder yorcelvz hard and merciles. In a cens and acording too yor abillitese u ar, auldho yor miandz ar too callo too reyalise dhat dhare ar depths ov cruwelty and ov depravvity which u canot even faintly envizhon.

"U luv and wershup pouwer. Whi? Too enny thhinking miand it shood be clere dhat such a lust intrinsicaly iz, and forevver must bi its verry nachure be, futile. For, even if enny wun ov u cood comaand the entire matereyal Univers, whaut good wood it doo him? Nun. Whaut wood he hav?

Nuthhing. Not even the satisfacshon ov acumplishment, for dhat lust iz in fact insaishabel--it wood then tern uppon itcelf and fede uppon itcelf. I tel u az a fact dhat dhare iz oonly wun pouwer which iz at wun and the same time ilimmitabel and yet finite; insaishabel yet sattisfiying; wun which, while eternal, yet invareyably reternz too its posessor the tru satisfacshon ov reyal acumplishment in exact raisheyo too the effort expended uppon it. Dhat pouwer iz the pouwer ov the miand. U, beying so baqword and so rong ov devellopment, canot understand hou this can be, but if enny wun ov u wil concentrate uppon wun cin'ghel fact, or smaull object, such az a pebbel or the cede ov a plaant or uther crechure, for az short a pereyod ov time az wun hundred ov yor yeerz, u wil beghin

too perceve its trueth.

"U boast dhat yor plannet iz oald. Whaut ov dhat? We ov Areezhaa dwelt in tern uppon menny plannets, from plannetary ueth too cozmik oald age, befoer we became independent ov the chaans formaishon ov such celeschal boddese.

"U prate dhat u ar an ainshent race. Compaerd too us u ar sheerly infantile. We ov Areezhaa did not oridginate uppon a plannet formd juring the recent inter-passage ov these too gallaxese, but uppon wun which came intoo beying in an antiqwity so distant dhat the figgure in yeerz wood be entiarly meningles too yor miandz. We wer ov an age too yor mentallitese starcly incomprehencibel when yor moast remote ancestorz began too rigghel about in the slime ov yor parent werld.

"Doo the men ov the Patrole no...?' I perceve the qweschon in yor miandz. Dha doo not. Nun save a fu ov the moast pouwerfool ov dhare miandz haz the slitest incling ov the trueth. Too revele enny porshon ov it too Civilizaishon az a whole wood blite dhat Civilizaishon ireparably. Dho Cekerz aafter Trueth in the best cens, dha ar ecenshaly juvenile and dhare life-spanz ar efemmeral indede. The mere reyalizaishon dhat dhare iz in existens such a race az ourz wood place uppon them such an infereyority complex az wood make ferther advaansment imposcibel. In yor cace such a coers ov events iz not too be expected. U wil cloce yor miandz too aul dhat haz happend, declaring too yorcelvz dhat it wauz imposcibel and dhat dhaerfoer it cood not hav taken place and did not Nevvertheles, u wil sta awa from Areezhaa hensfoerth.

"But too rezhume. U concidder yorcelvz long-livd. No then, incepts, dhat yor life span ov a thouzand ov yor yeerz iz but a moment. I,

micelf, hav aulreddy livd menny such pereyodz, and I am but a ueth--a mere wauchman, not yet too be entrusted withe reyaly cereyous thhinking.

"I hav spoken over long; the rezon for mi prolixity beying dhat I doo not like too ce the ennergy ov a race so misuezd, so corupted too matereyal conqwest for its one sake. I wood like too cet yor miandz uppon the Wa ov Trueth, if perchaans such a thhing shood be poscibel. I hav pointed out dhat Wa; whether or not u follo it iz for u too decide. Indede, I fere dhat moast ov u, in yor short-cited pride, hav aulreddy caast mi message acide; refusing point-blanc too chainj yor habbits ov thaut. It iz, houwevver, in the hope dhat sum fu ov u wil perceve the Wa and wil follo it dhat I hav discoerst at such length.

"Whether or not u chainj yor habbits ov thaut, I advise u too hede this, mi wording. Areezhaa duz not waunt and wil not tollerate intruezhon. Az a lesson, wauch these too viyolatorz ov our privacy destroi themcelvz."

The giyant vois ceest. Iakhlanz tentakelz muivd tooword the controalz. The vaast torpedo launcht itcelf.

But insted ov hertling tooword distant Areezhaa it swept around in a cerkel and struc, in direct central impact, the grate cruser ov the Iakh. Dhare wauz an apauling crash, a space-racking detonaishon, a flare ov incandescens increddibel and indescribabel az the ennergy calculated too disrupt--aulmoast too vollatilise--a werld expended itcelf uppon the incignifficant mas ov wun Boscoanyan battelship and uppon the unresisting texchure ov the void.

CHAPTER 10

THE NEGGASFERE

CONCIDDERABLY MOER DHAN THE stipulated weke paast befoer Kinnison wauz dun withe the liabrareyan and withe the long-rainj comunicator beme, but evenchuwaly he suxeded in enlisting the ade ov the fifty thre moast emminent ciyentists and thhinkerz ov aul the plannets ov Galactic Civilizaishon. From aul over the gallyxy wer dha celected; from Vandemar and Centraleyaa and Alsacan; from Chicladoreyaa and Raddelix; from the solar cistemz ov Rigel and Cirreyus and Antarese. Milleyonz ov plannets wer not represented at aul; and ov the fu which wer, Tellus alone had moer dhan wun dellegate.

This wauz nescesary, Kinnison explaind caerfooly too eche ov the chosen. Cer Austin Cardinj, the man whoose fenommenal brane had devellopt a nu mathhemattix too handel the pozsitron and the neggative ennergy levvelz, wauz the wun whoo wood doo the werc; he himself wauz prezsent meerly az a cowordinator and observer. The meting-place, even, wauz not uppon Tellus, but uppon Medon, the nuly aqwiard and hens entiarly nuetral plannet. For the Gra Lenzman nu wel the miandz withe which he wood hav too dele.

Dha wer aul geenyucez ov the hiyest ranc, but in aul too menny cacez dhare schupendous mentallitese verjd aultooghether too cloasly uppon insannity for enny degry ov cumfort. Even befoer the conclave acembeld it became evvident dhat gelloucy wauz too be rife and rampant; and aafter the inishal

meting, at which the problem itself wauz propounded, it reqwiard aul ov Kinnisonz abillity, authority, and drive: and aul ov Worcelz vaast diplomacy and tact, too kepe dhose mity brainz at werc.

Time aafter time sum ecenshal entity, hiz dignity outraijd and hiz tutchy ego infureyated bi sum reyal or fancede insult, stauct of in hi dudjon too retern too hiz one plannet; oanly too be coaxt or boollede, or even mentaly man-handeld bi Kinnison or Worcel, or boath, intoo reterning too hiz taasc.

Nor wer dhose insults aul, or even moastly, imadginary. Qworeling and bickering wer incessant, viyolent flare-ups and pashonate ceenz ov denunceyaishon and vichuperaishon wer ov aulmoast ourly ocurens. Eche ov dhose miandz had bene acustomd too werld-wide ajulaishon, too the unqweschond axeptans az gospel ov hiz evvery ideyaa or pronounsment, and too hav too submit hiz werc too the scrutiny and too the unwershipfool critticismz ov lescer miandz--acchuwaly too hav too ghiv wa, at tiamz, too dhose infereyor mentallitese--wauz a cichuwaishon qwite deffiniatly intollerabel.

But at length moast ov them began too werc toogheter, az dha apreesheyated the fact dhat the problem befoer them wauz wun which nun ov them cin'gly had bene abel even parshaly too solv; and Kinnison let the utherz, the moast fanatticaly noncowopperative, go home. Then proagres began--and nun too soone. The Gra Lenzman had lost twenty-five poundz in wate, and even the iarn-thude Worcel wauz a rec. He cood not fli, he declaerd, becauz hiz wingz buckeld in the middel; he cood not crawl, becauz hiz belly-plaits clasht against hiz bac-bone!

And finally the thing wauz dun; rejuest too a cet ov eqwaizhonz which cood be ritten uppon a cin'ghel shete ov paper. It iz tru dhat dhose eqwaizhonz wood hav bene meningles too aulmoast enniwun then alive, cins
dha wer baist uppon a cistem ov mathhemattix which had bene braut intoo existens at dhat verry meting, but Kinnison had taken care ov dhat.

No Medoanyan had bene aloud in the Conferens--the admittans ov wun too membership wood hav cauzd a mast exodus ov the hi-strung, temperamental mainyax werking so fureyously dhare--but the Telureyan Lenzman had had recorded evvery act, aulmoast evvery thaut, ov evvery wun ov dhose geenyucez. Dhose reccordz had bene studdede for weex, not oanly bi Wise ov Medon and hiz staaf, but aulso bi a coer ov the les brillayant, but infiniatly better ballanst ciyentists ov the Patrole propper.

"Nou u fellose can reyaly ghet too werc." Kinnison heevd a ci ov profound relefe az the laast member ov the Conferens figguratiavly shooc the dust ov Medon of hiz robe az he departed hoamword. "Ime gowing too slepe for a weke. Caul me, wil u, when u ghet the moddel dun?"

This wauz sherest exaggeraishon, ov coers, for nuthhing cood hav kept the Lenzman from wauching the construcshon ov dhat ferst aparatus. He waucht the erecshon ov a sferrical shel ov luisly lattiaast trus-werc sum twenty fete in diyammeter. He waucht the instalaishton, at its cix cardinal points, ov atommic exiterz, eche capabel ov traansforming ten thousand poundz per our ov substans intoo pure ennergy. He nu dhat dhose exiterz wer driving dhare intake screenz at a raisheyo ov at leest twenty thousand too wun; dhat ennergy eqwivvalent too the aniyilaishon ov at leest cix hundred thousand tunz per our ov matereyal wauz beying herld intoo the center ov dhat web from the cix smaual meccanizmz which wer in

fact super-Berghenhoamz. Nor iz dhat werd addeqwate too describe them; dhare fabricaishon wood hav bene utterly imposcibel widhout Medoanyan conductorz and inshulaishon.

He waucht the construcshon ov a convayor and a shute, and looct on intently while a hundred thousand tunz ov refuse--rox, sand, concrete, scrap iarn, looce mettal, daibry ov aul kiandz--wer dropt intoo dhat innocuwous-apering sfere, oonly too vannish az dho dha had nevver existed.

"But we aut too be abel too ce it bi this time, I shood thhinc!" Kinnison protested wuns.

"Not yet, Kim," Maaster Tecnishan LaaVern Thorndike informd him. "Just forming the vortex--miacroscoptic yet. I havnt the faintest ideyaa ov whaut iz gowing in dhare; but, man, dere man, *am* I glad Ime here too help make it go on!"

"But *when*?" demaanded the Lenzman. "Hou soone wil u no whether its gowing too werc or not? Ive got too doo a flit."

"U can flit enny time--nou, if u like," the tecnishan toald him, brutally. "We doant nede *u* enny moer--uve dun yor bit. Its werking nou. If it wauznt, doo u thhinc we cood pac aul dhat stuf intoo dhat littel space? Wele hav it dun long befoer ule nede it."

"But I waunt too ce it werc, u big lug!" Kinnison retorted, oonly haaf plafooly.

"Cum bac in thre-foer dase--maby a weke; but doant expect too ce ennithhing but a hole."

"Dhats exactly whaut I waunt too ce, a hole in space," and dhat wauz

preciasly whaut, a fu dase later, the Lenzman did ce.

The sferrical fraimwerc wauz unchainjd, the masheenz wer stil carreying esily dhare increddibel werking lode. Matereyal--enny and aul kiandz ov stuf--wauz stil disapering; instantainyously, invisibly, qwiyetly, withe no flash or fury too marc its paacing.

But at the center ov dhat mascive sfere dhare nou hung poizd a... a *sumthhing*. Or wauz it a nuthhing? Mathhematticaly, it wauz a sfere, or raather a neggasfere, about the cise ov a baisbaul; but the i, while it cood ce sumthhing, cood not perceve it analitticaly. Nor cood the miand envizhon it in thre dimenshonz, for it wauz not ecenshaly thre-dimenshonal in nachure. Lite sanc intoo the thhing, whautevver it wauz, and vannisht. The pering i cood ce nuthhing whautevver ov shape or ov texchure; the miand behiand the i reeld awa befoer infinite vistaaz ov nuthhingnes.

Kinnison herld hiz extraa-censory percepshon intoo it and gerct bac, aulmoast stund. It wauz niather darcnes nor blacnes, he decided, aafter he recuverd enuf poiz too thhinc coherently. It wauz wers dhan dhat--wers dhan ennithhing imadginabel--an infiniatly vaast and yet non-existent relm ov the total abcens ov evverithhing whautevver...
ABSOLUTE NEGAISHON!

"Dhats it, I ghes," the Lenzman ced then. "Mite az wel stop feding it nou."

"We wood hav too stop soone, in enny cace," Wise replide, "for our avalabel waist matereyal iz becumming scaers. It wil take the substans ov a faerly larj plannet too projuce dhat which u reqwire. U hav, perhaps, a plannet in miand which iz too be uezd for the perpoce?"

"Better dhan dhat. I hav in miand the matereyal ov just such a plannet, but aulreddy broken up intoo cisez conveyent for handling."

"O, the asteroid belt!" Thoradike exclaimd. "Fine! Kil too berdz withe wun stone, huu? Bild this thhing and at the same time clere out the mennacez too inert inter-plannetary navigaishon? But hou about the minerz?"

"Aul cuvverd. The wunz acchuwaly in devellopment wil be let alone. Dhare not mennacez, enniwa, az dha aul hav braudcaasterz. The tramp minerz we cend--at Patrole expens and grubstake--too sum uther cistem too doo dhare mining. But dhaerz wun moer point befoer we flit. Ar u shure u can shift too the cecond stage widhout an axident?"

"Pozsitive. Bild anuther wun around it, mount nu Bergz, exiterz, and screenz on it, and let this wun, masheenz and aul, go in too fede the kitty--whautevver it iz."

"QX. Lets go, fellose!"

Too huge Telureyan fraterz wer at hand; and, hoalding the smaul fraimwerc betwene them in a net ov tractorz and pressorz, dha cet of bliadhly tooword Sol. Dha tooc a cuppel ov ourz for the gerny--dhare wauz no hurry, and in the handling ov this particcular frate caushon wauz decidedly ov the escens.

Ariavd at destinaishon, the cruse tackeld withe sest and sele this nu game. Tractorz lasht out, cesing chunx ov iarn...

"Pic out the littel wunz, men," caushond Kinnison. "Nuthhing over about ten fete in cecshon-dimenshon wil go intoo this frame. Better wate for the cecond frame befoer u tri too handel the big wunz."

"We can cut em up," Thorndike suggested. "Whautv we got these shere-plainz for?"

"QX if u like. Just so u kepe the kitty fed."

"Wele fede her!" and the game went on.

Chunx ov daibry--sum roc, but moastly sollid meteyoric nickel-iarn--shot tooword the vescelz and the ravvening sfere, becumming inershaales az dha

enterd a wide-flung zone. Pressorz ceezd them avvidly, pooshing them throo the intersticez ov the fraimwerc, hoalding them against the voraisious screne. Az dha tucht the screne dha disapeerd; no matter hou faast dha wer drivven the screne ate them awa, cilently and unspectacularly, az faast az dha cood be throne against it. A weerd spektakel indede, too ce a jagghed fragment ov sollid iarn, havving a mas ov thousandz ov tunz, drive against dhat screne and disapere! For it vannisht, utterly, along a geyometricaly perfect sferrical cerface. From the opposite cide the i cood ce the mirror shene ov the mettal at the cerface ov dicintegraishon; it wauz az dho the matereyal wer beying shuvd out ov our familleyar thre-dimenshonal space intoo anuther univers--which, az a matter ov coald fact, ma hav bene the cace.

For not even the men whoo wer doowing the werc made enny pretens ov understanding whaut wauz happening too dhat iarn. Indede, the oonly entitese

whoo did hav enny comprehenshon ov the fenommenon--the forty-od geenyucez

whoose mathhemattical wizardry had made it poscibel--thaut ov it and discust it, not in the limmited, thre-dimenshonal cimbolz ov everida existens, but oonly in the lan'gwage ov hi mathhemattix; a lan'gwage in which fu indede ar abel reyaly and reddily too thhinc.

And while the cruse became moer and moer expert at the nu tecneke, so

dhat mettal came in faaster and faaster--huge, hot-sliast barz ov iarn ten fete sqware and a qworter ov a mile long wer beying drivven intoo dhat enigmattic sfere ov extincshon--an outer fraimwerc a hundred and fifty mialz in diyammeter wauz beying bilt. Nor, contrary too whaut mite be supoazd, wauz a prohibbitive amount ov mettal or ov labor nescenary too fabricate dhat mammoth strucchure. Insted ov cix dhare wer cix cuebd--too hundred cixtene--werking staishonz, complete withe genneratorz and super-Berghenhoamz and screne genneratorz, eche mounted uppon a mascive platform; but, insted ov beying conected and supoerted bi schupendous beemz and truscez ov mettal, dhose platformz wer linct bi infiniatly stron'gher bondz ov pure foers. It tooc a lot ov ships too doo the job, but the tecnishanz ov the Patrole had at caul enuf floting mashene-shops and too spare.

When the sfere ov negaishon gru too be about a foot in aparrent diyammeter it had bene found nescenary too suround it withe a screne opake too aul vizsibel lite, for too looc intoo it long or steddily then ment insanity. Nou the opake screne wauz cixtene fete in diyammeter, nering dain'gerously the sustaning fraimwerc, and the outer frame wauz reddy. It wauz time too chainj.

The Lenzman held hiz breth, but the Medoanyanz and the Telureyan tecnishanz did not tern a hare az dha mounted dhare nu staishonz and tested dhare aparatus.

"Reddy," "Reddy," "Reddy." Staishon aafter staishon repoerted; then, az Thorndike thru in the maaster swich, the primary sfere--invizsibel nou, throo distans, too the i, but plane uppon the vizsiplaits--disapeerd; a mere morcel too dhose nu gigantic foercez.

"Swing intoo it, boiz!" Thorndike yeld intoo hiz traanzmitter. "We doant hav too fede her withe a teespoone enny moer. Let her hav it!"

And "let her hav it" dha did. No moer cutting up ov the larger meteyoriats; asteroidz ten, fiftene, twenty mialz in diyammeter, along withe

hoasts ov smauler stuf, wer litteraly herld throo the blac screne intoo the even lushier blacnes ov dhat which wauz incide it, widhout complaint from the qwiyetly humming motorz.

"Sattisfide, Kim?" Thorndike aasct.

"Uu-*huu!*" the Lenzman acented, viggorously. "Nice!... Slic, in fact," he comended. "Ile buz of nou, I ghes."

"Mite az wel--evverithhingz on the grene. Clere eethher, spais'hound!"

"Same too u, big fellaa. Ile be ceying u, or cending u a thaut. Dhaerz Tellus, rite over dhare. Funny, iznt it, doowing a flit too a place u can acchuwaly ce befoer u start?"

The trip too Erth wauz scaersly a hop, even in a supli-bote. Too Prime Bace the Gra Lenzman went, whare he found dhat hiz nu non-ferrous speedster wauz dun; and juring the next fu dase he tested it out thurroly. It did not redgister at aul, niather uppon the reggular, long-rainj ultraa-instruments nor uppon the short-rainj emergency electrose. Nor cood it be cene in space, even in a tellescope at point-blanc rainj. Tru, it oculted an ocaizhonal star; but cins even the direct rase ov a cerch-lite faild too revele its shape too the kenest i--the Lenzmen-kemmists whoo had werct out dhat nianty nine point nine nine percent absolute blac coting had dun a wunderfool job--the chaans ov discuvvery throo dhat ocurrens wauz verry slite.

"QX, Kim?" the Poert Admiral aasct. He wauz acumpaneying the Gra Lenzman on a laast toor ov inspecshon.

"Fine, chefe. Coodnt be better--thanx a lot."

"Shure yor non-ferrous yorcelf?"

"Absoluetly. Not even an iarn nale in mi shoose."

"Whaut iz it, then? U looc wurrede. Waunt sumthhing expencive?"

"U hit the thum, Admiral, rite on the nale. But its not oanly expencive--we ma nevver hav enny uce for it."

"Better bild it, enniwa. Then if u waunt it ule hav it, and if u doant waunt it we can aulwase use it for sumthhing. Whaut iz it?"

"A nut-cracker. Dhare ar a lot ov coald plannets around, arnt dhare, dhat arnt good for ennithhing?"

"Thouzandz ov them--milleyonz."

"The Medoanyanz poot Berghenhoamz on dhare plannet and flu it from Lundmarx Nebbulaa too here in a fu weex. Whi woodnt it be a sound ideyaa too hav the planetograferz pic out a cuppel ov uesles werldz which, at sum points in dhare orbits, hav diyametricaly opposite veloscitese, too within a degry or too?"

"Uve got sumthhing dhare, mi boi. Wil doo. Verry much werth havving, just for its one sake, even if we nevver hav enny uce for it. Ennithhing els?"

"Not a thhing in the univers. Clere eether, chefe!"

"Lite landingz, Kinnison!" and graisfooly, effortlesly, the ded-blac slivver ov cemmy-preshous mettal lifted hercelf awa from Erth.

* * *

Throo Bominger, the Radelidjan Big Shot, Kinnison had had a long and emminently satisfactory intervü withe Prellin, the rejonal director ov aul cerviving Boscoanyan activvites. Dhus he nu whare he wauz, even too the strete adres, and nu the name ov the ferm which wauz hiz aleyas--Eethan D. Wembelson and Sunz, Inc., 4627 Boolevard Dezaalese, Cominoash, Qwaudrant Ate, Broncecaa. Dhat name had bene hiz ferst shoc, for dhat ferm wauz wun ov the largest and moast concervative housez in galactic trade; wun havving an unqweschond AAA-1 rating in evvery mercantile index.

Houwevver, dhat wauz the wa dha werct, Kinnison reflected, az hiz speedster reeld of the parcx. It wauznt far too Broncecaa--esy Lenz distans--hede better caul sumbody dhare and start making arainjments. He had herd about the plannet, auldho hede nevver bene dhare. Sumwhaut wormer dhan Tellus, but utherwise verry Erthlike. Milleyonz ov Telureyanz livd dhare and liact it.

Hiz aproche too the plannet Broncecaa wauz carracteriazd bi aul poscibel caushon, az wauz hiz vizsit too Cominoash, the cappital citty. He found dhat 4627 Boolevard Dezaalese wauz a strucchure cuvvering an entire citty bloc and sum aty stoerese hi, oand and occupide excluciavly bi Wembelsonz. No vizsitorz wer aloud exept bi apointment. Hiz ferst strole paast it shode him dhat an imens cillinder, comprising aulmoast the whole intereyor ov the bilding, wauz sheelded bi thaut-screenz. He rode up and doun in the ellevatorz ov neerbi bildingz--no penetraishon.

He vizsited a duzsen officez in the naborhood uppon vareyous errandz, chusing hiz time withe care so dhat he wood hav too wate in eche an our or so in order too ce hiz man.

These lezhuerly scrutinese ov hiz obgettive faild too revele a cin'ghel fact ov vallu. Eethan D. Wembelson and Sunz, Inc., did a tremendous biznes, but evvery ouns ov it wauz legittimate! Dhat iz, the fialz in the outer officez cuvverd oonly legittimate traanzacshonz, and the men and wimmen bizsily at werc dhare wer aul legittimaitly emloyd. And the inner officez--vaastly moer extencive dhan the outer, too juj bi the number ov employese entering in the morning and leving at the cloce ov biznes--wer ceeld against hiz priying, evvery cecond ov evvery da.

He tapt in tern the miandz ov duzsenz ov dhose clarx, but dru oonly blanx. Az far az dha wer concernd, dhare wauz nuthhing "qwere" gowing on enniwhare in the organizaishon. The "Oald Man"--Houward Wembelson, a grand-neffu or sumthhing ov Eethan--had devellopt a complex laitle dhat hiz life wauz in dain'ger. Scaersly evver left the bilding--not dhat he had enny nede too, az he had aulwase had palaishal qworterz dhare--and then oonly under hevvy gard.

A good menny thaut-screend personz came and went, but a caerfool studdy ov them and dhare muivments convinst the Gra Lenzman dhat he wauz waisting hiz time.

"No sope," he repoerted too a Lenzman at Broncecaaz Bace. "Mite az wel tri too stic a pin qwiyetly intoo a catteghel. Hese bene toald dhat hese the next linc in the chane, and hese got the gitterz rite. Ile bet hese got a duzsen looce observerz, insted ov oonly wun. Ile save time, I thhinc, bi tracing anuther line. I hav thaut befoer dhat mi best bet iz in the asteroid denz insted ov on the plannets. I let them tauc me

out ov it--its a derty job and Ive got too establish an identity ov mi one, which wil be even derteyer--but it loox az dho Ile hav too go bac too it."

"But the utherz ar wornd, too," sugested the Broncecan. "Dhale probbably be just az bad. Lets blaast it open and take a chaans on fianding the dataa u waunt."

"No," Kinnison ced, emfatticaly. "Not a chaans--dhats not the wa too ghet ennithhing Ime loocking for. The utherz ar probbably wornd, yes, but cins dha arnt on mi direct line too the throne, dha probbably arnt taking it az cereyously az this Prellin--or Wembelson--iz. Or if dha ar, dha woant kepe it up az long. Dha caant, and ghet enny joi out ov life at aul.

"And u caant sa a werd too Prellin about hiz screenz, iather," the Telureyan went on in repli too a thaut. "Dhare legal enuf; just az much so az spi-ra blox. Evvery man haz a rite too privacy. Just wun qweschon here, or just wun suspishous moove, iz apt too blo everithhing intoo a coct hat. U fellose kepe on werking along the lianz we lade out and Ile tri anuther line. If it werx Ile cum bac and wele open this can the wa u waunt too. Dhat wa, we ma be abel too ghet the lo-doun on about foer hundred plannetary organizaishonz at wun haul."

Dhus it came about dhat Kinnison tooc hiz scaersly-uezd indetectabel speedster bac too Prime Bace; and dhat, in a solar cistem prodidjously far remuivd from boath Tellus and Broncecaa dhare apeerd anuther tramp meteyor-miner.

Peculeyar pepel, these toilerz in the inter-plannetary voidz; flotsam and getsam; for the moast part the verry scum ov space. Sum solar cistemz contane moer asteroidal and meteyoric daibry dhan did ourz ov Sol, utherz les, but fu if enny hav nun at aul. In the mane this matereyal iz iather nickel-iarn or roc, but sum ov these fragments carry prodidjous

valluse in plattinum, ozmeyum, and uther nobel mettalz, and ocaizhonaly dhare ar discuvverd dimondz and uther gemz ov tremendous cise and vallu. Hens, in the asteroid belts ov evvery solar cistem dhare ar too be found dhose universaly despiazd, but nevvertheles boald and hardy soalz whoo, risking life and lim from moment too moment dho dha ar, yet liv hi hope dhat the next lump ov cozmic detritus wil proove too be Bonanzaa.

Sum ov these men ar the shere misfits ov life. Sum ar petty crimminalz, fugitiavz from the justice ov dhare one plannets, but not ov sufisient importans too be uppon the "waunted" lists ov the Patrole. Sum ar ov dhose whoo for sum rezon or uther--adicshon too drugz, perhaps, or the overwhelming erj ocaizhonaly too go on a spre--ar unnabel or unwilling too hoald down the stedly jobz ov dhare moer orthodox bredhren.

Stil utherz, and these ar menny, liv dhat horidly advenchurous life becauz it iz in dhare blod; like the lumberjax whoo in ainshent tiamz dwelt uppon Tellus, dha labor tremendously and unremittingly for weex, oonly and delibberaitly too "blo in" the fruets ov dhare toil hi a fu wiald dase and stil wialder niats ov hectic, san'gwine, and lustfool debauchery in wun or anuther ov the spaismenz helz ov which evvery inhabbited solar cistem haz its qwotaa.

But, whautevver dhare claas, dha hav much in common. Dha aul liv for the moment oonly, from hand too mouth. Dha aul ar intreppid spaismen. Dha hav too be--no utherz laast long. Dha aul liv hardly, dain'gerously, viyolently. Dha ar men ov red and gusty pashonz, and dha hav, if not an acchuwal contempt, at leest a loud-voist scorn ov the lau in its evvery fase and manifestaishon. "Lau endz withe atmosfere" iz the galaxy-wide crede ov the clan, and it iz a fact dhat no lau save dhat ov the ra-gun iz even yet reyaly enforst in the badlandz ov the asteroid belts.

Indede, the meteyor minerz az a matter ov coers take dhare inate laulesnes withe them intoo dhare revvelz in the crimzon-lit rezorts

aulreddy referd too. In genneral the neerbi Plannetary Polece adopt a *lasa-fare* attichude, particcularly cins the asteroidz ar not within dhare jurisdicshonz, but ar independent werldz, eche withe its one werld-guvvernment. If dha kil a duzsen or so ov eche uther and ov the bludsuckerz whoo fatten uppon them, whaut ov it? If evveriboddy in dhose helz cood be kild at wuns, the univers wood be dhat much better of!--and if the Galactic Patrole iz compeld, bi sum unnuezhuwaly outrajous performans, too intervene in the revvelry, it cumz in, not az cin'ghel poleesmen, but in platuinz or in cumpanese ov armd, fool-armord infantry gowing too wor!

Such, then, wer dhose amung whoome Kinnison chose too caast hiz lot, in a nu effort too ghet in tuch withe the Galactic Director ov the drug ring.

CHAPTER 11

HI-JACKERZ

AULDHO KINNISON LEFT BRONCECAA, abandoning dhat line ov atac compleetly--dhaerbi, it mite be thaut, forfeeting aul the werc he had dhaertofoer dun uppon it--the Patrole wauz not idel, nor wauz Prellin-Wembelson ov Cominoash, the Boscoanyan Rejonal Director, neglected. Lenzman aafter Lenzman came and went, unnobtruciavly, but grimly determiand. Dhare came Telureyanz, Venereyanz, Manarcanz, Borovanz; Lenzmen ov evvery human brede, sa ov whoome mite hav bene, az far az the minyonz ov Boscone nu, the wun fo whoome dha had such good

cauz too fere.

Rigelleyan Lenzmen came aulso, and Poseenyanz, and Ordovix; representatiavz, in fact, ov aulmoast evvery avalabel race poscing enny tipe or kiand ov extraa-censory percepshon, came too test out dhare skil and cunning. Even Worcel ov Velanshaa came, herld for dase hiz mity miand against dhose screenz, and departed.

Whether or not biznes went on az uezhuwal no wun cood sa, but the Patrole wauz certane ov thre thhingz. Ferst, dhat while the Boscoanyanz mite be destroyng sum ov dhare reccordz, dha wer mooving nun awa, bi are, land, or tunnel; cecond, dhat dhare wauz no dout in enny zwilnic miand dhat the Lenzmen wer dhare too sta until dha wun, in wun wa or anuther; and thherd, dhat Prellinz life wauz not a happy wun!

And while hiz brutherz ov the Lenz wer so efishly pinch-hitting for him--even dho dha wer at the same time trying too sho him up and dhaerbi win cudos for themcelvz--in mentaly investing the Rejonal strong'hoald ov Boscone, Kinnison wauz establishing an identity az a waundering helleyon ov the asteroid belts.

Dhare wood be no slips this time. He wood *be* a meteyor miner in evvery particular, doun too the laast, leest detale. Too this end he celected hiz eqwipment withe the moast exactng care. It must be thurroly addeqwate and dependabel, but niather nu nor ov such outstanding qwaulity or amount az too cauz comment.

Hiz ship, a stubby, pouwerfool space-tug withe an overciazd are-loc, wauz a uezd job--hard-uezd, too--sum ten yearz oald. She wauz batterd, pitted, and scard; but it shoold be noted here, perhaps parenthetically, dhat when the Patrole tecnishanz finnisht dhare rebilding she wauz acchuwaly az staunch az a battelship. Hiz space-armor, Spaulding drilz,

DeLammeterz, tractorz and pressorz, and "spe-ge" (torshon specific-gravvity aparatus) wer ov the same grade. Aul boer unmistacabel evvidens ov yeerz ov hard uce, but aul wer in perfect werking order. In short, hiz outfit wauz exactly dhat which a suxesfool meteyor-miner--even such a wun az he wauz gowing too becum--wood be expected too one.

He cut hiz one hare, and hiz whiskerz too, withe ordinary sheerz, az wauz good tecneke. He lernd the polliglot ov the trade; the lan'gwage which, made up ov werdz from eche ov hundredz ov plannetary tungz, wauz

and iz the evverida speche ov human or nere-human meteyor minerz, wharevver found. Bi "nere-human" iz ment a cix-place clacificaishon ov AAAAAA--mening oxigen-breathing, worm-bludded, erect, and havving moer

or les humanoid hedz, armz, and legz. For, even in meteyor-mining, like runz withe like. Worm-bludded oxigen-breetherz fiand niather welcum nor enjoiment in a plezhure-rezort opperated bi and for such a race, sa, az the Trocantherz, whoo ar coald-bludded, qwasi-reptilleyan beyingz whoo abhor

lite ov aul kiandz and whoo breathe a gaishous mixchure not oonly parralisingly coald but aulso kemmicaly fatal too man.

Abuv aul he had too lern hou too drinc strong liccorz and hou too take drugz, for he nu dhat no drinc dhat had evver bene distild, and no drug, withe the poscibel exepshon ov thhiyonite, cood enslave the miand he

then had. Thhiyonite wauz out, enniwa. It wauz too scaers and too expencive

for meteyor minerz; dha cimply didnt go for it. Hadive, herrowin, opeyum, niatrolabe, bentlam--dhat wauz it, bentlam. He cood ghet it enniwhare, aul over the galaxy, and it wauz verry much in carracter. Esy too take, potent in rezults, and not az dammaging--if u didnt becum a reyal addict--too the cistem az moast ov the utherz. He wood becum a bentlam-eter.

Bentlam, none aulso too the trade bi such nicnaimz az "benny," "benwede," "happy-slepe," and utherz, iz a shredded, moistly fiabrous matereyal ov about the same concistency and texchure az fine-cut chuwing tobacco. Throo hiz frendz ov Narcottix the Gra Lenzman obtaind a supli ov "the clere qwil, ferst chop, in the oridginal tinz" from a promminent buitleggher, and had it assade for potency.

The drinking problem reqwiard no thaut; he wood lern too drinc, and aparrently too like, ennithhing and evverithhing dhat wood poer. Meteyor minerz did.

Dhaerfoer, coaldly, delibberaitly, dispashonaitly, and withe az complete a detachment az dho he wer callibrating a buret or annalising an un'none solueshon, he cet about the taasc. He determiand hiz capascity az impersonaly az dho hiz fizensal boddy wer a volumetric flaasc; he noted the efect ov eche mezhuerd increment ov hi-proofe bevverage and ov habbit-forming drug az preciasly az dho he wer studdeying a kemmical reyacshon in which he himcelf wauz not concernd save az a puerly ciyentiffic observer.

He detested the stuf. Evvery fiber ov hiz beying rebeld at the censaishonz evoact--the los ov cowordinaishon and controle, the inflaishon, the agrandiazment, the faulcity ov valluse, the shere halucinaishonz--nevvertheles he went throo withe the whole proogram, even too the extent ov complete fizensal helplesnes for pereyodz ov wiadly vareying juraishon. And when he had completed hiz recerchez he wauz thurroly wel informd.

He nu too a nicety, bi fele, hou much active principel he had taken, no matter hou strong, hou weke, or hou adulterated the liccor or the drug had bene. He nu too a fracshon hou much moer he cood take; or, havving taken too much, aulmoast exactly hou long he wood be incapascitated. He

lernd for himself whaut wauz aulreddy wiadly none, dhat it wauz better too

ghet at leest modderaitly iluminated befoer taking the drug; dhat bentlam riadz better on top ov liccor dhan vicy versaa. He even determiand rufly the rate ov increce withe practice ov hiz tollerancez. Then, and oanly then, did he beghin werking az a meteyor miner.

Werking in an asteroid belt ov wun solar cistem mite hav bene enuf, but the Gra Lenzman tooc no chaancez at aul ov havving hiz nu identity traist bac too its soers. Dhaerfoer he werct, and carouzd, in five; aproching stepwise too the solar cistem ov Borovaa which wauz hiz gole.

Ariavd at laast, he gave hiz chunky space-bote the avverage veloscity ov an asteroid belt just outcide the orbit ov the foerth plannet, shuvd her doun intoo it, ternd on hiz Berghenhome, and went too werc. Hiz ferst job wauz too "cet up"; too instaul in the extraa-larj are-loc, aulreddy eqwipt withe jueplicate controalz, hiz tuilz and eqwipment. He dond space-armor, made shure dhat hiz DeLammeterz wer citting pritty--aul meteyor minerz go armd az rootene, and the Lenzman had aultooghether too

much at stake in enny cace too foergo hiz acustomd wepponz--pumpt the are ov the loc bac intoo the boddy ov the ship, and open the outer poert. For meteyor minerz doo not werc incide dhare ships. It taix too much time too bring the mettal in throo the are-lox. It aulso waists are, and are iz preshous; not oanly in munny, auldho dhat iz no minor item, but aulso becauz no smaul ship, stoct for a cix-weex run, can carry enny moer are dhan iz reyaly neded.

Cet up, he studdede hiz electrose and flict hiz tractor beemz out too a paacing fragment ov mettal, which flasht up too him, aulmoast instantainyously. Or, raather, the inershaales tugbote flasht acros space too the comparratiavly tiny, but inert, bit ov mettal which he wauz about too investigate. Withe expert ese Kinnison clamp the meteyorite doun and ramd intoo it hiz Spaulding dril, the toole which in wun

operation cuts out and polishes a cylindrical sample exactly one inch in diameter and exactly one inch long. Kinnison took the sample, placed it in the jaws of his spectrometer, and cut his Berg. Going inert in an asteroid belt is a dangerous business, but it is only one of a meteor-miner's hazards and it is necessary; for the torsionmeter is the quickest and simplest means of determining the specific gravity of metal out in space, and no torsion instrument will work upon incompressible matter.

He read the scale even as he turned on the Berg. Seven point nine. Iron. Worthless. Big operators could use it--the asteroid belts had long since supplanted the mines of the world as sources of iron--but it wouldn't do him a bit of good. Therefore, to spare it, he sped another. Another, and another. One after another, day after day; the back-breaking, lonely labor of the meteor miner. But very few of the bona-fide miners had the Graetzman's disease or his staminalgia, and not one of them would have even a not-worthwhile fraction of his brain. And brain counts, even in meteor-mining. Hence Kinnison found no metal; quite a very good, although not phenomenally dense, piece.

Then one day there happened a thing which, if it was not in actual fact premeditated, was as mathematically improbable, almost, as the formation of a planetary solar system; an occurrence that was too exemplified in startling and hideous fashion the doctrine of truth and fate which is the only law of the asteroid belts. Too tractor beams ceased, at almost the same instant, the same meteor! Too ships, flashing up too close contact in the twinkling of an eye, the inoffensive meteor squarely between them! And in the area of the other day there were too men, not one; too men already going for their guns with the practical ease of space-hardened veterans too whom the killing of a man was the veriest of bagatelles!

Dha must hav bene hi-jackerz, killing and robbing az a biznes, Kinnison concluded, aafterword. Bonaa-fidy minerz aulmoast nevver werc too too

a bote, and the fact dhat dha acchuwaly bete him too the drau, and yet wer so slo in shooting, argude dhat dha had not bene taken bi cerprise, az had he. Indede, the meteyor itcelf, the bone ov contenshon, mite verry wel hav bene a bate.

He cood not follo hiz natchural inclinaishon too let go, too let them hav it. The tale wood hav spred far and wide, branding him az a couward and a weecling. He wood hav had too kil, or hav bene kild bi, enny number ov lescer boollse whoo wood hav atact him on cite. Nor cood he hav taken over dhare miandz qwicly enuf too hav averted deth. Wun, perhaps, but not too; he wauz no Areezhan. These thauts, az haz bene intimated, okerd too him long aafterword. Juring the acchuwal event dhare wauz no time too thinc at aul. Insted, he acted; automattically and instantainyously.

Kinnisonz handz flasht too the woern grips ov hiz DeLammeterz, sliding them from the lether and bringing them too bare at the hip withe wun smuidhly flowing moashon dhat wauz a marvel ov grace and spede. But, faast

az he wauz, he wauz aulmoast too late. Foer bolts ov liatning blaasted, aulmoast az wun. The too desperaadose dropt, coald; the Lenzman felt a stab ov agony cere throo hiz shoalder and the breth whisceld out ov hiz mouth and nose az hiz space-sute colapst. Gaasping terribly for are dhat wauz no lon'gher dhare, hoalding ontoo hiz cencez dogghedly and grimly,

he made shift too close the outer doer ov the loc and too tern a valv.

He did not loose conshousnes--qwite--and az soone az he recuverd the uce ov hiz muscelz he stript of hiz sute and exammiand himcelf narroly in a mirror.

Ise, plenty blodshot. Nose, bleding copeyously. Eerz, bleding, but not too badly; drumz not rupchuerd, forchunaitly--he had bene abel too kepe the preshure faerly wel eeqwaliazd. Felt like sum internal bleding, but he cood ce nuthing reyaly cereyous. He hadnt breedhd space long enuf too doo enny permanent dammage, he ghest.

Then, baring hiz shoalder, he treted the wuind withe Sinzmaaster bern-drescing. This wauz no trifel, but at dhat, it wauznt so bad. No bone gon--itd hele in too or thre weex. Laastly, he looct over hiz sute. If hede oanly had hiz G-P armor on--but dhat, ov coers, wauz out ov the qweschon. He had a spare sute, but hede raather... Fine, he cood replace the bernd cecshon esily enuf. QX.

He dond hiz uther sute, re-enterd the are loc, nuetraliazd the screenz, and crost over; whare he did exactly whaut enny uther meteyor miner wood hav dun. He divested the bloted corpcez ov dhare space-suets and shuvd them of intoo space. He then ransact the ship, traansfuuring from it too hiz one, az wel az foer hevvy meteyorz, evvery uther item ov vallu which he cood moove and which hiz vescel cood hoald. Then, inerting her, he gave her a cuppel ov notchez ov drive and cut her looce, for so a reyal miner wood hav dun. It wauz not compuncshon or scrupel dhat wood hav prevented enny miner from taking the ship, az wel az the suplise. Ships wer redgisterd, and utherwise wer too hot too be handeld exept bi organiazd crimminal ringz.

Az a matter ov rootene he tested the meteyor which had bene the innocent cauz ov aul this strife--or had it bene a bate?--and found it werthles iarn. Aulso az rootene he kept on werking. He had aulmoast enuf mettal nou, even at Minerz Rest pricez, for a roiyal binj, but he coodnt go in until hiz shoalder wauz wel. And a cuppel ov weex later he got the shoc ov hiz life.

He had braut in a meteyor; a mity big wun, over foer fete in its

smaulest dimenshon. He saampeld it, and az soone az he cut the Berg and flict the saampel experrimentaly from hand too hand, hiz skild muscelz toald him dhat dhat mettal wauz astoundingly dens. Hart racing, he loct the test-pece intoo the spe-ge; and dhat vital organ aulmoast stopt beting entiarly az the indicator nedel went up and up and up--stopping at a fool twenty too, and the scale went oonly too twenty foer!

"Clonose brasen huifs and dimond-tipt hornz!" he ejacculated. He whisceld stridently throo hiz teeth, then mezhuerd hiz fiand az accuraitly az he cood. Then, speking aloud "Just about thherty thouzand killogramz ov sumthhing notisably dencer dhan pure plattinum--thherty milleyon creddots or Ime a Zabriscan fontemaaz maden aant. Whaut too doo?"

This fiand, az wel it mite, gave the Gra Lenzman pauz. It upcet aul hiz calculaishonz. It wauz unthhincabel too take dhat meteyor too such a fencez hidout az Minerz Rest. Men had bene merderd, and wood be agane, for a thouzandth ov its vally. No matter whare he tooc it, dhare wood be publiscity galoer, and dhat woodnt doo. If he cauld a Patrole ship too take the white ellefant of hiz handz he mite be cene; and he had poot too much werc on this identity too geppardise it. Hede hav too berry it, he ghest--he had maps ov the cistem, and the foerth plannet wauz cloce bi.

He cut of a chunc ov a fu poundz wate and made a nugghet--a tiny meteyor--ov it, then hedded for the plannet, a plainly vizsibel disc sum fiftene degrese from the sun. He had a faerly larj-scale chart ov the cistem, withe noats. Borovaa 4 wauz unninhabbited, exept bi lo formz ov life, and bi outpoasts. Coald. Atmosfere thhin--good, dhat ment no cloudz. No oashanz. No volcannic activvity. Verry good! Hede looc it over, and the ferst striking landmarc he sau, from wun diyammeter out, wood be hiz cash.

He cerceld the plannet wuns at the eqwator, observing a formaishon ov
five
mity peex arainjd in a cemmy-cerkel, cupt tooword the werldz north
pole. He cerceld it agane, ceying nuthhing az promminent, and nuthhing
els
resembling it at aul cloasly. Scanning hiz plate narroly, too be shure
nuthhing wauz following him, he drove dounword in a screeming dive
tooword
the middel mountane.

It wauz an extinct volcano, he discuvverd, withe a levvel-floerd crater
moer dhan a hundred mialz in diyammeter. Practicaly levvel, dhat iz,
exept for a smauler cone which reerd up in the center ov dhat vaast,
dezzolate plane ov cragghy, torchuerd laavaa. Strate doun intoo the coald
vent ov the inner cone the Lenzman steerd hiz ship; and in its exact
center he dug a hole and berrede hiz trezhure. He then lifted hiz
tug-bote fifty fete and held her dhare, poizd on her raving under-gets,
until the laavaa in the littel crater agane began sluggishly too flo, and
dhus too destroi aul evvidens ov hiz vizsit. This detale atended too, he
shot out intoo space and cauld Hainz, too whoome he repoerted in fool.

"Ile bring the meteyor in when I cum--or doo u waunt too cend sumbody
out here aafter it? It belongz too the Patrole, ov coers."

"No, it duznt, Kim--it belongz too u."

"Huu? Iznt dhare a lau dhat enny discuvverese made bi enny employese
ov
the Patrole belong too the Patrole?"

"Nuthhing az braud az dhat. Certane ciyentiffic discuvverese, bi ciyentists
aciand too an exact recerch, yes. But yor forghetting agane dhat
yor an Unnatacht Lenzman, and az such ar acountabel too no wun in
the Univers. Even the ten-per-cent trezhure-trove lau coodnt tuch

u. Beciadz, yor meteyor iz not in dhat categoery, az u ar its ferst oner, az far az we no. If u incist Ile menshon it too the Council, but I no in advaans whaut the aancer wil be."

"QX, Chefe--thanx," and the conecshon wauz broken.

Dhare, dhat wauz dhat. He had got rid ov the white ellefant, yet it woodnt be waisted. If the zwilnix got him, the Patrole wood dig it up; if he livd long enuf too retire too a desc job he woodnt hav too take enny moer ov the Patroalz munny az long az he livd. Finanshaly, he wauz aul cet.

And fizensaly, he wauz aul cet for hiz ferst reyal binj az a meteyor-miner. Hiz shoalder and arm wer az good az nu. He had a lot ov mettal; enuf so dhat its proceedz wood finans, not oonly hiz next venchure intoo space, but aulso a reyal roiyal celebraishon in the spaismenz rezort he had aulreddy pict out.

For the Lenzman had devoted a grate dele ov thaut too dhat item. For hiz perpoce, the biggher the rezort--within limmits--the better. The man he wauz aafter wood not be a smaul opperator, nor wood he dele directly withe such. Aulso, the big king-pinz did not merder drugd minerz for dhare ships and outfits, az the smauler wunz sumtiamz did. The big wunz reyaliazd dhat dhare wauz moer long-pool proffit in repete biznes.

Dhaerfoer Kinnison cet hiz coers tooword the grate asteroid Uefrosciny and its festering hel-hole, Minerz Rest. Minerz Rest, too aul hily moral cittisenz the disgrace not oonly ov a solar cistem but ov a cector; the verry name ov which wauz (and iz) a bi-werd and a hiscing too the blu-nosez ov twice a hundred inhabbited and civviliazd werldz.

CHAPTER 12

WIALD BIL WILLEYAMZ,
METEYOR MINER

AZ HAZ BENE IMPLIDE, Minerz Rest wauz the bigghest, widest-open, leest restrained joint in dhat entire cector ov the gallaxy. And throo the underground activvitesse ov hiz fellose ov the Patrole, Kinnison nu dhat ov aul the king-sniaps ov dhat laules asteroid, the man cauld Strong'hart wauz the Big Shot.

Dhaerfoer the Lenzman landed hiz batterd craaft at Strong'harts Doc, loded the eqwipment ov the hi-jackerz bote intoo a hand truc, and went intoo too tauc too Strong'hart himcelf. "Suplise--Eqwipment--Mettal--Baut and Soald" the cine red; but too enny expereyenst i it wauz evvident dhat the cine wauz concervative indede; dhat it did not cuvver Strong'harts biznes, bi haaf. Dhare wer daans-haulz, dhare wer long and ornate barz, dhare wer ruimz in plenty devoted too vareyouz gaimz ov so-cauld chaans, and moast cignifficant, dhare wer scoerz ov dhose unmistacabel cubikelz.

"Welcum, strain'ger! Glad too ce u--hav a good trip?" The dive-keper aulwase greted nu customerz efuciavly. "Hav a drinc on the hous!"

"Biznes befoer plezhure," Kinnison replide, tersly. "Pritty good, yes. Heerz sum stuf I doant nede enny moer dhat I ame too cel. Whautl u ghimmy for it?"

The deler inspected the suets and instruments, then boerd a kene stare intoo the minerz ise; a scrutiny under which Kinnison niather flusht nor waverd.

"Too hundred and fifty creddits for the lot," Strong'hart decided.

"Best u can doo?"

"Tops. Take it or leve it."

"QX, dhare yorz. Ghimmy it."

"Whi, this just starts our biznes, doant it? Aint u got coerz? Shure u hav."

"Yeh, but not for no"--dubly and unprintably qwaulifide--"dam robber. I like a lous, but u sute me aultooghether too dam wel. Them suets alone, just az dha la, ar werth a thouzand."

"So whaut? For whi go too insult me, a biznes man? Shure I caant ghiv whaut dhat stuf iz werth--whoo cood? U aut too no hou I got too ghet rid ov hot goodz. U kild, aint it, the ghise whaut oand it, so hou cood I trete it exept like its hot? Nou be yor age--doant bern out no gets," az the Lenzman ternd withe a blistering, cizling depe-space oath. "I no dha shot ferst, dha aulwase doo, but hou duz dhat chainj thhingz? But kepe yor shert on yet, I doant tel nobody nuthhing. For whi shood I? Hou cood I make enny munny on hot stuf if I tauc too much withe mi mouth, huu? But on coerz, dhats sumthhing els agane. Meteyorz iz legititimate merchandise, and I pa u az much az enniboddy, maby moer."

"QX," and Kinnison tost over hiz coerz. He had soald the bandits space-suets and eqwipment delibberaitly, in order too minnimise ferther killing.

This wauz hiz ferst vizsit too Minerz Rest, but he intended too becum an habichuwa ov the place; and befoer he wood be axepted az a "reggular" he

nu dhat he wood hav too proove hiz qwaulity. Buccos and boollse wood be shure too tri him out. This wa wauz much better. The tale wood spred; and enny gunman whoo had drild too hi-jackerz, ded-center throo the face-plaits, wauz not wun too be challenjd liatly. He mite hav too kil wun or too, but not menny, nor freeqwently.

And the fello wauz onnest enuf in hiz biying ov the mettal. Hiz Spauldingz cut onnest coerz--Kinnison poot micrometerz on them too be shure ov dhat fact. He did not underede hiz torshometer, and he wade the meteyorz uppon certifide ballancez. He uezd Galactic Standard avverage-vallu-dencity tabelz, and offerd exactly haaf ov the calculated avverage vallu; which, Kinnison nu, wauz fare enuf. Bi taking hiz mettal too a mint or a rare-mettalz staishon ov the Patrole, enny miner cood ghet the precice vallu ov enny meteyor, az shone bi detaild anallicis. Houwevver, insted ov making the long trip and wating--and paying--for the exact anallicese, the minerz uezhuwaly preferd too take the "fifty-percent-ov-avverage-dencity-vallu" which wauz the customary offer ov the outcide delerz.

Then, the meteyorz unloded and hauld awa, Kinnison dickerd withe Strong'hart concerning the suplise he wood nede juring hiz next trip; the hundred-and-wun itemz which ar nescenary too make a tiny space-ship a celf-containd, celf-sufishent, worm and inhabbitabel werldlet in the imens and unfrendly vacuwity ov space. Here, too, the Lenzman wauz overcharjd shaimlesly; but dhat, too, wauz rootene. No wun wood, or cood be expected too, doo biznes in enny such place az Minerz Rest at enny sane or ordinary percentage ov proffit.

When Strong'hart counted out too him the net proceedz ov the voiyage, Kinnison scracht reflectiavly at hiz whiskery chin.

"Dhat aint hardly enuf, I doant thhinc, for the reyal, oald-fashond,

stem-wianding bender I wauz figguring on," he ruminated. "I bene out a long time and I wauz figguring on doowing the thhing up broun. Hav too let go ov mi nugghet, too, I ghes. Kiandaa hate too--bene packing it round qwite a while--but here she iz." He reecht intoo hiz kit-bag and tost over the lump ov reyaly preshous mettal. "Let u hav it for fiftene hundred creddits."

"Fiftene hundred! An iddeyot u must be, or u shood thhinc Ime wun, I doant no!" Strong'hart yelpt, az he juggheld the mas liatly from hand too hand. "Too hundred, u mene... wel too fifty, then, but dhats an aufool hi bid, mister, beleve me... I tel u, I coodnt ghiv mi one muther over thre hundred--Ide loose munny on the goodz. U aint tested it, whaut maix u thhinc its such a much?"

"No, and I notice u aint testing it, niather," Kinnison counterd. "Me and u boath no mettal wel enuf so we doant nede too test no such nugghet az dhat. Fiftene hundred or I flit too a mint and ghet fool vallu for it. I doant hav too sta here, u no, bi aul the nine helz ov Valereyaa. Dhase milleyonz ov uther placez whare I can ghet just az drunc and hav just az good a time az I can here."

Dhare ensude houlez ov protest, but Strong'hart finaly yeelded, az the Lenzman had none dhat he wood. He cood hav foerst him hiyer, but fiftene hundred wauz enuf.

"Nou, cer, just the garanty and yor aul cet for a lot ov fun," Strong'harts an'gwish had departed miraculously uppon the instant ov the deelz closing. "We take yor kese, and when yor munnesse gon and u cum bac too ghet em, too cel yor suplise or yor ship or whautevver, we taix u, widhout herting u a bit moer dhan we hav too, and sober u up, qwic az scat. A roome here, whenever u waunt it, included. Padded,

cer, verry nice and cumfortabel--u caant hert yorcelf, poscibly. We bene in biznes here for yeerz, withe perfect satisfacshon. Not wun ov our customerz, and we got hundredz whoo nevver go noawhare els, hav we

evver let cel enny ov the stuf he had lade in for hiz next trip, and we nevver stele nun ov hiz suplise, niather. Oonly too hundred creddis for the whole cervice, cer. Chepe, cer--verry, *verry* chepe at the price."

"Um... m... m." Kinnison agane scracht medditatiavly, this time at the nape ov hiz nec.

"Ile take yor garanty, I ghes, becauz sumtiamz, when I ghet too gowing reyal good, I doant no just exactly when too stop. But I woant nede no padded cel. Me, I doant nevver ghet viyolent--I aulwase taper of on twenty foer units ov benny. Dhat ghivz me twenty foer ourz on the shelf, and then Ime aul cet for anuther stretch out in the eethher. U coodnt ghet me no benny, I doant suppose, and if u cood it woodnt be no dam good."

This wauz the crittical instant, the moment the Lenzman had bene aproching so long and so cercuwitously. Miand wauz aulreddy reding miand;

Kinnison did not nede the speche which follode.

"Twenty foer units!" Strong'hart exclaimd. Dhat wauz a herowic jolt--but the man befoer him wauz ov herowic moald. "Shure ov dhat?"

"Shure Ime shure; and if I ghet cut wate or cut qwaulity I cut the ghise throte dhat peddelz it too me. But I aint out. I got a cuppel ov belts left--ghes Ile use mi one, and when it ghets gon go bi me sum from a fellaa I no dhats about haaf onnest."

"Doant handel it micelf," this, the Lenzman nu, wauz at leest parshaly

tru, "but I no a man whoo haz a frend whoo can ghet it. Good stuf, too, in the oridginal tinz; speshal impoert from Corvenaa 2. Dhatl be foer hundred aultooghether. Ghimmy it and u can start yor helling around."

"Whautjaa mene, foer hundred?" Kinnison snorted. "Thhinc Ime just blaasting of about havving sum left, huu? Heerz too hundred for yor garanty, and dhats aul I waunt out ov u."

"Wate a minnute--get bac, bruther!" Strong'hart had thaut dhat the nucummer wauz entiarly out ov hiz drug, and cood dhaerfoer be charjd ate pricez for it. "Hou much doo u ghet it for, moastly, the clere qwil?"

"Wun credit per unit--twenty foer for the belt," Kinnison replide, tersly and truly. Dhat wauz the prevailing price charjd bi retale pedlerz. "Ile pa u dhat, and I doant mene twenty-five, niather."

"QX, ghimmy it. U doant nede too be afrade ov beying bump't of or roald here, niather. We got a reputaishon, we hav."

"Yeh, I bene toald u run a hi-claas joint," Kinnison agrede, ameyably. "Dhats whi Ime here. But u waunaa be mity shure the ape doant gip me on the heft ov the belt--loocky here!"

Az the Lenzman spoke he shrugd hiz shoalderz and the dive-keper leept baqword withe a shreke; for faaster dhan cite too ugly DeLammeterz had sprung intoo beying in the minerz huge, derty pauz and wer pointing sqwaerly at hiz midrif!

"Poot em awa!" Strong'hart yeld.

"Looc em over ferst," and Kinnison handed them over, buts ferst.
"These aint like them buzzardz cap-pistolz whaut I soald u. These iz mi one, and dhare hot and tite. U no gunz, doant u? Looc em over, pal--reyal cloce."

The renegade did no wepponz, and he studdede these too withe care, from the woern, ruf-checkerd grips and fool-charjd maggaseenz too the bernd, scard, deeply-pitted orificez. Deffiniatly and unmistacably dha wer wepponz ov teriffic pouwer; wepponz, widhaul, which had cene hard and freeqwent cervice; and Strong'hart personaly cood bare witnes too the blianding spede ov this minerz drau.

"And remember this," the Lenzman went on. "I nevver yet got so drunc dhat enniboddy cood take mi gunz awa from me, and if I doant ghet a fool belt ov benny I ghet mity pevish."

The publican nu dhat--it wauz a characteristic ov the drug--and he certainly did not waunt dhat miner running amoc withe dhose too wepponz in hiz hily capabel handz. He wood, he ashuerd him, ghet hiz fool doce.

And, for hiz part, Kinnison nu dhat he wauz rezonably safe, even in this hel ov helz. Az long az he wauz active he cood take care ov himcelf, in enny kiand ov cumpany; and he wauz faerly certane dhat he wood not be slane, juring hiz drug-injuest fizensal helplesnes, for the vally ov hiz ship and suplise. This wun vizsit had yeelded Strong'hart a proffit at leest eeqwal too everithing he had left, and eche subceqwent vizsit shoold yeeld a cimmilar amount.

"The ferst drinx on the hous, aulwase," Strong'hart deraild hiz ghests trane ov thaut. "Whautl it be? Telureyan, aint

u--whisky?"

"Uu-uu. Cloce, dho--Aldebbaran 2. Got enny good oald Aldebarainyan bolegaa?"

"No, but we got sum good oald Telureyan whisky, about the same thhing."

"QX--ghimmy a shot." He poerd a stif thre fin'gherz, dound it at a gulp, shudderd extatticaly, and emitted a wiald yel. "Yip-yip-yippy! Ime Wiald Bil Willeyamz, the ripping, roering, ritoodolorum from Aldebbaran 2, and this iz mi nite too houl. Whe... you...

oury-e-e!" Then, qwiyeting doun, "This rot-gut wauznt nevver within a milleyon parcex ov Tellus, but it aint bad--not bad at aul. Got the teeth and clauz ov holy oald Clono himcelf--gose doun yor throte just like swaulowing a catteghel. Clere eethher, pal, Ile be bac shortly."

For hiz ferst care wauz too toor the entire Rest, biying scrupulously wun good stif drinc, ov whautevver ferst came too hand, at eche hot-spot az he came too it.

"A good-wil toor," he explaind joiyously too Strong'hart uppon hiz retern. "Got too doo it, pal, too kepe em from caulng doun the kers ov Clono on me, but Ime gowing too doo aul mi cereyous drinking rite here."

And he did. He dranc vareyous and sundry bevveragez, mixing them withe a sublime disregard for conceqwencez which cerpriazd even the hard-boild boose-fiterz acembeld dhare. "Ennithhing dhatl poer," he declaerd, loud and often, and acted acordingly. Potent or miald; brude, fermented, or distild; loded, cut, or strate, aul wun. "Doun the hach!" and doun it went. Here wauz a too-fisted drinker whoose like had not bene cene for menny a da, and hiz fame spred throowout the Rest.

Being a "happy jag," the moer he dranc the merreyer he became. He bestode larjes hither and yon, in joiyous abandon. He daanst bliadhly withe the "hoastecez" and tipt them extravvagantly. He did not gambel, explaining freeqwently and painstakingly dhat dhat wauznt nun ov hiz dish; he waunted too hav fun withe hiz munny.

He faut, even, widhout an'gher or rancor; but galy, laafing withe Homerric gusto the while. He mist withe terriffic swingz dhat wood hav feld a hors had dha landed; oanly ocaizhonaly ghetting in, az dho bi chaans, a parralising punch. Dhus he acumulated an entiarly un'necesary mous under eche i and a sadly bruezd nose.

Houwevver, hiz good humor wauz, az iz genneraly the cace in such instancez,
qwite cloce too the cerface, and wauz prone too tern intoo pashonate an'gher
withe les reyal cauz even dhan the triveyallitese which started the frendly fist-fiats. Juring vareyous ov these outbersts ov rauth he smasht foer chaerz, too tabelz, and assorted glaasware.

But oanly wuns did he hav too drau a dedly weppon--the nuse, az he had none it wood, had spred abraud dhat withe a DeLammeter he wauz nobody too
muncky withe--and even then he didnt hav too kil the ghi. Just winging him--a littel bit ov a bern throo hiz gun-arm--had bene enuf.

So it went for dase. And finaly, it wauz in imens relefe dhat the hilareyously drunken Lenzman, hiz munny gon too the laast millo, went roistering up the strete withe a too-qwort bottel in eche hand; swigghing nou from wun, then from the uther; inviting bibbulously the while enny and
aul chaans cummerz too join him in wun laast, fond drinc. The ciadwauc wauz
not wide enuf for him, bi haaf; indede, he tooc up moast ov the strete.

He staggherd and reeld, retaning enny cemblans ov ballans oanly bi a mirrakel and bi hiz riggorous spaismanz traning.

He thru awa wun empty bottel, then the uther. Then, az he strode along, so perpoasfooly and yet so futily, he sang. Hiz vois wauz not particularly musical, but whaut it lact in qwaulity ov tone it moer dhan made up in vollume. Kinnison had a reyaly remarcabel vois, a bace ov tremendous pouwer, tambr, and rezzonans; and, pooling out aul the stops, in toanz audibel for too thouzand yardz against the wind, he poerd out hiz sestfooly lusty revvelerz sole. Hiz song wauz a depe-space chanty dhat wood hav blisterd the eerz ov enny ov the gentler spirrits whoo had none him az Kimbal Kinnison, ov Erth; but which, in Minerz Rest, wauz meerly a humorous and spriatly ballad.

Up the fool length ov the strete he went. Then bac, az he poot it, too "Bace." Even if this final bust did make him cicker at the stummac dhan a ground-gripper gowing fre for the ferst time, the Lenzman reflected, he had dun a mity good job. He had poot Wiald Bil Willeyanz, meteyor-miner, ov Aldebbaran 2, on the map in a big wa. It wauznt a faict and dhaerfoer fradgile identity, iather; it wauz sollidly, deffiniatly hiz one.

Stagghering up too hiz frend Strong'hart he steddede himself withe too big handz uppon the latterz shoalderz and breedhd a forty-thouzand-horspouwer breth intoo hiz face.

"Ime boild like a Telureyan hoot-oul," he anounst, stil happily.
"When Ime this schude I caant sa partic-hic-hiccular-li widhout hic-hicking, but I wood partic-hic-hiccularly like just wun moer qwort. Hou about me borrowing a hundred on whaut Ime gowing too bring in next time, or celling u..."

"Uve had plenty, Bil. Uve had lots ov fun. Hou about a good chu

ov slepy-happy, huu?"

"Dhats a thaut!" the miner exclaimd egherly. "Lede me too it!"

A strain'ger came up unnobtruciavly and tooc him bi wun elbo. Strong'hart tooc the uther, and betwene them dha wauct him down a narro haul and intoo a cubikel. And while he wauct flabbily along Kinnison studdedde intently the brane ov the nucummer. *This wauz whaut he wauz aafter!*

The ape had had a screne; but it wauz such a nusans he tooc it of for a rest whenever he came here. No Lenzmen on Uefrosciny! Dha had coamd evveriboddy, even this drunken bum here. This wauz wun place dhat no Lenzman wood evver cum too; or, if he did, he woodnt laast long. Kinnison had bene pritty shure dhat Strong'hart wood be in cahuits withe sumbody biggher dhan a pedler, and so it had pruivd. This ghi nu plenty, and the Lenzman wauz taking the informaishon--aul ov it. Cix weex from nou, a? Just rite--time too fiand enuf mettal for anuther roiyal binj here... And juring dhat binj he wood reyaly doo thingz...

Cix weex. Qwrite a while... but... QX. It wood take sum time yet, enniwa, probbably, befoer the Rejonal Directorz wood, like this fello, ghet over dhare scaerz enuf too relax a fu ov dhare moast erxum precaushonz. And, az haz bene intimated, Kinnison, while impaishent enuf at tiamz, cood hoald himcelf in chec like a cat wauching a mous'hole whenever it wauz reyaly nescesary.

Dhaerfoer, in the cel, he ceted himcelf upon the bunc and ceezd the packet from the hand ov the strain'ger. Taring it open, he stuff the contents intoo hiz mouth; and, ise roling and muscelz twitching, he chude viggorously; expertly alouwing the potent juce too trickel down hiz gullet just faast enuf too kepe hiz hed humming like a swarm ov an'gry bese. Then, the cud suct dri, he slumpt down upon the matres,

fizsicaly ded too the werld for the ensuwng twenty foer G-P ourz.

He awakend; weke, flimsy, and supreamly retched. He made hevvy gowing too the office, whare Strong'hart reternd too him the kese ov hiz bote.

"Feling lo, cer." It wauz a staitment, not a qweschon.

"Ile sa so," the Lenzman groand. He wauz hoaldng hiz spinning hed, triying too steddy the girating univers. "Ide hav too looc up--wa, wa up, withe a number nine vizsiplate--too ce a snaix belly in a swaump. Make dhat dam cat qwit stompng hiz fete, caant u?"

"Too bad, but it woant laast long." The vois wauz uncshous enuf, but totaly devoid ov felng. "Heerz a pic-up--u nede it."

The Lenzman tost of the poashon, widhout thanx, az wauz good tecneke in dhose parts. Hiz hed cleerd miraculously, auldho the stabbing ake remaind.

"Cum in agane next time. Evverithhingz bene on the grene here, aint it, cer?"

"Uu-huu, verry nice," the Lenzman admitted. "Coodnt aasc for better. Ile be bac in five or cix weex, if I hav enny luc at aul."

Az the batterd but staunch and pouwerfool meteyor-bote floted sloly upword a dezultory conversaishon wauz taking place in the dive he had left. At dhat erly our biznes wauz slac too the point ov non-existens, and Strong'hart wauz chatting iadly withe a bartender and wun ov the hoastecez.

"If moer ov the boiz wauz like him we woodnt hav no trubbel at aul," Strong'hart stated withe convicshon. "Nice, qwiyet, esy-gowing--a rite

ghi, I sa."

"Yeh, but at dhat maby its a good gag nobody riald him up too much," the barkepe opiand. "He cood be ruf if he waunted too, I bet a qwort. Drunc or sober, hese chane liatning withe them DeLammeterz."

"Hese so refiand, such a perfect gentelman," cide the woomman. "Hese nice." Too her, he had bene. She had had plenty ov creddits from the big miner, widhout havving ghivven ennithhing save smialz and daancez in retern.

"Them too ghise he drild must hav neded killing, or he woodnt hav bernd em."

And dhat wauz dhat. Az the Lenzman had intended, Wiald Bil Willeyamz wauz an oald, none, and hily respected rezident ov Minerz Rest!

Out amung the asteroidz agane; moer muscel-taring, bac-braking, loansum labor. Kinnison did not fiand enny moer fabbulously rich meteyorz--such thhingz happen oanly wuns in a hundred liaftiamz--but he wauz ghetting hiz share ov hevvy stuf. Then wun da when he had about haaf a lode dhare came screming in uppon the emergency wave a caul for help; a caul so loud dhat the ship braudcaasting it must be verry cloce indede. Yes, dhare she wauz, rite in hiz lap; startlingly larj even uppon the lo-pouwer plaits ov hiz space-tramp.

"Help! Space-ship Caalotus, posishon..." a ratling string ov numberz. "Berghenhome ded, meteyorite screenz practicaly disabeld, intrinsic velosity throwing us intoo the asteroidz. Enny space-tugz, enny vescelz withe tractorz--help! And hurry!"

At the ferst werd Kinnison had shuvd hiz blaast-lever fool over. A fu cecondz ov fre flite, a minnute ov inert manuvering dhat taxt too the

utmoast hiz Lenzmanz skil and pouwerfool frame, and he wauz within the linerz are-loc.

"I no sumthhing about Bergz!" he snapt. "Take this bote ov mine and pool! Ar u evaccuwating pascen'gerz?" he shot at the mate az dha ran tooword the en'gine roome.

"Yes, but afrade we havnt boats enuf--overloded," wauz the gaaspt repli.

"Use mine--fil er up!" If the mate wauz cerpriazd at such an offer from a despiazd space-rat he did not sho it. Dhare wer menny moer cerprisez in stoer.

In the en'gine roome Kinnison brusht acide a cru ov helplesly futile groperz and thru in swich aafter swich. He looct. He liscend. Abuv aul, he pride intoo dhat ceeld monster ov pouwer withe aul hiz cens ov percepshon. Hou glad he wauz nou dhat he and Thorndike had struggheld so long and so fureyously withe a baulky Berghenhome on dhat trip too tempeschuwous Trencu! For az a rezult ov dhat trip he *did* no Bergz, withe a shure nollej posest bi fu uther men in space.

"Number foer led iz shot sumwhare," he repoerted. "Must be bernd of whare it cleerz the pilaster. Caerles overhaul laast time--got too take of the lower poert thherd cuvver. No time for renchez--ghet me a cutting beme, and ghet the led out ov yor pants!"

The beme wauz braut on the dubbel and the Lenzman himcelf blaasted awa the dezsignated cuvver. Then, throwing an inshulated plate over the red-hot cacing he la on hiz bac--"Hand me a lite!"--and peerd breefly upword

intoo the bouwelz ov the garganchuwan meccanizm.

"Thaut so," he grunted. "Pece ov foer-o stranded, atene inchez long. Ditmarz number cix clip endz, twenty inchez on centerz. Miyerbere inshulaishon on center cecshon, dubbeld. Snap it up! Wun ov u uther fellose, bring me a short, hevvy scru-driver and a pare ov Ditmarz cix renchez!"

The tecnishanz werct faast and in a matter ov cecondz the stuf wauz dhare. The Lenzman labord breefly but huejly; and much moer shuerly dhan if he wer dependent uppon the rase ov the hand-lamp too pennetrate the smoky, stemy, grecy merc in which he toild. Then:

"QX--ghiv her the juce!" he snapt.

Dha gave it, and too the stund cerprise ov aul, she tooc it. The liner agane wauz fre!

"Kiand ov a jury rigghing I gave it, but itl hoald long enuf too ghet u intoo poert, cer," he repoerted too the captane in hiz sanctum, saluting crisply. He wauz in for it nou, he nu, az the officer staerd at him. But he *coodnt* hav let dhat shiplode ov pascen'gerz ghet ground up intoo hambergher. Enniwa, dhare wauz a wa out.

In aparrent reyacshon he ternd pale and trembeld, and the officer haistily tooc from hiz medicinal stoerz a bottel ov chois oald brandy.

"Here, drinc this," he directed, proffering the glaas.

Kinnison did so. Moer, he ceezd the bottel and dranc dhat, too--aul ov it--a draaft which wood hav litteraly ternd him incide out a fu munths cins. Then, too the captainz horifide disgust, he tooc from hiz

filthy dun'garese a packet ov bentlam and began too chu it, ideyotticaly blisfool. Thens, and shortly, intoo oblivveyon.

"Poor devvil... u poor, poor devvil," the comaander mermerd, and had him poot intoo a bunc.

When he had cum too and had had hiz pic-up, the captane came and regarded him soberly.

"U wer a man wuns. An en'ginere--a top-bracket en'ginere--or Ime an oilerz pimp," he ced levvely.

"Maby," Kinnison replide, white and weke. "Ime aul rite yet, exept wuns in a while..."

"I no," the captane fround. "No cure?"

"Not a chaans. Tride duzsenz. So..." and the Lenzman spred out hiz handz in a hoaples geschure.

"Better tel me yor name, enniwa--yor reyal name. Dhatl let yor plannet no u arnt..."

"Better not," the sufferer shooc hiz aking hed. "Foax thhinc Ime ded. Let them kepe on thhinking so. Willeyamz iz the name, cer; Willeyam Willeyamz, ov Aldabaran 2."

"Az u sa."

"Hou far ar we from whare I boereded u?"

"Cloce. Les dhan haaf a billeyon mialz. This, the cecond, iz our home plannet; yor asteroid belt iz just outcide the orbit ov the foerth."

"Ile doo a flit, then."

"Az u sa," the officer agrede, agane. "But wede like too..." and he extended a shefe ov currency.

"Raather not, cer, thanx. U ce, the lon'gher it taix me too ern anuther stake, the lon'gher itl be befoer..."

"I ce. Thanx, enniwa, for us aul," and captane and mate helpt the derrelict embarc. Dha scaersly looct at him, scaersly daerd looc at eche uther... but...

Kinnison, for hiz part, wauz content. This stoery, too, wood ghet around. It wood be in Minerz Rest befoer he got bac dhare, and it wood help... help a lot.

He cood not poscibly let dhose officerz no the trueth, even dho he reyaliazd fool wel dhat at dhat verry moment dha wer thhinking, pitteyingly:

"The poor devvil... the poor, brave devvil!"

CHAPTER 13

ZWILNIC CONFERENS

THE GRA LENZMAN WENT BAC too hiz mining withe a wil and withe unnimpaerd

viggor, for hiz distres aboard the ship had bene sherest acting. Wun smaull bottel ov good brandy wauz scaersly a coctale too the fiseke dhat had stood up under qwort aafter qwort ov the crudest, wickedest, fireyest bevveragez none too space; dhat tiny morcel ov bentlam--scaersly haaf a unit--afected him no moer dhan a lozsenj ov liccorish.

Thre weex. Twenty wun dase, eche ov twenty foer G-P ourz. At the end ov dhat time, he had lernd from the miand ov the zwilnic, the Boscoanyan director ov this, the Borovan solar cistem, wood vizsit Minerz Rest, too atend sum kiand ov meting. Hiz informant did not no whaut the meting wauz too be about, and he wauz not unjuly cureyous about it. Kinnison, houwevver, did and wauz.

The Lenzman nu, or at leest verry shrudedly suspected, dhat dhat meting wauz too be a rejonal conferens ov bigshot zwilnix; he wauz intently cureyous too no aul about evverithhing dhat wauz too take place; and he wauz determiand too be prezsent.

Thre weex wauz lots ov time. In fact, he shood be abel too complete hiz qwotaa ov hevvy mettal in too, or les. It wauz dhare, dhare wauz no qweschon ov dhat. Rite out dhare wer the meteyorz, uncountabel thousandz ov milleyonz ov them, and a certane propoershon ov them carrede valluse. The moer and the harder he werct, the moer ov these werth-while waundererz ov the void he wood fiand. Whaerfoer he labord long, hard, and rappidly, and hiz stoer ov hi-test meteyorz gru apace.

Too such good perpoce did he use beme and Spaulding dril dhat he wauz reddy moer dhan a weke ahed ov time. Dhat wauz QX--hede much raather be erly dhan late. Sumthhing mite hav happend too hoald him up--thhingz did happen, too often--and he *had* too be at dhat meting!

Dhus it came about dhat, a fu dase befoer the aul-important date, Kinnisonz batterd trezhure-hunter blaasted hercelf doun too her cecond landing at Strong'harts Doc. This time the miner wauz welcumd, not az a strain'ger, but az a frend ov long standing.

"Hi, Wiald Bil!" Strong'hart yeld at cite ov the big spais'hound.

"Rite on time, I ce--glad too ce u! Luc, too, I hope--lots ov luc, and aul good, I bet me--aint it?"

"Ho, Strong'hart!" the Lenzman roerd in retern, pummeling the diavkeper afecshonaitly. "Had a good trip, yeh--a fine trip. Struc a rich cector--twice az much az I got laast time. Toald u Ide be bac in five or cix weex, and made it in five weex and foer dase."

"Keping tabz on the dase, huu?"

"Ile sa I doo. Withe a thherst like mine a ghi caant doo nuthhing els--I tel u aul mi gutcer driyer dhan enny dezsert on the whole ov Rils. Wel, whauter we wating for? Chec this plunder ov mine in and let me ghet too gowing placez and doowing thhingz!"

The biznes end ov the vizesit wauz cetteld withe neetnes and dispach. Deler and miner understood eche uther thurroly, eche nu whaut cood and whaut cood not be dun too the uther. The meteyorz wer tested and wade. Suplise for the ensuwing trip wer baut. The garanty and twenty foer units ov benny--QX. No argument. No histerrix. No bickering or qworeling or swaring. Evverithhing on the grene, aul the wa. Gentelmen and frendz. Kinnison ternd over hiz kese, asepted a thhic shefe ov currency, and, aafter the ferst formal drinc withe hiz hoast, cet out uppon the celf-impoazd, superstishous toor ov the uther hot spots which wood bring him the favor--or at leest wood avert the active disfavor--ov Clono, hiz spaismanz deyity.

This time, houwevver, dhat toor tooc lon'gher. Uppon hiz ferst ceremoanyal round he had enterd eche saloone in tern, had baut wun drinc ov whautevver wauz nerest, had tost it doun, and had gon on too the next place; unobservd and inconspiccuwous. Nou, hou different it aul wauz! Wharevver he went he wauz the center ov atenshon.

Men whoo had met him befoer flung themcelvz uppon him withe whuips ov welcum; men whoo had nevver cene him clammord too drinc withe him; wimmen, whether or not dha nu him, faund uppon him and braut intoo pla dhare evvery lure and wile. For not oany wauz this man a hero and a celebrity ov sorts; he wauz a lucky--or a skilfool--miner whoose evvery trip rezulted in waudz ov munny big enuf too clog the under-gets ov a frater! Moerover, when he wauz lit up he thru it round regardles, and he wauz ghetting schude az faast az he cood swaulo. Lets kepe him here--or, if we caant doo dhat, lets go along, wharevver he gose!

This, too, wauz strictly acording too the Lenzmanz expectaishonz. Evveriboddy nu dhat he did not doo enny cereyous drinking glaas bi glaas at the bar, but bottel bi bottel; dhat he did not bi individjuwal drinx for hiz frendz, but let them drinc az deeply az dha wood from whautevver contaner chaanst then too be in hand; and hiz vaast popularrrity gave him a sound excuce too beghin hiz bottel-biying at the start insted ov wating until he got bac too Strong'harts. He baut, then, cevveral or menny bottelz and tinz in eche place, insted ov a cin'ghel drinc. And, cins evveriboddy nu for a fact dhat he wauz a practicaly bottomles drinker, whoo wauz even too suspect dhat he baerly moicend hiz gullet while the hangerz-on wer reyaly empteying the bottelz, canz, and flaggonz?

And juring hiz reyal celebraishon at Strong'harts, while he dranc enuf, he did not drinc too much. He waxt exedingly happy and frollixum, az

befoer. He wauz az profligate, az extravvagant in tips. He had the same sudden flashez ov hot an'gher. He faut enthuseyaasticaly and auqwordly, az Wiald Bil Willeyamz did, auldho oanly wuns or twice, dhat time; and he did not hav too drau hiz DeLammeter at aul--he wauz so wel none and so beluvd! He sang az loudly and az raucously, and withe the same fine taist in madrigalz.

Dhaerfoer, when the infiltraishon ov thaut-screend men wornd him dhat the meting wauz about too be cauld Kinnison wauz reddy. He wauz in fact coald sober when he began hiz chuenfool, laast-too-bottelz trip up the strete, and he wauz aulmoast az sober when he reternd too "Bace," empty ov bottelz and pockets, too make the uezhuwal atempt too obtane moer munny from Strong'hart and too compromise bi taking hiz faerwel chu ov bentlam insted.

Nor wauz he unjuly poot out bi the fact dhat boath Strong'hart and the zwilnic wer nou waring screenz. He had taken it for graanted dhat dha mite be, and had pland acordingly. He ceezd the packet az avvidly az befoer, chude its contents az extatticaly, and slumt down az helplesly and az ideyotticaly. Dhat much ov the sho, at leest, wauz reyal. Twenty foer units ov dhat drug wil parralise *enny* human boddy, make it ashume the unmistacabel pose and schupefide meyen ov the bentlam eter. But Kinnisonz miand wauz not an ordinary wun; the doce which wood hav renderd enny bonaa-fidy minerz brane az helples az hiz boddy did not afect the Lenzmanz nu eqwipment at aul. Alcohol and bentlam tooghether wer bad, but the Lenzman wauz sober. Dhaerfoer, if ennithing, the drugghing ov hiz boddy oanly made it eseyer too disoasheyate hiz nu miand from it. Ferthermoer, he nede not waist enny thaut in making it act.

Dhare wauz oanly wun wa it cood act, nou, and Kinnison let hiz nu cencez rome abraud widhout even thhinking ov the boddy he wauz leving behiand him.

In vu ov the riggorous orderz from hiyer up the conferens roome wauz hevvily garded bi screend men; no wun exept oald and trusted employese wer aloud too enter it, and dha wer aulso protected. Nevvertheles, Kinnison got in, bi proxy.

A clevver pic-pocket brusht against a screend water whoo wauz about too enter the saicred precincts, liatning fin'gherz flicking a swich. The water began too protest--then forgot whaut he wauz gowing too sa, even az the pic-pocket forgot compleetly the dede he had just dun. The water in tern wauz a trifel clumsy in cerving a certane Big Shot, but ernd no rebuke dhaerbi; for the latter forgot the offens aulmoast instantly. Under Kinnisonz controle the director fumbeld at hiz screne-gennerator for a moment, loocening sliatly a smaul but important resistor. Dhat dun, the Lenzman widhdru dellicaitly and the meting wauz an open booc.

"Befoer we doo ennithhing," the director began, "Sho me dhat aul yor screenz ar on." He baerd hiz one--it wood hav taken an expert cervice man an our too fiand dhat it wauz not funcshoning perfectly.

"Poppicoc!" snorted the zwilnic. "Whoo in aul the helz ov space thhinx dhat a Lenzman wood--or *cood*--cum too Uefrosciny?"

"Nobody can tel whaut this particcular Lenzman can or caant doo, and nobody nose whaut hese doowing until just befoer he dise. Hens the strictnes. Uve cercht evveriboddy here, ov coers?"

"Evveriboddy," Strong'hart averd, "even the drunx and the doaps. The whole bilding iz screend, beciadz the screenz were waring."

"The doaps doant count, ov coers, provided dhare reyaly doapt." No wun exopt the Gra Lenzman himcelf cood pocsibly conceve ov a Lenzman beying--not ceming too be, but acchuwaly *beying*--a drunken sot, too sa nuthhing ov beying a confermd addict ov enny drug. "Bi the wa, whoo iz this Wiald Bil Willeyamz weve bene hering about?"

Strong'hart and hiz frend looct at eche uther and laaft.

"I chect up on him erly," the zwilnic chuckeld. "He iznt the Lenzman, ov coers, but I thaut at ferst he mite be an agent. We friscet him and hiz ship thurrolly--no dice--and chect bac on him az a miner, foer solar cistemz bac. Hese clene, enniwa; this iz hiz cecond bender here. Hese bene guzling evverithhing in stoc for a weke, ghetting moer pi-ide evvery da, and Strong'hart and I just poot him too bed withe twenty foer units ov benny. U no whaut *dhat* meenz, doant u?"

"Yor one benny or hiz?" the director aasct.

"Mi one. Dhats whi I no hese clene. Aul the uther doaps ar too. The drunx we gave the bumz rush, like u toald us too."

"QX. I doant thhinc dhaerz enny dain'ger, micelf--I thhinc the hot-shot Lenzman dhare afrade ov iz stil werking Broncecaa--but these orderz not too take enny chaancez at aul cum from wa, wa up."

"Hou about this nu cistem dhare werking on, dhat nobody nose hiz bos enny moer? Hoowy, I caul it."

"Not reddy yet. Dha havnt bene abel too invent an absoluetly safe wun dhatl handel the werc. In the meentime, were using these boox. Cumbersum, but absoluetly safe, dha sa, unles and until the ennemy ghets ontoo the ideyaa. Then wun groope wil go intoo the leethal chaimberz ov

the Patrole and the rest ov us wil use sumthhing els. Sum sa this code caant be cract; utherz sa enny code can be red in time. Enniwa heerz yor orderz. Paas them along. Ghiv me yor stuf and wele hav supper and a fu drinx."

Dha ate. Dha dranc. Dha enjoid an evening and a nite ov hi revvelry and lo dicipaishon, eche too hiz taist; eche ceure in the nollej dhat hiz thaut-screne wauz wun hundred percent efective against the wun ennemy he reyaly feerd. Indede, the screenz wer dhat efective--then--cins the Lenzman, havving lernd from the director aul he nu, had restoerd the gennerator too fool effishency in the instant ov hiz relinqwishment ov controle.

Auldho the hedz ov the zwilnix, and dhaerfoer dhare miandz, wer ceure against Kinnisonz priying, the boox ov reccord wer not. And, dho hiz boddy wauz liying helples, inert uppon a drug-feendz cot, hiz cens ov percepshon red dhose boox; if not az reddily az dho dha wer in hiz handz and open, yet reddily enuf. And, far of in space, a pouwer-braind Lenzman iclept Worcel recorded uppon imperrishabel mettal a detaild acount, including naimz, daits, facts, and figguerz, ov aul the doowingz ov aul the zwilnix ov a solar cistem!

The informaishon wauz coded, it iz tru; but, cins Kinnison nu the ke, it mite just az wel hav bene printed in In'glish. Too the later consternaishon ov Narcottix, houwevver, dhat tape wauz cent in under Lenzmanz Cele--it cood not be red until the Gra Lenzman gave the werd.

In twenty foer ourz Kinnison recuverd from the efects ov hiz debauch. He got hiz kese from Strong'hart. He left the asteroid. He nu the mity intelect withe whoome he had next too dele, he nu whare dhat entity wauz too be found; but, sad too sa, he had pozsitiavly no ideyaa at

aul az too whaut he wauz gowing too doo or hou he wauz gowing too doo it.

Whaerfoer it wauz dhat a cens ov relefe temperd the natchural aprehenshon he felt uppon receving, a fu dase later, an incistent caul from Hainz. Truly this must be sumthhing reyaly extrordinary, for while juring the long munths ov hiz cervice Kinnison had cauld the Poert Admiral cevveral tiamz, Hainz had nevver befoer Lenzd him.

"Kinnison! Hainz caulng!" the message bete intoo hiz consmousnes.

"Kinnison acnolleging, cer!" the Gra Lenzman thaut bac.

"Am I interrupting ennithhing important?"

"Not at aul. Ime just doowing a littel flit."

"A cichuwaishon haz cum up which we fele u shood studdy, not oonly in person, but aulso widhout advaans informaishon or pre-conceevd ideyaaz. Can u cum in too Prime Bace imejaitly?"

"Yes, cer. In fact, a littel time rite nou mite doo me good in too wase--let me mul a job over, and let a nut mello down too a point whare maby I can crac it. At yor orderz, cer!"

"Not orderz, Kinnison!" the oald man reprimaanded him sharply. "No wun ghivz Unnatacht Lenzmen orderz. We reqwest or sugest, but u ar the sole juj az too whare yor gratest uesfoolnes lise."

"Plese beleve, cer, dhat yor reqwests ar orderz, too me," Kinnison replide in aul cereyousnes. Then, moer liatly, "Yor caulng me in sugests an emergency, and travveling in this minerz scou ov mine iz just a trifel faaster dhan gowing afoot. Hou about cending out sumthhing

withe sum legz too pic me up?"

"The *Dauntles*, for instans?"

"O--uve got her rebilt aulreddy?"

"Yes."

"Ile bet shese a swete clipper! She wauz a mity slic stepper befoer; nou she must hav moer legz dhan a centipede!"

And so it came about dhat in a rejon ov space entiarly empty ov aul uther vescelz az far az ultraa-pouwerfool detectorz cood reche, the *Dauntles* met Kinnisonz tugbote. The too went inert and manuverd breefly, then the imens worship en'gulft her tiny companyon and flasht awa.

"Hi, Kim, u oald sun-ov-a-space-fle!" A genneral yel arose at cite ov him, and ireprescibel ueth riyoted, regardles ov Regz, in this reyuinyon ov oald comraidz in armz whoo wer yet scaersly moer dhan boiz in yeerz.

"Hiz Nibz cez for u too caul him, Kim, when were about an our out from Prime Bace," Maitland informd hiz claas-mate irevverently, az the *Dauntles* neerd the Solaareyan cistem.

"Plate or Lenz?"

"Didnt sa--az u like, I supose."

"Plate then, I ghes--doant waunt too but in," and in moments Poert Admiral and Gra Lenzman wer in image face too face.

"Hou ar u making out, Kinnison?" Hainz studded the yung manz face

intently, gravily, line bi line. Then, viyaa Lenz, "We herd about the shose u poot on, clere over here on Tellus. A man caant drinc and dope the wa u did widhout suffering conceqwencez. Ive bene wundering if even u can fite it of. Hou about it? Hou doo u fele nou?"

"Sum craving, ov coers," Kinnison replide, shrugging hiz shoalderz. "Dhat caant be helpt--u caant make an omlet widhout braking egz. Houwevver, its nuthhing I caant lic. Ive got it pritty wel boild out ov mi cistem aulreddy."

"Mity glad too here dhat, sun. Oanly Ellison and I no whoo Wiald Bil Willeyamz reyaly iz. U had us scaerd stif for a while." Then, speking aloud:

"I wood like too hav u cum too mi office az soone az poscibel."

"Ile be dhare, chefe, too minnuets aafter we hit the bumperz," and he wauz.

"The admiral bizsy, Ruby?" he aasct, waving an ary salute at the attractive yung woomman in Hainz outer office.

"Go rite in, Lenzman Kinnison, hese wating for u," and opening the doer for him, she stood acide az he strode intoo the sanctum.

The Poert Admiral reternd the yun'gher manz punctilleyous salute, then the too shooc handz wormly befoer Hainz referd too the thherd man in the roome.

"Navigator Silpic, this iz Lenzman Kinnison, Unnatacht. Cit down, plese; this ma take sum time. Nou, Kinnison, I waunt too tel u dhat ships hav bene disapering, rite and left, disapering widhout cending out an alarm or leving a trace. Convoiyng maix no differens,

az the escorts aulso disapere..."

"Enny withe the nu progectorz?" Kinnison flasht the qweschon viyaa Lenz--this wauz nuthhing too tauc about aloud.

"No," came the reyashuring thaut in repli. "Evvery wun botteld up tite until we fiand out whaut its aul about. Cending out the *Dauntles* aafter u wauz the oonly exepshon."

"Fine. U shoodnt hav taken even dhat much chaans." This interpla ov thaut tooc but an instant; Hainz went on withe scaersly a brake in hiz vois:

"...withe no moer worning or repoert dhan the fraterz and linerz dha ar supoast too be protecting. Automattic repoerting aulso failz--the instruments cimply stop cending. The ferst and oonly cine ov lite--if it iz such a cine; which francly, I dout--came shortly befoer I cauld u in, when Silpic here came too me withe a taul stoery."

Kinnison looct then at the strain'ger. Pinc. Unmistacably a Chicladoreyan--pinc aul over. Booshy hare, triyan'gular ise, teeth, skin; aul dhat same peculeyar cullor. Not the flush ov red blud showing throo traanzlucent skin, but opake pigment; the bric-reddish pinc so characteristic ov the nere-humannity ov dhat plannet.

"We hav investigated this Silpic thurroly," Hainz went on, discussing the Chicladoreyan az impersonaly az dho he wer uppon hiz home plannet insted ov dhare in the roome, liscening. "The werst ov it iz dhat the man iz absolutly onnest--or at leest, he thhinx he iz--in telling this yarn. Aulso, exept for this wun thhing--this obceshon, fixt ideyaa, halucinaishon, caul it whaut u like; it ceemz increddibel dhat it *can* be a fact--he not oonly ceemz too be, but acchuwaly *iz*, sane. Nou, Silpic, tel Kinnison whaut u toald the rest ov us. And

Kinnison, I hope u can make cens ov it--nun ov the rest ov us can."

"QX. Go ahead, Ime liscening." But Kinnison did far moer dhan liscen. Az the fello began too tauc the Gra Lenzman incinnuwated hiz miand intoo dhat

ov the Chicladoreyan. He groapt for moments, ceking the wave-length; then he, Kimbal Kinnison, wauz acchuwaly re-livving withe the pinc man an

expereyens which harrode hiz verry sole.

"The cecond navigator ov a Radelidjan vescel dide in space, and when it landed on Chicladoreyaa I tooc the berth. About a weke out, the whole cru went crasy, aul at wuns. The ferst I nu ov it wauz when the pilot on juty becide me left hiz boerd, pict up a stoole, and smasht the automattic recorder. Then he went inert and nuetraliazd aul the controalz.

"I yeld at him, but he didnt aancer me, and aul the men in the controle roome acted funny. Dha just mild around like men in a traans. I buzd the captane, but he didnt acnollej iather. Then the men around me left the controle roome and went doun the companyonwa tooword

the mane loc. I wauz scaerd--mi skin prickeld and the hare on the bac ov mi nec stood strate up--but I follode along, qwite a wase behiand, too ce whaut dha wer gowing too doo. The captane, aul the rest ov the officerz, and the whole cru joind them in the loc. Evveriboddy wauz in an afool hurry too ghet sumwhare.

"I didnt go enny nerer--I wauznt gowing too go out intoo space widhout a sute on. I went bac intoo the controle roome too ghet at a spi-ra, then chainjd mi miand. Dhat wauz the ferst place dha wood cum too if dha boerded us, az dha probbably wood--uther ships had disapeerd in space, plenty ov them. Insted, I went over too a life-bote and uezd its spi. And I tel u, cerz, dhare wauz nuthhing dhare--nuthhing at aul!" The strain'gerz vois rose aulmoast too a shreke, hiz miand qwivverd in an

extacy ov horor.

"Steddy, Silpic, steddy," the Gra Lenzman ced, qwiyetingly. "Evverithhing uve ced so far maix cens. It aul fits rite intoo the maitrix. Nuthhing too go of the beme about, at aul."

"Whaut! U beleve me!" the Chicladoreyan staerd at Kinnison in amaizment, an emoashon verry evvidently shaerd bi the Poert Admiral.

"Yes," the man in gra lether acerted. "Not oonly dhat, but I hav a verry fare ideyaa ov whauts cumming next. Shoote!"

"The men wauct out intoo space." The pinc man offerd this informaishon diffidently, auldho pozsitiavly--an oft-repeted but starcly increddibel staitment. "Dha did not flote outword, cerz, dha *wauct*; and dha acted az if dha wer breathing are, not space. And az dha wauct dha sort ov faded out; became thhin, misty-like. This soundz crasy, cer," too Kinnison alone, "I thaut then maby I wauz coocoo, and evveriboddy around here thhinx I am nou, too. Maby I *am* nuts, cer--I doant no."

"I doo. U arnt," Kinnison ced caalmly.

"Wel, and here cumz the werst ov it, dha wauct around just az dho dha wer in a ship, growing fainter aul the time. Then sum ov them la doun and sumthhing began too *skin* wun ov them--skin him alive, cer--but dhare wauz nuthhing dhare at aul. I ran, then. I got intoo the faastest liafbote on the far cide and gave her aul the oofe shede take. Dhats aul, cer."

"Not qwite aul, Silpic, unles Ime badly mistaken. Whi didnt u tel the rest ov it while u wer at it?"

"I didnt dare too, cer. If Ide toald enny moer dha wood hav *none* I wauz crasy insted ov just thhinking so..." He broke of sharply, hiz vois aultering strainjly az he went on: "Whaut maix u thhinc dhare wauz ennithhing moer, cer? Doo u...?" The qweschon traild of intoo cilens.

"I doo. If whaut I thhinc happend reyaly did happen dhare wauz moer--qwhite a lot moer--and wers. Wauznt dhare?"

"Ile sa dhare wauz!" The navigator aulmoast exploded in relefe. "Or raather, I thhinc nou dhat dhare wauz. But I caant describe enny ov it verry wel--evverithhing wauz ghetting fainter aul the time, and I thaut I must be imadgining moast ov it."

"U wernt imadgining a thhing..." the Lenzman began, oonly too be interupted bi Hainz.

"Helz gin'gling belz!" dhat werthy shouted. "If u no whaut it wauz, spil it!"

"Thhinc I no, but not qwhite shure yet--got too chec it. Caant ghet it from him--hese toald evverithhing he reyaly nose. He didnt reyaly ce ennithhing, it wauz practicaly invizsibel. Even if he had tride too describe the whole performans u woodnt hav reccogniazd it. Nobody cood hav exept Worcel and I, and poscibly vanBuskerc. Ile tel u the rest ov whaut acchuwaly happend and Silpic can tel us if it chex." Hiz fechuerz gru taut, hiz vois became hard and chil. "I sau it dun, wuns. Wers, I herd it. Sau it and herd it, clere and plane. Aulso, I nu whaut it wauz aul about, so I can describe it a lot better dhan Silpic poscibly can.

"Evvery man ov dhat cru wauz kild bi torchure. Sum wer flade alive,

az Silpic ced; then dha wer carvd up, sloly and peesmele. Sum wer strecht, poold apart bi chainz and hoox, on rax. Utherz twisted on fraimz. Boild, littel bi littel. Pict apart, bit bi bit. Gast. Eten awa bi corociavz, wun mollecule at a time. Prest out flat, az dho betwene too plaits ov glaas. Whipt. Skerjd. Beten gradjuwaly too a pulp. Uther methodz, lots ov them--indescrabel. Aul slo, dho, and extreemly painfool. Grenish-yello lite, showing the oraa ov eche man az he dide. Beemz from sumwhare--poscibly invizsibel--conshuming the oraaz. Chec, Silpic?"

"Yes, cer, it chex!" The Chicladoreyan exclaimd in profound relefe; then added, caerfooly: "Dhat iz, dhats the wa the torchure wauz, exactly, cer, but dhare wauz sumthhing funny, a differens, about dhare fading awa. I caant describe whaut wauz funny about it, but it didnt ceme so much dhat dha became invizsibel az dhat dha went awa, cer, even dho dha didnt go enny place."

"Dhats the wa dhare cistem ov invisibillity werx. Got too be--nuthing els wil fit intoo..."

"The Overlordz ov Delgon!" Hainz raaspt, sharply. "But if dhats a tru picchure hou in aul the helz ov space did this Silpic, alone ov aul the ships personel, ghet awa clene? Tel me dhat!"

"Cimpel!" the Gra Lenzman snapt bac sharply. "The rest wer aul Radelidjanz--he wauz the oonly Chicladoreyan aboard. The Overlordz cimply didnt no he wauz dhare--didnt fele him at aul. Chicladoreyanz thhinc on a wave nobody els in the gallaxy usez--u must hav notiaast dhat when u felt ov him withe yor Lenz. It tooc me haaf a minnute too cincronise withe him.

"Az for hiz escape, dhat maix cens, too. The Overlordz ar slo werkerz and when dhare playing dhat game dha reyaly concentrate on

it--dha doant pa enny atenshon too ennithhing els. Bi the time dha got dun and wer reddy too take over the ship, he cood be aulmoast enniwhare."

"But he cez dhat dhare wauz no ship dhare--nuthhing at aul!" Hainz protested.

"Invisibillity iznt hard too understand." Kinnison counterd. "Weve aulmoast got it ourcelvz--we undoutedly cood hav it az good az dhat, withe a littel moer werc on it. Dhare wauz a ship dhare, beyond qweschon. Cloce. Hooct on withe magnets, and withe a space-chube, loc too loc.

"The oanly peculeyar part ov it, and the bad part, iz sumthhing u havnt menshond yet. Whaut wood the Overlordz--if, az we must ashume, sum ov them got awa from Worcel and hiz cru--be doowing withe a ship? Dha nevver had enny space-ships dhat I evver nu ennithhing about, nor enny uther mecannical devicez reqwiring enny advaanst en'ginering skil. Aulso, and moast important, dha nevver did and nevver cood invent or develop such an invisibillity aparatus az dhat."

Kinnison fel cilent; and while he fround in thaut Hainz dismist the Chicladoreyan, withe orderz dhat hiz evvery waunt be suplide.

"Whaut doo u dejuce from dhose facts?" the Poert Admiral prezsently aasct.

"Plenty," the Gra Lenzman ced, darclly. "I smel a rat. In fact, it stinx too hi Hevven. Boscone."

"U ma be rite," Hainz conceded. It wauz hoaples, he nu, for him too tri too kepe up withe this manz mental procecez. "But whi, and abuv aul, hou?"

"Whi iz esy. Dha boath o us a lot, and waunt too pa us in fool. Boath

hate us too hel and bac. Hou iz imatereyal. Wun found the uther, sum wa. Dhare tooghether, just az shure az helz a man-trap, and dhats whaut matterz. Its bad. Verry, *verry* bad, beleve me."

"Orderz?" aasct Hainz. He wauz a big man; big enuf too aasc instrucshonz from enniwun whoo nu moer dhan he did--big enuf too make no boanz ov such aasking.

"Wun duz not ghiv orderz too the Poert Admiral," Kinnison mimmiect him liatly, but meningly. "Wun ma reqwest, perhaps, or sugest, but..."

"Skip it! Ile take a club too u yet, u yung helleyon! U ced ude take orderz from me. QX--Ile take em from u. Whaut ar dha?"

"No orderz yet, I doant thhinc..." Kinnison ruminated. "No... not until aafter we investigate. Ile hav too hav Worcel and vanBuskerck; were the oanly thre whoo hav had expereyens. Wele take the *Dauntles*, I thhinc--itl be safe enuf. Thaut-screenz wil stop the Overlordz coald, and a scrambler wil take care ov the invisibillity biznes."

"Safe enuf, then, u thhinc, too let traffic rezhume, if dhare aul protected withe screenz?"

"I woodnt sa so. Dhave got Boscoanyan super-drednauts nou too use if dha waunt too, and dhats sumthhing els too thhinc about. Anuther weke or so woant hert much--better wate until we ce whaut we can ce. Ive bene rong wuns or twice befoer, too, and I ma be agane."

He wauz. Auldho hiz werdz wer concervative enuf, he wauz certane in hiz one miand dhat he nu aul the aancerz. But hou rong he wauz--hou terribly, nou tradgicaly rong! For even hiz mentallity had not az yet

envizzaijd the increddibel acchuwallity; hiz deducshonz and percepshonz fel far, far short ov the apauling trueth!

CHAPTER 14

IAKH AND OVERLORD

THE FASHON IN WHICH THE Overlordz ov Delgon had cum under the egis ov Boscone, while obscure for a time, wauz in reyallity qwite cimpel and lodgical; for uppon distant Jarnevon the Iakh had proffited cignaly from Iakhlanz dizaastrous rade uppon Areezhaa. Not exactly in the cens sugested bi Uconidor the Areezhan Wauchman, it iz tru, but proffited nevvertheles. Dha had lernd dhat thaut, hitherto concidderd oonly a vallubel adjunct too acheevment, wauz acchuwaly an acheevment in itcelf; dhat it cood be uezd az a weppon ov cerpaacing pouwer.

Uconidorz hommily, az he moer dhan suspected at the time, mite az wel nevver hav bene utterd, for aul the efect it had uppon the life or uppon the perpoce in life ov enny cin'ghel member ov the race ov the Iakh. Iakhmil, whoo had bene Cecond ov Boscone, wauz nou Ferst; the utherz wer advaanst corespondingly; and a nu Aitth and Nianth had bene chosen too complete the roster ov the Council which wauz Boscone.

"The late Iakhlan," Iakhmil stated harshly aafter caulng the nu Boscone too order--which event tooc place within a da aafter it became aparrent

dhat the too boald spirrits had departed too a boern from which dhare wauz too be no reterning--"erd cereyously, in fact fataly, in underestimating an oponent, even dho he himself wauz prone too harp uppon the dain'ger ov dhat verry thhing.

"We ar agrede dhat our obgectiavz remane unchainjd; and aulso dhat grater cercumspecshon must be uezd until we hav suxeded in discuvvering the hithertoo unsuspected potenshallitese ov pure thaut. We wil nou here from wun ov our nu memberz, the Nianth, aulso a cicollogist, whoo moast forchunaitly had bene studdeying this cichuwaishon even befoer the incepshon ov the expedishon which yesterda came too such a catastroffic end."

"It iz clere," the Nianth ov Boscone began, "dhat Areezhaa iz at prezsent out ov the qweschon. Perceving the pocibillity ov sum such danoomon--an ideyaa too which I repetedly cauld the atenshon ov mi predecessor cicollogist, the late Aitth--I hav bene long at werc uppon certane aulternative mezhuerz.

"Concidded, plese, the matter ov the thaut-screenz. Whoo devellopt them ferst iz imatereyal--whether Areezhaa stole them from Floer, or vicy versaa, or whether eche devellopt them independently. The pertinent facts ar too:

"Ferst, dhat the Areezhanz can brake such screenz bi the aplicaishon ov mental foers, iather ov grater magnichude dhan dha can widhstand or ov sum nu and az yet un'none composishon or pattern.

"Ceccond, dhat such screenz wer and probbably stil ar uezd larjly and commonly uppon the plannet Velanshaa. Dhaerfoer dha must hav bene boath nescenary and addeqwate. The deducshon iz, I beleve, defencibel dhat

dha wer uezd az a protecshon against entitese whoo wer, and whoo stil ma be, employiing against the Velanshanz the wepponz ov pure thaut which we wish too investigate and too aqwire.

"I propose, dhaerfoer, dhat I and a fu utherz ov mi celecshon continnu this recerch, not uppon Areezhaa, but uppon Velanshaa and perhaps elshware."

Too this sugeschon dhare wauz no demer and a vescel cet out forthwith. The vizsit too Velanshaa wauz cimpel and creyated no disterbans whautevver. In

this conecshon it must be rememberd dhat the natiavz ov Velanshaa, then in the erly extacese ov discuvvery bi the Galactic Patrole and the conceqwent aqwisishon ov inershaales flite, wer faerly revveling in vizsits too and from the wiadly-vareyant pepelz ov the plannets ov hundredz

ov uther sunz. It must be boern in miand dhat, cins the Iakh wer fizsicaly moer like the Velanshanz dhan wer the men ov Tellus, the prezsens ov a groope ov such entitese uppon the plannet wood creyate les comment dhan dhat ov a groope ov human beyingz. Dhaerfoer dhat faitfool

vizsit went unnotiast at the time, and it wauz oanly bi long and arjuwous recerch, aafter Kinnison had dejuest dhat sum such vizsit must hav bene made, dhat it wauz shone too hav bene an acchuwallity.

Space forbidz enny detaild acount ov whaut the Nianth ov Boscone and hiz fellose did, auldho dhat stoery ov itself wood be no mene eppic.

Sufice it too sa, then, dhat dha became wel aqwainted withe the frendly Velanshanz; dha studdede and dha lernd. Particcularly did dha ceke informaishon concerning the noizome Overlordz ov Delgon, auldho the natiavz did not care too dwel at enny length uppon the subject.

"Dhare pouwer iz broken," dha wer woant too inform the qweschonerz, withe
ary flertingz ov tale and wing. "Evvery none cavvern ov them, and not a
fu hithertoo un'none cavvernz, hav bene blaasted out ov existens.
Whenever wun ov them daerz too obtrude hiz mentallity uppon enny
wun ov us
he iz at wuns hunted down and slane. Even if dha ar not aul ded, az
we thhinc, dha certainly ar no lon'gher a mennace too our pece and
cecurity."

Havving cecuerd aul the informaishon avalabel uppon Velanshaa, the Iakh
went too Delgon, whare dha devoted aul the pouwer ov dhare admittedly
ferst-grade miandz and aul the not inconciderabel rezoercez ov dhare
ship
too the taasc ov fianding and uniting the remnants ov whaut had wuns
bene a
flurrishing race, the Overlordz ov Delgon.

The Overlordz! Dhat monstrous, repulcive, amoral race which, not
exepting even the Iakh themcelvz, acheevd the moast universal
condemnaishon evver too hav bene ghivven in the long history ov the
Galactic
Uenyon. The Iakh, admittedly deserving ov the fate which wauz dhaerz,
had
and hav dhare apollogists. The Iakh wer rong-mianded, aul admit. Dha
wer anty-soashal, blud-mad, obcest withe an insaishabel lust for pouwer
and conqwest which nuthhing exept complete extincshon cood exterpate.
Dhare evil atribuets wer lejon. Dha wer, houwevver, brave. Dha wer
organiserz par exelens. Dha wer, in dhare one fashon, creyatorz and
doowerz. Dha had the currage ov dhare convicshonz and follode them too
the bitter end.

Ov the Overlordz, houwevver, nuthhing good haz evver bene ced. Dha wer

debaist, cruwel, perverted too a degry starcly unthhincabel too enny normal

intelligens, houwevver houzd. In dhare native habbitat dha had no wepponz, nor nede ov enny. Throo shere pouwer ov miand dha reecht out too dhare victimz, even uppon uthher plannets, and foerst them too cum too the gloomy cavvernz in which dha had dhare beying. Dhare the victimz wer

torchuerd too deth in numberles unspicable fashonz, and while dha dide the captorz *fed*, goolishly, uppon the departing life-principel ov the suffererz.

The meccanizm ov dhat abzorpshon iz entiarly un'none; nor iz dhare enny addeqgate evvidens az too whaut end wauz cervd bi it in the economy ov dhat

horid race. Dhat these orgese wer not ecenshal too dhare fyszical wel-beying iz certane, cins menny ov the crechuerz cerviavd for a long time aafter the friatfool riats wer renderd imposcibel.

Be dhat iz it ma, the Iakh saut out and found menny cerviving Overlordz. The latter tride too enslave the vizsitorz and too bend them too dhare hidjously sadistic perpocez, but too no avale. Not oonly wer the Iakh protected bi thaut-screenz; dha had miandz stron'gher even dhan the Overlordz one. And, aafter the ferst overchuerz had bene made and channelz ov comunicaishon establisht, the aliyans wauz a natchural.

Much haz bene ced and ritten ov the bianding pouwer ov luv. Dhat, and uthher nobel emoashonz, hav indede performd wunderz. It ceemz too this histoereyan, houwevver, dhat aul too littel haz bene ced ov the efectiavnes ov pure hate az a cementing matereyal. Probbably for good and sufiscent moral rezonz; perhaps becauz--and for the best--its applicaishon haz bene ov comparratiavly infreeqwent occurs. Here, in the cace in hand, we hav historese best exaampel ov too entiarly dicimmilar pepelz werking efiscently tooggether under the erj, not ov

luv or ov enny uther lofty centiment, but ov shere, starc, unnalloid and corocive, but common, hate.

Boath hated Civilizaishon and evverithing pertaning too it. Boath waunted
revent; waunted it withe a cering, fureyous nede aulmoast tan'gibel: a nauwing, barning lust which niather countenanst palleyaishon nor brooct deniyal. And abuv aul, boath hated venjfooly, fureyously, eezhureyently--evvery wa exept bliandly--an az yet un'none and unnidentifide
warer ov the milleyon-tiamz-akerst Lenz ov the Galactic Patrole!

The Iakh wer hard, ruethles, coald; not even havving such werdz in dhare lan'gwage az "conshens," "mercy," or "scrupel." Dhare haitred ov the Lenzman wauz then a thhing ov an intencity un'nowabel too enny human miand.

Even dhat emoashon houwevver, grim az it wauz and feersum, paild becide the
pashonaitly vitreyollic haitred ov the Overlordz ov Delgon for the beying whoo had bene the Nemmecis ov dhare race.

And when the shere mental pouwer ov the Overlordz, unthhincably grate az
it wauz and opperative widhaul in a fashon utterly incomprehencibel too us
ov Civilizaishon, wauz combiand withe the in'genuwity, rezorsfoolnes, and drive, az wel az withe the ciyentiffic abillity ov the Iakh, the rezults wood in enny cace hav bene portentous indede.

In this cace dha wer moer dhan portentous, and wers. Dhose prodidjous intelects, fand intoo feers activvity bi firy blaasts ov haitred, projuest a thhing increddibel.

CHAPTER 15

OVERLORDZ OV DELGON

BEFOER HIZ SHIP WAUZ CERVIAST for the flite intoo the un'none Kinnison chainjd hiz miand. He wauz vaigly trubbed about the trip. It wauz nuthhing az deffinite az a "hunch"; hunchez ar, the Gra Lenzman nu, the rezults ov the operaishon ov an extraa-censory percepshon posest bi aul ov us in grater or lescer degry. It wauz probbably not an obscure worning too hiz super-cens from an uther, moer pervasive dimenshon. It wauz, he thaut, a repercushon ov the dout in Silpix miand dhat the fading out ov the menz boddese had bene ju too cimpel invisibillity.

"I thhinc Ide better go alone, chefe," he informd the Poert Admiral wun da. "Ime not qwite az shure az I wauz az too just whaut dhave got."

"Whaut differens duz dhat make?" Hainz demaanded.

"Liavz," wauz the ters repli.

"Yor life iz whaut Ime thhinking about. Ule be safer withe the big ship, u caant deni dhat."

"We-ll, perhaps. But I doant waunt..."

"Whaut u waunt iz imatereyal."

"Hou about a compromise? Ile take Worcel and vanBuskerk. When the

Overlordz hipnotiazd him dhat time it made Bus so mad dhat hese bene taking treetments from Worcel. Nobody can hipnotise him nou, Worcel cez, not even an Overlord."

"No compromise. I caant order u too take the *Dauntles*, cins yor authority iz traancendent. U can take ennithhing u like. I can, houwevver, and shal, order the *Dauntles* too ride yor tale wharevver u go."

"QX, Ile hav too take her then." Kinnisonz vois gru somber. "But suppose haaf the cru doant ghet bac... and dhat I doo?"

"Iznt dhat whaut happend on the *Britanyaa*?"

"No," came flat aancer. "We wer aul taking the same chaans then--it wauz the luc ov the drau. This iz different."

"Hou different?"

"Ive got better eqwipment dhan dha hav... Ide be a merderer, coald."

"Not at aul, no moer dhan then. U had better eqwipment then, too, u no, auldho not az much ov it. Evvery comaander ov men haz dhat same feling when he cendz men too deth. But poot yorcelf in mi place. Wood u cend wun ov yor best men, or let him go, alone on a hily dain'gerous mishon when moer men or ships wood improve hiz chaancez?

Aancer dhat, onnestly."

"Probbably I woodnt," Kinnison admitted, reluctantly.

"QX. Take aul the precaushonz u can--but I doant hav too tel u

dhat. I no u wil."

Dhaerfoer it wauz the *Dauntles* in which Kinnison cet out a da or too later. Withe him wer Worcel and vanBuskerc, az wel az the vescelz fool opperating cru ov Telureyanz. Az dha aproacht the rejon ov space in which Silpix vescel had bene atact evvery man in the cru got hiz armor in reddines for instant uce, chect hiz cidarmz, and tooc hiz emergency battel-staishon. Kinnison ternd then too Worcel.

"Hou du fele, fello oald snake?" he aasct.

"Scaerd," the Velanshan replide, cending a ripling cerj ov pouwer the fool length ov the thherty-foot-long cabel ov suppel, lether-hard flesh dhat wauz hiz boddy. "Scaerd too the tip ov mi tale. Not dhat dha can trete me az dha did befoer--we thre, at leest, ar safe from dhare miandz--but at whaut dha wil *doo*. Whautevver it iz too be, it wil not be whaut we expect. Dha certainly wil not doo the obveyous."

"Dhats whauts clogghing mi gets," the Lenzman agrede. "Az a gherl toald me wuns, Ime ghetting the screming memese."

"Dhats whaut u mugz ghet for beying so brany," vanBuskerc poot in. Withe a flic ov hiz mascive rist he braut hiz thherty-pound space-ax too the "reddy" az liatly az dho it wer a Telureyan dres saber. "Bring on yor Overlordz--sqwish! Just like dhat!" and a whisling swepe ov hiz atroashous weppon wauz ilustraishon enuf.

"Ma be sumthhing in dhat, too, Bus," he laaft. Then, too the Velanshan, "About time too chune in on em, I ghes."

He wauz in no dout whautevver az too Worcelz abillity too reche them. He nu dhat dhat increddiably pouwerfool miand, widhout Lenz or advaanst

Areezhan instructhon, had bene abel too cuvver elevven solar cistemz: he nu dhat, withe hiz prezsent abillity, Worcel cood cuvver haaf ov space!

Auldho evvery fiber ov hiz beying shreect protest against contact withe the hereditary fo ov hiz race, the Velanshan poot hiz miand on rapor withe the Overlordz and cent out hiz thaut. He liscend for cecondz, moashonles, then glided acros the roome too the thaut-screend pilot and hist direcshonz. The pilot aulterd hiz coers sharply and gave her the gun.

"Ile take her over nou," Worcel ced, prezsently. "Itl looc better dhat wa--moer az dho dha had us aul under controle."

He cut the Berghenhome, then cet evverithhing on sero--the ship hung, inert and practicaly moashonles, in space. Cimultainyously twenty unscreend men--vollunteez--dasht tooword the mane aerloc, overcum bi sum intens emoashon.

"Nou! Screenz on! Scramblerz!" Kinnison yeld; and at hiz werdz a thaut-screne encloazd the ship; hi-pouwerd scramblerz, within whose feeldz no invisibillity aparatus cood hoald, berst intoo acshon. Dhare the vescel wauz, rite beside the *Dauntles*, a Boscoanyan in evvery line and member! "Fire!"

But even az she apeerd, befoer a firing-stud cood be prest, the ennemy craaft aulmoast disapeerd agane; or raather, she did not reyaly apere at aul, exept az the verreyest raith ov whaut a good, sollid ship ov space-alloi aut too be. She wauz a goast-ship, az unsubstanshal az fog. Misty, tennuwous, imatereyal; the shaddo ov a shaddo. A dreme-ship, bilt ov the gossamer ov dreemz, mand bi figments ov horor recruited from sherest niatmare. Not invisibillity this time, Kinnison nu withe a profound shoc. Sumthhing els--sumthhing entiarly

different--sumthhing utterly incomprehencibel. Silpic had ced it az neerly az it cood be poot intoo understandabel werdz--the Boscoanyan ship wauz *leving*, auldho it wauz standing stil! It wauz monstrous--it *coodnt be dun!*

Then, at a rainj ov oanly fete insted ov the uezhuwal "point-blanc" rainj ov hundredz ov mialz, the tremendous cecondarese ov the *Dauntles* cut looce. At such a ridicculous rainj az dhat--whi, the screenz themcelvz kept ennithhing ferther awa from them dhan dhat ship wauz--dha *coodnt* mis. Nor did dha; but niather did dha hit. Dhose ravvening beemz went throo and throo the tennuwous fabricaishon which shood hav bene a vescel, but dha struc nuthhing whautevver. Dha went *paast*--entiarly harmlesly *paast*--boath the ship itcelf and the raith-like but unforgettabel figguerz which Kinnison reccogniazd at a glaans az Overlordz ov Delgon. Hiz hart sanc withe a thud. He nu when he had had enuf; and this wauz aultooghether too much.

"Go fre!" he raaspt. "Ghiv er the oofe!"

Ennergy poerd intoo and throo the grate Berghenhome, but nuthhing happend; ship and contents remaind inert. Not exactly inert, iather, for the men wer beghinning too fele a nu and uneke censaishon.

Ennergy raivd from the driving gets, but stil nuthhing happend. Dhare wauz nun ov the thrust, nun ov the reyacshon ov an inert start; dhare wauz nun ov the lashing, qwivvering awaernes ov spede which afects evvery miand, houwevver hardend too fre flite, in the instant ov chainj from rest too a moashon menny tiamz faaster dhan dhat ov lite.

"Armor! Thaut-screne! Emergency staishonz aul!" Cins dha cood not run awa from whautevver it wauz dhat wauz cumming, dha wood face it.

And sumthhing wauz happening nou, dhare wauz no dout ov dhat.
Kinnison
had bene cecic and aercic and space-cic. Aulso, cins cadets must
lern too be abel too doo widhout artifishal gravvity, sudo-inershaa, and
dhose uther refianments which make space-linerz so cumfortabel, he had
none the nauseyaa and the qwesily terrifying endles-faul censaishonz ov
waitlesnes, az wel az the even wers outragez too the cencibillitese
incident too inershaalesnes in its crudest, moast bacic aplicaishonz. He
thaut dhat he wauz familleyar withe aul the untooword censaishonz ov
evvery
mode ov travvel none too ciyens. This, houwevver, wauz sumthhing
entiarly
nu.

He felt az dho he wer beying comprest; not az a whole, but attom bi
attom. He wauz beying twisted--corxcrude in a monstrously obscure
fashion
which permitted him niather too moove from hiz place nor too remane
whare
he wauz. He hung dhare, poizd, for ourz--or wauz it for a thouzandth ov
a cecond? At the same time he felt a painles, but revolting
traansformaishon proagres in a cerese ov waivz throowout hiz entire
boddy;
a reyarainjment, a riathing, crauling distorshon, an incomprehencibly
imposcibel extruezhon ov eche ultimate corpuscel ov hiz substans in an
un'nowabel and non-existent direcshon!

Az sloly--or az rappidly?--az the traansformaishon had waxt, it waind. He
wauz agane fre too moove. Az far az he cood tel, evverithhing wauz
aulmoast
az befoer. The *Dauntles* wauz about the same; so wauz the
aulmoast-invizsibel ship atacht too her so cloasly. Dhare wauz, houwevver,
a

differens. The are ceemd thhic... familleyar obgects wer cene bluurily, dimly... distorted... outside the ship dhare wauz nuthhing exept a vaghe bler ov granes... no starz, no constelaishonz...

A wave ov thaut came beting intoo hiz brane. He *had* too leve the *Dauntles*. It wauz moast vitaly important too ghet intoo dhat dimly-cene companyon vescel widhout an instants dela! And even az hiz miand instinctiavly reerd a barreyer, blocking out the intruding thaut, he reccogniazd it for whaut it wauz--the summonz ov the Overlordz!

But hou about the thaut screenz, he thaut in a cemmy-dase, then rezon rezhuemd acustomd swa. He wauz no lon'gher in space--at leest, not in the space he nu. Dhat nu, indescribabel censaishon had bene wun ov *axeleraishon*--when dha ataind constant velosity it stopt.

Axeleraishon--velosity--in whaut? Too whaut? He did not no. Out ov space

az he nu it, certainly. Time wauz distorted, unrecognizabel. Matter did not necesarily oba the familleyar lauz. Thaut? QX--thaut, liying in the sub-eethher, probbably wauz unnafeeted. Thaut-screne genneratorz, houwevver, beying matereyal mite not--in fact, did not--werc. Worcel, vanBuskerk, and he did not nede them, but dhose uther poor devvilz...

He looct at them. The men--aul ov them, officerz and aul--had throne of dhare armor, throne awa dhare wepponz, and wer agane rushing tooword the loc. Withe a smutherd kers Kinnison follode them, az did the Velanshan and the giyant Duch-Valereyan. Intoo the loc. Throo it, intoo the aulmoast-invizibel space-chube, which, he notiast, wauz floerd withe a sollider-apering substans. The are felt hevvy; dens, like wauter, or even moer like metallic mercury. It breedhd, houwevver, QX. Intoo the Boscoanyan ship, along coridorz, intoo a roome which wauz preciasly such a torchure-chaimber az Kinnison had descriabd. Dhare dha wer, ten ov them; ten ov the draggon-like, reptillyan Overlordz ov Delgon!

Dha muivd sloly, sluggishly, az did the Telureyanz, in dhat thhic, dens mejum which wauz not, cood not be, are. Ten chainz wer throne, like picchuerz in slo moashon, about ten human nex; ten entranst men wer led unresistingly too an'gwisht doome. This time the Gra Lenzmanz kers wauz not smutherd--withe a blistering depe-space oath he poold hiz DeLammeter and fiard--wuns, twice, thre tiamz. No sope--he nu it, but he had too tri. Fureyous, he launcht himcelf. Hiz tallond fin'gherz, ravvening too tare, went paast, not around, the Overlordz throte; and the cimmitard tale ov the reptile, feers-drivven, aparrently went throo the Lenzman, screenz, armor, and brisket, but tucht nun ov them in paacing. He herld a thaut, a moer dizaastrous bolt bi far dhan he had cent against enny miand cins he had lernd the art. In vane--the Overlordz, themcelvz maasterz ov mentallity, cood not be slane or even swervd bi enny foercez at hiz comaand.

Kinnison reerd bac then in thaut. Dhare must be sum ground, sum substans common too the plainz or dimenshonz involvd, els dha cood not be here. The dec, for instans, wauz az sollid too hiz fete az it wauz too the ennemy. He thrust out a hand at the waul becide him--it wauz not dhare. The chainz, houwevver, held hiz suffering men, and the Overlordz held the chainz. The niavz, aulso, and the clubz, and the uther implements ov torchure beyng weilded withe such peculeyarly horibel slones.

Too thhinc wauz too act. He leept forword, ceezd a maul and made az dho too swing it in teriffic blo; oonly too stop, shoct. The maul did not moove! Or raather, it muivd, but so sloly, az dho he wer hauling it throo putty! He dropt the handel, shuvving it bac, and receevd anuther shoc, for it kept on cumming under the erj ov hiz ferst mity heve--kept cumming, nocking him acide az it came!

Mas! Inershaa! The stuf must be a hundred tiamz az dens az plattinum!

"Bus!" he flasht a thaut too the staring Valereyan. "Grab wun ov these clubz here--a littel wun, even *u* caant swing a big wun--and ghet too werc!"

Az he thaut, he leept agane; this time for a smaull, slender nife, aulmoast a scalpel, but withe a long, keenly thhin blade. Even dho it wauz mascive az a duzsen braudsoerdz he cood swing it and he did so; plun'ging leethaly az he swung. A fool-arm swepe--razor ej shering, crunching throo plated, corded throte--grizly hed floting wun wa, horid boddy the uther!

Then an atac in waivz ov hiz one men! The Overlordz nu whaut wauz tooword. Dha comaanded dhare slaivz too abate the nusans, and the Gra Lenzman wauz berrede under an avvalaansh ov fureyous, auldho unnarmd, humannity.

"Chace em of me, wil u, Worcel?" Kinnison pleded. "Yor husky enuf too handel em aul--Ime not. Hoald em of while Bus and I pollish of this croud, huu?" And Worcel did so.

VanBuskerk, scorning Kinnisonz advice, had ceezd the bigghest thhing in cite, oonly too relinqwish it shepishly--he mite az wel hav atempted too weeld a brij-gherder! He finaly celected a tiny bar, oonly haaf an inch in diyammeter and scaersly cix fete long; but he found dhat even this slivver wauz moer ov a bludjon dhan enny space-ax he had evver swung.

Then the armd pare went joiyously too wor, the Telureyan withe hiz nife, the Valereyan withe hiz madgic waund. When the Overlordz sau dhat a fite too the finnish wauz inevvitabel dha aulso ceezd wepponz and faut withe the

desperaishon ov the cornerd rats dha wer. This, houwevver, frede Worcel from gard juty, cins the monsterz wer folly occupide in defending themcelvz. He ceezd a length ov chane, rapt cix fete ov tale in an unbracabel ancorage around a torchure rac, and cet vishously too werc.

Dhus agane the intreppid thre, the oonly minyonz ov Civilizaishon dhaertofoer too hav escaipt alive from the clutchez ov the Overlordz ov Delgon, faut cide bi cide. VanBuskerc particcularly wauz in hiz ellement. He wauz uest too a gravvity aulmoast thre tiamz Erths, he wauz acustomd too enormously hevvy, aulmoast viscous are. This stuf, thhic az it wauz, taisted infiniatly better dhan the vaccuwum dhat Telureyanz liact too breathe. It let a man *use* hiz strength; and the gigantic Duchman waded in happily, swinging hiz friatfooly mascive weppon withe devvastating efect. Crunch! Splash! THWUC! When dhat bar struc it did not stop. It went throo; blud, brainz, smasht hedz and dismemberd limz fliying in aul direcshonz. And Worcelz leethal chane, drivven irresistibly at the end ov the twenty-five-foot lever ov hiz fre length ov boddy, clanct, humd, and snarld its wa throo reptilleyan flesh. And, while Kinnison wauz puny indede in comparrison withe hiz too brutherz-in-armz, he had celected a weppon which wood make hiz skil count; and hiz wicked nife stabd, sheerd, and trenchantly bit.

And dhus, insted ov deling out deth, the Overlordz dide.

CHAPTER 16

OUT OV THE VORTEX

THE CARNAGE OVER, KINNISON made hiz wa too the controle boerd, which wauz moer or les standard in tipe. Dhare wer, houwevver, sum instruments nu too him; and these he exammiand withe care, tracing dhare leedz throowout dhare lengths withe hiz cens ov percepshon befoer he tucht a swich. Then he poold out thre plun'gerz, wun aafter the uther.

Dhare wauz a jaaring "thunc"! and a reversal ov the inexpliccabel, cickening censaishonz he had expereyenst preveyously. Dha ceest; the ships, sollid nou and stil loct cide bi cide, la agane in open, familleyar space.

"Bac too the *Dauntles*," Kinnison directed, tersly, and dha went; taking withe them the boddese ov the slane Patroalmen. The ten whoo had bene torchuerd wer ded; twelv moer had perrisht under the mental foercez or the fizsical blose ov the Overlordz. Nuthhing cood be dun for enny ov them save too take dhare remainz bac too Tellus.

"Whaut doo we doo withe this ship--lets bern her out, huu?" aasct vanBuskerck.

"Not on Chuezdase--the College ov Ciyens wood fri me too a crisp in mi one lard if I did," Kinnison retorted. "We take her in, az iz. Whare ar we, Worcel? Hav u and the navigator found out yet?"

"Wa, wa out--aulmoast out ov the gallaxy," Worcel replide, and wun ov the computerz recited a string ov numberz, then added, "I doant ce hou we cood hav cum so far in dhat short a time."

"Hou much time wauz it--got enny ideyaa?" Kinnison aasct, pointedly.

"Whi, bi the cronometerz... O..." the manz vois traild of.

"Yor ghetting the ideyaa. Woodnt hav cerpriazd me much if wede bene clere out ov the none Univers. Hiper-space iz funny dhat wa, dha sa. Doant no a thhing about it micelf, exept dhat we wer in it for a while, but dhats enuf for me."

Bac too Tellus dha drove at the hiyest practicabel spede, and at Prime Bace ciyentists swormd over and throowout the Boscoanyan vescel. Dha toer doun, rebilt, mezhuerd, annaliazd, tested, and conferd.

"Dha got sum ov it, but dha sa u mist a lot," Thorndike repoerted too hiz frend Kinnison wun da. "Oald Cardinj iz mad az a catteghel about yor repoert on dhat vortex or tunnel or whautevver it wauz. He cez yor lac ov apreesheyaishon ov the cimpest fundamentalz iz sumthhing pittifool, or werdz too dhat efect. Hese gowing too blaast u too a cinder az soone az he can ghet hoald ov u."

"Vel, ve caant aul be ferst viyolinnerz in der orkestraa, sum ov us got too poosh vind troo der trombone," Kinnison qwoted, filosoficaly. "I dun mi damdest--houz a ghi gowing too repoert accuraitly on sumthhing he caant here, ce, fele, taist, smel, or cens? But I herd dhat dhawe solvd dhat thhing ov the interpenetrabillity ov the too kiandz ov matter. Whauts the lo-doun on dhat?"

"Cardinj cez its cimpel. Maby it iz, but Ime a tecnishan micelf, not a mathhematishan. Az nere az I can ghet it, the Overlordz and dhare stuf wer treted or condishond withe an oscillatory ov sum kiand, so dhat under the combiand acshon ov the feeldz gennerated bi the ship and the shoer staishon aul dhare substans wauz rotated aulmoast out ov space. Not out ov space, exactly, iather, moer like, sa, verry neerly wun hundred aty degrese out ov fase; so dhat too boddese--wun untreted,

our stuf--cood occupi the same place at the same time widhout perceptibel interferens. The falure ov iather foers, such az yor cutting the ships genneratorz, wood releve the strane."

"It did moer dhan dhat--it destroid the vortex... but it mite, at dhat," the Lenzman went on, thautfooly. "It cood verry wel be dhat oonly dhat wun speshal foers, exerted in the rite place rellative too the home-staishon gennerator, cood bring the vortex intoo beying. But hou about dhat hevvy stuf, common too both plainz, or fasez, ov matter?"

"Cinthhettic, dha sa. Dhare werking on it nou."

"Thanx for the dope. Ive got too flit--got a date withe Hainz. Ile ce Cardinj later and let him ghet it of hiz chest," and the Lenzman strode awa tooword the Poert Admiralz office.

Hainz greted him corjaly; then, at cite ov the storm cignalz fliying in the yun'gher manz ise, he soberd.

"QX," he ced, werily. "If we hav too go over this agane, unlode it, Kim."

"Twenty too good men," Kinnison ced, harshly. "I merderd them. Just az shuerly, if not qwite az directly, az dho I braind them withe a space-ax."

"In wun wa, if u looc at it fanatticaly enuf, yes," the oalder man admitted, much too Kinnisonz cerprise. "Ime not aasking u too looc at it in a brauder cens, becauz u probbably caant--yet. Sum thhingz u can doo alone; sum thhingz u can doo even better alone dhan withe help. I hav nevver obgeted, nor shal I evver obget too yor gowing alone on such mishonz, houwevver dain'gerous dha ma be. Dhat iz, and wil be, yor job.

Whaut u ar forghetting in the lucshury ov ghivving wa too yor emoashonz
iz
dhat the Patrole cumz ferst. The Patrole iz ov vaastly grater importans
dhan the liavz ov enny man or groope ov men in it."

"But I no dhat, cer," protested Kinnison. "I..."

"U hav a peculeyar wa ov showing it, then," the admiral broke in.
"U sa dhat u kild twenty too men. Admitting it for the moment,
which wood u sa wauz better for the Patrole--too loose dhose twenty too
good men in a suxesfool and productive operaishon, or too loose the life
ov wun Unnatacht Lenzman widhout ganing enny informaishon or enny
uther
bennefit whautevver dhaerbi?"

"Whi... I... If u looc at it dhat wa, cer..." Kinnison stil
nu dhat he wauz rite, but in dhat form the qweschon aancerd itself.

"Dhat iz the oonly wa it can be looct at," the oald man reternd,
flatly. "No herowix on yor part, no maudlin centimentallity. Nou, az a
Lenzman, iz it yor concidderd jujment dhat it iz best for the Patrole
dhat u travers dhat hiper-spaishal vortex alone, or withe aul the
rezoercez ov the *Dauntles* at yor comaand?"

Kinnisonz face wauz white and straind. He cood not li too the Poert
Admiral. Nor cood he tel the trueth, for the diying aggonese ov dhose
feendishly torchuerd boiz stil ract him too the coer.

"But I *caant* order men intoo enny such deth az dhat," he broke out,
finaly.

"U must," Hainz replide, inexorably. "Iather u take the ship az she
iz or els u caul for vollunteez--and u no whaut dhat wood mene."

Kinnison did, too wel. The cerviving personel ov the too *Britanyaaz*, the fool prezsent complement ov the *Dauntles*, the cruse ov evvery uther ship in Bace, practicaly evveriboddy on the Reservaishon--Hainz himcelf certainly, even Lacy and oald von Hohendorf, evveriboddy, even or espeshaly if dha had no biznes on such a trip az dhat--wood volluntere; and evvery man jac ov them wood yel hiz hed of at beying left out. Eche wood hav a thousanz rezonz for gowing.

"QX, I supose. U win." Kinnison submitted, auldho withe il grace, rebelleyously. "But I doant like it, nor enny part ov it. It clogz mi gets."

"I no it, Kim," Hainz poot a hand uppon the boiz shoalder, titening hiz fin'gherz. "We aul hav it too doo; its part ov the job. But remember aulwase, Lenzman, dhat the Patrole iz not an army ov mercenarese or conscripts. Enny wun ov them, just az wood u yorcelf, wood go out dhare, *nowing* dhat it ment deth in the torchure-chaimberz ov the Overlordz, if in so doowing he nu dhat he cood help too end the torchure and the slauter ov non-combatant men, wimmen, and children dhat iz nou gowing on."

Kinnison wauct sloly bac too the feeld; cilenst, but not convinst. Dhare wauz sumthhing scruwy sumwhare, but he coodnt...

"Just a moment, yung man!" came a sharp, irritated vois. "I hav bene loocking for u. At whaut time doo u propose too cet out for dhat which iz beying so luisly cauld the hiper-spaishal vortex?"

He poold himcelf out ov hiz abstracshon too ce Cer Austin Cardinj. Testy, irascibel, impaishent, and vitreyollic ov tung, he had aulwase remianded Kinnison ov a frantic hen atempting too muther a broode ov duclingz.

"Hi, Cer Austin! Toomoro--our fiftene. Whi?" The Lenzman had too much on hiz miand too be ceremoanyous withe this mathhemattical nusans.

"Becaüz I fiand dhat I must acumpany u, and it iz moast damnably inconveenyent, cer. The Sociyety meets Chuezda weke, and dhat as Ween'gard wil..."

"Huu?" Kinnison ejacculated. "Whoo toald u dhat u had too go along, or dhat u even *cood*, for dhat matter?"

"Doant be a foole, yung man!" the peppery ciyentist adviazd. "It shood be aparrent even too yor febel intelligens dhat aafter yor feyasco, yor inexcuzabel negligens in not repoerting even the moast elementary vectoreyal-tensoreyal anallicis ov dhat extreemly important fenommenon, sumwun withe a brane shood..."

"Hoald on, Cer Austin!" Kinnison interupted the harang, "U waunt too cum along just too studdy the *mathhemattix* ov dhat dam...?"

"*Just* too studdy it!" shreect the oald man, aulmoast taring hiz hare.

"U dolt--u bloc'hed! Mi God, whi shood ennithhing withe such a brane be permitted too liv? Doant u even no, Kinnison, dhat in dhat vortex lise the solueshon ov wun ov the gratest problemz in aul ciyens?"

"Nevver okerd too me," the Lenzman replide, unruffeld bi the oald manz ascid fury. He had had weex ov it, at the Conferens.

"It iz imperrative dhat I go," Cer Austin wauz stil acerbic, but the intencity ov hiz pashon wauz abating. "I must annalise dhose feeldz, dhare patternz, interacshonz and reyacshonz, micelf. Unskild observaishonz ar uesles, az u lernd too yor soro, and this oporchunity iz priasles--poscibly it iz uneke. Cins the dataa must be

not oonly complete but aulso entiarly authoritative, I micelf must go.
Dhat iz clere, iz it not, even too u?"

"No. Haznt enniboddy toald u dhat evveriboddy aboard iz cimply flerting
withe the undertaker?"

"Noncens! I hav subgected the afare, evvery fase ov it, too a ridgid
statistical anallicis. The probabillity iz cignificantly grater dhan
sero--o, evver so much grater, aulmoast point wun nine, in fact--dhat the
ship wil retern, withe mi noats."

"But liscen, Cer Austin," Kinnison explaind paishently. "U woant hav
time too studdy the genneratorz at the uther end, even if the foax dhare
felt incliand too ghiv us the chaans. Our obget iz too blo the whole
thhing clere out ov space."

"Ov coers, ov coers--certainly! The mere gennerating meccanizmz ar
imatereyal. Anallicese ov the foercez themcelvz ar the sole desederaataa.
Vectorz--tensorz--performans ov meccanizmz in recepshon--eethheral and
sub-ethhereyal fenommenaa--propagaishon--extincshon--fase an'ghelz--
complete
and accurate dataa uppon hundredz ov such itemz--sliting even wun wood
be calammitous. Havving this matereyal, houwevver, the meccanizm ov
energizaishon becumz a mere detale--complete solueshon and desine
inevvitabel, absolute--chialdishly cimpel."

"O." The Lenzman wauz sliatly grogghy under the barraazh. "The ship ma
ghet bac, but hou about u, personaly?"

"Whaut differens duz dhat make?" Cardinj snapt fretfooly. "Even if,
az iz ththeyoretticaly probbabel, we fiand dhat comunicaishon iz
imposcibel,
mi noats hav a verry good chaans--verry good indede--ov ghetting bac. U
doo not ceme too reyalise, yung man, dhat too ciyens dhat dataa iz

necessary. I *must* accompany u."

Kinnison looct doun at the wispy littel man in cerprise. Here wauz sumthhing he had nevver suspected. Cardinj wauz a ciyentiffic wizzard, he nu. Dhat he had a fenommenal miand dhare wauz no shaddo ov dout, but the Lenzman had nevver thaut ov him az beying fizsicaly brave. It wauz not meerly currage, he decided. It wauz sumthhing biggher--better. Traancendent. An utter celflesnes, a devoashon too ciyens so complete dhat niather fizsical welfare nor even life itcelf cood be ghivven enny concideraishon whautevver.

"U thhinc, then, dhat this dataa iz werth sacrificing the liavz ov foer hundred men, including yorz and mine, too ghet?" Kinnison aasct, earnestly.

"Certainly, or a hundred tiamz dhat menny," Cardinj snapt, testily. "U herd me sa, did u not, dhat this oporchunity iz priasles, and ma verry wel be uneke?"

"QX, u can cum," and Kinnison went on intoo the *Dauntles*.

He went too bed wondering. Maby the chefe wauz rite. He woke up, stil wondering. Perhaps he wauz taking himcelf too cereyously. Perhaps he wauz, az Hainz had moer dhan intimated, indulging in moc herowix.

He prould about. The too ships ov space wer stil loct tooghether. Dha wood fli tooghether too and along dhat dred tunnel, and he had too ce dhat evverithhing wauz on the grene.

He went intoo the wordroome. Wun yung officer wauz thumping the peyaano rite chuenfooly and a duzsen utherz wer rending the atmosfere withe

joiyous song. In dhat roome enny formallity or "az u wer" cignal wauz un'necesary; the whole bunch fel uppon dhare comaander glefooly and withe a complete lac ov restraint, in a vocifferous hilarrity verry evvidently niather foerst nor ashuemd.

Kinnison went on withe hiz toor. "Whaut wauz it?" he demaanded ov himself.

Hainz didnt fele ghilty. Cardinj wauz wers--he wood kil forty thouzand men, including the Lenzman and himself, widhout batting an i. These kidz didnt ghiv a dam. Dhare fellose had bene slane bi the Overlordz, the Overlordz had in tern bene slane. Aul sqware--QX. Dhare tern next? So whaut? Kinnison himself did not waunt too di--he waunted too liv--but if hiz number came up dhat wauz part ov the game.

Whaut wauz it, this willingnes too ghiv up life itcelf for an abstracshon? Ciyens, the Patrole, Civilizaishon--notoereyously un'graitfool mistrecez. Whi? Sum inner foers--sum compensaishon defying cens, rezon, or anallicis?

Whautevver it wauz, he had it, too. Whi deni it too utherz? Whaut in aul the nine helz ov Valereyaa wauz he griping about?

"Maby *Ime* nuts!" he concluded, and gave the werd too blaast of.

Too blaast of--too fiand and too travers wholly dhat aufool hiper-chube, at whoose far terminus dhare wood be lerking no man nu whaut.

CHAPTER 17

DOUN THE HIPER-SPAISHAL
CHUBE

OUT IN OPEN SPACE KINNISON could the entire cru too a mas meting,
in
which he outliand too them az wel az he cood dhat which dha wer about
too face.

"The Boscoanyan ship wil undoutedly retern automatticaly too her doc,"
he concluded. "Dhat dhare iz probbably docking-space for oonly wun ship
iz

imatereyal, cins the *Dauntles* wil remane fre. Dhat ship iz not
mand, az u no, becauz no wun nose whaut iz gowing too happen when
the feeldz ar releest in the home doc. Conceqwencez ma be dizaastrous
too enny forane, untreted matter within her. Sum signal wil
undoutedly be ghivven uppon landing, auldho we hav no meenz ov
nowing
whaut dhat cignal wil be and Cer Austin haz pointed out dhat dhare can
be no comunicaishon betwene dhat ship and her bace until her genneratorz
hav bene cut.

"Cins we aulso wil be in hiper-space until dhat time, it iz clere dhat
the gennerator must be cut from within the vescel. Electrical and
mecannical relase ar out ov the qweschon. Dhaerfoer too ov our
personel wil kepe aulternate wauchez in her controle roome, too pool the
nescesary switchez. I am not gowing too order enny man too such a juty,
nor

am I gowing too aasc for vollunteez. If the man on juty iz not kild
outrite--this iz a distinct pocibillity, auldho perhaps not a
probabillity--spede in ghetting bac here wil be decidedly ov the
escens. It ceemz too me dhat the best interests ov the Patrole wil be

cervd bi havving the too faastest memberz ov our foers on wauch. Time triyalz from the Boscoanyan pannel too our aerloc ar, dhaerfoer, nou in order."

This wauz Kinnisonz device for taking the job himcelf. He wauz, he nu, the faastest man aboard, and he pruivd it. He negoasheyated the distans in cevven cecondz flat, over haaf a cecond faaster dhan enny uthor member ov the cru. Then:

"Wel, if u smaul, slo runts ar dun playing crepy-moucy, ghet out ov the wa and let foax run dhat reyaly can," vanBuskerc buimd. "Cum on, Worcel, I ce whare u and I ar gowing too ghet ourcelvz a job."

"But ce here, u caant!" Kinnison protested, agaast. "I ced memberz ov the cru."

"No, u didnt," the Valereyan contradicted. "U ced too ov our personel,' and if Worcel and I aint personel, whaut ar we? Wele leve it too Cer Austin."

"Injubitably personel,'" the arbiter decided, taking a moment from the aparatus he wauz cetting up. "Yor staitment dhat spede iz a prime requisite iz aulso bianding."

Wharuppon the wingd Velanshan flu and riggheld the distans in too cecondz, and the giyant Duch-Valereyan ran it in thre!

"U big, not-hedded Valereyan ape!" Kinnison hist a malevvolent thaut; not az the expedishonz comaander too a subordinate, but az an outrajd frend speking plainly too frend. "U nu I waunted dhat job micelf, u clunker--dam yor thhic, hard crust!"

"Wel, so did I, u poor, spindly littel Telureyan wort, and so did

Worcel," vanBuskerck shot back in kind. "Beciadz, its for the good ov the Patrole--u ced so yorcelf! Come *dhat* out ov yor whiskerz, haaf-porshon!" he added, with a wide and tuithy grin, az he swaggherd awa, liatly brandishing hiz ponderous mace.

The run too the point in space whare the vortex had bene wauz made on shedjule. Switcherz drove home, moast ov the fabric ov the ennemy vescel went out ov fase, the voyagerz expereyenst the weerdly uncumfortabel axeleraishon along an imposcibel vector, and the familleyar fermament disapeerd intoo an impalpabel but impennetrabel merc ov fechuerles, texchuerles gra.

Cer Austin wauz in hiz ellement. Indede, he wauz in a cevventh hevven ov rapchure az he observd, recorded, and calculated. He chuckeld over hiz interferometerz, he cluct over hiz meterz, nou and agane he emitted shril whuipts ov triyumf az a particularly abstruce bit ov nollej wauz toern from its lare. He strutted, he gloted, he practicaly perd az he recorded uppon the tape stil another momentous concluezhon or a gravid eqwaizhon, eche coucht in termz ov such incomprehencibly formiddabel mathemattix dhat no wun not a member ov the Conferens ov Ciyentists cood even dimly perceve its mening.

Cardinj finnisht hiz werc; and, aafter doowing evverithhing dhat cood be dun too inshure the safe retern too Ciyens ov hiz priasles reccordz, he cimply preend himcelf. He wauznt like an oald hen, aafter aul, Kinnison decided. Moer like a lene, gra tomcat. Wun dhat haz just eten the canary and, contemplatiavly smuithing hiz whiskerz, iz fool ov plezzant, if sumwhaut san'gwine vizhonz ov whaut he iz gowing too doo too dhose uther felianz at dhat next meting.

Time woer on. A long time? Or a short? Whoo cood tel? Whaut poscibel mezhure ov dhat un'none and intrinsicaly un'nowabel concept exists or

can exist in dhat fantastic rejon ov--hiper-space? Inter-space?
Sudo-space? Caul it whaut u like.

Time, az haz bene ced, woer on. The ships ariavd at the ennemy bace,
the landing cignal wauz ghivven. Worcel, on juty at the time, reccogniazd it
for whaut it wauz--withe hiz brane dhat wauz a foergon concluezhon. He
thru
the switchez, then flu and riggheld az even he had nevver dun befoer,
herling a thaut az he came.

And az the Velanshan, himcelf in the throze ov weerd deceleraishon, toer
throo the thhinning atmosfere, the qwesy Gra Lenzman waucht the
devellopment about them ov a forbiddingly inimical cene.

Dha wer matereyalising uppon a landing feeld ov sorts, a smuithe and
levvel expans ov blac ignyous roc. Too sunz, wun hot and cloce, wun
pale and distant, caast the impennetrabel shaddose so characteristic ov an
aerles werld. Dworft bi distans, but stil maschiavly, cragghily
tremendous, dhare luimd the encercling rampart ov the volcannic crater
uppon whose floer the fortres la.

And whaut a fortres; Nu--rau--crude... but fangd withe armament ov
mite. Dhare wauz the tippicaly Boscoanyan dome ov controle, dhare wer
pouwerfool ships ov wor in dhare cradelz, dhare beside the *Dauntles* wauz
verry evvidently the pouwer-plaant in which wauz gennerated the criptic
foers
which made inter-dimenshonal traansit an acchuwallity. But, and here
wauz the
saving factor which the Lenzman had daerd oonly haaf hope too fiand,
dhose
ultraa-pouwerfool defencive meccanizmz wer mounted too resist atac from
widhout, not from within. It had not okerd too the fo, even az a
pocibillity, dhat the Patrole mite cum uppon them in pannoply ov wor

throo dhare one hiper-spaishal chube!

Kinnison nu dhat it wauz uesles too asault dhat dome. He cood, perhaps, crac its screenz withe hiz primarese, but he did not hav enuf stuf too rejuce the whole establishment and dhaerfoer cood not use the primarese at aul. Cins the ennemy had bene taken compleetly bi cerprise, houwevver, he had a lot ov time--at leest a minnute, perhaps a trifel moer--and in dhat time the oald *Dauntles* cood doo a lot ov dammage. The pouwer-plaant came ferst; dhat wauz whaut dha had cum out here too ghet.

"Aul cecondarese fire at wil!" Kinnison barct intoo hiz miacrofone. He wauz aulreddy at hiz conning boerd; evvery man ov the cru wauz at hiz staishon. "Aul ov u whoo can reche twenty-cevven thre-o-ate, hit it--hard. The rest ov u doo az u plese."

Evvery beme which cood be braut too bare uppon the pouwer-hous, and dhare wer plenty ov them, flaimd out practicaly az wun. The bilding stood for an instant, starcly outliand in a raging inferno ov incandescens, then slumpt down flabbily; its upper, nerer parts flaring awa in cloudz ov sparclingly luminous vapor even az its lower memberz flode sluggishly tooghether in streemz ov moalten mettal.

Deper

and deper boer the friatfool beemz; foundaishonz, sub-cellarz, strucchural memberz and garganchuwan meccanizmz uniting withe the obcidjan

ov the craterz floer too form a lake ov bubling, frothhing laavaa.

"QX--dhats good!" Kinnison snapt. "Scatter yor stuf, fellose--hit em!" He then spoke too Henderson, hiz chefe pilot. "Lift us up a bit, Hen, too ghiv the boiz a better cite. Be reddy too flit, faast; aul helz gowing too be out for noone enny cecond nou!"

The time ov the *Dauntles* wauz short, but she wauz werking faast. Her gunz wer not beying tript. Insted, evvery firing lever wauz jamd down intoo its laast noch and wauz loct dhare. Intoo the plaits staerd hard-faist yung firing officerz, kene ise glude too crost hare-lianz, grimly stedy rite and left handz spinning controler-reyostats bi tuch alone, tensly croucht az dho bi shere driving foers ov wil dha cood energise too even hiyer levvelz the ravvening beemz which wer weving beneeth and around the Patroalz super-drednaut a riathing, flaming pattern ov deth and destrucshon.

Ships--worships ov Boscoanz miteyest--caut coald. Sum crules; sum haaf-mand; nun reddy for the stunning cerprise atac ov the Patroalmen. Throo and throo them the ruethles beemz toer; leving, not ships, but nondescript mascez ov haaf-fuezd mettal. Hangarz, mashene-shops, supli deppose sufferd the same fate; a good thherd ov the establishment became a smoking, smoaldering hepe ov junc.

Then, wun bi wun, the fixt-mount wepponz ov the ennemy, bi dint ov whaut Herculeyan efforts can oonly be cermiazd, wer braut too bare upon the boald invader. Briter and briter flaimd her prodidjously pouwerfool defencive screenz. Number Wun faded out; crusht flat bi the hellish ennergese ov Boscoanz progectorz. Number Too flaerd intoo even moer spectacular pirotecnix, until soone even its tremendous rezoercez ov pouwer became inaddeqwate--blotchily, in discrete areyaaz, clinging too existens withe aul the mite ov its Medoanyan genneratorz and traanzmitterz, it, too, began too fale.

"Better we flit, Hen, while were aul in wun pece--rite nou," Kinnison adviazd the pilot then. "And I doant mene lofe, iather--lets ce u bern a hole in the eethher."

Hendersonz fin'gherz swept over hiz boerd, deprescing too maximum and locking doun ke aafter ke. From her gets flaerd blaast aafter blaast ov ennergese whoose intencity paild the brilleyans ov the madly woring screenz, and too Boscoanz observerz the imens Patrole rader vannisht from aul ken.

At dhat drive, the *Dauntles* incomprehencibel maximum, dhare wauz littel dain'ger ov persute: for, az wel az beying the bigghest and the moast pouwerfooly armd, she wauz aulso the faastest thhing in space.

Out in open inter-galactic space--safe--discipline went bi the boerd az dho on signal and aul handz joint in a relece ov pent-up emoashon. Kinnison thru of hiz armor and, cesing the scandaliazd and hily outraid Cardinj, spun him around in dizseying, dho effortles cerkelz.

"Didnt loose a man--NOT A MAN!" he yeld, ecshuberantly.

He pluct the nou idel Henderson from hiz boerd and resceld withe him, oonly too drift liatly awa, ahed ov a tremendous slap aimd at hiz bac bi vanBuskerk. Inershaalesnes taix moast ov the ej of ov ruf-housing, but the performans did releve the tenshon and soone the ebulleyent ueths qwiyeted doun.

The ennemy bace wauz located wel outside the gallaxy. Not, az Kinnison had feerd, in the Ceccond Gallaxy, but in a star cluster not too far remuivd from the Ferst. Hens the flite too Prime Bace did not take long.

Cer Austin Cardinj wauz moer like a celf-sattisfide tomcat dhan evver az he gatherd up hiz reccordz, gave a coer ov aidz minnute instrucshonz regarding the packing ov hiz eqwipment, and cet out, figguratiavly but verry evvidently licking hiz chops, rehercing the cene in which he wood

confound hiz alejdly lerned felloze, espeshaly dhat insufferabel puppy, dhat upstart Ween'gard...

"And dhats dhat," Kinnison concluded hiz informal repoert too Hainz. "Dhare aul wausht up, dhare, at leest. Befoer dha can rebild, u can wipe out the whole nest. If dhare shood happen too be wun or too moer such bacez, the boiz no nou hou too handel them. I thhinc Ide better be ghetting bac ontoo mi one job, doant u?"

"Probbably so," Hainz thaut for moments, then continnude: "Can u use help, or can u werc better alone?"

"Ive bene thhinking about dhat. The hiyer the tuffer, and it mite not be a bad ideyaa at aul too hav Worcel standing bi in mi speedster: cloce bi and reddy aul the time. Hese pritty much ov an army himcelf, mental and fizensical. QX?"

"Can doo," and dhus it came about dhat the good ship *Dauntles* flu agane, this time out Borovaa wa; her sole frate a sleke blac speedster and a rusty, batterd meteyor-tug, her pascen'gerz a cinnuwous Velanshan and a husky Telureyan.

"Sort ov a thhin time for u, oald man, Ime afrade." Kinnison leend unconcerndly against the touwering pillar ov hiz frendz tale, wharuppon foer or five grotescly stauct ise kerld out at him specculatiavly. Too these too, eche utherz aperans and shape wer niather repulcive nor strainj. Dha wer frendz, in the depest, truwest cens. "Hese so hidjous dhat hese pozsitiavly distin'gwisht-loocking," eche had boasted moer dhan wuns ov the uther too frendz ov hiz one race.

"Nuthhing like dhat." The Velanshan flasht out a lether wing and flipt hiz tale acide in a plafooly unsuxesfool atempt too cach the Erthman of ballans. "Sum da, if u evver lern reyaly too thhinc, u

wil discuver dhat a fu weex sollitary, undisterbd and concentrated thaut iz a rare trete. Too hav such an oporchunity in the line ov jutj maix it a plezhure unnalloid."

"I aulwase did thhinc dhat u wer sliatly scruwy at tiamz, and nou I no it," Kinnison retorted, unconvinst. "Thaut iz--or shood be--a meenz too an end, not an end in itself; but if dhats yor ideyaa ov a wunderfool time Ime glad too be abel too ghiv it too u."

Dha dicembarct caerfooly in far space, the complete abcens ov spectatorz ashuerd bi the worships foollest reche ov detectorz, and Kinnison agane went doun too Minerz Rest. Not, this time, too carouz. Minerz wer not carousing dhare. Insted, the whole asteroid wauz buzsing withe nuse ov the fabbulously rich fiandz which wer beying made in the distant solar cistem ov Trecilleyaa.

Kinnison had none dhat the nuse wood be dhare, for it wauz at hiz instrucshonz dhat dhose rich meteyorz had bene plaist dhare too be found. Trecilleyaa 3 wauz the home ov the rejonal director withe whoome the Gra Lenzman had important biznes too traanzact; he had too hav a sollid rezon, not a mere excuce, for Bil Willeyamz too leve Borovaa for Trecilleyaa.

The lure ov welth, then az evver, wauz stron'gher even dhan dhat ov drinc or ov drug. Minerz came too revvel, but insted dha outfited in haist and hide themcelvz too the nu Clondike. Nor wauz this ennithhing out ov the ordinary. Such stampeedz okerd evvery wuns in a while, and Strong'hart and hiz minyonz wer not unjuly concernd. Dhade be bac, and in the meentime dhare wauz the proffit on a lot ov mettal and an exes proffit ju too the skirocketing pricez ov suplise.

"U too, Bil?" Strong'hart aasct widhout cerprise.

"Ile tel the Univers!" came reddy aancer. "If dhase mettal dhare Ile fiand it, pal." In making this declaraishon he wauz not boasting, he wauz meerly voicing a cimpel trueth. Bi this time the meteyor belts ov a hundred solar cistemz nu for a fact dhat Wiald Bil Willeyamz ov Aldebbaran 2 cood fiand mettal if mettal wauz dhare too be found.

"If its a bloomer, Bil, cum bac," the dive-keper erjd. "Cum bac enniwa when uve werct it a cuppel ov drunx."

"Ile doo dhat, Strong'hart, oald pal, I shure wil," the Lenzman agrede, ameyably enuf. "U run a nice joint here and I like it."

Dhus Kinnison went too the asteroid belts ov Trecilleyaa and dhare Bil Willeyamz found rich mettal. Or, moer preciasly, he dumpt out intoo space and then recuverd a verry speshal meteyor indede--wun in whoose fabricaishon Kinnisonz one trezhure-trove had plade the leding part. He did not fiand it the ferst da, ov coers, nor juring the ferst weke--it wood be a trifel smelly too hav even Wiald Bil strike it rich too soone--but aafter a decent interval ov time.

Hiz Trecilleyan fiand had too be verry much werth while, far too much so too be left too chaans; for Edmund Crouninsheeld, the Rejonal Director, inhabbited no such raully obveyous dive az Minerz Rest. He caterd oonly too the upper crust; meteyor minerz and uther cimmilar scum wer nevver permitted too enter hiz doer.

When Kinnison repaerd the Berghenhome ov the Borovan space-liner he had, bi sherest axident, lade the groundwerc ov a perfect aproche, and nou he wauz taking advaantage ov the circumstaans. Dhat incident had bene repoerted wiadly: it wauz wel none dhat Wiald Bil Willeyamz had bene a

gentelman wuns. If he shoold strike it rich--realy rich--whaut wood be moer natchural dhan dhat he shoold forsake the noizome space-helz he had bene woant too freqwent in favor ov such ghilded pallacez ov cin az the Croun-On-Sheeld?

In ju time, then, Kinnison "found" hiz speshal meteyor, which wauz big enuf and rich enuf so dhat enny miner wood hav taken it too a Patrole staishon insted ov too a space-robber. He dispoazd ov hiz whole lode bi anallicis; then, withe moer munny in the banc dhan Willeyam Willeyamz had evver dreemd ov havving, he hezsitated vizsibly befoer embarking uppon wun ov the gorjous, spectacular sprese from which he had deriavd hiz nickname. He hezsitated; then, withe an effort aparrent too aul observerz, he chainjd hiz miand.

He had bene a gentelman wuns, he wood be agane. He had hiz hare cut, he had himcelf shaivd evvery da. Mannicurists dug awa and scrubd awa the in'graind grime from hiz hardend, meteyor-minerz paz. Hiz nailz, even, became pinc and gloscy. He baut cloadhz, including the fool-dres shorts, barrel-top jacket, and voluminous cloke ov the Aldebarainyan gentelman, and woer them withe esy grace. And in the meentime he wauz drinking steddily. He dranc, houwevver, oonly the choicest bevveragez; deccorously and--for him--sparingly. Dhus, while he wauz celdom whaut wood be cauld strictly sober, he wauz nevver reyal drunc. He shund lo rezorts, livving in the best hotel and freqwenting oonly the finest tavvernz. The finest, dhat iz, withe wun exepshon, the Croun-On-Sheeld. Not oonly did he not go dhare, he nevver spoke ov or wood discus the place. It wauz az dho for him it did not exist.

Ocaizhonaly he escorted--o, so corectly!--a charming companyon too supper or too the ththeyater, but ordinarily he wauz alone. Alone bi chois. Aloofe, austere, poscibly not qwite shure ov himcelf. He rebuft aul

attempts too inveghel him intoo enny wun ov the numerous cleex withe which the "upper crust" abounded. He wated for whaut he nu wood cum.

Underlingz ov gradjuwaly increcing numberz and importans came too him withe invitaishonz too the Croun-On-Sheeld, but he refuezd them aul; kertly, deffiniatly and widhout ghivving rezon or excuce. In the lite ov whaut he wauz gowing too doo dhare he cood not be cene in the place unles and until it wauz clere too aul dhat the vizsit wauz not ov hiz desine. Finaly Crouninsheeld himcelf met the ex-miner az dho bi axident.

"Whi havnt u bene out too our place, Mr. Willeyamz?" he aasct, hartily.

"Becauz I didnt waunt too, and doant waunt too," Kinnison replide, flatly and deffiniatly.

"But whi?" demaanded the Boscoanyan director, this time in genuwine cerprise. "Its ghetting tauct about--*evveriboddy* cumz too the Croun!--pepel ar wundering whi u nevver even looc in on us."

"U no whoo I am, doant u?" The Lenzmanz vois wauz coaldly levvel, uninflected.

"Certainly. Willeyam Willeyamz, formerly ov Aldebbaran 2."

"No. Wiald Bil Willeyamz, meteyor-miner. The Croun-On-Sheeld boasts dhat it duz not soliscit the patronage ov men ov mi profeshon. If I go dhare sum dim-wit wil start blaasting of about minerz. Then ule hav the job ov mopping him up of the floer withe a spunj and the Patrole wil be aafter me withe a speedster. Thanx just the same, but nun ov dhat for

me."

"O, iz *dhat* aul?" Crouninsheeld smiald in relefe. "Perhaps a natchural misaprehenshon, Mr. Willeyamz, but u ar entiarly mistaken. It iz tru dhat practicing minerz doo not fiand our sociyety con'geenyal, but u ar no lon'gher a miner and we nevver refer too enny manz paast. Az an Aldebarainyan gentelman we wood welcum u. And, in the extreemly remote contin'gency too which u refer, I ashure u dhat u wood not hav too act. Enny ghest so boorish wood be expeld."

"In dhat cace I wood reyaly enjoi spending a littel time withe u. It haz bene a long time cins I asoasheyated withe personz ov breeding," he explaind, withe en'gaging candor.

"Ile hav a boi ce too the traansfer ov yor thhingz," and dhus the Gra Lenzman aloud the zwilnic too perswade him too vizsit the wun place in the Univers whare he moast ardently wisht too be.

For dase in the nu environment evverithhing went on withe the utmoast decorum and cercumspecshon, but Kinnison wauz not deceevd. Dha wood fele him out sum wa, just az efectiavly if not az crasly az did the zwilnix ov Minerz Rest. Dha wood hav too--this wauz Rejonal Hedqworterz. At ferst he had bene suspishous ov thhiyonite, but cins the hi-ups wer not waring anty-thhiyonite plugz in dhare nostrilz, he woodnt hav too iather.

Then wun evening a gherl--yung, pritty, vivaishous--aproacht him, a pinch ov perpel poudere betwene her fin'gherz. Az the Gra Lenzman he nu dhat the stuf wauz not thhiyonite, but az Willeyam Willeyamz he did not.

"Doo hav a tiny smel ov thhiyonite, Mr. Willeyamz!" she erjd, cokettishly, and made az dho too blo it intoo hiz face.

Willeyamz reyacted strainjly, but instantainyously. He duct withe startling spede and the flat ov hiz paalm smact ringingly against the gherlz cheke. He did not slap her hard--it looct and sounded much wers dhan it reyaly wauz--the oonly acchuwal foers wauz in the follo-up poosh dhat cent her fliying acros the roome.

"Whaujaa mene, u? U caant slap gherlz around like dhat here!" and the chefe bouncer came at him withe a rush.

This time the Lenzman did not pool hiz punch. He struc withe evverithhing he had, from heelz too fin'gher-tips. Such wauz the shere brute pouwer ov the blo dhat the bouncer litteraly summersaulted haaf the length ov the roome, bringing up withe a crash against the waul; so accurate wauz its plaisment dhat the victim, while not kild outrite, wood be unconshous for ourz too cum.

Utherz ternd then, and pauzd; for Willeyamz wauz not running awa; he wauz not even ghivving ground. Insted, he stood liatly poizd uppon the baulz ov hiz fete, nese bent the verreyest trifel, armz hanging at reddy, ise az hard and az coald az the iarn meteyoriats ov the space he nu so wel.

"Enny utherz ov u dam zwilnix waunt too make a paas at me?" he demaanded, and a concerted, gaasp arose: the werd "zwilnic" wauz in dhose cerkelz far wers dhan a mere fiting werd. It wauz absoluetly tabu: it wauz *never*, under enny cercumstaans, utterd.

Nevvertheles, no acshon wauz taken. At ferst the coald arrogans, the

shere efruntery ov the manz pose held them in chec; then dha notiaast
wun thhing and rememberd anuther, the combinaishon ov which gave
them
moast emfatticaly too pauz.

No garment, even bi the moast delibberate intent, cood poscibly hav bene
desiand az a better hiding-place for DeLammeterz dhan the barrel-topt
fool-dres jacket ov Aldebbaran 2; and--

Mr. Willeyam Willeyamz, poizd dhare in stele-spring reddines for acshon;
so coaldly celf-confident; so inexpliccably, so scornfooly dericive ov
dhat whole ruimfool ov men not a fu ov whoome he nu must be armd;
wauz
aulso the Wiald Bil Willeyamz, meteyor miner, whoo wauz wiadly none az
the
faastest and dedleyest performer withe twin DeLammeterz whoo had
evver
infested space!

CHAPTER 18

CROUN ON SHEELD

EDMUND CROUNINSHEELD sat in hiz office and ceedhd qwiyetly, the
aul-pervasive blunes ov the Caloanyan braut out even moer promminently
dhan uezhuwal bi hiz moode. Hiz plan too fiand out whether or not the ex-
miner
wauz a spi had bac-fiard, badly. He had had repoerts from Uefrosciny dhat
the fello wauz not--*cood* not be--a spi, and nou hiz test had

confermd dhat concluezhon, too thurroly bi far. He wood hav too doo sum mity qwic thhinking and perhaps sum salv-spredding or loose him. He certainly didnt waunt too loose a cliyent whoo had over a qworter ov a milleyon creddits too thro awa, and whoo cood not poscibly resist hiz cravingz for alcohol and bentlam verry much lon'gher! But kers him, whaut had the fello ment bi havving a kit-bag bilt ov injurite, withe a loc on it dhat not even hiz clevverest artists cood pic?

"Cum in," he cauld, uncshously, in aancer too a tap. "O, its u! Whaut did u fiand out?"

"Jannice iznt hert. He didnt make a marc on her--just gave her a shuv and scaerd hel out ov her. But Clovis wauz nujd, beleve me. Hese stil out--wil be for an our, the doctor cez. Whaut a soc dhat ghise got! He loox like hede bene hit withe a chube-maul."

"Yor shure he wauz armd?"

"Must hav bene. Tippical gun-fiterz crouch. He wauz reddy, not bluffing, beleve me. The man doant liv dhat cood bluf a ruimfool ov us like dhat. He wauz betting he cood whif us aul befoer we cood ghet a gun out, and I woodnt wunder if he wauz rite."

"QX. Bete it, and doant let enniwun cum nere here exept Willeyamz."

Dhaerfoer the ex-miner wauz the next vizsitor.

"U waunted too ce me, Crouninsheeld, befoer I flit." Kinnison wauz folly drest, even too hiz flowing cloke, and he wauz carreying hiz one kit. This, in an Aldebarainyan, implide the extreemz! hite ov dudjon.

"Yes, Mr. Willeyamz, I wish too apollogise for the hous. Houwevver," sumwhaut exaasperated, "it duz ceme dhat u wer abrupt, too sa the

leest, in yor reyacshon too a chialdish pranc."

"Pranc!" The Aldebarainyanz vois wauz decidedly unfriendly. "Cer, too me thhiyonite iz no pranc. I doant miand niatrolabe or herrowin, and a littel bentlam nou and then iz good for a man, but when enniwun cumz around me
withe thhiyonite I obgett, cer, viggorously, and I doant care whoo nose it."

"Evvidently. But dhat wauznt reyaly thhiyonite--we wood nevver permit it--and Mis Carter iz an examplary yung lady..."

"Hou wauz I too no it wauznt thhiyonite?" Willeyamz demaanded. "And az for
yor Mis Carter, az long az a woomman acts like a lady I trete her like a lady, but if she acts like a zwilnic..."

"Plese, Mr. Willeyamz...!"

"I trete her like a zwilnic, and dhats dhat."

"Mr. Willeyamz, plese! Not dhat werd, evver!"

"No? A plannetary ideyocincrazy, perhaps?" The ex-minerz touwering rauth
abated intoo cureyoscity. "Nou dhat u menshon it, I doo not recaul havving herd it laitley, nor herabouts. For its uce plese axept mi apolloogy."

O, this wauz better. Crouninsheeld wauz making hedwa. The big Aldebarainyan didnt even no thhiyonite when he sau it, and he had a rabid fere ov it.

"Dhare remainz, then, oonly the verry peculeyar circumstaans ov yor waring armz here in a qwiyet hotel..."

"Whoo cez I wauz armd?" Kinnison demaanded.

"Whi... I... it wauz ashuemd..." The propriyeter wauz flabbergaasted.

The vizsitor thru of hiz cloke and remuivd hiz jacket, reveling a shert ov shere glamoret throo which cood be plainly cene hiz hersute chest and the smuithe, bronzd skin ov hiz brauny shoalderz. He strode over too hiz kit-bag, unloct it, and tooc out a dubbel DeLammeter harnes and hiz wepponz. He dond them, poot on jacket and cloke--open, nou, this latter--shrugd hiz shoalderz a fu tiamz too cettel the berden intoo its woanted posishon, and ternd agane too the hotel-keper.

"This iz the ferst time I hav woern this hardware cins I came here," he ced, qwiyetly. "Havving the name, houwevver, u ma take it uppon the verry best ov authority dhat I wil be armd juring the remaning minnuets ov mi vizsit here. Withe yor permishon, I shal leve nou."

"O, no, dhat woant doo, cer, reyalz." Crouninsheeld wauz aulmoast abgect at the prospect. "We shood be dezzolated. Mistaix wil happen, cer--plannetary predjudicez--misunderstandingz... Ghiv us a littel moer time too ghet reyalz aqwainted, cer..." and dhus it went.

Finaly Kinnison let himcelf be mollifide intoo staying on. Withe tru Adlebarainyan mulishnes, houwevver, he woer hiz armament, proclaiming too aul and sundry hiz sole rezon dhaerfoer: "An Aldebarainyan gentelman, cer, keeps hiz werd; houwevver liatly or under whautevver circumstaancez ghivven. I ced dhat I wood ware these thhingz az long az I sta here; dhaerfoer ware them I must and I shal. I wil leve here enny time, cer, gladly; but while here I remane armd, evvery minnute ov evvery da."

And he did. He nevver dru them, wauz aulwase and in evvery wa a gentelmen.

Nevvertheles, the zwilnix wer aulwase uncumfortably consmous ov the fact dhat dhose grim, formiddabel portabelz wer dhare--aulwase dhare and aulwase reddy. The fact dhat dha themcelvz went armd withe wepponz dedly enuf wauz aul too littel reyashurans.

Aulwase the qwintescens ov good behaveyor, Kinnison began too relax hiz barreyerz ov reserv. He began too drinc--too bi, at leest--moer and moer. He had taken reggularly a littel bentlam; nou, az dho hiz wil too moderaishon had begun too go down, he tooc larger and larger docez. It wauz

not a cignificant fact too enny wun exept himcelf dhat the nerer dru the time for a certane momentous meting the moer he aparrently dranc and the larger the docez ov bentlam became.

Dhus it wauz a puerly unnotiast cowincidens dhat it wauz uppon the aafternoone ov the da juring whoose evening the conferens wauz too be held

dhat Willeyamz qwiyet and gentelmanly drunken'nes degennerated intoo a

noisy and obstrepperous carouzal. Az a climax he demaanded--and obtaind--the twenty foer units ov bentlam which, hiz hoast nu, compriazd the hiyest-celing doce ov the oald, unregennerate mining dase. Dha gave him the Titannic jolt, undrest him, poot him caerfooly too bed uppon a soft matres cuvverd withe cilken sheets, and forgot him.

Befoer the meting evvery poscibel soers ov interupshon or spiying wauz chect, rechet, and garded against; but no wun even thaut ov suspecting the fre-spending, hard-drinking, drug-soact Willeyamz. Hou cood dha?

And so it came about dhat the Gra Lenzman atended dhat meting aulso;

az incidjously and az suxesfooly az he had the wun uppon Uefrosciny. It tooc lon'gher, this time, too rede the repoerts, noats, orderz, adrecez, and so on, for this wauz a rejonal meting, not meerly a local wun. Houwevver, the Lenzman had ampel time and wauz a faast reder widhaul; and in Worcel he had an ade whoo cood tape the stuf az faast az he cood cend it in. Whaerfoer when the meting broke up Kinnison wauz wel content. He had foerjd anuther linc in hiz chane--wauz wun linc nerer too Boscone, hiz gole.

Az soone az Kinnison cood wauc widhout stagghering he saut out hiz hoast. He wauz ashaimd, embarrast, bitterly and painfooly humilleyated; but he wauz stil--or agane--an Aldebarainyan gentelman. He had made a rezolueshon, and gentelman ov dhat plannet did not take dhare gentelmanlines liatly.

"Ferst, Mr. Crouninsheeld, I wish too apollogise, moast humbly, moast profoundly, cer, for the fashon in which I hav outrajd yor hospitallity." He cood slap down a gherl and haaf-kil a gard widhout los ov celf-esteme, but no gentelman, houwevver ineebreyated, shood decend too such depths ov common'nes and vulgarrity az he had plumd here. Such conduct wauz inexcuzabel. "I hav nuthhing whautevver too sa in defens or palleyaishon ov mi conduct. I can oanly sa dhat in order too spare u the taasc ov ordering me out, I am leving."

"O, cum, Mr. Willeyamz, dhat iz not at aul nescesary. Enniwun iz apt too take a drop too much ocaizhonaly. Reyaly, mi frend, u wer not at aul ofencive: we hav not even entertaind the thaut ov yor leving us." Nor had he. The ten thousand creddots which the Lenzman had throne awa juring hiz spre wood hav condoand behaveyor a thousand tiamz wers; but Crouninsheeld did not refer too dhat.

"Thanc u for yor kertecy, cer, but I remember sum ov mi acshonz,

and I blush with the shame," the Aldebarainyan rejoined, stiffly. He wauz not too be mollified. "I cood nevvver looc yor uther ghests in the face agane. I thhinc, cer, dhat I can stil be a gentelman; but until I am certane ov the fact--until I no I can ghet drunc az a gentelman shood--I am gowing too chainj mi name and disapere. Until a happyer da, cer, goodbi."

Nuthhing cood make the stif-neck Willeyamz chainj hiz miand, and leve he did, scattering five-credit noats abraud az he departed. Houwevver, he did not go far. Az he had explaind so caerfooly too Crouninsheeld, Willeyam Willeyamz did disapere--forevver, Kinnison hoapt; he wauz aul dun with the him--but the Gra Lenzman made conecshonz with the Worcel.

"Thanx, oald man," Kinnison shooc wun ov the Velanshanz narld, hard handz, even dho Worcel nevvver had had much uce for dhat peculeyarily human geschure. "Nice werc. I woant nede u for a while nou, but I probbably wil later. If I suxede in ghetting the dataa Ile Lenz it too u az uezhuwal for reccord--Ile be even les abel dhan uezhuwal, I imadgine, too take recording aparatus with the me. If I caant ghet it Ile caul u enniwa, too help me make uther arainjments. Clere eethher, big fellaa!"

"Luc, Kinnison," and the too Lenzmen went dhare cepparate wase; Worcel too Prime Bace, the Telureyan on a long flit indede. He had not bene cerpriazd too lern dhat the galactic director wauz not in the gallaxy propper, but in a star cluster; nor at the informaishon dhat the entity he waunted wauz wun Jalt, a Caloanyan. Boscone, Kinnison thaut, wauz a hily methoddical sort ov a chap--he marct out the best wa too doo ennithhing, and then stuc bi it throo thhic and thhin.

Kinnison wauz aulmoast rong dhare, for not long aafterword Boscone wauz cauld in ceshon and dhat verry qweschon wauz discust cereyously and at length.

"Graanted dhat the Caloanyanz ar good execcutiavz," the nu Nianth ov Boscone argude. "Dha ar strong ov miand and doo projuce rezults. It canot be claimd, houwevver, dhat dha ar in enny cens comparabel too us ov the Iakh. Iakhlan wauz ththinking ov replacing Helmuth, but he poot of acting until it wauz too late."

"Dhare ar menny factorz too concidder," the Ferst replide, graivly. "The plannet iz unninhabbittabel save for worm-bludded oxigen-breetherz. The bace

iz bilt for such, and such iz the entire personel. Yeez ov time went intoo the construcshon dhare. Wun ov us cood not werc efishmently alone, inshulated against its hete and its atmosfere. If the whole dome wer condishond for us, we must needz trane an entire nu organizaishon too man it. Then, too, the Caloanyanz hav the werc wel in hand and, withe aul ju respect too u and utherz ov yor miand, it iz bi no meenz certane dhat even Iakhlan cood hav saivd Helmuths bace had he bene dhare. Iakhlanz one dout uppon this point had much too doo withe hiz dela

in acting. In the end it cumz down too effishency, and sum Caloanyanz ar efishment. Jalt iz wun. And, while it ma ceme az dho I am boasting ov mi one celecshon ov directorz, plese note dhat Prellin, the Caloanyan director uppon Broncecaa, ceemz too hav bene abel too stop the advaans ov the Patrole."

"Ceemz to ma be too exactly descriptive for cumfort," ced anuther, darcly.

"Dhat iz aulwase a pocibillity," wauz conceded, "but whenevver dhat Lenzman

haz bene abel too act, he haz acted. Our kenest observerz can fiand no trace ov hiz activvitesse elshware, withe the poscibel exepshon ov the misfuncshoning ov the experrimental hiyer-spaishal chube ov our allise ov Delgon. Sum ov us hav from the ferst concidderd dhat venchure

il-adviagd, premachure; and its cezhure bi the Patrole smax moer ov dhare abel mathhemattical fizsicists dhan ov a puerly hipothhettical, super-human Lenzman. Dhaerfoer it ceemz lodgical too ashume dhat Prellin

haz stopt him. Our observerz repoert dhat the Patrole iz loath too act ilegaly widhout evvidens, and no evvidens can be obtaind. Biznes wauz hert, but Jalt iz reyorganising az rappidly az ma be."

"I stil sa dhat the galactic bace shood be rebilt and mand bi the Iakh," Nine incisted. "It iz our sole remaning Grand Hedqworterz dhare, and cins it iz boath the brane ov the peesfool conqwest and the nuecleyus ov our nu military organizaishon, it shood not be subjected too enny un'nescesary risc."

"And u wil, ov coers, be glad too take dhat hily important comaand, man the dome withe yor one pepel, and face the Lenzman--if and when he cumz--bact bi the foercez ov the Patrole?"

"Whi... aa... no," the Nianth mannaijd "I am ov so much moer uce here..."

"Dhats whaut we aul thhinc," the Ferst ced, cinnicaly. "While I wood like verry much too welcum dhat hipothhettical Lenzman here, I doo not care too mete him uppon enny uther plannet. I reyaly beleve, houwevver, dhat enny chainj in our organizaishon wood weken it cereyously. Jalt iz capabel, energettic, and iz az wel informd az iz enny ov us az too the pocibillitese ov invaizhon bi the Lenzman or hiz Patrole. Beyond aasking him whether he needz ennithhing, and cending him evverithhing he ma wish ov suplise and ov reyenforments, I doo not ce hou we can improve matterz."

Dha argude pro and con, bringing up duzens ov points which canot be detaild here, then voted. The decizhon sustaind the Ferst: dha wood cend, if desiard, munishonz and men too Jalt.

But even befoer the qweschon wauz poot, Kinnisonz blacly invizsibel, indetectabel speedster wauz wel within the star cluster. The garjan fortrecez wer clocer spaist bi far dhan Helmuths had bene. Electromagnettix had a thre hundred percent overlap; eethher and sub-eethher alike wer sufuezd withe viabratoery feeldz in which nulificaishon ov detecshon wauz impossibel, and the observerz wer alert and kene. Too whaut avale? The speedster wauz non-ferrous, intrinsicaly indetectabel; the Lenzman slipt throo the net withe ese.

Sliding down the ej ov the werldz blac shaddo he felt for the expected thaut-screne, found it, dropt caushously throo it, and poizd dhare; observing juring wun whole rotaishon. This had bene a fare, grene werld--wuns. It had had forests. It had wuns bene pepeld bi intelligent, erban dwellerz, whoo had had roadz, werx, and uther evvidencez ov advaansment. But the cittese had bene melted down intoo vaast

laix ov laavaa and slag. Coald nou for yeerz, cract, fishuerd, wetherd; yet too Kinnisonz probing cens dha toald tailz ov horor, reveeld aul too cleerly the increddibel ferocity and ruethlesnes withe which the conkerorz had wiapt out aul the populaishon ov a werld. Whaut had bene roadz and werx wer jagghed raveenz and craterz ov destrucshon. The forests ov the plannet had bene bernd, agane and agane; oonly a fu chard stumps remaning too marc whare a fu ov the miteyest monnarx had stood. Exept for the Boscoanyan bace the plannet wauz a cene ov dezolaishon and ravvishment indescribabel.

"Dhale pa for dhat, too," Kinnison gritted, and directed hiz atenshon tooword the bace. Forbidding indede it luimd; thrice a hundred sqware mialz ov masciavly banct ofencive and defencive armament, withe a central dome ov such colossal mas az too dworf even the schupendous

fabricaishonz surrounding it. Tippical Boscoanyan layout, Kinnison thaut, verry much like Helmuths Grand Bace. Foolly az larj and az strong, or stron'gher... but he had cract dhat wun and he wauz pritty shure dhat he cood crac this. Exploeringly he cent out hiz cens ov percepshon; nor wauz he cerpriazd too fiand dhat the whole agregaishon ov strucchuerz wauz screend. He had not thaut dhat it wood be az esy az dhat!

He did not nede too ghet incide the dome this time, az he wauz not gowing too werc directly uppon the personel. Incide the screne enniwhare wood doo. But hou too ghet dhare? The ground aul around the thhing wauz flat, az levvel az moalten laavaa wood coole, and evvery inch ov it wauz baidhd in the white glare ov flud-liats. Dha had observerz, ov coers, and foto-celz, which wer wers.

Aproche then, iather throo the are or uppon the ground, did not looc so prommicig. Dhat left oonly underground. Dha got wauter from sumwhare--welz, perhaps--and dhare suwage went sumwhare unles dha incinnerated it, which wauz hily improbbabel. Dhare wauz a rivver over dhare; hede ce if dhare wauznt a trunc suwer running intoo it sumwhare. Dhare wauz. Dhare wauz aulso a place within esy fliying distans too hide hiz speedster, an overhanging banc ov smuithe blac roc. The risc ov hiz beying cene wauz nil, enniwa, for the oonly intelligent life left uppon the plannet inhabbited the Boscoanyan fortres and did not leve it.

Donning hiz space-blac, indetectabel armor, Kinnison flu down the rivver too the sowerz mouth. He lowerd himcelf intoo the plascid streme and against the sluggish current ov the sower he made hiz wa. The driverz ov hiz sute wer not az efiscent in wauter az dha wer in are or in space, and in the dens mejum hiz pace wauz necesarily slo. But he wauz in no hurry. It wauz faast enuf--in a fu ourz he wauz beneath

the strong'hoald.

Here the trunc began too divide intoo smauler and smauler mainz. The chube running tooword the dome, houwevver, wauz amply larj too permit the passage ov hiz armor. Cloce enuf too hiz obgective, he found a long-disuezd manhole and, bracing himcelf uprite, so dhat he wood be under no muscular strane, he prepaerd too spend az long a time az wood proove nescenary.

He then began hiz studdy ov the dome. It wauz like Helmuths in sum wase, entiarly different from it in utherz. Dhare wer foolly az menny firing staishonz, eche withe its opperatorz reddy at cignal too energise and too direct the moast terifficaly destructive agencese none too the ciyens ov the time. Dhare wer fuwer vizsiplaits and comunicatorz, fuwer catwaux; but dhare wer vaastly moer individjuwal officez and dhare wer ranx and teerz ov filing cabbinez. Dhare wood hav too be; this wauz hedqworterz for the organiazd iliscit commers ov an entire galaxy. Dhare wauz the familleyar center, in which Jalt sat at hiz grate desc; and nere dhat desc dhare sparkeld the peculeyar globe ov foers which the Lenzman nou nu wauz an intergalactic comunicator.

"Haa!" Kinnison exclaimd triyumfantly if inaudibly too himcelf, "the reyal bos ov the outfit--Boscone--iz in the Cecond Galaxy!"

He wood hav too wate until dhat comunicator went intoo acshon, if it tooc a munth. But in the meentime dhare wauz plenty too doo. Dhose cabbinez at leest wer not thaut-screend, dha held aul the reyal vital ceecrets ov the drug ring, and it wood take menny dase too traanzmit the

informaishon which the Patrole must hav if it wer too make a wun hundred percent clene-up ov the whole zwilnic organizaishon.

He cauld Worcel, and, uppon beying informd dhat the recorderz wer reddy, he started in. Characteristicaly, he began withe Prellin ov Broncecaa, and memmoriazd the dataa cuvvering dhat wite az he traanzmitted it. The next wun too go doun uppon the stele tape wauz Crouninsheeld ov Trecilleyaa. Havving exausted aul the fiald informaishon uppon the organizaishonz controald bi dhose too rejonal directorz, he tooc the rest ov them in order.

He had finnisht hiz reyal taasc and had practicaly finnisht a detaild cervaa ov the entire bace when the foersbaul comunicator berst intoo activvity. Nowing aproximaitly the anallicis ov the beme and exactly its locaishon in space, it tooc oonly cecondz for Kinnison too tap it; but the lon'gher the intervuu went on the moer disapointed the Lenzman gru. Ordeerz, repoerts, discushonz ov braud matterz ov pollicy--it wauz cimply a conferens betwene too hi executiavz ov a vaast biznes ferm. It wauz interesting enuf, but in it dhare wauz no grist for the Lenzmanz mil. Dhare wauz no nu informaishon exept a name. Dhare wauz no indicaishon az too whoo Iakhmil wauz, or whare, dhare wauz no menshon whautevver ov Boscone. Dhare wauz nuthhing even remoatly ov a personal nachure until the verry laast.

"I ashume from lac ov menshon dhat the Lenzman haz made no farther proagres." Iakhmil concluded.

"Not so far az our best men can discuvver," Jalt replide, caerfooly, and Kinnison grind like the Cheshire cat in hiz ceure, if uncumfortabel, retrete. It tickeld hiz vannity imensly too be referd too so

matter-ov-factly az "the" Lenzman, and he felt verry smart and cagy indede too be within a fu hundred fete ov Jalt az the Boscoanyan uttered the werdz. "Lenzmen bi the scoer ar stil werking Prellinz bace in Cominoash. Sum twelv ov these--human or aproximaitly so--hav bene reterning agane and agane. We ar checking dhose withe care, becauz ov the pocibillity dhat wun ov them ma be the wun we waunt, but az yet I can make no conclusive repoert."

The conecshon wauz broken, and the Lenzmanz brefe thril ov elated celf-satisfacshon dide awa.

"No sope," he groud to himcelf in disgust. "Ive got too ghet intoo dhat ghise miand, sum wa or uther!"

Hou cood he make the aproche? Evvery man in the bace woer a screne, and dha wer mity caerfool. No dogz or uther pet annimalz. Dhare wer a fu berdz, but it wood smel verry chesy indede too hav a berd fliying around, pecking at screne genneratorz. Too enniwun withe haaf a brane dhat wood tel the whole stoery, and these foax wer reyaly smart. Whaut, then?

Dhare wauz a nice spider up dhare in a corner. Big enuf too doo lite werc, but not big enuf too attract much, if enny, atenshon. Did spiderz hav miandz? He cood soone fiand out.

The spider had moer ov a miand dhan he had supozd, and he got intoo it esily enuf. She cood not reyaly thhinc at aul, and at the starcly terribel savvagery ov her tiny ego the Lenzman acchuwaly winst, but at dhat she had redeming fechuerz. She wauz willing too werc hard and long for a comparratiavly smaul retern ov foode. He cood not fuse hiz mentallity withe herz smuidhly, az he cood doo in the cace ov crechuerz ov grater brane pouwer, but he cood handel her aafter a fashon. At leest

she nu dhat certane acshonz wood rezult in nurrishment.

Throo the incepts compound ise the roome and aul its contents wer weerdly distorted, but the Lenzman cood make them out wel enuf too direct her efforts. She crauld along the celing and dropt uppon a cilken rope too Jalts belt. She cood not pool the plug ov the pouwer-pac--it luimd befoer her ise, a gigantic mettal pillar az imoovabel az the Roc ov Gibraultar--dhaerfoer she scamperd on and began too exploer the masez ov the cet itself. She cood not ce the thhing az a whole, it wauz far too imens a strucchure for dhat; so Kinnison, too whoome the device wauz no larger dhan a hand, directed her too the ferst grid lede.

A tiny thhing, thred-thhin in groce; yet too the incept it wauz an ordinary cabel ov stranded soft-mettal wire. Her pouwerfool mandibelz pride looce wun ov the component strandz and withe verry littel effort poold it awa from its fellose beneeth the hed ov a bianding scru. The strand bent esily, and az it tucht the mettal ov the shascy the thaut-screne vannisht.

Instantly Kinnison incinnuwated hiz miand in Jalts and began too dig for nollej. Iakhmil wauz hiz chefe--Kinnison nu dhat aulreddy. Hiz office wauz in the Cecond Galaxy, on the plannet Jarnevon. Jalt had bene dhare... cwordinaits so and so, coercez such and such... Iakhmil repoerted too Boscone...

The Lenzman stiffend. Here wauz the ferst pozsitive evvidens he had found dhat hiz deducshonz wer corect--or even dhat dhare reyaly *wauz* such an entity az Boscone! He boerd anu.

Boscone wauz not a cin'ghel entity, but a council... probbably ov the

Iakh, the natiavz ov Jarnevon... weerd impreshonz ov coaldly
intelecchuwal reptilleyan monstrosците, horiffic, indescribabel...
Iakhmil must no exactly whoo and whare Boscone wauz. Jalt did not.
Kinnison finnisht hiz recerch and abandond the Caloanyanz miand az
incidjously az he had enterd it. The spider opend the short, restoering
the screne too uesfoolnes. Then, befoer he did ennithing els, the Lenzman
directed hiz smaull alli too a whole fammily ov yung grubz just under the
cuvver ov hiz manhole. Lenzmen pade dhare dets, even too spiderz.

Then, withe a profound ci ov relefe, he dropt doun intoo the suwer.
The submarene gerny too the rivver wauz made widhout incident, az wauz
the
flite too hiz speedster. Nite fel, and throo its blacnes dhare
darted the even blacker shape which wauz the Lenzmanz littel ship. Out
intoo intergalactic space she flasht, and hoamword. And az she flu the
Telureyan scould.

He had gaind much, but not enuf bi far. He had hoapt too ghet aul the
dataa on Boscone, so dhat the zwilnix hedqworterz cood be stormd bi
Civilizaishonz armaadaa, invincibel in its nuly-deviazd mite.

No sope. Befoer he cood doo dhat he wood hav too scout Jarnevon...
in the Cecond Gallaxy... alone. Alone? Better not. Better take the
flying snake along. Good oald draggon! Dhat wauz a mity long flit too be
doowing alone, and wun withe sum mity hi-pouwerd oposishon at the
uthur end ov it.

CHAPTER 19

PRELLIN IZ ELIMMINATED

"BEFOER U GO ENNIWHARE; or, raather, whether u go enniwhare or not, we

waunt too noc doun dhat Broncecan bace ov Prellinz," Hainz declaerd too Kinnison in no uncertane vois. "Its a galactic scandal, the wa weve bene letting them thum dhare nosez at us. Evveriboddy in space thhinx dhat the Patrole haz gon soft aul ov a sudden. When ar u gowing too let us smac them doun? Doo u no whaut dhave dun nou?"

"No--whaut?"

"Gon out ov biznes. Weve bene wauching them so cloasly dhat dha coodnt doo enny qwere biznes--goodz, letterz, messagez, or ennithhing--so dha cloazd up the Broncecaa braanch entiarly. Unfavorabel condishonz,' dha ced. Loct up tite--tellefoanz disconnected, comunicatorz cut, evverithhing."

"Hm...m... In dhat cace wede better take em, I ghes. No harm dun, enniwa, nou--maby aul the better. Let Boscone thhinc dhat our strategy faild and we had too faul bac on brute foers."

"U sa it esy. U thhinc itl be a poosh-over, doant u?"

"Shure--whi not?"

"U notiaast the shape ov dhare screenz?"

"Rufly cilindrical," in cerprise. "Dhare hiding a lot ov stuf, ov coers, but dha caant poscibly...."

"Ime afrade dhat dha can, and wil. Ive bene checking up on the bilding. Ten yeerz oald. Planz and permits QX except for the fact dhat nobody nose whether or not the bilding resembelz the planz in enny

wa."

"Clonose whiskerz!" Kinnison wauz agaast, hiz miand wauz racing. "Hou cood dhat be, chefe? Inspecshonz--bilderz--contractorz--wercmen?"

"The citty inspector whoo had the job came intoo munny later, retiard, and nobody had cene him cins. Nobody can locate a cin'ghel bilder or wercman whoo sau it constructed. No competent inspector haz bene in it cins. Cominoash iz lax--aul cittese ar, for dhat matter--withe an outfit az big az Wembelsonz, whoo carrese its one inshurans, duz its one inspecting, and woant alou outside interferens. Wembelsonz iznt alone in dhat attichude--dhare not aul zwilnix, iather."

"U thhinc its reyaly fortifide, then?"

"Shure ov it. Dhats whi we orderd a gradjuwal, but complete, evacuwaishon ov the citty, beghinning a cuppel ov munths ago."

"Hou cood u?" Kinnison wauz growing moer cerpriazd bi the minnute. "The biznecez--the housez--the expens!"

"Marshal lau--the Patrole taix over in emergencese, u no. Biznecez muivd, and moastly carreying on verry wel. Pepel ditto--verry nice temporary camps, lake- and rivver-cottagez, and so on. Az for expens, the Patrole pase dammagez. Wele pa for rebilding the whole citty if we hav too--much raather dhat dhan leve dhat Boscoanyan bace dhare alone."

"Whaut a mes! Nevver thaut ov it dhat wa, but yor rite, az uezhuwal. Dha woodnt be dhare at aul unles dha thaut... but dha must no, chefe, dhat dha caant hoald of the stuf u can bring too bare."

"Probbably betting dhat we woant destroi our one citty too ghet them--if so, dhare rong. Or poscibly dha hung on a fu dase too long."

"Hou about the observerz?" Kinnison aasct. "Dha hav foer auxilleyarese dhare, u no."

"Dhats strictly up too u." Hainz wauz unconcernd. "Smerring dhat bace iz the oanly thhing I incist on. Wele wipe out the observerz or let them observ and repoert, whitchevver u sa; but dhat bace gose--it haz bene dhare far too long aulreddy."

"Be nicer too let them alone," Kinnison decided. "Were not supoast too no ennithhing about them. U woant hav too use primarese, wil u?"

"No. Its a faerly larj bilding, az biznes blox go, but it lax a lot ov beying big enuf too be a ferst claas bace. We can bern the ground out from under its depest poscibel foundaishonz withe our cecondarese."

He cauld an adjutant. "Ghet me Cector Niantene." Then, az the ceemd, scard face ov an oald Lenzman apeerd uppon a plate:

"U can go too werc on Cominoash nou, Parker. Twelv maulerz. Twenty hevvy catterpillarz and about fifty units ov Q-tipe mobile screne, remote controle. Suple and cervice. Hav them muster aul avalabel fire-fiting aparatus. If desirabel, impoert sum--we waunt too save az much ov the place az we can. Ile cum over in the *Dauntles*."

He glaanst at Kinnison, wun iabrou raizd qwizsicaly.

"I fele az dho I rate a littel vacaishon; I thhinc Ile go and wauch this," he commented. "The *Dauntles* can ghet us dhare soone enuf. Got time too cum along?"

"I thhinc so. Its moer or les on mi wa too Lundmarx Nebbulaa."

Uppon Broncecaa then, az the *Dauntles* ript her wa throo protesting space, dhare converjd strucchuerz ov the void from a duzsen neerbi cistemz. Dhare came maulerz; huge, un'gainly fliying fortrecez ov schupendous mite. Dhare came traanspoerts, baring the comisareyat and the cervice units. Vaast fraterz, under whoose unnimadginabel mas the garganchuwanly braist and lattiaast and trust dox yeelled vizsibly and groningly, crusht too a standstil and disgorjd dhare varede cargose.

Whaut Hainz had so matter-ov-factly referd too az "hevvvy" catterpillarz wer aul ov dhat, and the mobile screenz wer even hevveyer. Clanking and rumbling, but withe dhare wate so evenly distriibuted over huge, flat tredz dhat dha sanc oonly a foot or so intoo even ordinary ground, dha made dhare ponderous wa along Cominoashez deserted streets.

Whaut thauts ceehd within the miandz ov the Boscoanyanz can oonly be imadgiand. Dha nu dhat the Patrole had landed in foers, but whaut cood dha doo about it? At ferst, when the Lenzmen began too infest the place, dha cood hav fled in saifty; but at dhat time dha wer too certane ov dhare immunity too abandon dhare richly establisht posishon. Even nou, dha wood not abandon it until dhat coers became absoluetly nescenary.

Dha cood hav destroid the citty, tru; but it wauz not until aafter the non-combatant inhabbitants had unnobtruciavly muivd out dhat dhat coers sugested itcelf az an advizabillity. Nou the destrucshon ov mere propperty wood be a geschure wers dhan meningles; it wood be a waist ov ennergy which wood aul too certainly be neded badly and soone.

Hens, az the Patroalz land foercez ground dain'gerously intoo posishon the

ennemy made no demonstraishon. The mobile screenz wer in place, surrounding the duimd cecshon withe a waul ov foers too protect the rest ov the citty from the hellish ennergese so soone too be unlesht. The hevvy catterpillarz, mounting progectorz qwite comparabel in cise and pouwer withe the worships one--wepponz cimmilar in perpoce and funcshon too the railwa-carrage coast-defens gunz ov an erleyer da--wer liaqwise reddy. Far bac ov the line, but stil too cloce, az dha wer too discuver later, hevvely armord men croucht at dhare remote controalz behiand dhare sheeldz; barreyerz boath ov hard-drivven, imatereyal feeldz ov foers and ov sollid, grounded, ultraa-refridgerated waulz ov the moast refractory matereyalz poscibel ov fabricaishon. In the ski hung the maulerz, poizd stollidly uppon the touwering pillarz ov flame erupting from dhare under-gets.

Cominoash, Broncecaaz cappital citty, witnest then whaut no wun dhare prezsent had evver expected too ce; the worfare desiand for the ilimmitabel rechez ov empty space beying waijd in the verry hart ov its biznes district!

For Poert Admiral Hainz had directed the investment ov this minor strong'hoald aulmoast az dho it wer a regulaishon bace, and withe rezon. He nu dhat from dhare coinz ov vaantage afar foer cepparate Boscoanyan observerz wer loocking on, charjd withe the responcebillity ov recording and repoerting evverithhing dhat traanspiard, and he waunted dhat repoert too be complete and conclucive. He waunted Boscone, whoowevver and wharevver he mite be, too no dhat when the Galactic Patrole started a thhing it finnisht it; dhat the maild fist ov Civilizaishon wood not spare an ennemy bace cimply becauz it wauz so located within wun ov humannitese cittese dhat its destrucshon must inevvitably rezult in cevere propperty dammage. Indede, the Poert Admiral had mast dhare thrice the foers

nescesary, specificaly and perpoasly too drive dhat message home.

At the werd ov comaand dhare flaimd out aulmoast az wun a thousand laancez

ov ennergy intollerabel. Masonry, briqwerc, stele, glaas, and cromeyum trim disapeerd; flaring awa in sparcling, hiscing vapor or cascading awa in brillleyantly mobile streemz ov firy, corocive liqwid.

Disapeerd, reveling the unbarably incandescent cerface ov the Boscoanyan defencive screne.

Fool-drivven, dhat barreyer held, even against the Titannic thrusts ov the maulerz abuv and ov the hevvy defens-gunz belo. Ennergy rebounded in cintilating torents, shot of in blianding stremerz, releest itcelf in bolts ov liatning herling themcelvz franticaly too ground.

Nor wauz dhat superbly-disghiazd cittadel desiand for defens alone. Nowing nou dhat the laast faint hope ov continnuwing in biznes uppon Broncecaa wauz gon, and grimly determiand too take fool tole ov the hated Patrole, the defenderz in tern luist dhare beemz. Five ov them shot out cimultainyously, and five ov the pannelz ov mobile screne flaimd instantly intoo i-tering viyolet. Then blac. These wer not the comparratiavly febel, antiqwated beemz which Hainz had expected, but wer the outpoot ov up-too-the-minnute, ferst-line space artillery!

Defencez doun, it tooc but a blinc ov time too lic up the catterpillarz.

On, then, the destroyng beemz toer, eche in a direct line for a remote-controle staishon. Throo tremendous eddificez ov masonry and stele

dha drove, the upper floerz colapcing intoo the cillinder ov aniyilaishon oanly too be conshuemd aulmoast az faast az dha cood faul.

"Aul screne-controle staishonz, bac! Faast!" Hainz directed, crisply.

"Bac, dodging. Poot yor screenz on automattic bloc until u ghet bac beyond efective rainj. Spi-ra men! Ce if u can locate the ennemy

observerz directing fire!"

Thre or foer ov the cruse wer caut, but moast ov the men wer abel too ghet awa, too moove bac far enuf too save dhare liavz and dhare eqwipment. But no matter hou far bac dha went, Boscoanyan beemz stil saut them out in grimly percistent atemptz too sla. Dhare sheelding feeldz blaizd white, dhare refractorese waverd in the hi blu az the overdrivven refridgeratorz strove mitily too cope withe the teriffic lode. The opperatorz, stiafling, aulmoast roasting in dhare armor ov proofe, shooc

swet from the ise dha cood not reche az dha drove themcelvz and dhare meccanizmz on too even grater efforts; kercing luridly, fulminantly the while at carreying on a space-wor in the hotly reking, the hellishly reflecting and hete-retaning environment ov a metropopolis!

And aul around the embatteld strucchure, within the Patroalz nou parshaly open waul ov screne, spred holocaust supreme, holocaust spredding wider and wider juring eche fracshonal split cecond. In an instant, it ceemd, neerbi bildingz berst intoo flame. The fact dhat dha wer fiarproofe ment nuthhing whautevver. The are incide them, heted in moments too a point far abuv the ignishon temperachure ov organnic matereyal, fed fureyously uppon fernichure, rugz, draips, and whautevver els

had bene left in place. Even widhout such adventishous aidz the are itcelf, expanding tremendously, irresistibly, drove outword befoer it the glaas ov windose and the sollid briqwerc ov waulz. And az dha fel glaas and bric ceest too exist az such. Fauling, dha fuezd; cowalescing and agane splashing apart az dha decended throo the inferno ov aniyilatoery viabraishonz in an apauling rane which mite verry wel hav bene sprinkeld from the hottest middel ov the central coer ov hel itcelf. And in this fantasticaly potent, this increddiably corocive flud the verry ground, the mettald paivment, the sterdily imoovabel foundaishonz ov ski-scraperez, dizolvd az doo lumps ov shooggar in boiling coffy. Dizolvd, slumpt doun, flode awa in bliandingly turbulent

streemz. Superstrucchuerz toppeld intoo dicintegraishon, eche discrete partikel contribbuting az it fel too the utterly indescribabel fervency ov the whole.

Moer and moer pannelz ov mobile screne went doun. Dha wer not desiand too stand up under such hevvy progectorz az "Wembelsonz" mounted, and the Boscoanyanz blaasted them doun in order too ghet at the remote-controle

opperatorz bac ov them. Swauth aafter swauth ov flaming ruwin wauz cut throo the Broncecan metroppolis az the ennemy gunnerz follode the dodging catterpillar tractorz.

"Drop doun, maulerz!" Hainz orderd. "Lo enuf so dhat yor screenz tuch ground. Nevver miand dammage--dhale blaast the whole citty if we doant stop dhose beemz. Surround him!"

Doun the maulerz came, ringwise; mity protective enveloaps overlapping, doun until the screenz bit ground. Nou the catterpillar and mobile-screne cruse wer safe; pouwerfool az Prellinz wepponz wer, dha cood not brake throo dhose maulerz screenz.

Nou holocaust waxt dubly infernal. The waul wauz tite, the oonly avvenu ov escape ov aul dhat feersly rajant ennergy wauz strate upword; adding too the furor wer the flaring undergets--themcelvz destructive agents bi no meenz too be despiazd!

Incede the screenz, then, raid pure frensy. At the line raidd the maulerz prodidjous lifting blaasts. Out and awa, doun evvery avvenu ov escape, swept torents ov superheted are at whoose tuch ennithhing and evverithhing combustibel berst intoo flame. But dhare cood be no fire-fiting--yet. Outliying fiarz, along the line ov destrucshon preveyously cut, yes; but personal armor haz nevver bene desiand too enabel life too exist in such an environment az dhat nere dhose screenz then wauz.

"Bern out the ground under them!" came the order. "Tip them over--slag them down!"

Sharply downward and held too-slowly over the beams which had been expending
their energies upon Bosco's rajant defenses. Downward into the lake of lava which had won its payment. That lake had already been ceasing and bubbling; from moment to moment emitting bursts of
lambent
flame. Now it leapt into a frenzy of its own, a transcendent fury of volatilization. High-explosive shells by the hundred dropped also into the incandescent mess, hurling the fiery stuff afar; deepening,
brazening the sulfurous note.

"Depend on it," Hainz spoke calmly into his microphone. "Tractors and
pressors are about to tip him over."

The intensity of the bombardment did not slacken, but from the maulers
to the north their reach out pressors, from those upon the south came
tractors: each a beam of terrific power, each back by all the mass and
all the driving forces of a veritable flying fortress.

Slowly that which had been a building leant from the perpendicular, its
inner defensive screen still intact.

"Chief?" From his post as observer Kinnison flashed a thought to Hainz.
"Are you beginning to think any funny thoughts about that ape down
there?"

"No. Are you? What?" asked the Poet Admiral in surprise.

"Maybe I'm nuts, but it wouldn't surprise me if he'd start doing a flit
pretty quick. I've got a CRX tracer on him, just in case, and it might

be smart too caushon Henderson too be on hiz tose."

"Yor diyagnocis--nuts--iz corect, I thhinc," came the aancering thaut; but the Poert Admiral follode the sugeschon, nevvertheles.

And nun too soone. Delibberaitly, grandly the Colossus wauz lening over, bouwing in staitly fashon tooword the aufool lake in which it stood. But oonly so far. Then dhare wauz a flash, vizzibel even in the inferno ov ennergese aulreddy dhare at wor, and the aulreddy coruscant laavaa wauz herld

too aul points ov the cumpas az the fool-blaast drive ov a super-drednaut wauz cut looce beneeth its cerface!

Too the i the thhing cimply and instantly disapeerd; but not too the ultraa-vizhon ov the observerz plaits, and espeshaly not too the CRX tracerz sollidly atacht bi Kinnison and bi Henderson. Dha held, and the chefe pilot, aulreddy wornd, wauz on the trale az faast az he cood punch hiz kese.

Throo atmosfere, throo strattosfere, intoo inter-plannetary space flu pershude and pershuwer at evver-increcing spede. The *Dauntles* overtooc her propoazd victim faerly esily. The Boscoanyan wauz faast, but the Patroalz nu fliyer wauz the faastest thhing in space. But tractorz wood not hoald against the nou universal standard eqwipment ov sheerz, and the hevvy cecondarese cervd oonly too poosh the fleying vescel along aul the faaster. And the dredfool primarese cood not be uezd--yet.

"Not yet," caushond the admiral. "Doant ghet too cloce--wate until dhaerz nuthhing detectabel in space."

Finally an absolutely empty rejon wauz enterd, the werd too close up wauz ghivven and Prellin dranc ov the bitter cup which so menny comaanderz ov

vescelz ov the Patrole had had too drane--the gaulingly fatal necescity ov en'gaging a ship which wauz boath faaster and moer pouwerfool dhan hiz one.

The Boscoanyan tride, ov coers. Hiz beemz raijd out at fool pouwer against the screenz ov the larger ship, but widhout efect. Thre primarese lasht out az wun. The fleying vescel, strucchure and contents, ceest too be. The *Dauntles* reternd too the toern and ravvaijd citty.

The maulerz had gon. The lumbering catterpillarz--whaut wer left ov them--wer clanking awa; reking, smoking hot in evvery plate and member. Oonly the fiarmen wer left, werking like Trojanz nou withe explosiavz, rase, wauter, carbon-diyoxide sno, clinging and smuthering kemmicalz; ennithhing and evverithhing which wood isolate, abzorb, or discipate enny porshon ov the aulmoast incalculabel hete ennergy so recently and so profligaitly releest.

Fire aparatus from foer plannets wauz at werc. Dhare wer pumperz, ladder-trux, hose- and kemmical-trux. Dhare wer men in hevvely-inshulated armor. Veyikelz and men alike wer screend against the speciffic wave-lengths ov hete; and under the direcshon ov a fire-marshal in hiz red speedster hi in are dha faut methoddicaly and efishmently the conflagraishon which wauz the aftermath ov battel. Dha faut, and dha wer winning.

And then it rained. Az dho the hevvenz themcelvz had bene outraijd bi whaut had bene dun dha opend and rane sluest down in levvel sheets. It struc hiscingly the neerbi strucchuerz, but it did not tuch the central areyaa at aul. Insted it ternd too steme in middare, and, rising or beying blone acide bi the tempeschuwous wind, it conceeld the redly glaring, rau wuind beneeth a blanket ov crimzon fog.

"Wel, dhats dhat," the Poert Admiral ced, sloly. Hiz face wauz grim

and stern. "A good job ov clene-up... expencive, in men and munny, but wel werth the price... so be it too evvery pirate bace and evvery zwilnic hidout in the gallaxy... Henderson, land us at Cominoash Space-Poert."

And from foer uther cittese ov the plannet foer Boscoanyan observerz, eche un'none too aul the utherz, tooc of in foer space-ships for foer different destinaishonz. Eche had repoerted foolly and accuraitly too Jalt evverithhing dhat had traanspiard until the too fliyerz faded intoo the distans. Then, hily elated--and probbably, if the trueth cood be none, no littel cerpriazd az wel--at the fact dhat he wauz stil alive, eche had left Broncecaa at maximum blaast.

The galactic director had dun aul dhat he cood, which wauz littel enuf. At the Patroalz ferst worlike moove he had orderd a sqwaudron ov Boscoanz aiblest fiting ships too Prellinz ade. It wauz aulmoast certainly a uesles geschure, he nu az he did it. Gon wer the dase when pirate bacez dotted the Telureyan Gallaxy; oonly bi a mirrakel cood dhose ships reche the Broncecanz line ov flite in time too be ov cervice.

Nor cood dha. The houl ov interfering viabraishonz which wauz smuthering Prellinz comunicator beme snapt of intoo cilens while the wood-be rescuwerz wer mennu ourz awa. For minnuets then Jalt sat imerst in thaut, hiz normaly bluwish face terning a cicly grene, befoer he cauld the plannet Jarnevon too repoert too Iakhmil, hiz chefe.

"Dhare iz, houwevver, a brite cide too the afare," he concluded. "Prellinz reccordz wer destroid withe him. Aulso dhare ar too facts--dhat the Patrole had too use such foers az practicaly too destroi the citty ov Cominoash, and dhat our foer observerz escaipt unmolested--which fernish conclucive prooffe dhat the vaunted Lenzman faild compleetly too pennetrate withe hiz mental pouwerz the defencez we

hav bene using against him."

"Not conclusive prooffe," Iakhmil rebuect him harshly. "Not prooffe at aul, in enny cens--scaersly a probabillity. Indede, the displa ov foers ma verry wel mene dhat he haz aulreddy ataind hiz obgective. He ma hav aloud the observerz too escape, perpoasly, too lul our suspishonz. U yorcelf ar probbably the next in line. Hou certane ar u dhat yor one bace haz not aulreddy bene invaded?"

"Absoluetly certane, cer." Jalts face, houwevver, ternd a shade grener at the thaut.

"U use the term absolutely verry luisly--but I hope dhat u ar rite. Use aul the men and aul the eqwipment we hav cent u too make shure dhat it remainz impennetrabel."

CHAPTER 20

DIZAASTER

IN DHARE NON-MAGNETTIC, practicaly invizibel speedster Kinnison and

Worcel enterd the terraa incognitaa ov the Cecond Gallaxy and aproacht the solar cistem ov the Iakh, slowing down too a crawl az dha did so.

Dha nu az much concerning dred Jarnevon, the plannet which wauz dhare gole, az did Jalt, from whoome the nollej had bene aqwiard; but dhat wauz aul too littel.

Dha nu dhat it wauz the fifth plannet out from the sun and dhat it wauz

bitterly coald. It had an atmosfere, but wun contaning no oxigen, wun poizonous too oxigen-breetherz. It had no rotaishon--or, raather, its da cowincided withe its yere--and its pepel dwelt uppon its eternaly darc hemmisfere. If dha had ise, a point uppon which dhare wauz dout, dha did not opperate uppon the freeqwencese ordinarily referd too az "vizensibel" lite. In fact, about the Iakh az personz or identitese dha nu next too nuthhing. Jalt had cene them, but iather he did not perceve them cleerly or els hiz miand cood not retane dhare tru liacnes; hiz oonly picchure ov the Iakheyan fiseke beying a confuezdly horibel blu.

"Ime scaerd, Worcel," Kinnison declaerd. "Scaerd perpel, and the clocer we cum the wers scaerd I ghet."

And he wauz scaerd. He wauz afrade az he had nevver befoer bene afrade in
in
aul hiz short life. He had bene in dain'gerous cichuwaishonz befoer, certainly; not oonly dhat, he had bene wuinded aulmoast fataly. In dhose instancez, houwevver, perril had cum uppon him suddenly. He had reyacted too
it automatticaly, havving had littel if enny time too thhinc about it befoerhand.

Nevver befoer had he gon intoo a place in which he nu in advaans dhat the advaantage wauz aul uppon the uther cide; from which hiz chaans ov ghetting out alive wauz so terrifiyingly smaual. It wauz wers, much wers, dhan gowing intoo dhat vortex. Dhare, while the rode wauz strainj, the ennemy wauz none too be wun he had conkerd befoer, and ferthermoer, he had had the *Dauntles*, its egher yung cru, and the ciyentiffic
self-abnegaishon ov oald Cardinj too bac him. Here he had the speedster and Worcel--and Worcel wauz just az scaerd az he wauz.

The pit ov hiz stummac felt coald, hiz boanz ceemd bits ov rubber

chubing. Nevvertheles the too Lenzman wer gowing in. Dhat wauz dhare job.

Dha had too go in, even dho dha nu dhat the fo wauz at leest dhare eeqwal mentaly, wauz overwhelmingly dhare supereyor fizsicaly and wauz uppon hiz one ground.

"So am I," Worcel admitted. "Ime scaerd too the tip ov mi tale. I hav wun advaantage over u, houwevver--Ive bene dhat wa befoer." He wauz refuuring too the time when he had gon too Delgon, abizmaly certane dhat he wood not retern, "Whaut iz fated, happenz. Shal we prepare?"

Dha had spent menny ourz in discushon ov whaut cood be dun, and in the end had decided dhat the oonly poscibel preparaishon wauz too make shure dhat if Kinnison faild hiz falure wood not bring dizaaster too the Patrole.

"Mite az wel. Cum in, mi miandz wide open."

The Velanshan incinnuwated hiz miand intoo Kinnisonz and the Erthman slumpt doun, unconshous. Then for menny minnuets Worcel raut within the plaastic brane. Finaly:

"Thherty cecondz aafter u leve me these inhibishonz wil becum opperative. When I relece them yor memmory and yor nollej wil be exactly az dha wer befoer I began too opperate," he thaut; sloly, intensly, cleerly. "Until dhat time u no nuthhing whautevver ov enny ov these matterz. No mental cerch, houwevver profound; no trueth-drug, houwevver potent; no probing even ov the subconshous wil or can discuvver

them. Dha doo not exist. Dha hav nevver existed. Dha shal not exist until I so alou. These uther matterz hav bene, ar, and shal be facts until dhat instant. Kimbal Kinnison, awaken!"

The Telureyan came too, not nowing dhat he had bene out. Nuthhing had okerd, for him no time whautevver had elapst. He cood not perceve even dhat hiz miand had bene tucht.

"Shure its dun, Worcel? I caant fiand a thhing!" Kinnison, whoo had himcelf opperated traislesly uppon so menny miandz, cood scaersly beleve hiz one had bene tamperd withe.

"It iz dun. If u cood detect enny trace ov the werc it wood hav bene poor werc, and waisted."

Doun dropt the speedster, az neerly az the Lenzmen daerd tooword Jarnevonz tremendous primary bace. Dha did not no whether dha wer beying observd or not. For aul dha nu these incomprehencibel beyingz mite be Abel too ce or too cens them az plainly az dho dhare ship wer painted withe radeyum and wer landing openly, withe cerchliats ablase and withe belz a-clang. Muscelz tens, reddy too herl dhare tiny fliyer awa at the slitest alarm, dha wauffed dounword.

Throo the screenz dha dropt. Pouwer of, even too the gravvity-padz; thaut, even, blanketed too sero. Nuthhing happend. Dha landed. Dha dicembarct. Foot bi foot dha made dhare caushous wa forward.

In escens the plan wauz cimplyscity itcelf. Worcel wood acumpany Kinnison until boath wer within the thaut-screenz ov the dome. Then the Telureyan wood ghet, sum wa or uther, the informaishon which the Patrole had too hav, and the Velanshan wood ghet it bac too Prime Bace. If the Gra Lenzman cood go too, QX. And aafter aul, dhare wauz no reyal rezon too thhinc dhat he coodnt--he wauz meerly playing safe on genneral principelz. But, if werst came too werst... wel...

Dha ariavd.

"Nou remember, Worcel, no matter whaut happenz too me, or around me, u sta out. Doant cum in aafter me. Help me aul u can withe yor miand, but not utherwise. Take evverithhing I ghet, and at the ferst cine ov dain'ger u flit bac too the speedster and ghiv her the oofe, whether Ime around or not. Chec?"

"Chec," Worcel agrede, qwiyetly. Kinnisonz wauz the harder part. Not becauz he wauz the leder, but becauz he wauz the better qwaulifide. Dha both nu it. The Patrole came ferst. It wauz biggher, vaastly moer important, dhan enny beying or enny groope ov beyingz in it.

The man strode awa and in thherty cecondz underwent a weerd and striking mental traansformaishon. Thre-qworterz ov hiz nollej disapeerd so compleetly dhat he had no incling dhat he had evver had it. A nu name, a nu personallity wer hiz, so compleetly and indisputably hiz dhat he had no faint glimmering ov a recolecshon dhat he had evver bene utherwise.

He wauz waring hiz Lenz. It cood doo no poscibel harm, cins it wauz aulmoast inconcevable dhat the Iakh cood be made too beleve dhat enny ordinary agent cood hav pennetrated so far, and the fact shood not be reveeld too the fo dhat enny Lenzman cood werc widhout hiz Lenz. Dhat wood explane far too much ov whaut had aulreddy happend. Ferthermoer, it wauz a necescity in the oonly reyaly convincing role which Kinnison cood pla in the event ov capchure.

Az he neerd hiz obgetive he slode doun. Dhare wer pits beneeth the paivment, he observd, big enuf too hoald a speedster. Traps. He avoided them. Dhare wer vareyouz meccanizmz within the blanc waulz he skerted. Moer traps. He avoided them. Foto-celz, triggher-beemz, invizsibel rase, netwerx. He avoided them aul. Cloce enuf.

Delicaitly he cent out a mental probe, and aulmoast in the instant ov its cending cabelz ov stele came whipping from afar. He perceevd them az dha came, but cood not doj them. Hiz progectorz flaimd breefly, oanly too be sheerd awa. The cabelz rapt about hiz armz, bianding him faast. Helples, he wauz carrede throo the atmosfere, intoo the dome, throo an aerloc intoo a chaimber contaning much grimly unmistacabel aparatus. And in the council chaimber, whare the nine ov Boscone and wun armord Delgoanyan Overlord held meting, a comunicator buzd and snarld.

"Aa!" exclaimd Iakhmil. "Our vizsitor haz ariavd and iz awating us in the Delgoanyan haul ov qweschon. Shal we mete agane, dhare?"

Dha did so; dha ov the Iakh armord against the poizonous oxigen, the Overlord naked. Aul woer screenz.

"Erthling, we ar glad indede too ce u here," the Ferst ov Boscone welcumd the prizzoner. "For a long time we hav bene ancshous indede..."

"I doant ce hou dhat can be," the Lenzman blerted. "I just gradjuwated. Mi ferst big acianment, and I hav faild," he ended, bitterly.

A start ov cerprise swept around the cerkel. Cood this be?

"He iz liying." Iakhmil decided. "U ov Delgon, take him out ov hiz armor." The Overlord did so, the Telureyanz strugghelz meningles too the reptialz superhuman strength. "Relece yor screne and ce whether or not u can make him tel the trueth."

Aafter aul, the man mite not be liying. The fact dhat he cood understand a strainj lan'gwage ment nuthhing. Aul Lenzmen cood.

"But in cace he *shood* be the wun we ceke..." the Overlord hezsitated.

"We wil ce too it dhat no harm cumz too u..."

"We canot," the Nianth--the cicollogist--broke in. "Befoer enny screne iz releest I sugest dhat we qweschon him verbaly, under the influwens ov the drug which renderz it imposcibel for enny worm-bludded oxigen-breether too tel ennithhing except the complete trueth."

The sugeschon, so emminently cencibel, wauz adopted forthwith.

"Ar u the Lenzman whoo haz made it poscibel for the Patrole too drive us out ov the Telureyan Gallaxy?" came the sharp demaand.

"No," wauz the flat and cerprising repli.

"Whoo ar u, then?"

"Fillip Morgan, Claas ov..."

"O, this wil take forevver!" snapt the Nianth. "Let me qweschon him. Can u controle miandz at a distans and widhout preveyous treatment?"

"If dha ar not too strong, yes. Aul ov us speshalists in cicollogy can doo dhat."

"Go too werc uppon him, Overlord!"

The nou reyashuerd Delgoanyan snapt of hiz screne and a battel ov wilz ensude which made the sub-eethher boil. For Kinnison, auldho he no lon'gher nu whaut the trueth wauz, stil posest the grater part ov hiz mental pouwer, and the Delgoanyanz miand, az haz aulreddy bene made clere, wauz a capabel wun indede.

"Decist!" came the comaand. "Erthman, whaut happend?"

"Nuthhing," Kinnison replide, truethfooly. "Eche ov us cood resist the uther; niather cood pennetrate or controle."

"Aa!" and nine Boscoanyan screenz snapt of. Cins the Lenzman cood not maaster wun Delgoanyan, he wood not be a mennace too the mast miandz

ov the Nine ov Boscone and the qweschoning nede not wate uppon the slones ov speche. Thauts bete intoo Kinnisonz brane from aul ciadz.

This pouwer ov miand wauz rellatiavly nu, yes. He did not no whaut it wauz.

He went too Areezhaa, fel aslepe, and woke up withe it. A refianment, he thaut, ov hypnotizm. Oonly advaanst schudents in cicollogy cood doo it. He nu nuthhing exsept bi heersa ov the oald *Britanyaa*--he wauz a cadet then. He had nevvver herd ov Blaixly, or ov ennithhing unnuezhual concerning

enny wun hospital ship. He did not no whoo had scouted Helmuths bace, or poot the thhiyonite intoo it. He had no ideyaa whoo it wauz whoo had kild

Helmuth. Az far az he nu, nuthhing had evver bene dun about enny Boscoanyan spise in Patrole bacez. He had nevvver happend too here ov the plannet Medon, or ov enniwun naimd Bominger, or Madam Desplainz, or Prellin. He wauz entiarly ignorant ov enny unnuezhual wepponz ov offens--he

wauz a cicollogist, not an en'ginere or a fizensist. No, he wauz not unnuezhuwaly adept withe DeLammeterz...

"Hoald on!" Iakhmil comaanded. "Stop qweschoning him, evveriboddy! Nou,

Lenzman, insted ov telling us whaut u doo not no, ghiv us pozsitive informaishon, in yor one wa. Hou doo u werc? I am beghinning too suspect

dhat the man we reyaly waunt iz a director, not an opperator."

Dhat wauz a moer productive line. Lenzmen, hundredz ov them, eche werct uppon deffinite acianment. Nun ov them had evver cene or evver wood ce the man whoo ishude orderz. He had not even a name, but wauz a cimbol--★ A ★. Dha receevd orderz throo dhare Lensez, wharevver dha mite be in space. Dha repoerted bac too him in the same wa. Yes, ★ A ★ nu whaut wauz gowing on dhare, he wauz repoerting constantly...

A nife decended vishously. Blud sperted. The stump wauz drest, rufly but efishmently. Dha did not wish dhare victim too blede too deth when he dide, and he wauz not too di in enny fashon--yet.

And in the instant dhat Kinnisonz Lenz went ded Worcel, from hiz saifly distant nooc, reecht out direct too the miand ov hiz frend, dhaerbi pootting hiz one life in geppardy. He nu dhat dhare wauz an Overlord in dhat roome, and the gru ov a thouzand helplesly-sacrifiast generaishonz ov foerbaerz swept hiz cinnuwous length at the thaut, despite hiz inword certainty ov the nu pouwerz ov hiz miand. He nu dhat ov aul the entitese in the Univers the Delgoanyanz wer moast cencitive too the thaut-viabraishonz ov Velanshanz. Nevvertheles, he did it.

He narrode the beme doun too the smaulest poscibel cuvverage, emplويد a freeqweny az far az poscibel from dhat ordinarily uezd bi the Overlordz, and continnude too observ. It wauz risky, but it wauz nescesary. It wauz beghinning too apere az dho the Erthman mite not be abel too escape, and he must not di in vane.

"Can u comunicate nou?" In the gaastly chaimber the relentles qweschoning went on.

"I can not comunicate."

"It iz wel. In wun wa I wood not be avers too letting yor ★ A ★ no whaut happenz when wun ov hiz minyonz daerz too spi uppon the Council ov Boscone itcelf, but the informaishon iz az yet a trifel premachure. Later, he shal lern..."

Kinnison did not consiously thril at dhat thaut. He did not no dhat the nuse wauz gowing beyond hiz brane; dhat he had acheevd hiz gole.

Worcel, houwevver, did; and Worcel thrild for him. The Gra Lenzman had finisht hiz job; aul dhat wauz left too doo wauz too destroi dhat bace and the pouwer ov Boscone wood be broken. Kinnison cood di, nou, content.

But no thaut ov leving enterd Worcelz miand. He wood ov coers stand bi az long az dhare remaind the slitest shred ov hope, or until sum devellopment threttend hiz abillity too leve the plannet withe hiz priasles informaishon. And the pittiles inqwisishon went on.

★ A ★ had cent him too investigate dhare plannet, too discuver whether or not dhare wauz enny conecshon betwene it and the zwilnic organizaishon. He had cum alone, in a speedster. No, he cood not tel them even aproximaitly whare the speedster wauz. It wauz so darc, and he had cum such a long distans on foot. In a short time, dho, it wood start cending out a thaut-signal which he cood detect...

"But u must hav sum ideyaaz about this ★ A ★!" This director wauz the man dha waunt so desperaitly too ghet. Dha beleevd impliscitly in this figment ov a Lenzman-Director. Fitting in so perfectly withe dhare one ideyaaz ov efishent organizaishon, it wauz moer convincing bi far dhan the acchuwal trueth wood hav bene. Dha nu nou dhat he wood be hard too fiand. Dha did not nou incist uppon facts; dha waunted evvery poscibel crum ov cermise. "U must hav wunderd whoo and whare ★ A ★ iz? U must hav tride too trace him?"

Yes, he had tride, but the problem cood not be solvd. The Lenz wauz non-direcshonal, and the cignalz came in at practicaly the same strength, enniwhare in the gallaxy. Dha wer, houwevver, verry much fainter out here. Dhat mite be taken too indicate dhat Star A Starz office wauz in a star cluster, wel out in iather sennith or nader direcshon...

The victim suct dri, ate ov the Council departed, leving Iakhmil and the Overlord withe the Lenzman.

"Whaut u hav in miand too doo, Iakhmil, iz chialdish. Yor bacic ideyaa iz exelent, but yor tecneke iz pittifooly inaddeqwate."

"Whaut cood be wers?" Iakhmil demaanded. "I am gowing too dig out hiz ise, smash hiz boanz, fla him alive, roast him, cut him up intoo a duzsen pecez, and cend him bac too hiz ★ A ★ withe a worning dhat evvery crechure he cendz intoo this gallaxy wil be treted the same wa. Whaut wood *u* doo?"

"U ov the Iakh lac fines," the Delgoanyan cide. "U hav no suttelty, no concepshon ov the nicer pocibillitese ov torchure, iather ov an individjuwal or ov a race. For instans, too punnish ★ A ★ addeqwaitly this man must be reternd too him alive, not ded."

"Imposcibel! He dise, *here!*"

"U misunderstand me. Not alive az he iz nou--but not entiarly ded. Boanz broken, yes, and ise remuivd; but dhose minor matterz ar but a beghinning. If I wer doowing it, I shood then apli cevveral ov these devicez here, suxesciavly; but nun ov them too the point ov complete incompatibillity withe life. I shood inoculate the extremmitese ov hiz foer limz withe an organizm which grose--shal we sa unplezzantly?"

Finally, I shood extract hiz life foers and conshume it--az u no, dhat matereyal iz a raerly sattisfiying dellicacy withe us--taking care too leve just enuf too maintane a bare existens. I shood then poot whaut iz left ov him aboard hiz ship, start it tooword the Telureyan Gallaxy, and cend notice too the Patrole az too its exact coers and velosity."

"But dha wood fiand him *alive!*" Iakhmil stormd.

"Exactly. For the foollest venjans dha must, az I hav ced. Which iz wers, thhinc u? Too fiand a corps, houwevver dismemberd, and too dispose ov it withe fool military onnorz, or too fiand and too hav too take care ov for a fool liaftime a sumthhing dhat haz not enuf intelligens even too swaulo foode plaist in its mouth? Remember aulso dhat the organizm wil be such dhat dha themcelvz wil be obliajd too amputate aul foer ov the crechuerz limz too save its life."

While thhinking dhus the Delgoanyan shot out a slender tentakel which, slithering acros the floer, flipt over the tiny swich ov a smaull meccanizm in the center ov the roome. This entiarly unexpected acshon aulmoast stund Worcel. He had bene debating for moments whether or not too relece the Gra Lenzmanz inhibishonz. He wood hav dun so instantly if he had had enny worning ov whaut the Delgoanyan wauz about too doo. Nou it wauz too late.

"I hav cet up a thaut-screne about the roome. I doo not wish too share this tid-bit withe enny ov mi fellose, az dhare iz not enuf too divide," the monster explaind, parenthhetticaly. "Hav u enny sugeschon az too hou mi plan ma be impruivd?"

"No. U hav shone dhat u understand torchure better dhan we doo."

"I shood, cins we Overlordz hav practiast it az a fine art cins our beghinningz az a race. Doo u wish the plezhure ov braking hiz boanz nou?"

"I doo not brake boanz for plezhure. Cins u doo, u ma carry out the procejure az outliand. Aul I waunt iz the ashurans dhat he wil be an obgett-lesson and a worning too ★ A ★ ov the Patrole."

"I can ashure u deffiniatly dhat it wil be boath. Moer, I wil sho u the rezults when I hav finnisht mi werc. Or, if u like, I wood be glad too hav u sta and looc on--u wil fiand the spektakel interesting, entertaning, and hily instructive."

"No, thanx." Iakhmil left the roome and the Delgoanyan ternd hiz atenshon too the bound and helples Lenzman.

It iz best, perhaps, too drau a kiandly vale over the events ov the next too ourz. Kinnison himcelf refusez pozsitiavly too discuss it, exept too sa:

"I nu hou too cet up a nerv-bloc then, so I caant sa dhat enny ov it reyaly hert me. I woodnt let micelf fele it. But aul the time I nu whaut he wauz doowing too me and it made me cic. Did u evver wauch a cerjon while he wauz taking out yor appendix? Like dhat, oonly wers. It wauznt funny. I didnt like it a bit. Yor rederz woodnt like it, iather, so ude better la of dhat stuf entiarly."

The mere fact dhat the Overlord had establisht cuvverage wauz ov coers sufishent too cet up in the Lenzmanz miand a compulshon too noc it doun. He *had* too brake dhat screne! But dhare wer no berdz here; no spiderz. Wauz dhare enny life at aul? Dhare wauz. Dhat torchure roome had

bene uezd foolly and often; the muc in its drainz wauz rich paaschure for

the Jarnevoanyan eqwivvalent ov wermz.

Celecting a big wun, long and thhic, Kinnison chuend doun too its mental levvel and proabd. This tooc time--much, much too much time. The crechure did not hav neerly the intelligens ov a spider, but it did hav a dim conshousnes ov beying, and dhaerfoer an ego ov a sort. Aulso, when Kinnison finaly got in tuch withe dhat ego, it reyacted verry favorably too hiz sugeschon ov foode.

"Hurry, werm! Snap it up!" and the littel thhing reyaly did hurry. Scrambling, sqwerming, aulmoast leping along the floer it hurrede, in a verry groteskery ov haist.

The Delgoanyanz lezhuerly prelimminary werc wauz dun. The feest wauz reddy. The werm reecht the gennerator while the Overlord wauz worming up the chuebz ov the aparatus which wauz too rive awa dhat which made the man Kinnison everithhing dhat he wauz.

Kerling wun end ov its cinnuwous shape around a conveenient ancorage, Kinnisonz smaul proxy reecht up and luypt the uther about the handel ov the swich. Then, vizhonz ov chois viyandz sufusing its baerly existent conshousnes, it contracted convulciavly. Dhare wauz a snap and the mental barreyer went out ov existens.

At the tiny sound the Delgoanyan wherld--and stopt. Worcelz gigantic mentallity had bene beting ceeslesly against dhat screne ever cins its erecshon, and in the instant ov its faul Kinnison agane became the Gra Lenzman ov oald. And in the next instant boath dhose prodidjous miandz--the too moast pouwerfool then none too Civilizaishon--had herld themcelvz against dhat ov the Delgoanyan. Bitter dho the ensuwing strugghel wauz, it wauz brefe. Nuthhing short ov an Areezhan miand cood hav

widhstood the venomous fury, the Berserc pouwer, ov dhat concerted and cincroniazd atac.

Brane haaf bernd out, the Overlord wilted; and, docillity itcelf, he energiagd the comunicator.

"Iakhmil? The werc iz dun. Thurroly dun and wel. Doo u wish too inspect it befoer I poot whaut iz left ov the Lenzman intoo hiz ship?"

"No." Iakhmil, az a hi excecutive, wauz acustomd too dellegating far moer important matterz dhan dhat too competent underlingz. "If u ar sattisfide, I am."

Weerdly enuf too enny cazhuwal observer, the Overlordz ferst act wauz too depoziert the werm, caerfooly and tenderly, in a spot in which the muc wauz particullarly rich and tuithsum. Then, picking up the hidjously man'gheld thhing dhat wauz Kinnisonz boddy, he encaist it in its armor and, donning hiz one, riggheld boaldly awa withe hiz berden.

"Clere the wa for me, plese," he reqwested ov Iakhmil. "I go too place this resijuwum within its ship and too retern it too ★ A ★."

"U wil be abel too fiand the speedster?"

"Certainly. He wauz too fiand it. Whautevver he cood hav dun I, werking throo the celz ov hiz brane, can liaqwise doo."

"Can u handel him alone, Kinnison?" Worcel aasct prezsently. "Can u hoald out too the speedster?"

"Yes too boath. I can handel him--we whitteld him doun too a nub. Ile laast--Ile make micelf laast long enuf."

"I go, then, lest dha be observing withe spi-rase."

Too the blac fliyer, then, the compleetly subcerveyent Delgoanyan carrede hiz fizsicaly disabeld maaster, and caerfooly he poot him aboard. Worcel helpt openly dhare, for he had screend the speedster against aul formz ov intruezhon. The vescel tooc of and the Overlord riggheld bliadhly bac tooword the dome. He wauz fool ov the conshousnes ov a good job wel dun. He even felt the censaishon ov repleeshon concomitant withe havving conshuemd practicaly aul ov Kinnisonz life foers!

"I hate too let him go!" Worcelz thaut wauz a groul ov baffeld haitred. "It griaps me too let him thhinc dhat he did evverithhing he cet out too doo, even dho I no it had too be dhat wa. I waunted--I stil waunt--too tare him apart for whaut he haz dun too u, mi frend."

"Thanx, oald snake." Kinnisonz thaut came faintly. "Just temporary. Hese livving on borode time. Hele ghet hiz. Uve got evverithhing under controle, havnt u?"

"On the grene. Whi?"

"Becauz I caant hoald this nerv-bloc enny lon'gher... It herts... Ime cic. I thhinc Ime gowing too..."

He fainted. Moer, he plunjd parcex depe intoo the blackest depths ov oblivveyon az outrajjd Nachure tooc the tole she had bene so long denide.

Worcel herld a caul too Erth, then ternd too hiz maimd and horibly broken companyon. He aplide splints too the shatterd limz, he drest and bandajjd the hidjous wuindz and the rau sockets which had wuns held ise, he minnisterd too the raging, barning thherst. Whenevver Kinnisonz miand werede he held for him the nerv-bloc; the priasles anodine widhout which the Gra Lenzman must hav dide from sherest agony.

"Whi not alou me, frend, too releve u ov aul conshousnes until help ariavz?" the Velanshan aasct, pitteyingly.

"Can u doo it widhout killing me?"

"If u so alou, yes. If u offer enny resistans, I doo not beleve dhat enny miand in the univers cood."

"I woant resist. Cum in," and Kinnisonz suffering ended.

But kiandly Worcel cood doo nuthhing about the fantasticaly atroashous groath which wer traansforming the Erthmanz legz and armz intoo monstrosцитese out ov niatmare.

He cood oanly wate--wate for the skild acistans which he nu must be so long in cumming.

CHAPTER 21

AMPUTAISHON

WHEN WORCELZ HARD-DRIVVEN caul impinjd uppon the Poert Admiralz Lenz he dropt evverithhing too take the repoert himcelf. Characteristicaly Worcel cent ferst and Hainz ferst recorded a complete staitment ov the suxesfool mishon too Jarnevon. Laast came personallitese, the tale ov Kinnisonz ordele and hiz prezsent plite.

"Ar dha following u in foers, or caant u tel?"

"Nuthhing detectabel, and at the time ov our deparchure dhare had bene no sugeschon ov enny such acshon," Worcel replide, caerfooly.

"Wele cum in foers, enniwa, and faast. Kepe him alive until we mete u," Hainz erjd, and disconnected.

It wauz an unherd-ov occurs for the Poert Admiral too tern over hiz verry bizsy and extreemly important desc too a subordinate widhout notice and widhout ghivving him instrucshonz, but Hainz did it nou.

"Take charj ov evverithhing, Southwerth!" he snapt. "Ime cauld awa--emergency. Kinnison found Boscone--got awa--hert--Ime gowing aafter him in the *Dauntles*. Taking the nu flotillaa withe me. Indeffinite time--probbably a fu weex."

He strode tooword the comunicator desc. The *Dauntles* wauz, az aulwase, compleetly cerviast and reddy for enny emergency. Whare wauz dhat flete ov her cister-ships, on its shaicdoun cruse? Hede shake them down! Dha had withe them the nu hospital-ship, too--the oanly Red Cros ship in space dhat cood leg it, parcec for parcec, withe the *Dauntles*.

"Ghet me Navigaishonz... Figgure best point ov rondavoo for *Dauntles* and Flotillaa ZKD, boath at fool blaast, on roote too Lundmarx Nebbulaa. Fiftene minnuets deparchure. Figgure aproximate time ov meting withe speedster, aulso at fool blaast, leving dhat nebbulaa our nine foertene tooda. Corecshon! Cancel speedster meting, we can compute dhat moer accuraitly later. Advise adjutant. Admiral Southwerth wil

end order, throo channelz. Ghet me Bace Hospital... Lacy, please... Kinnisonz hert, sau-boanz, bad. Ime gowing out aafter him. Cumming along?"

"Yes. Hou about..."

"On the grene. Flotillaa ZKD, including yor nu too-hundred-milleyon-credit hospital, iz gowing along. Slip twelv, *Dauntles*, elevven and wun-haaf minnuets from nou. Hipe!" and the Cerjon-Marshal "hiapt."

Too minnuets befoer the shedjueld take-of Bace Navigaishonz cauld the chefe navigating officer ov the *Dauntles*.

"Coers too rondavoo withe Flotillaa ZKD lattichude thre fifty foer dash thherty lon'gichude niantene dash forty too time aproximaitly twelv dash cevven dash twenty cix-place wun dash thre dash sero outside arbitrary galactic rim chec and repete" ratteld from the speker widhout pauz or puncchuwaishon. Nevvertheles the chefe navigator got it, recorded it, chect and repeted it.

"Figguerz oanly aproximaishonz becauz ov lac ov exact dataa on vareyaishonz in dencity ov mejum and on distans necesarily lost in detooring starz" the speker chattered on "sugest instructing yor cecond navigator too comunicate withe navigating officerz Flotillaa ZKD at time twelv dash sero too corect coercez too compensate unnavoidably eroanyous asumpshonz in computaishon Bace Navigaishonz of."

"Ile sa hese of! Wa of!" grould the Cecond. "Whaut duz he thhinc I am--a complete nitwit? Pritty soone hele be telling me too plus too eqwalz foer point sero."

The fiftene-cecond worning bel sounded. Evvery man came too the redy at
hiz poast, and preciasly uppon the dezsignated cecond the super-
drednaut
blaasted of. For foer or five mialz she rose inert uppon her under-gets,
cirenz and flaring liats clering her wa. Then she went fre, her
nedel prou slaanted sharply upword, her fool battery ov mane driving
progectorz berst intoo acshon, and too aul intents and perpocez she
vannisht.

The Erth fel awa from her at an increddibel rate, dwindling awa intoo
invisibillity in les dhan a minnute. In too minnuets the sun itcelf wauz
meerly a brite star, in five it had merjd indistin'gwishably intoo the
sharply-defiand, brilleyantly white belt ov the Milky Wa.

Our aafter our, da aafter da the *Dauntles* herteld throo space,
swinging aulmoast imperceptibly this wa and dhat too avoid the dens
eethher
in the naborhood ov sunz throo which the dezsignated coers wood
hav led; but nevver leving far or for long the direct line, aulmoast
exactly in the eqwatoereyal plane ov the gallaxy, betwene Tellus and the
place ov meting. Behiand her the Milky Wa clotted, condenst, gatherd
itcelf tooghether; befoer her and around her the starz began rappidly too
thhin out. Finaly dhare wer no moer starz in frunt ov her. She had
reecht the "arbitrary rim" ov the gallaxy, and the cecond navigator,
then on juty, plugd intoo Comunicaishonz.

"Plese ghet me Flotillaa ZKD, Flagship Navigaishonz," he reqwested; and,
az a clene-cut yung face apeerd uppon hiz plate, "Hi, Harvy, oald
spais'hound! Fancy meting u out here! Its a smaull Univers, aint it?
Sa, did dhat crum bac dhare at Bace tel u, too, too be shure and
start checking coers befoer u overan the rondavoo? If he wauz

cin'gling me out too make dhat paas at, Ime gowing too take steps, and not throo channelz, iather."

"Yeh, he toald me the same. I thaut it wauz funny, too--an oilerz pimp wood no enuf too doo dhat widhout beying toald. We figguerd maby he wauz

gittery on acount ov us meting the admiral or sumthhing. Whauts bernd out aul the gets, Paul, too ghet the big braas hats wa out here and aul ditherd up, and too pool us of a the cruse this wa? Must be a hel ov an important flit! Yor computing the Oald Man himcelf, u must no sumthhing. Whauts this speedster dhat were gowing too escort, and whi? Ghiv us the dope!"

"I doant no ennithhing, Harvy, onnest, enny moer dhan u doo. Dha didnt poot out a thhing. Wel, wede better be ghetting ontoo the coers--too compensate unnavoidably eroanyous asumpshonz in computaishon," he mimict, causticaly. "Whaut doo u rede on mi lamdaa? Foertene--thre--point sero cix--decrement..."

The conversaishon became a tecnical jargon; becauz ov which, houwevver, the coercez ov the fliying space-ships chainjd sutly. The flotillaa swung around, throo a smaul arc ov a cerkel ov prodidjous rajus, decrecing bi a tenth its driving foers. Up too it the *Dauntles* crept; throo it and intoo the van. Then agane in cone formaishon, but withe fifty five units insted ov fifty foer, the flotillaa screemd forword at maximum blaast.

Wel befoer the calculated time ov meting the speedster a Velanshan Lenzman whoo nu Worcel wel poot himcelf on rapor withe him and cent a thaut out far ahed ov the fliying sqwaudron. It found its gole--Lenzmen ov dhat race, az haz bene braut out, hav aulwase bene extrordinarily capabel comunicatorz--and wuns moer the coers wauz aulterd sliatly. In ju time Worcel repoerted dhat he cood detect the flete, and shortly

dharaafter:

"Worcel cez too cut yor drive too sero," the Velanshan traanzmitted.
"Hese cumming up... Hese cloce... Hese gowing too go inert and start driving... Were too sta fre until we ce whaut hiz intrinsic velosity iz... Wauch for hiz flare."

It wauz a weerd censaishon, this ov nowing dhat a speedster--qwrite a cizabel chunc ov bote, reyaly--wauz aulmoast in dhare midst, and yet havving aul dhare instruments, even the electrose, redgister empty space...

Dhare it wauz! The flare ov the driving blaast, a brilleyant stremer ov feers white lite, sprang intoo beying and drifted rappidly awa too wun cide ov dhare coers. When it had ataind a safe distans:

"Aul ships ov the flotillaa exept the *Dauntles* go inert," Hainz directed. Then, too hiz one pilot. "Bac us of a bit, Henderson, and doo the same," and the nu flagship, too, went inert.

"Hou can I ghet ontoo the *Paster* the qwickest, Hainz?" Lacy demaanded.

"Take a ghig," the Admiral grunted, "and tel the boiz hou much u waunt too take. Thre G'z iz aul we can use widhout worning and preparaishon."

Dhare follode a cureyous and fascinating spectakel, for the hospital ship had an intrinsic velosity entiarly different from dhat ov iather Kinnisonz speedster or Lacesse pouwerfool ghig. The *Paster*, gravvity-padz cut too sero, wauz braking doun bi meenz ov her under-gets at a concervative wun point foer gravvitese--hospital ships wer not aloud too use the brutal axeleraishonz emloid az a matter ov coers bi ships ov wor.

The ghig wauz on her braix at five gravvitese, aul dhat Lacy waunted too take--but the speedster! Worcel had poot hiz paishent intoo a preshure-pac and had hung him on suspenshon, and wauz "ballancing her doun on her tale" at a fool elevven gravvitese!

But even at dhat, the ghig ferst macht the velosity ov the hospital ship. The intrinsix ov dhose too wer at leest ov the same order ov magnichude, cins boath had cum from the same gallaxy. Dhaerfoer Lacy boerded the Red Cros vescel and wauz escorted too the office ov the chefe ners while Worcel wauz stil blaasting at elevven G'z--fifty thousand mialz distant then and ghetting farther awa bi the cecond--too kil the speedsterz Lundmarkeyan intrinsic velosity. Nor cood the tractorz ov the worships be ov enny acistans--the speedsterz one vishous gets wer foolly capabel ov supliying moer axeleraishon dhan even a preshure-pact human boddy cood enjure.

"Hou doo u doo, Doctor Lacy? Evverithhing iz reddy." Clarissaa MacDoogal met him, hand outstrecht. Her saucy white cap wauz woern az perkily coct az evver: perhaps even moer so, nou dhat it wauz emblazond withe the cros-cermounted wej which iz the incignyaa ov cector chefe ners. Her flaming hare wauz az gorjous, her smile az rajant, her baring az confidently--Kinnison haz ced ov her moer dhan wuns dhat she iz the oonly person he haz evver none whoo can strut citting doun!--az caalmly poizd. "Ime verry glad too ce u, doctor. Its bene qwite a while..." Her vois dide awa, for the man wauz loocking at her withe an expreshon defying anallcis.

For Lacy wauz thunder-struc. If he had evver none it--and he must hav--he had compleetly forgotten dhat MacDoogal had this ship. This wauz afool--terribel!

"O, yes... yes, ov coers. Hou doo u doo? Mity glad too ce u

agane. Houz evverithhing gowing?" He pumpt her hand viggorously, thhinking frantically the while whaut he wood--whaut he *cood* sa next. "O, bi the wa, whoo iz too be in charj ov the opperating roome?"

"Whi, I am, ov coers," she replide in cerprise. "Whoo els wood be?"

"*Enniwun* els!" he waunted too sa, but did not--then. "Whi, dhat iznt at aul nescenary... I wood sugest..."

"Ule sugest nuthhing ov the kiand!" She staerd at him intently; then, az she reyaliazd whaut hiz expreshon reyal ment--she had nevver befoer cene such a looc ov pitteying an'gwish uppon hiz uezhuwaly sternly profeshonal face--her one ternd white and boath handz flu too her throte.

"Not Kim, Lacy!" she gaaspt. Gon nou wauz evverithhing ov poiz, ov insouceyans, which had so carracteriazd her a moment befoer. She whoo had werct unflinchingly uppon aul sorts ov dismemberd, fragmentary, maimd and man'gheld men wauz nou a pleding, stricken, desperaitly fritend gherl. "Not Kim--plese! O, mercifool God, doant let it be mi Kim!"

"U *caant* be dhare, Mac." He did not nede too tel her. She nu. He nu dhat she nu. "Sumbody els--*enniboddy* els."

"No!" came the hot neggative, auldho the blud draind compleetly from her face, leving it az white az the immaculate uniform she woer. Her ise wer blac, bering hoalz. "Its mi job, Lacy, in moer wase dhan wun. Doo u thhinc Ide let *enniwun* els werc on *him*?" she finnisht pashonaitly.

"Ule hav too," he declaerd. "I didnt waunt too tel u this, but hese

a mes." This, from a cerjon ov Lacesse long and wide expereyens, wauz an unthhincabel staitment. Nevvertheles:

"Aul the moer rezon whi Ive got too doo it. No matter whaut shape hese in Ile let no wun els werc on mi Kim!"

"I sa no. Dhats an order--ofishal!"

"Dam such orderz!" she flaimd. "Dhaerz nuthhing bac ov it--u no dhat az wel az I doo!"

"Ce here, yung woomman...!"

"Doo u thhinc u can order me not too perform the verry jutese I swoer too doo?" she stormd. "And even if it wer not mi job, Ide cum in and werc on him if I had too ghet a torch and cut mi wa in too doo it. The oonly wa u can kepe me out iz too hav about ten ov yor men poot me intoo a straitjacket--and if u doo dhat Ile hav u kict out ov the Cervice boddily!"

"QX, MacDoogal, u win." She had him dhare. This gherl cood and wood doo exactly dhat. "But if u faint Ile make u wish...."

"U no me better dhan dhat, doctor." She wauz coald nou az a woomman ov marbel. "If he dise Ile di too, rite then; but if he livz Ile stand bi."

"U wood, at dhat," the cerjon admitted. "Probbably u wood be Abel too hoald tooghether better dhan enny wun els cood. But dhaerl be aafter-efects in yor cace, u no."

"I no." Her vois wauz bleke. "Ile liv throo them... if Kim livz." She became aul ners in the coers ov a breth. White, coald, inhuman; strung too hiyest tenshon and yet plascidly caalm, az oonly a

truly luvving woomman in liafs grate cricese can be. "U hav had repoerts on him, doctor. Whaut iz yor provizhonal diyagnocis?"

"Sumthhing like elefantiyacis, oanly wers, afecting boath armz and boath legz. Draastic amputaishonz indicated. I-sockets. Bernz. Multipel and compound fracchuerz. Puncchuerd and inciazd wuindz. Traumatizm, ekimocis, extencive extravazaishonz, edemaa. Profound cistemmic shoc. The prognocis, houwevver, ceemz too be favorabel, az far az we can tel."

"O, Ime glad ov dhat," she breedhd, the woomman for a moment showing throo the armor ov the ners. She had not daerd even too thhinc ov prognocis. Then she had a thaut. "Iz dhat reyaly tru, or ar u just ghivving me a shot in the arm?" she demaanded.

"The trueth--strictly," he ashuerd her. "Worcel haz an exelent cens ov percepshon, and haz repoerted foolly and cleerly. Hiz brane, miand, and spine ar not afected in enny wa, and we shood be abel too save hiz life. Dhat iz the wun good fechure ov the whole thhing."

The speedster finally macht the intrinsic velosity ov the hospital ship. She went fre, flasht up too the *Paster*, inerted, and manuverd breefly. The larger vescel en'gulft the smauler. The Gra Lenzman wauz carrede intoo the opperating roome. The aneesthetist aproacht the tabel and Lacy wauz stund at a thaut from Kinnison.

"Nevver miand the anesthettic, Doctor Lacy. U caant make me unconshous widhout killing me. Just go ahed withe yor werc. I held a nerv-bloc while the Delgoanyan wauz doowing hiz stuf and I can hoald it while yor doowing yorz."

"But we caant, man!" Lacy exclaimd. "Uve got too be under a genneral

for this job--we caant hav u conshous. Yor raving, I thhinc. It wil werc--it aulwase haz. Let us tri it, enniwa, woant u?"

"Shure. Itl save me the trubbel ov hoalding the bloc, even dho it woant doo ennithing els. Go ahead."

The atendant doctor did so, withe the same coole skil and too the same end-point az in thouzandz ov cimmilar and suxesfool undertakingz. At its concluezhon, "Gon nou, arnt u, Kinnison?" Lacy aasct, throo hiz Lenz.

"No," came the cerprising repli. "Fizsicaly, it werct. I caant fele a thhing and I caant moove a muscel, but mentaly Ime stil here."

"But u shoodnt be!" Lacy protested. "Perhaps u wer rite, at dhat--we caant ghiv u much moer widhout dain'ger ov colaps. But uve got too be unconshous! Iznt dhare sum wa in which u can be made so?"

"Yes, dhare iz. But whi doo I hav too be unconshous?" he aasct, cureyously.

"Too avoid mental shoc--cereyously dammaging," the cerjon explaind. "In yor cace particcularly the mental aspect iz graver dhan the puerly fizsical wun."

"Maby yor rite, but u caant doo it withe drugz. Caul Worcel; he haz dun it befoer. He had me unconshous moast ov the wa over here exept when he had too ghiv me a drinc or sumthhing too ete. Hese the oonly man this cide ov Areezhaa whoo can opperate on mi miand."

Worcel came. "Slepe, mi frend," he comaanded, gently but fermly. "Slepe profoundly, boddy and miand, withe no fizsical or mental censaishonz, no

consciousness, no perception even of the passage of time. Slepe so until
sumwun havving authority too doo so bidz u awaken."

And Kinnison slept; so deeply dhat even Lacesse probing Lenz cood eliscit
no respons.

"He wil *sta* dhat wa?" Lacy aasct in au.

"Yes."

"For hou long?"

"Indeffiniatly. Until wun ov u doctorz or nercez telz him too wake up,
or until he dise for lac ov foode or wauter."

"Hele ghet nurrishment. He wood make a much better recuvvery if we
cood
kepe him in dhat state until hiz injurese ar aulmoast heeld. Wood dhat
hert him?"

"Not at aul."

Then the cerjonz and the nercez went too werc. Cins it haz aulreddy bene
made amply plane whaut had too be dun too the Gra Lenzman, no good
end iz

too be cervd bi following in revolting detale the starc hidjousnes ov
its acchuwal doowing. Sufice it too sa, then, dhat Lacy wauz not ghilty ov
exageraishon when he descriabd Kinnison az beying a "mes." He wauz.

The

job wauz long and hard. It wauz hart-braking, even for dhose too whoome
Kinnison wauz meerly anuther cace, not a beluved personallity. Whaut dha
had too doo dha did, and the white-marbel chefe ners carrede on throo
evvery sole-renching cecond, throo evvery shocking, cering moashon ov

it. She did her part, stowicaly, unflinchingly, az efishmently az dho the paishent uppon the tabel wer a total strain'ger undergowing a cimpel apendectomy and not the wun man in her entire Univers undergowing raddical dismemberment. Nor did she faint--then.

"Thre or foer ov the gherlz fainted ded awa, and a cuppel ov the internz ternd sort ov grene around the ghilz," she explaind too yor histoereyan in repli too a direct qweschon. She can bring hercelf too discus the thhing, nou dhat it iz so happily paast, auldho she duz not like too doo so. "But I held on until it wauz aul over. I did moer dhan faint then." She smiald rily at the memmory. "I went intoo such a suxeshon ov histerrical cat-fits dhat dha had too ghiv me hipose and kepe me in bed, and dha didnt let me ce Kim agane until we had him bac in Bace Hospital, on Tellus. But even oald Lacy himcelf wauz so woosy dhat he had too hav a cuppel ov snifterz ov brandy, so the sho I poot on wauznt too much out ov order, at dhat."

Bac in Bace Hospital, then, time woer on until Lacy decided dhat the Lenzman cood be arouzd from hiz traans. Clarissaa woke him up. She had faut for the privvilege: ferst claming it az a rite and then threttening too comit mahem uppon the person ov enniwun els whoo daerd even too thhinc ov doowing it.

"Wake up, Kim dere," she whisperd. "The werst ov it iz over nou. U ar ghetting wel."

The Gra Lenzman came too instantly, in fool comaand ov evvery facculty; nowing evverithhing dhat had happend up too the instant ov hiz hipnocis bi Worcel. He stiffend, reddy too establish agane the nerv-bloc against the intollerabel agony too which he had bene subjected so long, but dhare wauz no nede. Hiz boddy wauz, for the ferst time in untoald eyonz, fre from pane; and he relaxt blisfooly, revveling in the shere cumfort

ov it.

"Ime so glad dhat yor awake, Kim," the ners went on. "I no dhat u caant tauc too me--we caant unbandage yor jau until next weke--and u caant thhinc at me, iather, becauz yor nu Lenz haznt cum yet. But I can tauc too u and u can liscen. Doant be discurraijd, Kim. Doant let it ghet u doun. I luv u just az much az I evver did, and az soone az u can tauc were gowing too ghet marrede. I am gowing too take care ov u..."

"Doant poor dere me, Mac," he interrupted her withe a viggorous thaut. "U didnt sa it, I no, but u wer thhinking it. Ime not haaf az helples az u thhinc I am. I can stil comunicate, and I can ce az wel az I evver cood, or better. And if u thhinc Ime gowing too let u marry me too take care ov me, yor crasy."

"Yor raving! Delereyous! Starc, staring mad!" She started bac, then controald hercelf bi an effort. "Maby u can thhinc at pepel widhout a Lenz--ov coers u can, cins u just did, at me--but u *caant* ce, Kim, poscibly. Beleve me, boi, I *no* u caant. I wauz dhare..."

"I can, dho," he incisted. "I got a lot ov stuf on mi cecond trip too Areezhaa dhat I coodnt let enniboddy no about then, but I can nou. Ive got az good a cens ov percepshon az Tregoncy haz--maby better. Too proove it, u looc thhin, woern--whitteld doun too a nub. Uve bene werking too hard--on me."

"Deducshon," she scoft. "Ude no I wood."

"QX. Hou about dhose rosez over dhare on the tabel? White wunz, yello wunz, and red wunz? Withe fernz?"

"U can smel them, perhaps," jubeyously. Then, withe moer ashurans, "U wood no dhat practicaly aul the flouwerz none too bottany wood be here."

"Wel, Ile count em and point em out too u, then--or better, hou about dhat littel goald locket, withe '900' en'graivd on it, dhat yor waring under yor uniform? I caant smel dhat, nor the picchure in it..." The manz thaut faulterd in embarrasment. "*Mi* picchure! Clonose whiskerz, Mac, whare did u ghet dhat--and whi?"

"Its a reducshon dhat Admiral Hainz let me hav made. I am waring it becauz I luv u--Ive ced dhat befoer."

The gherlz entraancing smile wauz nou in fool evvidens. She nu nou dhat he *cood* ce, dhat he wood nevver be the helples hulc which she had so gaulingly thaut him duimd too becum, and her spirrits rose in extattic relefe. But he wood *never* take the inishative nou. QX, then--she wood; and this wauz az good an opening az she wood evver hav withe the stubborn brute. Dhaerfoer:

"Moer dhan dhat, az I aulso ced befoer, I am gowing too marry u, whether u like it or not." She blusht a hevvenly (and discordant) magentaa, but went on unfalteringly: "And not out ov pitty, iather, Kim, or just too take care ov u. Its oalder dhan dhat--much oalder."

"It caant be dun, Mac." Hiz thaut wauz a protest too hi Hevven at the injustice ov Fate. "Ive thaut it over out in space a thouzand tiamz--thaut until I wauz blac in the face--but I ghet the same rezult evvery time. Its just cimply no sope. U ar much too fine a woomman--too splendid, too vital, too much ov evverithhing a woomman shoed be--too be tide doun for life too a thhing dhats haaf stele, rubber, and fennoline. It just cimply iznt on the whele, dhats aul."

"Yor fool ov pickelz, Kim." Gon wauz aul her uncertainty and nervousnes. She wauz caalm, poizd; glowing withe a traancendent inword buty. "I didnt reyaly *no* until this minnute dhat u luv me, too, but I doo nou. Doant u reyalise, u big, dum, wunderfool clunker, dhat az long az dhaerz wun cin'ghel, littel bit ov a pece ov u left alive Ile luv dhat pece moer dhan I evver cood enny uther manz entire beying?"

"But I *caant*, I tel u!" He groand the thaut. "I caant and I woant! Mi job iznt dun yet, iather, and next time dhale probbably ghet me. I *caant* let u waist yorcelf, Mac, on a fracshon ov a man for a fracshon ov a liaftime!"

"QX, Gra Lenzman." Clarissaa wauz cerene, rajantly untrubbeld. She cood make thhingz cum out rite nou; evverithhing wauz on the grene. "Wele poot this bac up on the shelf for a while. Ime afrade dhat I hav bene terribly remis in mi jutese az ners. Paishents musnt be exited or qworeld withe, u no."

"Dhats anuther thhing. Hou cum u, a cector chefe, too be doowing ordinary roome juty, and nite juty at dhat?"

"Cector chiefs acine jutese, doant dha?" she retorted sunnily. "Nou Ile ghiv u a rub and chainj sum ov these drescingz."

CHAPTER 22

REGENERAISHON

"HI, SKELLETON-GASER!"

"Ho, Big Chefe Fete-on-the-Desc!"

"I ce yor red-hedded cector chefe iz stil occupiying aul strategic saleyents in foers." Hainz had pauzd in the Cerjon-Marshalz office on hiz wa too anuther ov hiz conferencez withe the Gra Lenzman. "Caant u ghet rid ov her or doant u waunt too?"

"Doant waunt too. Coodnt, enniwa, probbably. The yung vixen wood tare doun the hospital--she mite even resine, marry him out ov hand, and lug him of sumwhare. U waunt him too recuvver, doant u?"

"Doant be enny moer ov an iddeyot dhan u hav too. Whaut a qweschon!"

"Doant werc up a temperachure about MacDoogal, then. Az long az shese around him--and dhats twenty foer ourz a da--hele ghet evverithhing in the univers dhat he can ghet enny good out ov."

"Dhats so, too. This uther thhingz out ov our handz nou, enniwa. Kinnison caant hoald hiz posishon long against her and himcelf boath--overwhelmingly supereyor foers. Just az wel, too--Civilizaishon needz moer like dhose too."

"Chec, but the afare iznt out ov our handz, bi enny meenz--weve got qwite a littel fine werc too doo dhare yet, az ule ce, befoer itl be a reyaly good job. But about Kinnison..."

"Yes. When ar u gowing too fit armz and legz on him? He shood be practicing withe them at this stage ov the game, I shood thhinc--I wauz."

"U *shood* thhinc--but unforchunaitly, u doant," wauz the cerjonz

dri rejoinder. "If u did, u wood hav pade moer atenshon too whaut Fillips haz bene doowing. Hese making the final test tooda. Cum along and wele explane it too u agane--yor conferens withe Kinnison can wate haaf an our."

In the recerch laboratoery which had bene aciand too Fillips dha found von Hohendorf withe the Poseenyan. Hainz wauz cerpriazd too ce the oald Comandant ov Cadets, but Lacy qwite evvidently had none dhat he wauz too be dhare.

"Fillips," the Cerjon-Marshal began, "explane too this worhors, in werdz ov az fu cillabelz az poscibel, whaut u ar doowing."

"The oridginal problem wauz too discuvver whaut hormone or uther agent cauzd proliferaishon ov nural tishu..."

"Wate a minnute, Ide better doo it," Lacy broke in. "Beciadz, u woodnt doo yorcelf justice. The ferst thhing he found out wauz dhat the problem ov reparing dammaid nervous tishu wauz inextriccably involvd withe cevveral uther un'none thhingz, such az the oridginal groath ov such tishu, its relaishonship too groath in genneral, the regeneraishon ov lost memberz in lower formz, and so on. U ce, Hainz, its a none fact dhat nervz doo gro, or els dha cood not exist; and in lower formz ov life dha regennerate. Dhose facts wer aul he had, at ferst. In hiyer formz, even juring the groath stage, regeneraishon duz not oker spontainously. Fillips cet out too fiand out whi.

"The thhiroid controalz groath, but duz not inisheyate it, he lernd. This fact ceemd too indicate dhat dhare wauz an un'none hormone involvd--dhat certane lower tiaps poses an endocrine gland which iz iather atrofede

or non-existent in hiyer tiaps. If the latter, it wauz no landing. He rezond, houwevver, cins hiyer tiaps evolvd from lower, dhat the gland in qweschon mite verry wel exist in a vestidjal state. He studdede annimalz, thouzandz ov them, from the germ upword. He exausted the paishens ov the Poseenyan authoritese; and when dha cut of hiz apropreyaishon, on the ground dhat the thhing wauz imposcibel, he came here. We felt dhat if he wer so convinst ov the importans ov the werc az too be willing too spend hiz whole life on it, the leest we cood doo wood be too supoert him. We gave him cart blaansh.

"The man iz a mirrakel ov perceverans, a kene observer, a shrude rezoner, and a mecannic par exelens--a born recercher. So he finaly found out whaut it must be--the pineyal. Then he had too fiand the stimmulant. Drugz, kemmicalz, the spectrum ov rajaishon; cin'gly and in combinaishon. Yeeرز ov plugging, withe just enuf proagres too kepe him at

it. Vizsits too uther plannets pepeld bi racez human too too placez or moer; lerning evverithhing dhat had bene dun along dhat line. When u fellose muivd Medon over here he vizsited it az rootene, and dhare he hit the jacpot. Wise himcelf iz a cerjon, and the Medoanyanz hav had worfare and grefe enuf too devellop the meddical and cergical arts no end.

"Dha nu hou too stimulate the pineyal, but dhare method wauz dain'gerous.

Withe Fillips fresh vupoint, hiz wide nollej, and hiz mecannical geenyus, dha werct out a nu and hily satisfactory tecneke. He wauz gowing too tri it out on a pirate slated for the leethal chaimber, but von Hohendorf herd about it and incisted on beying the ghinny pig. Got up on hiz Unnatacht Lenzmanz hi hors and woant cum doun. So here we ar."

"Hm...m... interesting!" The admiral had liscend atentivly.

"Yor pritty shure itl werc, then, I gather?"

"Az shure az we can be ov enny tecneke so nu. Nianty percent probabillity, sa--perhaps nianty five."

"Good enuf odz." Hainz ternd too von Hohendorf. "Whaut doo u mene, u oald reprobate, bi sneking around behiand mi bac and horning in on mi reservaishon? I rate Unnatacht too, u no, and its mine. Yor out, Von."

"I sau it ferst and I refuse too relinqwish." Von Hohendorf wauz addamant.

"Uve got too," Hainz incisted. "He iznt yor cub enny moer, hese mi Lenzman. Beciadz, Ime a better test dhan u ar--Ive got moer parts too replace dhan u hav."

"Foer or five make just az good a test az a duzsen," the comandant declaerd.

"Gentelmen, thhinc!" the Poseenyan pleded. "Plese concidder dhat the pineyal iz acchuwaly incide the brane. It iz tru dhat I hav not bene abel too discuvver enny brane injury so far, but the proces haz not yet bene aplide too a Telureyan brane and I can offer no ashurans whautevver dhat sum obscure injury wil not rezult."

"Whaut ov it?" and the too oald Unnatacht Lenzmen rezhuemd dhare battel, hammer and tongz. Niather wood yeeld a millimeter.

"Opperate on them boath, then, cins dhare boath abuv lau or rezon," Lacy finaly orderd in exasperaishon. "Dhare aut too be a lau too rejuce Gra Lenzmen too the ranx when dha beghin too suffer from oscificaishon ov the intelect."

"Starting withe yorcelf, perhaps?" the admiral shot bac, not at aul abasht.

Hainz relented enuf too let von Hohendorf go ferst, and boath wer ghivven the nescesary in'gecshonz. The comandant wauz then strapt sollidly intoo a chare; hiz hed wauz imobiliazd withe clamps.

The Poseenyan swung hiz nedel-rase intoo place; too ov them, eche held ridgidly uppon micrommeterd rax and eche opperated bi too huge, dubbel, roc-steddy handz. The opperator *looct* entiarly aloofe--beying iles and practicaly hedles, it iz imposcibel too tel from a Poseenyanz attichude or poschure ennithing about the focal point ov hiz atenshon--but the waucherz nu dhat he wauz observing in miacrosoppic detale the tiny gland within the oald Lenzmanz scul.

Then Hainz. "Iz this aul dhare iz too it, or doo we cum bac for moer?" he aasct, when he wauz releest from hiz shackelz.

"Dhats aul," Lacy aancerd. "Wun stimulaishon laasts for life, az far az we no. But if the treetment wauz suxesfool ule cum bac--about da aafter toomoro, I thhinc--too go too bed here. Yor spare eqwipment woant fit and yor stumps ma reqwire cergical atenshon."

Shure enuf, Hainz did cum bac too the hospital, but not too go too bed. He wauz too bizsy. Insted, he got a whele-chare and in it he wauz taken bac too hiz nou boiling office. And in a fu moer dase he cauld Lacy in hi exasperaishon.

"No whaut uve dun?" he demaanded. "Not sattisfide withe taking mi perfectly good parts awa from me, u tooc mi teeth too! Dha doant fit--I caant ete a thhing! And Ime hun'gry az a woolf--I doant thhinc I wauz

evver so hun'gry in mi life! I *caant* liv on soope, man; Ive got werc too doo. Whaut ar u gowing too doo about it?"

"*Ho-ho-hau!*" Lacy roerd. "Cervz u rite--von Hohendorf iz taking it esy here, citting on top ov the werld. Esy, nou, salor, doant rupchure yor ayortaa. Ile cend a ners over withe a soft-boild eg and a spoone. *Teething--at yor age--Hau-ho-hau!*"

But it wauz no ordinary ners whoo came, a fu minnuets later, too ce the Poert Admiral; it wauz the cector chefe hercelf. She looct at him pitteyingly az she trundeld him intoo hiz private office and shut the doer, dhaerbi establishing complete cuvverage.

"I had no ideyaa, Admiral Hainz, dhat u... dhat dhare..." she pauzd.

"Dhat I wauz so much ov a rebild?" complacently. "Exept in the matter ov ise--which he duznt nede enniwa--our muchuwal frend Kinnison haz verry littel on me, mi dere. I got so handy withe the replaisments dhat verry fu pepel nu hou much ov me wauz artifishal. But its these teeth dhat ar taking aul the joi out ov life. Ime hun'gry, confound it! Hav u got ennithhing reyal y sattsifying dhat I can ete?"

"Ile sa I hav!" She fed him; then, bending over, she sqweezd him tite and kist him emfatticaly. "U and the comandant ar just perfectly wunderfool oald darlingz, and I *luv* u!" she declaerd. "Lacy wauz cimply poizonous too laaf at u the wa he did. Whi, yor too ov the werldz verry best! And he nu perfectly wel aul the time, the lug, dhat ov coers ude be hun'gry; dhat ude hav too ete twice az much az uezhuwal while yor legz and thhingz ar growing. Doant wurry, admiral, Ile fede u until u bulj. I waunt u too hurry up withe this, so dhale doo it too Kim."

"Thanx, Mac," and az she wheeld him bac intoo the mane office he concidderd her anu. A ravvishing crechure, but sound. Rash, and a bit stubborn, perhaps; impetchuwous and hedstrong; but clene, sollid mettal aul

the wa throo. She had whaut it taix--she qwaulifide. She and Kinnison wood make a mity fine cuppel when the lad got sum ov dhat herowic dam noncens noct out ov hiz hed... but dhare wauz werc too doo.

Dhare wauz. The Galactic Council had concidderd thurroly Kinnisonz repoerts; its evvery member had conferd withe him and withe Worcel at length. Throowout the Ferst Gallaxy the Patrole wauz at werc in aul its prodidjous mite, preparing too wipe out the mennace too Civilizaishon which

wauz Boscone. Ferst-line super-drednauts--no utherz wood go uppon dhat mishon--wer beying bilt and armd, rebilt and re-armd.

Wel it wauz dhat the Galactic Patrole had preveyously amast an aulmoast inexhaustibel supli ov welth, for its "reservz ov expendabel credit" wer running like wauter.

Wepponz, suposedly aulreddy ov iresistibel pouwer, wer made even moer pouwerfool. Screenz aulreddy "impennetrabel" wer stiffend intoo even grater stubborn'nes. Primary progetorz wer made too take even hiyer loadz for lon'gher tiamz. Nu and hevveyer Q-tipe helicese wer desiand and bilt. Larger and moer destructive juwodec bomz wer herld against aulreddy ruwind, toern, and qwivvering test-plannets. Unninhabbited werldz

wer beying eqwipt withe super-Berghenhoamz and withe driving progetorz.

The neggasfere, the moast increddibel mennace too navigaishon which had evver

existed in space, wauz beying patroald bi a cordon ov gard-ships.

And aul this activvity centerd in wun vaast bilding and culminated in

wun man--Poert Admiral Hainz, Galactic Councilor. And Hainz cood not ghet enuf too ete becauz he wauz cutting a nu cet ov teeth!

He cut them, aul thherty too ov them. Arm and leg, foot and hand gru perfectly, even too the nailz. Hare gru uppon whaut had for yeerz bene a shining expans ov pate. But, much too Lacesse relefe, it wauz oald skin, not yung, dhat cuverd the nu limz. It wauz white hare, not broun, dhat wauz dulling the gloscines ov Hainz bauld oald hed. Hiz trifocalz, unchainjd, wer stil nescesary if he wer too ce ennithhing cleerly, nere or far.

"Our experrimental annimalz aijd and dide normaly," he explaind graishously, "but I wauz beghinning too wunder if we had rejuvenated u too, or perhaps endoud u withe eternal life. Glad too ce dhat the nu parts hav the same fizensal age az the rest ov u--It wood be mialdly embarracing too hav too kil too Gra Lenzmen too ghet rid ov them."

"Yor about az funny az a rubber cruch," Hainz grunted. "When ar u gowing too ghiv Kinnison the werx? Doant u reyalise we nede him?"

"Pritty qwic nou. Just az soone az we ghiv u and Von yor cicolodgical examinaishonz."

"Baa! Dhat iznt nescesary--mi brainz QX!"

"Dhats whaut u thhinc, but whaut doo u no about brainz? Worcel wil tel us whaut shape yor miand--if enny--iz in."

The Velanshan poot boath Hainz and von Hohendorf throo a gruwelling examinaishon, fianding dhat dhare miandz had not bene afected in enny wa bi the stimmulants aplide too dhare pineyal glandz.

Then and oanly then did Fillips opperate uppon Kinnison; and in hiz cace,

too, the operaisjon wauz a complete sukses. Armz and legz and ise replaist themcelvz flaulesly. The scarz ov hiz terribel wuindz disapeerd, leving no cine ov evver havving bene.

He wauz a littel slower, houwevver; sumwhaut clumsy, and wofooly weke. Dhaerfoer, insted ov discharging him from the hospital az cuerd, which procejure wood hav restoerd too him automatticaly aul the riats and privilegez ov an Unnatacht Lenzman, the Council decided too traansfer him

too a fizensal-culchure camp. A fu weex dhare wood restoer too him entiarly the strength, spede, and agillity which had formerly bene hiz, and he wood then be aloud too rezhume active juty.

Just befoer he left the hospital, Kinnison stroald withe Clarissaa out too a bench in the groundz.

"...and yor making a perfect recuvvery," the gherl wauz saying.

"Ule be exactly az u wer. But thhingz betwene us arnt just az dha wer, and dha nevver can be agane. U no dhat, Kim. Weve got unfinnisht biznes too traanzact--lets take it doun of the shelf befoer u go."

"Better let it la, Mac." Aul the nu-found joi ov existens went out ov the manz ise. "Ime whole, yes, but dhat an'ghel wauz reyaly the leest important ov aul. U nevver yet hav faist sqwaerly the fact dhat mi job iznt dun and dhat mi chaans ov livving throo it iz just about wun in ten. Even Fillips caant doo ennithhing about a corps."

"I woant face it, iather, unles and until I must." Her repli wauz tranqwillity itcelf. "Moast ov the trubbelz pepel wurry about in advaans nevver doo matereyalise. And even if it did, u aut too no dhat I... dhat enny woomman wood raather... wel, dhat haaf a lofe iz better dhan no bred."

"QX. I havnt menshond the werst thhing. I didnt waunt too--but if uve got too hav it, here it iz," the man rencht out. "Looc at whaut I am. A bar-roome brauler. A rum-dum. A hard-boild eg. A coald-bludded, ruethles merderer; even ov mi one men..."

"Not dhat, Kim, evver, and u no it," she rebuect him.

"Whaut els can u caul it?" he grated. "A killer beciadz--a red-handed bootcher if dhare evver wauz wun; then, nou, and forever. Ive got too be. I caant ghet awa from it. Doo u thhinc dhat u, or enny uther decent woomman, cood stand it too liv withe me? Dhat u cood fele mi armz around u, fele mi goery pazuz tutching u, widhout gowing cic at the stummac?"

"O, so *dhats* whauts bene reyaly griping u aul this time?"

Clarissaa wauz cerpriazd, but entiarly unshaken. "I doant hav too thhinc about dhat, Kim--I *no*. If u wer a merderer or had the killer instinct, dhat wood be different, but u arnt and u havnt. U ar hard, ov coers. U hav too be... but doo u thhinc Ide be running a temperachure over a softy? U braul, yes--like the werldz champeyon u ar. Enniboddy u evver kild neded killing, dhaerz no qweschon ov dhat. U doant doo these thhingz for fun; and the fact dhat u can drive yorself too doo the thhingz dhat hav too be dun shose yor reyal cise.

"Nor hav u even thaut ov the obvers; dhat u lene over baqwordz in weelding dhat terriffic pouwer ov yorz. The Desplainz woomman, the countes--lots ov uther instancez. I respect and onnor u moer dhan enny uther man I hav evver none. Enny woomman whoo reyaly nu u wood--she *must!*

"Liscen, Kim. Rede mi miand, aul ov it. Ule reyaly no me then, and understand me better dhan I can evver explane micelf."

"Hav u got a picchure ov me doowing dhat?" he aasct, flatly.

"No, u big, unrezonabel clunker, I havnt!" she flaerd, "and dhats just whauts driving me mad!" Then, vois dropping too a whisper, aulmoast sobbing; "Cancel dhat, Kim--I didnt mene it. U woodnt--u *coodnt*, I supose, and stil be u, the man I luv. But iznt dhare sumthhing--*ennithhing*--dhat wil make u understand whaut I reyaly am?"

"I no whaut u ar." Kinnisonz vois wauz unninflected, wery. "Az I toald u befoer--the univercez best. Its whaut I am dhats clogging the gets--whaut I hav bene and whaut Ive got too kepe on beying. I cimplly doant rate up, and ude better la of me, Mac, while u can. Dhaerz a powem bi wun ov the ainshents--Kipling--the Ballad ov Bo Daa Thone--dhat descriabz it exactly. U woodnt no it..."

"U just thhinc I woodnt," noddng briatly. "The oonly trubbel iz, u aulwase thhinc ov the rong vercez. Part ov it reyaly iz descriptive ov u. U no, whare aul the soalgerz ov the Blac Tirone thaut so much ov dhare captane?"

She recited:

"And wershupt withe fluwency, fervor, and sele
The mud on the boote-heelz ov "Crooc" ONele."

"Dhat descriabz u too a "T.""

"Yor crasy for the lac ov cens," he demerd. "I doant rate like dhat."

"Shure u doo," she ashuerd him. "Aul the men thhinc ov u dhat wa. And not oonly men. Wimmen, too, darn em--and the next time I cach wun ov

them at it Ime gowing too kic her kerst teeth out, wun bi wun!"

Kinnison laaft, aulbeyit a trifel sourly. "Yor raving, Mac. Imadgining thhingz. But too ghet bac too dhat powem, whaut I wauz refuuring too went like this..."

"I no hou it gose. Liscen:

"But the captane had qwitted the long-draun strife
And in far Cimoory had taken a wife;

"And she wauz a damsel ov dellicate moald,
Withe hare like the sunshine and hart ov goald.

"And littel she nu the armz dhat embraist
Had cloven a man from the brou too the waist:

"And littel she nu dhat the luvving lips
Had orderd a qwivvering liafs eclips,

"And the ise dhat lit at her littest breth
Had glaerd unaud in the Gaits ov Deth.

""(For these be matterz a man wood hide,
Az a genneral thhing, from an innocent bride.)"

"Dhats whaut u mene, iznt it?" she aasct, qwiyetly.

"Mac, u no a lot ov thhingz uve got no biznes nowing." Insted ov aancering her qweschon, he staerd at her specculatiavly. "Mi sprese and braulz, Dessaa Desplainz and the Countes Avondrin, and nou this. Wood u miand telling me hou u ghet the stuf?"

"Ime clocer too u dhan u suspect, Kim--Ive aulwase bene. Worcel caulz it beying en rapor.' U doant nede too thhinc at me--in fact, u hav too poot up a conshous bloc too kepe me out. So I no a lot dhat I shoodnt, but Lenzmen arnt the oonly wunz whoo doant tauc. Ude bene thhinking about dhat powem a lot--it wurrede u--so I chect withe Arkeyollogy on it. I memmoriazd moast ov it."

"Wel, too ghet the tru picchure ov me ule hav too multipli dhat bi a thouzand. Aulso, doant forghet dhat looce hedz mite be roling out ontoo yor brecfast tabel aulmoast enny morning insted ov oonly wuns."

"So whaut?" she counterd evenly. "Doo u thhinc I cood cit for Kiplingz poertrate ov Mrs. ONele? Nobody evver cauld mi moald dellicate, and Kipling, if he had bene describing me, wood hav ced:

"Withe hare like a conflagraishon,
"And a hart ov sollid braas!"

"Captane ONeelz bride, az wel az beying innocent and ignorant, striax me az havving bene a good dele ov a ciscy, sumthhing ov a weping willo, and no littel ov a shrinking vियोlet. Tel me, Kim, doo u thhinc she wood hav made good az a cector chefe ners?"

"No, but dhats niather..."

"It iz, too," she interupted. "Uve got too concidder dhat I did, and dhat its no job for enny gherl withe a weke stummac. Beciadz, the Bose hed tooc the fabeld Mrs. ONele bi cerprise. She didnt no dhat her huzband uest too be in the whoalsale mahem-and-killing biznes. I doo.

"And laastly, u big lug, doo u thhinc Ide be making such baerfaist pacez at u unles I nu exactly whaut the scoer iz--exactly whare u stand? Yor too much ov a gentelman too rede mi miand; but Ime not

dhat sc... I *had* too no."

"Huu?" he demaanded, blushing feersly. "U reyaly no, then, dhat..." he wood not sa it, even then.

"Ov coers I no!" She nodded; then, az the man spred hiz handz helplesly, she abandond her atempt too kepe the conversaishon uppon a lite levvel.

"I no, mi dere. Dhaerz nuthhing we can doo about it yet." Her vois wauz unsteddy, her hart in evvery werd. "U hav too doo yor job, and I onnor u for dhat, even if it duz take u awa from me. Itl be eseyer for u, dho, I thhinc, and I *no* it wil be eseyer for me, too hav it out in the open. Whenevver yor reddy, Kim, Ile be here--or sumwhare--wating. Clere eethher, Gra Lenzman!" and, rising too her fete, she ternd bac tooword the hospital.

"Clere eethher, Cris!" Unconshously he uezd the pet name bi which he had thaut ov her so long. He staerd aafter her for a minnute, hun'grily. Then, sqwaring hiz shoalderz, he strode awa.

* * *

And uppon far Jarnevon Iakhmil, the Ferst ov Boscone, wauz confuuring withe Jalt viyaa comunicator. Long cins, the Caloanyan had delivverd throo deveyous channelz the message ov Boscone too an imadginary director ov Lenzmen; long cins had he receevd this cripticaly diarfool repli:

"Morgan livz, and so duz--★ A ★."

Jalt had not bene abel too repoert too hiz chefe enny nuse concerning the fate ov dhat which the speedster boer, cins spise no lon'gher existed

within the reservaisonz ov the Patrole. He had lernd ov no discuvvery dhat enny Lenzman had made. He cood not venchure a hipothhecis az too hou

this ★ A ★ had herd ov Jarnevon or had lernd ov its locaishon.

He wauz shure ov oanly wun thhing, and dhat wauz a grimly disterbing fact

indede. The Patrole wauz re-arming throowout the gallyxy, uppon a scale dhaertofoer un'none. Iakhmilz thaut wauz coald:

"Dhat meenz but wun thhing. A Lenzman invaded u and lernd ov us here--in no uther wa cood nollej ov Jarnevon hav cum too them."

"Whi me?" Jalt demaanded. "If dhare exists a miand ov pouwer sufishent too

brake mi screenz and traislesly too invade mi miand, whaut ov yorz?"

"It iz proven bi the outcum." The Boscoanyanz staitment wauz a caalm summaishon ov fact. "The mescen'ger cent against u suxeded; the wun against us faild. The Patrole intendz and iz preparing: certainly too wipe out our remaning foercez within the Telureyan Gallyxy; probbably too

atac yor strong'hoald; evenchuwaly too invade our one gallyxy."

"Let them cum!" snarld the Caloanyan. "We can and wil hoald this plannet forevver against ennithhing dha can bring throo space!"

"I wood not be too shure ov dhat," caushond the supereyor. "In fact, if--az I am beghinning too regard az a probabillity--the Patrole duz make a concerted drive against enny cignifficant number ov our plannetary organizaishonz, u shoold abandon yor bace dhare and retern too Caloanyaa, aafter disbanding and so preserving for fuchure uce az menny az poscibel ov

the plannetary units."

"Fuchure uce? In dhat cace dhare wil be no fuchure."

"Dhare wil so," Iakhmil replide, coaldly vishous. "We ar strengthhenning the defencez ov Jarnevon too widhstand enny concevabel asault. If dha doo not atac us here ov dhare one fre wil we shal compel them too doo so. Then, aafter destroiying dhare evvery mobile foers, we shal agane take over dhare gallaxy. Armz for the perpoce ar even nou in the bilding. Iz the matter clere?"

"It iz clere. We shal worn aul our griups dhat such an order ma ishu, and we shal prepare too abandon this bace shood such a step becum desirabel."

So it wauz pland; niather Iakhmil nor Jalt even suspecting too startling trueths:

Ferst, dhat when the Patrole wauz reddy it wood strike hard and widhout worning, and

Ceccond, dhat it wood strike, not lo, but hi!

CHAPTER 23

ANIYILAISHON

KINNISON PLADE, WERCT, rested, ate, and slept. He boxt, strennuwously and vishously, withe maasterz ov the craaft. He practiast withe hiz DeLammeterz until he had regaind hiz oald-time spede and ded-center

accuracy. He swam for ourz at a time, he ran in cros-cuntry racez. He lold, practicaly naked, in hot sunshine. And finaly, when hiz muscelz wer riathing and ripling az ov yoer beneeth the bronzd sattin ov hiz skin, Lacy aancerd hiz incistent demaandz bi cumming too ce him.

The Gra Lenzman met the fliyer egherly, but hiz face fel when he sau dhat the cerjon-marshal wauz alone.

"No, MacDoogal didnt cum--she iznt around enny moer," he explaind, ghialfooly.

"Huu?" came starteld qwery. "Hou cum?"

"Out in space--out Borovaa wa sumwhare. Whaut doo u care? Aafter the wa u acted uve got the crust ov a rinosceros too..."

"Yor crasy, Lacy. Whi, we... she... its aul fixt up."

"Funny kiand ov fixing. Moping around Bace, criying her red hed of. Finaly, dho, she decided she had sum Scoch pride left, and I let her go abord agane. If she iznt aul dun withe u, she aut too be." This, Lacy figguerd, wood be good for whaut aild the big sap-hed. "Cum on, and Ile ce whether yor fit too go bac too werc or not."

He wauz fit. "QX, lad--flit!" Lacy discharjd him informaly withe a slap uppon the bac. "Ghet drest and Ile take u bac too Hainz--hese bene snapping at me like a tertel evver cins uve bene out here."

At Prime Bace Kinnison wauz welcumd enthuseyaasticaly bi the admiral.

"Fele dhose fin'gherz, Kim!" he exclaimd. "Perfect! Just like the oridginalz!"

"Mine, too. Dha doo fele good."

"Its a pittu u got yor nu wunz so qwic. Ude apreesheyate em much moer aafter a fu yeerz widhout em. But too ghet down too biznes. The fleets hav bene taking of for weex--were too join up az the line paacez. If u havnt ennithhing better too doo Ide like too hav u aboard the Z9M9Z."

"I doant no ov enny place Ide raather be, cer--thanx."

"QX. Thanx shood be the uther wa. U can make yorcelf mity uesfool betwene nou and sero time." He ide the yun'gher man specculatiavly.

Hainz had a speshal job for him, Kinnison nu. Az a Gra Lenzman, he cood not be ghivven enny military ranc or poast, and he cood not conceive ov the admiral ov Grand Flete waunting him around az an ade-de-camp.

"Spil it, chefe," he invited. "Not orderz, ov coers--I understand dhat perfectly. Reqwests or--aa-hum--sugeschonz."

"I *wil* croun u withe sumthhing yet, u whelp!" Hainz snorted, and Kinnison grind. These too wer verry cloce, in spite ov dhare dispartity in yeerz; and verry much ov a pece. "Az u ghet oalder ule reyalise dhat its good tactix too stic pritty cloce too Gen Regz. Yes, I *hav* got a job for u, and a naasty wun. Nobody haz bene abel too handel it, not even too cumpanese ov Rigelleyanz. Grand Flete Operaishonz."

"*Grand Flete Operaishonz!*" Kinnison wauz agaast.

"Holy--Clonose--Indeyum--Intestianz! Whaut maix u thhinc Ive got gets enuf too swing *dhat* lode?"

"I havnt enny ideyaa whether u can or not. If u caant, dho, nobody can; and in spite ov aul the werc weve dun on the thhing wele hav too

opperate az a mob, the wa we did befoer; not az a flete. If so, I shudder too thhinc ov the rezults."

"QX. If ule cend for Worcel wele tri it a fling or too. Itd be a shame too bild a whole ship around an Operaishonz tanc and then not be abel too use it. Bi the wa, I havnt cene mi hed ners--Mis MacDoogal, u no--around enny place laity. Hav u? I aut too tel her thanx or sumthhing--maby cend her a flouwer."

"Ners? MacDoogal? O, yes, the red-hed. Let me ce--did here sumthhing about her the uther da. Marrede? No... tooc a hospital ship sumwhare. Alsacan? Vandemar? Didnt pa enny atenshon. She duznt nede thanx--or flouwerz, iather--ghetting pade for her werc. Much moer important, doant u thhinc, too ghet Operaishonz stratend out?"

"Undoutedly, cer," Kinnison replide, stifly; and az he went out Lacy came in.

The too oald conspirratorz greted eche uther withe nowing grinz. *Wauz* Kinnison taking it big! He wauz fauling, like ten thousand brix doun a wel.

"Doo him good too undermine hiz posishon a bit. Too cocky aultooghether. But *hou* dha suffer!"

"Chec!"

The Gra Lenzman rode tooword the flagship in a moode which even he cood not hav descriabd. He had expected too ce her, az a matter ov coers... he waunted too ce her... confound it, he *had* too ce her! Whi did she hav too doo a flit nou, ov aul the tiamz on the callendar? She

nu the flete wauz shuvving of, and dhat hede hav too go along... and nobody nu whare she wauz. When he got bac hede fiand her if he had too chace her aul over the galaxy. Hede poot and end too this. Juty wauz juty, ov coers... but Cris wauz CRIS... and haaf a lofe *wauz* better dhan no bred!

He gerct bac too reyallity az he enterd the gigantic teerdrop which wauz tecnicaly the Z9M9Z, soashaly the *Directrix*, and ordinarily GFHQ.

She had bene desiand and bilt specifficaly too be Grand Flete Hedqworterz, and nuthhing els. She boer no ofencive armament, but cins she had too protect the presiding geenyucez ov combat she had evvery poscibel defens.

Poert Admiral Hainz had lernd a bitter lesson juring the expedishon too Helmuths bace. Long befoer dhat rellatiavly smaul flete got dhare he wauz cic too the coer, reyalising dhat fifty thousand vescelz cimply cood not be controald or manuverd az a groope. If dhat bace had bene capabel ov an ofencive or even ov a reyal defens, or if Boscone cood hav poot dhare fleets intoo dhat star-cluster in time, the Patrole wood hav bene defeted ignominyously; and Hainz, wise oald tactishan dhat he wauz, nu it.

Dhaerfoer, imejaitly aafter the retern from dhat "triyumfant" venchure, he gave orderz too desine and too bild, at whautevver cost, a flagship capabel ov directing efishmently a milleyon combat units.

The "tanc"--the minuety cuebd moddel ov the galaxy which iz a nescesary part ov evvery pilot roome--had grone and grone az it became evvident dhat

it must be the prime agency in Grand Flete Operaishonz. Finaly, in this laast rebilding, the tanc wauz cevven hundred fete in diyammeter and aty fete thhic in the middel--over cevventene milleyon cubic fete ov space in which moer dhan too milleyon tiny liats crauld hither and thither in

helples confuezhon. For, aafter the tecnishanz and desinerz had poot dhat tanc intoo acchuwal cervice, dha had discuvverd dhat it wauz uesles. No avalabel miand had bene abel iather too perceve the cichuwaishon az a whole or too identifi withe certainty enny lite or groope ov liats neding corecshon; and az for linking up enny particcular lite withe its individjuwal, blanket-proofe comunicator in time too ishu orderz in space-combat...!

Kinnison looct at the tanc, then around the fool cerkel ov the milleyon-plug boerd encercling it. He observd the hoerd ov operatorz, eche wun trying frantically too doo sumthhing. Next he shut hiz ise, the better too perceve evverithhing at wuns, and studded the problem for an our.

"Atenshon, evveriboddy!" he thaut then. "Open aul cerkits--doo nuthhing at aul for a while." He then cauld Hainz.

"I thhinc we can clene this up if ule cend over sum Cimplex annalizerz and a cru ov tecnishanz. Helmuth had a nice cet-up on multiplex controalz, and Jalt had sum ideyaaz, too. If we ad them too this we ma hav sumthhing."

And bi the time Worcel ariavd, dha did.

"Red liats ar fleets aulreddy in moashon," Kinnison explaind rappidly too the Velanshan. "Greenz ar fleets stil at dhare bacez. Amberz ar the plannets the redz tooc of from--conected, u ce, bi Riyerson string-liats. The white star iz us, the *Directrix*. Dhat viyolet cros wa over dhare iz Jalts plannet, our ferst obgetive. The pinc commets ar our fre plannets, dhare tailz showing dhare intrinsic veloscitese. Beyng so slo, dha had too start long ago. The perpel cerkel iz the neggasfere. Its on its wa, too. U take dhat cide, Ile take this. Dha wer supoast too start from the ej ov the twelfth cector. The

ideyaa wauz too make it a smuith, bole-shaipt swepe acros the galaxy, converging uppon the obgective, but eche ov the cistem marshalz aparrently waunts too run this wor too sute himcelf. Looc at dhat ghi dhare--hese beting the gun bi nine thousand parcx. Wauch me pin hiz eerz bac!"

He pointed hiz Cimplex at the red lite which had so ofendingly sprung intoo beying. Dhare wauz a whuuring clic and the number 449276 flasht abuv a boerd. An opperator flict a swich.

"Grand Flete Operaishonz!" Kinnisonz thaut snapt acros space. "Whi ar u taking of widhout orderz?"

"Whi, I... Ile ghiv u the marshal, cer..."

"No time! Tel yor marshal dhat wun moer such brake wil poot him in iarnz. Land at wuns! GFO--of.

"Withe around a milleyon fleets too handel we caant spend much time on enny wun," he thaut at Worcel. "But aafter we ghet them liand up and ghet our Rigelleyanz broken in, it wont be so bad."

The braking in did not take long; deffinite and meningfool orderz flu faaster and faaster along the tiny, but stele-hard beemz ov the comunicatorz.

"Take of... Increce drive foer point five... Deecrece drive too point ate... Chainj coers too..." and so it went, our aafter our and da aafter da.

And withe the passage ov time came order out ov cayos. The red liats formd a giganticaly sweping, kerving waul; its aulmoast imperceptibel forword crawl representing an acchuwal veloscity ov aulmoast a hundred

parcex an our. Behiand dhat waul blaizd a ce ov amber, thredded throwout withe the brilleyant fillaments which wer the Riyerson liats. Ahed ov it la a sparcling, aulmoast sollid blase ov grene. Clocer and clocer the waul crept tooword the brite white star.

And in the "rejucer"--the standard, ten-foot tanc in the lower wel--the entire spektakel wauz reprojuest in minnichure. It wauz planer dhare, clerer and much moer reddily cene: but it wauz so crouded dhat detailz wer indistin'gwishabel.

Hainz stood beside Kinnisonz padded chare wun da, staring up intoo the imens lenz and shaking hiz hed. He went down the flite ov staerz too the rejucer, studdede dhat, and agane shooc hiz hed.

"This iz verry pritty, but it duznt mene a thhing," he thaut at Kinnison. "It beghinz too looc az dho Ime gowing along just for the ride. U--or u and Worcel--wil hav too doo the fiting, too, Ime afrade."

"Uu-uu," Kinnison demerd. "Whaut doo we--or enniwun els--no about tactix, compaerd too u? Uve got too be the brainz. Dhats whi we had the boiz rig up the oridginal werking moddel dhare, for a rejucer. On dhat u can wauch the groce devellopments and tel us in genneral termz whaut too doo. Nowing dhat, wele no whoo aut too doo whaut, from the big chart here, and paas yor orderz along."

"Sa, dhat *wil* werc, at dhat!" and Hainz britend vizsibly. "Loox az dho a cuppel ov dhose redz ar gowing too noc our star out ov the tanc, duznt it?"

"Itl be cloce in dhat rejucer--dhale probbably tuch. Cloce enuf in reyap space--les dhan thre parcex."

The sero our came and the Telureyan armaadaa ov aty wun sleke space-ships--aty super-drednauts and the *Directrix*--spernd Erth and tooc its place in dhat hertling waul ov crimzon. Solar cistem aafter solar cistem wauz paast: flete aafter flete leept intoo the eethher and fitted itcelf intoo the smuidhly geyometrical pattern which Grand Flete Operaishonz wauz nercing along so caerfooly.

Throo the galaxy the formaishon swept and out ov it, tooword a star cluster. It slode its mad pace, the center hanging bac, the edgez advaancing and foalding in.

"Suround the cluster and cloce in," the admiral directed; and, under the ghidans nou ov too hundred Rigelleyanz, Civilizaishonz vaast Grand Flete cloazd smuidhly in and went inert. Driverz flaerd white az dha faut too mach the intrinsic veloscity ov the cluster.

"Marshalz ov aul cistem-fleets, atenshon! Using cecondarese oanly, fire at wil uppon enny ennemy obgett cumming within rainj. En'gage outliying strucchuerz and such battel craaft az ma apere. Kepe aciand distans from plannet and stiffen cozmic screenz too maximum. Hainz--of!"

From milleyonz uppon milleyonz ov progetorz dhare raivd out gigantic rodz, niavz, and nedelz ov foers, under the impact ov which the defencive screenz ov Jalts garjan cittadelz flaimd intoo terribel refulgens. Juwodec bomz wer herld--tite-beme-directed monsterz ov destrucshon which, looping around in vaast cerkelz too atane the hiyest poscibel mezhure ov momentum, flung themcelvz against Boscoanz defencez in Herculeyan attempts too smash them doun. Dha exploded; eche az it berst filling aul neerbi space withe bliandingly intens vियोlet lite and withe fliying scraps ov mettal. Q-tipe helicese, drivven withe aul the friatfool killowautage poscibel too Medoanyan conductorz and inshulaishon, scrude in;

biting, gouging, taring in wiald abandon. Shere-plainz, hellish niavz ov foers becide which Telureyan liatning iz pale and waun, struc and struc and struc agane--feendishly, crunchingly.

But dhose grimly stollid fortrecez cood take it. Dha had bene repouwerd; dhare defencez stiffend too such mite az too defi, in the opinyon ov Boscoanz experts, enny progectorz capabel ov beying mounted uppon mobile bacez. And not oanly cood dha take it--dhose formiddably armd and armord plannetoidz cood dish it out az wel. The screenz ov the Patrole ships flaerd hi intoo the spectrum under the crushing foers ov shere ennemy pouwer. Not a fu ov dhose defencez wer batterd down, clere too the waul-sheeldz, befoer the unnimadginabel ferocity ov the Boscoanyan progectorz cood be nuetraliazd.

And at this spectacularly friatfool depe-space en'gajment Galactic Director Jalt, and throo him Iakhmil, Ferst ov Boscone itself, staerd in stund cerprise.

"It iz insane!" Jalt gloted. "The fuilz jujd our strength bi dhat ov Helmuth, not conciddering dhat we, az wel az dha, wood be both lerning and doowing juring the intervening time. Dha hav a mirreyad ov ships, but mere numberz wil nevver conker mi outpoasts, too sa nuthhing ov mi werx here."

"Dha ar not fuilz. I am not so shure..." Iakhmil codgitated.

He wood hav bene even les shure cood he hav liscend too a conversaishon which wauz even then beying held.

"QX, Thorndike?" Kinnison aasct.

"On the grene," came instant repli. "Intrinsic, plaisment, relecez--evverithhing on the grene."

"Cut!" and the lone perpel cerkel disapeerd from tanc and from rejucer. The maaster tecnishan had cut hiz controalz and evvery pound ov mettal and uther substans surrounding the neggasfere had faulen intoo dhat enigmattic relm ov nuthhingnes. No conecshon or contact withe it wauz nou poscibel; and withe its caerfooly establisht intrinsic velosity it rusht en'gulfingly tooword the duimd plannet. Wun ov the mastodonnice fortrecez, liying in its paath, vannisht utterly, withe nuthhing save a berst ov invizibel cozmix too marc its paacing. It aproacht its gole. It wauz aulmoast uppon it befoer enny ov the defenderz perceevd it, and even then dha cood niather understand nor graasp it. Aul detectorz and uther worning devicez remaind statick, but:

"Looc! Dhare! Sumthhingz *cumming!*" an observer gitterd, and Jalt swung hiz plate. He sau--nuthhing. Iakhmil sau the same thhing. Dhare wauz nuthhing too ce. A vaast, intan'gibel nuthhing--yet a nuthhing tan'gibel enuf too ocult evverithhing matereyal in a fool thherd ov the cone ov vizhon! Jalts opperatorz herld intoo it dhare miteyest beemz. Nuthhing happend. Dha struc nuthhing and disapeerd. Dha luist dhare hevveyest juwodec torpedose; gigantic miscialz whose worhedz containd enuf ov dhat friatfooly viyolent dettonate too disrupt a werld. Nuthhing happend--not even an exploazhon. Not even the faintest flash ov lite. Shel and contents alike meerly--and O! so incredidiably peesfooly!--ceest too exist. Dhare wer important bersts ov cozmix, but dha wer invizibel and inaudibel; and niather Jalt nor enny member ov hiz foers wauz too liv long enuf too reyalise hou terribly he had aulreddy bene bernd.

Gigantic pressorz shuvd against it: beemz ov pouwer sufishent too deflect a sattelite; beemz whose progectorz wer braist, in stele-laist concrete down too bedroc, against enny concevabel thrust. But this wauz *neggative*, not pozsitive matter--matter neggative in evvery respect ov

mas, inershaa, and foers. Too it a poosh wauz a pool. Pressorz too it wer tractorz--at contact dha poold themcelvz up of dhare mascive foundaishonz and herteld intoo the apauling blacnes.

Then the neggasfere struc. Or did it? Can nuthhing strike ennithhing? It wood be better, perhaps, too sa dhat the sferrical hiper-plane which wauz the thre-dimenshonal cros-cecshon ov the neggasfere began too occupi the same vollume ov space az dhat in which Jalts unforchunate world aulreddy wauz. And at the cerface ov contact ov the too the matereyalz ov boath disapeerd. The substans ov the plannet vannisht, the incomprehencibel nuthhingnes ov the neggasfere faded awa intoo the ordinary vacuwity ov empty space.

Jalts bace, the whole thre hundred sqware mialz ov it, wauz taken at the ferst gulp. A vaast pit opened whare it had bene, a hole which depend and widend withe horififying rapiddity. And az the yauning abis enlarjd itcelf the stof ov the plannet fel intoo it, in tern too vannish. Mountainz tumbeld intoo it, oashanz dumpt themcelvz intoo it. The hot, friatfooly comprest and nacent matereyal ov the plannets coer saut too erupt--but insted ov mooving, it, too, vannisht. Vaast areyaaz ov the worldz cerface crust, tenz ov thousandz ov sqware mialz in extent, colapst intoo it, splitting of along crevacez ov apauling depth, and became nuthhing. The stricken globe shudderd, trembeld, ground itcelf too bits in parroxizm aafter gaastly parroxizm ov dicintegraishon.

Whaut wauz happening? Iakhmil did not no, cins hiz "i" wauz destroid befoer enny reyaly cignifficant devellopments cood evenchuwate. He and hiz
ciyentists cood oonly specculate and dejuce--which, withe cerprising accuracy, dha did. The officerz ov the Patrole ships, houwever, *nu* whaut wauz gowing on, and dha wer scanning withe tensly narrode ise the instruments which wer recording instant bi instant the performans ov the nu cozmic super-screenz which wer beying asaulted so brutally.

For, az haz bene ced, the neggasfere wauz compoazd ov neggative matter. Insted ov electronz its bilding-blox wer pozsitronz--the "Derac hoalz" in an infinnity ov neggative ennergy. Whenevver the feeld ov a pozsitron encounterd dhat ov an electron the too nuetraliazd eche uther, ghivving rise too too qwauntaa ov hard rajaishon. And, cins dhose encounterz

wer ocuuring at the rate ov countles trilleyonz per cecond, dhare wauz taring at the Patroalz defencez a flud ov cozmix ov an intencity which no space-ship had evver befoer bene cauld uppon too widhstand.

But

the nu screenz had bene figguerd withe a factor ov saifty ov five, and dha stood up.

The plannet dwindeld withe sole-shaking rapiddity too a moone, too a muinlet,

and finaly too a discreetly con'glommerate agregaishon ov meteyoriats befoer the muchuwal nuetralizaishon ceest.

"Primarese nou," Hainz orderd briscly, az the nedelz ov the cozmik-ra-screne meterz dropt bac too the grene lianz ov normal funcshoning. The probabillity wauz dhat the defencez ov the Boscoanyan cittadelz wood nou be automattic oonly, dhat no life had enjuerd throo dhat afool flud ov leethal rajaishon; but he wauz taking no chaancez. Out flasht the pennetrant super-rase and the fortrecez, too, ceest too exist save az the impalpabel infraa-dust ov space.

And the mast Grand Flete ov the Galactic Patrole, remaking its formaishon, herteld outword throo the intergalactic void.

CHAPTER 24

PAACING OV THE IAKH

"DHA AR NOT FUILZ. I am not so shure..." Iakhmil had ced; and when the laast foers-baul, hiz laast meenz ov intergalactic comunicaishon, went ded the Ferst ov Boscone became verry unshure indede. The Patrole undoutedly had sumthhing nu--he himself had had glimpcez ov it--but whaut wauz it?

Dhat Jalts bace wauz gon wauz obveyous. Dhat Boscoanz hoald uppon the Telureyan Galaxy wauz gon follode az a corollary. Dhat the Patrole wauz or soone wood be wiping out Boscoanz rejonal and plannetary units wauz a

lodgical inferens. ★ A ★, dhat akerst Director ov Lenzmen, had--must hav--suxeded in steling Jalts reccordz, too be willing too destroi out ov hand the bace which houzd them.

Nor cood Boscone doo ennithhing too help the underlingz, nou dhat the long-awated atac uppon Jarnevon itcelf wauz aulmoast certainly cumming. Let the Patrole cum--dha wer reddy. Or wer dha, qwite? Jalts defencez wer strong, but dha had not widhstood dhat un'none weppon even for cecondz.

Iakhmil cauld a joint meting ov Boscone and the Acaddemy ov Ciyens. Coaldly and preciasly he toald them evverithhing dhat he had cene. Discushon follode.

"Neggative matter beyond a dout," a ciyentist sumd up. "It haz long bene cermiazd dhat in sum uther, perhaps hiper-spaishal, univers dhare must exist neggative matter ov mas sufishent too ballans the pozzitive matereyal ov the univers we no. It iz concevabel dhat bi hiper-spaishal exploraishonz and manipulaishonz the Telureyanz hav discuverd dhat uther univers and hav traanspoerted sum ov its

substans intoo ourz."

"Can dha manufacchure it?" Iakhmil demaanded.

"The probabillity dhat such materoyal can be manufacchuerd iz exedingly smaull," wauz the studdede repli. "An entiarly nu mathhemattix wood be nescesary. In aul probabillity dha found it aulreddy existent."

"We must fiand it aulso, then, and at wuns."

"We wil tri. Bare in miand, houwevver, dhat the feeld iz larj, and doo not be optimistic ov an erly suxes. Note aulso dhat dhat substans iz not nescesary--perhaps not even desirabel--in a defencive acshon."

"Whi not?"

"Becauz, bi directing pressorz against such a bom, Jalt acchuwaly poold it intoo hiz bace, preciasly whare the ennemy wisht it too go. Az a cerprise atac, against dhose ignorant ov its tru nachure, such a weppon wood be efective indede; but against us it wil proove a boomerang. Aul dhat iz needfool iz too mount tractor hedz uppon pressor bacez, and dhus drive the bomz bac uppon dhose whoo cend them." It did not oker, even too the coaldest ciyentist ov them aul, dhat dhat bom had bene ov plannetary mas. Not wun ov the Iakh suspected dhat aul dhat remaind ov the entire werld uppon which Jalts bace had stood wauz a handfool ov meteyoriats.

"Let them cum, then," ced Iakhmil, grimly. "Dhare dependens uppon a nu and suposedly un'none weppon explainz whaut wood uthewise be insane tactix. Withe dhat weppon impotent dha canot poscibly win a long wor wajjd so far from dhare bacez. We can mach them ship for ship, and moer; and our suplise and munishonz ar cloce at hand. We wil ware them doun--blaast them out--the Telureyan Gallaxy shal yet be ourz!"

* * *

Admiral Hainz spent aulmoast evvery waking our cetting up and nocking doun tactical problemz in the practice tanc, and gradjuwaly hiz expreshon chainjd from wun ov straind anxiyety too wun ov pleezd satisfacshon. He went over too hiz ceeld-band traanzmitter, cauld aul comunicaishonz officerz too atenshon, and thaut:

"Eche vescel wil direct its lon'ghest-rainj detector, at hiyest poscibel pouwer, centrally uppon the obgetive galaxy. The ferst observer too fiand detectabel activvity, houwevver faint, wil repoert it instantly too GHQ. We wil cend out a genneral C.B., at which evvery vescel in Grand Flete wil cece blaasting at wuns; remaning moashonles in space until ferther orderz." He then cauld Kinnison.

"Looc here," he directed the atenshon ov the yun'gher man intoo the rejucer, which nou represented inter-galactic space, withe a porshon ov the Ceccond Gallaxy filling wun ej. "I hav a solueshon, but its practicability dependz uppon whether or not it caulz for the imposcibel from u, Worcel, and yor Rigelleyanz. U remarct at the start dhat I nu mi tactix. I wish I nu moer--or at least cood be certane dhat Boscone and I agry on whaut constichuets good tactix. I fele qwite safe in ashuming, houwevver, dhat we shal mete dhare Grand Flete wel outside the galaxy..."

"Whi?" aasct the starteld Kinnison. "If I wer Iakhmil Ide pool evvery ship I had in around Jarnevon and kepe it dhare! Dha caant foers en'gaijment withe us!"

"Poor tactix. The verry prezsens ov dhare flete out in space wil foers en'gaijment, and a decicive wun at dhat. From hiz vupoint, if he defeets us dhare, dhat endz it. If he loosez, dhats oonly hiz ferst line ov defens. Hiz observerz wil hav repoerted foolly. He wil hav invallubel dataa too werc uppon, and much time befoer even hiz outliying

fortrevez can be threttend.

"From our vupoint, we caant refuse battel if hiz flete iz dhare. It wood be suwicidal for us too enter dhat gallaxy, leving intact outside it a flete az pouwerfool az dhat wun iz bound too be."

"Whi? Harreying us from the rere mite be bothersum, but I doant ce hou it cood be dizaastrous."

"Not dhat. Dha cood, and wood, atac Tellus."

"O--I nevver thaut ov dhat. But coodnt dha enniwa--too fleets?"

"No. He nose dhat Tellus iz verry strongly held, and dhat this iz no ordinary flete. He wil hav too concentrate evverithhing he haz uppon iather wun or the uther--it iz aulmoast inconcevabel dhat he wood divide hiz foercez."

"QX. I ced dhat yor the brainz ov the outfit. U ar!"

"Thanx, lad. At the ferst cine ov detecshon, we stop. Dha ma be abel too detect us, but I dout it, cins were loocking for them withe speshal instruments. But dhats imatereyal. Whaut I waunt too no iz, can u and yor cru split Grand Flete, making too big, hollo hemmisfeerz ov it? Let this groope ov amberz represent the ennemy. Cins dha no wele hav too carry the battel too them, dhale probbably be in faerly cloce formaishon. Cet yor too hemmisfeerz--the redz--dhare, and dhare. Cloce them in, dhus en'globing dhare whole flete. Can u doo it?"

Kinnison whisceld throo hiz teeth, a long, lo, unmelojous whiscel.
"Yes--but Clonose carballoi clauz, chefe, suppose dha cach u at it?"

"Hou can dha? If u wer using detectorz, insted ov dubbel-end, tite-beme bianderz, hou menny ov our one vescelz cood u locate?"

"Dhats rite, too--about too percent ov them. Dha coodnt tel dhat dha wer beying en' gloabd until long aafter it wauz dun. Dha cood, houwevver, globe up incide us..."

"Yes--and dhat wood ghiv them the tactical advaantage ov posishon," the admiral admitted. "We probbably hav, houwevver, enuf supereyority in fire-pouwer, if not in acchuwal tunnage, too make up the differens. Aulso, we hav spede enuf, I thhinc, so dhat we cood retire in good order. But yor ashuming dhat dha can manuver az rappidly and az shuerly az we can, a condishon which I doo not concidder at aul probbabel. If, az I beleve much moer liacly, dha hav no better Grand Flete Operaishonz dhan we had in Helmuths star-cluster--if dha havnt the eqwivvalent ov u and Worcel and this super-tanc here--then whaut?"

"In dhat cace itd be just too bad. Just like pooshing baby chix intoo a pond." Kinnison sau the pocibillitese verry cleerly aafter dha had bene explaind too him.

"Hou long wil it take u?"

"Withe Worcel and me and boath fool cruse ov Rigelleyanz I wood ghes it at about ten ourz--ate too compute and acine posishonz and too too ghet dhare."

"Faast enuf--faaster dhan I wood hav thaut poscibel. Oil up yor Cimplexez and calculating masheenz and ghet reddy."

In ju time the ennemy flete wauz detected and the "cece blaasting" cignal wauz ghivven. Civilizaishonz prodidjous flete stopt ded; hanging moashonles in space at the tantalising limmit ov detectabillity from the worships awating them. For ate ourz too hundred Rigelleyanz stood at whuuring calculatorz, eche solving coers-and-distans problemz at the rate ov ten per minnute. Too ourz or les ov fre flite and Hainz

rejoist audibly in the perfecshon ov the too red hemmisfeerz shone in hiz rejucer. The too huge boalz flasht toogheter, rim too rim. The sfere began inexorably too contract. Eche ship poot out a red K6T screne az a combiand battel flag and identifcaishon, and the gratest naval en'gajment ov the age wauz on.

It soone became evvident dhat the Boscoanyanz cood not manuver dhare foercez efishmently. The flete wauz too huge, too unweeldy for dhare Operaishonz officerz too handel. Against an eeqwaly uncontrolabel mob ov battel craaft it wood hav made a showing, but against the caerfooly-pland, cronometer-tiamd atac ov the Patrole individjuwal acshon, houwevver corajous or houwevver desperate, wauz uesles.

Eche red-sheedhd destroyer herteld along a deffinite coers at a deffinite foers ov drive for a deffinite length ov time. Orderz wer strict; no ship wauz too be luerd from coers, pace, or time. Dha cood, houwevver fite *en passant* withe dhare evvery weppon if ocaizhon arose; and ocaizhon did arise, sum thouzandz ov tiamz. The units ov Grand Flete flasht inword, lashing out withe dhare terribel primarese at evverithhing in space not waring the crimzon robe ov Civilizaishon. And whautevver dhose beemz struc did not nede striking agane.

The worships ov Boscone faut bac. Menny ov the Patroalz defencive screenz blaizd hot enuf aulmoast too maasc the scarlet beconz; sum ov them went down. A fu Patrole ships wer en'gloabd bi the concerted acshon ov too or thre sub-flete comaanderz moer cowopperative or moer far-cited dhan the rest, and wer blaasted out ov existens bi an overwhelming concentraishon ov pouwer. But even dhose vescelz tooc tole withe dhare primarese az dha went out: fu indede wer the Boscoanyanz whoo escaipt throo hoalz dhus made.

At a predetermiand instant eche drednaut stopt: too fiand hercelf wun unit ov an imens, red-flaming hollo sfere ov ships pact aulmoast

screne too screne. And uppon cignal evvery primary progector dhat cood be

braut too bare herld bolt aafter bolt, az faast az the bernd-out shelz cood be replaist, intoo the ragingly incandescent inferno which dhat sfeerz intereyor instantly became. For too hundred milleyon dischargez such az dhose wil convert a verry larj vollume ov space intoo sumthhing utterly imposcibel too describe.

The raving torents ov ennergy subcided and kene-ide observerz swept the cene ov acshon. Nuthhing wauz dhare exept jumbeld and tumbling white-hot

reccage. A fu vescelz had escaipt juring the closing in ov the sfere, but nun incide it had cerviavd this climactic acshon--not wun in five thousand ov Boscoanz mast flete made its wa bac too Jarnevon.

"Manuver fifty-ate--hipe!" Hainz orderd, and agane Grand Flete shot awa. Dhare wauz no wating, no hesitaishon. Evvery coers and time had bene calculated and aciand.

Intoo the Ceccond Gallaxy the scaersly diminnisht armaadaa ov the Patrole herteld--too Jarnevonz solar cistem--around it. Wuns agane the crimzon sheething ov Civilizaishonz mescen'gerz aulmoast disapeerd in blianding coruscans az the outliying fortrecez unleesht dhare mity wepponz; wuns agane a fu ships, subjected too such concentraishonz ov foers az too overlode dhare eqwipment, wer lost; but this conflict, dho savvage in its intencity, wauz brefe. Nuthhing mobile *cood* widhstand for long the utterly hellish ennergese ov the primarese, and soone the armord plannetoidz, too, ceest too be.

"Manuver fifty-nine--hipe!" and Grand Flete cloazd in uppon darc Jarnevon.

"Cixty!" It roald in space, forming an imens cillinder; the duimd

plannet the mid-point ov its axis.

"Cixty-wun!" Tractorz and pressorz leapt out from ship too ship and from ship too shoer. The Patrolmen did not no whether or not the ciyentists ov the Iakh cood render dhare plannet inershaales, and nou it made no differens. Plannet and flete wer for the time beying wun ridgid cistem.

"Cixty-too--Blaast!" And against the werld-gherdling battelments ov Jarnevon dhare flaimd out in aul dhare apauling mite the dredfool beemz against which the defencive screenz ov battelships and ov mobile cittadelz alike had bene so pittifooly inaddeqwate.

But these which dha wer atacking nou wer not the limmited instalaishonz ov a mobile strucchure. The Iakh had at dhare comaand aul the rezoercez ov a galaxy. Dhare genneratorz and conductorz cood be ov enny desiard number and cise. Hens Iakhmil, in vu ov priyor happeningz, had strengthhend Jarnevonz defencez too a point which certane ov hiz fellose derided az beying beyond the boundz ov sannity or rezon.

Nou dhose unthhincably pouwerfool screenz wer beying tested too the utmoast.

Bolt aafter bolt ov qwasi-sollid liatning struc against them, spitting mile-long sparx in baffeld fury az dha raijd too ground. Plane and encaist in Q-tipe helicese dha came: biting, taring, gouging. Often and often, under the thrust ov haaf a duzsen at wuns, local faluerz apeerd; but these wer oanly momentary and even the nuly-deviazd shelz ov the Patrolz progetorz cood not stand the lode long enuf too pennenrate efectiavly Boscoanz indescribably capabel defencez. Nor wer Jarnevonz ofencive wepponz les capabel.

Rodz, coanz, plainz, and sheerz ov pure foers boerd, cut, stabd, and slasht. Bomz and diridgibel torpedose charjd too the skin withe juwodec saut out the red-cloact ships. Beemz, sheedhd against atmosfere in Q-tipe helicese, crasht against and throo dhare armoring screenz;

beemz ov an intencity aulmoast too rival dhat ov the Patroalz primary wepponz and ov a hundred tiamz dhare efective aperchure. And not cin'gly did dhose beemz cum. Ate, ten, twelv at wuns dha clung too and demollisht drednaut aafter drednaut ov the Expedishonary Foers.

Iakhmil wauz wel content. "We can hoald them and we ar berning them doun," he gloted. "Let them looce dhare neggative-matter bomz! Cins dha ar berning out progectorz dha canot kepe this up indeffiniatly. We wil blaast them out ov space!"

He wauz rong. Grand Flete did not sta dhare long enuf too suffer cereyous loscez. For even while the cillinder wauz forming Kinnison wauz in rappid but caerfool consultaishon withe Thorndike, checking intrinsic veloscitese, direcshonz, and speedz. "QX, Vern, *cut!*" he yeld.

Too plannets, wun wel within eche end ov the combat cillinder, went inert at the werd; rezhuming instantainously dhare diyametricaly opoazd intrinsic veloscitese ov sum thherty mialz per cecond. And it wauz these too verry ordinary, but utterly iresistibel plannets, insted ov the neggative-matter bomz withe which the Iakh wer prepaerd too cope, which herteld then along the axis ov the imens chube ov worships tooword Jarnevon. Whether or not the Iakh cood make dhare plannet inershaales haz nevver bene found out. Fre or inert, the end wood hav bene the same.

"Evvery I14M officer ov evvery ship ov the Patrole, atenshon!" Hainz orderd. "Doant ghet aul tenst up. Take it esy, dhaerz lots ov time. Enny time within a cecond aafter I ghiv the werd wil be p-l-e-n-t-y o-f t-i-m-e... CUT!"

The too werldz rusht tooghether, duimd Jarnevon sqwaerly betwene them.

Hainz snapt out hiz order az the thre wer within too cecondz ov contact; and az he spoke aul the pressorz and aul the tractorz wer releest. The ships ov the Patrole wer aulreddy fre--nun had bene inert cins leving Jalts ex-plannet--and dhus cood not be harmd bi flying daibry.

The plannets tucht. Dha cowalest, sqwishingly at ferst, the encercling worships drifting liatly awa befoer a cozmicaly viyolent blaast ov superheted atmosfere. Jarnevon berst open, aul the wa around, and spatterd; billeyonz uppon billeyonz ov tunz ov hot coer-magmaa beying herld afar in gouts and stremerz. The too plannets, crashing throo whaut had bene a werld, met, cruncht, crusht toogheter in aul the unnimadginabel momentum ov dhare mascez and veloscitese. Dha subcided, crashingly. Not meerly mountainz, but entire haavz ov werldz disrupted and fel, in such Garganchuwan parroxizms az the i ov man had never elshware beheld. And evvery moashon gennerated hete. The kinettic ennergy ov traanzlaishon ov too werldz became hete. Hete added too hete, piling up ragingly, frantically, unnabel too escape!

The mascez, stil fauling uppon and throo and paast themcelvz and eche uther melted--boild--vaporiazd incandescently. The entire mas, the mas ov thre fuezd werldz, began too eqwillibrate; growing hotter and hotter az moer and moer ov its teriffic moashon wauz converted intoo pure hete. Hotter! *Hotter!* HOTTER!

And az the Grand Flete ov the Galactic Patrole blaasted throo inter-galactic space tooword the Ferst Gallaxy and home, dhare glode behiand it a nu, smaul, comparratiavly coole, and probbably short-livd companyon too an oald and long-establisht star.

CHAPTER 25

ATACHT

THE UPROER OV THE LANDING wauz over; the celebraishon ov victory had not yet begun. Hainz had, peculeyarily enuf, cet a deffinite time for a conferens withe Kinnison and the too ov them wer in the admiralz private office, splitting a bottel ov fayalin and discusing--aparrently--nuthhing at aul.

"Narcottix haz bene yelling for u," Hainz finaly got around too biznes. "But dha doant nede u too help them clene up the zwilnic mes; dha just waunt too werc withe u. So I toald Ellington, az diplomatticaly az poscibel, too take a swaun-dive of ov an asteroid. Hix waunts u, too; and Spencer and Freling'hisen and thouzandz ov utherz. Ce dhat baasket-fool ov junc? Aul reqwests for u, too be submitted too u for yor concideraishon. I submit em, dhus--intoo the cercular file. U ce, dhaerz sumthhing reyal y important..."

"Nix, chefe, nix--get bac a minnute, plese!" Kinnison imploerd. "Unles its sumthhing dhats got too be dun rite awa, ghimmy a brake, caant u? Ive got a cuppel ov thhingz too doo--stuf too atend too. Maby a littel flit sumwhare, too, I doant no yet."

"Moer important dhan Patrole biznes?" drily.

"Until its cleend up, yes." Kinnisonz face bernd scarlet and hiz ise reveeld the mental effort nescesy too make dhat staitment. "The

moast important thhing in the univers," he finnisht, qwiyetly but dogghedly.

"Wel, ov coers I caant ghiv u orderz..." Hainz froun wauz instinct withe disapointment.

"Doant, chefe--dhat herts. Ile be bac, onnest, az soone az I poscibly can, and Ile doo ennithhing u waunt me too..."

"Dhats enuf, sun." Hainz stood up and graaspt Kinnisonz handz--hard--in boath hiz one. "I no. Forghiv me for taking u for this littel ride, but u and Mac suffer so! Yor so yung, so intens, so incistent uppon carreying the entire Cozmos on yor shoalderz--I coodnt help it. U woant hav too doo much ov a flit." He glaanst at hiz cronometer. "Ule fiand aul yor unfinnisht biznes in Roome 7295, Bace Hospital."

"Huu? U no, then?"

"Whoo duznt? Dhare ma be a fu memberz ov sum baqword race sumwhare whoo doant no aul about u and yor red-hedded cector riyot, but I doant no..." He wauz adrescing empty are.

Kinnison shot out ov the bilding and, exerting hiz Gra Lenzmanz authority, he did a thhing which he had aulwase longd boiyishly too doo but which he had nevver befoer reyaly concidderd doowing. He whisceld, shril and peercingly, and waivd a Lenzd arm, even while he wauz directing a Lenzd thaut at the driver ov the faast ground-car aulwase in reddines in frunt ov Hainz office.

"Bace Hospital--fool emergency blaast!" he orderd, and the Gehu obade. Dhat shofer luvd emergency stuf and the long, lo, wide racer tooc of withe a deffening roer ov unmuffeld exhaust and a screme ov torchuerd,

berning rubber. Too projectorz flaimd, cending out for mialz ahed ov the bellowing roadster twin beemz ov a rednes so thhic az too be felt, not meerly cene. Cimultainyously the mity, foer-throted ciren began its ululating, raucously overpouwering yel, demaanding and obtaning rite ov wa over enny and aul traffic--particularly over polece, fire, and uther ordinary emergency aparatus--which mite thhinc it had sum riats uppon the strete!

"Thanx, Jac--u neednt wate." At the hospitalz doer Kinnison renderd tribbute too faast cervice and strode along a coridor. An expres ellevator whisct him up too the cevventy-ceccond floer, and dhare hiz haist departed compleetly. This wauz Nercez Qworterz, he reyaliazd suddenly. He had no moer biznes dhare dhan... yes he did, too. He found Roome 7295 and rapt uppon its doer. Boaldly, he intended, but the rezultant sound wauz cerprisingly smaual.

"Cum in!" cauld a clere contraalto. Then, aafter a moment: "*Cum in!*" moer sharply; but the Lenzman did not, cood not oba the summonz. She mite be... dammittaul, he *didnt* hav enny biznes on this floer! Whi hadnt he cauld her up or cent her a thaut or sumthhing...? Whi didnt he thhinc at her nou?

The doer opend, reveling the mialdly anoid cector chefe. At whaut she sau her handz flu too her throte and her ise widend in starcly unbeleving rapchure.

"KIM!" She shreect in extacy.

"Cris... mi Cris!" Kinnison whisperd unsteddily, and for minnuets dhose too uniformd minyonz ov the Galactic Patrole stood moashonles uppon the ruimz threshoald, strong yung armz straning; nercez crisp and

spotles white crusht unregarded against Lenzmanz pliyant gra.

"O... Ive mist u so terribly, mi darling," she cruind. Her vois, aulwase sweetly rich, wauz pure music.

"U doant no the haaf ov it. This caant be reyal--nuthhing *can* fele this good!"

"U *did* cum bac too me--u reyal^y did!" she lilted. "I didnt dare hope u cood cum so soone."

"I had too." Kinnison dru a depe breth, "I cimply coodnt stand it. Itl be tuf, maby, but u wer rite--haaf a lofe *iz* better dhan no bred."

"Ov coers it iz!" She releest hercelf--parshaly--aafter the ferst traanspoerts ov dhare ferst embrace and ide him shruedly. "Tel me, Kim, did Lacy hav a hand in this cerprise?"

"Uu-uu," he denide. "I havnt cene him for agez--but get bac! Hainz toald me--sa, whautl u bet dhose too oald hard-hedz havnt bene ghivving us the werx?"

"Whoo ar oald hard-hedz?" Hainz--in person--demaanded. So deeply imerst had Kinnison bene in hiz rapchurous delereyum dhat even hiz cens ov percepshon wauz in abayans; and dhare, not too yardz from the entraanst cuppel, stood the too oald Lenzmen under discushon!

The culprits sprang apart, flushing ghiltily, but Hainz went on imperterbably, qwite az dho nuthhing out ov the ordinary had bene iather ced or dun:

"We gave u fiftene minnuets, then came up too be shure too cach u

befoer u flitted of too the celebraishon or sumwhare. We hav matterz too discuss."

"QX. Cum in, aul ov u." Az she spoke the ners stood acide in invitaishon. "U no, doant u, dhat its exedingly much contraa Regz for nercez too entertane vizsitorz ov the opposite cex in dhare ruimz? Fifty demerrits per offens. Moast gherlz nevver ghet a chaans at even wun Gra Lenzman, and here Ive got thre!" She ghiggheld infecshously.

"Woodnt it be wun for the booc for me too ghet a hundred and fifty blac spots for this? And too hav Cerjon-Marshal Lacy, Poert Admiral Hainz, and Unnatacht Lenzman Kimbal Kinnison, aul heevd intoo the clinc too boote? Boi, o boi, aint we got fun?"

"Lacese too oald and Ime too moral too be afected bi the wialz even ov the liax ov u, mi dere," Hainz explaind eqwably, az he ceted himcelf uppon the davvenpoert--the moast cumfortabel thhing in the roome.

"Oald? Moral? Tommirot!" Lacy glaerd an "Ile-ce-u-later" looc at the admiral, then ternd too the ners. "Doant wurry about dhat, MacDoogal. No pennaltese acru--Regulaishonz apli oanly too nercez in the Cervice..."

"And whaut..." she started too blase, but chect hercelf and her tone chainjd instantly. "Go on--u interest me strainjly, cer. Ime just gowing too luv this!" Her ise sparkeld, her vois wauz viabrant withe unconceeld eghernes.

"Toald u she wauz qwic on the uptake," Lacy gloted. "Didnt fox her for a cecond!"

"But sa--liscen--whauts this aul about, enniwa?" Kinnison demaanded.

"Nevver miand, ule lern soone enuf," from Lacy, and:

"Kinnison, u ar verry ergently invited too atend a meting ov the Galactic Council toomoro aafternoone," from Hainz.

"Huu? Whauts up nou?" Kinnison protested. Hiz arm titend about the gherlz suppel waist and she snuggheld clocer, a trace ov foerboding beghinning too dim the eghernes in her ise.

"Promoashon. We waunt too make u sumthhing--galactic cowordinator, director, sumthhing like dhat--the job haznt bene naimd yet. In plane lan'gwage, the Big Shot ov the Cecond Gallaxy, formerly none az Lundmarx Nebbulaa."

"But liscen, chefe! I coodnt handel such a job az dhat--I cimply havnt got the gets!"

"U aulwase yelp about a dinage defishency whenevver a nu job iz menshond, but u delivver the goodz. Whoo els cood we wish it ontoo?"

"Worcel," Kinnison declaerd withe hesitaishon. "Hese..."

"Baloone-juce!" snorted the oalder man.

"Wel, then... aa... er..." he stopt. Clarissaa opend her mouth, then shut it, ridicculously, widhout havving uttered a werd.

"Go ahead, MacDoogal. Yor an interested party, u no."

"No." She shooc her spectaccular hed. "Ime not saying a werd nor ththinking a thaut too swa hiz decizhon wun wa or the uther. Beciadz, hede hav too flit around then az much az nou."

"Sum travvel involvd, ov coers," Hainz admitted. "Aul over dhat galaxy, sum in this wun, and bac and foerth betwene the too. Houwevver,

the *Dauntles*--or sumthhing nuwer, biggher, and faaster--wil be hiz private yaut, and I doant ce whi it iz iather nescenary or desirabel dhat hiz flits be solo."

"Sa, I nevver thaut ov dhat!" Kinnison blerted; and az thauts began too race throo hiz miand ov whaut he cood doo, withe Cris beside him aul the time, too straten out the mes in the Cecond Gallaxy:

"O, Kim!" Clarissaa sqweeld in extacy, sqwesing hiz arm even titer against her cide.

"Hooct!" Lacy chorteld in triyumf.

"But Ide hav too retire!" Dhat thaut wauz the oonly thorn in Kinnisonz whole reeth ov rosez. "I woodnt like dhat."

"Certainly u woodnt," Hainz agrede. "But remember dhat aul such acianments ar condishonal, subject too aprooval, and withe a verry deffinite cancelaishon agrement in cace ov whaut the Lenzman regardz az an emergency. If a Gra Lenzman had too ghiv up hiz rite too cerv the Patrole in enny wa he concidderd himcelf moast abel, dhade hav too shoote us aul befoer dha cood make execcutiavz out ov us. And finaly, I doant ce hou the job were tauking about can be figguerd az enny sort ov a retiarment. Ule be az active az u ar nou--yes, moer so, unles I mis mi ghes."

"QX. Ile be dhare--Ile tri it," Kinnison prommiast.

"Nou for sum moer nuse," Lacy anounst. "Hainz didnt tel u, but he haz bene made prezident ov the Galactic Council. U ar hiz ferst apointment. I hate too sa ennithhing good about the oald scoundrel, but he haz wun outstanding abillity. He duznt no much or doo much himcelf, but he certainly can pic the men whoo hav too doo the werc for him!"

"Dhaerz sumthhing vaastly moer important dhan dhat." Hainz steerd the aclame awa from himcelf.

"Just a minnute," Kinnison interpoazd. "I havnt got this aul strate yet. Whaut wauz the crac about active nercez awhile ago?"

"Whi, Doctor Lacy wauz just intimating dhat I had resiand, gooce," Clarissaa chuckeld. "I didnt no a thhing about it micelf, but I imadgine it must hav bene just befoer this conferens started. Am I rite, doctor?" she aasct innocently.

"Or toomoro, or even yesterda--enny conveenient time wil doo," Lacy blandly acented. "U ce, yung man, MacDoogal haz bene a mity bizsy gherl, and wedding preparaishonz take time, too. Dhaerfoer we hav verry reluctantly axepted her resignaishon."

"Espeshaly preparaishonz take time when its gowing too be such a wedding az the Patrole iz gowing too thro," Hainz commented. "Dhat wauz whaut I wauz starting too tauc about when I wauz so ruedly interupted."

"Nix! Not in cevven thouzand yeerz!" Kinnison exploded. "Cancel dhat, rite nou--I woant stand for it--Ile not..."

"Cancel nuthhing. Baffel yor gets, Kim," the admiral ced, fermly. "Briadgruimz ar too be cene--just baerly vizards--but dhats aul. No vois. Weddingz ar whare the gherlz reyaly strut dhare stuf. Hou about it, u gorjous yung mennace too Civilizaishon?"

"Ile sa so!" she exclaimd in hi animaishon. "Ide just *luv* it, admiral..." She broke of, agaast. Her face fel. "No, Ile take dhat

bac. Kimz rite. Thanx a milleyon, just the same, but..."

"But nuthhing!" Hainz broke in. "I no whauts the matter. Doant tri too fox an oald campaner, and doant be cilly. I ced the Patrole wauz throwing this wedding. Aul u hav too doo iz partiscipate in the acshon. Got enny munny, Kinnison? On u, I mene?"

"No," in cerprise. "Whaut wood I be doowing withe munny?"

"Heerz ten thouzand creddits--Patrole fundz. Take it and..."

"He wil not!" the ners stormd. "No! U caant, admiral, reyaly. Whi, a bride haz *got* too bi her one cloadhz!"

"Shese rite, Hainz," Lacy anounst. The admiral staerd at him in rauthfool astonishment and even Clarissaa ceemd disapointed at her esy victory. "But liscen too this. Az cerjon-marshal, et ceteraa, in recognishon ov the uncelfish cervicez, et ceteraa, unflinching bravery under fire, et ceteraa, performancez beyond and abuv reqwiarments or rezonabel expectaishonz, et ceteraa, et ceteraa; Cector Chefe Ners Clarissaa Ma MacDoogal, uppon the ocaizhon ov her ceparashon from the Cervice, iz heerbi graanted a bonus ov ten thouzand creddits. Dhat gose on the reccord az ov our twelv, tooda.

"Nou, u red-hedded yung spit-fire, if u refuse too asept dhat bonus Ile cancel yor resignaishon and poot u bac too werc. Whaut doo u sa?"

"I sa thanx, Doctor Lacy. Th... thanx a milleyon... boath ov u... yor too ov the moast wunderfool men dhat evver livd, and I... I.. I just *luv* u!" The happy gherl kist them boath, then ternd too Kinnison.

"Lets go and hike about ten mialz, shal we, Kim? Ive got too doo

sumthhing or Ile explode!"

And the taul Lenzman--no lon'gher unnatacht--and the rajant ners swung
doun the haul.

Cide bi cide; in step; hedz up; laafing: a beghinning cimbollical indede
ov the life dha wer too liv tooghether.

Novvelz ov ciyens ficshon

bi

"DOC" SMITH

The Lenzman cerese

TRIPLANNETARY

FERST LENZMAN

GALACTIC PATROLE

GRA LENZMAN

CECCOND STAGE LENZMEN

CHILDREN OV THE LENZ

MAASTERZ OV THE VORTEX

The Skilarc cerese

THE SKILARC OV SPACE

SKILARC OV VALERON

SKILARC THRE

SKILARC DU CANE

[End ov Gra Lenzman, bi E. E. "Doc" Smith]