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# SCIENCE FICTION *Quarterly*

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Dirrul had been told that the key to the mystery of Thon lay in the special meanings that these people had for the terms they used. And that it would be fatal to employ his own meanings for Thonian words — as he discovered!



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*Cover by Milton Luros*

*Interior illustrations by Luros, Orbán, and Sibley*

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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# A TRANSMISSIBLE MATTER

An SFQ "First"

by Ray Earl Schmidt

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

Theoretically, a machine may be infallible; but human beings aren't, even in theory. So, were matter-transmitters of the type described by our new author, to come into being, we might see an occasional error at the non-mechanical end — one, perhaps, with as hilarious results as in the present story.



**N**EWS-ITEM appearing in the *San Francisco Daily Messenger*: Luna, July 5/TMT— Warrant Officer Joseph Small chief operator at the Luna matter-transmitter relaying-station, was severely shaken up during a

baseball game today. The Rock Rabbits, a team of local miners and prospectors, tangled with the team from GHQ in the shade of Old Smoky. At the top of the fifth inning, Klein, the leadoff batter for the Rock Rabbits, belted a drive into deep right field. Small, playing nearly a third of a mile from home base, slipped his binoculars into his spacesuit pocket as the ball approached. He turned to his left and made a powerful running leap, intercepting the ball in fine style some twenty feet above the ground. Unfortunately, the leap carried him out over a minor crater at the limit of the field. He landed, dazed but unhurt, thirty feet below the surface. Hurriedly he tried to peg the ball out, but it struck the rim, causing an avalanche. He regained consciousness in the hospital half an hour after his rescue.

Small was charged with an error on

the play, and Klein was robbed of a home run, being allowed only three bases on any ball coming to rest in a crater. (See the Sports Page for a summary of Lunar baseball ground rules.) GHQ was leading 6-4 when the game was called in the seventh inning on account of sunlight.

Small is expected to resume his duties within a week.

## VENUSGRAM

TO: Small  
Relay Station  
Luna

FROM: Mallory  
Communications  
GTHQ Venus  
July 9/TMT

Subject: Shipment X15235NP  
(Standard)  
Consigned to  
Frontier Hospital  
N/W Sector Venus

Frontier Hospital insists that the above-described is the wrong shipment. X15235NP (non-perishable) contained a large amount of laboratory glassware, other scientific-appar-



To put it mildly, Dr. Atterbury was astonished . . .

atus, and an incredible number of music-spools. The Hospital's consignment should have had the PLSA (perishable life, suspended animation) suffix, insofar as they were expecting Dr. Carole Anne Kent, famed microbiologist. She was supposed to take charge of the forces combatting the plague of Venii fever, which rages unchecked.

The Hospital, having adequate laboratory-equipment and no need for the music-spools, is holding the shipment, pending notification of its proper destination.

Concern is expressed over the safety and whereabouts of Dr. Kent. She must be revived within 30 hours after

the inception of suspended animation, and we received Advance Notice of Transmission regarding her some twenty hours ago. Spare no effort in locating her. This is an emergency!

MARSGRAM

TO: Small  
Relay Station  
Luna

FROM: Kane  
Communications  
GTHQ MARS

SUBJECT: Shipment X15234PLSA  
(Standard)  
Consigned to

Professor Reginald  
Atterbury  
Northern Sector  
MARS

The above-described shipment, relayed through you, has been delivered by freight-copter to Atterbury, who is studying Martian life-forms at the edge of the Northern Ice Cap. This consignment was supposed to contain a quantity of scientific apparatus and recorded music.

By the time the copter had returned to GTHQ, Atterbury was on the radio complaining about what seems to me to be the best of good luck. The shipment contained a woman in suspended animation. Her maximum time in SA had almost elapsed, so the Professor revived her as per enclosed instructions. It seems that she is supposed to be on Venus, seeking out an antibiotic to combat 'kill-em-slow', the dreaded Venii fever.

We lack the necessary equipment to repackage her, or we would transmit her back to you. If an emergency arises, transmit to us the plastic chrysalis and other necessities for the transmission of humans.

Meanwhile she's still out there with Atterbury.

LUNAGRAM

TO: Kane  
Communications  
GTHQ Mars

FROM: Small  
Relay Station  
LUNA

SUBJECT: Shipments X15235NP  
X15234PLSA

Gratified to learn of Dr. Kent's safety.

The mixup occurred here. I was in hospital, Serg. Fusari was on leave to Terra, leaving Corp. (now Pte.) Davidson as ranking transmission-

man. Normally he does our paper and Lunar com. work, with a little dispatch-riding thrown in. He became rattled, placing the first shipment to arrive from Terra in the Mars directional, and the second in the Venus directional, without bothering to check back to the Advance Notice of Transmission. It never occurred to him that they might not come through in the order listed.

Atterbury can deem himself fortunate. He could have received a complete baby layette, highchair, and certain similar parts and attachments that came through at the same time for our Adjutant's wife. I'd have never lifted my head again if that shipment had gone wandering around the Solar System.

Can send you none of the equipment necessary for transmitting humans. You have no doctor on Mars qualified to induce suspended animation. I'll think up some way of explaining away this carelessness for the benefit of the boys on Venus.

From now on, when I play baseball, I play shortstop.

LUNAGRAM

TO: Mallory  
Communications  
GTHQ Venus

FROM: Small  
Relay Station  
LUNA  
July 10/TMT

FOR: FRONTIER HOSPITAL  
N/W SECTOR VENUS

SUBJECT: Shipments X15235NP  
X15234PLSA

Due to unforeseen technical difficulties utterly beyond human control Dr. Carole Anne Kent has inadvertently arrived on Mars. She is alive

and well, but the time of her departure for Venus is, as yet, uncertain.

Everything is being done to facilitate the immediate rectification of this unfortunate situation, and the entire transmission-staffs of Terra, Venus, Mars, and Luna join to express deep concern and offer their profoundest apologies.

**P**ERSONAL letter-film from Professor Reginald Atterbury, Northern sector, Mars, addressed to Hon. Charles L. P. Bickstaffe, Bart., Maidstone manor, 16 Vine Road, Little East Southam, Nottingham, Nott., U.K.

Mars, July 11/TMT.

Dear Bip,

I have no idea when you'll receive this letter, but I simply must write. You joshed me no end, Bip, when I accepted McGill University's offer to go to Mars. You could foresee nothing for me but a frightfully-dull semi-prison term. How jolly well wrong you were! As I write this, it's after 02:00MMT, and I couldn't sleep if I did go to bed. The excitement of the last three days has completely intoxicated me.

I'd have written before, but my time has been pretty well taken up in establishing camp, acquiring specimens, and preparing reports for the University. My camp (I've dubbed it Noaks, due to the absence of oaks—or anything else in the vegetable line that grows over four inches high) is located some one hundred twenty or thirty miles south of the Ice Cap's edge. The Martians follow the melting ice, planting their queer grains and vegetables, and rejoicing in the effects of the increased water vapor.

The Martians are quaint little

fellows, resembling the brownies in childrens' story-books. They're quick and shy, avoiding our people as much as possible. As yet, we've made no fruitful contact with them. However, I'm doing my little bit in that direction, too; quite by accident I discovered that they like our music. A number of them halted their northern trek at Noaks one day, enthralled by the vibrations that emanated from my lab. I set up my speaker outside and played off my favorites: Bach *Double Concerto*, Smolensk Symphony Orchestra, Remagen and Schluss, soloists; *Boogie Woogie Classics*, played George 'Gut-Bucket' Skinner; and the *Mikado*, by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. They loved it, Bip. They cavorted for joy; they were delirious.

Presently I was obliged to return to the lab. I had to prepare and photograph a specimen of *Cladonia marsiferina* and feed my *Sorex marsati*. The Martians scampered away. Presently a delegation of them returned, so I put on my pressure suit, picked up my camera, and went out. They presented me with what looked to be a big clinker—an uninteresting, earthy lump, resembling bauxite or some such ore. It must be quite valuable to the Brownies. Anyway, they scampered off before I had half-finished my little speech of gratitude. I returned to the lab, tossed the clinker on a work bench, and promptly forgot about it.

I wirelessly GTHQ and placed an order for a good deal of recorded music and certain scientific nubbies that I needed. Fortunately, the University has provided vast piles of good Canadian dollars for my studies here, so I order my supplies from Terra to come via matter-transmitter. I

had in mind a study of the Martians in relationship to us and our music.

One day the freight-copter from GTHQ landed at Noaks, and I helped unload the large, coffin-like box in which standard matter transmissions are made. The weather was a bit unpleasant and we worked the shipment through the air lock. The copter-crew declined tea, wishing to get back over the seven hundred miles to GTHQ as quickly as possible. We hurried to unload fuel for my power plant and compressor.

Bip, when I opened my shipment I got the surprise of my life. I'd got an unclad woman in suspended animation. I went into quite a dither. Can you guess the first thing I did after this shocking discovery? I found myself very carefully combing my beard.

I took firm hold of myself and checked the enclosed data. I learned that she was Dr. Carole Kent, microbiologist, and her SA period was nearly over. I put on water for tea.

**A**FTER CAREFULLY reading the instructions for reviving her, I checked the temperature, air-pressure, and oxygen-content in the lab; all were within the prescribed limits. I closed valves in the several tubes that led into the plastic sarcophagus from pressure-containers beside it. Then I split this chrysalis, and quickly made the prescribed injection into the proper vein. I didn't permit my mind to wander during all these operations; I was a scientist doing by duty. When I'd completed the work as per instructions I wobbled to a chair.

I didn't dare look at her. It unnerved me; it made me realize what a sheltered life I've been leading. Reluctant but worried, I

went over to have a look at her.

"Holy suffering Pete! What a face full of fungus!" She had spoken, and I was keenly disappointed. I had hoped for someone speaking English. It seemed that some of her words were vaguely-familiar, so I decided she must be a Yankee, gibbering in her native tongue.

Then I realized that she was referring to my beard. I blushed. "Welcome to Noaks, Dr. Kent," I stammered, feeling like a schoolboy. She lay there, Bip, quite unclad, staring up at me.

"If you'll just turn your back for a minute," she said cheerfully, "I'll exhume my clothes from somewhere out of this tomb. Then you can brief me on the situation."

I went to make tea. I strove to keep my mind blank.

"Hell! This isn't Venus!" she yelled, looking out at the Martian sandstorm.

I introduced myself and asked her to join me for lunch. I explained how there must have been a mixup somewhere in transmission.

Bip, she's a remarkable girl! She's too beautiful to fritter her life away as a microbiologist. She speaks two languages: one is English, and the other is a queer mixture of slang, curses, and slumside jargon that I find very disconcerting. When she found out what had happened, she accepted it with three swearwords, and then she began to prowls about my lab, firing sudden questions and studying my equipment.

She's two people, Bip: one is a skilled scientist, and the other a blunt, cheerful, unself-conscious American woman. She shocks and pleases me immensely.

"Reg," she stated, "your lab is pretty damn crude."

I was slightly nettled. "Miss Kent," I said coolly, "a good deal of scientific apparatus was on its way here to dispel the crudeness that offends *you*, who came in its place."

She laughed merrily. "Call me Carole, Reg—and I think Noaks is out of this world." I had to laugh in turn.

I reached GTHQ on the wireless and told them what had happened. Kane, at Communications, said they'd see us in a few days. He leeringly wished me all the luck in the world. I blushed.

She'd been looking over my specimens. "Know anything about the bugs in the soil, Reg?" she asked, touching my powerful microscope.

"Not too much," I replied. "While the weather's been good, I've been hunting bigger things. I'll check the bacteria when I'm stormbound. However, there's *Cladothrix dichtoma* in the muck by the melting snow, and there's *Bacillus radicolica* where there's vegetation. I recognized them because they resemble the Earth-types of those names. I've tentatively put the initial M for Mars behind the Latin, for now.

"You talk my lingo, Reg!" she declared in triumph. "There's an antibiotic in these hills and we're going to dredge it out."

**S**HE HAS AN enormous capacity for work; she probed all afternoon through the soil-samples that I had indoors. In order to supplement my meagre glass supply, I tortured that plastic chrysalis into petri dishes and other containers. I distilled water, hunted up material for making culture media, and consolidated my dwindling alcohol supply.

She had no success. We made sunder and played the Boogie

Woogie classics, to which she taught me a savage dance that is currently being revived in America.

I prepared a bed for myself in the storeroom, leaving such meagre comforts as I had to Carole.

Before retiring, I shaved off my beard, I lay awake, thinking, for a long while.

When I went to the lab to help with breakfast next morning, she said, with her disconcerting frankness: "Why, Reg! You're handsome!" I blushed.

"No fresh soil-samples today," she said gloomily, as she looked out at the sandstorm. "Say, Reg, what's that chunk of whatever-it-is on the far bench?"

I explained that it was some sort of Martian wealth. She began a patient, brooding examination of it under the microscope. An hour later she let out a blood-curdling whoop; she had discovered a promising breed of bugs, as she calls them.

As I write this, it's late night of the second day after the discovery. Already a culture of these bugs, feeding on the bacteria from the dirtiest thing in the Universe—the human mouth—is producing a minute quantity of a deep purple substance. Miss Kent feels that this might be our antibiotic.

"It'll probably make more stiffs than Venii fever," was her rather inelegant comment. "There's bound to be something wrong with it, but let's rejoice until we find out what."

She kissed me before I retired to the store room for the night. I couldn't sleep so I pounded out this letter to you, Bip. I'll film it in the morning and mail it when the GTHQ copter comes again.

There's a great deal more to tell you of my work here, which

seems to grow more interesting every day, but it can wait until I return to England. I look forward to seeing you, and be sure to have several bottles of good port for my home-coming.

Sincerely,

Reg Atterbury.

P. S. It seems that people must take off their clothes prior to transmission. Sometimes shipments encounter some sort of cosmic interference, and the matter becomes scrambled. Perhaps you will recall the case of Major van Leek, who materialized in the receiver on Io with his clothes inside him. Lose more Majors that way, what?

**T**HE FOLLOWING is a transcript of a telephone conversation between Sergeant Kane, at Communications, GTHQ, Mars, and Brig. K. K. Detweiler, Officer Commanding, Administration Building, Mars.

KANE: Hello, sir. A Terragram for you, sir. Shall I have it delivered to Administration?

DETWEILLER: Personal or policy, Kane?

KANE: Ah—er—policy, I think, sir.

DETWEILLER: Read it to me, please, and send it over later.

KANE:

#### TERRAGRAM

TO: Kane  
Communications  
GTHQ Mars

FROM: Thornhill Miss Claudia  
President  
Society for the Protection  
and Upholding of Moral  
and Ethical Standards  
(SPUMES)

Chicago Ill USA  
July 12/TMT

FOR: Brig K K Detweiler  
Officer Commanding  
GTHQ Mars

SUBJECT: Dr Carole Anne Kent  
Prof R Atterbury

We view with deep concern the continued juxtaposition of the two above-mentioned scientists without proper chaperoning, as mentioned in the daily news-dispatches from Mars. In this day and age of tremendous progress, all eyes are focused upon our brilliant men and women of science and culture, who, by virtue of their achievements, tower head and shoulders above common humanity. It behooves these famous people to conduct themselves in nothing but an exemplary fashion lest the morals of the solar system's people be riddled and completely undermined.

Our Society is grieved, Brig. Detweiler, by your failure to recognize the hazard and act upon it. The SPUMES Board of Directors urges you to take the proper steps immediately. You will either (1) arrange to have the above-mentioned chaperoned, or (2) remove Dr. Kent to GTHQ. Your failure to comply will place upon your shoulders a burden of sin equal to, or greater, than theirs.

Your immediate reply, stating that you have successfully terminated this heinous association, is eagerly awaited at SPUMES Headquarters.

That's the end of quotation, sir.

DETWEILLER: You read that gobbledygook very nicely, Kane. In a minute or two, -I'm going to work myself into a towering rage. Before I do, I'd like to hear you comment on that Terragram in two or three well-chosen sentences, Kane.

KANE: I'd say, sir, that you'll have to be pretty careful; the SPUMES is



a large organization, with a lobby in every government-house in the Western Hemisphere. Your handling of this, sir, could have a direct bearing on future space-operations. A blunder could provide ammunition for the Anti-Space Bloc.

DETWEILLER: Thank you, Kane. That was very practical, although I think you over-emphasize the danger. Now, I think I'll grow angry. I want you to listen, Kane. If a person grows really angry, he thinks of all the wrong ways out of a situation. Ergo, when he calms down, the right ways are at his fingertips, due to the process of elimination. I do it many times, Kane, when faced with a nasty situation.

KANE: I'll try it sometime. Sounds good, sir.

DETWEILLER: Your comment, Kane, was the practical kind, which leaves the theory and philosophy to me. It would seem that modern civilization has too much time on its hands if it can find nothing better to do than to form damnfool societies. When every race in the Galaxy has been visited, Kane, and entered statistically in a book, it will be found that we Terrans have had more silly clubs, inane societies, asinine associations, and crazy collections of people dedicated to nothing more than filling office-space, cluttering the mails, killing time, and promoting more futile fads and general foolishness than any other race. Take this SPUMES outfit. It's membership consists of retired prostitutes, reformed gamblers, maiden ladies, prudish preachers, monied nincompoops, morons with time on their hands, and warped— (Eleven words are deleted here. Brig. Detweiller's description of the SPUMES membership grows highly colorful, but libelously unjust.—Ed.) How do I sound, Kane?

KANE: Doing nicely, sir. Best voice I've heard you in since the time the scorpion got into your pressure-suit

out on Syrtis. You've put your finger on it, I think; let's have the wrong solutions now, sir.

DETWEILLER: I should resign my command in protest. I'm military governor of Mars, and such orders as I get come from Gen. Carter in Washington. I resent having a collection of crackpots trying to tell me what to do. I could send a stiff Marsgram to Carter, one to the Secretary for Space, and one to the President. Then we might get some sort of action in stopping this interference. I can sit still, doing nothing and saying nothing, and letting SPUMES stew. I could go out there and get Dr. Kent; or I could send you, Kane, or somebody, out to chaperone. If I could teleport, I'd go to Chicago, call a SPUMES convention and then I'd— (Brig. Detweiller's description of the havoc he would wreak on the membership of SPUMES, individually and collectively, approaches sadism, and cannot be recorded in this journal—Ed.)—taking Thornhill, Miss Claudia by the neck, and releasing it only after rigor mortis has—

KANE: You're shouting, sir.

DETWEILLER: Oh! Pardon me, Kane. Thank you. I feel much better. The solution must be at hand.

KANE: I don't see it yet, sir.

DETWEILLER: I'm going out to see Atterbury and Kent. It's the only thing that I can do. They are important scientists, and it—ah—behooves me, as military governor, to pay them my respects. Perhaps the right course will make itself more evident if I do that.

KANE: You're probably right, sir.

DETWEILLER: Will you phone down to Maintenance and have them warm up Bessie? I might just as well go now and get it over with. The damned sandstorm seems to be letting up.

KANE: Yes, sir. I'll do it right away, sir. Goodbye.

TO: Small  
Relay Station  
Luna

FROM: Mallory  
Communications  
GTHQ VENUS  
July 13/TMT

SUBJECT: This message is a news release for Terra and Mars Frontier Hospital Medical Bulletin

It was the Hospital janitor who pressed the music-spools into use. He had been hungering for music, and so out of the misplaced shipment he dug all of Wagner's operas, the symphonies of Sibelius, Mahler, and Bruckner, besides the symphonic suites of Stravinsky. The hospital has an intercom system, and one night, as he cleaned up the laboratory, he inadvertently sent *Tannhauser* to all the rooms. The "Festmarch", "Pilgrims' Chorus", and the "Hymn to the Evening Star" had an amazing therapeutic effect upon the convalescing patients. Venii fever leaves its recovering victims listless and mentally-depressed.

The previously-mentioned selections had no effect whatsoever on those patients approaching a crisis. A little research showed that Wagner's *Rienzi Overture*, and anything by Bruckner and Sibelius, bolstered the morale of these victims, while the "Ride of the Valkries" from Wagner's *Walkure* proved to be effective on children only.

Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert are helpful to those suffering the first throes of the disease.

The janitor claims no credit and prefers to remain anonymous.

When musical therapy is not in progress, and the janitor is not playing over and over Brunhilde's Self-Immolation from *Gotterdammerung* by Wagner, a certain doctor seeks out

a spool of Prairie Oom Paul Pfeiffer and His Seventeen Boys of The Golden West. One night he had been puttering about the lab, listening the while to the previously-mentioned aggregation. When he was finished, he shut off the machine and the lights, and retired for the night.

About an hour later Prairie Oom Paul Pfeiffer and his Seventeen Boys of The Golden West began to render "There's a Love-knot in my Lariat" at full volume through the entire hospital. Someone ran to the lab. Lights blazed on. Shrieks of agony pierced the night.

The Larbarians from the hills had attacked the hospital, three of their numbers entering a lab window to attack from within. They had fiddled the music-distribution system to full volume.

The first doctor to the lab reports that one of the three was having convulsions; one was racing around in mortal terror; and the third just stood dumbly, bereft of his senses. "There's a Love-knot in my Lariat" had taken its toll.

Meanwhile, four convalescing patients felt compelled to commit suicide. To the strains of "There's a Love-knot", etc., they opened two first-floor windows and solemnly dived about a foot and a half into a hedge. The four white-clad figures atop the hedge and the terrific noise proved to be so disconcerting that the horde of barbarians about the hospital turned and fled in complete disorder.

The doctor, who likes Prairie Oom Paul Pfeiffer and his Seventeen Boys, claims no credit and prefers to remain anonymous. The hospital still requires an antibiotic, Dr. Kent, or both, although no deaths have occurred since the inception of musical therapy.

MARSGRAM .

TO: Small  
Relay Station  
Luna

FROM: Kane  
 Communications  
 GTHQ MARS

SUBJECT: You will regard this as  
 ADVANCE NOTICE  
 OF TRANSMISSION  
 in re Shipment R14PL  
 (Compact) for relay to  
 Frontier Hospital  
 N/W Sector Venus

Brig. Detweiller visited Noaks, the laboratory of Prof. Reginald Atterbury. Dr. Carole Anne Kent and Atterbury are the co-discoverers of a new antibiotic, which has been named marsycin. The above-described shipment contains a small amount of the antibiotic and a number of cultures at various stages. Note that it carries the PL (perishable life) suffix.

This antibiotic is as yet untested, but it is not poisonous, and it is soluble in water. Miss Kent feels that it will probably not be effective against Venii fever, but will likely take its place in pharmacy as a specific for diarrhea in pigeons. However, it is the best she can do, under the circumstances.

Further note, Small, that this shipment is supposed to be relayed to Venus, not to Pluto, Halley's Comet, or Valhalla. Govern yourself accordingly.

**T**RANSCRIPT of a telephone conversation between Sergeant Kane, at Communications, and Brig. Detweiller, Administration Building, Mars.

KANE: Hello, sir. The shipment to Venus via Luna went out an hour ago. I go off duty in a little while, sir, and I was just wondering if there was any reply yet for SPUMES.

DETWEILLER: As a matter of fact, yes, there is, Kane. I just finished it. Here, I'll just read the body of it to you. You can write that ungodly heading required by regulations.

Ready?

KANE: Yes, sir. Shoot.

DETWEILLER: Here's the message:

In reply to your Terragram of July 11/TMT, whose tone and substance I deeply resent, I wish to report that the situation which offends your warped moral values has been cleared up, to the satisfaction of everyone concerned, I hope.

During my visit to Atterbury and Miss Kent, I drew their attention to what you deem to be their moral lapse. I suggested marriage, to which Atterbury replied: "What d'you say, Carole, old thing? We could jolly well give it a try for a month or two, what?" Go spume over that! I married them.

In future, please bear in mind that I'm the military governor of Mars, and any further messages from you, which indicate your attempted interference in Mars internal-affairs, will be committed to File X, the wastebasket.

End of message, Kane. What do you think of it?

KANE: I rather like it, sir. It's as neat a bit of fiction as I've ever heard, sir.

DETWEILLER: Fiction? Fiction? I worded it strongly, Kane, to discourage a recurrence of SPUMES snoopiness. Do you refer to the wastebasket part?

KANE: No, sir. I refer to the marriage part, sir. On page 7, appendix viii to Planetary Military Governorships, Regulation 11, sub-section b states: *Two officers of rank not lower than colonel shall in the event no chaplain is in garrison, consider themselves authorized—*

DETWEILLER: All right, all right Kane! Of course I didn't marry them; I didn't even mention it. But understand this: that spacegram goes exactly as I gave it to you.

KANE: Yes, sir. I understand, sir.

DETWEILLER: What's your rank, Kane?

KANE: Sergeant, sir.

DETWEILLER: How long have you been a sergeant?

KANE: Three months, this time, sir.

DETWEILLER: What do you mean—this time?

KANE: This is the third time I've been a sergeant.

DETWEILLER: What happened?

KANE: Insubordination, sir.

DETWEILLER: Bear in mind, Kane, that majors, captains, and lieutenants are infallible; never talk back to them. If you must sound off, do it to a Brigadier. They've learned that they're far from perfect.

KANE: I'll bear it in mind, sir.

DETWEILLER: Do you think, Kane, that your fortunes might improve if you were promoted to Warrant Officer, Second Class?

KANE: Somehow, I think it would help, sir.

DETWEILLER: I'm offering you such a promotion. Bear in mind, Kane, that I'm not bribing you into silence over this matter. That wouldn't be necessary, I'm sure. Since you can quote trivial regulations from obscure appendices, it should be safe to assume that you know at least a third of the important rules in the regular manual. This means that you are a valuable man. Your promotion merely comes at an auspicious time, and it should serve to remind you that I have a good

deal of confidence in you. A warrant is next thing to a commission, and while it certainly won't serve to make you popular with the men, it might help to keep you out of trouble with your superiors. I have faith in you.

KANE: Thank you kindly, sir; but if I'd been prudent, sir, I'd have never mentioned that regulation.

DETWEILLER: Glad you did. This way you won't be tempted to talk too much. Anyway, by the time Atterbury and Miss Kent get finished out there, they'll be ready to get married. The situation can have nothing but such a logical, satisfactory ending. But I had to leave them alone. Atterbury is a slow, gallantly-shy Englishman. He's susceptible, though; you don't have to be a Brigadier to see that. Miss Kent has a pair of Vickers Mark XV eyes, and every time she brings them to bear on the poor Professor, he almost wilts. However, love must be permitted to evolve at its own sweet will. Miss Kent will trick him into taking the offensive—or, failing that, she will suggest that their future scientific contributions be joint efforts. I am reminded of a little couplet, which was written by El Lobo, Tamale, or some other old, famous Spaniard: "Between a Professor's Yes and No, There isn't Room for a Proton to Go".

