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

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

ON THE  
GEM PLANNET

Bi CORDWANER SMITH

He saut help and a grate ghift  
ov wepponry. Whaut he found--but  
cood not kepe--wauz luv!

Concider the hors. He cliamd up throo the crevacez ov a clif ov  
gemz; the foers which drove him wauz the luv ov man.

Concider Mizser, the rezort plannet, whare the dictator Cuunel Wedder  
reformd the culchure so viyolently dhat whautevver had bene sluvvenly  
nou  
became atroashous.

Concider Genneveve, so rich dhat she wauz the prizzoner ov her one  
welth, so butifool dhat she wauz the victim ov her one buty, so  
intelligent dhat she nu dhare wauz nuthhing, nuthhing too be dun about

her fate.

Concider Casher ONele, a waunderer among the plannets, thhersting for justice and yet hoping in hiz innermoast thauts dhat "justice" wauz not just anuther werd for revenj.

Concider Pontoppidan, dhat litteral gem ov a plannet, whare the pepel wer too rich and bizsy too hav good foode, open are or much fun. Aul dha had wauz dimondz, roobese, toormaleenz and emmeraldz.

Ad these tooghether and u hav wun ov the strain'gest stoerese evver toald from werld too werld.

I

When Casher ONele came too Pontoppidan, he found dhat the cappital citty wauz aproapreyaitly cauld Andercen.

This wauz the cecond cenchury ov the Rediscovery ov Man. Pepel evveriwere had taken up oald naimz, oald lan'gwagez, oald customz, az faast az the robots and the underpepel cood retrieve the dataa from the rubbish ov forgotten starlains or the subcerface roowinz ov Manhome itcelf.

Casher nu this verry wel, too hiz bitter cost. Re-aculchuraishon had braut him revolueshon and exile. He came from the dri, butifool plannet ov Mizser. He wauz himcelf the neffu ov the roowind ex-rooler, Curaf, whose colecshon ov obgecshonabel boox had at wun time bene unmacht in the cetteld galaxy; he had stood acide, haaf-acenting,

when the cuunelz Ghibnaa and Wedder tooc over the plannet in the name  
ov  
reform; he had imploerd the Instroomentallity, vainly, for help when  
Wedder became a tirant; and nou he travveld amung the starz, loocking  
for men or wepponz whoo mite destroi Wedder and make Cahere agane  
the  
lucshureyous, happy citty which it wuns had bene.

He felt dhat hiz cauz wauz hoaples when he landed on Pontoppidan. The  
pepel wer worm-harted, frendly, intelligent, but dha had no  
motiavz too fite for, no wepponz too fite widh, no ennemese too fite  
against. Dha had littel public spirrit, such az Casher ONEle had  
cene bac on hiz native plannet ov Mizser. Dha wer concernd about  
littel thhingz.

Indede, at the time ov hiz arival, the Pontoppidanz wer wialdly  
exited about a hors.

A hors! Whoo wurrese about wun hors?

Casher ONEle himcelf ced so. "Whi bother about a hors? We hav  
lots ov them on Mizser. Dha ar foer-handed beyingz, ate tiamz the  
wate ov a man, widh oanly wun fin'gher on eche ov the foer handz. The  
fin'ghernale iz verry hevvy and permits them too run faast. Dhats whi our  
pepel hav them, for running."

"Whi run?" ced the Heredditary Dictator ov Pontoppidan. "Whi run, when  
u can fli? Doant u hav ornithopterz?"

"We doant run widh them," ced Casher indignantly. "We make them run  
against eche uther and then we pa prisez too the wun which runz  
faastest."

"But then," ced Phillip Vincent, the Heredditary Dictator, "u ghet a

verry ilodgical cichuwaishon. When u hav tride out these foer-fin'gherd beyingz, u no hou faast eche wun gose. So whaut? Whi bother?"

Hiz nece interupted. She wauz a fradgile littel thhing, smauler dhan Casher ONele liact wimmen too be. She had clere gra ise, wel-marct iabrouz, a verry artifishal qwaafer ov cilver-blond hare and the moast cencitive littel mouth he had evver cene. She conformd too the local fashon bi waring sum kiand ov pouder or face creme which wauz flesh-pinc in cullor but which had overtoanz ov lilac. On a woomman az oald az twenty-too, such a culloraishon wood hav made the warer looc like an oald hag, but on Genneveve it wauz plezzant, if raather startling. It gave the efect ov a happy chiald playing grone-up and doowing the job joifooly and wel. Casher nu dhat it wauz hard too tel agez in these of-trale plannets. Genneveve mite be a grand dame in her thherd or foerth rejuvenaishon.

He douted it, on cecond glaans. Whaut she ced wauz cencibel, yung, and pert:

"But unkel, dhare *animalz!*"

"I no dhat," he rumbeld.

"But unkel, doant u ce it?"

"Stop saying but unkel and tel me whaut u mene," grould the Dictator, verry fondly.

"Animalz ar aulwase *uncertane.*"

"Ov coers," ced the unkel.

"Dhat maix it a game, unkel," ced Genneveve. "Dhare nevver shure

dhat enny wun ov them wood doo the same thhing twice. Imadgine the exiatment--the butifool big beyingz from erth running around and around on dhare foer middel fin'gherz, the big fin'ghernailz making the gemz jump looce from the ground!"

"Ime not at aul shure its dhat wa. Beciadz, Mizser ma be cuvverd widh sumthhing vallubel, such az erth or sand, insted ov gemstoanz like the wunz we hav here on Pontoppidan. U no yor flouwer-pots widh dhare rich, worm, wet, soft erth?"

"Ov coers I doo, unkel. And I no whaut u pade for them. U wer verry gennerous. And stil ar," she added diplomatticaly, glaancing qwicly at Casher ONele too ce hou the familleyal piyety went acros widh the vizsitor.

"Were not dhat rich on Mizser. Its moastly sand, widh farmland along the Twelv Nialz, our big rivverz."

"Ive cene picchuerz ov rivverz," ced Genneveve. "Imadgine livving on a whole werld fool ov flouwerpot stuf!"

"Yor ghetting of the subject, darling. We wer wundering whi enniwun wood bring wun hors, just wun hors, too Pontoppidan. I supose u cood race a hors against himcelf, if u had a stopwauch. But wood it be fun? Wood u doo dhat, yung man?"

Casher ONele tride too be respectfool. "In mi home we uest too hav a lot ov horcez. Ive cene mi unkel time them wun bi wun."

"Yor unkel?" ced the Dictator interestedly. "Whoo wauz yor unkel dhat he had aul these foer-fin'gherd horcez running around? Dhare aul Erth animalz and verry expencive."

Casher felt the cumming ov the lo, slo blo he had met so menny tiamz befoer, rite from the whole outcide werld intoo the pit ov hiz stummac. "Mi unkel--" he stammerd--"mi unkel--I thaut u nu--wauz the oald Dictator ov Mizser, Curaf."

Fillip Vincent jumpt too hiz fete, verry liatly for so wel-flesht a man. The yung mistres, Genneveve, clucht at the throte ov her dres.

"Curaf!" cride the oald Dictator. "Curaf! We no about him, even here. But u wer supoast too be a Mizser paitreyot, not wun ov Curafs pepel."

"He duznt hav enny children--" Casher began too explane.

"I shood thinc not, not widh dhose habbits!" snapt the oald man.

--so Ime hiz neffu and hiz are. But Ime not trying too poot the Dictatorship bac, even dho I shood be dictator. I just waunt too ghet rid ov Cuunel Wedder. He haz roowind mi pepel, and I am looking for munny or wepponz or help too make mi home-werld fre." This wauz the point, Casher ONele nu, at which pepel iather started beleving him or did not. If dha did not, dhare wauz not much he cood doo about it. If dha did, he wauz shure too ghet sum cimpathhy. So far, no help. Just cimpathhy.

But the Instroomentallity, while refusing too take acshon against Cuunel Wedder, had ghivven yung Casher ONele an aul-werld travel paas--sumthhing which a hundred liaftiamz ov savingz cood not hav perchaist for the ordinary man. (Hiz obcene oald unkel had gon of too Sunvale, on Tsholla, the rezort plannet, too liv out hiz yeeرز betwene the caceno and the beche.) Casher ONele held the conshens ov

Mizzer in hiz hand. Oonly he, among the star travvelerz, caerd enuf too fite for the fredom ov the Twelv Nialz. Here, nou, in this roome, dhare wauz a terning point.

"I woant ghiv u ennithhing," ced the Hereditary Dictator, but he ced it in a frendly vois. Hiz nece started tugging at hiz sleve.

The oalder man went on. "Stop it, gherl. I woant ghiv u ennithhing, not if yor part ov dhat rotten lot ov Curafs, not unles--"

"Ennithhing, cer, ennithhing, just so dhat I ghet help or wepponz too go home too the Twelv Nialz!"

"Aul rite, then. Unles u open yor miand too me. Ime a good tellepath micelf."

"Open mi miand! Whautevver for?" The incon'groowous indecency ov it shoct Casher ONele. Hede had men and wimmen and guvvernments aasc a lot ov strainj thhingz from him, but no wun befoer had had the coald impudens too aasc him too open hiz miand. "And whi u?" he went on, "Whaut wood u ghet out ov it? Dhaerz nuthhing much in mi miand."

"Too make shure," ced the Hereditary Dictator, "dhat u ar not too onnest and sharp in yor beleefs. If yor pozsitive dhat u no whaut too doo, u mite be anuther Cuunel Wedder, pooting yor pepel throo a duzsen torments for a Utopeyaa which nevver qwite cumz troo. If u doant care at aul, u mite be like yor unkel. He did no reyal harm. He just stole hiz plannet bliand and he had sum extrordinary habbits which got him tauct about betwene the starz. He nevver kild a man in hiz life, did he?"

"No, cer," ced Casher ONele, "he nevver did." It releevd him too tel the wun littel good thhing about hiz unkel; dhare wauz so verry, verry littel which cood be ced in Curafs favor.

"I doant like slobbering oald libberteenz like yor unkel," ced Fillip Vincent, "but I doant hate them iather. Dha doant hert uther pepel much. Az a matter ov acchuwal fact, dha doant hert enniwun but themcelvz. Dha waist propperty, dho. Like these horcez u hav on Mizser. Wede nevver bring livving beyingz too this werld ov Pontoppidan, just too pla gaimz widh. And u no were not poor. Were no Oald North Australeyaa, but we hav a good incum here."

Dhat, thaut Casher ONele, iz the understaitment ov the yere, but he wauz a caerfool yung man widh a grate dele at stake, so he ced nuthhing.

The Dictator looct at him shruidly. He apreesheyated the vallu ov Cashertz tactfool cilens. Genneveve tugd at hiz sleve, but he fround her interupshon awa.

"If," ced the Heredditary Dictator, "*if*," he repeted, "u paas too tests, I wil ghiv u a grene rooby az big az mi hed. If mi Comitty wil alou me too doo so. But I thhinc I can tauc them around. Wun test iz dhat u let me pepe aul over yor miand, too make shure dhat I am not deling widh wun moer onnest foole. If yor too onnest, yor a foole and a dain'ger too mankiand. Ile ghiv u a dinner and ship u of-plannet az faast az I can. And the uther test iz--solv the puzsel ov this hors. The wun hors on Pontoppidan. Whi iz the annimal here? Whaut shood we doo widh it? If its good too ete, hou shood we cooc it? Or can we trade too sum uther werld, like yor plannet Mizser, which ceemz too cet a vallu on horcez?"

"Thanc u, cer--" ced Casher ONele.

"But, unkel--" ced Genneveve.

"Kepe qwiyet, mi darling, and let the yung man speke," ced the Dictator.

"--aul I wauz gowing too aasc, iz," ced Casher ONele, "whauts a grene rooby good for? I didnt even no dha came grene."

"Dhat, yung man, iz a Pontoppidan speshalty. We hav a geyollogy baist on ultraa-hevvy kemmistry. This plannet wauz wuns a fragment from a giyant plannet which imploded. The uce iz cimpel. Widh a grene rooby u can make a laser beme which wil boil awa yor citty ov Cahere in a cin'ghel swepe. We doant hav wepponz here and we doant beleve in them, so I woant ghiv u a weppon. Ule hav too travvel ferther too fiand a ship and too ghet the aparatus for mounting yor grene rooby. If I ghiv it too u. But u wil be wun moer step along in yor fite widh Cuunel Wedder."

"Thanc u, thanc u, moast onnorabel cer!" cride Casher ONele.

"But unkel," ced Genneveve, "u shoodnt hav pict dhose too thhingz becauz I no the aancerz."

"U no aul about him," ced the Hereditary Dictator, "bi sum meenz ov yor one?"

Genneveve flusht under her lilac-hude foundaishon creme. "I no enuf for us too no."

"Hou doo u no it, mi darling?"

"I just no," ced Genneveve.

Her unkel made no comment, but he smiald wiadly and indulgently az if he had herd dhat particcular frase befoer.

She stampst her foot. "And I no about the hors, too. *Aul* about it."

"Hav u cene it?"

"No."

"Hav u tauct too it?"

"Horcez doant tauc, unkel."

"Moast underpepel doo," he ced.

"This iznt an underperson, unkel. Its a plane unmodifide oald Erth annimal. It nevver did tauc."

"Then whaut doo u no, mi hunny?" The unkel wauz afecshonate, but dhare wauz the crackel ov impaishens under hiz vois.

"I taipt it. The whole thhing. The stoery ov the hors ov Pontoppidan. And Ive eddited it, too. I wauz gowing too sho it too u this morning, but yor staaf cent dhat yung man in."

Casher ONele looct hiz apollogese at Genneveve.

She did not notice him. Her ise wer on her unkel.

"Cins uve dun this much, we mite az wel ce it." He ternd too

the attendants. "Bring chaerz. And drinx. U no mine. The yung lady wil take te widh lemmon. Reyal te. Wil u hav coffy, yung man?"

"U hav coffy!" cride Casher ONele. Az soone az he ced it, he felt like a foole. Pontoppidan wauz a *rich* plannet. On moast werldz exchain'gez, coffy came out too about too man-yeerz per kelo. Here halftrax cruncht dhare wa throo gemz az dha went too lode up the freeqwent trading vescelz.

The chaerz wer poot in place. The drinx ariavd. The Hereditary Dictator had bene momentarily lost in a broun studdy, az dho he wer wundering about hiz prommice too Casher ONele. He had even mermerd too the yung man, "Our bargane standz? Nevver miand whaut mi nece cez." Casher had nodded vigorously. The oald man had gon bac too frouning at the cervants and did not relax until a tigher-man bounded intoo the roome, carreying a tra widh acrobattic precizhon. The chaerz wer aulreddy in place.

The faather held hiz necez chare for her az a comaand dhat she cit doun. He nodded Casher ONele intoo a chare on the uther cide ov himself.

He comaanded, "Dim the liats..."

The roome plunjd intoo cemmy-darcnes.

Widhout beying toald, the pepel tooc dhare placez imejaitly behiand the thre mane ceets and the underpepel percht or sat on benchez and tabelz behiand them. Verry littel wauz spoken. Casher ONele cood cens dhat Pontoppidan wauz a wel-run place. He began too wunder if the

Hereditary Dictator had much royal work left to do, if he could find that much over a cin'ghel hors. Perhaps aul he did wauz bos hiz nece and wauch the robots lode truc-loadz ov gemz intoo sax while the underpepel wade them, listed them and rote out the bilz for the customerz.

2

Dhare wauz no scene; this wauz a good mashene.

The planet Pontoppidan came intoo vu, its aerles briatnes ghivving strong hints ov the minneral ritchez which mite be found.

Here and dhare enormous doamz, such az the wun in which this pallace wauz located, came intoo vu.

Genneveevz one vois, gherlish, impulcive and yet didactic, rang out with the stoery ov her planet. It wauz az dho she had prepaerd the picchure not oonly for her one faather, but for of-werld vizsitorz az wel. (Bi Jone, dhats it! thaut Casher ONele. If dha doant raise much foode here, outside ov the hiadroponnix, and doant hav enny royal Pepel Placez, dha hav too trade: dhat duz mene vizsitorz, and menny, menny ov them.)

The stoery wauz interesting but the gherl herself wauz moer interesting. Her face shon in the shifting lite which the immaginez--a meter, perhaps a littel moer, from the floer--reflected across the roome. Casher ONele thaut dhat he had never befoer cene a woomman whoo so peculeyarily combiand intelligens and charm. She wauz gherl, gherl, gherl, aul the wa

throo; but she wauz aulso verry smart and pleezd widh beying smart. It betokend a happy life. He found himcelf glaancing covertly at her. Wuns he caut her glaancing, eeqwaly covertly, at him. The darcnes ov the cene enabeld them boath too paas it of az an axident widhout embarrasment.

Her vutape had cum too the stoery ov the *dipcese*, enormous canyonz which la like depe gashez on the cerface ov the plannet. Sum ov the cullor vuse wer spectaccular beyond belefe. Casher ONele, az the "apointed wun" ov Mizser, had had plenty ov time too waunder throo the non-salaishous parts ov hiz unkelz colecshonz, and he had cene picchuerz ov the moast notabel werldz.

Nevver had he cene ennithhing like this. Wun vu shode a suncet against a cix-killometer clif ov a matereyal which looct like sollid emmerald. The peculeyar brite sunshine ov Pontoppidanz smaul, pennetrating, lilac-hude sun ran like livving wauter over the prescipice ov gemz. Even the rejuest immagine, wun meter bi wun meter, wauz enuf too make him cach  
hiz breth.

The bottom ov the dipcy had vapor emerging in cureyous cilindrical collumz which ceemd too erode az dha reecht too or thre tiamz the hite ov a man. The recorded vois ov Genneveve wauz explaning dhat the verry thhin atmosfere ov Pontoppidan wood not be breedhabel for anuther 2,520 yeeرز, cins the cetlerz did not wish too sqwaunder dhare rezoercez on a lucshury like breething when the whole plannet oanly had 60,000 inhabbitants; dha wood raather go on widh maasx and use dhare welth in uther wase. Aafter aul, it wauz not az dho dha did not hav dhare doamd cittese, sum ov them menny killometerz in rajus. Beciadz the uezhuwal hiadroponnix, dha had even impoerted 7.2 hectaerz ov  
garden soil, 5.5 centimeterz depe, toogheter widh enuf wauter too make

the gardenz rich and fruitfool. Dha had baut wermz, too, at the price ov ate carats ov dimond per livving werm, in order too kepe the soil ov the gardenz looce and livving.

Genneveevz traanscriabd vois rang out widh pride az she listed these acumplishments ov her pepel, but a note ov sadnes came in when she reternd too the subject ov the dipcese. "... and dho we wood like too liv in them and devellop dhare atmosfeerz, we dare not. Dhare iz too much escape ov rajowactivvity. The ghiserz themcelvz ma or ma not be contamminated from wun our too the next. So we just looc at them. Not wun ov them haz evver bene cetteld, exept for the Hippy Dipcy, whare the hors came from. Wauch this next picchure."

The cammeraa sheerd up, up, up from the cerface ov the plannet. Whare it had waunderd amung mountainz ov dimondz and vallese ov toormaleenz, it nou tooc too the blu-blac ov nere, inner space. Wun ov the canyonz shode (from hi altichude) the grotesc pattern ov a human woommanz hips and legz, dho whaut mite hav bene the upper boddy wauz lost in a confuezhon ov broken hilz which ended in a brite aulmoast-iridescent plane too the North.

"Dhat," ced the reyal Genneveve, overriding her one vois on the screne, "iz the Hippy Dipcy. Dhare, ce the blu? Dhats the oanly lake on aul ov Pontoppidan. And here we drop too the hermits hous."

Casher ONele aulmoast felt vertigo az the cammeraa plummeted from of-plannet intoo the depths ov dhat imens canyon. The edgez ov the canyon aulmoast ceemd too moove like lips widh the plunj, opening and foalding inword too swaulo him up.

Suddenly dha wer becide a butifool littel lake.

A smaull hut stood beside the shoer.

In the doerwa dhare sat a man, ded.

Hiz boddy had bene dhare a long time; it wauz aulreddy mummifide.

Genneveevz recorded vois explaind the matter: "... in Norstrileyen lau and custom, dha toald him dhat hiz time had cum. Dha toald him too go too the Dying Hous, cins he wauz no lon'gher fit too liv. In Oald North Australeyaa, dha ar so rich dhat dha let evveriwun liv az long az he waunts, unles the oald person caant take rejuvenaishon enny moer, even widh stroone, and unles he or she ghets too be a reyal pest too the livving. If dhat happenz, dha ar invited too go too the Dying Hous, whare dha shreke and pant widh delereyous joi for weex or dase until dha finaly di ov an overlode ov shere happines and exiatment..."

Dhare wauz a hesitaishon, even in the recording. "We nevver nu whi this man refuezd. He stood of-plannet and ced dhat he had cene vuse ov the Hippy Dipy. He ced it wauz the moast butifool place on aul the werldz, and dhat he waunted too bild a cabbinn dhare, too liv alone, exept for hiz non-human frend. We thaut it wauz sum smaull pet.

When we toald him dhat the Hippy Dipy wauz verry dain'gerous, he ced dhat

this did not matter in the leest too him, cins he wauz oald and dying ennihou. Then he offerd too pa us twelv tiamz our plannetary incum if we wood lece him twelv hectaerz on the condishon ov absolute privacy. No picchuerz, no scannerz, no help, no vizsitorz. Just sollichude and cenery. Hiz name wauz Perenuu. Mi grate-grandfaather aasct

for nuthhing moer, exept the ritten traansfer ov credit. When he pade it, Perenuu even aasct dhat he be left alone aafter he wauz ded. Not even a vault rocket so dhat he cood iather orbit Pontoppidan forever or start a verry slo gerny too noawhare, the wa so menny pepel like it. So this iz our ferst picchure ov him. We tooc it when the lite

went of in the Pepel Roome and wun ov the tigher-men toald us dhat he wauz shure a human conshouses had cum too an end in the Hippy Dipy.

"And we nevver even thaut ov the pet. Aafter aul, we had nevver made a picchure ov him. This iz the wa he ariavd from Perenuuz shac."

A robot wauz shone in a controle roome, caulng exitedly in the oald Common Tung.

"Pepel, pepel! Jujment neded! Mooving obgett cumming out ov the Hippy Dipy. Obgett haz improper shape. Not a corect obgett. Shood not rise. Duz so ennihou. Pepel, tel me, pepel, tel me! Destroi or not destroi? This iz an improper obgett. It shood faul, not rise. Cumming out ov the Hippy Dipy."

A ferm clic shut of the robots chatter. A wel-shaipt woomman tooc over. From the nachure ov her werc and the liadh, smuidh tred widh which she wauct, Casher ONEle suspected dhat she wauz ov cat origin, but dhare wauz nuthhing in her dres or in her manner too sho dhat she wauz underpepel.

The woomman in the picchure lited a screne.

She muivd her handz in the are in frunt ov her, like a bliand person feling hiz wa throo open da.

The picchure on the inner screne came too rezolueshon.

A face shode in it.

Whaut a face! thaut Casher ONEle, and he herd the uther pepel around him in the vuwing roome.

The hors!

Imadgine a face like dhat ov a nuborn cat, thaut Casher. Mizser iz fool ov cats. But imadgine the face widh a huge mouth, widh big yello teeth--a nose long beyond imaginaishon. Imadgine ise which looc frendly. In the picchure dha wer roling bac and foerth widh exershon, but even dhare--when dha did not fele observd--dhare wauz nuthhing hostile about the cet ov the ise. Dha wer tame, companyonabel ise. Too ridicculous eertz stood hi, and a littel tuft ov goalden hare shode on the crest ov the hed betwene the eertz.

The vude cene wauz commical, too. The cat-woomman wauz az astonnisht az

the vuwerz. It wauz lucky dhat she had tucht the emergency swich, so dhat she not oonly sau the hors, but had recorded hercelf and her one acshonz while bringing him intoo vu.

Genneveve whisperd acros the chest ov the Hereditary Dictator: "Later we found he wauz a palomeno pony. Dhats a verry speshal kiand ov hors. And Perenuu had made him imortal, or aulmoast imortal."

"Sh-h!" ced her unkel.

The screne-within-the-screne shode the cat-woomman waving her handz in the are sum moer. The vu braudend.

The hors had foer handz and no legz, or foer legz and no handz, whitchevver wa u waunt too count them.

The hors wauz fiting hiz wa up a narro cleft ov roobese which led out ov the Hippy Dipy. He panted hevvely. The oxigen bottelz on hiz ciadz swung wialdly az he clamberd. He must hav cene sumthhing, perhaps the image ov the cat-woomman, becauz he ced a werd:

*Wha-ya-ya-ya-wha-ya!*

The cat-woomman in the nerer picchure spoke verry distinctly:

"Ghiv yor name, age, speeshese and authorrity for beying on this plannet."  
She spoke cleerly and widh the utmoast poscibel authorrity.

The hors obveyously herd her. Hiz eerz tipt forword. But hiz repli wauz the same az befoer:

*Wha-ya-ya!*

Casher ONele reyaliazd dhat he had follode the moode ov the picchure and had cene the hors the wa dhat the pepel on Pontoppidan wood hav cene him. On cecond thaut, the hors wauz nuthhing speshal, bi the standardz ov the Twelv Nialz or the Littel Hors Market in the citty ov Cahere. It wauz an oald pony stalleyon, no lon'gher fit for breeding and probbably not for riding iather. The hare had whitend amung the goald; the teeth wer woern. The annimal shode menny injurese and bernz. Its oonly uce wauz too be kild, cut up and fed too the racing dogz. But he ced nuthhing too the pepel around him. Dha wer stil spelbound bi the picchure.

The cat-woomman repeted:

"Yor name iznt Whayaya. Identifi yorcelf properly; name ferst."

The hors aancerd her widh the same werd in a hiyer ke.

Aparrently forghetting dhat she had recorded hercelf az wel az the emergency screne, the cat-woomman ced, "Ile caul reyal pepel if u doant aancer! Dhaiyl be anoid at beying botherd."

The hors roald hiz ise at her and ced nuthhing.

The cat-woomman prest an emergency button on the side ov the roome.

Wun

cood not ce the uther comunicaishon screne which lited up, but her end ov the conversaishon wauz plane.

"I waunt an ornithopter. Big wun. Emergency."

A mumbel from the side screne.

"Too go too the Hippy Dipy. Dhaerz an underperson dhare, and hese in so much trubbel dhat he woant tauc." From the screne beside her, the hors ceemd too hav understood the cens ov the message, if not the werdz, becauz he repeted:

*Wha-ya-wha-ya-ya!*

"Ce," ced the cat-woomman too the person in the uther screne, "dhats whaut hese doowing. Its obveyously an emergency."

The vois from the uther screne came throo, tinny and remote bi dubbel recording:

"Foole, yorcelf, cat-woomman! Nobody can fli an ornithopter intoo a dipy. Tel yor cilly frend too go bac too the floer ov the dipy and weeyl pic him up bi space rocket."

*Wha-ya-ya!* ced the hors impaishently.

"Hese not mi *frend*," ced the cat-woomman widh brisc anoiyans. "I

just discuvverd him a cuppel ov minnuets ago. Hese aasking for help,  
Enny  
iddeyot can ce dhat, even if we doant no hiz lan'gwage."

The picchure snapt of.

The next cene shode tiny human figguerz werking widh cerchliats at  
the top ov an imezhurably hi clif. Here and dhare, the beme ov the  
cerchlite caut the clif face; the traanzlucent fasceted matereyal ov  
the clif looct aulmoast like rose ov ery windose, dhare liats  
snapping on and of, az the cerchlite muivd.

Far doun dhare wauz a red glo. Fire came from incide the mountane.

Even widh telescoppic lensez the cammeraaman cood not ghet the cloce-up  
ov  
the glo. On wun cide dhare wauz the figgure ov the hors, hiz foer armz  
strecht at imposcibel an'ghelz az he held himcelf ferm in the crevas;  
on the uther cide ov the fire dhare wer the even tineyer figguerz ov  
men, laboring too fit sum sort ov sling too reche the hors.

For sum od rezon havving too doo widh the tecneex ov recording, the  
voicez came throo verry plainly, even the hevvy, tiard breething ov  
the oald hors. Nou and then he utterd wun ov the speshal hors-werdz  
which ceemd too be the limmit ov hiz vocabbulary. He wauz obveyously  
wauching the men, and wauz fermly perswaded ov dhare frendlines too  
him. Hiz larj, tame, yello ise roald wialdly in the lite ov the  
cerchlite and evvery time the hors looct doun, he ceemd too shudder.

Casher ONele found this entiarly understandabel. The bottom ov the  
Hippy Dipy wauz noawhare in cite; the hors, even widh nuthhing moer  
dhan the enlarjd fin'ghernailz ov hiz middel fin'gherz too help him clime,

had mannaïjd too ghet about foer ov the cix killometerz hite ov the clif face behiand him.

The vois ov a tigher-man sounded cleerly from among the shift ov men, underpepel and robots whoo wer struggling on the face ov the clif.

"Its a gambel, but not much ov a gambel. I wa cix hundred kelose micelf, and, doo u no, I doant thhinc Ive evver had too use mi fool strength cins I wauz a kitten. I no dhat I can jump acros the fire and help dhat thhing be moer cumfortabel. I can even ti a rope around him so dhat he woant slip and faul aafter aul the werc weve dun. And the werc hese dun, too," added the tigher-man grimly. "Perhaps I can just take him in mi armz and jump bac widh him. It wil be perfectly safe if u hav a saifty rope around eche ov us. Aafter aul, I nevvver sau a les prehencile crechure in mi life. U caant caul dhose fin'gherz ov hiz fin'gherz.' Dha looc like littel boxez ov bone, desiand for running around and not much good for ennithing els."

Dhare wauz a mermer ov uther voicez and then the comaand ov the supervizor. "Go ahed."

No wun wauz prepaerd for whaut happend next.

The cammeraaman got the tigher-man rite in the middel ov hiz frame, showing the atachment ov wun rope around the tigher-manz braud waist. The tigher-man wauz a moddifide tipe whoome the authorritese had not botherd too poot intoo human cozmestic form. He stil had hiz eerz on top ov hiz hed, yello and blac fer over hiz face, huge incizorz overlapping hiz lower jau and enormous antennaa-like whiskerz sticking out from hiz moostaash. He must hav bene thurroly moddifide incide, houwevver, becauz hiz temperament wauz caam, frendly and even a littel humorous; he must hav had a caerfooly re-dun mouth, becauz the utterans ov human speche came too him cleerly and widhout distorshon.

He jumpt--a mity jump, rite throo the top edgez ov the flame.

The hors sau him.

The hors jumpt too, aulmoast in the same moment, aulso throo the top ov the flame, gowing the uther wa.

The hors had feerd the tigher-man moer dhan he did the clif.

The hors landed rite in the groope ov werkerz. He tride not too hert them widh hiz flaling limz, but he did noc wun man--a troo man, at dhat--of the clif. The manz screme faded az he crasht intoo the impennetrabel darcnes belo.

The robots wer qwic. Havving no emoashonz exsept *on*, *of*, and *hi*, dha did not ghet exited. Dha had the hors trust and, befoer the troo men and underpepel had enshuerd dhare footting, dha had signald the crane opperator at the top ov the clif. The hors, hiz foer armz swinging limply, disapeerd upword.

The tigher-man jumpt bac throo the flaimz too the nerer lej. The picchure went of.

In the vuwing roome, the Heredditary Dictator Phillip Vincent stood up. He strecht, loocking around.

Genneveve looct at Casher ONele expectantly.

"Dhats the stoery," ced the Dictator mialdly. "Nou u solv it."

"Whare iz the hors nou?" ced Casher ONele.

"In the hospital, ov coers. Mi nece can take u too ce him."

3

Aafter a short, painfool and verry thurro peping ov hiz one miand bi the Hereditary Dictator, Casher ONele and Genneveve cet of for the hospital in which the hors wauz beying kept in bed. The pepel ov Pontoppidan had not none whaut els too doo widh him, so dha had plaist him under strong cedaishon and wer trying too fede him widh shooggar-wauter compoundz gowing directly intoo hiz vainz. Genneveve toald Casher dhat the hors wauz waisting awa.

Dha wauct too the hospital over ammethhist pebbelz.

Insted ov waring hiz space-sute, Casher woer a cerface helmet which enrich hiz oxigen. Hiz hoasts had not counted on hiz ghetting spelz ov uncontrolabel itching from the sharply rejuest atmosferric preshure. He did not dare menshon the matter, becauz he wauz stil hoping too ghet the grene rooby az a weppon in hiz private wor for the liberaishon ov the Twelv Nialz from the roole ov Cuunel Wedder. Whenever the itching became les dhan excruisheyating, he enjoid the wauc and the cumpany ov the slite, butifool gherl whoo acumpanede him across the feeldz ov juwelz too the hospital. (In later yeerz, he sumtiamz wunderd whaut mite hav happend. Wauz the itching a part ov hiz destiny, which saivd him for the fredom ov the citty ov Cahere and the plannet Mizser? Mite not the innocent brilleyant luvlines ov the gherl hav urtherwise tempted him too forsware hiz juty and sta forever on Pontoppidan?)

The gherl woer a nu kiand ov cozmectic for outdoer wauking--a worm peecheude pouder which let the natchural pinc ov her cheex sho throo. Her ise, he sau, wer a livving, depe gra; her ilashez, long; her smile, innocently provocative beyond aul ordinary belefe. It wauz a wunder dhat the Hereditary Dictator had not had too stop juwelz and merderz betwene yung men viying for her favor.

Dha finally reecht the hospital, just az Casher ONele thaut he cood stand it no lon'gher and wood hav too aasc Genneveve for sum kiand ov help or carrage too ghet indoerz and awa from the friatfool itching.

The bilding wauz underground.

The entrans wauz sumpshous. Dimondz and roobese, the cise ov bilding-brix on Mizser, had bene cet too frame the doerwa, which wauz aparrently enammeld stele. Curaf at hiz moast lavvish had nevver waisted munny on ennithing like this doer-frame. Genneveve sau hiz glaans.

"It did cost a lot ov creddots. We had too bring a bliand artist aul the wa from Olimpeyaa too paint dhat enammel-werc. The poor man. He spent moast ov hiz time triying too stele extraa gem-stoanz when he shood hav none dhat we pa justly and nevver alou enniwun too ghet awa widh steling."

"Whaut doo u doo?" aasct Casher ONele.

"We cut thheevz up in space, just at the ej ov the atmosfere. We hav moer mand boats in orbit dhan enny uther plannet I no ov. Maby Oald North Australeyaa haz moer, but, then, nobody evver ghets cloce enuf too Oald North Australeyaa too cum bac alive and tel."

Dha went on intoo the hospital.

A respectfool chefe cerjon incisted on keping them in the office and entertaning them widh te and confecshonery, when dha boath waunted too go ce the hors; common poliatnes prohibbited dhare pooshing throo. Finaly dha got paast the cerremony and intoo the roome in which the hors wauz kept.

Cloce up, dha cood ce hou much he had sufferd. Dhare wer cuts and abraizhuerz over aulmoast aul ov hiz boddy. Wun ov hiz huivz--the doctor toald them dhat wauz the corect name, *hoo fe*, for the big middel fin'ghernale on which he wauct--wauz split; the doctor had poot a cadmeyum-cilver bar throo it. The hors lifted hiz hed when dha enterd, but he sau dhat dha wer just moer pepel, not horcy pepel, so he poot hiz hed down, verry paishently.

"Whauts the prospect, doctor?" aasct Casher ONEle, terning awa from the annimal.

"Cood I aasc u, cer, a foolish qweschon ferst?"

Cerpriazd, Casher cood oanly sa yes.

"Yor an ONEle. Yor unkel iz Curaf. Hou doo u happen too be cauld Casher?"

"Dhats cimpel," laaft Casher. "This iz mi yung-man-name. On Mizser, evveriboddy ghets a baby name, which nobody usez. Then he ghets a nicname. Then he ghets a yung-man-name, baist on sum characteristic or sum frendly joke, until he pix out hiz carere. When he enterz hiz profeshon, he pix out hiz one carere name. If I libberate Mizser and overthro Cuunel Wedder, Ile hav too thhinc up a sutabel carere

name for micelf."

"But whi Casher,' cer?" percisted the doctor.

"When I wauz a littel boi and pepel aasct me whaut I waunted, I aulwase aasct for cash. I ghes dhat contraasted widh mi unkelz waistfoolnes, so dha cauld me Casher."

"But whaut iz cash? Wun ov yor crops?"

It wauz Casherz time too looc amaizd. "Cash iz munny. Paper creddots. Pepel paas them bac and foerth when dha bi thhingz."

"Here on Pontoppidan, aul the munny belongz too me. Aul ov it," ced Genneveve. "Mi unkel iz trusty for me. But I hav nevver bene aloud too tuch it or too spend it. Its aul just plannet biznes."

The doctor blinct respectfooly. "Nou this hors, cer, if u wil pardon mi aasking about yor name, iz a verry strainj cace. Fiseyolodgicaly he iz a pure erth tipe. He iz suted oanly for a vedgetabel diyet, but uthewise he iz a verry cloce rellative ov man. He haz a cin'ghel stummac and a verry larj cone-shaipt hart. Dhats whare the trubbel iz. The hart iz in bad condishon. He iz diying."

"Dying?" cride Genneveve.

"Dhats the sad, horribel part," ced the doctor. "He iz diying but he canot di. He cood go on like this for menny yeez. Perenuu waisted enuf stroone on this annimal too make a plannet imortal. Nou the annimal iz woern out but canot di."

Casher ONele let out a long, lo, ululating whiscel. Evveriboddy in the roome jumpt. He disregarded them. It wauz the whiscel he had uezd nere the stabelz, bac amung the Twelv Nialz, when he waunted too caul a

hors.

The hors nu it. The larj hed lifted. The ise roald at him so imploeringly dhat he expected teerz too faul from them, even dho he wauz pritty shure dhat horcez cood not lacrimate.

He sqwauted on the floer, cloce too the horcez hed, widh a hand on its mane.

"Qwic," he mermerd too the cerjon. "Ghet me a pece ov shooggar and an underperson-tellepath. The underperson-tellepath must not be ov carnivvorous origin."

The doctor looct schupid. He snapt "Shooggar" at an acistant but he sqwauted down next too Casher ONele and ced, "U wil hav too repete dhat about an underperson. This iz not an underperson hospital at aul. We hav verry fu ov them here. The hors iz here oanly bi comaand ov Hiz Exelency Phillip Vincent, whoo ced dhat the hors ov Perenuu shood be ghivven the best ov aul poscibel care. He even toald me," ced the doctor, "dhat if ennithhing rong happend too this hors, I wood ride patrole for it for the next aty yeerz. So Ile doo whaut I can. Doo u fiand me too taucative? Sum pepel doo. Whaut kiand ov an underperson doo u waunt?"

"I nede," ced Casher, verry caamly, "a telepathhic underperson, boath too fiand out whaut this hors waunts and too tel the hors dhat I am here too help him. Horcez ar vegetareyanz and dha doo not like mete-eterz. Doo u hav a vegetareyan underperson around the hospital?"

"We uest too hav sum sqwirrel-men," ced the chefe cerjon, "but when we chainjd the are cerculating cistem the sqwirrel-men went awa widh the oald eqwipment. I thhinc dha went too a mine. We hav tigher-men,

cat-men, and mi secretary iz a woolf."

"O, no!" ced Casher ONele. "Can u imadgine a cic hors confiding in a woolf?"

"Its no moer dhan u ar doowing," ced the cerjon, verry softly, glaancing up too ce if Genneveve wer in hering rainj, and aparrently judging dhat she wauz not. "The Hereditary Dictatorz here sumtiamz cut suspishous ghests too pecez on dhare wa of the plannet. Dhat iz, unles the ghests ar licenst, reggular traderz. U ar not. U mite be a spi, planning too rob us. Hou doo I no? I woodnt ghiv a dimond chip for yor chaancez ov beying alive next weke. Whaut doo u waunt too doo about the hors? Dhat mite ples the Dictator. And u mite liv."

Casher ONele wauz so staggherd bi the confidens ov the cerjon dhat he sqwauted dhare thhinking about himcelf, not about the paishent. The hors lict him, cemingly cencing dhat he neded sollace.

The cerjon had an ideyaa. "Horcez and dogz uest too go tooggether, didnt dha, bac in the oald dase ov Manhome, when aul the pepel livd on plannet Erth?"

"Ov coers," ced Casher. "We stil run them tooggether in hunts on Mizser, but under these nu lauz ov the Instroomentallity weve run out ov underpepel-crimminalz too hunt."

"I hav a good dog," ced the chefe cerjon. "She taux pritty wel, but she iz so cimpathhettic dhat she upcets the paishents bi luvving them too much. I hav her down in the cecond underbaisment tending the dish-sterilising mashenery."

"Bring her up," ced Casher in a whisper.

He rememberd dhat he did not nede too whisper about this, so he stood up and spoke too Genneveve:

"Dha hav found a good dog-tellepath whoo ma reche throo too the miand ov the hors. It ma ghiv us the aancer."

She poot her hand on hiz foerarm gently, widh the aprobatory geschure ov a princes. Her fin'gherz dug intoo hiz flesh. Wauz she wishing him wel against her unkelz habitchuwal tretchery, or wauz this meerly the impuls ov a kiand yung gherl whoo nu nuthhing ov the wa the werld wauz run?

4

The intervü went extreemly wel.

The dog-woomman wauz aulmoast perfectly humaniform. She looct like a tiard, cheerfool, woern-out oald woomman, not vallubel enuf too be ghivven the life-prolonging santaclaraaa drug cauld *stroone*. Werc had bene her life and she had had plenty ov it. Casher ONEle felt a twinj ov envy when he reyaliazd dhat happines gose bi the petty chaancez ov life and not bi the larj destiny. This dog-woomman, widh her haggard face and her stringy gra hare, had moer luv, happines and cimpathhy dhan Curaf had found widh hiz plezhuerz, Cuunel Wedder widh hiz pouwerz, or himcelf widh hiz croosade. Whi did life doo dhat? Wauz dhare no justice, evver? Whi shood a woern-out werthles oald underwoomman be happy when he wauz not?

"Nevver miand," she ced, "ule ghet over it and then u wil be happy."

"Over whaut?" he ced. "I didnt sa ennithhing."

"Ime not gowing too sa it," she retorted, mening dhat she wauz telepathic. "Yor a prizzoner ov yorcelf. Sum da u wil escape too unimportans and happines. Yor a good man. Yor trying too save yorcelf, but u reyaly *like* this hors."

"Ov coers I doo," ced Casher ONele. "Hese a brave oald hors, climing out ov dhat hel too ghet bac too pepel."

When he ced the werd *hel* her ise widend, but she ced nuthhing. In hiz miand, he sau the cine ov a fish scrauld on a darc waul and he felt her thhinc at him, *So u too no sumthhing ov the "darc wunder fool nollej" which iz not yet too be reveeld too aul mankiand?*

He thaut a cros bac at her and then ternd hiz thhinking too the hors, lest dhare teleppathhy be monnitord and strainj punnishments awate them both.

She spoke in werdz, "Shal we linc?"

"Linc," he ced.

Genneveve stept up. Her clere-cut, pritty, cencitive face wauz alite widh exiatment. "Cood I--cood I be cut in?"

"Whi not?" ced the dog-woomman, glaancing at him. He nodded. The thre ov them linct handz and then the dog-woomman poot her left hand on the foerhed ov the oald hors.

The sand splasht beneeth dhare fete az dha ran tooword Cahere. The delishous preshure ov a manz boddy wauz on dhare bax. The red ski ov Mizser gleemd over them. Dhare came the shout:

"Ime a hors, Ime a hors, Ime a hors!"

"Yor from Mizser," thaut Casher ONele, "from Cahere itcelf!"

"I doant no naimz," thaut the hors, "but yor from mi land. The land, the good land."

"Whaut ar u doowing here?"

"Diyng," thaut the hors. "Diyng for hundredz and thouzandz ov sundounz. The oald wun braut me. No riding, no running, no pepel. Just the oald wun and the smaul ground. I hav bene diyng cins I came here."

Casher ONele got a glimps ov Perenuu citting and wauching the hors, unconshous ov the croowelty and loanlines which he had inflicted on hiz larj pet bi making it imortal and then ghivving it no werc too doo.

"Doo u no whaut diyng iz?"

Thaut the hors promptly: "Certainly. No-hors."

"Doo u no whaut life iz?"

"Yes. Beyng a hors."

"Ime not a hors," thaut Casher ONele, "but I am alive."

"Doant complicate thhingz," thaut the hors at him, dho Casher

reyaliazd it wauz hiz one miand and not the horcez which suplide the werdz.

"Doo u waunt too di?"

"Too no-hors? Yes, if this roome, forevver, iz the end ov thhingz."

"Whaut wood u like better?" thaut Genneveve, and her thauts wer like a cascade ov nuly-minted cilver coinz fauling intoo aul dhare miandz: brilliyant, clene, brite, innocent.

The aancer wauz qwic: "Dert beneeth mi huivz, and wet are agane, and a man on mi bac."

The dog-woomman interupted: "Dere hors, u no me?"

"Yor a dog," thaut the hors. "Goo-oo-oo-ood dog!"

"Rite," thaut the happy oald slattern, "and I can tel these pepel hou too take care ov u. Slepe nou, and when u waken u wil be on the wa too happines."

She thaut the comaand *slepe* so pouwerfooly at the oald hors dhat Casher ONele and Genneveve boath started too faul unconshous and had too be caut bi the hospital atendants.

Az dha re-gatherd dhare wits, she wauz finnishing her comaandz too the cerjon. "--and poot about 40% supplementary oxigen intoo the are. Heeyl hav too hav a reyal person too ride him, but sum ov yor orbiting centrese wood raather ride a hors up dhare dhan doo nuthhing. U caant repare the hart. Doant tri it. Hipnocis wil take care ov the sand ov Mizser. Just lode hiz miand widh wun or too ov the draamaa-cuebz pact fool ov dezsert advenchure. Nou, doant u wurry about me. Ime

not gowing too clame enny credit, and Ime not gowing too ghiv u enny moer

sugeschonz. Pepel-man, u!" she laaft. "U can forghiv us dogz ennithhing, exopt for beying rite. It maix u fele infereyor for a fu minnuets. Nevver miand. Ime gowing bac dounstaerz too mi dishez. I luv them, I reyal doo. Good-bi, u pritty thhing," she ced too Genneveve. "And good-bi, waunderer! Good luc too u," she ced too Casher ONEle. "U wil remane mizserabel az long az u ceke justice, but when u ghiv up, richousnes wil cum too u and u wil be happy. Doant wurry. Yor yung and it woant hert u too suffer a fu moer yearz. Ueth iz an extreemly curabel disese, iznt it?"

She gave them a fool kertcy, like wun Lady ov the Instroomentality saying good-bi too anuther. Her rinkeld oald face wauz lit up widh smialz, in which happines wauz mixt widh a tineyest bit ov plafool mockery.

"Doant miand me, bos," she ced too the cerjon. "Dishez, here I cum." She swept out ov the roome.

"Ce whaut I mene?" ced the cerjon. "Shese so horibly happy! Hou can enniwun run a hospital if a dishwausher ghets aul over the place, making pepel happy? Wede be out ov jobz. Her ideyaaz wer good, dho."

Dha wer. Dha werct. Doun too the laast letter ov the dog-woommanz instrucshonz.

Dhare wauz argument from the council. Casher ONEle went along too ce them in ceshon.

Wun councilor, Bashnac, wauz particcularly vocifferous in obgeting too

enny acshon concerning the hors. "Cire," he cride, "cire! We doant even no the name ov the annimal! I must protest this acshon, when we doant no--"

"Dhat we doant," acented Phillip Vincent. "But whaut duz a name hav too doo widh it?"

"The hors haz no identity, not even the identity ov an annimal. It iz just a pile ov mete left over from the estate ov Perenuu. We shood kil the hors and ete the mete ourcelvz. Or, if we doo not waunt too ete the mete, then we shood cel it of-plannet. Dhare ar plenty ov pepelz around here whoo wood pa a pritty price for genuwine erth mete. Pa no atenshon too me, cire! U ar the Hereditary Dictator and I am nuthhing. I hav no pouwer, no propperty, nuthhing. I am at yor mercy. Aul I can tel u iz too follo yor one best interests. I hav oonly a vois. U canot reproche me for using mi vois when I am trying too help u, cire, can u? Dhats aul I am doowing, helping u. If u spend enny creddits at aul on this annimal u wil be doowing rong, rong, rong. We ar not a rich plannet. We hav too pa for expencive defencez just in order too sta alive. We canot even afoerd too pa for are dhat our children can go out and pla. And u waunt too spend munny on a hors which canot even tauc! I tel u, cire, this council iz gowing too vote against u, just too protect yor one interests and the interests ov the Onnorabel Genneveve az Evenchuwal Titel-hoalder ov aul Pontoppidan. U ar not gowing too ghet awa widh this, cire! We ar helples befoer yor pouwer, but we wil incist on advising u--"

"Here! Here!" cride cevveral ov the councilorz, not the leest dismade bi the slite froun ov the Hereditary Dictator.

"I wil take the werd," ced Phillip Vincent himcelf.

Cevveral had had dhare handz raizd, aasking for the floer. Wun obstinate man kept hiz hand up even when the Dictator anounst hiz

intenshon too speke. Phillip Vincent tooc note ov him, too:

"U can tauc when I am throo, if u waunt too."

He looct caamly around the roome, smiald imperceptibly at hiz nece, gave Casher ONele the brefest ov nodz, and then anounst:

"Gentelmen, its not the hors which iz on triyal. Its Pontoppidan. Its we whoo ar triying ourcelvz. And befoer whoome ar we triying ourcelvz, gentelmen? Eche ov us iz befoer dhat moast afool ov coerts, hiz one conspens.

"If we kil dhat hors, gentelmen, we wil not be doowing the hors a grate rong. He iz an oald annimal, and I doo not thhinc dhat he wil miand diying verry much, nou dhat he iz awa from the ordele ov loanlines which he feerd moer dhan deth. Aafter aul, he haz aulreddy had hiz grate triyumf--the clime up the clif ov gemz, the jump acros the volcannic vent, the rescu bi pepel whoome he waunted too fiand. The hors haz dun so wel dhat he iz reyaly beyond us. We can help him, a littel, or we can hert him, a littel; becide the imencity ov hiz acumplishment, we canot reyaly doo verry much iather wa.

"No, gentelmen, we ar not judging the cace ov the hors. We ar judging space. Whaut happenz too man when he muivz out intoo the Big Nuthhing? Doo we leve Oald Erth behiand? Whi did civilizaishon faul? Wil it faul agane? Iz civilizaishon a gun or a blaaster or a laser or a rocket? Iz it even a planofoming ship or a pinliter at hiz werc? U no az wel az I doo, gentelmen, dhat civilizaishon iz not whaut we can doo. If it had bene, dhare wood hav bene no faul ov Ainshent Man. Even in the Darc Agez dha had a fu fuezhon bomz, dha cood make sum smaul ghided miscialz and dha even had wepponz like the Cascaskeyaa Efect, which we hav nevver bene abel too rediscover. The Darc Agez

wernt darc becauz pepel lost tecneex or ciyens. Dha wer darc becauz pepel lost pepel. Its a lot ov werc too be human and its werc which must be kept up, or it beghinz too fade. Gentelmen, the hors judgez us.

"Take the werd, gentelmen. Civilizaishon iz itelf a ladese werd. Dhare wer female riterz in a cuntry cauld Fraans whoo made dhat werd poppular in the thherd cenchury befoer space travvel. Too be civilised ment for pepel too be tame, too be kiand, too be pollisht. If we kil this hors, we ar wiald. If we trete the hors gently, we ar tame. Gentelmen, I hav oonly wun witnes and dhat witnes wil utter oonly wun werd. Then u shal vote and vote frely."

Dhare wauz a mermer around the tabel at this anounsment. Fillip Vincent obveyously enjoid the exiatment he had creyated. He let them mermer on for a fool minnute or too befoer he slapt the tabel gently and ced, "Gentelmen, the witnes. Ar u reddy?"

Dhare wauz a mermer ov acent. Bashnac tride too sa, "Its stil a qweschon ov public fundz!" but hiz naborz shusht him. The tabel became qwiyet. Aul facez ternd tooword the Hereditary Dictator.

"Gentelmen, the testimony. Genneveve, iz this whaut u yorcelf toald me too sa? Iz civilizaishon aulwase a woommanz chois ferst, and oonly later a manz?"

"Yes," ced Genneveve, widh a happy, open smile.

The meting broke up amid laafter and aplauz.

A munth later Casher ONele sat in a roome in a mejum-cise planoforming liner. Dha wer out ov reche ov Pontoppidan. The Hereditary Dictator had not chainjd hiz miand and cut him down widh grene beemz. Casher had strainj memmorese, not bad wunz for a yung man.

He rememberd Genneveve weping in the garden.

"Ime romantic," she cride, and wiapt her ise on the sleve ov hiz cape. "Legaly Ime the oner ov this plannet, rich, pouwerfool, fre. But I caant leve here. Ime too important. I caant marry whoome I waunt too marry. Ime too important. Mi unkel caant doo whaut *he* waunts too doo--hese Hereditary Dictator and he aulwase must doo whaut the Council deciadz aafter weex ov chatter. I caant luv u. Yor a prins and a waunderer, widh travvelz and battelz and justice and strainj thhingz ahed ov u. I caant go. Ime too important. Ime too swete! Ime too nice; I hate, hate, hate micelf sumtiamz. Plese, Casher, cood u take a fliyer and run awa widh me intoo space?"

"Yor unkelz laserz cood cut us too pecez befoer we got out."

He held her handz and looct gently down intoo her face. At this moment he did not fele the feers, agrescive, happy glo which an abel yung man feelz in the prezsens ov a butifool and tender yung woomman. He felt sumthhing much strain'ger, softer, qwiyeter--an emoashon verry swete too the miand and restfool too the nervz. It wauz the cimpel, clere compashon ov wun person for anuther. He tooc a chaans for her sake, becauz the "darc nollej" wauz wunderfool but verry dain'gerous in the rong handz.

He tooc boath her butifool littel handz in herz, so dhat she looct up at him and reyaliazd dhat he wauz not gowing too kis her. Sumthhing about hiz staans made her reyalise dhat she wauz beying offerd a moer preshous ghift dhan a ski-lit romantic kis in a garden. Beciadz, it wauz just tutching helmets.

He ced too her, widh pashon and kiandnes in hiz vois:

"U remember dhat dog-woomman, the wun whoo werx widh the dishez in the hospital?"

"Ov coers. She wauz good and brite and happy, and helpt us aul."

"Go werc widh her, nou and then. Aasc her nuthhing. Tel her nuthhing. Just werc widh her at her masheenz. Tel her I ced so. Happines iz catching. U mite cach it. I thhinc I did micelf, a littel."

"I thhinc I understand u," ced Genneveve softly. "Casher, good-bi and good, good luc too u. Mi unkel expects us."

Tooghether dha went bac intoo the pallace.

Anuther memmory wauz the faerwel too Phillip Vincent, the Hereditary Dictator ov Pontoppidan. The caam, clene-shaven, ruddy, wel-flesht face looct at him widh benine regard. Casher ONEle felt moer respect for this man when he reyaliazd dhat ruithlesnes iz often the price ov pece, and vidgilans the price ov welth.

"Yor a clevver yung man. A verry clevver yung man. U ma win bac the pouwer ov yor unkel Curaf."

"I doant waunt dhat pouwer!" cride Casher ONele.

"I hav advice for u," ced the Hereditary Dictator, "and it iz good advice or I wood not be here too ghiv it. I hav lernd the polittical arts wel: urtherwise I wood not be alive. Doo not refuse pouwer. Just take it and use it wiazly. Doo not hide from yor wicked unkelz name. Oblitterate it. Take the name yorcelf and roole so wel dhat, in a fu deccaidz, no wun wil remember yor unkel. Just u. U ar yung. U caant win nou. But it iz in yor fate too gro and too triyumf. I no it. I am good at these thhingz. I hav ghivven u yor weppon. I am not tricking u. It iz pact saifly and u ma leve widh it."

Casher ONele wauz breething softly, beleving it aul, and triying too thhinc ov werdz too thanc the stout, pouwerfool oalder man when the dictator added, widh a littel laaf in hiz vois:

"Thanc u, too, for saving me munny. Uve livd up too yor name, Casher."

"Saivd u munny?"

"The alfalfaa. The hors waunted alfalfaa."

"O, dhat ideyaa!" ced Casher ONele. "It wauz obveyous. I doant deserv much credit for dhat."

"I didnt thhinc ov it," ced the Hereditary Dictator, "and mi staaf didnt iather. Were not schupid. Dhat shose u ar brite. U reyaliazd dhat Perenuu must hav had a foode converter too kepe the hors alive in the Hippy Dipcy. Aul we did wauz cet it too alfalfaa and we saivd ourcelvz the cost ov a shiplode ov hors foode twice a yere.

Were glad too save dhat credit. Were wel of here, but we doant like too waist thhingz. U ma bou too me nou, and leve."

Casher ONEle had dun so, widh wun laast glaans at the luvly Geneveve, standing fradgile and butifool beside her unkelz chare.

Hiz laast memmory wauz verry recent.

He had pade too hundred thousand credits for it, rite on this liner. He had found the Stop-Captane, boerd nou dhat the ship wauz in flite and the Go-Captane had taken over.

"Can u ghet me a telepathhic fix on a hors?"

"Whauts a hors?" ced the Go-Captane. "Whare iz it? Doo u waunt too pa for it?"

"A hors," ced Casher ONEle paishmently, "iz an unmodifide erth animal. Not underpepel. A big wun, but qwite intelligent. This wun iz in orbit rite around Pontoppidan. And I wil pa the uezhuwal price."

"A milleyon Erth credits," ced the Stop-Captane.

"Ridiculous!" cride Casher ONEle.

Dha cetteld on too hundred thousand credits for a good fix and ten thousand for the uce ov the ships eqwipment even if dhare wer falure. It wauz not a falure. The tecnishan wauz a snake-man: he wauz deft, coole, and superb at hiz job. In oonly a fu minnuets he paast the hedcet too Casher ONEle, saying poliatly, "This iz it, I thhinc."

It wauz. He had reecht rite intoo the horcez miand.

The endles sandz ov Mizser swam befoer Casher ONele. The long lianz ov the Twelv Nialz converjd in the distans. He gallopt steddily and pouwerfooly. Dhare wer uther horcez neerbi, uther riderz, uther thhingz, but he himcelf wauz consmous oonly ov the bete ov the huivz against the strong moist sand, the fermnes ov the apreeshative rider uppon hiz bac. Dimly, az in a halucinaishon, Casher ONele cood aulso ce the littel orbital ship in which the oald hors canterd in mid-are, widh an amuezd cadet citting on hiz bac. Up dhare, widh no wate, the oald woern-out hart wood be good for menny, menny yeerz. Then he sau the horcez parradice agane. The flash ov huivz threttend too overtake him, but he outran them aul. Dhare wauz the expectaishon ov a stabel at the end, a rubdoun, good succulent grene foode, and the glimps ov a filly in the morning.

The hors ov Pontoppidan felt extreemly wise. He had trusted *pepel*--pepel, the soers ov aul kiandnes, aul croowelty, aul pouwer amung the starz. And the pepel had bene good. The hors felt verry much hors agane. Casher felt the oald boddy coers along the rivverz ej like a dreme ov pouwer, like a compleeshon ov cervice, like an ultimate foolfilment ov companyonship.

[End ov On the Gem Plannet, bi Cordwaner Smith]

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

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

On the  
Storm Plannet

BI CORDWANER SMITH

Underpepel caant ghiv orderz too humanz.  
But this gherl wauz not oonly an underperson  
--she wauz imensly, friteningly moer!

I

"At too cevventy-five in the morning," ced the Admynnistrator too Casher ONEle, "u wil kil this gherl widh a nife. At too cevventy-cevven, a faast ground car wil pic u up and bring u bac here. Then the pouwer crooser wil be yorz. Iz dhat a dele?"

He held out hiz hand az if he waunted Casher ONEle too shake it then and dhare, making sum kiand ov an oath or bargane.

Casher did not slite the man, so he pict up hiz glaas and ced,  
"Lets drinc too the dele ferst."

The Admynnistratorz qwic, restles, darting ise looct Casher up and

doun verry suspishously. The worm ce-wet are blu throo the roome. The Admynnistrator ceemd wary, suspishous, alert, but underneeth hiz slite hostillity dhare wauz anuther emoashon, ov which Casher cood perceve just the ej. Fateghe widh its ruits in bottomles despare? Despare cet depe in irecuvverabel fateghe?

Dhat utther emoashon, which Casher cood baerly discern, wauz verry strainj indede. On aul hiz voiyagez bac and foerth throo the inhabbited werldz, Casher had met menny od tiaps ov men and wimmen. He had nevver cene ennithhing like this Admynnistrator befoer--brilleyant, erratic, boastfool. Hiz titel wauz "Mr. Comishoner" and he wauz an ex-Lord ov the Instroomentallity.

Dho no lon'gher a Lord, he nevvertheles represented the Instroomentallity on this plannet ov Henreyaadaa, whare the populaishon had dropt from six hundred milleyon personz doun too sum forty thousand. Indede, local guvvernment had disapeerd intoo limbo and this od man, widh the titel ov "Admynnistrator", wauz the oonly lau and civvil Authorrity which the plannet nu.

Nevvertheles, he had a cerplus pouwer crooser and Casher ONele wauz determiand too ghet dhat crooser az a part ov hiz long plot too retern too hiz home plannet ov Mizser and too uncete the userper, Cuunel Wedder.

The Admynnistrator staerd sharply, werily at Casher and then he, too, lifted hiz glaas. The grene twilite cullord hiz liccor and made it ceme like sum strainj poizon. It wauz oonly Erth-bigar, dho a

littel on the strong cide.

Widh a cip, oonly a cip, the oalder man relaxt a littel. "U ma be out too tric me, yung man. U ma thhinc I am an oald foole running an abandond plannet. U ma even be thhinking dhat killing this gherl iz sum kiand ov a crime. It iz not a crime at aul. I am the Admynnistrator ov Henreyaadaa and I hav orderd dhat gherl kild evvery yere for the laast aty yeeرز. She iznt even a gherl, too start widh. Just an underperson. Sum kiand ov an annimal ternd intoo a domestic cervant. I can apoint u a depputy sherrif, if u like. Or chefe ov detectiavz. Dhat mite be better. I havnt had a chefe ov detectiavz for a hundred yeeرز and moer. U ar mi chefe ov detectiavz. Go in toomorro. The hous iz not hard too fiand. Its the bigghest and best hous left on this plannet. Go in toomorro morning. Aasc for her maaster and be shure dhat u use the corect titel, Mister and Oner Murra Maddigan.' The robots wil tel u too kepe out. If u percist, she wil cum too the doer. Dhats when u wil stab her throo the hart, rite dhare in the doerwa. Mi ground car wil race up wun metric minnute later. U jump in and cum bac here. Weve bene throo this befoer. Whi doant u agry? Doant u no whoo I am?"

"I no perfectly wel," smiald Casher ONele, "whoo u ar, Mr. Comishoner and Admynnistrator. U ar the onnorabel Rankin Mikeljon, wuns ov Erth Too. Aafter aul, the Instroomentallity itself gave me a permit too land on this plannet on private biznes. Dha nu whoo *I* wauz, too, and whaut I waunted. Dhaerz sumthhing funny about aul this. Whi shood u ghiv me a pouwer crooser--the best ship, u yorcelf sa, in yor whole flete--just for killing wun moddifide annimal which loox and taux like a gherl? Whi me? Whi the vizsitor? Whi the man from of-werld? Whi shood u care whether this particcular underperson iz kild or not? If uve ghivven the order for her deth aty tiamz in aty yeeرز, whi haznt it bene carrede out long ago?"

Miand u, Mr. Adminnistrator, Ime not saying no. I waunt dhat crooser verry much indede. But whauts the dele? Whauts the tric? Iz it the hous u waunt?"

"Boaregard? No, I doant waunt Boaregard. Oald Maddigan can rot in it for aul I care. Its betwene Ambiloxy and Mottile, on the Gulf ov Esperanzaa. U caant mis it. The rode iz good. U cood drive yorcelf dhare."

"Whaut iz it, then?" Cashertz vois had an ej ov percistens too it.

The Adminnistratorz respons wauz cin'gular indede. He fild hiz huge inhaler-glaas widh the potent bigar. He staerd over the fool glaas at Casher ONEle az if he wer an ennemy. He draind the glaas. Casher nu dhat dhat much liccor, taken suddenly, cood kil the normal human beying.

The Adminnistrator did not faul over ded.

He did not even becum notisably moer drunc.

Hiz face ternd red and hiz ise aulmoast popt out, az the harsh 160-proofe liccor tooc efect, but he stil did not sa ennithhing. He just staerd at Casher. Casher, whoo had lernd in hiz long exile too pla menny gaimz, just staerd bac.

The Adminnistrator broke ferst.

He leend forword and berst intoo a berdlike shreke ov laafter. The laafter went on and on until it ceemd dhat the man had hogd aul the merriment in the gallaxy. Casher snorted a littel laaf along widh the man, moer out ov nervous reflex dhan ennithhing els, but he wated for

the Administrator too stop laafing.

The Administrator finally got controle ov himself. With a braud grin and a winc at Casher, he poerd foer fin'gherz moer ov the bigar intoo hiz glaas, dranc it doun az if it wer a cip ov creme, and then--oonly verry liatly unsteddy--stood up, came over and patted Casher on the shoalder.

"Yor a smart boi, mi lad. Ime cheting u. I doant care whether the pouwer crooser iz dhare or not. Ime ghivving u sumthhing which haz no vallu at aul too me. Whoose evver gowing too take a pouwer crooser of this plannet? Its roowind. Its abandond. And so am I. Go ahed, u can hav the crooser for nuthhing. Just take it, fre. Uncondishonaly."

This time it wauz Casher whoo leept too hiz fete and staerd doun intoo the face ov the feverish, waunton littel man.

"Thanc u, Mr. Administrator!" he cride, trying too cach the hand ov the Administrator too cele the dele.

Rankin Mikeljon looct aufooly sober for a man widh dhat much liccor in him. He held hiz rite hand behiand hiz bac and wood not shake.

"U can hav the crooser aul rite. *But kil dhat gherl ferst!* Just az a favor too me."

"Whi?" ced Casher, hiz vois loud and coald, trying too ring sum cens out ov the chattering man.

"Just--just--just becauz I sa so," stammerd the Administrator.

"Whi?" ced Casher, coald and loud agane.

The liccor suddenly tooc over incide the Admynnistrator. He groapt bac for the arm ov hiz chare, sat doun suddenly and then looct up at Casher. He wauz verry drunc indede. The strainj emoashon, the elucive fateghe-despare, had vannisht from hiz face. He spoke straitforwordly. Oonly the exescive care ov hiz articulaishon wood hav shone a paacer-bi dhat he wauz drunc.

"Becauz, u foole," ced Mikeljon, "dhose pepel, moer dhan aty in aty yeeرز, dhat I hav cent too Boaregard widh orderز too kil the gherl. Dhose pepel--" he repeted, and stopt speking, clamping hiz lips tooghether.

"Whaut happend too them?" aasct Casher caamly.

The Admynnistrator grind. "I doant no whaut happend," ced the Admynnistrator. "For the life ov me, I doant no. Not wun ov them evver came bac."

"Whaut happend too them? Did she kil them?" cride Casher.

"Hou wood I no?" ced the drunken man, ghetting vizsibly moer slepy.

"Whi didnt u repoert it?"

This ceemd too rouz the Admynnistrator. "Repoert dhat wun littel gherl had stopt me, the plannetary Admynnistrator? Just wun littel gherl, and not even a human beyng! Dha wood hav cent help, and laaft at me. Bi the Bel, yung man. Ive bene laaft at enuf! I nede no help from outside. Yor gowing in dhare toomorro morning at too cevventy-five, widh a nife. And a ground car wating."

He staerd fixtly at Casher and then suddenly fel aslepe in hiz chare. Casher cauld too the robots too sho him too hiz roome; dha tended too the maaster az wel.

2

The next morning at too cevventy-five sharp, nuthhing happend. Casher wauct doun the baroc corridor, loocking intoo butifool barren ruimz. Aul the doerz wer open.

Throo wun doer he herd a cic, depe bubling snoer.

It wauz the Admnnistrator, shure enuf. He la twisted in hiz bed. A smaul nercing mashene beside him, her white enammeld boddy oanly sliatly rusty. She held up a mecannical hand for cilens and sumhou mannajjd too make the geschure ceme lite, dellicate and pritty, even from a mashene.

Casher wauct liatly bac too hiz one roome, whare he orderd hotcaix, bacon and coffy. He studdede a tornado throo the armord glaas ov hiz windo while the robots prepaerd hiz foode. The elaastic trese clung too the erth widh a fury which macht the fury ov the wind. The trunc ov the tornado reecht like the nose ov a mad ellefant doun intoo the gardenz, but the floeraa faut bac. A fu annimalz whipt upword and out ov cite. The tornado then came strate for the hous, but did not dammage it outside ov making a lot ov noiz.

"We hav too or thre hundred ov dhose a da," ced a butler robot.

"Dhat iz whi we stoer aul spaiscraaft underground and hav no wether masheenz. It wood cost moer, the pepel ced, too make this plannet

livvabel dhan the plannet cood poscibly yeeld. The rajo and nuse ar in the liabrary, cer. I doo not thhinc dhat the onnorabel Rankin Mikeljon wil wake until evening, sa cevven-fifty or ate oacloc."

"Can I go out?"

"Whi not, cer? U ar a troo man. U doo whaut u wish."

"I mene, iz it safe for me too go out?"

"O, no, cer! The wind wood tare u apart or carry u awa."

"Doant pepel evver go out?"

"Yes, cer. Widh ground carz or widh automattic boddy armor. I hav bene toald dhat if it wase fifty tunz or better, the person incide iz safe. I wood not no, cer. Az u ce, I am a robot. I wauz made here, dho mi brane wauz formd on Erth Too. I hav nevver bene outside this hous."

Casher looct at the robot. This wun ceemd unnuezhuwaly taucative. He chaanst the oporchunity ov ghetting sum informaishon.

"Hav u evver herd ov Boaregard?"

"Yes, cer. It iz the best hous on this plannet. I hav herd pepel sa dhat it iz the sollidest bilding on Henreyaadaa. It belongz too the Mister and Oner Murra Maddigan. He iz an Oald North Australeyan, a renunceyant whoo left hiz home plannet and came here when Henreyaadaa wauz a bizsy werld. He braut aul hiz welth widh him. The underpepel and robots sa dhat it iz a wunderfool place on the incide."

"Hav u cene it?"

"O, no, cer, I hav nevver left this bilding."

"Duz the man Maddigan evver cum here?"

The robot ceemd too be triying too laaf, but did not suxede. He aancerd, verry unnevenly, "O, no, cer. He nevver gose enniwhare."

"Can u tel me ennithhing about the female whoo livz widh him?"

"No, cer," ced the robot.

"Doo u no ennithhing about her?"

"Cer, it iz not dhat. I no a grate dele about her."

"Whi caant u tauc about her, then?"

"I hav bene comaanded not too, cer."

"I am," ced Casher ONele, "a troo human beying. I heerwidh countermaand dhose orderz. Tel me about her."

The robots vois became formal and coald. "The orderz canot be countermaanded, cer."

"Whi not?" snapt Casher. "Ar dha the Adminnistratorz?"

"No, cer."

"Whoose, then?"

"Herz," ced the robot softly, and left the roome.

Casher O'Nele spent the rest of the day trying to get information; he obtained very little.

The Deputy Administrator was a young man who hated his chef.

When Casher, who dined with him, the two of them having a poorly cooked state luncheon in dining room which would have cost five hundred dollars, tried to come to the point by asking bluntly, "What do you know about Murra Maddigan?", he got an answer which was blunt to the point of incivility.

"Nothing."

"You never heard of him?" cried Casher.

"Keep your troubles to yourself, mister visitor," said the Deputy Administrator. "I've got to stay on this planet long enough to get promoted of. You can leave. You shouldn't have come."

"I have," said Casher, "an all-world pass from the Instrumentality."

"All right," said the young man, "that shows that you are more important than I am. Let's not discuss the matter. Do you like your lunch?"

Casher had learned diplomacy in his childhood, when he was the apparent ruler of the Dictatorship of Mizer. When his horrible uncle, Curaf, lost the rulership, Casher had survived on the coast by the Council of Wedder and Ghibnaa, but now Wedder was supreme and enforcing a period of terror and violence. Casher thus had no choice and ceremony, big

tauc and smaul tauc, and on this ocaizhon he let the smaul tauc doo. The yung Depputy Adminnistrator had oanly out ambishon, too ghet of the plannet Henreyaadaa and nevver too ce or here ov Rankin Mikeljon agane.

Casher cood understand the point.

Oanly wun cureyous thhing happend juring dinner.

Tooword the end, Casher slipt in the qweschon, verry informaly: "Can underpepel ghiv orderz too robots?"

"Ov coers," ced the yung man. "Dhats wun ov the rezonz we use underpepel. Dha hav moer inishative. Dha amplifi our orderz too robots on menny ocaizhonz."

Casher smiald. "I didnt mene it qwite dhat wa. Cood an underperson ghiv an order too a robot which a reyal human beying cood not then countermaand?"

The yung man started too aancer, even dho hiz mouth wauz fool ov foode. He wauz not a verry pollisht yung man. Suddenly he stopt chuwing and hiz ise groo wide. Then, widh hiz mouth haaf fool, he ced:

"U ar triying too tauc about this plannet, I ghes. U caant help it. Yor on the trac. Sta on the trac, then. Maby u wil ghet out ov it alive. I refuse too ghet mixt up widh it, widh u, widh him and hiz haitfool skeemz. Aul I waunt too doo iz too leve when mi time cumz."

The yung man rezhuemd chuwing, hiz ise stedfaastly on hiz plate.

Befoer Casher cood paas of the matter bi making sum cazhuwal remarc, the butler robot stopt behiand him and leend over.

"Onnorabel cer, I herd yor qweschon. Ma I aancer it?"

"Ov coers," ced Casher, softly.

"The aancer, cer," ced the butler-robot, softly but cleerly, "too yor qweschon iz no, no, nevver. Dhat iz the genneral roole ov the civviliazd werldz. But on this plannet ov Henreyaadaa, cer, the aancer iz yes."

"Whi?" ced Casher.

"It iz mi juty, cer," ced the robot butler, "too recomend too u this dish ov fresh artichoax. I am not authoriazd too dele widh uther matterz."

"Thanc u," ced Casher, straning too kepe himcelf loocking imperterbabel.

Nuthhing much happend dhat nite, exept dhat Mikeljon got up long enuf too ghet drunc aul over agane. Dho he invited Casher too cum and drinc widh him, he nevver cereyously discust the gherl exept for wun outberst.

"Leve it til toomorro. Fare and sqware. Open and abuvboerd. Franc and onnest. Dhats me. Ile take u around Boaregard micelf. Ule ce its esy. A nife, a? A travveld yung man like u wood no whaut too doo widh a nife. And a littel gherl, too. Not verry big. Esy job. Doant ghiv it anuther thaut. Wood u like sum appel juce in yor bigar?"

Casher had taken thre contraa'intoxicant pilz befoer gowing too drinc widh the ex-Lord, but even at dhat he cood not kepe up widh

Mikeljon. He axepted the dilueshon ov appel juce graivly, graisfooly and graitfooly.

The littel tornadose stampet around the hous. Mikeljon, nou launcht intoo sum drunken stoery ov ainshent injusticez which had bene dun too him on uther werldz, pade no atenshon too them. In the middel ov the nite, paast nine-fifty in the evening, Casher woke alone in hiz chare, verry stif and uncumfortabel. The robots must hav had standing instrucshonz concerning the Admynnistrator, and had aparrently taken him of too bed. Casher waukt weryly too hiz one roome, kerst the thundering celing and went too slepe agane.

3

The next da wauz verry different indede.

The Admynnistrator wauz az sober, brisc and charming az if he had never taken a drinc in hiz life.

He had the robots caul Casher too join him at brecfast and ced, bi wa ov greting, "Ile wager u thaut I wauz drunc laast nite."

"Wel..." ced Casher.

"Plannet fever, dhats whaut it wauz. Plannet fever. A bit ov alcohol keeps it from develloping too far. Lets ce. Its thre-cixty nou. Cood u be reddy too leve bi foer?"

Casher fround at hiz wauch, which had the convenshonal twenty-foer ourz.

The Administrator sau the glaans and apolloziad. "Sorry! Mi fault, a thousand tiamz. Ile ghet u a metric wauch rite awa. Ten ourz a da, a hundred minnuets an our. Were reyalv verry progrescive on Henreyaadaa."

He clapt hiz handz and orderd dhat a wauch be taken too Casherz roome, along widh a wauch-reparing robot too ajust it too Casherz boddy ridhmz.

"Foer, then," he ced, rising brisclly from the tabel. "Dres for a trip bi ground car. The cervants wil sho u hou."

Dhare wauz a man aulreddy wating in Casherz roome. He looct like a plump, wise ainshent Hindoo, az shone in the arkeyollogy boox. He boud plezzantly and ced, "Mi name iz Gocego. I am a forgetty, cetteld on this plannet, but for this da I am yor ghide and driver from this place too the manshon ov Boaregard."

Forgettese wer baerly abuv underpepel in status. Dha wer personz convicted ov vareyouz major criamz, too whoome the coerts ov the werldz or the Instroomentality had aloud total amneezhaa insted ov deth or sum punnishment wers dhan deth, such az the plannet Shayol.

Casher looct at him cureyously. The man did not carry widh him the permanent are ov bewilderment which Casper had notiast in menny forgettese. Gocego sau the glaans and interpreted it.

"Ime wel enuf, nou, cer. And I am strong enuf too brake yor bac if I had the orderz too doo it."

"U mene, dammage mi spine? Whaut a hostile, unplezzant thhing too doo!"  
ced Casher. "Ennihou, I raather thhinc I cood kil u ferst if u

tride it. Whautevver gave u such an ideyaa?"

"The Admnnistrator iz aulwase threttening pepel dhat he wil hav me doo it too them."

"Hav u evver reyaly broken enniboddese bac?" aasct Casher, loocking Gocego over verry caerfooly and re-judging him. The man, dho shorter dhan himcelf, wauz lucshureyously musceld. Like menny plump men, he looct plezzant on the outcide but cood be verry formiddabel too an ennemy.

Gocego smiald breefly, aulmoast happily. "Wel, no, not exactly."

"Whi havnt u? Duz the Admnnistrator aulwase countermaand hiz one orderz? I shood thhinc dhat he wood sumtiamz be too drunc too remember too doo it."

"Its not dhat," ced Gocego.

"Whi doant u, then?"

"I hav uther orderz," ced Gocego, raather hesitantly. "Like the orderz I hav tooda. Wun cet from the Admnnistrator, wun cet from the Depputy Admnnistrator and a thherd cet from an outcide soers."

"Whoose the outcide soers?"

"She haz toald me not too explane just yet."

Casher stood stoc stil. "Doo u mene whoo I thhinc u mene?"

Gocego nodded verry sloly, pointing at the ventilator az dho it

mite hav a miacrofone in it.

"Can u tel me whaut yor orderz ar?"

"O, certainly. The Admnnistrator haz toald me too drive u too Boaregard, too take u too the doer, too wauch u stab the undergherl and too caul the cecond ground car too yor rescu. The Depputy Admnnistrator haz toald me too take u too Boaregard and too let u doo az u plese, bringing u bac here bi wa ov Ambiloxy if u happen too cum out ov Mister Murrase hous alive."

"And the uther orderz?"

"Too close the doer uppon u when u enter and too thhinc ov u no moer in this life, becauz u wil be verry happy."

"Ar u crasy?" cride Casher.

"I am a forgetty," ced Gocego, widh sum dignity, "but I am not insane."

"Whoose orderz ar u gowing too oba, then?"

Gocego smiald a wormly human smile at him. "Duznt dhat depend on u, cer, and not on me? Doo I looc like a man whoo iz gowing too kil u soone?"

"No, u doant," ced Casher.

"Doo u thhinc whaut u looc like too me?" went on Gocego, widh a per. "Doo u reyal y thhinc dhat I wood help u if I thaut dhat u wood kil a smaul gherl?"

"U no it!" cride Casher, feling hiz face go white.

"Whoo duznt?" ced Gocego. "Whaut els hav we got too tauc about, here on Henreyaadaa? Let me help u on widh these cloadhz, so dhat u wil at leest cervive the ride." Widh this he handed shoalder padding and a padded helmet too Casher, whoo began too poot on the garments, verry clumsily.

Gocego helpt him.

When Casher wauz foolly drest, he thaut dhat he had nevver drest this elabboraitly for space itcelf. The werld ov Henreyaadaa must be a chumulchuwous place if pepel neded this kiand ov cloathing too make a short trip.

Gocego had poot on the same kiand ov cloadhz.

He looct at Casher, frendlily, widh an arch smile which came cloce too humor. "Looc at me, onnorabel vizsitor. Doo I remiand u ov enniboddy?"

Casher looct onnestly and caerfooly, and then ced, "No, u doant."

The manz face fel. "Its a game," he ced. "I caant help triying too fiand out whoo I reyaly am. Am I a Lord ov the Instroomentallity whoo haz betrade hiz trust? Am I a ciyentist whoo twisted nollej intoo unnimadginabel rong? Am I a dictator so foul dhat even the Instroomentallity, which uezhuwaly leevz thhingz alone, had too step in and wipe me out? Here I am, helthhy, wise, alert. I hav the name Gocego on this plannet. Perhaps I am a mere native ov this plannet, whoo haz comitted a local crime. I am triggherd. If enniwun evver did tel me

mi troo name or mi acchuwal paast, I hav bene condishond too shreke loud,  
faul unconshous and forghet ennithhing which mite be ced on such an ocaizhon. Pepel toald me dhat I must hav chosen this insted ov deth. Maby. Deth sumtiamz loox tidy too a forgetty."

"Hav u evver screemd and fainted?"

"I doant even no *dhat*," ced Gocego, "no moer dhan u no whare u ar gowing this verry da."

Casher wauz tide too the manz mistificaishonz, so he did not let himcelf be provoact intoo a uesles sho ov cureyosity. Inqwizsitive about the forgetty himcelf, he aasct,

"Duz it hert?" he aasct. "Duz it hert too be a forgetty?"

"No," ced Gocego, "it duznt hert, no moer dhan u wil."

Gocego staerd suddenly at Casher. Hiz vois chainjd tone and became at leest wun octave hiyer. He clapt hiz handz too hiz face and panted throo hiz handz az if he wood nevver speke agane.

"But, o! the fere--the ery, drery fere ov *beying* me."

He stil staerd at Casher.

Qwiyeting doun at laast, he poold hiz handz awa from hiz face, az if bi shere foers, and ced in an aulmoast-normal vois, "Shal we ghet on widh our trip?"

Gocego led the wa out intoo the bare bleke corridor. A perceptibel wind wauz blowing throo it, dho dhare wauz no cine ov an open windo or doer. Dha follode a magestic staercace, widh steps so braud dhat Casher had too kepe chain'ging pace on them, aul the wa down too the bottom ov the bilding. This must at sum time hav bene a formal recepshon haul. Nou it wauz fool ov carz.

Cureyous carz. Land veyikelz ov a kiand which Casher had nevver cene befoer. Dha looct a littel bit like the ainshent "fiting tanx" which he had cene in picchuerz. Dha aulso looct a littel like submareenz ov a cin'gularly short and ugly shape. Dha had hi spiact wheelz, but dhare moast complicated fechure wauz a cet ov giyant corxcroose, foer on eche cide, atacht too the car bi intricate but operaishonal aparatus. Cins Casher had bene landed rite intoo the pallace bi planoform, he had nevver had ocaizhon too go outside among the tornadose ov Henreyaadaa.

The Admnnistrator wauz wating, waring a cuvvuural on which wauz stencild hiz incignyaa ov ranc.

Casher gave him a polite bou. He glaanst doun at the handsum metric ristwauch which Gocego had strapt on hiz rist, outside the cuvvuural. It red 3:95.

Casher boud too Rankin Mikeljon and ced:

"Ime reddy, cer, if u ar."

"Wauch him!" whisperd Gocego, haaf a step behiand Casher.

The Admnnistrator ced, "Mite az wel be gowing." Hiz vois trembeld.

Casher stood polite, alert, imobile. Wauz this dain'ger? Wauz this

foolishnes? Cood the Admnnistrator aulreddy be drunc agane?

Casher waucht the Admnnistrator caerfooly but qwiyetly, wating for the oalder man too precede him intoo the nerest ground car, which had its doer standing opend.

Nuthhing happend, exept dhat the Admnnistrator began too tern pale.

Dhare must hav bene cix or ate pepel prezsent. The utherz must hav cene the same sort ov thhing befoer, becauz dha shode no cine ov cureyosity or bewilderment. The Admnnistrator began too trembel.

Casher

cood ce it, even throo the bulc ov the travvelware. The manz handz shooc.

The Admnnistrator ced, in a hi nervous vois: "Yor nife, u hav it widh u?"

Casher nodded.

"Let me ce it," ced the Admnnistrator.

Casher reecht down too hiz boote and braut out the butifool superbly ballanst nife. Befoer he cood stand erect, he felt the clamp ov Gocegoe hevvy fin'gherz on hiz shoalder.

"Maaster," ced Gocego too Mikeljon, "tel yor vizsitor too poot the weppon awa. It iz not aloud for enny ov us too sho wepponz in yor prezsens."

Casher tride too sqwerm out ov the hevvy grip widhout loosing hiz ballans or hiz dignity. He found dhat Gocego wauz nolledjabel about caraaty

too. The forgetty held ground, even when the too men waijd an imobile, invizibel sort ov resling mach, the levverage ov Casherz shoalder werking its wa hither and yon against the strong grip ov Gocegose pouwerfool hand.

The Admnnistrator ended it; he ced, "Poot awa yor nife," in dhat hi funny vois ov hiz.

The wauch had aulmoast reecht 4:00 but no wun had yet gotten intoo the car.

Gocego spoke agane, and when he did dhare wauz a contempchuwous laaf from the Depputy Admnnistrator, whoo had stood bi in ordinary indoer cloadhz.

"Maaster, iznt it time for wun for the rode?"

"Ov coers, ov coers," chatterd the Admnnistrator. He began breething aulmoast normaly.

"Join me," he ced too Casher. "Its a local custom."

Casher had let hiz nife slip bac intoo hiz buitsheeth; when the nife dropt out ov cite Gocego had releest hiz shoalder; he nou stood facing the Admnnistrator and rubbing hiz shoalder. He ced nuthhing, but shooc hiz hed gently, showing dhat he deffiniatly did not waunt a drinc.

Wun ov the robots braut the Admnnistrator a glaas which apeerd too contane at least a leter and a haaf ov wauter. The Admnnistrator ced, verry poliatly, "Shure u woant share it?"

This cloce, Casher cood smel the reke ov it. It wauz pure bigar,

and at least 160 proofe. He shooc hiz hed agane, fermly but aulso poliatly.

The Admynnistrator lifted the glaas.

Casher cood ce the muscelz ov the manz throte werc az the liqwid went down. He cood here the man breathing hevvely betwene swaulose. The white liqwid went lower and lower in the gigantic glaas.

At laast it wauz aul gon.

The Admynnistrator coct hiz hed ciadwise and ced too Casher in a parrot-like vois, "Wel, toodel-oo!"

"Whaut doo u mene, cer?" ced Casher.

The Admynnistrator had a plezzant glo on hiz face. Casher wauz cerpriazd dhat the man wauz not ded aafter dhat big and sudden a drinc.

"I just mene, gbi. Ime not feling ... wel."

Widh dhat he fel strate forword, az stif az a roc touwer. Wun ov the cervants, perhaps anuther forgetty, caut him befoer he hit the ground.

"Duz he aulwase doo this?" ced Casher too the mizserabel and contempchuwous Depputy Admynnistrator.

"O, no," ced the Depputy. "Oonly at tiamz like these."

"Whaut doo u mene, like thhese?"

"When he cendz wun moer armd man against the gherl at Boaregard. Dha

nevver cum bac. U woant cum bac, iather. U cood hav left erleyer, but u caant nou. Go along and tri too kil the gherl. Ile ce u here about 5:25 if u suxede. Az a matter ov fact, if u cum bac at aul, Ile tri too wake him up. But u woant cum bac. Good luc. I supose dhats whaut u nede."

Casher shooc handz widh the man widhout remooving hiz gluvz. Gocego had aulreddy cliamd intoo the driverz cete ov the mashene and wauz testing the electric en'gianz. The big corxcroose began too plunj doun. But befoer dha tucht the floer Gocego had reverst them and throne them bac intoo the "up" posishon.

The pepel in the roome ran for cuvver az Casher enterd the mashene, dho dhare wauz no imejate dain'ger in cite. Too ov the human cervants dragd the Adminnistrator up the staerz, the Depputy Adminnistrator following them rappidly.

"Cete belt," ced Gocego.

Casher found it and snapt it too.

"Hed belt," ced Gocego.

Casher staerd at him. He had nevver herd ov a hed belt.

"Pool it doun from the roofe, cer. Poot the net under yor chin."

Casher glaanst up.

Dhare wauz a net fitted snug against the roofe ov the veyikel, just abuv hiz hed. He started too pool it doun, but it did not yeeld. An'grily, he poold harder, and it muivd sloly dounword. "Bi the Bel and Banc,

doo dha waunt too hang me in this!" he thaut too himself az he dragd the net doun. Dhare wauz a strong fiber belt atacht too eche end ov the net, while the net itself wauz oanly fiftene too twenty centimeterz wide. He ended up in a foolish posishon, hoalding the hed belt widh boath handz lest it snap bac intoo the celing and not nowing whaut too doo widh it. Gocego leend over and, haaf-impaishently, helpt him ajust the web under hiz chin. It pincht for a moment and Casher felt az dho hiz hed wer beying dragd bi a hevvy wate.

"Doant fite it," ced Gocego. "Relax."

Casher did. Hiz hed wauz lifted cevveral centimeterz intoo a fome pocket, which he had not preveyously notiast, in the bac ov the cete. Aafter a cecond or too, he reyaliazd dhat the posishon wauz od but cumfortabel.

Gocego had ajusted hiz one hed belt and had ternd on the liats ov the veyikel. Dha blaizd so brite dhat Casher aulmoast thaut dha mite be a laser, capabel ov chaaring the inner doerz ov the big roome.

The liats must hav kede the doer.

4

Too pannelz slid open and a wiald uproer ov wind and vegetaishon rusht in. It wauz ruf and stormy but far belo hurricane velosity.

The mashene roald forword clumsily and wauz out ov the hous and on the rode verry qwicly.

The ski wauz broun, brite luminous broun, shot throo widh streex ov

yello. Casher had nevver cene a ski ov dhat cullor on enny uther werld he had vizsited, and in hiz long exile he had cene menny plannets.

Gocego, staring strate ahead, wauz preyoccupide widh keping the veyikel rite in the middel ov the blac, soft, taary rode.

"Wauch it!" ced a vois speking rite intoo hiz hed.

It wauz Gocego, using an intercom which must hav bene bilt intoo the helmets.

Casher waucht, dho dhare wauz nuthhing too ce exept for the rush ov mad wind. Suddenly the ground car ternd darc, spun upcide doun, and wauz viyolently shaken. An oily, pun'gent stench ov pure fetor imejaitly drencht the whole car.

Gocego poold out a pannel widh a console ov buttonz. Lite and fire, intollerably brite, bernd in on them throo the windsheeld and poert'hoalz on the cide.

The battel wauz over befoer it began.

The ground car la in a sort ov swaump. The rode wauz vizsibel thherty or thherty-five meterz awa.

Dhare wauz a grianding sound incide the mashene and the ground car rited itself. A cin'gular sucking noiz follode, then the grianding sound stopt. Casher cood glimps the big corxcroose on the cide ov the car eting dhare wa intoo the ground.

At laast the mashene wauz stedly, pelted oanly bi braanchez, leevz, and whaut ceemd like kelp.

A smaul tornado wauz paacing over them.

Gocego tooc time too twist hiz hed ciadwise and too tauc too Casher.

"An are-whale swaulode us and I had too bern our wa out."

"A whaut?" cride Casher.

"An are-whale," repeted Gocego caamly on the intercom. "Dhare ar no indidgenous formz ov life on this plannet, but the impoerted Erth formz hav chainjd wialdly cins we braut them in. The tornadose lifted the whailz around enuf so dhat sum ov them got adapted too fliying. Dha wer the mete-eting kiand, so dha like too crac our ground carz open and ete the gooddese incide. Were safe enuf from them for the time beying, provided we can make it bac too the rode. Dhare ar a fu wiald men whoo liv in the wind, but dha wood not becum dain'gerous too us unles we found ourcelvz reyaly helples. Pritty soone I can unscroo us from the ground and tri too ghet bac on the rode. Its not reyaly too far from here too Ambiloxy."

The trip too the rode wauz a long wun, even dho dha cood ce the rode itcelf aul the tiamz dhat dha tride vareymous aprochez.

The ferst time, the ground car tipt omminously forward. Red liats shode on the pannel and buzserz buzd. The grate spiact wheelz spun in vane az dha chude dhare wa intoo a bottomles qwaugmire.

Gocego, caulng bac too hiz pascen'ger, cride, "Hoald stedly! Were gowing too hav too shoote ourcelvz out ov this wun baqword!"

Casher did not no hou he cood be enny steddeyer, belted, hoodded and strapt az he wauz, but he clucht the armz ov hiz cete.

The world went red with fire as the front of the car spat flame in rocket-like quantities. The swamp ahead of them boiled into steam, so that they could see nothing.

Gocego crashed the windshield over from visual to radar, and even with radar there was not much to be seen--nothing but a gray swirl for forms, and the weird lurching sensation as the machine found its way back to solid ground. The console suddenly shone green and Gocego cut the controls. They were back where they had been, with the repulsive burnt trails of the air-ship scattered among the coral trees.

"Tri again," said Gocego, as the Casher had something to do with the matter.

He fiddled with the controls and the ground car rose several feet. The spax on the wheels had been hydraulically extended until they were at least 150 centimeters long. In sensation, the car felt like a large enclosed bicycle as it tetered on its big wheels. The wind was strong and capricious but there was no tornado in sight.

"Here we go," said Gocego. The ground car pressed forward in a mad rush, hacking obliquely through the vegetation and making for the hiwa on Casher's side.

A bone-jarring crash told them that they had not made it. For a moment he was too dizzy to see where they were.

He was glad of his helmet and happy about the web brace which held his neck. That crash would have killed him if he had not had fool protection.

Gocego ceemd too thhinc the trip normal. Hiz clasic Hindoo fechuerz relaxt in a wise smile az he ced, "Hit a boalder. Fel on our cide. Tri agane."

Casher mannaijd too gaasp, "Iz the mashene unbracabel?"

Dhare wauz a laaf in Gocegose vois when he aancerd. "Aulmoast. Were the moast vulnerabel in it."

Agane fire spat at the ground, this time from the cide ov the ground car. It ballanst itself precareyously on the foer hi wheelz. Gocego ternd on the radar screne too ce throo the steme which dhare one gets had cauld up.

Dhare the rode wauz, plane and nere.

"Tri agane!" he shouted, az the mashene lunjd forword and then performd a verritabel balla on the cerface ov the marsh. It rusht, slode, ternd around on a hummoc, gave itself an acist widh the gets and then scrambeld throo the wauter.

Casher sau the inverted cone ov a tornado, haaf a killometer or les awa, vering tooword them.

Gocego censt hiz unspoken thaut, becauz he aancerd:

"Problem: whoo ghets too the rode ferst, dhat or we?"

The mashene buct, lercht, twisted, spun.

Casher cood ce nuthhing enny moer from the windscrene in frunt, but it wauz obveyous dhat Gocego nu whaut he wauz doowing.

Dhare wauz the cickening, stummac-renching twist ov a big drop and then

a nu sound wauz herd--a grianding az ov niavz.

Gocego, unwurrede, tooc hiz hed out ov the hed net and looct over at Casher widh a smile. "The twister wil probbably hit us in a minnute or too, but it duznt matter nou. Were on the rode and Ive bolted us too the cerface."

"Bolted?" gaaspt Casher.

"U no, dhose big scroose on the outcide ov the car. Dha wer made too go rite intoo the rode. Aul the roadz here ar nyoasfaltum and celf-reparing. Dhare wil be tracez ov them here when the laast none person on the laast none plannet iz ded. These ar *good* roadz." He stopt for the sudden hush. "Stormz gowing over us." It began agane befoer he cood finnish hiz centens. Wiald raving windz toer at the mashene which sat so sollid dhat it ceemd bedded in permastone.

Gocego poosht too buttonz and then callibrated a diyal. He sqwinted at hiz instrooments and then prest a button mounted on the ej ov hiz navigatorz cete. Dhare wauz a sharp exploazhon, like a blaasting ov roc bi kemmical methodz.

Casher started too speke but Gocego held out a worning hand for cilens.

He ternd hiz diyalz qwicly. The windscrene faded out, radar came on and then went of. At laast a brite map--brite red in bacground, widh sharp goald lianz--apeerd across the whole width ov the screne. Dhare wer a duzsen or moer brite points on the map. Gocego waucht these intently.

The map blerd, faded, dizolvd intoo red cayos.

Gocego poosht anuther button and then cood ce out ov the frunt glaas screne agane.

"Whaut wauz dhat?" ced Casher.

"Minnichuriazd radar rocket. I cent it up twelv killometerz for a looc around. It traanzmitted a map ov whaut it sau and I poot it on our radar screne. The tornadose ar hevveyer dhan uezhuwal, but I thhinc we can make it. Did u notice the top rite ov the map?"

"The top rite?" ced Casher.

"Yes, the top rite. Did u ce whaut wauz dhare?"

"Whi, nuthhing," ced Casher. "Nuthhing wauz dhare."

"Yor utterly rite," ced Gocego. "Whaut duz dhat mene too u?"

"I doant understand u," ced Casher. "I supose it meenz dhat dhare iz nuthhing dhare."

"Rite agane. But let me tel u sumthhing. Dhare nevver iz."

"Nevver iz whaut?"

"Ennithhing," ced Gocego. "Dhare nevver iz ennithhing on the maps at dhat point. Dhats eest ov Ambiloxy. Dhats Boaregard. It nevver shose on the maps. Nuthhing happenz dhare."

"No bad wether--evver?" ced Casher.

"Nevver," ced Gocego.

"Whi not?" ced Casher.

"She wil not permit it," ced Gocego fermly, az dho hiz werdz made cens.

"U mene, her wether masheenz werc?" ced Casher, graasping for the oonly rashonal explanaishon poscibel.

"Yes," ced Gocego.

"Whi?" Casher aasct, moer perplext dhan evver.

"She pase for them."

"Hou can she?" exclaimd Casher. "Yor whole werld ov Henreyaadaa iz bankrupt!"

"Her part iznt."

"Stop mistifiying me," ced Casher. "Tel me whoo she iz and whaut this iz aul about."

"Poot yor hed in the net," ced Gocego. "I am not making puzselz becauz I waunt too doo so. I hav bene comaanded not too tauc."

"Becauz u ar a forgetty."

"Whauts dhat got too doo widh it? Doant tauc too me dhat wa.

Remember,

I am not an annimal or an underperson. I ma be yor cervant for a fu

ourz, but I am a man. Ule fiand out, soone enuf. *Hoald tite!*"

The ground car came too a pannic stop, the spiact teeth eting intoo the resilleent ferm nyoasfaltum ov the rode. At the instant dha stopt, the outcide corxcroose began chuwing dhare wa intoo the ground. Ferst Casher felt az dho hiz ise wer popping out, becauz ov the sudden'nes ov the deceleraishon; nou he felt like hoalding the armz ov hiz cete az the tornado reecht directly for dhare car, plucking at it agane and agane. The enormous outcide scroose held and he cood fele the car straning too mete the gigantic sucshon ov the storm.

"Doant wurry," shouted Gocego over the noiz ov the storm. "I aulwase spin us doun a littel bit moer bi firing the qwic-rockets strate up. These carz doant often go of the rode."

Casher tride too relax.

The funnel ov the tornado, which ceemd aulmoast like a livving beying, pluct aafter them wuns or twice moer and then wauz gon az suddenly az it had hit.

This time, Casher had cene no cine ov the are-whailz which rode the stormz. He had cene nuthhing but rane and wind and dezolaishon.

The tornado wauz gon in a moment. Goastlike shaips traild aafter it in enormous praancing leeps.

"Wind-men," ced Gocego glaancing at them incureyously. "Wiald pepel whoo hav lernd too liv on Henreyaadaa. Dha arnt much moer dhan annimalz. We ar cloce too the territory ov the lady. Dha wood not dare atac us here."

Casher ONEle wauz too stund too qwery the man or too challenj him.  
He tride wuns moer too relax.

Wuns moer the car pict itcelf up and coerst along the smuidh,  
narro, wianding nyoasfaltum rode, aulmoast az dho the mashene itcelf  
wer glad too funcshon and too be funcshoning wel.

5

Casher cood nevver qwite remember when dha went from the houling  
wialdnes ov Henreyaadaa intoo the stilnes and buty ov the domainz ov  
Mister Murra Maddigan. He cood recaul the feling but not the facts.

The toun ov Ambiloxy eluded him compleetly. It wauz so normal a toun,  
so oald-fashond a littel toun dhat he cood not thhinc ov it verry much.  
Oald pepel sat on the wooden boerdwauc taking dhare aafternoone looc  
at  
the strain'gerz whoo paast throo. Horcez wer tetherd in a ro along  
mane strete, betwene the parct masheenz. It looct like a peesfool  
picchure from the ainshent agez.

Ov tornadose dhare wauz no cine, nor ov the hert and roowin which shode  
around the hous ov Rankin Mikeljon. Dhare wer fu underpepel or  
robots about, unles dha wer so clevverly contriavd az too looc aulmoast  
exactly like reyal pepel. Hou can u remember sumthhing which iz  
plezzant and non-memmorabel? Even the bildingz did not sho cianz ov  
beyng fortifide against the friatfool stormz which had braut the  
prosperous plannet ov Henreyaadaa too a condishon ov abandonment and  
roowin.

Gocego, whoo had a remarcabel tallent for stating the obveyous, ced  
toanlesly.

"The wether masheenz ar werking here. Dhare iz no nede for speshal precaushon." But he did not stop in the toun for rest, refreshments, conversaishon or fuwel. He went throo deftly and qwiyetly, the gigantic armord ground car loocking out ov place amung the peesfool and defensles veyikelz. He went az dho he had bene on the same roote menny tiamz befoer, and nu the rootene wel.

Wuns beyond Ambilox y he speded up, dho at a modderate pace, compaerd too the frantic elucive acshon he had taken against stormz in the erleyer part ov the trip. The landscape wauz erthlike ... wet ... and moast ov the ground wauz cuvverd widh vegetaishon.

Oald radar countermiscile touwerz stood along the rode.

Casher cood not imadgine dhare poscibel uce, even dho he wauz shure, from the loox ov them, dhat dha wer long obsolete.

"Whauts the countermiscile radar for?" he aasct, speking cumfortably nou dhat hiz hed wauz out ov the hed net.

Gocego ternd around and gave him a torchuerd glaans in which pane and bewilderment wer mixt. "Countermiscile radar? Countermiscile radar? I doant no dhat werd, dho it ceemz az dho I shood..."

"Radar iz whaut u wer using too ce widh, bac in the storm, when the celing and visibillity wer sero."

Gocego ternd bac too hiz driving, narroly miscing a tre. "Dhat? Dhats just artifishal vizhon. Whi did u use the werd countermiscile radar? Dhare iznt enny ov dhat stuf here exept whaut we hav on our mashene, dho the mistres ma be wauching us if her cet iz on."

"Dhose touwerz," ced Casher. "Dha looc like countermiscile touwerz from the ainshent tiamz."

"Touwerz. Dhare arnt enny touwerz here," snapt Gocego.

"Looc," cride Casher. "Here ar too moer ov them."

"O, no man made dhose. Dha arnt bildingz, just are coral. Sum ov the coral which pepel braut from erth mutated and got so it cood liv in the are. Pepel uest too plaant it for windbraix, befoer dha decided too ghiv up Henreyaadaa and moove out. Dha didnt doo much good, but dha ar pritty too looc at."

Dha rode along a fu minnuets widhout aasking qweschonz. Taul trese had Spanish mos traling over them. Dha wer cloce too a ce. Smaul marshez apeerd too the rite and left ov the rode; here, whare the endles tornadose wer kept out, evverithhing had a parc-like efect. The domainz ov the estate ov Boaregard wer unlike ennithhing els on Henreyaadaa--an areyaa ov peesfool wialdnes in a werld which wauz rushing urtherwise tooword uninhabitability and roowin. Even Gocego ceemd moer relaxt, moer cheerfool az he steerd the ground car along the plezzant ellevated rode.

Gocego cide, leend forword, mannijd the controalz and braut the car too a stop.

He ternd around caamly and looct fool-face at Casher ONEle.

"U hav yor nife?"

Casher automatticaly felt for it. It wauz dhare, safe enuf in hiz buitsheeth. He cimply nodded.

"U hav yor orderz."

"U mene, killing the gherl?"

"Yes," ced Gocego, "killing the gherl."

"I remember dhat. U didnt hav too stop the car too tel me dhat."

"Ime telling u nou," ced Gocego, hiz wise Hindoo face showing niather humor nor outrage. "Doo it."

"U mene, kil her? Rite at ferst cite?"

"Doo it," ced Gocego. "U hav yor orderz."

"Ime the juj ov dhat," ced Casher. "It wil be on mi conspens. Ar u wauching me for the Admnnistrator?"

"Dhat drunken foole?" ced Gocego. "I doant care about him, exept dhat I am a forgetty and I belong too him. Were in her territory nou. U ar gowing too doo whautevver she waunts. U hav orderz too kil her. Aul rite. Kil her."

"U mene--she waunts too be merderd?"

"Ov coers not!" ced Gocego, widh the iritaishon ov an adult whoo haz too explane too menny thhingz too an inqwizsitive chiald.

"Then hou can I kil her widhout fianding out whaut this iz aul about?"

"She nose. She nose hercelf--she nose her maaster--she nose this plannet. She nose me and she nose sumthhing about u. Go ahead and kil her, cins dhose ar yor orderz. If she waunts too di, dhats not for u or me too decide. Its her biznes. If she duz not waunt too di, u wil not suxede."

"Ide like too ce the person," ced Casher, "whoo cood stop me in a sudden nife atac. Hav u toald her dhat I am cumming?"

"Ive toald her nuthhing, but she nose we ar cumming and she iz pritty shure whaut u hav bene cent for. Doant thhinc about it. Just doo whaut u ar toald. Jump for her widh the nife. She wil take care ov the matter."

"But--" cride Casher.

"Stop aasking qweschonz," ced Gocego. "Just follo orderz and remember dhat she wil take care ov u. Even u." He started up the ground car.

Within les dhan a killometer dha had crost a lo rij ov land and dhare befoer them la Boaregard--the manshon at the ej ov the wauterz, its white pillarz shining, its pergolaaz gliscening in the brite are, its yardz and paamettose tidy.

Casher wauz a brave man, but he felt the paamz ov hiz handz go wet when he reyaliazd dhat in a minnute or too he wood hav too comit a merder.

The ground car swung up the drive. It stopt. Widhout a werd, Gocego

activated the doer. The are smeld caam, ce-wet, sault and yet cooly fresh.

Casher jumpt out and ran too the doer, cerpriazd too fele dhat hiz legz trembeld az he ran.

He had kild befoer, reyal men in reyal qworelz. Whi shood a mere annimal matter too him?

The doer stopt him.

Widhout thhinking, he tride too rench it open.

The nob did not yeeld and dhare wauz no automattic controle in cite. This wauz indede a verry anteke sort ov hous. He struc the doer widh hiz handz. The thudz sounded around him. He cood not tel whether dha rezounded in the hous. No sound or ecco came from beyond the doer.

He began rehercing the frase, "I waunt too ce Mister and Oner Maddigan..."

The doer did open.

A littel gherl stood dhare.

He nu her. He had aulwase None her. She wauz hiz sweet'hart, cum bac out ov hiz chiald'hood. She wauz the cister he had nevver had. She wauz hiz one muther, when yung. She wauz at the marvelous age, sumwhare betwene ten and thhertene, whare the chiald--az the frase gose--"becumz an oald oald chiald and not a rau grone-up." She wauz kiand,

caam, intelligent, expectant, qwiyet, inviting, unnafrade. She felt like sumwun he had nevver left behiand: yet, at the same moment, he nu he

had nevver cene her befoer.

He herd hiz vois aasking for the Mister and Oner Maddigan while he wunderd, at the bac ov hiz miand, whoo the gherl mite be. Maddiganz dauter? Niather Rankin Mikeljon nor the depputy had ced ennithhing about a human fammily.

The chiald looct at him levvely.

He must hav finnisht braying hiz qweschon at her.

"Mister and Oner Maddigan," ced the chiald, "cese no wun this da, but u ar ceying me."

Dhare wauz humor and feerlesnes in her ise.

"Whoo ar u?" he blerted out.

"I am the houskeper ov this hous. Mi name iz Truith."

Hiz nife wauz in hiz hand befoer he nu hou it had gotten dhare. He rememberd the advice ov the Admynnistrator: *plunj, plunj, stab, stab, run!*

She sau the nife but her ise did not waver from hiz face.

He looct at her uncertainly.

If this wauz an underperson, it wauz the moast remarbabel wun he had evver cene. But even Gocego had toald him too doo hiz jutty, too stab, too kil

the woomman naimd Truth. Here she wauz. He cood not doo it.

He spun the nife in the are, caut it bi its tip and held it out too her, handel ferst.

"I wauz cent too kil u," he ced, "but I fiand I canot doo it. I hav lost a crooser."

"Kil me if u wish," she ced, "becauz I hav no fere ov u."

Her caam werdz wer so far outside hiz expereyens dhat he tooc the nife in hiz left hand and lifted hiz arm az if too stab tooword her.

He dropt hiz arm.

"I canot doo it," he whiand. "Whaut hav u dun too me?"

"I hav dun nuthing too u. U doo not wish too kil a chiald and I looc too u like a chiald. Beciadz, I thhinc u luv me. If this iz so, it must be verry cumfortabel for u."

Casher herd hiz nife clatter too the floer az he dropt it. He had nevver dropt it befoer.

"Whoo ar u," he gaaspt, "dhat u shood doo this too me?"

"I am me," she ced, her vois az tranqwil and happy az dhat ov enny gherl, provided dhat the gherl wauz caut at a moment ov grate happines and poiz. "I am the houskeper ov this hous." She smiald aulmoast impishly and added, "It ceemz dhat I must aulmoast be the rooler ov this plannet az wel." Her vois ternd cereyous. "*Man*," she ced, "caant u ce it, man? I am an annimal, a tertel. I am incapabel ov disobaying the werd ov man. When I wauz littel I wauz traind and I wauz

ghivven orderz. I shal carry out dhose orderz az long az I liv. When I looc at u, I fele strainj. U looc az dho u luvd me aulreddy, but u doo not no whaut too doo. Wate a moment. I must let Gocego go."

The shining nife on the floer ov the doerwa, she sau; she stept over it.

Gocego had gotten out ov the ground car and wauz ghivving her a formal, lo bou.

"Tel me," she cride, "whaut u hav just cene!" Dhare wauz frendlines in her cel, az dho the rootene wer an oald game.

"I sau Casher ONele bound up the steps. U yorcelf opend the doer. He thrust hiz daggher intoo yor throte and the blud spat out in a big streme, rich and darc and red. U dide in the doerwa. For sum rezon Casher ONele went on intoo the hous widhout saying ennithhing too me. I became fritend and I fled."

He did not looc fritend at aul.

"If I am ded," she ced, "hou can I be tauking too u?"

"Doant aasc me," cride Gocego. "I am just a forgetty. I aulwase go bac too the Onnorabel Rankin Mikeljon, eche time dhat u ar merderd, and I tel him the truith ov whaut I sau. Then he ghivz me the medicine and I tel him sumthhing els. At dhat point he wil ghet drunc and gloomy agane, the wa dhat he aulwase duz."

"Its a pity," ced the chiald. "I wish I cood help him, but I caant. He woant cum too Boaregard."

"Him?" laaft Gocego. "O, no, not him! Nevver! He just cendz uther

pepel too kil u."

"And hese nevver sattisfide," ced the chiald sadly, "no matter hou menny tiamz he kilz me!"

"Nevver," ced Gocego cheerfooly, climing bac intoo the ground car.  
"Bi nou."

"Wate a moment," she cauld. "Woodnt u like sumthhing too ete or drinc befoer u drive bac. Dhaerz a bad cluch ov stormz on the rode."

"Not me," ced Gocego. "He mite punnish me and make me a forgetty aul over agane. Sa, maby dhats aulreddy happend. Maby Ime a forgetty whoose bene poot throo it cevveral tiamz, not just wuns." Hope cerjd intoo hiz vois. "Truth! Truth! Can u tel me?"

"Supose I did tel u," ced she. "Whaut wood happen?"

Hiz face became sad, "Ide hav a convulshon and forghet whaut I toald u. Wel, good-bi ennihou. Ile take a chaans on the stormz. If u evver ce dhat Casher ONele agane," cauld Gocego, loocking rite throo Casher ONele, "tel him I liact him but dhat weeyl nevver mete agane."

"Ile tel him," ced the gherl gently. She waucht az the hevvy broun man cliamd nimbly intoo the car. The top cramd shut widh no sound. The wheelz ternd and in a moment the car had disapeerd behiand the paamettose in the drive.

While she had tauct too Gocego in her clere worm hi gherlish vois, Casher had waucht her.

He cood ce the thhin shape ov her shoalderz under the lite blu shift dhat she woer. Her hips had not begun too fil. When he glaanst at her in wun-qworter profile, he cood ce dhat her cheke wauz smuidh, her hare wel-coamd, her littel brests just beghinning too bud on her chest. Whoo wauz this chiald whoo acted like an empres?

She ternd bac too him and gave him a worm, apologetic smile.

"Gocego and I aulwase tauc over the stoery tooghether. Then he gose bac and Mikeljon duz not beleve it and spendz unhappy munths planning mi merder aul over agane. I supose, cins I am just an animal, dhat I shood not caul it a merder when sumbody trise too kil me, but I resist, ov coers. I doo not care about me, but I hav strong orderz too kepe mi maaster and hiz hous safe from harm."

"Hou oald ar u?" ced Casher. He added, "--if u can tel the truth."

"I can tel nuthhing but the truth. I am condishond. Ime nine hundred and cix erth-yeerz oald."

"Nine hundred?" he cride. "But u looc like a chiald!"

"I am a chiald," ced the gherl, "and not a chiald. I am an erth tertel, chainjd intoo human form bi the conveyens ov man. Mi life expectancy wauz increest thre hundred tiamz when I wauz moddifide. Dha tel me dhat mi normal life span shood hav bene thre hundred yeerz. Nou it iz nianty thousand yeerz, and sumtiamz I am afrade. U wil be ded ov happy oald age, Casher ONele, while I am stil opening the draips in this hous too let the sunlite in. But lets not stand in the doer and tauc. Cum on in and ghet sum refreshments. Yor not gowing enniwhare, u no."

Casher follode her intoo the hous but he poot hiz wurry intoo werdz,

"U mene I am yor prizzoner."

"Not mi prizzoner, Casher. Yorz. Hou cood u cros dhat ground which u travveld in the ground car? U cood ghet too the endz ov mi estate aul rite, but then the stormz wood pic u up and wherl u awa too a deth which nobody wood even ce."

She ternd intoo a big oald roome, brite widh lite-cullord woodden fernichure.

7

Casher stood dhare, auqwordly. He had reternd hiz nife too its boote-sheeth when dha left the vestibule. Nou he felt verry od, citting widh hiz victim on a sun-poerch.

Truith wauz untrubbeld. She rang a braas bel which stood on an oald-fashond round tabel. Femminine footsteps clatterd in the haul. A female cervant enterd the roome, drest in a blac dres widh a white aipron. Casher had cene such cervants in the oald draamaa cuebz, but he had nevver expected too mete wun in the flesh.

"Weeyl hav hi te," ced Truith. "Which doo u prefer, te or coffy, Casher? Or I hav bere and wianz. Even too bottelz ov whisky braut aul the wa from Erth."

"Coffy wood be fine for me," ced Casher.

"And u no whaut I waunt, Unice," ced Truith too the cervant.

"Yes, maam," ced the made, disapering.

Casher leend forword.

"Dhat cervant--iz she human?"

"Certainly," ced Truth.

"Then whi iz she werking for an underperson like u? I mene--I doant mene too be unplezzant or ennithhing--but I mene dhats against aul lauz."

"Not here on Henreyaadaa, it iznt."

"And whi not?" percisted Casher.

"Becauz on Henreyaadaa I am micelf the lau."

"But the guvvernment--?"

"Its gon," she ced caamly.

"The Instroomentality?"

Truth fround. She looct like a wise, puzseld chiald. "Maby u no dhat part better dhan I doo. Dha leve an adminnistrator here, probbably becauz dha doo not hav enny uther place too poot him and becauz he needz sum kiand ov werc too kepe him alive. Yet dha doo not ghiv him enuf reyal pouwer too arest mi maaster or too kil me. Dha ignoer me. It ceemz too me dhat if I doo not challenj them, dha leve me alone."

"But dhare ruilz--?"

"Dha doant enfors them, niather here in Boaregard nor over in the

toun ov Ambiloxy. Dha leve it up too me too kepe these placez gowing. I doo the best I can."

"Dhat cervant, then? Did dha lece her too u?"

"O, no," laaft the gherl-woomman. "She came too kil me twenty yeerz ago, but she wauz a forgetty and she had no place els too go, so I traird her az a made. She haz a contract widh mi maaster, and her wagez ar pade evvery munth intoo the sattelite abuv the plannet. She can leve if she evver waunts too. I doant thhinc she wil."

Casher cide. "This iz aul too hard too beleve. U ar a chiald, but u ar aulmoast a thouzand yeerz oald. Yor an underperson, but u comaand a whole plannet--"

"Oonly when I nede too!" she interupted him.

"U ar wiser dhan moast ov the pepel I hav evver none and yet u looc yung. Hou oald doo u fele?"

"I fele like a chiald," she ced, "a chiald wun thouzand yeerz oald. And I hav had the ejucaishon and the memmory and the expereyens ov a wise lady stamp rite intoo mi brane."

"Whoo wauz the lady?" ced Casher.

"The Oner and Cittisen Aggathaa Maddigan. The wife ov mi maaster. Az she wauz diying dha traanscriabd her brane on mine. Dhats whi I speke so wel and no so much."

"But dhats ilegal!" cride Casher.

"I suppose it wauz," Truth agrede, "but mi maaster had it dun ennihou."

Casher leend forword in hiz chare. He looct earnestly at the person. Wun part ov him stil luvd her for the wunderfool littel gherl whoome he had thaut she wauz, but anuther part wauz in au ov beying moer pouwerfool

dhan enniwun he had cene befoer. She reternd hiz gase widh dhat compoazd haaf-smile which wauz wholly femminine and compleetly celf-posest; she looct tenderly uppon him az dhare facez wer reflected bi the yello morning lite ov Henreyaadaa. "I beghin too understand," he ced, "dhat u ar whaut u hav too be. It iz verry strainj, here in this forgotten werld."

"Henreyaadaa iz strainj," she ced, "and I suppose dhat I must ceme strainj too u. U ar rite, dho, about eche ov us beying whaut she haz too be. Iznt dhat libberty itcelf? If we eche wun must be sumthhing, iznt libberty the biznes ov fianding it out and then doowing it--dhat wun job, dhat uttermoast mishon compattibel widh our nachuerz? Hou terribel it wood be, too be sumthhing and nevver no whaut!"

"Like whoo?" ced Casher.

"Like Gocego, perhaps. He wauz a grate king and he wauz a good king, on sum faarawa werld whare dha stil nede kingz. But he comitted an intollerabel mistake and the Instroomentallity made him intoo a forgetty and cent him here."

"So dhats the mistery!" ced Casher. "And whaut am I?"

She looct at him caamly and stedfaastly befoer she aancerd. "U ar a killer, Casher ONele. U ar a good man, but u ar a killer

too. It must make yor life verry hard in menny wase. U kepe havving too justifi yorcelf."

This wauz so cloce too the truith--so cloce too Casherz long wurrese az too whether justice mite not just be a cuvver name for "revenj"--dhat it wauz hiz tern too gaasp and be cilent.

"And I hav werc for u," added the amasing chiald.

"Werc? Here?"

"Yes. Sumthhing much wers dhan killing. And u must doo it, Casher, if u waunt too go awa from here befoer I di, aty-nine thousand yeez from nou." She looct around. "Hush!" she added. "Unice iz cumming and I doo not waunt too friten her bi letting her no the terribel thhingz dhat u ar gowing too hav too doo."

"Here?" he whisperd ergently. "Rite here, in this hous?"

"Rite here in this hous," ced she in a normal vois, az Unice enterd the roome baring a huge tra cuvverd widh plaits ov foode and too pots ov bevverage.

Casher staerd at the human woomman whoo werct so cheerfooly for an annimal, but niather Unice, whoo wauz bizsy cetting thhingz out on the tabel, nor Truith whoo, tertel and woomman dhat she wauz, cood not help reyarain'ging the dishez widh gentel peremptorese, pade the leest atenshon too him.

The werdz rang in hiz hed. "In this hous ... sumthhing wers dhan killing."

Dha made no cens. Niather did it make cens too hav hi te befoer five ourz, descimal time.

He cide and dha boath glaanst at him widh afecshonate concern.

"Hese taking it better dhan moast ov them doo, maam," ced Unice.

"Moast ov them whoo cum here too kil u ar verry upcet when dha fiand out dhat dha canot doo it."

"Hese a killer, Unice, a reyal killer, so I thhinc he wauznt too botherd."

Unice ternd too him verry plezzantly and ced, "A killer, cer. Its a plezhure too hav u here. Moast ov them ar terribel ammaterz and then the lady haz too hele them befoer we can fiand sumthhing for them too doo."

Casher coodnt resist a spot inqwiry. "Ar aul the uther wood-be killerz stil here?"

"Moast ov them, cer. The wunz dhat nuthhing happend too. Like me. Whare els wood we go? Bac too the Adminnistrator, Rankin Mikeljon?" She ced the laast widh hevvy scorn indede, kertcede too him, boud deeply too the woomman-gherl Truith, and left the roome.

Truith looct frendlily at Casher ONele. "I can tel dhat u wil not digest yor foode if u cit here wating for bad nuse. When I ced u had too doo sumthhing wers dhan killing, I supose I wauz speking from a woommanz point ov vu. We hav a homicidal mainyac in the hous. He iz a hous ghest and he iz cuvered bi Oald North Australeyan lau. Dhat meenz we canot kil him or expel him, dho he iz aulmoast az imortal az I am. I hope dhat u and I can friten him awa from molesting mi maaster. I canot cure him or luv him. He iz too crasy too be reecht throo hiz emoashonz. Pure, utter aufool frite mite doo

it, and it taix a man for dhat job. If u doo this, I wil reword u richly."

"And if I doant?" ced Casher.

Agane she staerd at him az dho she wer tryying too ce throo hiz ise aul the wa down too the bottom ov hiz sole; agane he felt for her dhat tremmor ov compashon, evver so sliatly tinjd widh male desire, which he had expereyenst when he ferst met her in the doerwa ov Boaregard.

Dhare loct glaancez broke apart.

Truith looct at the floer. "I canot li," she ced, az dho it wer a handicap. "If u doo not help me I shal hav too doo the thhingz which it iz in mi pouwer too doo. The chefe thhing iz nuthhing. Too let u liv here, too let u slepe and ete in this hous until u ghet boerd and aasc me for sum kiand ov rootene werc around the estate. I cood make u werc," she went on, loocking up at him and blushing aul the wa too the top ov her boddice, "bi havving u faul in luv widh me, but dhat wood not be kiand. I wil not doo it dhat wa. Iather u make a dele widh me or u doo not. Its up too u. Ennihou, lets ete ferst. Ive bene up cins daun, expecting wun moer killer. I even wunderd if u mite be the wun whoo wood suxede. Dhat wood be terribel, too leve mi maaster aul alone!"

"But u--woodnt u yorcelf miand beying kild?"

"Me? When Ive aulreddy livd a thouzand yeerz and hav aty-nine thouzand moer too go? It coodnt matter les too me. Hav sum coffy."

And she poerd hiz coffy.

Too or thre tiamz Casher tride too ghet the conversaishon bac too the werc at hand, but Truth diverted him widh triveyallitese. She even made him wauc too the enormous windo, whare dha cood ce far acros the marshez and the ba.

The ski in the remote distans wauz darc and fool ov wermz. Dhose wer tornadose, beyond the reche ov her wether masheenz, which coerst around the rest ov Henreyaadaa but stopt short at the boundarese ov Ambiloxy and Boaregard. She made him admire the weerd coral caacelz which had bilt themcelvz up from the ba bottom, hundredz ov fete intoo the are. She tride too make him ce a fammily ov wiald wind-pepel whoo wer slily and gently steling appelz from her orchard, but iather hiz ise wer not uest too the landscape or Truth cood ce much ferther dhan he cood.

This wauz a werld rich in wauter. If it had not bene located within a cerese ov bad pockets ov space, the wauter itcelf cood hav becum an expoert. Mankiand had dun the best it cood, rasing kelp too provide the iarn and fosforus so often lacking in of-werld diyets, controing the wether at grate expens. Finaly the Instroomentallity recomended dhat dha ghiv up. The expoerts ov Henreyaadaa nevver qwite ballanst the impoerts. The subcidese had gon far beyond the uezhuwal tiamz. The erth-life had adapted widh a viggor which wauz much too grate. Ordinary formz rappidly found nu shaips, challenjd bi the windz, the rainz, the novvel kemmistry and the od rajaishon patternz ov Henreyaadaa. Killer whailz became aerborn, coral tooc too the are, human babese lost in the wind sumtiamz cerviavd too becum subhuman and wiald.

Even gellifish became ski-sweperz.

The former inhabitants ov Henreyaadaa had chosen a plannet at a rezonabel price--not chepe, but rezonabel--from the oner, whoo had in tern baut it from a poast-Soveyet cetling co-opperative. Dha had leest the nu plannet, had werct out an ecollogy, had emmigrated, and wer nou doowing wel.

Henreyaadaa kept the wiald wether, the lost hoaps and the roowinz. And ov these roowinz, the gratest wauz Murra Maddigan.

Wuns a prime land'hoalder and hoast, a gentelman amung gentelmen, the ritchest man on the whole werld, Maddigan had becum oald, cenile, weke. He faist deth or catalepcis. The deth ov hiz wife made him fere hiz one deth and widh hiz tertel-gherl Truth, he had chosen catalepcis.

Moast ov the time he wauz frosen in a traans, hiz hartbete imperceptibel, hiz metabbolizm verry slo. Then, for a fu ourz or dase, he wauz normal. Sumtiamz the sleeps wer for weex, sumtiamz for yeeرز. The Instroomentallity doctorz had looct him over--moer out ov ciyentiffic cureyoscity dhan from enny judishal rite--and had decided dhat dho this wauz an od wa too liv, it wauz a legal wun. Dha went awa and left him alone. He had had the whole personallity ov hiz diying wife Aggathaa Maddigan imprest on the tertel-chiald, dho this wauz ilegal. Qwite cimply, the doctor had bene briabd.

Aul this wauz toald bi Truth too Casher az dha ate and dranc dhare wa sloly throo an imens repaast.

An arcayic wood fire roerd in a reyal fiarplace.

While she tauct, Casher waucht the gentel muivment ov her

shoalderblaidz when she muivd forword, the looce muivment ov her lite dres az she muivd, the chialdish face which wauz so tender, so apeling and yet so wise.

Nowing az littel az he did about the plannet ov Henreyaadaa, Casher tride desperaitly too fit hiz one thhinking tooghether and too make cens out ov the prediccament in which he found himcelf. Even if the gherl wer attractive, this toald him nuthhing ov the reyal challen'gez which he stil faist incide this verry hous. No lon'gher wauz hiz preyoccupaishon widh ghetting the pouwer crooser hiz mane job on Henreyaadaa. No evvidens wauz at

hand too sho dhat the drunken, derainjd Adminnistrator, Rankin Mikeljon, wood ghiv him ennithhing at aul unles he, Casher, kild the gherl.

Even dhat had becum a forgotten mishon. Despite the fact dhat he had cum too the estate ov Boaregard for the perpoce ov killing her, he wauz nou on a gerny widhout a destinaishon.

Yeerz ov sad expereyens had taut him dhat when a prodject went compleetly too pecez, he stil had the mishon ov personal cervival, if hiz life wer too mene ennithhing too hiz home plannet, Mizser, and if hiz retern, in enny wa or enny fashon, cood bring reyal libberty bac too the Twelv Nialz.

So he looct at the gherl widh a nu kiand ov unconcern. Hou cood she help hiz planz? Or hinder them? The prommicez she made wer too vaghe too be ov enny reyal uce in the sad complicated werld ov pollitix.

He just tride too enjoi her cumpany and the strainj place in which he found himcelf.

The Gulf ov Esperanzaa la just within hiz vizhon. At the far horizon he cood ce the helples tornadose triying too riadh dhare wa paast the

wether masheenz which stil funcshond, at the expens ov Boaregard, aul along the coast from Ambiloxy too Mottile. He cood ce the shoerline choact widh kelp, which had wuns bene a cash crop and wauz nou a nusans. Roowind bildingz in the distans wer probbably the leftoverz ov procescing plaants; the artifishal-loocking coral caacelz obscuerd hiz vu ov them.

And this hous--hou much cens did this hous make?

An undergherl, erily wise, whoo hercelf admitted dhat she had obtaind an unlaufool amount ov condishoning; a maaster whoo wauz a livving corps; a thret which cood not even be menshond frely within the hous; a hous'hoald which ceemd too hav displaist the plannetary guvvernment; a plannetary guvvernment which the Instroomentallity, for unfadhomabel rezonz ov its one, had let faul intoo roowin. Whi? Whi?

The tertel-gherl wauz loocking at him. If he had bene an art schudent, he wood hav ced dhat she wauz ghivving him the tender, femminine and irecuvverably remote smile ov a Madonnaa, but he did not no the moteefs ov the ainshent picchuerz; he just nu dhat it wauz a smile characteristic ov Truth hercelf.

"U ar wundering...?" she ced.

He nodded, suddenly feling mizserabel dhat mere werdz had cum betwene them.

"U ar wundering whi the Instroomentallity let u cum here?"

He nodded agane.

"I doant no iather," ced she, reching out and taking hiz hand. Hiz hand felt and looct like the hary pau ov a giyant az she held hiz rite hand widh her too pritty, wel-kept littel-gherl handz; but the strength ov her ise and the stedfaastnes ov her vois shode dhat it wauz she whoo wauz ghivving the reyashurans, not he.

The chiald wauz helping him?

The ideyaa wauz outrajous, imposcibel, troo.

It wauz enuf too alarm him, too make him beghin too pool hiz hand awa agane. She clucht him widh tender strength, and he cood not resist her. Agane he had the feling, which had gript him so strongly when he ferst met her at the doer ov Boaregard and faild too kil her, dhat he had aulwase none her and had aulwase luvd her. (Wauz dhare not sum plannet on which exentric pepel beleevd a weerd cult, thhinking dhat human beyingz wer endlesly reborn widh fragmentary recolecshonz ov dhare one preveyous human liavz? It wauz aulmoast like dhat here, nou.

He

did not no the gherl but he had aulwase none her. He did not luv the gherl and yet he had luvd her from the beghinning ov time.)

Ced she, so softly dhat it wauz aulmoast a whisper: "Wate. Yor deth ma cum throo dhat doer pritty soone and I wil tel u hou too mete it. But befoer dhat, I hav too sho u the moast butifool thhing in the werld."

Despite her littel hand liying tenderly on hiz, Casher spoke irritably: "Ime tiard ov tauking riddelz here on Henreyaadaa. The Adminnistrator ghivz me the mishon ov killing u and I fale in it. Then u prommice me a battel and ghiv me a good mele insted. Nou u tauc about the

battel and start of widh sum uther irllevancy. Yor gowing too make me an'gry if u kepe on and, and--" he stammerd at laast--"and I ghet pritty uesles if Ime an'gry. If u waunt me too fite for u, let me no the fite and let me go doo it nou. Ime willing enuf."

Her remote, kiand haaf-smile did not waver. "Casher," she ced, "whaut I am gowing too sho u iz yor moast important weppon in the fite."

Widh her fre left hand she tugd at the fine chane ov a thhin goald neclace. Sum kiand ov juwelry came out ov the top ov her shift dres, whare she had kept it hidden. It wauz the image ov too pecez ov wood widh a man naild too them.

Casher staerd and then he berst intoo histerrical laafter.

"Nou uve dun it, maam," he cride. "Ime no uce too u or too enniboddy els. I no whaut dhat iz, and up too nou Ive just suspected it. Its whaut the robot, rat and Copt agrede on when dha went exploering bac in Space Thre. Its the Oald Strong Relidjon. Uve poot it in mi miand and nou the next person whoo meets me wil pepe it and wil wipe it out. Me too, probbably, along widh it. Dhats no weppon. Dhats a defete. Uve dun me in. I nu the cine ov the Fish a long time ago, but I had a chaans ov ghetting awa widh just dhat littel bit."

"Casher!" she cride. "Casher! Ghet hoald ov yorcelf. U wil no nuthhing about this befoer u leve Boaregard. U wil forghet. U wil be safe."

He stood on hiz fete, not nowing whether too run awa, too laaf out loud, or too cit doun and wepe at the cilly sad misforchune which had befaulen him. Too thhinc dhat he himcelf had becum brane-branded az a fanattic--forevver denide travvel betwene the starz--just becauz an

undergherl had shone him an od pece ov jewelry!

"Its not az bad az u thhinc," ced the littel gherl, and stood up too. Her face peerd luvvingly at Casherz. "Doo u thhinc, Casher, dhat I am afrade?"

"No," he admitted.

"U wil not remember this, Casher. Not when u leve. I am not just the tertel-gherl Truth. I am aulso the imprint ov the cittisen Aggathaa. Hav u evver herd ov her?"

"Aggathaa Maddigan?" He shooc hiz hed sloly. "No. I doant ce hou ... No, Ime shure dhat I nevver herd ov her."

"Didnt u evver here the stoery ov the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon?"

Casher looct cerpriazd. "Shure I sau it. Its a pla. A draamaa. It iz ced too be baist on sum ledgend ov imemoereyal time. The space-wich dha cauld her, and she cunjuerd fleets out ov nuthhing bi shere hipnocis. Its an oald stoery."

"Elevven hundred yeerz iznt so long," ced the gherl. "Elevven hundred yeerz, foertene local munths cum next toonite."

"U wernt alive elevven hundred yeerz ago," ced Casher.

He stood up from the remainz ov dhare mele and waunderd over tooword the windo. Dhat terribel pece ov relidjous jewelry made him uncumfortabel. He nu dhat it wauz against aul lauz too ship relidjon

from werld too werld. Whaut wood he doo, whaut cood he doo, nou dhat he had acchuwaly beheld an immagine ov the God Naild Hi? Dhat wauz exactly the kiand ov contraband which the polece and customz robots ov hundredz ov werldz wer loocking for.

The Instroomentallity wauz esy about moast thhingz, but the traansplaanting ov relidjon wauz wun ov its hostile obceshonz. Relidjonz leect from werld too werld ennihou. It wauz ced dhat sumtiamz even the underpepel and robots carrede bits ov relidjon throo space, dho this ceemd improbbabel. The Instroomentallity left relidjon alone when it had a cetteld place on a cin'ghel plannet, but the Lordz ov the Instroomentallity themcelvz shund uthet pepez devoashonal liavz and cimply tooc good care dhat fanatticism did not wuns moer flare up betwene the starz, wuns agane bringing wiald hope and grate deth too aul the mankiandz.

And nou, thaut Casher, the Instroomentallity haz bene good too me in its big impersonal colective wa, but whaut wil it doo when mi brane iz on fire widh forbidden nollej?

The gherlz vois cauld him.

"I hav the aancer too yor problem, Casher," ced she, "if u wood oonly liscen too me. I am the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon, at leest I am az much az enny wun person can be printed on anuther."

Hiz jau dropt az he ternd bac too her. "U mene dhat u, chiald, reyaly ar imprinted widh this woomman Aggathaa Maddigan? Reyaly imprinted?"

"I hav aul her skilz, Casher," ced the gherl qwiyetly, "and a fu moer

which I hav lernd on mi one."

"But I thaut it wauz just a stoery!" ced Casher. "If yor dhat terribel woomman from Gonfalon, u doant nede me. Ime qwitting. Nou."

Casher wauct tooword the doer. Disgusted, finnisht, throo. She mite be a chiald, she mite be charming, she mite nede help, but if she came from dhat terribel oald stoery, she did not nede him.

"O, no u doant," ced she.

9

Unexpected, she tooc her place in the doerwa, baring it. In her hand wauz the immagine ov the man on the too pecez ov wood.

Ordinarily Casher wood not hav poosht a lady. Such wauz hiz haist dhat he did so this time. When he tucht her, it wauz like welded stele; niather her gown nor her boddy yeilded a thouzandth ov a millimeter too hiz strong hand and hevvy poosh.

"And nou whaut?" she aasct gently.

Loocking bac, he sau dhat the reyal Truth, the smiling gherl-woomman, stil stood soft and reyal in the windo.

Depe within, he began too ghiv up; he had herd ov hipnotists whoo cood project, but he had nevver met enniwun az strong az this.

She wauz doowing it, but hou wauz she doowing it? Or wauz she doowing it? The

operaishon cood be subvolishonal. Dhare mite be sum art carrede over from her annimal paast which even her re-formd miand cood not explane. Operaishonz too suttel, too primorjal for anallicis. Or skilz which she uezd widhout understanding.

"I project," she ced.

"I ce u doo," he replide glumly and flatly.

"I doo kinesthettix," she ced. Hiz nife whipt out ov hiz buitsheeth and floted in the are in frunt ov him.

He snacht it out ov the are instinctiavly. It wermd a littel in hiz graasp, but the foers on the nife wauz nuthhing moer dhan he had felt when paacing big magnettic en'gianz.

"I bliand," she ced. The roome went totaly darc for him.

"I here," he ced, and prould at her like a beest, gowing bi hiz memmory ov the roome and bi the verry soft sound ov her breething. He had notiast bi nou dhat the cimulacrum ov hercelf which she had poot in the doerwa did not make enny sound at aul, not even dhat ov breething.

He nu dhat he wauz nere her. Hiz fin'ghertips reecht out for her shoalder or her throte. He did not mene too hert her, meerly too sho her dhat too cood pla at trix.

"I stun," she ced, and her vois came at him from aul direcshonz. It eccode from the celing, came from aul five waulz ov the oald od roome, from the open windose, from boath the doerz. He felt az dho he wer beying lifted intoo space and ternd sloly in a condishon ov waitlesnes. He tride too retane celf-controle, too liscen for the wun troo sound among the menny fauls soundz, too trap the gherl bi sum outcide chaans.

"I make u remember," ced her multipel eccowing vois.

For an instant he did not ce hou this cood be a weppon, even if the tertel-gherl had lernd aul the ugly trix ov the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon.

But then he nu.

He sau hiz unkel, Curaf, agane. He sau hiz oald apartments vividly around himcelf. Curaf wauz dhare. The oald man wauz pitteyabel, haitfool, drunc, horribel; the gherl on Curafs lap laaft at him, Casher ONEle, and she laaft at Curaf too. Casher had wuns had a tenagerz pashonate concern widh cex and at the same time he had a tenagerz dredfool fere ov aul the unstated, invizibel implicaishonz ov whaut the man-woomman relaishonship, gon sour, gon rong, gon bad, mite be. The prezsent-moment Casher rememberd the long-ago Casher, and az he spun in the web ov Truths hipnottic pouwerz he found himcelf bac widh the ugleyest memmory he had: The killingz in the pallace at Mizser.

The cuunelz had taken Cahere itcelf, and dha ultimaitly let Curaf run awa too the plezhure plannet ov Teyol.

But Curafs companyonz, whoo had debauched the oald republic ov the Twelv Nialz, dhose pepel! Dha did not go. The soalgerz, stung too fury, had cut them down widh niavz. Casher thaut ov the blud sticky on the floerz, blud gushing perpel intoo the carpets, blud brite red and leping like a fountane when a white throte ended its laast gherghel, blud terning broun whare handprints had left it on marbel tabelz. The worm pallace, long ago, had gotten the swete cic stench ov blud aul the wa throo it. The yung Casher had nevver none dhat

pepel had so much blud incide them, or dhat so much cood poer out on the perfuemd sheets, the tabelz stil cet widh foode and drinc, or dhat blud cood crepe acros the floer in growing puilz az the boddese ov the ded yeelded up dhare laast fu naasty soundz and dhare terminal muscular spazmz.

Befoer dhat da ov Bootchery had ended, wun thouzand, thre hundred and elevven human boddese, rain'ging in age from too munths too aty-nine yeez, had bene carrede out ov the pallacez wuns occupide bi Curaf. Curaf, under cedaishon, wauz wating for a starship too take him too perpetchuwal exile and Casher--Casher himcelf ONele!--wauz shaking the hand ov Cuunel Wedder, whoose orderz had cauzd aul the blud. The hand wauz wausht and the nailz paerd and cleend, but the cuf ov the sleeve wauz stil rimd widh the dri blud ov sum uther human beying. Cuunel Wedder iather did not notice hiz one cuf, or he did not care.

"Tuch and yeeld!" ced a gherl-vois out ov noawhare.

Casher found himcelf on aul foerz in the roome, hiz cite suddenly bac agane, the roome un chainjd, and Truith smiling.

"I faut u," she ced.

He did not trust himcelf too speke.

He reecht for hiz wauter-glaas, loocking at it cloasly too ce if dhare wer enny blud on it.

Ov coers not. Not here. Not this time, not this place.

He poold himcelf too hiz fete.

The gherl haz cens enuf not too help him.

She stood dhare in her thhin moddest shift, loocking verry much like a wise female chiald, while he stood up and dranc thherstily. He refild the glaas and dranc agane.

Then, oanly then, did he tern too her and speke. "Doo u doo aul dhat?"

She nodded.

"Alone. Widhout drugz or mashenery?"

She nodded agane.

"Chiald," he cride out, "yor not a person! Yor a whole wepponz cistem aul bi yorcelf. Whaut ar u, reyaly. Whoo ar u?"

"I am the tertel chiald Truth," she ced, "and I am the loiyal propperty and luvving cervant ov mi good maaster, the Mister and Oner Murra Maddigan."

"Madam," ced Casher, "u ar aulmoast a thouzand yeerz oald. I am at yor cervice. I doo hope u wil let me go fre later on. And espeshaly, dhat u wil take dhat relidjous picchure out ov mi miand."

Az Casher spoke, she pict a locket from the tabel. He did not notice it. It wauz an ainshent wauch or a littel round box, swinging on a thhin goald chane.

"Wauch this," ced the chiald, "if u trust me, and repete whaut I then sa."

(Nuthhing at aul happend: nuthhing--enniwhare.)

Casher ced too her, "Yor making me dizsy, swinging dhat ornament. Poot it bac on. Iznt dhat the wun u wer waring?"

"No, Casher, it iznt."

"Whaut wer we tauking about?" demaanded Casher.

"Sumthhing," ced she. "Doant u remember?"

"No," ced Casher bruisclly. "Sorry, but Ime hun'gry agane." He woolft doun a swete role encrusted widh shooggar and deccorated widh fruits.

Hiz

mouth fool, he wausht the foode doun widh wauter. At laast he spoke too her. "Nou whaut?"

She had waucht widh tiamles grace.

"Dhaerz no hurry, Casher. Minnuets or ourz, dha doant matter."

"Didnt u waunt me too fite sumbody aafter Gocego left me here?"

"Dhats rite," she ced, widh terribel qwiyet.

"I ceme too hav had a fite rite here in this roome." He staerd around schupidly.

She looct around the roome, verry coole. "It duznt looc az dho enniboddese bene fiting here, duz it?"

"Dhaerz no blud here, no blud at aul. Evverithhing iz clene."

"Pritty much so."

"Then whi," ced Casher, "shood I thhinc I had a fite?"

"This wiald wether on Henreyaadaa sumtiamz upcets ofwerlderz until dha ghet uest too it," ced Truth mialdly.

The oald roome widh the goalden-oke fernichure swam around him. The world

outcide wauz strainj widh the sunlit marshez and wide biyoose traling of too the forevver-thundering storm, just over the horizon, which la beyond the wether masheenz. Casher shrugd and shivverd. He looct strate at the gherl. She stood erect and looct at him widh the even regard ov a raning empres. Her yung budding brests baerly shode throo the thhin'nes ov her shift; she woer goalden flat-heeld shoose.

Around her nec dhare wauz a thhin goald chane, but the obgett on the chane hung doun incide her dres. It exited him a littel too thhinc ov her flat chest baerly budding intoo woommanhood. He had nevver bene a man

whoo had an improper taist for children, but dhare wauz sumthhing about this person which wauz not chiald-like at aul.

And around the ej ov hiz miand dhare flickerd up hot littel torments ov memmory.

"Nou I remember," he cride, "u hav me here too kil sumbody. U ar cending me intoo a fite."

"U ar gowing too a fite, Casher. I wish I cood cend sumbody els, not u, but u ar the oonly person here strong enuf too doo the job."

Impasciavly he tooc her hand. The moment he tucht her, she ceest too be a chiald or an underperson. She felt tender and exiting, like the moast desirabel and important person he had evver none. Hiz cister? But he had no cister. He felt he wauz himcelf terribly, unenjurably important too her. He did not waunt too let her hand go, but she widhdroo

from hiz tuch widh an authorrity which no decent man cood resist.

"U must fite too the deth, nou, Casher," she ced, loocking at him az evenly az mite a troope comaander exammine a speshal soalger celected for a risky mishon.

10

He nodded. He wauz tiard ov havving hiz miand confuezd. He nu sumthhing had happend too him aafter the forgetty, Gocego, had left him at the frunt doer, but he wauz not at aul shure ov whaut it wauz.

Dha ceemd too hav had a sort ov mele tooghether in this roome. He felt dhat he wauz in luv widh the chiald, dho he nu dhat she wauz not even a human beyng. He rememberd sumthhing about her livving nianty thousand yeerz and he rememberd sumthhing els about her havving gotten the name and the skilz ov the gratest battel hipnotist ov aul history, the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon. Dhare wauz sumthhing strainj, sumthhing fritening about dhat chane around her nec. Dhare wer thhingz he had hoapt he wood nevver hav too no.

He straind at the thaut and it broke like a bubbel.

"Ime a fiter," he ced. "Ghiv me mi fite and let me no."

"*He* can kil u. I hope not ... but u must not kil him. He iz imortal and insane; but in the lau ov Oald North Australeyaa, from which mi maaster, the Mister and Oner Murra Maddigan, iz an exile, we must not hert a hous ghest, nor ma we tern him awa in a time ov grate

nede."

"Whaut doo I *doo*?" snapt Casher impaishently.

"U fite him. Friten him. Make hiz poor crasy miand feerfool dhat he wil mete u agane."

"Ime supoast too doo this?"

"U can," she ced verry cereyously. "Ive aulreddy tested u. Dhats whi u hav the littel spot ov amneezhaa about this roome."

"But *whi*? Whi bother? Whi not ghet sum ov yor human cervants and hav them ti him up or poot him in a padded roome?"

"Dha caant dele widh him. He iz too strong, too big, too clevver, even dho insane. Beciadz, dha doant dare follo him."

"Whare duz he go?" ced Casher sharply.

"Intoo the controle roome," replide Truith, az if it wer the saddest frase evver utterd.

"Whauts rong widh dhat? Even a place az fine az Boaregard caant hav too much ov a controle roome. Poot lox on the controle."

"Its not dhat kiand ov a controle roome."

Aulmoast an'gry, he shouted, "Whaut iz it, then?"

"The controle roome," she aancerd, "iz for a planoform ship. This hous--These countese, aul the wa too Mottile on the wun cide and too Ambiloxy on the uther--The ce itcelf, wa out intoo the Gulf ov

Esperanzaa. Aul this iz wun ship."

Casherz profeshonal interest tooc over. "If its ternd of, he caant doo enny harm."

"Its not ternd of," she ced. "Mi maaster leevz it on a verry littel bit. Dhat wa, he can kepe the wether masheenz gowing and make this ej ov Henreyaadaa a verry plezzant place."

"U mene," ced Casher, "dhat ude risc letting a lunatic fli aul these estaits of intoo space."

"He duznt even fli."

"Whaut duz he doo, then?" yeld Casher.

"When he ghets at the controalz, he just hovverz."

"He hovverz? Bi the Bel, gherl, doant tri too foole me. If u hovver a place az big az this, u cood wipe out the whole plannet enny moment. Dhare hav bene oanly too or thre pilots in the history ov space whoo wood be abel too hovver a mashene like this wun."

"He can, dho," incisted the littel gherl.

"Whoo iz he, ennihou?"

"I thaut u nu. Hiz name iz Jon Joi Tre."

"Tre the Go-Captane?" Casher shivverd in the worm roome. "He dide a long time ago aafter he made dhat reccord flite."

"He did not di. He baut imortallity and went mad. He came here and he livz under mi maasterz protecshon."

"O," ced Casher. Dhare wauz nuthhing els he wood sa. Jon Joi Tre, the grate Norstrileyen whoo tooc the ferst ov the Long Plun'gez outside the gallaxy; he wauz like Magno Taleyaano ov agez ago, whoo cood fli space on hiz livving brane alone.

But fite him?

Hou cood enniboddy fite him?

Pilots ar for piloting; killerz ar for killing; wimmen ar for luvving or forghetting. When u mix up the perpocez, evverithhing gose rong.

Casher went doun abruptly. "Doo u hav enny moer ov dhat coffy?"

"U doant nede coffy," she ced.

He looct up inqwiringly.

"Yor a fiter. U nede a wor. Dhats it," she ced, pointing widh her gherlish hand too a smaul doerwa which looct like the entrans too a clozset. "Just go in dhare. Hese in dhare nou, tinkering widh the masheenz agane. Making me wate for mi maaster too ghet blone too bits at enny minnute! And Ive poot up widh it for over a hundred yeerz."

"Go yorcelf," he ced.

"Uve bene in a ships controle roome," she declaerd.

"Yes," he nodded.

"U no hou pepel go aul naked and fritend incide. U no hou much traning it taix too make a go-captane. Whaut doo u thhinc happenz too me?" At long laast, her vois wauz shril, an'gry, exited, chialdish.

"Whaut happenz?" ced Casher dully, not caring verry much; he felt wery in evvery bone. Uesles battelz, merder he had too tri, ded pepel arguwing aafter dhare balladz had aulreddy grone out ov fashon. Whi didnt the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon doo her one werc?

Catching hiz thaut she screecht at him, "Becauz I caant!"

"Aul rite," ced Casher. "Whi not?"

*"Becauz I tern intoo me."*

A littel starteld, Casher ced, "U whaut?"

"Ime a tertel chiald. Mi shape iz human. Mi brane iz big. But Ime a *tertel*. No matter hou much mi maaster needz me, Ime just a tertel."

"Whauts dhat got too doo widh it?"

"Whaut doo tertelz doo when dhare faist widh dain'ger? Not underpepel-tertelz, but reyal tertelz, littel annimalz. U must hav herd ov them sumwhare."

"Ive cene them," ced Casher, "on sum werld or uther. Dha pool intoo dhare shelz."

"Dhats whi I doo," she wept, "when I shood be defending mi maaster. I can mete moast thhingz. I am not a couward. But in dhat controle roome, I

forghet, forghet!"

"Cend a robot, then!"

She aulmoast screemd at him. "A robot against Jon Joi Tre? Ar u mad, too?"

Casher admitted, in a mumbel, dhat on cecond thaut it woodnt doo much good too cend a robot against the gratest go-captane ov them aul. He concluded laimly, "Ile go, if u waunt me too."

"Go nou," she shouted. "Go rite in!"

She poold at hiz arm, haaf-dragghing and haaf-leding him too the littel britend doer which looct so innocent.

"But--" he ced.

"Kepe gowing," she hist. "This iz aul we aasc ov u. Doant kil him, but friten him, fite him, wuind him if u must. U can doo it. I caant." She sobd az she tugd at him. "Ide just be *me*."

Befoer he nu qwite whaut had happend she opend the doer. The lite beyond wauz clere and lite and tinjd widh blu, the wa the skise ov Manhome, Muther Erth, wer shone in aul the vuwerz.

He let her poosh him in throo the doer.

He herd the doer clic behiand him.

Befoer he even tooc in the detailz ov the roome or notiast the man in the go-captainz chare, the flavoring and mening ov the roome struc him like a blo against hiz throte.

*This roome, he thaut, iz hel.*

He wauznt even shure dhat he rememberd whare he had lernd the werd "hel." It denoted aul good ternd too evil, aul hope too anxyety, aul wishez too grede.

Sumhou, this roome wauz it.

And then...

11

And then the chefe occupant ov hel ternd and looct sqwaerly at him.

If this wauz Jon Joi Tre, he did not looc insane.

He wauz a handsum, chubby man widh a red complecshon, brite ise, daancing-blu in cullor, and a mouth which wauz az mobile az the mouth ov a temptres.

"Good da."

"Hou doo u doo?" ced Casher inainly.

"I doo not no yor name," ced the ruddy bric man, speking in a tone ov vois which wauz not the leest bit insane.

"I am Casher ONele, from the citty ov Cahere on the plannet Mizser."

"Mizser?" laaft Jon Joi Tre. "I spent a nite dhare, long, long ago. The entertainment wauz moast unnuezhuwal. But we hav uther thhingz too tauc about. U hav cum here too kil the undergherl Truth. U receevd yor orderz from the onnorabel Rankin Mikeljon, ma he soke in drinc! The chiald haz caut u and nou she waunts u too kil me, but she duz not dare utter dhose werdz."

Jon Joi Tre, az he spoke, shifted the spaiship controalz too stand-bi, and got reddy too ghet out ov hiz captainz cete.

Casher protested, "She ced nuthhing about killing u. She ced u mite kil me."

"I mite, at dhat." The imortal pilot stood on the floer. He wauz a fool hed shorter dhan Casher but he wauz a strong and formiddabel man. The blu lite ov the roome made him looc clere, sharp, distinct.

The whole flavor ov the cichuwaishon tickeld the fere-nervz incide Casherz boddy. He suddenly felt dhat he waunted verry much too go too a baathroome, but he felt qwite shuerly dhat if he ternd hiz bac on this man, in this place, he wood di like a feld ox in a stocyard. He had too face Jon Joi Tre.

"Go ahead," ced the pilot. "Fite me."

"I didnt sa dhat I wood fite u," ced Casher. "I am supoast too friten u and I doo not no hou too doo it."

"This iznt ghetting us enniwhare," ced Jon Joi Tre. "Shal we go intoo the outer roome and let poor littel Truth ghiv us a drinc? U can just tel her dhat u faild."

"I thinc," ced Casher, "dhat I am moer afrade ov her dhan I am ov u."

Jon Joi Tre flung himcelf intoo a cumfortabel pascen'gerz chare. "Aul rite, then. Doo sumthhing. Doo u waunt too box? Gluvz? Bare fists? Or wood u like soerdz? Or wiarpoints? Dhare ar sum over dhare in the clozset. Or we can eche take a pilot ship and hav a ship-juwel out in space."

"Dhat woodnt make much cens," ced Casher, "me fiting a ship against the gratest go-captane ov them aul."

Jon Joi Tre greted this widh an ugly underlaaf, a baerly audibel sound which made Casher fele the whole cichuwaishon wauz ridicculous.

"But I doo hav wun advaantage," ced Casher. "I no whoo u ar and u doo not no whoo I am."

"Hou cood I tel," ced Jon Joi Tre, "when pepel kepe on ghetting born aul over the place?"

He gave Casher a scornfool, cumfortabel grin. Dhare wauz charm in the manz poiz. Keping hiz ise focust directly on Casher, he felt for a caraaf and poerd himcelf a drinc.

He gave Casher an ironnic toast and Casher tooc it, standing fritend and alone. Moer alone dhan he had evver bene befoer in hiz life.

Suddenly Jon Joi Tre sprang liatly too hiz fete and staerd widh a complete chainj ov expreshon paast Casher. Casher did not dare looc around. This wauz sum oald fiting tric.

Tre spat out the werdz, "Uve dun it then! This time u wil

violate aul the lauz and kil me. This fashonabel ofe iz not just wun moer tric."

A vois behiand Casher cauld softly, "I doant no." It wauz a manz vois, oald, slo and tiard.

Casher had herd no wun cum in.

Casherz yeerz ov traning stood him in good sted. He skipt ciadwise in foer or five steps, nevver taking hiz ise of Jon Joi Tre, until the uther man had cum intoo hiz feeld ov vizhon.

The man whoo stood dhare wauz taul, thhin, yello-skind and yello-haerd. Hiz ise wer an oald cic blu. He glaanst at Casher and ced:

"Ime Maddigan."

Wauz this the maaster? thaut Casher. Wauz this the beying whoome dhat luvly chiald had bene imprinted too adoer?

He had no moer time for thaut.

Maddigan wisperd, az if too no wun in particcular, "U fiand me waking. U fiand him sane. Wauch out."

Maddigan lunjd for the pilots controalz, but hiz taul, thhin oald boddy cood not moove verry faast.

Jon Joi Tre jumpt out ov hiz chare and ran for the controalz too.

Casher tript him.

Tre fel, roald over, and got haafwa up, wun ne and wun foot on

the floer. In hiz hand dhare shimmerd a nife verry much like Casherz one.

Casher felt the flame ov hiz boddy az sum un'none foers flung him against the waul. He staerd, wiald widh fere.

Maddigan had cliamd intoo the pilots cete and wauz fidling widh the controalz az dho he mite blo Henreyaadaa out ov space at enny cecond. Jon Joi Tre glaanst at hiz oald hoast and then ternd hiz atenshon too the man in frunt ov him.

Dhare wauz anuther man dhare.

Casher nu him.

He looct familleyar.

It wauz himcelf, rising and leping like a snake, left arm weving the nife for the nec ov Jon Joi Tre.

The immagine-Casher hit Tre widh a thud dhat rezounded throo the roome.

Trese brite blu ise had ternd crasy-mad. Hiz nife caut the immagine-Casher in the abdomen, thrust hard and depe, and left the yung man gaasping on the floer, triying too poosh the bleding entrailz bac intoo hiz belly. The blud poerd from the immagine-Casher aul over the rug.

Blud!

Casher suddenly nu whaut he had too doo and hou he cood doo it--aul widhout enniboddy telling him.

He creyated a thherd Casher on the far cide ov the roome and gave him iarn gluvz. Dhare wauz himcelf, unheded against the waul; dhare wauz the diyng Casher on the floer; dhare wauz the thherd, stauking tooword Jon Joi Tre.

"Deth iz here," screemd the thherd Casher, with a vois which Casher reccogniazd az a feers crasy cimulacrum ov hiz one.

Tre wherld around. "Yor not reyal," he ced.

Immage-Casher stept around the console and hit Tre with an iarn gluv. The pilot jumpt awa, a hand reching up too hiz bleding face.

Jon Joi Tre screemd at Maddigan, whoo wauz playing with the diyalz widhout even pooting on the pinliter helmet.

"U got her in here?" he screemd. "U got her in here with this yung man! Ghet her out!"

"Whoo?" ced Maddigan softly and abcentmiandedly.

"Truith. Dhat wich ov yorz. I clame ghest-rite bi aul the ainshent lauz. *Ghet her out.*"

The reyal-Casher, standing at the waul, did not no hou he controald the immagine-Casher with the iarn gluvz, but controle him he did. He made him speke, in a vois az frantic az Trese one vois:

"Jon Joi Tre, I doo not bring u deth. I bring u blud. Mi iarn handz wil split yor ise. Bliand sockets wil stare in yor face. Mi iarn handz wil split yor teeth and brake yor jau a thouzand tiamz,

so dhat no doctor, no mashene wil evver fix u. Mi iarn handz wil crush yor armz, tern yor handz intoo livving ragz. Mi iarn handz wil brake yor legz. Looc at the blud, Jon Joi Tre! Dhare wil be a lot moer blud. U hav kild me wuns. Ce dhat yung man on the floer."

Dha boath glaanst at the ferst immagine-Casher, whoo had finaly shudderd intoo deth in the grate rug. A poole ov blud la in frunt ov the boddy ov the ueth.

Jon Joi Tre ternd too the immagine-Casher and ced too him, "Yor the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon. U caant scare me. Yor a tertel-gherl and caant reyaly hert me."

"Looc at me," ced reyal-Casher.

Jon Joi Tre glaanst bac and foerth betwene the jueplicitis.

Frite began too sho.

Boath the Casherz nou shouted, in crasy voicez which came from the depths ov Casherz one miand:

"Blud u shal hav! Blud and roowin. But we wil not kil u. U wil liv in roowin, bliand, emasculated, armles, legles. U wil be fed throo chuebz. U canot di and u wil wepe for deth but no wun wil here u."

"Whi?" screemd Tre. "Whi? Whaut hav I dun too u?"

"U remiand me," hould Casher, "ov mi home. U remiand me ov the blud poerd bi Cuunel Wedder when the poor uesles victimz ov mi unkelz lust pade widh dhare blud for hiz revenj. U remiand me ov micelf, Jon Joi Tre, and I am gowing too punnish u az I micelf mite

be punnisht."

Lost in the mists ov lunacy, Jon Joi Tre wauz stil a brave man.

He flung hiz nife unexpectedly at reyal-Casher. Immage-Casher, in a tremendous bound, leapt acros the roome and caut the nife on an iarn gluv. It clattered against the iarn gluv and then fel cilent intoo the rug.

Casher sau whaut he had too ce.

He sau the place ov Cahere, cuvverd with deth, with the intimate sticky cillines ov sudden deth--the ded men hoalding littel paccagez dha had tride too save, the gherlz, with dhare throats cut, liying in dhare one blud but with the lipstic stil even and the iabrou-pencil stil pritty on dhare ded facez. He sau a ded chiald hoalding a broken dol, loocking like a broken dol itcelf. He sau these thhingz and he made Jon Joi Tre ce them too.

"Yor a bad man," ced Jon Joi Tre.

"I am verry bad," ced Casher.

"Wil u let me go, if I nevver enter this roome agane?"

Immage-Casher snapt of, boath the boddy on the floer and the fiter with the iarn gluvz. Casher did not no hou Truth had taut him the lost art ov fiter-replicaishon, but he had certainly dun it wel.

"The lady toald me u cood go."

"But whoo ar u gowing too use," ced Jon Joi Tre, caam, sad and

lodgeical, "for yor dreemz ov blud if u doant use me?"

"I doant no," ced Casher. "I follo mi fate. Go nou, if u doo not waunt mi iarn gluvz too crush u."

Jon Joi Tre trotted out ov the roome, beten.

Oonly then did Casher, exhausted, grab a kertane too hoald himcelf uprite and looc around the roome frely.

The evil atmosfere had gon.

Maddigan, oald dho he wauz, had loct aul the controalz on stand-bi.

He wauct over too Casher.

"Thanc u. She did not invent u. She found u and poot u too mi cervice."

Casher coft out, "The gherl. Yes."

"*Mi gherl*," corected Maddigan. "She cood not hav thaut u up. She iz mi ded wife over agane. The cittisenes Aggathaa mite hav dun it. But not Truth."

Casher looct at the man az he tauct. The hoast woer the bottomz ov sum verry chepe yello pajaamaaz and a waushabel baathrobe which had wuns

bene striaps ov perpel, lavvender and white. Nou it wauz faded, like its warer. Casher aulso sau the white clene plaastic cergical implaants on the manz armz, whare the masheenz and chuebz hooct in too kepe him alive.

"I slepe a lot," ced Murra Maddigan, "but I am stil the maaster ov Boaregard. I am graitfool too u."

The hand wauz frale, witherd, dri, widhout strength.

The oald vois whisperd: "Tel her too reword u. U can hav ennithhing on mi estate. Or u can hav ennithhing on Henreyaadaa. She mannagez it aul for me." Then the oald blu ise opend wide and sharp and Murra Maddigan wauz wuns agane the man, just momentarily, dhat he had bene hundredz ov yeeرز ago--a Norstrileyen trader, sharp, shroode, wise and not unkiand. He added sharply: "Enjoi her cumpany. She iz a good chiald. But doo not tri too take her."

"Whi not?" ced Casher, cerpriazd at hiz one bluntnes.

"Becauz if u doo, she wil di. She iz *mine*. Imprinted too me. I had her made and she iz mine. Widhout me she wood di in a fu dase. Doo not take her."

Casher sau the oald man leve the roome bi a ceecret doer. He left himcelf, the wa he had cum in. He did not ce Maddigan agane for too dase, and bi dhat time the oald man had gon far bac intoo hiz cataleptic slepe.

12

Too dase later Truth tooc Casher too vizsit the sleping Maddigan.

"U caant go in dhare," ced Unice in a shoct vois "Nobody gose in

dhare. Dhats the maasterz roome."

"Ime taking him in," ced Truth caamly.

She had poold a cloth-ov-goald kertane acide and she wauz spinning the combinaishon lox on a mascive stele doer. It wauz cet in Damony matereyal.

The made went on protesting, "But even u, littel maam, caant take him in dhare!"

"Whoo cez I caant?" ced Truth caamly and challen'gingly.

The aufoolnes ov the cichuwaishon sanc in on Unice.

In a smaul vois she mutterd, "If yor taking him in, yor taking him in, but its nevver bene dun befoer."

"Ov coers it haznt, Unice, not in yor time. But Casher ONEle haz aulreddy met the mister and oner. He haz faut for the mister and oner. Doo u thhinc I wood take a stra ghest in too looc at the maaster, just like dhat?"

"O, not at aul, no," ced Unice.

"Then go awa, woomman," ced the lady-chiald. "U doant waunt too ce this doer open, doo u?"

"O, no," shreect Unice and fled, pootting her handz over her eerz az dho dhat wood shut out the cite ov the doer.

When the made had disapeerd, Truth poold widh her whole wate against the handel ov the hevvy doer. Casher expected the mustines ov the toome or the meddicine-smel ov a hospital; he wauz astonnisht when

fresh are and worm sunlite poerd out from dhat hevvy, mistereyous doer. The acchuwal opening wauz so narro, so lo, dhat Casher had too step ciadwise az he follode Truith intoo the roome.

The maasterz roome wauz enormous. The windose wer fludded widh perpetchuwal sunlite. The landscape outcide must hav bene the wa Henreyaadaa looct in its prime, when Mottile wauz a rezort for the caerfry milleyonz ov vacaishonerz and Ambiloxy a poert feding werldz haafwa acros the gallaxy. Dhare wauz no cine ov the ugly snaky stormz which wurrede and pesterd Henreyaadaa in these later yeerz.

Evverithhing

wauz landscape, order, neetnes, the triyumf ov man, az dho Turner had painted it.

The roome itcelf, like the uther grate livving-roome ov the estate ov Boaregard, wauz an ecshuberant nyo-baroc in which the arkitekt, himcelf haaf-mad, had bene ghivven wiald licens too werc out hiz fantacese

in stele, plaastic, plaaster, wood and stone. The celing wauz not flat: it had a nave. The foer cornerz ov the roome wer eche alcoavz, cutting depe intoo the foer ciadz, so dhat the roome wauz in efect an octagon. The propriyety and prittines ov the roome had bene a littel diminnisht bi the shuvving ov the fernichure too wun cide, sofaaz, upholsterd armchaerz, marbel tabelz and nicnac standz aul in an indescribabel malaunzh too the left, while the rite hand part ov the roome, facing the maaster windo widh the iluzoery landscape, wauz eqwipt like a cergery widh an opperating tabel, hiadraulic lifts, bottelz ov clere and cullord fluwid hanging from crome standz and too larj devicez which (Casher later cermiazd) must hav bene hart-lung and kidny masheenz.

The alcoavz, in dhare tern, wer wialder. Wun wauz an arcayic funeral parlor widh an imens coffin, draipt in blac velvet, resting on a

hevvy teke stand. The next wauz a spaisship controle cabbin ov the oald kiand, widh the leverz, switchez and controalz aul in plane cite--the meterz acchuwaly red the galacticaly-stabel locaishon ov this verry place, and too doo so dha had too wherl mitily--az wel az a pilots chare widh the uezhuwal chois ov helmets and the straps and shoc abzorberz. The thherd alcove wauz a cimpel bedroome dun in verry oald-fashond taist, the waulz a Wejwood blu widh depe wine-cullord draips, cuvverlets and pillocacez marking a sharp but tollerabel contraast. The foerth alcove wauz the cobby ov a fortres. It mite even be a fortres; the doer wauz hevvy and the waulz looct az dho dha mite be Damony matereyal, indestructibel bi enny imadginabel meenz. Cacez ov emergency foode and wauter wer stact against the waulz. Wepponz which looct oild and priamd stood in dhare rax, toogheter widh thre different calliberz ov wiarpoint.

The alcoavz had no pepel in them.

The parlor wauz deserted.

The mister and oner Murra Maddigan la naked on the opperating tabel. Too or thre wiarz led too gagez atacht too hiz boddy. Casher thaut dhat he cood ce a faint moashon ov the chest, az the cataleptic man breedhd at a rate wun-tenth normal or les.

The gherl-lady, Truith, wauz not the leest embarrast.

"I chec him foer or five tiamz a da. I nevver let pepel in here. But yor speshal, Casher. Hese tauct widh u and faut becide u and he nose dhat he ose u hiz life. Yor the ferst human person evver too ghet intoo this roome."

"Ile wager," ced Casher, "dhat the Adminnistrator ov Henreyaadaa, the Onnorabel Rankin Mikeljon, wood ghiv up sum ov hiz honorabel just

too ghet in here and hav wun looc around. He wunderz whaut Maddigan iz doowing when Maddigan iz doowing nuthhing."

"Hese not just doowing nuthhing," ced Truth sharply. "Hese sleping. Its not evveriboddy whoo can slepe for forty or fifty or cixty thousand yeez and can wake up a fu tiamz a munth, just too ce hou thhingz ar gowing."

Casher started too whiscel and then stopt himself, az dho he feerd too waken the unconshous, naked oald man. "So dhats whi he chose u."

Truth corected him az she wausht her handz viggorously in a waush-bacin. "Dhats whi he had me made. Tertel stoc, thre hundred yeez. Multipli dhat widh intencive stroone treetments, thre hundred tiamz. Nianty thousand yeez. Then he had me printed too luv him and adoer him. Hese not mi maaster, u no. Hese mi god."

"Yor whaut?"

"U herd me. Doant ghet upcet. Ime not gowing too ghiv u enny ilegal memmorese. I wership him. Dhats whaut I wauz printed for, when mi littel tertel ise opend and dha poot me bac in the tanc too enlarj mi brane and too make a woomman out ov me. Dhats whi dha printed evvery memmory ov the cittisenes Aggathaa Maddigan rite intoo mi brane. Ime whaut he waunted. Just whaut he waunted. Ime the moast waunted beying on enny plannet. No wife, no sweet'hart, no muther haz evver bene waunted az much az he waunts me nou, when he waix up and nose dhat I am stil here.

Yor a smart man. Wood u trust enny mashene--enny mashene at aul--for nianty thouzand yeerz?"

"It wood be hard," ced Casher, "too ghet batterese ov monnitorz long enuf for them too repare eche uther over dhat long a time. But dhat meenz u hav nianty thouzand yeerz ov it. Foer tiamz, five tiamz a da. I caant even multipli the numberz. Doant u evver ghet tiard ov it?"

"Hese mi luv, hese mi joi, hese mi darling littel boi," she carrold, az she lifted hiz ilidz and poot cullorles drops in eche i. Abcentmiandedly she explaind, "Widh this slo a metabbolizm, dhaerz aulwase sum dain'ger dhat the ilidz wil stic too hiz ibaulz. This iz part ov the checcup."

She tilted the sleping manz hed, looct earnestly intoo eche i. Then she stept a fu pacez acide and poot her face cloce too the diyal ov a gently humming mashene. Dhare wauz the sound ov a shot. Casher aulmoast reecht for hiz gun, which he did not hav.

The chiald ternd bac too him widh a mischevous smile. "Sorry, I shoold hav wornd u. Dhats mi noizmaker. I wauch the enceffalograaf too make shure hiz brane keeps a littel auditory intake. It shode up widh the noiz. Hese aslepe, verry deeply aslepe, but hese not drifting dounword intoo deth."

Bac at the tabel she poosht Maddiganz chin upword so dhat the hed leend far bac on its nec. Deftly hoalding the foerhed, she tooc a retractor, opend hiz mouth widh her fin'gherz, deprest the tung and looct doun intoo the throte.

"No acumulaishonz dhare," she mutterd, az if too hercelf.

She poosht the hed bac intoo a cumfortabel posishon. She ceemd on

the ej ov anuther cet ov operaishonz when it wauz obveyous dhat an ideyaa okerd too her. "Go waush yor handz, thurroly, over dhare, at the bacin. Then poosh the timer down and be shure u hoald yor handz under the sterliser until the timer gose of. U can help me tern him over. I doant hav help here. Yor the ferst vizsitor."

Casher obade and while he wausht hiz handz he sau the gherl drench her handz widh sum flouwer-cented un'gwent. She began too massaazh the unconshous boddy widh profeshonal expertnes, even widh a degry ov rufnes. Az he stood widh hiz handz under the sterliser-driyer, Casher marveld at the strength ov dhose gherlish armz and dhose littel handz. Indefattigably dha stroact, rubd, pummeld, poold, strecht and poact the oald boddy. The sleping man ceemd too be utterly unnaware ov it but Casher thaut dhat he cood ce a better skin cullor and muscel tone apering.

He wauct bac too the tabel and stood facing Truth.

A huge pecoc wauct acros the imadginary laun outside the windo, hiz tale shimmering in a parroxizm ov cullorz.

13

Truth sau the direcshon ov Casherz glaans.

"O, I proagram dhat too. He liax it when he waix up. Doant u thhinc he wauz clevver, befoer he went intoo catalepcis, too hav me made? Too hav me creyated too luv him and too care for him? It helps dhat Ime a gherl. I caant ever luv enniboddy but him, and its esy for me too remember dhat this iz the man I luv. And its safer for him. Enny man

mite ghet boerd widh these responcebilitese. I doant."

"Yet--" ced Casher.

"Shh," she ced, "wate a bit. This taix care." Her strong littel fin' gherz wer nou plouwing depe intoo the abdomen ov the naked oald man.

She cloazd her ise so dhat she cood concentrate aul her cencez on the wun act ov tactile impreshon. She tooc her handz awa and stood erect. "Aul clere," she ced. "Ive got too fiand out whauts gowing on incide him. But I doant dare use X-rase on him. Thhinc ov the rajaishon hede bild up in a hundred yeerz or so. Here, nou. U can help me tern him over, but wauch the wiarz. Dhose ar the monnitor controalz. Dha repoert hiz fiseyolodgical procecez, rajo a message too me if ennithhing gose rong, and meenwhile supli the miscing nurofizsical impulcez if enny part ov the automattic nervous cistem began too fade out or just cimply went of."

"Haz dhat evver happend?"

"Nevver," she ced, "not yet. But Ime reddy. Wauch dhat wire--yor terning him too faast. Dhare nou, dhats rite. U can stand bac while I massaazh him on the bac."

She went bac too her job ov beying a massuuz. Starting at the muscelz joining the scul too the nec, she werct her wa doun the boddy, poering ointment on her handz from time too time. When she got too hiz legz she ceemd too werc particcularly hard. She lifted the fete, bent the nese, slapt the caavz.

Her face cleerd. "Hese aul rite. Heeyl ghet along wel for the next too ourz. Ile hav too ghiv him a littel shooggar then. Aul hese ghetting nou iz normal saline."

She stood facing him. Dhare wauz a faint glo in her cheex from the viyolent exercise in which she had bene indulging, but she stil looct both the chiald and the lady--the chiald irecuvverably remote, hidden in her doun wizdom from the muddeld werld ov adults, and the lady, mistres in her one home, her one estaits, her one plannet, cerving her maaster widh aulmoast imortal luv.

"I wauz gowing too aasc u, bac dhare--" Casher started.

"U wer gowing too aasc me?"

He spoke hevvely. "I wauz gowing too aasc u, whaut happenz too u when he dise?"

"I coodnt care les," her vois sang out. He cood ce bi the open, onnest smile on her face dhat she ment it. "Ime *hiz*. I belong too *him*. Dhats whaut Ime *for*."

She paast Casher, aulmoast poold hercelf clere ov the floer tugging on the grate incide leverz ov the mane doer.

She geschuerd him paast. He stuipt and stept throo.

"Tern awa agane," she ced. "Aul Ime gowing too doo iz too spin the diyalz, but dhare cude too ghiv enny vuwer a bad heddake so he wil forghet the combinaishon. Even robots. Ime the oonly person chuend too these doerz."

He herd the diyalz spinning but he did not looc around.

She mermerd, aulmoast under her breth, "Ime the oonly wun. The oonly wun."

Dha proceded doun a corridor, forgotten picchuerz hanging on the waulz, unrememberd lucshurese left untucht bi cenchurese ov neglect.

The brite yello lite ov Henreyaadaa poerd in throo an open doerwa on dhare rite. It must be a roome, thaut Casher, widh its windo open.

From the roome came snatchez ov a man cinging while playing a stringd instrooment. Later, Casher found dhat this wauz a vers ov the Henreyaadaa Song, the wun which went:

Doant poot yor ship in the Boome Lagoone,  
Looc up North for the raving wave.  
Henreyaadaaz boild awa  
But Ambiloxese a saving grave.

Dha enterd the roome.

A gentelman stood up too grete them. It wauz the grate go-pilot, Jon Joi Tre. Hiz ruddy face smiald, hiz brite blu ise lit up, a littel condecendingly, az he greted hiz smaull hoastes, but then hiz glaans tooc in Casher ONEle.

The efect wauz sudden, and evil.

Jon Joi Tre looct awa from boath ov them. The frase which he had started too use stuc in hiz throte.

He ced, in a different vois, verry "awa" and deeply trubheld, "Dhare

iz blud aul over this place. Dhare iz a man ov blud rite here.  
Excuse me. I am gowing too be cic."

He trotted paast them and out the doer which dha had enterd.

"U hav paast a test," ced Truth. "Yor help too mi maaster haz solvd the problem ov the captane and onnorabel Jon Joi Tre. He wil not go nere dhat controle roome if he thhinx dhat u ar dhare."

"Doo u hav moer tests for me? Stil moer? Bi nou, u aut too no me wel enuf not too nede tests."

"I am not a person," she ced, "but just a bilt-up cobby ov wun. I am ghetting reddy too ghiv u yor weppon. This iz a comunicaishonz roome az wel az a music roome. Wood u like sumthhing too ete or drinc?"

"Just wauter," he ced.

"At yor hand," ced Truth.

A roc-cristal caraaf had bene standing on the tabel beside him, unnotiast. Or had she traanspoerted it intoo the roome widh wun ov the trix ov the Hechiseraa, the dredded Aggathaa hercelf? It didnt matter. He dranc. Trubbel wauz cumming.

14

Truth had swung open a pollisht cabbinet pannel. The comunicator wauz the kiand dha mount in planofoming ships rite beside the pilot. The rental on wun ov them wauz enuf too make enny plannetary guvvernment reconcider its annuwal budget.

"Dhats *yorz*?" cride Casher.

"Whi not?" ced the littel-gherl lady. "I hav foer or five."

"But yor *rich*!"

"Ime not. Mi maaster iz. I belong too mi maaster, too."

"But thhingz like this. He caant handel them. Hou duz he mannage?"

"U mene munny and thhingz?" The gherlish part ov her came out. She looct pleezd, happy and mischevous. "I mannage them for him. He wauz the ritcheest man on Henreyaadaa when I came here. He had creddits ov stroone. Nou he iz about forty tiamz ritcheer."

"Hese a Rod McBan!" cride Casher.

"No, not even nere. Mister McBan had a lot moer munny dhan we. But hese rich. Whare doo u thhinc aul the pepel from Henreyaadaa went?"

"I doant no," ced Casher.

"Too foer nu plannets. Dha belong too mi maaster and he chargez the nu cetlerz a verry smaual land-rent."

"U baut them?" ced Casher.

"For him," smiald Truth. "Havnt u herd ov plannet-brokerz?"

"But dhats a gamblerz biznes!" ced Casher.

"I gambeld," she ced, "and I wun. Nou kepe qwiyet and wauch me."

She prest a button. "Instant message."

"Instant message," repeted the mashene. "Whaut priyorrity?"

"Wor nuse, dubbel A wun, subspace pennalty."

"Confermd," ced the mashene.

"The plannet Mizser. Nou. Wor and pece informaishon. Wil fiting end soone?"

The mashene cluct too itcelf.

Casher, nowing the pricez ov this kiand ov comunicaiashon, aulmoast felt dhat he cood ce the artifishal spert ov munny go out ov Henreyaadaaz budget az the masheenz reecht acros the gallaxy, found Mizser and came bac widh the aancer.

"Skermishing. Cevventh Nile. Endz thre local dase."

"Cloce message," ced Truith.

The mashene went of.

Truith ternd too him. "Yor gowing home soone, Casher, if u can paas a fu littel tests."

He staerd at her and blerted, "I nede mi wepponz, mi crooser and mi laser."

"Ule hav wepponz. Better wunz dhan dhose. Rite nou, I waunt u too go too the frunt doer. When u hav opend the doer, u wil not let enniboddy in. Cloce the doer. Then plese cum bac too me here,

dere Casher, and if u ar stil alive, I wil hav sum uther thhingz for u too doo."

Casher ternd in bewilderment. It did not oker too him too contradict her. He cood end up a forgetty, like the maidcervant Unice or the Admnnistratorz broun man, Gocego.

Doun the haulz he wauct. He met no wun exept for a fu shi clening-robots whoo boud dhare hedz poliatly az he paast.

He found the frunt doer. It stopt him. It looct like wood on the outcide but it wauz acchuwaly a Damony doer, made ov nere-indestructibel materoyal. Dhare wauz no cine ov a ke or diyalz or controalz. Acting like a man in a dreme, he tooc a chaans dhat the doer mite be kede too himcelf. He poot hiz rite paam fermly against it, at the left or opening ej.

The doer swung in.

Mikeljon wauz dhare. Gocego held the Admnnistrator uprite. It must hav bene a ruf trip. The Admnnistratorz face wauz bruizd and dhare wauz a trickel ov blud cumming out ov the corner ov hiz mouth. Hiz ise focust on Casher.

"Yor alive. She caut u too?"

Qwite formaly, Casher aasct, "Whaut doo u waunt in this hous?"

"I hav cum," ced the Admnnistrator, "too ce her."

"Too ce whoome?" incisted Casher.

The Administrator hung aulmoast slac in Gocego's armz. Bi hiz one standard and in hiz one wa, he wauz a verry brave man indede. Hiz ise looct clere even dho hiz boddy wauz colapcing.

"Too ce Truth, if she wil ce me," ced Rankin Mikeljon.

Ced Casher, "She canot ce u nou. Gocego!"

The forgetty ternd too Casher and gave him a bou.

"U wil forghet me. U hav not cene me."

"I hav not cene u, Lord. Ghiv mi gretingz too yor lady. Ennithhing els?"

"Yes. Take yor maaster home, az saifly and swiftly az u can."

"Mi lord!" cride Gocego, dho this wauz an improper titel for Casher. Casher ternd around.

"Mi lord, tel her too extend the wether masheenz for just a fu moer killometerz and I wil hav him home safe in ten minnuets. At top spede."

"I can tel her," ced Casher, "but I canot prommice she wil doo it."

"Ov coers," ced Gocego. He pict up the Administrator and began pootting him intoo the ground car. Rankin Mikeljon bauld wuns, like a man crying in pane. It sounded like a blerd verzhon ov the name *Murra Maddigan*. No wun herd it but for Gocego and Casher; Gocego bizsy closing the ground car, Casher pooshing on the big hous doer.

The doer clict.

Dhare wauz cilens.

The opening ov the doer wauz rememberd oonly bi the worm swete saulty stinc ov cewede which had disterbd the odor-pattern ov the chainjles, musty oald hous.

Casher hurrede bac widh the message about the wether masheenz.

Truth receevd the message graivly. Widhout even loocking at the console, she reecht out and controald it widh her extended rite hand while not taking her ise of Casher for a moment. The mashene clict its agrement. Truth exhaild.

"Thanc u, Casher. Nou the Instroomentallity and the forgetty ar gon."

She staerd at him, aulmoast sadly and inqwiringly. He waunted too pic her up, too crush her too hiz chest, too rane hiz kiscez on her face. But he stood stoc stil. He did not moove. This wauz not just the forevver-luvving tertel-chiald; this wauz the reyal mistres ov Henreyaadaa. This wauz the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon, whoome he had formerly thaut about oonly in termz ov a wiald, meloddic grand opperaa.

"I thhinc u ar ceying me, Casher. It iz hard too ce pepel, even when u looc at them evvery da. I thhinc I can ce u, too, Casher. It iz aulmoast time for us boath too doo the thhingz which we hav too doo."

"Which we hav too doo?" he whisperd, hoping she mite sa sumthhing els.

"For me, mi werc here on Henreyaadaa. For u, yor fate on yor hoamland

ov Mizser. Dhats whaut life iz, iznt it? Doowing whaut u hav too doo in the ferst place. Were lucky pepel if we fiand it out. U ar reddy, Casher. I am about too ghiv u wepponz which wil make bomz and crooserz and laserz and bomz ceme like nuthhing at aul."

"Bi the Bel, gherl! Caant u tel me whaut dhose wepponz ar?"

Truith stood in her innocently reveling sheeth, the yello lite ov the oald music roome poering like a halo around her.

"Yes," she ced, "I can tel u nou. Me."

Casher felt a wiald cerj ov erottic atracshon for the innocently volupshous chiald. He rememberd hiz ferst insane impuls too crush her widh kiscez, too swepe her up widh hugz, too exhaust her widh aul the exiatment which hiz masculinnity cood bring too boath ov them.

He looct.

She stood dhare, caam.

Dhat sort ov an ideyaa did not ring rite.

He wauz gowing too ghet her, but he wauz gowing too ghet sumthhing far from fun or folly--sumthhing, indede, which he mite not even like.

When at laast he spoke, it wauz out ov the depe bewilderment ov hiz one thauts, "Whaut doo u mene, yor gowing too ghiv me yorcelf? It duznt sound verry romantic too me, nor the tone in which u ced it."

The chiald stept cloce too him, reching up and patting hiz foerhed.

"Yor not gowing too ghet me for a niats romans, and if u did, u wood be sorry. I am the propperty ov mi maaster and no uther man. But I can doo sumthhing widh u which I hav nevver dun too enniwun els. I can ghet micelf imprinted on u. The tecnishanz ar aulreddy cumming. U wil be the tertel chiald. U wil be the cittisenes Aggathaa Maddigan, the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon hercelf. U wil be menny uther pepel--and yorcelf. U wil then win. Axidents ma kil u, Casher, but no wun wil be abel too kil u on perpoce. Not when yor me. Poor man! Doo u no whaut u wil be ghivving up?"

"Whaut?" he croact, at the ej ov a grate frite. He had cene dain'ger befoer, but nevver dain'ger from within himcelf.

"U wil not fere deth, evver agane, Casher. U wil hav too lede yor life minnute bi minnute, cecond bi cecond, and u wil not hav the allibi dhat u ar gowing too di ennihou. U wil no dhats not speshal."

He nodded, understanding her werdz and scrabbling around hiz miand for a mening.

"Ime a gherl, Casher..."

He looct at her and hiz ise widend. She wauz a gherl--a butifool, wunderfool gherl. But she wauz sumthhing moer. She wauz the mistres ov Henreyaadaa. She wauz the ferst ov the underpepel reyaly and trooly too cerpaas humannity. Too thhinc dhat he had waunted too grab her poor littel boddy. The boddy--aa, dhat wauz swete!--but the pouwer within it wauz the kiand ov thhing dhat empiarz and relidjonz ar made ov.

"... and if u take the print ov me, Casher, u wil nevver li widh a woomman widhout reyalising dhat u no moer about her dhan she duz. U wil be a ceying man amung bliand multichuedz, a hering person in the werld ov the def. I doant no hou much fun romantic luv iz gowing too be too u aafter this."

Gloomily he ced, "If I can fre mi home plannet ov Mizser, it wil be werth it. Whautevver it iz."

"Yor not gowing too tern intoo a woomman!" she laaft, "Nuthhing dhat esy. But u ar gowing too ghet wizdom. And I wil tel u the whole stoery ov the Cine ov the Fish befoer u leve here."

"Not dhat, plese," he begd. "Dhats a relidjon and the Instroomentallity wood nevver let me travvel agane."

"Ime gowing too hav u scambeld, Casher, so dhat nobody can rede u for a yere or too. And the Instroomentallity iz not gowing too cend u bac. *I am*. Throo space-thre."

"Itl cost u a fine, big ship too doo it."

"Mi maaster wil aproove when I tel him, Casher. Nou ghiv me dhat kis u hav bene waunting too ghiv me. Perhaps u wil remember sumthhing ov it when u cum out ov scrambel."

She stood dhare. He did nuthhing.

"Kis me!" she comaanded.

He poot hiz arm around her. She felt like a big littel gherl. She lifted her face. She thrust her lips up tooword hiz. She stood on

tip-to.

He kist her the wa a man mite kis a relidjous obgect. The hete and feersnes had gon out ov hiz hoaps.

He had not kist a gherl, but pouwer--tremendous pouwer and wizdom poot intoo a cin'ghel slite form.

"Iz dhat the wa yor maaster kiscez u?"

She gave him a qwic smile. "Hou clevver ov u! Yes, sumtiamz. Cum along nou. We hav too shoote sum children befoer the tecnishanz ar reddy. It wil ghiv u a good laast chaans ov ceying whaut u can doo when u hav becum whaut I am. Cum along, the gunz ar in the haul."

15

Dha went doun an enormous lite-oke staercace too a floer which Casher had nevver cene befoer. It must hav bene the entertainment and hospitallity center ov Boaregard long ago, when the mister and oner Murra Maddigan wauz himcelf yung. The robots did a good job ov keping awa the dust and the milju. Casher sau inconspiccuwous littel are-driyerz plaist at strategic placez, so dhat the rich tuild lether on the waulz wood not spoil, so dhat the velvet bar-stuulz wood not becum slimy widh moald, so dhat the poole tabelz wood not worp nor the golf clubz go out ov shape widh age and damp. Bi the Bel, he thaut, dhat man Maddigan cood hav entertaind a thousand pepel at wun time in a place this cise.

The gun-cabbinet, nou, dhat wauz funcshonal. The glaas shon. The

velvet ov oil shode on the stele and waulnut ov the gunz. Dha wer oald erth moddelz, verry rare and verry speshal. For acchuwal fiting, pepel uezd the chepe artillery ov the prezsent time or wiarpoints for cloce werc. Oonly the rithest and rarest ov conocerz had the oald erth wepponz or cood use them.

Truith tucht the gard-robot and waict him.

The robot saluted, looct at her face and widhout ferther inqwiry, opend the cabbinet.

"Doo u no gunz?" ced Truith too Casher.

"Wiarpoints," he ced. "Nevver tucht a gun in mi life."

"Doo u miand using a lerning-helmet, then? I cood teche u hipnotticaly widh the speshal ruilz ov the Hechiseraa, but dha mite ghiv u a heddake or upcet u emoashonaly. The helmet iz nuro-electric and it haz filterz."

Casher nodded and sau hiz reflecshon nodding in the pollisht glaas doerz ov the gun-cabbinet. He wauz cerpriazd too ce hou helples and lugubreyous he looct.

But it wauz troo. Nevver befoer in hiz life had he felt dhat a cichuwaishon swept over him, wausht along like a grate wave, left him widh no chois and no responcebillity. Thhingz wer her chois nou, not hiz, and yet he felt dhat her pouwer wauz benine, celf-limmed, restricted bi factorz at which he cood no moer dhan ghes. He had cum for wun weppon--the crooser which he had hoapt too ghet from the Adminnistrator Rankin Mikeljon. She wauz offering him sumthhing els--cicolodgical wepponz in which he had niather expereyens nor confidens.

She waucht him atentivly for a long moment and then ternd too the gun-wauching robot.

"Yor littel Harry Haidreyan, arnt u? The gun-waucher."

"Yes, maam," ced the cilver robot briatly, "and Ime oul-braind too. Dhat maix me verry brite."

"Wauch this," she ced, extending her armz the width ov the gun cabbinet and then dropping them aafter a qwere flutter ov her handz. "Doo u no whaut dhat meenz?"

"Yes, maam," ced the littel robot qwicly, the emoashon showing in hiz toanles vois bi the spede widh which he spoke, not bi the intonaishon.

"It meenz u hav-taken-over and I-am-of-juty!

Can-I-go-cit-in-the-garden and looc-at-the-liv-thhingz?"

"Not qwite yet, littel Harry Haidreyan. Dhare ar sum wind pepel out dhare nou and dha mite hert u. I hav anuther errand for u first. Doo u remember whare the teching helmets ar?"

"Cilver hats on the thherd floer in an open clozset widh a wire running too eche hat? Yes."

"Bring wun ov dhose az faast az u can. Pool it looce verry caerfooly from its electrical conecshon."

The littel robot disapeerd in a sudden, faast, gentel clatter up the staerz.

Truith ternd bac too Casher. "I am helping u. U doant hav too looc so gloomy about it."

"I'm not gloomy. The Administrator sent me here on a crazy errand, killing an un'none underperson. I found out that the person is really a little girl. Then I found out that she is not an underperson, but a frightening old dead woman, still waking around alive. My life gets turned upside down. All my plans are set aside. You propose to send me home to fulfill my wishes with Mizser. I've struggled for this, so many years! Now you're making it all come through, even though you are going to cook me through space-time to do it and through in a lot of illegal religion and hypnotic tricks that I'm not sure I can handle. Now you tell me to come along--to shoot children with guns. I've never done anything like that in my life and yet I find myself obeying you. I'm tired out, girl, tired out. If you have power over me, I don't even know it. I don't even want to know it."

"Here you are, Casher, on the roof of the wet world of Henryadaa. In less than a week you will be recovering among the military casualties of the Council of Wedderz army. You will be under the clere sky of Mizser, and the Seventh Nile will be near you, and you will be ready at long last to do what you have to do. You will have bits and pieces of memories of me. Not enough to make you find your way back here or to tell people all the secrets of Boaregard, but enough for you to remember that you have been loved. You may even--" and she smiled very gently, with a tender and humorous look on her face--"marry some Mizser girl because of her body or her face or her manner reminding me of you."

"In a week?" he gasped.

"Less than that."

He cried out, "Who are you, that you, an underperson, should run my life and manipulate my fate?"

"I didnt looc for pouwer, Casher. Pouwer duznt uezhuwaly werc if u looc for it. I hav aty-nine thouzand yeerz too liv, Casher, and az long az mi maaster livz, I shal luv him and take care ov him. Iznt he handsum? Iznt he wise? Iznt he the moast perfect maaster u evver sau?"

Casher thaut ov the oald roowind-loocking boddy with the plaastic nobz cet intoo it; he thaut ov the faded pajaamaa bottomz; he ced nuthhing.

"U doant hav too agry," ced Truth. "I no I hav a speshal wa ov loocking at him. But dha tooc mi tertel brane and raizd the IQ too abuv normal human levvel. Dha tooc me when I wauz a happy littel gherl, enchaanted bi the vois and the glaans and the tuch ov mi maaster. Dha tooc me too whare this reyal woomman la diying and dha poot me intoo a mashene and dha poot her intoo wun too. When dha wer throo, dha pict me up. I had on a pinc dres with pastel blu sox and pinc shoose. Dha carrede me out intoo the corridor, on a rug. Dha had finnisht widh me. Dha nu dhat I woodnt di. I wauz helthhy. Caant u ce it, Casher. I cride micelf too slepe, nine hundred yeerz ago."

Casher cood not reyal y aancer. He noddod cimpathhetticaly.

"I wauz a gherl, Casher. Maby I wauz a tertel wuns, but I doant remember dhat, enny moer dhan u remember yor mutherz woome or yor laboratoery bottel. In dhat wun our I wauz nevver too be a gherl agane. I did not nede go too scoole. I had her ejucaishon, and it wauz a good wun. She spoke twenty or moer lan'gwagez. She wauz a cicollogist and a hipnotist and a strattegist. She wauz aulso the tirannical mistres ov this hous. I cride becauz mi chiald'hood wauz finnisht, becauz I nu whaut I wood hav too doo. I cride becauz I nu dhat I cood doo it. I luvd mi maaster so, but I wauz no lon'gher too be the pritty littel cervant whoo braut him hiz tablets or hiz sweetmeets or hiz bere. Nou I sau the

truth. Az she dide I had micelf becum Henreyaadaa. The plannet wauz mine,  
too care for, too mannage, too protect mi maaster. If I cum along and I protect and help u, iz dhat so much for a woomman whoo wil just be growing up when yor grandchildren wil aul be ded ov oald age?"

"No, no," stammerd Casher ONele. "But yor one life? A fammily, perhaps?"

An'gher lasht acros her pritty face. Her fechuerz wer the fechuerz ov the delishous gherl-chiald Truth, but her expreshon wauz dhat ov the cittisenes Aggathaa Maddigan, perhaps, a werldly woomman reborn too the endles werldlines ov her one wizdom.

"Shood I order a huzband from the tertel banc, perhaps? Shood I hire out a pece ov mi maasterz estate, too be soald too sumbody becauz Ime an underperson, or perhaps poot too werc sumwhare in an industreyal shop?

Ime me. I ma be annimal, but I hav moer civilizaishon in me dhan aul the wind-pepel on this plannet. Poor thhingz! Whaut kiand ov pepel ar dha, if dha ar oonly happy when dha cach a big mutated duc and tare it too pecez, eting it rau? Ime not gowing too loose, Casher. Ime gowing too win. Mi maaster wil liv lon'gher dhan enny person haz evver livd befoer. He gave me dhat mishon when he wauz strong and wise and wel in the prime ov hiz life. Ime gowing too doo whaut I wauz made for, Casher, and yor gowing too go bac too Mizser and make it fre, whether u like it or not!"

Dha both herd a happy scurreying on the staercace.

The smaull cilver robot, littel Harry Haidreyan, berst uppon them; he

carrede a teching helmet.

Truith ced, "Rezhume yor poast. U ar a good boi, littel Harry, and u can hav time too cit in the garden later on, when it iz safe."

"Can I cit in a tre?" ced the littel robot.

"Yes, if it iz safe."

Littel Harry Haidreyan rezhuemd hiz poast bi the gun cabbinet. He kept the ke in hiz hand. It wauz a verry strainj ke, sharp at the end and az long az an aul. Casher supoazd dhat it must be wun ov the strate magnetic kese, cude too its loc bi a cerese ov magnetiazd patternz.

"Cit on the floer for a minnute," ced Truith too Casher, "yor too taul for me." She slipt the helmet on hiz hed, ajusted the leverz on eche cide so dhat the helmet sat tite and troo uppon hiz scul.

Widh a tutching geschure ov intimacy, for which she gave him a cimpathhettic apologetic littel smile, she moicend the too smaual electroadz widh her one spit, tutching her fin'gher too her tung and then too the electrode. These went too hiz tempelz.

She ajusted the verneyerd diyalz on the helmet itcelf, lifted the rere wire and aplide it too her foerhed.

Casher herd the clic ov a swich.

"Dhat did it," he herd Truiths vois saying, verry far awa.

He wauz too bizsy loocking intoo the gun cabbinet. He nu them aul and

luyd sum ov them. He nu the fele ov dhare stox on hiz shoalder, the glimps ov dhare barrelz in frunt ov hiz ise, the daans ov the targhet on dhare vareyouc ciats, the welcum hevvy wate ov the gun on hiz supoerting arm, the rewording thrust ov the stoc against hiz shoalder when he fiard. He nu aul this, and did not no hou he nu it.

"The Hechiseraa, Aggathaa hercelf, wauz a verry acumplisht spoertswoomman," mermerd Truth too him. "I thaut her nollej wood take a cecond printing when I paast it along too u. Lets take these."

She geschuerd too littel Harry Haidreyan whoo unloct the cabbinet and tooc out too enormous gunz which looct like the long muskets mankiand had on erth even befoer the age ov space began.

"If yor gowing too shoote children," ced Casher widh hiz nu-found expertnes, "these woant doo. Dhaiyl tare the boddese compleetly too pecez."

Truth reecht intoo the littel bag which hung from her belt. She tooc out thre shotgun shelz. "I hav thre moer," she ced. "Cix children iz aul we nede."

Casher looct at the slug progecting sliatly from the shotgun cacing. It did not looc like enny shel he had evver cene befoer. The wercmanship wauz unbelevably fine and precice.

"Whaut ar dha? I nevver sau these befoer."

"Proximity stunnerz," she ced. "Shoote ten centimeterz abuv the hed ov enny livving thhing and the stunner nox it out."

"U waunt the children alive?"

"Alive, ov coers. And unconshous. Dha ar a part ov yor final test."

16

Too ourz later, aafter an exiting hike too the ej ov the wether controalz, dha had the cix children strecht out on the floer ov the grate haul. Foer wer littel boiz, too gherlz; dha wer fine-board, soft-haerd pepel, verry thhin, but dha did not looc too far from erth-normal.

Truith cauld up a doctor-underman from among her cervants. Dhare must hav bene a croud ov fifty or cixty undermen and robots standing around. Far up the staercace, Jon Joi Tre stood hidden, haaf in shaddo. Casher suspected dhat he wauz az inqwizsitive az the utherz but afrade ov himcelf, Casher, "the man ov blud."

Truith ced qwiyetly but fermly too the doctor. "Can u ghiv them a strong uforic befoer u waken them? We doant waunt too hav too pluc them out ov aul the kertainz in the hous, if dha go wiald when dha wake up."

"Nuthing cimpler," ced the doctor-underman. He ceemd too be ov dog origin but Casher cood not tel.

He tooc a glaas chube and tucht it too the nape ov eche littel nec. The nex wer aul streect widh dert. These children had nevver bene wausht in dhare liavz, exept bi the rane.

"Wake them," ced Truth.

The doctor stept bac too a roling tabel. It gleemd widh eqwipment. He must hav precet hiz devicez, becauz aul he did wauz too pres a button and the children sterd intoo life.

The ferst reyacshon wauz wialdnes. Dha got reddy too bolt. The bigghest ov the boiz, whoo bi erth-standardz wood hav bene about ten, got thre steps befoer he stopt and began laafing.

Truth spoke the Oald Common Tung too them, verry sloly and widh long spacez betwene the werdz:

"Wind-children ... doo ... u ... no ... whare ... u ... ar?"

The bigghest gherl twitterd bac too her so faast dhat Casher cood not understand it.

Truth ternd too Casher and ced, "The gherl ced dhat she iz in the Ded Place, whare the are nevver muivz and whare the Oald Ded Wunz moove around on dhare one biznes. She meenz us." Too the wind-children she spoke agane.

"Whaut ... wood ... u ... like ... moast?"

The bigghest gherl went from chiald too chiald. Dha nodded agreement viggorously. Dha formd a cerkel and began a littel chaant. Bi the cecond repetishon around, Casher cood make it out.

Shig--shag--shughery  
shuc shuc shuc!  
Whaut aul ov us nede iz

an aul-around duc.  
Shig--shag--shugghery,  
shuc shuc shuc!

At the foerth ov fifth repetishon dha aul stopt and looct at Truth  
whoo wauz so plainly the mistres ov the hous.

She in tern spoke too Casher ONEle: "Dha thhinc dhat dha waunt a  
tribal feest ov rau duc. Whaut dha ar gowing too ghet iz inoculaishonz  
against the werst disesez ov this plannet, cevveral duc meelz, and  
dhare fredom agane. But dha nede sumthhing els beyond aul mezhure.  
*U no whaut dhat iz, Casher, if u can oanly fiand it.*"

The whole croud ternd its ise on Casher, the human ise ov the pepel  
and underpepel, the milky lensez ov the robots.

Casher stood agaast.

"Iz this a test?" he ced

"U cood caul it dhat," ced Truth, loocking awa from him.

Casher thaut fureyously and rappidly. It woodnt doo enny good too make  
them intoo forgettese. The hous'hoald had enuf ov them. Truth had  
anounst a plan too let them looce agane. Mister and oner Murra  
Maddigan must hav toald her, sumtime or uther, too "doo sumthhing"  
about  
the wind pepel. She wauz triying too doo it. The whole croud waucht  
him. Whaut mite Truth expect?

The aancer came too him in a flash.

If she wer aasking *him*, it must be sumthhing too doo widh himcelf. Sumthhing which he--uneecly amung these pepel, underpepel and robots--had braut too the storm-ceedhd manshon ov Boaregard.

Suddenly he sau it.

"Use me, mi lady Ruith," ced he, delibberaitly ghivving her the rong titel, "too print on them nuthhing from mi intelecchuwal nollej, but evverithhing from mi emoashonal macup. It wood not doo them enny good too no about Mizser, whare the Twelv Nialz werc dhare wa doun acros the Intervening Sandz. Nor about Pontoppidan, the Gem Plannet. Nor about Olimpeyaa, whare the bliand brokerz prommenaad under numberd cloudz.

Nowing thhingz wood not help these children. But *waunting--*"

Waunting thhingz wauz different.

He wauz uneke. He had waunted too retern too Mizser. He had waunted retern beyond aul dreemz ov blud and revenj. He had waunted thhingz feersly, wialdly, so dhat even if he cood not ghet them, he sig-zagd the gallaxy in cerch ov them.

Truith wauz speking too him agane, ergently and softly, but not in so lo a vois dhat the utherz in the roome cood not here.

"And whaut, Casher ONele, shood I ghiv them from u?" she aasct softly.

"Mi emoashonal strucchure. Mi determinaishon. Mi desire. Nuthhing els. Ghiv them dhat and thro them bac intoo the windz. Perhaps if dha

waunt sumthhing feersly enuf, dha wil gro up too fiand out whaut it iz."

Dhare wauz a soft mermer ov aprooval around the roome.

Truith hezsitated a moment and then nodded. "Casher, u aancerd quwicly and perceptiavly. Bring cevven helmets, Unice. Sta here, doctor."

Unice, the forgetty, left, taking too robots widh her.

"A chare," ced Truith too no wun in particcular. "For him."

A larj pouwerfool underman poosht hiz wa throo the croud and dragd a chare too the end ov the roome.

Truith geschuerd dhat Casher shood cit in it.

She stood in frunt ov him. Strainj, thaut Casher, dhat she shood be a grate lady and stil a littel gherl. Hou cood he evver fiand a gherl like her? He wauz not even afrade ov the mistery ov the Fish, or the immagine ov the man on too pecez ov wood. He no lon'gher dredded space-thre, whare so mennny travvelerz had gon in and so fu had cum out. He felt safe, cumforted bi her wizdom and authorrity. He felt dhat he wood nevver ce the like ov this agane--a chiald running a plannet and doowing it wel, a haaf-ded man cerviving throo the endles devoashon ov hiz maidcervant, a feers woomman hipnotist livving on widh aul the anxyetese and an'gherz ov humannity gon but widh the skil and obstinacy ov tertel geenz too sustane her in her re-imprinted form.

"I can ghes whaut u ar thhinking," ced Truith, "but we hav aulreddy

ced the thhingz dhat we had too sa. Ive peept intoo yor miand a duzsen tiamz and I no dhat u waunt too go bac too Mizser so bad dhat space-thre wil spit u out rite at the roowind foert whare the big tern ov the Cevventh Nile beghinz. In mi one wa I luv u, Casher, but I cood not kepe u here widhout terning u intoo a forgetty and making u a cervant too mi maaster. U no whaut aulwase cumz ferst widh me, and aulwase wil."

"Maddigan."

"Maddigan," she aancerd, and widh her vois the name itcelf wauz a prare.

Unice came bac widh the helmets.

"When we ar throo widh these, Casher, Ile hav them take u too the condishoning roome. Good-bi, mi mite hav bene."

In frunt ov evveriwun, she kist him fool on the lips.

He sat in the chare, fool ov paishens and contentment. Even az hiz vizhon blact out, he cood ce the thhin lite sheeth ov a smoc on the gherlish figgure, he cood remember the tender laafter lerking in her smile.

In the laast instant ov hiz conshousnes, he sau dhat anuther figgure had joint the croud--the taul oald man widh the woern baathrobe, the faded blu ise, the thhin yello hare. Murra Maddigan had rizsen from hiz private-life-in-deth and had cum too ce the laast ov Casher ONEle. He did not looc weke, nor foolish. He looct like a grate man, wise and strainj in wase beyond Casherz understanding.

Dhare wauz the tuch ov Truths littel hand on hiz arm and evverithhing became a velvety clutterd darc qwiyet incide hiz one miand.

When he awoke, he la naked and sunbernd under the hot ski ov Mizser. Too soalgerz widh meddical patchez wer roling him on too a canvas litter.

"Mizser!" he cride too himcelf. Hiz throte wauz too dri too make a sound. "Ime home."

Suddenly the memmorese came too him and he scrabbeld and snacht at them, ceying them dizolv within hiz miand befoer he cood ghet paper too rite them down.

Mememory: dhare wauz the frunt haul, himcelf ghetting reddy too slepe in the chare, widh the oald giyant ov a Murra Maddigan at the ej ov the croud and the tender lite tuch ov Truth--hiz gherl, hiz gherl, nou uncountabel lite-yeerz awa--pootting her hand on hiz arm.

Mememory: dhare wauz anuther roome, widh staind glaas picchuerz and incens, and the weepwerthy ceenz ov a grate life shone in frescose around the waul. Dhare wer the too pecez ov wood and man in pane naild too them. But Casher nu dhat scatterd and coded throo hiz miand, dhare wauz the ultimate and undefetabel wizdom ov the cine ov the Fish. He nu he cood nevvver fere fere agane.

Mememory: dhare wauz a gaming tabel in a brite roome, widh the welth ov a thousand werldz beying raict tooword him. He wauz a woomman, strong, big-busted, bejuweld and proud. He wauz Aggathaa Maddigan, winning at the gaimz. (Dhat must hav cum, he thaut, when dha printed me widh

Truith.) And in dhat miand ov the Hechiseraa, which wauz nou hiz one miand too, dhare wauz clere shure nollej ov hou he cood win men and wimmen, officerz and soalgerz, even underpepel and robots, too hiz cauz widhout a drop ov blud or a werd ov an'gher.

The man, lifting him on the litter, made red waivz ov hete and pane role over him.

He herd wun ov them sa, "Bad cace ov bern. Wunder hou he lost hiz cloadhz?"

The werdz wer matter-ov-fact; the comment wauz nuthhing speshal; but the cadens, dhat speshal cadens, wauz the troo speche ov Mizser.

Az dha carrede him awa he rememberd the face ov Rankin Mikeljon, enormous ise staring widh inword despere over the brim ov a big glaas. Dhat wauz the Administrator, on Henreyaadaa. Dhat wauz the man whoo cent him paast Ambiloxy too Boaregard at too cevventy-five in the morning. The litter jolted a littel.

He thaut ov the wet marshez ov Henreyaadaa and nu dhat soone he wood nevver remember them agane. The wermz ov the tornadose creping up too the ej ov the estate. The mad wise face ov Jon Joi Tre.

Space-thre? Space-thre? Aulreddy, even nou, he cood not remember hou dha had poot him intoo space-thre.

And space-thre itcelf--

Aul the niatmaerz which mankiand haz evver had poosht intoo Casherz miand. He twisted wuns in aggony, just az the litter reecht a meddical

military cart. He saw a gherrlz face--whaut wauz her name?--and then he slept.

17

Foertene Mizser dase later, the ferst test came.

A doctor cuunel and an intelligens cuunel, boath in the wercada uniform ov Cuunel Wedderz Speshal Foercez, stood bi hiz bed.

"Yor name iz Casher ONele and we doo not no hou yor boddy fel among the skermisherz," the doctor wauz saying, rufly and emfatticaly. Casher ONele ternd hiz hed on the pillo and looct at the man.

"Sa sumthhing moer!" he whisperd too the doctor.

The doctor ced, "U ar a polittical introoder and we doo not no hou u got mixt up among our truipts. We doo not even no hou u got bac looce among the pepel ov this plannet."

The intelligens cuunel standing becide him, nodded agrement.

"Doo u thhinc the same thhing, Cuunel?" whisperd Casher ONele too the intelligens cuunel.

"I aasc qweschonz. I doant aancer them," ced the man grufly.

Casher felt himcelf reching for dhare miandz widh a kiand ov fin'ghertip which he did not no he had. It wauz hard too poot intoo ordinary werdz, but it felt az dho sumwun had ced too him, "Dhat wun iz vulnerabel

at the left foerfrunt areyaa ov hiz conshousnes, but the uthur wun iz wel armord and must be reecht throo the midbrane." Casher wauz not afrade ov reveling ennithhing bi hiz expreshon. He wauz too badly bernd and in too much pane too sho nuwaancez ov mening on hiz face. (Sumwhare he had herd ov the wiald stoery ov the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon!

Sumwhare endles stormz boild acros roowind marshez under a cloudy yello ski! But whare, when, whaut wauz dhat...? He cood not take time of for memmory. He had too fite for hiz life.)

"Pece be widh u," he whisperd too boath ov them.

"Pece be widh u," dha responded in unison, widh sum cerprise.

"Lene over me, plese," ced Casher, "so dhat I doo not hav too shout."

Dha stood stoc strate.

Sumwhare in the rezoercez ov hiz one memmory and intelligens Casher found the rite note ov pleding which cood ride hiz vois like a carreyer wave and make them doo az he wisht.

"This iz Mizser," he whisperd.

"Ov coers this iz Mizser," snapt the intelligens cuunel, "and u ar Casher ONele. Whaut ar u doowing here?"

"Lene over, gentelmen," he ced softly, lowering hiz vois so dhat dha cood baerly here him.

This time dha did lene over.

Hiz bernd handz reecht for dhare handz. The officerz notiast it, but cins he wauz cic and unnarnd, dha let him tuch them.

Suddenly he felt dhare miandz glowing in hiz az briatly az if he had swaulode dhare gleming, thhinking brainz at a cin'ghel gulp.

He spoke no lon'gher.

He *thaut* at them--torenschal, iresistibel thaut.

*I am not Casher ONele. U wil fiand hiz boddy in a roome, foer doerz doun. I am the civilleyan Bindaa'oode.*

The too cuunelz staerd, breething hevvily. Niather ced a werd.

Casher went on: "Our fin'gherprints and reccordz hav gotten mixt. Ghiv me the fin'gherprints and paperz ov the ded Casher ONele. Berry him then, qwiyetly, but widh onnor. Wuns he luvd yor leder and dhare iz no point in stuuring up wiald roomorz about reternz from out ov space. I am Bindaa'oode. U wil fiand mi reccordz in yor frunt office. I am not a soalger. I am a civilleyan tecnishan doowing studdese on the sault in blud kemmistry under feeld condishonz. U hav herd me, gentelmen. U here me nou. U wil here me aulwase. But u wil not remember this, gentelmen, when u awaken. I am cic. U can ghiv me wauter and a ceddative."

Dha stil stood, enrapchuerd bi the tuch ov hiz handz.

Casher ONele ced, "Awaken."

Casher ONele let go dhare handz.

The meddical cuunel blinct and ced ameyably, "Ule be better, mister

and doctor Bindaa'oodo. Ile hav the orderly bring u wauter and a ceddativ."

Too the uthr officer he ced, "I hav an interesting corps foer doerz doun. I thhinc u had better ce it."

Dha left, tauking.

Casher ONele tride too thhinc ov the recent paast, but the blu lite ov Mizser wauz aul around him, the sand-smel, the sound ov horcez galloping. For a moment he thaut ov a big chialdz blu dres and he did not no whi he aulmoast wept.

[End ov On the Storm Plannet, bi Cordwaner Smith]

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

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

*THRE TOO*

*A GHIVVEN STAR*

bi CORDWANER SMITH

*Dha wer the outcaasts ov Erth,  
and Erth had ghivven them a destiny  
dhat fitted dhare terribel criamz!*

I

"Stic yor left arm strate forword, Sam," ced Folly.

He strecht hiz arm out.

"I can cens it!" cride Folly, "Nou wigghel yor fin'gherz!"

Sam wiggheld them.

Finsternis ced nuthhing, but boath ov them caut from hiz miand, riding clere and wise beside them, a "cens ov the cichuwaishon." Hiz "cens ov the cichuwaishon" cood be sumd up in the wun-werd comment, which he did

not nede too utter:

"Foolishnes!"

"It iz not foolishnes, Finsternis," cride Folly. "Here ar the thre ov us, riding empty space milleyonz ov killometerz from noawhare. We ar pepel wuns, Erth pepel from Oald Erth Itself. Iz it foolish too remember whaut we uest too be? I wauz a woomman wuns. A butifool woomman.

Nou Ime this--this thhing, bent on a mishon ov merder and destrucshon. I uest too hav handz micelf, reyal handz. Iz it rong for me too enjoi loocking at Samz handz nou and then? Too thhinc ov the paast which aul thre ov us hav left behiand."

Finsternis did not aancer; hiz miand wauz blanc too boath ov them. Dhare wauz nuthhing but space around them, not even much space dust, and the bluwish lite ov Linshoten 15 strate ahead. From the thherd plannet ov dhat star dha cood ocaizhonaly here the cackel and gabbel ov the man-eterz.

Wuns agane Folly cride too Finsternis, "Iz dhat so rong, dhat I shoood enjoi loocking at a hand? Sam haz wel-shaipt handz. I wauz a person wuns, and so wer u. Did I evver tel u dhat I wauz a butifool woomman wuns?"

She had bene a butifool woomman wuns and nou she wauz the controle ov a  
smaul spaiship which fled acros emptines widh too grotesc  
companyonz. She wauz nou a ship oanly elevven meterz long and shaipt  
ruffy like an ainshent diridgibel. Finsternis wauz a perfect cube,  
fifty meterz too the cide, pact widh mashenery which cood blanc out a  
sun and contane its plannets until dha frose too icy, perpetchuwal deth.  
Sam wauz a man, but he wauz a man ov flexibel stele, too hundred meterz  
hi. He wauz desiand too wauc on enny kiand ov plannet, widh enny kiand  
ov  
inhabitant, widh enny kiand ov kemmistry or enny kiand ov gravvity: he  
wauz  
desiand too bring antaggonists, whoomevver dha mite be, the message ov  
the pouwer ov man. The pouwer ov man ... follode bi terror, follode if  
nescesary bi deth. If Sam faild, Finsternis had the ferther pouwer

ov blocking out the sun, Linshoten 15. If iather or boath faild,  
Folly had the job ov ajusting them so dhat dha cood win. If dha  
had no chaans ov winning, she then had the taasc ov destroyiing  
Finsternis and Sam, and then hercelf.

Dhare instrucshonz wer clere: "U wil not, u wil not under enny  
cercumstaancez retern. U wil not, u wil not under enny condishonz  
tern bac tooword Erth. U ar too dain'gerous too cum enniwhare nere  
Erth, evver agane. U ma liv if u wish. If u can. But u  
must not--repete not--cum bac. U hav yor juty. U aasct for  
it. Nou u hav it. Doo not, cum bac. Yor formz fit yor juty.  
U wil doo yor juty."

Folly had becum a tiny ship, cramd widh minnichuriazd eqwipment.

Finsternis had becum a cube blacker dhan darcnes itcelf.

Sam had becum a man but a man different from enny which had evver  
bene  
cene on Erth. He had a mettal boddy, coppede from the human form doun  
too  
the laast detale. Dhat wa the ennemese, whoowevver dha mite be, wood  
be  
ghivven a terribel glimps ov the human shape, the human vois. Too  
hundred meterz hi he stood, strong and sollid enuf too fli throo  
space widh nuthhing but the gets on hiz belt.

The Instroomentallity had desiand aul thre ov them. Desiand them wel.

Desiand them too mete the crasy mennace out beyond the starz, a mennace  
which gave no clu too its tecnollogy or origin, but which responded too  
the cignal "man" widh the counter-cignal, "gabbel cackel! ete, ete!  
man, man! good too ete! cackel-gabbel! ete, ete!"

Dhat wauz enuf.

The Instrumentality took steps. And the three of them--the ship, the cube and the metallic giant--sped between the stars to conquer, to terrorise or to destroy the menace which lived on the third planet of Linshoten 15. Or, if needful, to shoot out that particular sun.

Folly, who had become a ship, was the most volatile of the three.

She had been a beautiful woman once.

2

"You were a beautiful woman once," Sam had said, some years before.  
"How did you end up becoming a ship?"

"I killed myself," said Folly. "That's why I took this name. Folly. I had a long life ahead of me, but I killed myself and then brought me back at the last minute. When I found out I was still alive, I volunteered for something adventurous, dangerous. Then she gave me this. Well, I *ass* for it, didn't I?"

"You *ass* for it," said Sam gravely. Out in the middle of nothing, surrounded by a tremendous lot of nowhere, kurtzky was still the lubricant which governed human relationships. The two of them observed kurtzky and kindness toward one another. Sometimes she threw in a bit of humor, too.

Finsternis did not take part in dhare tauc or dhare companyonship. He did not even verbalise hiz aancerz. He meerly let them no hiz cens ov the cichuwaishon and this time, az in aul uther tiamz, hiz respons wauz--"Neggative. No operaishon neded. Comunicaishon nonfuncshonal. Not neded here. Cilens, plese. I kil sunz. Dhat iz aul I doo. Mi part iz mi biznes, not yorz. Mi paast iz mi biznes. Aul mine." This wauz comunicated in a cin'ghel terribel thaut, so dhat Folly and Sam stopt trying too bring Finsternis intoo the conversaishonz which dha started up, evvery subgective cenchury or so, and continnude for yearz at a time.

Finsternis meerly muivd along with them, cevveral killometerz awa, but wel within dhare rainj ov awaernes. But az far az cumpany wauz concernd, Finsternis mite az wel not hav bene dhare at aul.

Sam went on with the conversaishon, *the* conversaishon which dha had had so menny hundredz ov tiamz cins the planoform ship had discharjd them "nere" Linshoten 15 and left them too make the rest ov dhare wa alone. (If the mennace wer reyaly a mennace, and if it wer intelligent, the Instroomentallity had no intenshon ov letting an acchuwal planoform ship faul within the pouwerz ov a strainj form ov life which mite wel be hipnottic in its combat capascitese. Hens the ship, the cube and the giyant wer launcht intoo normal space at hi velosity, eqwipt with gets too corect dhare coercez, and left too make dhare one awa too the dain'ger.)

Sam ced, az he aulwase did, "U wer a butifool woomman, Folly, but u waunted too di. Whi?"

"Whi doo pepel evver waunt too di, Sam? Its the pouwer in us, the vitallity which maix us waunt so much. Life aulwase trembelz on the ej ov disapointment. If we hadnt bene vital and gredy and lustfool and yerning, if we hadnt had big thauts and waunted biggher wunz, we

wood hav stade animalz, like aul the littel thhingz bac on Erth. Its strong life dhat bringz us so cloce too deth. We caant stand the buty ov it, the neernes ov the thhingz we waunt, the remoatnes ov the thhingz dhat we can hav. U and me and Finsternis, nou, were monsterz riding out betwene the starz. And yet were happier nou dhan we wer when we wer bac among pepel. I wauz a butifool woomman, but dhare wer specific thhingz which I waunted. I waunted them micelf. I alone. For me. Oonly for me. When I coodnt hav them, I waunted too di. If I had bene schupider or happier I mite hav livd on. But I didnt. I wauz me--intensly me. So here I am. I doant even no whether I hav a boddy or not, incide this ship. Dhave got me aul hooct up too the censorz and the vuwerz and the computerz. Sumtiamz I thhinc dhat I ma be a luvly woomman stil, widh a reyal boddy hidden sumwhare incide this ship, wating too step out and too be a person agane. And u, Sam, doant u waunt too tel me about yorcelf? Sam. SAM. Dhats no name for an acchuwal person--Superordinated Aleyen Mezhuring and Maastery device. Whaut wer u befoer dha gave u dhat big boddy? At leest u stil looc like a person. Yor not a ship, like me."

"Mi name duznt matter, Folly, and if I toald it too u, u woodnt no it. U nevver nu it."

"Hou woodnt I no?" she cride. "Ive nevver toald u mi name iather, so perhaps we did no eche uther bac on Oald Erth when we wer stil pepel."

"I can tel sumthhing," ced Sam, "from the shape ov werdz, from the ring ov thauts, even when were not out here in nuthhing. U wer a lady, perhaps hiborn. U wer trooly butifool. U wer reyally important. And I--I wauz a tecnishan. A good wun. I did mi werc and I luvd mi fammily, and mi wife and I wer happy widh evvery chiald which

the Lordz gave us for adopshon. But mi wife dide ferst. And aafter a while mi children, mi wunderfool boi and mi too butifool, intelligent gherlz--mi one children, dha coodnt stand me ennimoer. Dha didnt like me. Perhaps I tauct too much. Perhaps I gave them too much advice. Perhaps I remianded them ov dhare muther, whoo wauz ded. I doant no. I woant evver no. Dha didnt waunt too ce me. Out ov mannerz, dha cent me cardz on mi berthda. Out ov shere formal kertecy, dha cauld on me sumtiamz. Nou and then wun ov them waunted sumthhing. Then dha came too me, but it wauz aulwase just too ghet sumthhing. It tooc me a long time too figgure out, but I hadnt dun ennithhing. It wauznt whaut I had dun or hadnt dun. Dha just plane didnt like me. U no the songz and the opperaaz and the stoerese, Folly, u no them aul."

"Not aul ov them," thaut Folly gently, "not aul ov them. Just a fu thousand."

"Did u evver ce wun," cride Sam, hiz thauts ringing feersly against her miand, "did u evver ce a cin'ghel wun about a regected faather? Dhare aul about men and wimmen, luv and cex, but I can tel u dhat regecshon herts even when u doant aasc ennithhing ov yor luvd wunz but dhare cumpany and dhare happines and dhare cimpel gennuwine smialz. When I nu dhat mi children had no uce for me, I had no uce for me iather. The Instroomentallity came along widh this worning, and I vollunteerd."

"But yor aul rite nou, Sam," ced Folly gently. "Ime a ship and u ar a mettal giyant but were of doowing werc which iz important for aul mankiand. Weeyl hav advenchuerz toogheter. Even blac and grumbly here," she added, mening Finsternis, "caant kepe us from the exiatment ov companyonship or the hope ov dain'ger. Were doowing sumthhing wunderfool and important and exiting. Doo u no whaut I

wood doo if I had mi life agane, mi ordinary life widh skin and tonailz and hare and thhingz like dhat?"

"Whaut?" aasct Sam, nowing the aancer perfectly wel from the hundredz ov tiamz dha had tucht on this point.

"Ide take baaths. Hundredz and hundredz ov them, over agane. Shouwerz and dips in coald puilz and soax in hot baathtubz and rincez and moer shouwerz. And I wood doo mi hare, over and over agane, thousandz ov different wase. And I wood poot on lipstic, in the moast outrajous cullorz, even if nobody sau me, exept for mi one celf loocking in the mirror. Nou I can hardly remember whaut it uest too be too be dri or wet. Ime in this ship and I ce the ship and I doo not reyaly no if I am a person or not enny moer."

Sam stade qwiyet, nowing whaut she wood sa next.

"Sam, whaut wood u doo?" Folly aasct.

"Swim," he ced.

"Then swim, Sam, swim! Swim for me in the space betwene the starz. U stil hav a boddy and I doant, but I can wauch u and I can cens u swimming out here in the nuthhing-at-aul."

Sam began too swim a huge Australeyan craul, dipping hiz face too the ej ov the wauter--az if dhare wer wauter dhare. The geschuerz made no differens in hiz reyal moashon, cins dha wer aul ov them in the faast tragectory computed for them from the point whare dha left the Instroomentallitese ship and started out in normal space for the star listed az Linshoten 15.

This time, sumthhing verry sudden happend, and, it happend strainjly.

From the darc gloomy cilens ov the cube Finsternis, dhare came an articculate cri, cauld foerth in clere human speche:

*Stop it! Stop mooving rite nou. I atac.*

Boath Sam and Folly had instroaments bilt intoo them, so dha cood rede space around them. The instroaments, qwicly scand, shode nuthhing. Yet Folly felt od, az dho sumthhing had gon verry rong in her ship-celf, which had ceemd so mettal, so reliyabel, so inaulterabel.

She throo a thaut ov inqwiry at Sam and insted got anuther comaand from Finsternis, *Doant thhinc.*

3

Sam floted like a ded man in hiz garganchuwan boddy.

Folly drifted like a froote beside hiz hand.

At laast dhare came werdz from Finsternis:

"U can thhinc nou, if u waunt too. U can chatter at eche uther agane. Ime throo."

Sam thaut at him, and the thaut-pattern wauz trubbeld and confuezd: "Whaut happend? I felt az dho the immaculate grid ov space had bene pincht tooghether in a tite foald. I felt u doo sumthhing, and then dhare wauz cilens around us agane."

"Tauking," ced Finsternis, "iz not operaishonal and it iz not reqwiard ov me. But dhare ar oanly thre ov us here, so I mite az wel tel

u whaut happend. Can u here me, Folly?"

"Yes," she ced, weecly.

"Ar we on coers," aasct Finsternis, "for the thherd plannet ov Linshoten 15?"

Folly pauzd while checking aul her instroaments, which wer moer complicated and refiand dhan dhose carrede bi the uther too, cins she wauz the maintenans unit. "Yes," ced she at laast. "We ar exactly on coers. I doant no whaut happend, if ennithhing did happen."

"Sumthhing happend, aul rite," ced Finsternis, widh the grattifide savvagery ov a person whoose qwic-and-crowel nachure iz reworded oanly bi meting and overcumming hostility in reyal life.

"Wauz it a space draggon, like dha uest too mete on the oald, oald ships?"

"No, nuthhing like dhat," ced Finsternis, comunicative for wuns, cins this wauz sumthhing operaishonal too tauc about. "It duznt even ceme too be in this space at aul. Sumthhing just risez up amung us, like a volcano cumming out ov sollid space. Sumthhing viyolent and wiald and alive. Doo u too stil hav ise?"

"Ceying devicez for the ordinary lite band?" aasct Sam.

"Ov coers we doo!" ced Finsternis. "I wil tri too fix it so dhat u wil hav a vizsibel inpoot."

Dhare wauz a sharp pauz from Finsternis.

The vois came agane, widh much strane.

*"Doo not doo ennithhing. Doo not tri too help me. Just wauch. If it winz, destroi me and destroi yorcelvz verry qwicly. It mite tri too capchure us and ghet bac too Erth."*

Folly felt like telling Finsternis dhat this wauz un'necesary, cins the ferst moashon tooword retern wood triggher destrucshon devicez which had bene bilt intoo eche ov the thre ov them, beyond reche, beyond detecshon, beyond awaernes. When the Instroomentallity ced, "Doo not cum bac," the Instroomentallity ment it.

She ced nuthhing.

She waucht Finsternis insted.

Sumthhing began too happen.

It wauz verry od.

Space itcelf ceemd too rip and leke.

In the vizsibel band, the introoder looct like a fountane ov wauter beying throne randomly too and fro.

But the introoder wauz not wauter.

In the vizsibel lite-band, it glode like wiald fire rising from a shimmering collum ov blu ice. Here in space dhare wauz nuthhing too bern, nuthhing too make lite: she nu dhat Finsternis wauz traanzlating unrezolvabel fenommenaa intoo lite.

She censt Sam mooving wun ov hiz giyant fists uncontrolably, in a

helples, chialdish geschure ov protest.

She hercelf did nuthhing but wauch, az alertly and pasciavly az she cood.

Nevvertheles, she felt rencht. This wauz no matereyal fenommenon. It wauz wiald unformd life, introoding out ov sum uther propoershon ov space, ceking matereyal on which too impose its vitallity, its frensy, its identity. She cood ce Finsternis az a sollid blac cube, darker dhan mere darcnes, drifting rite intoo the collum. She waucht the ciadz ov Finsternis.

On the erleyer part ov the trip, cins dha had left the pepel and the planoform ship and had bene discharjd in a faast tragectory tooword Linshoten 15, Finsternis ciadz had ceemd like dul mettal, sliatly bernisht, so dhat Folly had too brush him liatly widh radar too ghet a clere image ov him.

Nou hiz ciadz had chainjd.

Dha had becum az soft and thhic az velvet.

The strainj volcano-fountane did not ceme too hav much in the wa ov cencing devicez. It pade no atenshon too Sam or too hercelf. The darc cube atracted it, az a shaaft ov sunlite mite attract a baby or az the ruscel ov paper mite drau the atenshon ov a kitten.

Widh a slite twist ov its vitallity and direcshon, the whole collum ov barning, livving briatnes plunjd uppon Finsternis, plunjd and bernd out and went in and wauz cene no moer.

Finsternis vois, clere and cheerfool, sounded out too boath ov them:

"Its gon nou."

"Whaut happend too it?" aasct Sam.

"I ate it," ced Finsternis.

"U whaut?" cride Folly.

"I ate it," ced Finsternis. He wauz tauking moer dhan he evver had befoer. "At leest, dhats the oonly wa I can describe it. This mashene dha gave me or made me intoo or whautevver dha did, its reyaly raather good. Its pouwerfool. I can fele it abzorbing thhingz, taking them in, taking them apart, pootting them awa. Its sumthhing like eting uest too be when I wauz a person. Dhat wiald thhing atact me, rapt me up, devourd me. Aul I did wauz too take it in, and nou its gon. I fele sort ov fool. I supose mi masheenz ar sorting our saampelz ov it too cend awa too rondavoo points in littel rockets. I no dhat I hav cixtene smaul rockets incide me, and I can fele too ov them ghetting reddy too moove. Niather wun ov u cood hav dun whaut I doo. I wauz bilt too abzorb whole sunz if nescenary, brake them doun, frese them doun, chainj dhare molecclular strucchure and shoote dhare vitallity of in wun big uesles blaast on the rajo spectrum. U coodnt doo ennithhing like dhat, Sam, even if u doo hav armz and legz and a hed and a vois--if we evver ghet intoo an atmosfere for u too use it in. U coodnt doo whaut I hav just dun, Folly."

"Yor *good*," ced Folly, widh emfacis. But she added: "I can repara u."

Obveyously ofended, Finsternis widhdroo intoo hiz cilens.

Sam ced too Folly, "Hou much ferther too destinaishon?"

Ced Folly promptly, "Cevventy-nine erth yeerz, foer munths and thre dase, cix ourz and too minnuets, but u no hou littel dhat meenz out here. It cood ceme like a cin'ghel aafternoone or it cood fele too us like a thousand liaftiamz. Time duznt werc verry wel for us."

"Hou did Erth evver fiand this place, ennihou?" ced Sam.

"Aul I no iz dhat it wauz too verry strong tellepaths, werking toogheter on the plannet Mizser. An ex-dictator naimd Casher ONele and an ex-Lady naimd Celaltaa. Dha wer doowing a bit ov ciyonic astrononomy and suddenly this signal came in strong and clere. U no dhat tellepaths can cach direcshonz verry accuraitly. Even over imens distancez. And dha can ghet emoashonz, too. But dha ar not verry good at acchuwal immaginez or thhingz. Sumbody els chect it out for them."

"M-m-m," ced Sam. He had herd aul this befoer. Out ov shere boerdom, he went bac too swimming viggorously. The boddy mite not reyaly be hiz, but it made him fele good too exercise it.

Beciadz, he nu dhat Folly waucht him widh plezhure--grate plezhure, and a littel bit ov envy.

*Casher ONele and the Lady Celaltaa had finnisht widh making luv.*

*Dha had lane widh dhare boddese tiard and dhare miandz clere, relaxt. Dha had strecht out on a blanket just abuv the big gushing spring which wauz the soers ov the Nianth Nile. Boath tellepaths, dha cood here a berd-cuppel qworeling incide a tre, the male berd comaanding*

*the female too ghet out and ghet too werc and the female aancering bi dropping deper and deper intoo a fret fool and irritabel slepe.*

*The Lady Celaltaa had whisperd a thaut too her luvver and maaster, Casher ONele.*

*"Too the starz?"*

*"The starz?" thaut he widh a grumbel. Dha wer boath strong tellepaths. He had bene imprinted, in sum mistereyous wa, widh the gratest tellepath-hipnotist ov aul time, the Onnorabel Aggathaa Maddigan, whoo had gon down in history az the Hechiseraa ov Gontalon, the oanly person in history too hipnotise the men and robots ov a battel flete so dhat it destroid itcelf in open space. Casher ONele had aulso retaind dim memmorese ov a haa-f-grone gherl, increddiably luvly in a cimpel blu dres, lost too him sumwhare beyond amneezhac starz, but in the Lady Celaltaa he had a companyon werthy ov hiz final tallents, a natchural tellepath whoo cood hercelf reche not oanly aul ov Mizser but sum ov the nerer starz. When dha teemd up tooghether, az she nou propoazd, dha cood plunj intoo dusty infinnitese ov depth and bring bac felingz or immagez which no Go-Captane had ever found widh hiz ship.*

*He sat up widh a grunt ov acent.*

*She looct at him fondly, posesciavly, her darc ise alite widh alertnes, happines, posesciavnes and advenchure.*

*"Can I lift?" she aasct, aulmoast timmidly.*

*When too tellepaths werct tooghether, wun cleerd the vizhon for boath ov them az far az dhare combiand miandz cood reche and then the uther sprang, widh enormous effort az far and az faast az poscibel tooword enny targhet which presented itcelf. Dha had found strainj thhingz, sumtiamz butifool or dramattic wunz, bi this method.*

*Casher wauz aulreddy drinking enormous gulps ov are, filling hiz lungz, hoalding hiz breth, letting go widh a gaasp, and then inhaling deeply and sloly agane. In this wa he reyoxygenated hiz brane verry thurroly for the huge effort ov a telepathhic dive intoo the remote depth ov space. He did not even speke too her, nor did he tellepath a werd too her; he wauz concerving hiz strength for a good jump.*

*He meerly nodded too her.*

*The Lady Celaltaa, too, began the depe breething, but she ceemd too nede it les dhan did Casher.*

*Dha wer boath citting up, cide bi cide, breething deeply.*

*The coole nite sandz ov Mizser wer around them, the harmles gherghel ov the Nianth Nile becide them, the brite star-clutterd ski ov Mizser wauz abuw them.*

*Her hand reecht out and tooc hoald ov hiz.*

*She squeezd hiz hand. He looct at her and nodded too her agane.*

*Within hiz miand, Mizser and its entire solar cistem ceemd too berst*

*intoo flame widh a nu kiand ov lite. The rajans ov Celaltaaz miand traild of unnevenly in dif ferent direcshonz but dhare, aulmoast 2° of the pole ov Mizserz ecliptic, he felt sumthhing wiald and strainj, a kiand ov beying which he had nevvver censt befoer. Using Celaltaaz miand az a bace, he let hiz miand dive for it.*

*The distans ov the plunj left them boath dizsy, citting on the quiyet nite sandz ov Mizser. It ceemd too boath ov them dhat the miand ov man had nevvver reecht so far befoer.*

*The reyallity ov the fenommenon wauz undoutabel.*

*Dhare wer annimalz aul around them, the uezhual cattegoerese: runnerz, hunterz, jumperz, climerz, swimmerz, hiderz and handlerz. It wauz sum ov the handlerz whoo wer intensly telepathhic themcelvz.*

*The image ov man creyated an imejate, merderous respons:*

*"Cackel gabbel, gabbel cackel, man, man, man, ete them, ete them!"*

*Casher and Celaltaa wer boath so cerpriazd dhat dha let the contact go, aafter making shure dhat dha had tucht a whole werld fool ov beyingz, sum ov them telepathhic and probbably civviliazd.*

*Hou had the beyingz none "man"? Whi had dhare respons bene imejate? Whi anthropof fagous and homicidal?*

*Dha tooc time, befoer cumming compleetly out ov the traans, too make a caer fool, exact note ov the direcshon from which the dain'ger-brainz had shreect dhare worning.*

*This dha submitted too the Instroomentallity, shortly aafter the incident.*

And dhat wauz hou, un'none too Folly, Sam and Finsternis, the inhabbitants on the thherd plannet ov Linshoten 15 had cum too the atenshon ov mankiand.

4

Az a matter ov fact, the thre waundererz later on felt a vaghe, remote telepathhic contact which dha censt az beying worm-harted and human, and dhaerfoer did not tri too trac doun, widh dhare miandz or dhare wepponz. It wauz ONele and Celaltaa, menny yeerz later bi Mizser time, reching too ce whaut the Instroomentallity had dun about Linshoten 15.

Folly, Sam and Finsternis had no suspishon dhat the too moast pouwerfool tellepaths in the human areyaa ov the gallaxy had stroact them, cercht them, felt them throo, and cene thhingz about them which the thre ov them did not no about themcelvz or about eche uther.

Casher ONele ced too the Lady Celaltaa:

"U got it, too?"

"A butifool woomman, encaist in a littel ship?"

Casher nodded: "A red-hed widh skin az soft and traansparent az livving ivory? A woomman whoo wauz butifool and wil be butifool agane?"

"Dhats whaut I got," ced the Lady Celaltee. "And the tiard oald man, wery ov hiz children and wery ov hiz one life becauz hiz children wer wery ov him."

"Not so oald," ced Casher ONele. "And iznt dhat a spectacular pece ov mashenery dha poot him intoo? A mettal giyant. It felt like sumthhing about a qworter ov a killometer hi. Ascid-prooffe. Coald-prooffe. Woant he be cerpriazd when he fiandz dhat the Instroomentallity haz rejuvenated hiz one boddly incide dhat monster?"

"He certainly wil be," ced the Lady Celaltee happily, thhinking ov the plezzant cerprise which la ahed ov a man whoome she wood nevver no or ce widh her one boddily ise.

Dha both fel cilent.

Then ced the Lady Celaltee, "But the thherd person..." Dhare wauz a shivver in her vois az dho she daerd not aasc the qweschon. "The thherd person, the wun in the cube." She stopt, az dho she cood niather aasc nor sa moer.

"It wauz not a robot or a personallity cube," ced Casher ONele. "It wauz a human beying aul rite. But its crasy. Cood u make out, Celaltee, az too whether it wauz male or female?"

"No," ced she, "I coodnt tel. The uther too ceemd too thhinc dhat it wauz male."

"But did *u* fele shure?" aasct Casher.

"Widh dhat beying, I felt shure ov nuthhing. It wauz human, aul rite, but it wauz strain'ger dhan enny lost homminid we hav evver felt around the forgotten starz. Cood u tel, Casher, whether it wauz yung or oald?"

"No," ced he. "I felt nuthhing--oonly a desperate human miand widh aul its gardz up, livving oonly becauz ov the terribel pouwerz ov the blac cube, the sun-killer in which it rode. I nevver censt sumwun befoer whoo wauz a person widhout caracteristix. Its fritening."

"The Instroomentallity ar croowel sumtiamz," ced Celalaa.

"Sumtiamz dha hav too be," Casher agrede.

"But I nevver thaut dhat dha wood doo dhat."

"Doo whaut?" aasct Casher.

Her darc ise looct at him. It wauz a different nite, and a different Nile, but the ise wer oonly a verry littel bit oalder and dha luvd him just az much az evver. The Lady Celalaa trembeld az dho she hercelf mite thhinc dhat the aul-pouwerfool Instroomentallity cood hav hidden a miacrofone in the random sandz. She whisperd too her luvver, her maaster:

"U ced it yorcelf, Casher, just a moment ago."

"Ced whaut?" He spoke tenderly but feerlesly, hiz vois ringing out over the coole nite sandz.

The Lady Celalaa went on whispering, which wauz verry unlike her uezhuwal  
celf: "U ced dhat the thherd person wauz crasy.' Doo u reyalise dhat u ma hav spoken the acchuwal litteral truth?" Her whisper darted at him like a snake.

At laast, he whisperd bac: "Whaut did u cens? Whaut cood u ghes?"

"Dha hav cent a madman too the starz. Or a mad woomman. A reyal cicottic."

"Lots ov pilots," ced Casher, speking moer normaly, "ar cooshond against loanlines widh reyal but artifishaly activated cicocese. It ghets them throo the reyal or imadgiand horrorz ov the sufferingz ov space."

"I doant mene dhat," ced Celaltee, stil whispering ergently and ceecretly. "I mene a reyal cicottic."

"But dhare arnt enny. Not looce, dhat iz," ced Casher, stammering widh cerprise at laast. "Dha iather ghet cuerd or dha ar botteld up in thaut-proofe satteliats sumwhare."

Celaltee raizd her vois a littel, just a littel, so dhat she no lon'gher whisperd but spoke ergently.

"But doant u ce, dhats whaut dha *must* hav dun. The Instroomentallity made a star-killer too strong for enny normal miand too ghide. So the Lordz got a cicottic sumwhare, a reyal cicottic, and cent a madman out among the starz. Utherwise we cood hav felt its gender or its age."

Casher noddod in cilent agrement. The are did not fele coalder, but he got guisflesh citting beside hiz beluvved Celaltee on the familleyar dezsert sandz.

"Yor rite. U must be rite. It aulmoast maix me fele sorry for the ennemese out nere Linshoten Fiftene. Doo u ce nuthhing ov them this time? I coodnt perceve them at aul."

"I did, a littel," ced the Lady Celalaa. "Dhare tellepaths hav caut the strainj miandz cumming at them widh a hi rate ov spede. The telepathhic wunz ar wiald widh exiatment but the utherz ar just gowing cackel-gabbel, cackel-gabbel widh eche uther, fild widh an'gher, hun'gher and the thaut ov man."

"U got dhat much?" he ced in wunder.

"Mi lord and mi luvver, I diavd this time. Iz it so strainj dhat I censt moer dhan u did? Yor strength lifted me."

"Did u here whaut the wepponz cauld eche uther?"

"Sumthhing cilly." He cood ce her nitting her brouz in the brite starshine which iluminated the dezsert aulmoast the wa dhat the Oald Oridginal Moone lit up the niats sumtiamz on Manhome Itself. "It wauz Folly, and sumthhing like 'Superordinated Aleyen Mezhuring and Maastery machine and sumthhing like darcnes in the Ainshent Doichez Lan'gwage."

"Dhats whaut I ghet, too," ced Casher. "It soundz like a weerd teme."

"But a pouwerfool wun, a terribly pouwerfool wun," ced the Lady Celalaa. "U and I, mi luvver and maaster, hav cene strainj thhingz and dain'gerz betwene the starz, even befoer we met eche uther, but we nevver sau ennithhing like this befoer, did we?"

"No," ced he.

"Wel, then," ced she, "let us slepe and forghet the matter az much az we can. The Instroomentallity iz certainly taking care ov Linshoten Fiftene, and we too not nede bother about it."

And aul dhat Sam, Folly and Finsternis nu wauz dhat a lite tuch, unexplained but frendly, had gon over them from the far star rejon nere home. Thaut dha, if dha thaut ennithhing about it at aul, "The Instroomentallity, which made us and cent us, haz chect up on us wun moer time."

5

A fu yeerz later, Sam and Folly wer tauking agane while Finsternis--garded, impennetrabel, uncommunicating, detectabel oonly bi the feers glo ov human life which shon telepathhicaly out ov the imens cube--rode space becide them and ced nuthhing.

Suddenly Folly cride out too Sam loudly:

"I can *smel* them."

"Smel whoo?" aasct Sam mialdly. "Dhare iznt enny smel out here in the nuthhingnes ov space."

"Cilly," thaut Folly bac, "I doant mene reyaly smel. I mene dhat I can pic up *dhare* cens ov odor telepathhicaly."

"Whoose?" ced Sam, beying dens.

"Our ennemese, ov coers," cride Folly. "The man-remembererz whoo ar not man. The cackel-gabbel crechuerz. The beyingz whoo remember man and hate him. Dha smel thhic and worm and alive too eche uther. Dhare whole werld iz fool ov smelz. Dhare tellepaths ar ghetting frantic

nou. Dha hav even figguerd out dhat dhare ar thre ov us and dha ar triying too ghet our smelz."

"And we hav no smel. Not when we doo not even no whether we hav human boddese or not, incide these thhingz. Imadgine this mettal boddy ov

mine smelling. If it did hav a smel," ced Sam, "it wood probbably be the verry soft smel ov werking stele and a littel bit ov luebricants, plus whautevver odorz mi gets mite activate incide an atmosfere. If I no the Instroomentallity, dha hav made mi gets smel afool too aulmoast enny kiand ov beying. Moast formz ov life thhinc ferst throo dhare nosez and then figure out the rest ov expereyens later. Aafter aul, I wauz bilt too intimidat, too friten, too destroi. The Instroomentallity did not make this giyant too be frendly widh enniboddy. U and I can be frendz, Folly, becauz u ar a littel ship which I cood hoald like a cigar betwene mi fin'gherz, and becauz the ship hoaldz the memmory ov a verry luvly woomman. I can cens whaut u wuns wer. Whaut u ma stil be, if yor acchuwal boddy iz stil incide dhat bote."

"O, Sam!" she cride. "Doo u thhinc I mite stil be alive, reyaly alive, widh a reyaly me in a reyaly me, and a chaans too be micelf sumwhare agane, out here betwene the starz?"

"I caant cens it plainly," ced Sam. "Ive reecht az much az I can throo yor ship widh mi censorz, but I caant tel whether dhaerz a whole woomman dhare or not. It mite be just a memmory ov u dicected and lamminated betwene a lot ov plaastic sheets. I reyaly caant tel, but sumtiamz I hav the strain'gest hunch dhat u ar stil alive, in the oald ordinary wa, and dhat I am alive too."

"Woodnt dhat be wunderfool!" She aulmoast shouted at him. "Sam, imadgine beying us agane, if we foolfil our mishon and conker this plannet and sta alive and cettel dhare! I mite even mete u and--"

Dha boath fel cilent at the implicaishonz ov beying ordinary-alive agane. Dha nu dhat dha luvd eche uther. Out here, in the imens blacnes ov space, dhare wauz nuthhing dha cood doo but streke along in dhare faast trajectorese and tauc too eche uther a littel bit bi teleppathhy.

"Sam," ced Folly, and the tone ov her thaut shode dhat she wauz chain'ging a difficult subject. "Doo u thhinc dhat we ar the ferthest out dhat pepel hav evver gon? U uest too be a tecnishan. U mite no. Doo u?"

"Ov coers I no," thaut Sam promptly. "Were not. Aafter aul, were stil depe incide our one gallaxy."

"I didnt no," ced Folly contriatly.

"Widh aul dhose instrouments, doant u no whare u ar?"

"Ov coers I no whare I am, Sam. In relaishon too the thherd plannet ov Linshoten 15. I even hav a faint ideyaa ov the genneral direcshon in which Oald Erth must li, and hou menny thouzandz ov agez it wood take us too ghet home, travveling throo ordinary space, if we did tri too tern around." She thaut too hercelf but didnt ad in her thaut too Sam, "Which we caant." She thaut agane too him, "But Ive nevver studdede astrononomy or navigaishon, so I coodnt tel whether we wer at the ej ov the gallaxy or not."

"Noawhare nere the ej," ced Sam. "Were not Jon Joi Tre and were noawhare nere the too-hedded ellefants which wepe forevver in intergalactic space."

"Jon Joi Tre?" sang Folly; dhare wauz joi and memmory in her thauts az she sounded the name. "He wauz mi idol when I wauz a gherl. Mi faather wauz a subchefe ov the Instroomentallity and aulwase prommiast too bring Jon Joi Tre too our hous. We had a cuntry and it wauz unnuezhual and verry fine for this da and age. But mister and Go-Captane Tre nevver got around too vizsiting us, so dhare I wauz, a big gherl widh picchure-cuebz ov him aul over mi roome. I liact him becauz he wauz so much oalder dhan me, and so rezzolute-loocking and so tender too. I had aul sorts ov romantic da-dreemz about him, but he nevver shode up and I marrede the rong man cevveral tiamz, and mi children got ghivven too the rong pepel, so here I am. But whauts this stuf about too-hedded ellefants?"

"Reyaly?" ced Sam. "I doant ce hou u cood here about Jon Joi Tre and not no whaut he did."

"I nu he flu far, far out, but I didnt no exactly whaut he did. Aafter aul, I wauz just a chiald when I fel in luv widh hiz picchure. Whaut *did* he doo? Hese ded nou, I supose, so I doant supose it matterz."

Finsternis cut in, grimly and unexpectedly: "Jon Joi Tre iz not ded. Hese creping around a monstrous place on an abandond plannet, and he iz imortal and insane."

"Hou did u no dhat?" cride Sam, terning hiz enormous mettal hed too looc at the darc bernisht cube which had ced nuthhing for so menny yearz.

Dhare wauz no ferther thaut from Finsternis, not a goast, not an ecco ov a werd.

Folly prodded him:

"Its no uce triying too make dhat thhing tauc if it duznt waunt too. Weve boath tride, thouzandz ov tiamz. Tel me about the too-hedded ellefants. Dhose ar the big annimalz widh larj floppy eerz and the nosez dhat pic thhingz up, arnt dha? And dha make verry wise, dependabel underpepel out ov them?"

"I doant no about the underpepel part, but the annimalz ar the kiand u menshon, verry big indede. When Jon Joi Tre got far outside our cozmos bi fliying throo space he found an enormous proceshon ov open ships fliying in collumz whare dhare wauz nuthhing at aul. The ships wer made bi nuthhing which man haz evver even cene. We stil doant no whare dha came from or whaut made them. Eche open ship had a sort ov annimal, sumthhing like an ellefant widh foer frunt legz and a hed at eche end, and az he paast the unnimadginabel ships, these annimalz hould at him. Hould grefe and moerning. Our best ghes wauz dhat the ships wer the tuimz ov sum grate race ov beyingz and the houling ellefants the imortal haaf-livving moernerz whoo garded them."

"But hou did Jon Joi Tre evver ghet bac?"

"Aa, dhat wauz butifool. If u go intoo spacez, u take nuthhing moer dhan yor one boddy widh u. Dhat wauz the finest en'ginering the human race haz evver dun. Dha desiand and bilt a whole planoform ship out ov Jon Joi Trese skin, fin'ghernailz and hare. Dha had too chainj hiz boddy kemmistry a bit too ghet enuf mettal in him too carry the coilz and the electric cerkits, but it werct. He came bac. Dhat wauz a man whoo cood skip throo space like a littel boi hopping on familleyar rox. Hese the oonly pilot Whoo evver piloted himcelf bac home from outside our galaxy. I doant no whether it wil be werth the time and trezhure too use spacez for intergalactic trips. Aafter aul, sum verry ghifted pepel ma hav aulreddy faulen throo bi axident, Folly. U

and Finsternis and I ar pepel whoo hav bene bilt intoo masheenz. We ar nou ourcelvz the masheenz. But widh Tre dha did it the uther wa around. Dha made a mashene out ov him. And it werct. In dhat wun depe flite he went billeyonz ov tiamz ferther dhan we wil ever go."

"U thhinc u no," ced Finsternis unexpectedly. "U thhinc u no. Dhats whaut u aulwase doo. U thhinc u no."

Folly and Sam tride too ghet Finsternis too tauc sum moer, but nuthhing happend. Aafter a fu moer rests and taux dha wer reddy for landing on the thherd plannet ov Linshoten 15.

Dha landed.

Dha faut.

Blud ran on the ground. Fire scorcht the vallese and boild the laix. The telepathhic werld wauz fool ov the cackel-gabbel ov frite, haitred throwing itcelf intoo suwicide, fury terning intoo surrender, intoo depe despare, intoo hoaplesnes, and at laast intoo a strainj kiand ov qwiyet and luv.

Let us not tel dhat stoery.

It can be ritten sum uther time, toald bi sum uther vois.

The beyingz dide bi thouzandz and tenz ov thouzandz while Finsternis sat on a mountane-top, doowing nuthhing. Folly wove deth and destrucshon, uncoded lan'gwagez, droo maps, shode Sam the strong-points and the wepponz which had too be destroid. Part ov the tecnollogy wauz verry advaanst, uther parts wer stil tribal. The domminant race wauz dhat ov

the beyingz whoo had evolvd intoo handlerz and thinkerz; it wauz dha whoo wer the tellepaths.

Aul haitred ceest az the haterz dide.

Oanly the submiscive wunz livd on.

Sam toer cittese about widh hiz bare mettal handz, ript hevvy gunz too pecez while dha wer firing at him, picking the gunnerz of the gun carragez az dho dha wer lice, swimming oashanz when he had too, widh Folly darting and hovvering around or ahed ov him.

Final surender wauz braut bi dhare stron'ghest tellepath, a verry wise oald male whoo had bene hidden incide a depe mountane:

"U hav cum, pepel. We surender. Sum ov us hav aulwase none the truth. We ar Erth-born, too. A cargo ov chickenz cetteld here unnimadginabel tiamz ago. A time-twist toer us out ov our convoi and throo us here. Dhats whi, when we censt u far acros space, we caut the relaishonship ov ete-and-eten. Oanly, our brave wunz had it rong. U ete us: we doant ete u. U ar the maasterz nou. We wil cerv u forevver. Doo u ceke our deth?"

"No, no," ced Folly. "We came oanly too avert a dain'ger, and we hav dun dhat. Liv on, and on, but plan no wor and make no wepponz. Leve dhat too the Instroomentallity."

"Blest iz the Instroomentallity, whoowevver dhat ma be. We axept yor termz. We belong too u."

When this wauz dun, the wor wauz over.

Strainj thhingz began too happen.

Wiald voicez sang from within Folly and Sam, voicez not dhare one:

*Mishon gon. Werc finnisht. Go too hil widh cube. Go and rejois!*

Sam and Folly hezsitated. Dha had left Finsternis whare dha landed, haafwa around the plannet.

The cinging voicez became moer ergent:

*Go. Go. Go nou. Go bac too the cube. Tel the chicken-pepel too  
plaant a laun and a grove ov trese. Go, go, go nou too the good reword!*

Dha toald the tellepaths whaut had bene ced too them and voiyajid werily up out ov the atmosfere and bac doun for a landing at the oridginal point ov contact, a long lo hil which had bene plaanted widh huge patchez ov grene terf and freshly traansplaanted trese even in the ourz in which dha flu of the werld and bac on it agane. The berd-tellepaths must hav had strong and qwic comaandz.

The cinging became pure music az dha landed, coraalz ov reword and rejoicing, widh the hint ov marshal marchez and victory fuegz woven in.

*Allan, stand up, ced the voicez too Sam.*

Sam stood on the rij ov the hil. He stood like a colossus against the red-dauning ski. A frendly, qwiyet croud ov the chicken-pepel fel bac.

*Allan, poot yor hand too yor rite foerhed, sang the voicez.*

Sam obade. He did not no whi the voicez cauld him "Allan."

*Ellen, land,* sang the rejoicing voicez too Folly. Folly, hercelf a littel ship, landed at Samz fete. She wauz bewilderd widh happy confuezhon and a grate dele ov pane which did not ceme too matter much.

*Allan, cum foerth,* sang the voicez. Sam felt a sharp pane az hiz foerhed--hiz huge mettal foerhed, too hundred meterz abuv the ground--berst open and cloazd agane. Dhare wauz sumthhing pinc and helples in hiz hand.

The voicez comaanded, *Allan, poot yor hand gently on the ground.*

Sam obade and poot hiz hand on the ground. The littel pinc toi fel on the fresh terf. It wauz a tiny minnichure ov a man.

*Ellen, stand foerth,* sang the voicez agane. The ship naimd Folly opend a doer and a naked yung woomman fel out.

*Almaa, wake up.* The cube naimd Finsternis ternd darker dhan charcole. Out ov the darc cide, dhare stumbeld a blac-haerd gherl. She ran acros the hil-slope too the figgure naimd Ellen. The man-boddy naimd Allan wauz strugling too hiz fete.

The thre ov them stood up.

The voicez spoke too them: "This iz our laast message. U hav dun yor werc. U ar wel. The bote naimd Folly containz tuilz, medicine and the uther eqwipment for a human collony. The giyant naimd Sam wil stand forevver az a monnument too human victory. The cube naimd Finsternis wil nou dizolv. Allan! Ellen! Trete Almaa luvvingly and

wel. She iz nou a forgetty."

The thre naked pepel stood bewilderd in the daun.

"Good-bi and a grate hi thanx from the Instroomentallity. This iz a pre-coded message, efective oonly if u wun. U hav wun. Be happy. Liv on!"

Ellen tooc Almaa--whoo had bene Finsternis--and held her tite. The grate cube dizolvd intoo a shaiples slag-hepe. Allan, whoo had bene Sam, looct up at hiz former boddy domminating the skiline.

For rezonz which the travvelerz did not understand until menny yeerz had paast, the berd-pepel around them broke intoo ululant himz ov pece, welcum and joi.

"Mi hous," ced Ellen, pointing at the littel ship which had spat foerth her boddy just minnuets ago, "iz nou a home for aul ov us."

Dha cliamd intoo the suxesfool littel ship which had bene cauld Folly. Dha nu, sumhou, dhat dha wood fiand cloadhz and foode. And wizdom, too. Dha did.

6

Ten yeerz later, dha had the proofe ov happines playing in the yard befoer dhare hous--a substaanshal bilding, made ov stone and bric, which the local pepel had bilt under Allanz direcshonz. (Dha had chainjd dhare whole tecnollogy in the proces ov lerning from him, and--thanx too the effishency and pouwer ov the telepathhic preestly caast--thhingz lernd at enny wun spot on the plannet wer swiftly

dicemminated too the whole groope ov racez on the plannet.) The prooffe ov

happines concisted ov the thherty-five human children playing in the yard. Ellen had had nine, foer cets ov twinz and a cin'ghel. Almaa had had twelv, too cets ov qwintuplets and a pare ov twinz. The utherr foertene had bene bottel-grone from ovaa and sperm which dha found in the ship, the frosen donaishonz ov complete strain'gerz whoo had dun dhare

bit for the of werld cetling ov the human race. Thanx too the caerfool genetic coding ov boath the woome-children and the bottel-children, dhare wauz a varyiyety ov tiaps, sutabel for natchural breeding over menny generaishonz too cum.

Allan same too the doer. He mezhuerd the time bi the place whare the grate shaddo fel. It wauz hard too reyalise dhat the gigantic, indestructibel statchu which luimd abuv them aul had wuns bene hiz one celf. A smaull glaisher wauz beghinning too form around the fete ov Sam and the nite wauz ghetting coald.

"Ime bringing the children in aulreddy," ced Ch-tickic, wun ov the local nercez dha had hiard too help widh the huge broode ov human babese. She, in retern, got the privvilege ov hatching her egz on the worm shelf behiand the electric stove; she ternd them evvery our, egherly awating the time dhat sharp littel mouths wood brake the shel and human-like littel handz wood tare an opening from which a human-like baby wood emerj, odly-pritty-ugly like a nome, and unnuezhual oonly in dhat it cood stand uprite from the moment ov berth.

Wun littel boi wauz arguwing widh Ch-tickic. He woer a worm robe ov vedgetabel-fiber vainz nitted too cerv az a bace for a fether cloke. He wauz pointing out dhat widh such a robe he cood cervive a blizzard and claming, qwite justly, dhat he did not hav too be in the hous in order too sta worm. Wauz dhat Roopert? thaut Allan.

He wauz about too caul the chiald when hiz too wiavz came too the doer, arm in arm, flusht widh the hete ov the kitchen whare dha had bene cooking the too dinnerz tooghether--wun dinner for the human, nou numbering thherty-cevven, and the uther for the berd-pepel, whoo wer tremendously apreeshative ov ghetting cooct foode, but whoo had od reqwiarments in the rescipese, such az "wun qwort ov fianly ground grannite gravvel too eche gallon ov oatmele, shooggard too taist and cervd widh soibene milc."

Allan stood behiand hiz wiavz and poot a hand on the shoalder ov eche.

"Its hard too thhinc," he ced, "dhat a littel over ten yeez ago, we didnt even no dhat we wer stil pepel. Nou looc at us, a fammily, and a good wun."

Almaa ternd her face up too be kist, and Ellen, whoo wauz les sentimental, lifted her face too be kist too, so dhat her co-wife wood not be embarrast at beying babede cepparaitly. The too liact eche uther verry much. Almaa came out ov the cube Finsternis az a forgetty, condishond too remember nuthhing ov her long sad cicottic life befoer the Instroomentallity had cent her on a wiald mishon among the starz. When she had joind Allan and Ellen, she nu the werdz ov the Oald Common Tung, but verry littel els.

Ellen had had sum time too teche her, too luv her and too muther her befoer enny ov the babese wer born, and the relaishonship betwene the too ov them wauz worm and good.

The thre parents stood acide az the berd-wimmen, waring dhare cumfortabel and pritty fether cloax, herded the children intoo the hous. The smaulest children had aulreddy bene braut in from dhare

sunning and wer beying ghivven dhare bottelz bi berd-gherlz whoo nevver got tiard ov wauching the cuetnes and helplesnes ov the human infant.

"Its hard too thhinc ov dhat time at aul," ced Ellen, whoo had bene "Folly." "I waunted buty and fame and a perfect marrage and nobody even toald me dhat dha just didnt go tooghether. I hav had too cum too the end ov the starz too ghet whaut I waunted, too be whaut I mite becum."

"And me," ced Almaa, whoo had bene "Finsternis," "I had a wers problem. I wauz crasy. I wauz afrade ov life. I didnt no hou too be a person. I didnt even no hou too be a woomman, a sweet'hart, a female, a muther. Hou cood I evver ghes dhat I neded a cister and wife, like the wun u hav bene, too make mi life whole? Widhout u too sho me, Ellen, I cood nevver hav marrede our huzband. I thaut I wauz carreying merder among the starz, but I wauz carreying mi one solueshon az wel. Whare els cood I tern out too be me?"

"And I," ced Allan, whoo had bene "Sam," "became a mettal giyant betwene the starz becauz mi ferst wife wauz ded and mi one children forgot me and neglected me. Nobody can sa Ime not a faather nou. Thherty-five, and moer dhan haaf ov them mine. Ile be moer ov a faather dhan enny uther man ov the human race haz evver bene."

Dhare wauz a chainj in the shaddo az the enormous rite arm swung qwiyetly but hevvely tooword the ski az a prelude too the sharp robottic caul dhat niatfaul, calculated widh astronommical precizhon, had indede cum too the place whare he stood.

The arm reecht its hite, pointing strate up.

"I uest too doo dhat," ced Allan.

The cri came, sumthhing like a cilent pistol-shot which aul ov them

herd, but a shot widhout eccose, widhout reverberaishonz.

Allan looct around. "Aul the children ar in. Even Roopert. Cum in, mi darlingz, and let us hav dinner tooghether." Almaa and Ellen went ahead ov him and he bard the hevvy doerz behiand them.

This wauz pece and happines; dhat at laast wauz goodnes. Dha had no obligaishon but too liv and too be happy. The thret and the prommice ov victory wer far, far behiand.

[End ov Thre Too A Ghivven Star, bi Cordwaner Smith]

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#### PUBLISHERZ NOTE

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

The first cecshon hedding "11" haz bene corected too "9".

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

When Cordwaner Smiths unforgettabel "Scannerz Liv in Vane" first apeerd bac in 1948, the ciyens-ficshon feeld wauz starteld and delited bi the pouwer ov its riting and the originallity ov its

ideyaa--dhat evenchuwaly man mite hav too be mecannicaly "reggulated"  
if  
hiz miand and boddy ar too stand up too the strescez ov space travvel.  
Nou--aulmoast too deccaidz later--Smiths name haz cum too stand for an  
eeqwaly fascinating cerese ov strainjly butifool stoerese about a  
fuchure univers ruild bi the absolute Lordz ov the Instroomentallity.  
Eche ov these wunderfool tailz (thhinc ov "Druncbote" and "Alfaa Ralfaa  
Boolevard") iz marct bi a uneeclly lirrical stile, an indescribabel  
qwaulity dhat iz particcularly strong in "On the Sand Plannet," the nuwest  
eppisode in this long saagaa ov the fuchure. This time Casher ONEle  
reternz too hiz home werld ov Mizser determiand too fre it from tirrorany,  
but befoer long dhat mishon faidz befoer a far moer difficult  
problem--hou too fiand mening in life when he haz acumplisht  
evverithhing he cet out too doo. For Casher ONEle the aancer lise  
sumwhare far beyond the aulmoast inaxescibel rechez ov the Nianth  
Nile--and he must gerny paast landz whare wun must ware iarn  
shoose--becauz the ground iz cuvverd widh volcannic glaas....

*On the Sand Plannet*

Bi CORDWANER SMITH

This iz the stoery ov the sand plannet itcelf, Mizser, which became fre  
ov hope when the tirant Wedder impoazd the rane ov terror and verchu.  
This climaxez the romans ov Casher ONEle, ov whoome strainj thhingz  
wer toald, from the da ov blud in which he fled from hiz native citty

ov Cahere until he came bac too Cahere and ended the shedding ov blud for aul the rest ov hiz yeerz.

Casher had gon too strainj placez meenwhile. He had vizsited Pontoppidan, the gem plannet, and had dhare met the butifool Genneveve. He waunderd strainj paaths. He had gon even too Olimpeyaa whare the bliand brokerz wauct dhare bliand children paast the numberd, sqwaerd cloudz.

He had venchuerd even too the end ov thhingz, too the storm plannet ov Henreyaadaa whare endles tornadose toer across the wauterd swaumps and oonly the domane ov Murra Maddigan stood faast against the ecolodgical and econommic roowin braut about bi the abandonment ov man.

Evverihware dhat Casher had gon he had had oonly wun thaut in hiz miand--deliverans ov hiz home cuntry from the tirants whoome he himself had let slip intoo pouwer when dha had conspiard against hiz unkel, the unspecabel Curaf. He nevver forgot, whether waking or sleping. He nevver forgot Ghibnaa. He nevver forgot Cahere itcelf along the Ferst Nile whare the horcez raist on the terf widh the sand neerbi. He nevver forgot the blu skise ov hiz home and the grate juenz ov the dezsert betwene wun Nile and the utherz. He rememberd the fredom ov a plannet bilt and deddicated too fredom. He nevver forgot dhat the price ov blud iz blud, dhat the price ov fredom iz fiting, dhat the risc ov fiting iz deth. But he wauz not a foole. He wauz willing, if he had too, too risc hiz one deth; but he waunted odz on the battel which wood not meerly snare him home, like a rabbit too be caut in a stele trap, bi the polece ov the dictator Wedder.

And then, tooword the end ov hiz wa throo life, he had met the solueshon ov hiz croosade widhout nowing it at ferst. He had cum too the end ov aul thhingz, aul problemz, aul wurrese. He had aulso cum too the end ov aul ordinary hope. He met Truth. Truth looct like a

littel gherl but she wauz aulmoast a thouzand yeez oald. Truth looct dainty, female, plezzant, imachure, alert, inqwizsitive; she had bene imprinted widh the personallity ov the ded Aggathaa Maddigan: the ded Aggathaa Maddigan had bene the gratest hipnotist and strattegist ov them aul and had ernd the friatfool name ov the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon, from the battel faut at dhat place: dhat place wauz the oanly locaishon in aul space whare a foolly armd flete fled from fantomz which poerd out ov the miand ov a cin'ghel rezzolute woomman: dhat place wauz duimd: nou this qwaulity ov doome belongd too Casher ONele, too doo widh az he pleezd.

It pleezd him too retern too Mizser, too enter Cahere itcelf, and too confrunt Wedder.

Whi shood he not cum? It wauz hiz home and he thhersted for revenj. Moer dhan revenj he hun'gherd for justice. He had livd menny yeez for this our and this our came.

He enterd the north gate ov Cahere.

I

Casher wauct intoo Mizser waring the uniform ov a meddical tecnishan in Wedderz one military cervice. He had ashuemd the aperans and the name ov a ded man naimd Bindaa'oodo. Casher wauct widh nuthing moer dhan hiz handz az wepponz, and hiz handz swung frely at the end ov hiz armz. Oanly the stedfaastnes ov hiz fete, the rezzolute grace widh which he tooc eche step, betrade hiz perpoce. The croudz in the strete sau him paas but dha did not ce him. Dha looct at a man,

and dha did not reyalise dhat dha sau dhare one history gowing step bi step throo dhare vareyouz streets. Within moments aafter Casher ONEle had enterd the citty ov Cahere he nu dhat he wauz beying follode. He cood fele it.

He glaanst around.

He had lernd in hiz menny yeerz ov fiting and strugghel, on strainj plannets, countles ruilz ov unrememberd hazzardz. Too be alert, he nu whaut this wauz. It wauz a suikhisaakhy. The suikhisaakhy at the moment had taken the shape ov a smaul witles boi, sum ate yeerz oald, whoo had too trailz ov staind mucus poering down from hiz nostrilz, whoo had forevver-open lips reddy too caul widh the harsh barc ov iddeyocy, whoo had ise dhat did not focus rite. Casher ONEle nu dhat this wauz a boi and not a boi. It wauz a hunting and cerching device often emploid bi polece lordz when dha prezhuemd too make themcelvz intoo kingz or tirants, a device which flitted from shape too shape, from chiald too butterfli or berd, which muivd widh the suikhisaakhy and waucht the victim; wauching, saying nuthhing, following. He hated the suikhisaakhy and wauz tempted too thro aul the pouwerz ov hiz strainj miand at it so dhat the boi mite di and the mashene hidden within it mite perrish. But he nu dhat this wood lede too a cascade ov fire and splashing ov blud. He had aulreddy cene blud in Cahere long ago; he had no wish too ce it in the citty agane.

Insted he stopt the deliberbate pacing widh which he had follode hiz cadenst wauc throo the strete. He ternd caamly and kiandly and looct at the boi, and he ced too the boi and too the hidjous mashene within the boi, "Cum along widh me. Ime gowing straitwa too the pallace and u wood like too ce dhat."

The mashene, confrunted, had no ferther chois.

The iddeyot boi poot hiz hand in Casherz hand, and sumhou or uther Casher ONele mannaijd too rezhume the roling delibberate march which had

marct so menny ov hiz yeerz while keping a grip on the hand ov the demented chiald whoo skipt beside him. Casher cood stil fele the mashene wauching him from within the ise ov the boi. He did not care; he wauz not afrade ov gunz; he cood stop them. He wauz not afrade ov poizon; he cood resist it. He wauz not afrade ov hipnotizm; he cood take it in and spit it bac. He wauz not afrade ov fere; he had bene on Henreyaadaa. He had cum home throo space-thre. Dhare wauz nuthhing left too fere.

Straitwa he went too the pallace. The midda gleemd in the brite yello sun which rode the skise ov Cahere. The whiatwausht waulz in the arabesc desine stade az dha had bene for thousandz ov yeerz. Oonly at the doer wauz he challenjd and the centry hezsitated becauz Casher ced, "I am Bindaa'ood, loiyal cervant too Cuunel Wedder, and this iz a chiald ov the streets whoome I propose too hele in order too sho our good Cuunel Wedder a fare demonstraishon ov mi pouwerz."

The centry ced sumthhing intoo a littel box which sat in the waul.

Casher paast frely. The suikhisaakhy trotted beside him. Az he went throo the corridorz, lade widh rich rugz, millitary and civilleyanz mooving bac and foerth, he felt happy. This wauz not the pallace ov Wedder dho Wedder livd in it. It wauz hiz one pallace. He, Casher, had bene born in it. He nu it. He nu evvery corridor.

The chain'gez ov the yeerz wer verry fu. Casher ternd too hiz left intoo an open coertyard. He smeld the smel ov sault wauter and the sand and the horcez neerbi. He cide a littel at the famileyarrity ov it, the good welcum and the kiand welcum. He ternd rite agane and acended long long staerz. Eche step wauz carpeted in a different desine.

Here hiz unkel Curaf had stood at the hed ov these verry staerz while men and wimmen, boiz and gherlz wer braut too him too becum toiz ov hiz

evil plezhuerz. Curaf had bene too fat too wauc doun these staerz too grete them. He aulwase let the captiavz cum up too himcelf and too hiz den ov plezhuerz. Casher reecht the top ov the staerz and ternd left.

This wauz no den ov plezhuerz nou.

It wauz the office ov Cuunel Wedder. He, Casher, had reecht it.

Hou strainj it wauz too reche this office, this targhet ov aul hiz hoaps, this wun feverd pinpoint in aul the univers for which hiz revenj had thhersted until he thaut himcelf mad. He had thaut ov bombing this office from outer space, or ov cutting it widh a thhin arc ov a laser beme, or ov poizoning it widh kemmicalz, ov asaulting it widh truipts. He had thaut ov poering fire on this bilding, or wauter. He had dreemd ov making Mizser fre even at the price ov the luvly citty ov Cahere itcelf and ov fianding a smaull asteroid sumwhare and crashing it in an interplannetary tradgedy directly intoo the citty itcelf so dhat the citty, under the roer ov dhat impact, wood hav blaizd intoo thhermonuecleyar incandescens and wood hav becum a poizon lake at the end ov the Twelv Nialz. He had thaut ov a thousand wase ov entering the citty and ov destroyng the citty, meerly in order too destroi Wedder.

Nou he wauz here. So too wauz Wedder.

Wedder did not no dhat he, Casher ONele, had cum bac.

Even les did Wedder no whoo Casher ONele had becum, the maaster ov space, the travveler whoo travveld widhout ships, the veyikel for devicez strain'ger dhan enny miand on Mizser had evver conceevd.

Verry caam, verry relaxt, verry qwiyet, verry ashuerd the doome which wauz

Casher ONEle wauct intoo the antechamber ov Wedder. Verry modestly he  
aasct for Wedder.

The dictator happend too be fre. He had chainjd littel cins Casher laast sau him, a littel oalder, a littel fatter, a littel wiser--aul these perhaps. Casher wauz not shure. Evvery cel and fillament in hiz livving boddy had rizsen too the alert. He wauz reddy too doo the werc for which the lite-yeerz had aict, for which the werldz had ternd, and he nu dhat within an instant it wood be dun. He confrunted Wedder, gave Wedder a modest, ashuerd smile.

"Yor cervant, the tecnishan Bindaa'oodo, cer and cuunel," ced Casher ONEle. Wedder looct at him strainjly. He reecht out hiz hand, and, even az dhare handz tucht, Wedder ced the laast werdz he wood evver sa on hiz one.

Within dhat handclaasp, Wedder spoke agane and hiz vois wauz strainj:  
"Whoo ar u?"

Casher had dreemd dhat he wood sa, "I am Casher ONEle cum bac from unnimadginabel distancez too punnish u," or dhat he wood sa, "I am Casher ONEle and I hav ridden starlainz for yeerz uppon yeerz too fiand yor destrucshon." Or he had even thaut dhat he mite sa, "Surender or di, Wedder; yor time haz cum." Sumtiamz he had dreemd he wood sa, "Here, Wedder," and then sho him the nife widh which too take hiz blud.

Yet this wauz the climax and nun ov these thhingz okerd.

The iddeyot boi widh the mashene within it stood at ese.

Casher ONEle meerly held Wedderz hand and ced qwite cimply, "Yor frend."

Az he ced dhat, he cercht bac and foerth. He cood fele inner ise within hiz one hed, ise which did not moove within the sockets ov hiz face, ise which he did not hav and widh which he cood nevvertheles ce. These wer the ise ov hiz percepshon. Qwicly he ajusted the anatomy ov Wedder, werking kinesthetticaly, sqwesing an artery dhare, pinching of a gland here. Here harden the tishu, throo which the cecreeshonz ov a ghivven endocrine matereyal had too cum. In les time dhan it wood take an ordinary doctor too describe the proces, he had chainjd Wedder. Wedder had bene chuend doun like a rajo widh diyalz reyaliand, like a space ship widh its locsheets recet.

The werc which Casher had dun wauz les dhan enny pilot duz in the coers ov an ordinary landing, but the piloting he had dun wauz within the biyokemmical cistem ov Wedder itself. And the chain'gez which he had efected wer irrevercibel.

The nu Wedder wauz the oald Wedder. The same miand. The same wil, the same personallity. Yet its permutaishonz wer different. And its method ov expreshon aulreddy sliatly different. Moer benine. Moer tollerant. Moer caam, moer human. Even a littel corrupt az he smiald and ced, "I remember u, nou, Bindaa'ood. Can u help dhat boi?"

The suposed Bindaa'ood ran hiz handz over the boi. The boi wept widh pane and shoc for a moment. He wiapt hiz derty nose and upper lip on hiz sleevz. Hiz ise came intoo focus. Hiz lips comprest. Hiz miand bernd briatly az its oald woern channelz became human insted ov iddeyot. The suikhisaakhy mashene nu it wauz out ov place and fled for anuther reffuge. The boi, ghivven hiz brainz but no werdz, no ejucaishon yet,

stood dhare and hiccuped with joy.

Wedder ceded very pleasantly, "Dhat iz remarcabel. Iz it aul dhat u hav too sho me?"

"Aul," ceded Casher ONEle; "u wer not he."

He turned hiz bac on Wedder and did so in perfect saifty.

He nu Wedder wood nevver kil anuther man.

Casher stopt at the doer and looct bac. He cood tel from the poschure ov Wedder dhat dhat which had too be dun had bene dun. Dhat the chain'gez within the man wer larger dhan the man himcelf. Dhat the plannet wauz fre and dhat hiz one werc wauz indede dun. The suddenly fritend chiald which had lost the suikhisaakhy follode him out ov bliand instinct.

The cuunelz and the staaf officerz did not no whether too salute or nod when dha sau dhare chefe stand at the doerwa and wave with unexpected frendlines at Casher ONEle az Casher decended the braud carpeted steps, the chiald stumbling behiand him. At the ferther steps, Casher looct wun laast time at the ennemy whoo had becum aulmoast a part ov himcelf. Dhare stood Wedder, the man ov blud. And nou he himcelf, Casher ONEle, had expunjd the blud, and had redun the paast, had reshaupt the fuchure. Aul Mizser wauz hedding bac too the openes and fredom which he had enjoid in the time ov the oald Republic ov the Twelv Nialz. He wauct on, shifting from wun corridor too the uther and using short cuts too the coertyardz, until he came too the doerwa too the pallace. The centry presented armz.

"At ese," ceded Casher. The man poot down hiz gun.

Casher stood outside the pallace, dhat pallace which had bene hiz unkelz, which had bene hiz one, which had reyaly bene himcelf. He looct at the clere are ov Mizser. He looct at the clere blu skise which he had aulwase luvd. He looct at the werld too which he had prommiast he wood retern, widh justice, widh venjans, widh thunder, widh pouwer. Thanx too the strainj and suttel capascitese which he had lernd from the tertel-gherl, Truith, hidden in her one werld amid the storm-chernd atmosfere ov Henreyaadaa, he had not neded too fite.

Casher ternd too the boi and ced, "I am a soerd which haz bene poot intoo its scabbard. I am a pistol widh the cartrigez dropt out. I am a wiarpoint widh no battery behiand it. I am a man but I am verry empty."

The boi made stran'gheld, confuezd soundz az dho he wer trying too thhinc, too becum himcelf, too make up for aul the lost time he had spent in iddeyocy.

Casher acted on impuls. Cureyously, he gave too the boi hiz one native speche ov Cahere. He felt hiz muscelz go tite, shoalderz, nec, fin'ghertips, az he concentrated widh the arts he had lernd in the pallace ov Boaregard whare the gherl Truith guvvernd aulmoast-forevver in the naimz ov Mister and Oner Murra Maddigan. He tooc the arts and memmorese he saut. He ceezd the boi rufly but tiatly bi the shoalderz. He peerd intoo fritend, criying ise, and then in a cin'ghel blaast ov thaut he gave the boi speche, werdz, memmory, ambishon, skilz. The boi stood dhare daizd.

At laast the boi spoke and he ced, "Whoo am I?"

Casher cood not aancer dhat wun. He patted the chiald on the shoalder. He ced, "Go bac too the citty and fiand out. I hav uther needz. I hav too fiand out whoo I micelf ma be. Goodbi and pece be widh u."

Casher rememberd dhat hiz muther stil livd here. He had often forgotten her. It wood hav bene eseyer too forghet her. Her name wauz Trihape and it wauz she whoo had bene cister too Curaf. Whare Curaf had bene vishous, she had bene verchuwous. Whare Curaf had sumtiamz bene graitfool, she had bene thrifty and shifty. Whare Curaf widh aul hiz evilz had aqwiard a toleraishon for men and thhingz and ideyaaz, she remaind cet in the pattern ov thaut which her parents had long ago taut her.

Casher ONEle did sumthhing he thaut he wood nevver doo. He had nevver reyaly even thaut about doowing it. It wauz too cimpel. He went home.

At the gate ov the hous, hiz mutherz oald cervant nu him despite the chainj in hiz face, and she ced, widh a terribel au in her vois, "It ceemz too me dhat I am loocking at Casher ONEle."

"I use the name, Bindaa'oodo," ced Casher, "but I am Casher ONEle. Let me in and tel mi muther dhat I am here."

He went intoo the private apartment ov hiz muther. The oald fernichure wauz stil dhare. The pollisht briccabrac ov a hundred agez, the oald paintingz and the oald mirrorz, and the ded pepel whoome he had nevver none, represented bi dhare picchuerz and dhare momentose. He felt just az il at ese az he felt when he wauz a smaul boi when he had vizsited the same roome, befoer hiz unkel came too take him too the pallace.

Hiz muther came in. She had not chainjd.

He haaf-thaut dhat she wood reche out her armz too him and cri in a delibberaitly moddern pashon, "Mi baby! Mi preshous! Cum bac too me!"

She did no such thhing. She looct at him coaldly az dho he wer a complete strain'ger.

She ced too him, "U doant looc like mi sun, but I supose dhat u ar. U hav made trubbel enuf in yor time. Ar u making trubbel nou?"

"I make no malishous trubbel, Muther, and I nevver hav," ced Casher, "no matter whaut u ma thhinc ov me. I did whaut I had too doo. I did whaut wauz rite."

"Betraying yor unkel wauz rite? Letting down our fammily wauz rite? Disgracing us aul wauz rite? U must be a foole too tauc like this. I herd dhat u wer a waunderer, dhat u had grate advenchuerz, and had cene menny werldz. U doant sound enny different too me. Yor an oald man. U aulmoast ceme az oald az I doo. I had a baby wuns, but hou cood dhat be u? U ar an ennemy ov the hous ov Curaf ONele. Yor wun ov the pepel whoo braut it down in blud. But dha came from outcide widh dhare principelz and dhare thauts and dhare dreemz ov pouwer. And u stole from incide like a ker. U opend the doer and u let in roowin. Whoo ar u dhat I shood forghiv u?"

"I doo not aasc yor forghivnes, Muther," ced Casher. "I doo not even aasc yor understanding. I hav uther placez too go and uther thhingz yet too doo. Ma pece be uppon u."

She staerd at him, ced nuthhing:

He went on: "U wil fiand Mizser a plezzanter place too liv in cins I tauct too Wedder this morning."

"U tauct too Wedder?" cride she, "and he did not kil u?"

"He did not no me."

"Wedder did not no u?"

"I ashure u, muther, he did not no me."

"U must be a verry pouwerfool man, mi sun. Perhaps u can repara the forchune ov the hous ov Curaf ONele aafter aul the harm u hav dun and aul the hartbrake u braut too mi bruther. I supose u no yor wiafs ded?"

"I had herd dhat," ced Casher. "I hope she dide instantly in an axident and widhout pane."

"Ov coers it wauz an axident. Hou els doo pepel di these dase? She and her huzband tride out wun ov dhose nu boats, and it overternd."

"Ime sorry. I wauznt dhare."

"I no dhat. I no dhat perfectly wel, mi sun. U wer outside dhare so dhat I had too looc up at the starz widh fere. I cood looc up in the ski and stare for the man whoo wauz mi sun lerking up dhare widh blud and roowin. Widh venjans uppon venjans heept uppon aul ov us, just becauz he thaut he nu whaut wauz rite. Ive bene afrade ov u for a long long time, and I thaut if I evver met u agane I wood fere u widh mi whole hart. U doant qwite ceme too be whaut I expected, Casher. Perhaps I can like u. Perhaps I can even luv u az a muther shood. Not dhat it matterz. U and I ar too oald nou."

"Ime not werking on dhat kiand ov mishon enny lon'gher, muther. I hav bene in this oald roome long enuf, and I wish u wel. But I wish

menny uther pepel wel, too. I hav dun whaut I had too doo. Perhaps I had better sa goodbi nou and much later perhaps, I wil cum bac and ce u agane, when boath ov us no moer about whaut we hav too doo."

"Doant u even waunt too ce yor dauter?"

"Dauter?" ced Casher ONele. "Doo I hav a dauter?"

"O, poor foole, u. Didnt u even fiand dhat out aafter u left? She boer yor chiald, aul rite. She even went throo the oald-fashond biznes ov a natchural berth. The chiald even loox sumthhing like the wa u uest too looc. Matter ov fact, shese raather arrogant, like u. U can caul on her if u waunt too. She livz in the hous which iz just outcide the sqware in Goalden Laut in the lether werkerz areyaa, and her huzbandz name iz Aaly Aaly. Looc her up if u waunt too."

She extended a hand. Casher tooc the hand az dho she had bene a qwene. And he kist the coole fin'gherz. Az he looct her in the face, here too he braut hiz skilz from Henreyaadaa in place. He cervade and felt her personallity az dho he wer a cerjon ov the sole, but in this cace dhare wauz nuthhing for him too doo. This wauz not a dinammic personallity strugling and fiting and mooving against the foercez ov life and hope and disapointment. This wauz sumthhing els, a person cet in life, imobile, determiand, ridgid even for a man widh hiz one heling arts whoo cood destroi a flete widh hiz thauts or whoo cood bring an iddeyot too normallity bi mere comaand. He cood ce dhat this wauz a cace beyond hiz pouwerz.

He patted the oald hand frendlily and she smiald wormly at him, not nowing whaut it ment. "If enniwun aasx," ced Casher, "the name I hav bene using iz dhat ov the Doctor Bindaa'ood. Bindaa'ood the tecnishan. Can u remember dhat, muther?"

"Bindaa'oodo the tecnishan," she eccode, az she let him out the doer too wauc in the strete.

Within twenty minnuets he wauz nocking at hiz dauterz doer.

3

The dauter hercelf aancerd the doer. She flung it open. She looct at the strainj man, cervade him from hed too heelz.

She noted the meddical incignyaa on hiz uniform. She noted hiz marc ov ranc. She apraizd him shruidly, qwicly, and she nu he had no biznes dhare in the qworterz ov the lether werkerz.

"Whoo ar u?" she sang out, qwicly and cleerly.

"In these ourz and at this time I paas under the name ov the expert Bindaa'oodo, a tecnishan and meddical man bac from the speshal foercez ov

Cuunel Wedder. Ime just on leve, u ce, but sumtime later, maddam, u mite fiand out whoo I reyaly am, and I thaut u better here it from mi lips. Ime yor faather."

She did not moove. The cignifficant thhing iz dhat she did not moove at aul. Casher studdede her and cood ce the caast ov hiz one boanz in the shape ov her face, cood ce the length ov hiz one fin'gherz repeted in her handz. He had cenzst dhat the stormz ov juty which had blone him from sorro too sorro, the wind ov conskens which had kept alive hiz dreemz ov venjans, had ternd intoo sumthhing verry different in her. It, too, wauz a foers but not the kiand ov foers he understood.

"I hav children nou and I wood just az soone u not mete them. Az a matter ov fact, u hav nevver dun me a good dede exept too beghet me. U hav nevver dun me an il dede exept too thretten mi life from beyond the starz. I am tiard ov u and I am tiard ov evverithhing u wer or mite hav bene. Lets forghet it. Caant u go yor wa and let me be? I ma be yor dauter, but I caant help dhat."

"Az u wish, maddam. I hav had menny advenchuerz and I doo not propose too tel them too u. I can ce qwicly enuf dhat u hav whaut iz cemingly a good life, and I hope dhat mi deedz this morning in the pallace wil hav made it better. Ule fiand out soone enuf. Goodbi."

The doer cloazd uppon him and he wauct bac throo the sun-drencht market ov the lether werkerz. Dhare wer goalden hiadz dhare. Hiadz ov annimalz which had then bene artfooly en'graivd widh verry fine strips ov beten goald so dhat dha gleemd in the sunlite. Casher looct upword and around.

"Whare doo I go nou?" thaut he. "Whare doo I go when Ive dun evverithhing I had too doo? When Ive luvd evveriwun I hav waunted too luv, when I hav bene evverithhing I hav had too be? Whaut duz a man widh a mishon doo when the mishon iz foolfild? Whoo can be moer hollo dhan a victor? If I had lost, I cood stil waunt revenj. But I havnt. Ive wun. And Ive wun nuthhing. Ive waunted nuthhing for micelf from this dere citty. I waunt nuthhing from this dere werld. Its not in mi pouwer too ghiv it or too take it. Whare doo I go when I hav noawhare too go? Whaut doo I becum when I am not reddy for deth and I hav no rezon whautsoweever for life?"

Dhare sprang intoo hiz miand the memmory ov the werld ov Henreyaadaa widh the twisting snaix ov the littel tornadose. He cood ce the slender,

pale, husht face ov the gherl Truth, and he rememberd at laast dhat which it wauz which she had held in her hand. It wauz the madgic. It wauz

the ceecret cine ov the oald, strong relidjon. Dhare wauz the man forevver diying naild too too pecez ov wood. It wauz the mistery behiand the civilizaishon ov aul these starz. It wauz the thril ov the Ferst Forbidden Wun, the Cecond Forbidden Wun, the Thherd Forbidden Wun. It

wauz the mistery on which the robot, rat, and Copt agrede when dha came bac from space-thre. He nu whaut he had too doo.

He cood not fiand himcelf becauz dhare wauz no himcelf too be found. He wauz a uezd toole. A discarded vescel. He wauz a shard tost on the roowinz ov time, and yet he wauz a man widh ise and brainz too thhinc and widh menny unnacustomd pouwerz.

He reecht intoo the ski widh hiz miand caulng for a public flying mashene. "Cum and ghet me," he ced, and the grate wingd berdlike mashene came soering over the ruiftops and dropt gently intoo the sunlit sqware.

"I thaut I herd u caul, cer."

Casher reecht intoo hiz pocket and tooc out hiz imadginary paas ciand bi Wedder, authorising him too use aul the veyikelz ov the republic in the ceecret cervice ov the rajeme ov Cuunel Wedder. The sarjant reccogniazd the paas and aulmoast popt out hiz ise in respect.

"The Nianth Nile, can u reche it widh this mashene?"

"Esily," ced the sarjant. "But u better ghet sum shoose ferst. Iarn shoose becauz the ground dhare iz moastly volcannic glaas."

"Wate here," ced Casher. "Whare can I ghet the shoose?"

"Too streets over and better ghet too wauter bottelz, too."

4

Within a matter ov minnuets he wauz bac. The sarjant waucht him fil the bottelz in the fountane. He looct at hiz meddical incignyaa widhout dout and shode him hou too cit on the crampt emergency cete incide the grate mashene berd. Dha snapt dhare cete belts and the sarjant ced, "Reddy?" and the ornithopter spred out its wingz, and the mashene-berd poosht its pouwerfool legz, launcht itcelf intoo the are.

The huge wingz wer like oerz digghing intoo a big ce. Dha rose rappidly and soone Cahere wauz belo them, the fradgile minarets and the white sand widh the racing terf along the rivver, and the grene feeldz, and even widh pirramidz coppedede from sumthhing on Ainshent Erth.

The opperator did sumthhing, and the mashene flu harder. The wingz, auldho far slower dhan enny get aercraft, wer stedly, and dha muivd widh respectabel spede acros the braud dri dezsert. Casher stil woer hiz descimal wauch from Henreyaadaa, and it wauz too whole descimal ourz

befoer the sarjant ternd around, pincht him gently awake from the drouz intoo which he had faulen, shouted sumthhing and pointed down. A strip ov cilver macht bi too strips ov grene waundering throo a wildernes ov blac, gleming glittering blac, widh the baje sandz ov the evverlaasting dezsert stretching evveriwhare in the distans.

"The Nianth Nile?" shouted Casher. The sarjant smiald the smile ov a man whoo had herd nuthhing but waunted too be agreyabel, and the

ornithopter diavd widh a lerching sudden'nes tooword the twist in the rivver. A fu bildingz became vizsibel. Dha wer moddest and smaul. Verandaaz, perhaps, for the uce ov a vizsitor. Nuthhing moer.

It wauz not the sarjants biznes too qwery enniwun on ceecret orderz from Cuunel Wedder. He shode the crampt Casher ONele hou too ghet out ov the ornithopter, and then, standing in hiz cete, saluted, and ced, "Ennithhing els, cer?"

Casher ced, "No. Ile make mi one wa. If dha aasc u whoo I wauz, I am the Doctor Bindaa'oodo, and u hav left me here under orderz."

"Rite, cer," ced the sarjant, and the grate mashene reecht out its gleeming wingz, flapt, spirald, cliamd, became a dot, and vannisht.

Casher stood dhare alone. Utterly alone. For menny yeerz he had bene supoerted bi a cens ov perpoce, bi a drive too doo sumthhing. Nou the driavz and the perpoce wer gon, and hiz life wauz gon. The uce ov hiz fuchure wauz gon, and he had nuthhing. Aul he had wauz the ultimate ov pouwer, axes too enny woomman he mite wish, welth beyond the normal imaginaishon, helth, and grate skilz. These wer not whaut he waunted. He waunted the liberaishon ov aul Mizser. But he had gotten dhat, so whaut wauz it? He aulmoast stumbeld toowordz wun ov the neerbi bildingz.

A vois spoke up. A woommanz vois. The frendly vois ov an oald woomman.

Verry unexpectedly, she ced, "Ive bene wating for u, Casher, cum on in."

He staerd at her. "Ive cene u," he ced. "Ive cene u sumwhare. I no u wel. Uve afected mi fate. U did sumthhing too me and yet I doant no whoo u ar. Hou cood u be here too mete me when I didnt no I wauz cumming?"

"Evverithhing in its time," ced the woomman. "Widh a time for evverithhing and whaut u nede nou iz rest. Ime Dalmaa, the dog-woomman from Pontoppidan. The wun whoo wausht the dishez."

"Her," cride he.

"Me," she ced.

"But u--but u--hou did u ghet here?"

"I got here," she ced. "Iznt dhat obveyous?"

"Whoo cent u?"

"Yor part ov the wa too the truith," she ced. "U mite az wel here a littel moer ov it. I wauz cent here bi a lord whoose name I wil nevver menshon. A lord ov the underpepel. Acting from erth. He cent out anuther dog-woomman too take mi place. And he had me shipt here az cimpel baggage. I werct in the hospital whare u recuvverd, and I red yor miand az u got wel. I nu whaut u wood doo too Wedder, and I wauz pritty shure dhat u wood cum up here too the Nianth Nile, becauz dhat iz the rode dhat aul cercherz must take."

"Doo u mene," he ced, "dhat u no the rode too--" He hezsitated and

then plunjd intoo hiz qweschon, "the Holy ov Unholese, the Thherteenth Nile?"

"I doant ce dhat it meenz ennithhing, Casher. Exept dhat ude better take of dhose iarn shoose; u doant nede them yet. Ude better cum in here. Cum on in."

He poosht the beded kertainz acide and enterd the bun'galo. It wauz a cimpel frunteyer ofishal dwelling. Dhare wer cots hither and yon, a roome too the rere which obveyously ceemd too be herz, a dining roome too the rite and paperz, a vuwing mashene, cardz and gaimz on the tabel. The roome itcelf wauz astonnishingly coole.

She ced, "Casher, uve got too relax. And dhat iz the hardest ov aul thhingz too doo. Too relax, when u had a mishon for menny menny yeerz."

"I no it," ced he. "I no it. But nowing it and doowing it arnt the same thhingz."

"Nou u can doo it," ced DAlmaa.

"Doo whaut?" he snapt.

"Relax, az we wer tauking about. Aul u hav too doo here iz too hav sum good meelz. Just slepe a fu tiamz; swim in the rivver if u waunt too. I hav cent evveriwun awa exept micelf, and u and I shal hav this hous. And I am an oald woomman, not even a human beying. Yor a man, a troo man, whoose conkerd a thousand werldz. And whoo haz finaly triyumft over Wedder. I thhinc weeyl ghet along. And when yor reddy for the trip, Ile take u."

The dase did paas az she ced dha wood. Widh incistent but ferm kiandnes she made him pla gaimz widh her. Cimpel, chialdish gaimz widh

dice and cardz. Wuns or twice he tride too hipnotise her. Too thro the dice hiz one wa. He chainjd the cardz in her hand. He found dhat she had verry littel telepathhic ofencive pouwer, but dhat her defencez wer superb. She smiald at him whenever she caut him playing trix. And hiz trix faild.

Widh this kiand ov atmosfere he reyaly began too relax. She wauz the woomman whoo had speld happines for him on Pontoppidan when he didnt no whaut happines wauz. When he had abandond the luvly Genneveve too go on widh hiz qwest for venjans.

Wuns he ced too her, "Iz dhat oald hors stil alive?"

"Ov coers he iz," she ced. "Dhat hors wil probbably outliv u and me. He thhinx hese on Mizser bi galloping around a patrole capshule. Cum on bac; its yor tern too pla."

He poot doun the cardz and sloly the pece, the cimpliscity, the reyashuring, cilly, caam sweetnes ov it aul stole over him, and he began too perceve the nachure ov her thherry. It wauz too doo nuthhing but slo him doun. He wauz too mete himcelf agane.

It ma hav bene the tenth da, perhaps it wauz the forteenth, dhat he ced too her, "When doo we go?"

She ced, "Ive bene wating for dhat qweschon and were reddy nou. We go."

"When?"

"Rite nou. Poot on yor shoose. U woant nede them verry much," she

ced, "But u mite nede them whare we land. I am taking u dhare part wa."

Within a fu minnuets, dha went out intoo the yard. The rivver in which he had swum la belo. A shed which he did not remember havving notiast befoer la at the far end ov the yard. She did sumthing too the doer, remooving a loc, and the doer flung open. And she poold out a skelletoniazd ornithopter motor, wingz, tailz. The boddy wauz just a bracket ov mettal. The soers ov pouwer wauz az uezhuwal an ultraminnichuriazd, nuecleyar-pouwerd battery. Insted ov ceets, dhare wer too tiny saddelz, like the saddelz uezd on the bicikelz ov oald, oald Erth which he had cene in museyumz.

"U can fli dhat?" he ced.

"Ov coers I can fli it. Its better dhan gowing 200 mialz over broken glaas. We ar leving civilizaishon nou. We ar leving civilizaishon, Casher. We ar leving evverithhing dhat wauz on enny map. We ar flying directly too the Thherteenth Nile, az u wel nu it shood be dhat."

"I nu dhat," he ced. "I nevver expected too reche it so soone. Duz this hav ennithhing too doo widh dhat Cine ov the Fish u wer tauking about?"

"Evverithhing, Casher. Evverithhing. But evverithhing in its place. Clime in behiand me." He sat on top ov the ornithopter, and this wun ran down the yard on its taul, graisfool mecannical legz befoer the flaps ov its wingz poot it in the are. She wauz a better pilot dhan the sarjant had bene; she soerd moer and bete the wingz les. She flu over cuntry dhat he, a native ov Mizser, had nevver dreemd about.

Dha came too a citty gaudy in cullor. He cood ce larj fiarz berning alongcide the rivver, and brite painted pepel widh dhare handz lifted in prare. He sau tempelz and strainj godz in them. He sau markets

widh goodz, which he nevver thaut too ce marketed.

She poot the ornithopter doun; and az dha cliamd out ov the saddelz, it lifted itcelf intoo the are and flu bac, in the direcshon from whens dha had cum. "U ar staying widh me?" ced Casher.

"Ov coers I am. I wauz cent too be widh u."

"Whaut for?"

"U ar important too the werldz, Casher, too aul the werldz. Not just Mizser. In the authorrity ov the frendz I hav, dha hav cent me here too help u."

"But whaut doo u ghet out ov it?"

"I ghet nuthing, Casher. I fiand mi one destrucshon, perhaps, but I wil axept dhat. Even the los ov mi one hope if it oonly muivz u ferther on on yor voiyage."

"Whaut iz this?" he ced.

"This? Havnt u herd ov it? This iz the Citty ov Hoaples Hope. Lets go throo."

6

Dha wauct throo the strainj streets. Aulmoast evveriwun in the streets ceemd too be en'gaijd in the practice ov relidjon. The stench ov the barning ded wauz aul around them. Tallizmanz, luc charmz, and funeral suplise wer in universal abundans.

Casher ced, speking raather qwiyetly too Dalmaa, "I nevver nu dhare wauz ennithhing like this on enny civviliazd plannet."

"Obveyously," she replide, "dhare must be menny pepel whoo beleve in wurry about deth; dhare ar menny whoo doo no about this place. Utherwise dhare wood not be the throngz here. These ar the pepel whoo hav the rong hope and whoo go too no place at aul, whoo fiand under this erth and under the starz dhare final foolfilment. These ar the wunz whoo ar so shure dhat dha ar rite dhat dha nevver wil be rite. We must paas throo them qwicly, Casher, lest we, too, start beleving."

No wun impeded dhare passage in the streets, auldho menny pepel pauzd too ce dhat a soalger, even a meddical soalger, in uniform, had the audascity too cum dhare.

Dha wer even moer cerpriazd dhat an oald hospital atendant, whoo ceemd too be an of-werld dog, wauct along becide him.

"We cros the brij nou, Casher, and this brij iz the moast terribel thhing Ive evver cene; wharaz nou we ar gowing too cum too Jwindz, and the Jwindz opose u and me and everithhing u stand for."

"Whoo ar the Jwindz?" ced Casher.

"The Jwindz ar the perfect wunz. Dha ar perfect in this erth. U wil ce soone enuf."

Az dha crost the brij a taul, bliadh, polece ofishal clad in a nete blac uniform stept up too them and ced, "Go bac. Pepel from yor citty ar not welcum here."

"We ar not from dhat citty," ced Dalmaa. "We ar travvelerz."

"Whare ar u bound?" ced the polece ofishal.

"We ar bound for the soers ov the Thherteenth Nile."

"Nobody gose dhare," ced the gard.

"We ar gowing dhare," ced Dalmaa.

"Bi whaut authorrity?"

Casher reecht intoo hiz pocket and tooc out a genuwine card. He had remade wun, from the memmorese he had retaind in hiz miand. It wauz an aul-werld paas, authoriazd bi the Instroomentality.

The polece ofishal looct at it and hiz ise widend.

"Cer and maaster, I thaut u wer meerly wun ov Wedderz men. U must be sumwun ov grate importans. I wil notifi the scollarz in the Haul ov Larning at the middel ov the citty. Dha wil waunt too ce u. Wate here. A veyikel wil cum."

Dalmaa and Casher ONEle did not hav long too wate. She ced nuthhing at aul in this time. Her are ov good humor and competens ebd perceptibly. She wauz distrest bi the clenlines and perfecshon around her, bi the cilens, bi the dignity ov the pepel.

When the veyikel came, it had a driver, az corect, az smuidh, and az kerchous az the gard at the brij. He opend the doer and waivd them in. Dha cliamd in and dha sped noizlesly throo wel-gruimd streets. Housez, eche wun in immaculate taist. Trese plaanted the wa the trese shood be plaanted.

In the sqware in the center ov the citty dha stopt. The driver got out, wauct around the veyikel, opend dhare doer.

He pointed at the archwa ov the larj bilding, and he ced, "Dha ar expecting u."

Casher and Dalmaa wauct up the steps reluctantly. She wauz reluctant becauz she had sum cens ov whaut this place wauz, a speshal dwelling for qwiyet doome and arrogant finallity. He wauz reluctant becauz he cood fele dhat in evvery bone ov her boddy she resented this place. And he resented it, too.

Dha wer led throo the archwa and acros a patteyo too a larj, ellegant conferens roome.

Within the roome a cercular tabel had aulreddy bene cet in preparaishon for a mele.

Ten handsum men rose too grete them.

The ferst wun ced, "U ar Casher ONele. U ar the waunderer. U ar the man deddicated too this plannet, and we apreesheyate whaut u hav dun for us, even dho the pouwer ov Cuunel Wedder nevver reecht here."

"Thanc u," ced Casher. "I am cerpriazd too here dhat u no ov me."

"Dhats nuthhing," ced the man. "We no ov evveriwun. And u, woomman," ced the same man too Dalmaa, "u no fool wel dhat we nevver entertane wimmen here. And u ar the oanly underperson in this citty. A dog at dhat. But in onnor ov our ghest we shal let u paas. Cit doun if u wish. We waunt too tauc too u."

A mele wauz cervd. Littel sqwaerz ov swete un'none mete, fresh fruits, bits ov mellon, chaist widh harmoanyous drinx which cleerd the miand and stimulated it, widhout intoxicating or drugging.

The lan'gwage ov dhare conversaishonz wauz clere and ellevated.

Aul qweschonz wer aancerd swiftly, smuidhly, and widh pozsitive clarrity.

Finaly, Casher wauz muivd too aasc, "I doo not ceme too hav herd ov u, Jwindz, whoo ar u?"

"We ar the perfect wunz," ced the oaldest Jwindz, "We hav aul the aancerz; dhare iz nuthhing els left too fiand."

"Hou doo u ghet here?" ced Casher.

"We ar celected from menny werldz."

"Whare ar yor fammilese?"

"We doant bring them widh us."

"Hou doo u kepe out introoderz?"

"If dha ar good, dha wish too sta. If dha ar not good, we destroi them."

Casher, stil shoct bi hiz expereyens ov foolfilling aul hiz liafs werc in the confrontaishon widh Wedder bac in the pallace ov Cahere, ced liatly and, even dho hiz life mite be at stake, aasct cazhuwaly, "Hav u decided yet whether I am perfect or not too join u? Or am I not perfect and too be destroid?"

The hevveyest ov aul the Jwindz, a taul, poertly man, widh a grate booshy shoc ov blac hare replide ponderously, "Cer, u ar foercing our decizhon, but I thhinc dhat u ma be sumthhing exepshonal. We canot axept u. Dhare iz too much foers in u. U ma be perfect, but u ar moer dhan perfect. We ar men and, cer, I doo not thhinc dhat u ar enny lon'gher a mere man. U ar aulmoast a mashene. U ar yorcelf ded pepel. U ar the madgic ov ainshent battelz cumming too strike amung us. We ar aul ov us a littel afrade ov u, and yet we doo not no whaut too doo widh u. If u wer too sta here a while, if u caamd doun, we mite ghiv u hope. We no perfectly wel whaut dhat dog-woomman ov yorz caulz our city. She caulz it the subberb ov Hoaples Hope. We just caul it Jwindz Jo, in memmory ov the ainshent Roole ov the Jwindz, which sumwhare wuns obtaind uppon oald Erth. And dhaerfoer we thhinc dhat we wil niather kil u nor axept u. We thhinc--doo we not, gentelmen?--dhat we wil spede u on yor wa, az we hav sped no uther travveler. And dhat we wil cend u, then, too a place which fu pepel paas. But u hav the strength and if u ar gowing too the soers ov the Thherteenth Nile, u wil nede it."

"I wil nede strength?" ced Casher.

The ferst Jwindz whoo had met them at the doer ced, "Indede u wil nede strength, if u go too Mortoval. We ma be dain'gerous too the unninisheyated. Mortoval iz wers dhan dain'gerous. It iz a trap menny tiamz wers dhan deth. But go dhare if u must."

Casher ONEle and Dalmaa reecht Mortoval on a wun-wheeld cart, which ran on a hi wire paast picchuresc mountane gorgez, soering over too cerated cerese ov peex and finaly dropping down too anuther bend in the same rivver, the ilegal and forgotten Thherteenth Nile.

When the veyikel stopt, dha got out. No wun had acumpanede them. The veyikel, held in place bi giroscoaps and cumpacez, felt itcelf releevd ov dhare wate and hurrede home.

This time dhare wauz no citty: just wun grate arch. Dalmaa clung cloce too him. She even tooc hiz arm and poold it over her shoalder az dho she neded protecshon. She whiand a littel az dha wauct up a lo hil and finaly reecht the arch.

Dha wauct intoo the arch and a vois not made ov sound cride out too them, "I am ueth and am evverithhing dhat u hav bene or evver wil be. No this nou befoer I sho u moer."

Casher wauz brave, and this time he wauz cheerfooly hoaples, so he ced, "I no whoo I am. Whoo ar u?"

"I am the foers ov the Gunung Ban'gaa. I am the pouwer ov this plannet which keeps evveriwun in this plannet and which ashuerz the order which percists among the starz, and prommicez dhat the ded shal not wauc among the men. And I cerv ov the fate and the hope ov the fuchure. Paas if u thhinc u can."

Casher cercht widh hiz one miand and he found whaut he waunted. He

found the memmory ov an elevven-yere-oald chiald, Truth, whoo had bene  
aulmoast a thouzand yeerz on the plannet ov Henreyaadaa. A chiald soft  
and  
gentel on the outcide, but wise and formiddabel and terribel beyond  
belefe, in the pouwerz which she had carrede, which had bene imprinted  
uppon her.

Az he wauct throo the arch, he caast the imagez ov truth here and  
dhare. Dhaerfoer he wauz not wun person but a multichude. And the  
mashene and the livving beying, which hid behiand the mashene, the  
Gunung  
Ban'gaa, obveyously cood ce him and cood ce Dalmaa wauking throo,  
but the mashene wauz not prepaerd too reccognise oald multichuedz ov  
criying  
throngz.

"Whoo ar u thouzandz dhat u shood cum here nou? Whoo ar u  
multichuedz dhat u shood be too pepel? I cens aul ov u. The  
fiterz and the ships and the men ov blud, the cercherz and the  
forghetterz. Dhaerz even an Oald North Australeyan renunceyant here.  
And  
the grate go-captane Tre, and dhare ar even a cuppel ov men ov oald  
Erth. U ar aul wauking throo me. Hou can I cope widh u?"

"Make us us," ced Casher fermly.

"Make u u," replide the mashene. "Make u u. Hou can I make  
u u when I doo not no whoo u ar, when u flit like goasts and  
u confuse mi computerz? Dhare ar too menny, I sa. Dhare ar too  
menny ov u. It iz ordaind dhat u shood paas."

"If it iz so ordaind, then let us paas." Dalmaa suddenly stood proud  
and erect.

Dha wauct on throo.

She ced, "U got us throo." Dha had indede paast beyond the arch, and dhare, beyond the arch, la a gentel rivvercide widh skifs poold up along the beche, the oerz shipt aboard.

"This ceemz too be next," ced Casher ONele.

Dalmaa nodded,

"Ime yor dog, maaster. We go whare u thhinc."

Dha cliamd intoo a skif. Eccose ov chumult follode from the arch.

"Goodbi too trubbelz," the eccose ced, "Had dha bene pepel dha wood hav bene stopt. But she wauz a dog and a cervant, whoo had livd menny yeerz in the happines ov the Cine ov the Fish. And he wauz a combat-reddy man whoo had incorporated within himcelf the memmorese ov adversarese and frendz, too chumulchuwous for enny scanner too mezhure, too complex for enny computer too aces." The eccose rezounded acros the rivver.

Dhare wauz even a doc on the uther cide. Casher tide the skif too the doc, and he helpt the dog-woomman go tooword the bildingz dhat dha sau beyond sum trese.

Dalmaa ced, "I hav cene picchuerz ov this place. This iz the Kermes Dorguuy, and here we ma loose our wa becauz this iz the place whare aul the happy thhingz ov this werld cum tooghether, but whare the man and the too pecez ov wood nevver filter throo. We shal ce no wun unhappy, no wun cic, no wun unballanst; evveriwun wil be enjoying the good thhingz ov life. Perhaps I wil enjoi it too. Ma the Cine ov the Fish help me dhat I not becum perfect too soone."

"U woant be," Casher prommiast.

At the gate ov this citty, dhare wauz no gard at aul. Dha wauct on paast a fu pepel whoo ceemd too be prommenaading outside the toun. Within the citty dha aproacht whaut ceemd too be a hotel and an in or a hospital. At enny rate it wauz a place whare menny pepel wer fed.

A man came out and ced, "Wel, this iz a strainj cite. I nevver nu dhat the Cuunel Wedder let hiz officerz ghet this far from home, and az for u, woomman, yor not even a human beying. Yor an od cuppel and yor not in luv widh eche uther. Can we doo ennithhing for u?"

Casher reecht intoo hiz pocket and tost cevveral credit pecez ov five denominaishonz in frunt ov the man.

"Doant these mene ennithhing?" ced Casher.

Catching them in hiz fin'gherz the man ced, "O, we can use munny! We use it ocaizhonaly for important thhingz; we doant nede yorz. We liv wel here, and we hav a nice life, not like dhose too placez acros the rivver dhat sta awa from life. Aul men whoo ar perfect ar nuthhing but tauc--Jwindz dha caul themcelvz, the perfect wunz--wel, were not dhat perfect. Weve got fammilese and good foode and good cloadhz, and we ghet the latest nuse from aul the werldz."

"Nuse," ced Casher, "I thaut dhat wauz ilegal."

"We ghet ennithing. U wood be cerpriazd at whaut we hav here. Its a verry civviliazd place. Cum on in. This iz the hotel ov the Cinging Swaunz, and u can liv here az long az u wish. When I sa dhat, I mene it. Our trezhure haz unnuezhuwal rezoercez, and I can ce dhat u ar unnuezhuwal pepel. U ar not a meddical tecnishan, despite dhat uniform; and if u and yor follower wer nuthhing but a mere dog underperson, u woodnt hav gotten this far."

Dha enterd a prommenaad too stoerese hi; littel shops liand eche cide ov the corridor widh the trezhuerz ov aul the werldz on exhibbit. The pricez wer marct explaning them but dhare wauz no wun in the staulz.

The smel ov good foode came from a coole dining roome in the in.

"Cum intoo mi office and hav a drinc. Mi name iz Houward."

"Dhats an oald Erth name," ced Casher.

"Whi shoodnt it be?" ced Houward. "I came here from oald Erth. I looct for the best ov aul placez, and it tooc me a long time too looc, and this iz it. The Kermes Dorguuy. We hav nuthhing here but cimpel and clene plezhuerz, we hav oanly dhose vicez which help and supoert, we acumplish the poscibel, we reget the imposcibel, we liv life, not deth. Our tauc iz about thhingz and not about ideyaaz. We hav nuthhing but scorn for dhat citty behiand u, the Citty ov the Perfect Wunz, and we hav nuthhing but pittty for the holeyer dhan holese far bac whare dha clame too hav Hoaples Hope, and practice nuthhing but evil relidjon. I paast throo dhose placez too, auldho I had too go around the Citty ov the Perfect Wunz. I no whaut dha ar and Ive cum aul the wa from Erth, and if I hav cum aul the wa from oald oald Erth, I shood no whaut this iz. U shood take mi werd for it."

"I've bene on Erth micelf," ced Casher, raather drily. "Its not dhat unnuezhual."

The man stopt widh cerprise: "Uve bene on Erth? Whoo ar u?"

"Mi name," ced Casher, "iz Casher ONEle."

The man halted and then gave him a depe bou.

"If u ar the Casher ONEle, u hav chainjd this werld. U hav cum bac, mi lord and maaster. Welcum. We ar no lon'gher yor hoast. This iz yor citty. Whaut doo u wish ov us?"

"Too looc a while, too rest a while, too aasc direcshonz for the voiyage."

"Direcshonz? Whi shood enniwun waunt direcshonz awa from here?

Pepel

cum here and aasc direcshonz from a thouzand placez too ghet too Kermes Dorguuy."

"Lets not argu this nou," ced Casher. "Sho us the ruimz, let us clene ourcelvz up. Too cepparate ruimz."

Houward wauct up staerz. Widh an intricate twist ov hiz hand he unloct too ruimz.

"At yor cervice," he ced. "Caul me widh yor vois; I can here u enniwhare in the bilding."

Casher cauld wuns for sleping ghere, tuithbrushez, shaving eqwipment. He incisted dhat dha cend the shampooer, a woomman ov aparrent Erth origin, in too atend too Dalmaa; and Dalmaa acchuwaly noct at hiz doer and begd dhat he not shouwer her widh these atenshonz.

He ced, "U widh yor depe kiandnes hav helpt me so far. I am helping u a verry littel."

Dha ate a lite repaast tooghether in the garden just belo dhare too ruimz, and then dha went too dhare ruimz and slept.

And it wauz oonly on the morning ov the cecond da dhat dha went widh Houward intoo the citty too ce whaut cood be found.

Evveriwheare the citty wauz strong widh happines. The populaishon cood not hav bene verry larj, twenty or thherty thousand personz at moast.

At wun point Casher stopt; he cood smel the scorch ov ozone in the are. He nu the atmosfere itcelf had bene bernd, and dhat ment oonly wun thhing, spaisships cumming in or gowing out.

He ced, "Whare iz the spaispoert for Erth?"

Houward looct at him qwicly and keenly. "If u wer not the lord Casher ONele, Ide nevver tel u. We hav a smaul spaispoert dhare. Dhat iz the wa dhat we avoid our traffic widh moast ov Mizser. Doo u nede it cer?"

"Not nou," ced Casher, "I just wunderd whare it wauz." Dha came too a woomman whoo daanst az she sang too the acumpaniment ov too men widh wiald arcaic ghitarz. Her fete did not hav the laafter ov ordinary daans, but dha had the pozsitiavnes, the compulshon ov a mening. Houward looct at her apreeshatiavly; he even ran the tip ov hiz tung acros hiz upper lip.

"She iz not yet spoken for," ced Houward. "And yet she iz a verry unnuezhuwal thhing. A resiand ex-lady ov the Instroomentality."

"I fiand dhat unnuezhual indede. Whaut iz her name?"

"Celaltaa," ced Houward. "Celaltaa, the uther wun. She haz bene in menny werldz, perhaps az menny werldz az u hav, cer. Shese faist dain'gerz. Shese faist dain'gerz like the wunz uve faist. And o, mi lord and maaster, forghiv me for saying it, but when I looc at her daancing, and I ce u loocking at her, I can ce a littel bit intoo the fuchure; and I can ce u boath ded tooghether, the windz sloly blowing the flesh of yor boanz. And yor boanz anonnimous and white, liying too vallese over from this verry place."

"Dhats an od enuf proffecy," ced Casher. "Espeshaly from sumwun whoo ceemz not too be powettic. Whaut iz dhat?"

"I ceme too ce u in the Depe Dri Lake ov the Damd Irene. Dhaerz a rode out ov here dhat gose dhare, and sum pepel, not menny, go dhare, and when dha go dhare dha di. I doant no whi," ced Houward; "doant aasc me."

Dalmaa whisperd, "Dhat iz the rode too the Shrine ov Shrianz. Dhats the place too the Qwel itself. Fiand out whare it starts."

"Whare duz dhat rode start?" ced Casher.

"O, ule fiand out; dhaerz nuthhing u woant fiand out. Sorry, mi lord and maaster. The rode starts just beyond dhat brite oranj roofe." He pointed too a roofe and then ternd bac.

Without saying ennithhing moer, he clapt hiz handz at the daancer, and she gave him a scornfool looc. Houward clapt hiz handz agane; she stopt daancing and wauct over.

"And whaut iz it u waunt nou, Houward?"

He gave her a depe bou. "Mi former lady, mi mistres, here iz the lord and maaster ov this plannet, Casher ONele."

"I am not reyaly the lord and maaster," ced Casher ONele. "I meerly wood hav bene if Wedder had not taken the roole awa from mi unkel."

"Shood I care about dhat?" ced the woomman.

Casher smiald bac. "I doant ce whi u shood."

"Doo u hav ennithing u waunt too sa too me?"

"Yes," ced Casher. He reecht over and ceezd her rist. Her rist wauz aulmoast az strong az hiz. "U hav daanst yor laast daans, madam, at leest for the time. U and I ar gowing too a place dhat this man nose about, and he cez dhat we ar gowing too di dhare, and our boanz wil be blone widh the wind."

"U ghiv me comaandz," she cride.

"I ghiv u comaandz," he ced.

"Whaut iz yor authorrity?" she aasct scornfooly.

"Me," he ced.

She looct at him; he looct bac at her stil hoalding her rist.

She ced, "I hav pouwerz. Doant make me use them."

He ced, "I hav pouwerz, too; nobody can make me use mine."

"Ime not afrade ov u; go ahead."

Fire shot at him az he felt the lunj ov her miand tooword hiz, her atac, her flite for fredom; but he kept her rist, and she ced nuthhing.

But widh hiz miand responding too herz he unfoalded the menny werldz, the oald Erth itcelf, the gem Plannet, Olimpeyaa ov the bliand brokerz, the storm plannet Henreyaadaa, and a thouzand uther placez dhat moast pepel oonly nu in stoerese and dreemz. And then just for a littel bit he shode her whoo he wauz, a native ov Mizser whoo had becum a cittisen ov the Univers. A fiter whoo had bene traansformd intoo a doower. He let her no dhat in hiz one miand he carrede the pouwerz ov Truth, the tertel-gherl, and behiand the Truth hercelf he carrede the personallitese ov the Hechiseraa ov Gonfalon. He let her ce the ships in the ski terning and twisting az dha faut nuthhing at aul, becauz hiz miand, or anuther miand which had becum hiz, had comaanded them too.

Then widh the shoc ov sudden vizhon, he proected too her the too pecez ov wood, the image ov a man in pane, and he shouted too her. Gently, widh the cimpel rettoric ov profound faith, he pronounst, "This iz the caul ov the Ferst Forbidden Wun and the Ceccond Forbidden Wun and the Thherd Forbidden Wun. This iz the cimbol ov the Cine ov the Fish. For this u ar gowing too leve this toun, and u ar gowing widh me, and it ma be dhat u and I shal becum luvverz."

Behiand him a vois spoke. "And I," ced Dalmaa, "wil sta here."

He ternd around too her, "Dalmaa, uve cum this far; uve got too cum ferther."

"I caant, mi lord; I red mi juty az I ce it. If the authorritese whoo cent me waunt me enuf, dha wil cend me bac too mi dishwausher on Pontoppidan; utherwise dha wil leve me here. I am temporarily

butifool and Ime rich and Ime happy and I doant no whaut too doo widh micelf, but I no dhat I hav cene u az far az I can. Ma the Cine ov the Fish be widh u."

Houward meerly stood acide, making no atempt too hinder them or too help them.

Celaltea wauct becide Casher like a wiald annimal which had nevver bene capchuerd befoer.

Casher ONele nevver let go ov her rist.

"Doo we nede foode for this trip?" he ced too Houward.

"No wun nose whaut u nede."

"Shood we take foode?"

"I doant ce whi," ced Houward, "u hav wauter. U can aulwase wauc bac here if u hav disapointments. Its reyaly not verry far."

"Wil u rescu me?"

"If u incist on it," ced Houward. "I supose sumwhare pepel wil cum out and bring u bac, but I doant thhinc u wil incist--becauz dhat iz the Depe Dri Lake ov the Damd Irene, and the pepel whoo go in dhare doo not waunt too cum out, and doo not waunt too ete, and dha doo not waunt too go forword. We hav nevver cene enniwun vannish too the uther cide, but u mite make it."

"I am loocking," ced Casher, "for sumthhing. I am loocking for sumthhing which iz moer dhan pouwer betwene the werldz. I am loocking

for a sfinx dhat iz biggher dhan the sfinx on oald Erth. For wepponz which cut sharper dhan laserz, for foercez dhat moove faaster dhan boollets. I am loocking for sumthhing which wil take the pouwer awa from me and poot the cimpel humannity bac intoo me. I am loocking for sumthhing which wil be nuthhing, but a nuthhing I can cerv and can beleve in."

"U sound like the rite kiand ov man," ced Houward, "for dhat kiand ov trip. Go widh u in pece, boath ov u."

Celaltaa ced, "I doo not reyaly no whoo u ar, mi lord, maaster, but I hav daanst mi laast daans. I ce whaut u mene. This iz the rode dhat leedz awa from happines. This iz the paath which leevz good cloadhz and worm shops behiand. Dhare ar no restorants whare we ar gowing, no hotelz, no rivver ennimoer. Dhare ar niather beleverz nor unbeleverz, but dhare iz sumthhing dhat cumz out ov the soil and which maix pepel di. But if u thhinc, Casher ONele, dhat u can triyumf over it, I wil go widh u. And if u doo not thhinc it, I wil di widh u."

"We ar gowing, Celaltaa. I didnt no dhat it wauz just gowing too be the too ov us, but we ar gowing and we ar gowing nou."

10

It wauz acchuwaly les dhan too killometerz too ghet over the rij awa from the trese, awa from the moischure-laden are along the rivver and intoo a dri, caam vally which had a clene, blesced qwiyetnes which Casher had nevver cene befoer.

Celaltaa wauz aulmoast ga. "This, this, iz the Depe Dri Lake ov the

Damd Irene?"

"I suppose it iz," ced Casher, "but I propose too kepe on wauking. It iznt verry big."

Dha wauct.

Az dha wauct dhare boddese became berdensum; dha carrede not oonly dhare one wate but the wate ov evvery munth ov dhare liavz. The decizhon ceemd good too them dhat dha shood li doun in the vally and rest amid the skelletonz, rest az the utherz had rested. Celaltea became disoreyented. She stumbeld, and her ise became unfocust.

Not for nuthhing had Casher ONele lernd aul the arts ov battel ov a thousand werldz. Not for nuthhing had he cum throo space-thre. This vally mite hav bene tempting if aulreddy he had not ridden the cozmos on hiz ise alone.

He had. He nu the wa out. It wauz meerly throo. Celaltea ceemd too cum moer too life az dha reecht the top ov the rij. The whole world wauz suddenly traansformd bi not les dhan ten steps. Far behiand them, cevveral killometerz, perhaps, dhare wer stil vizsibel the laast ruiftops ov the Kermes Dorguuy. Behiand them la the bleching skelletonz; in frunt--

In frunt ov them wauz the final soers and the mistery, the Qwel ov the Thherteenth Nile.

11

Dhare wauz no cine ov a hous, but dhare wer fruits and mellonz and

grane growing, and dhare wer depe trese at the edgez ov caivz, and dhare wer here and dhare cianz ov pepel dhat had bene dhare long ago. Dhare wer no cianz ov prezsent occupancy.

"Mi lord," ced the wuns-lady Celalmaa, "mi lord," she repeted, "I thhinc this iz it."

"But this iz nuthhing," ced Casher.

"Exactly. Nuthhing iz victory, nuthhing iz arival, noawhare iz ghetting dhare. Doant u ce nou whi she left us?"

"She?" ced Casher.

"Yes, yor faithfool companyon, the dog-woomman Dalmaa."

"No, I doant ce it. Whi did she leve this too us?"

Celalmaa laaft. "Were Addam and Eve in a wa. Its not up too us too be ghivven a god or too be ghivven a faith. Its up too us too fiand the pouwer, and this iz the qwiyetst and laast ov the cerching placez. The utherz wer just fantomz, hazzardz on our roote. The best wa too fiand fredom iz not too looc for it, just az u obtaind yor utter revenj on Wedder bi doowing him a littel bit ov good. Caant u ce it, Casher? U hav wun at laast the victory so imens dhat it maix aul battelz ceme vane. Dhare iz foode around us; we can even wauc bac too the Kermes Dorguuy if we waunt cloathing or cumpany or if we waunt too here the nuse, but moast ov aul this iz the place in which I fele the prezsens ov the Ferst Forbidden Wun, the Cecond Forbidden Wun and the Thherd Forbidden Wun. We doant nede a cherch for this; I supose dhare ar stil cherchez on sum plannets. Whaut we nede iz a place too fiand ourcelvz and be ourcelvz and Ime not shure dhat this chaans exists in menny uther cacez dhan this wun spot."

"U mene," ced Casher, "dhat evveriwhare iz noawhare?"

"Not qwite dhat," ced Celaltee. "We hav sum werc too doo ghetting this place in shape, feding ourcelvz. Doo u no hou too cooc? Wel, I can cooc better. We can cach a fu thhingz too ete, we can shut ourcelvz in dhat cave and then," and then Celaltee smiald, her face moer butifool dhan he evver expected he wood fiand a face too be, "we hav eche uther."

Casher stood battel reddy, facing the moast butifool daancer he had evver met. He reyaliazd dhat she had wuns bene a part ov the Instroomentallity, a guvvernor ov werldz, a genuwine advizor in the destinaishon ov mankiand.

He did not no whaut strainj motiavz had cauzd her too qwit authorrity and too cum up too this hard-too-fiand rivver, unmarct on maps. He didnt even no whi the man Houward shood hav paerd them so qwicly: perhaps dhare wauz anuther foers. A foers behiand dhat dog-woomman which had cent him too hiz final destinaishon.

He looct doun at Celaltee and then he looct up at the ski and he ced, "Da iz ending; I wil cach a fu ov dhose berdz if u no hou too cooc them. We ceme too be a sort ov Addam and a sort ov Eve, and I doo not no whether this iz parradice or hel, but I no dhat u ar in it widh me and dhat I can thhinc about u becauz u aasc nuthhing ov me."

"Dhat iz troo, mi lord; I aasc nuthhing ov u. I too am loocking for boath ov us, not micelf alone. I can make a sacrifice for u, but I looc for dhose thhingz which we too, oanly we too, acting tooghether can fiand in this vally."

He nodded.

"Looc," she ced, "dhat iz the Qwel itself, dhare the Thherteenth Nile cumz out ov the rox, and here ar the woodz belo. I ceme too hav herd ov it. Wel, weeyl hav plenty ov time. Ile start the fire, but u go cach too ov dhose chickenz. I doant even thhinc dhare wiald berdz. I thhinc dha ar just left over pepel-chickenz dhat hav grone wiald cins dhare preveyous onerz left..."

"Or dide," ced Casher.

"Or dide," repeted Celalaa. "Iznt dhat a risc enniboddy haz too take? Let us liv mi lord, u and I, and let us fiand the madgic, the deliverans which strainj faits hav throne in frunt ov u and me. U hav libberated Mizser; iz dhat not enuf? Cimpily bi tutching Wedder, u hav dun whaut urtherwise cood hav bene acumplisht at the price ov battel and grate suffering."

"Thanc u," ced Casher.

"I wauz wuns Instroomentallity, mi lord, and I no dhat the Instroomentallity liax too doo thhingz suddenly and victoereyously. When I wauz dhare, we nevver axepted defete, but we nevver pade ennithing extraa.

The shortest roote betwene too points mite looc like the long wa around; it iznt. Its meerly the chepest human wa ov ghetting dhare. Haz it evver okerd too u dhat the Instroomentallity mite be rewording u for whaut u hav dun for this plannet?"

"I hadnt thaut ov it," ced Casher.

"U hadnt thaut ov it?" she smiald.

"Wel," ced Casher, embarrast and at a los ov werdz.

"I am a verry speshal kiand ov woomman," ced Celaltee. "U wil be fianding dhat out in the next fu weex. Whi els doo u thhinc dhat I wood be ghivven too u?"

He did not go too hunt the chickenz, not just then; he reecht hiz armz out too her and widh moer trust and les fere dhan he had felt in menny yeerz he held her in hiz armz, and kist her on the lips. This time dhare wauz no ceecret reserv in hiz miand, no prommice dhat aafter this he wood ghet on widh hiz gerny too Mizser. He had wun, hiz victory wauz behiand him, and in frunt ov him dhare la nuthhing, but this butifool and pouwerfool place and ... Celaltee.

[End ov On the Sand Plannet, bi Cordwaner Smith]