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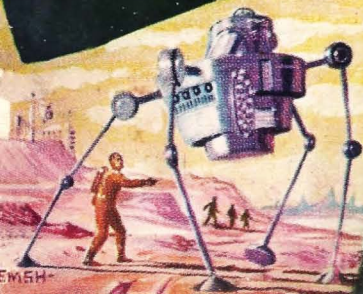
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**SCIENCE  
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Volume 9

JANUARY, 1959

Number 5

**SERIAL NOVEL**

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..... *Ward Moore & Robert Bradford*  
They were rebels against a tyranny that only a small minority considered oppressive at all — the Medarchy, where every citizen was a patient, and the doctor's word was law. And if they were captured — they'd be "cured" rather than executed. But to Cyrus Tarn and Virginia Carling, this was worse than execution!

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First  
of  
Four  
Paris



# CADUCEUS

## WILD

by Ward Moore  
& Robert Bradford

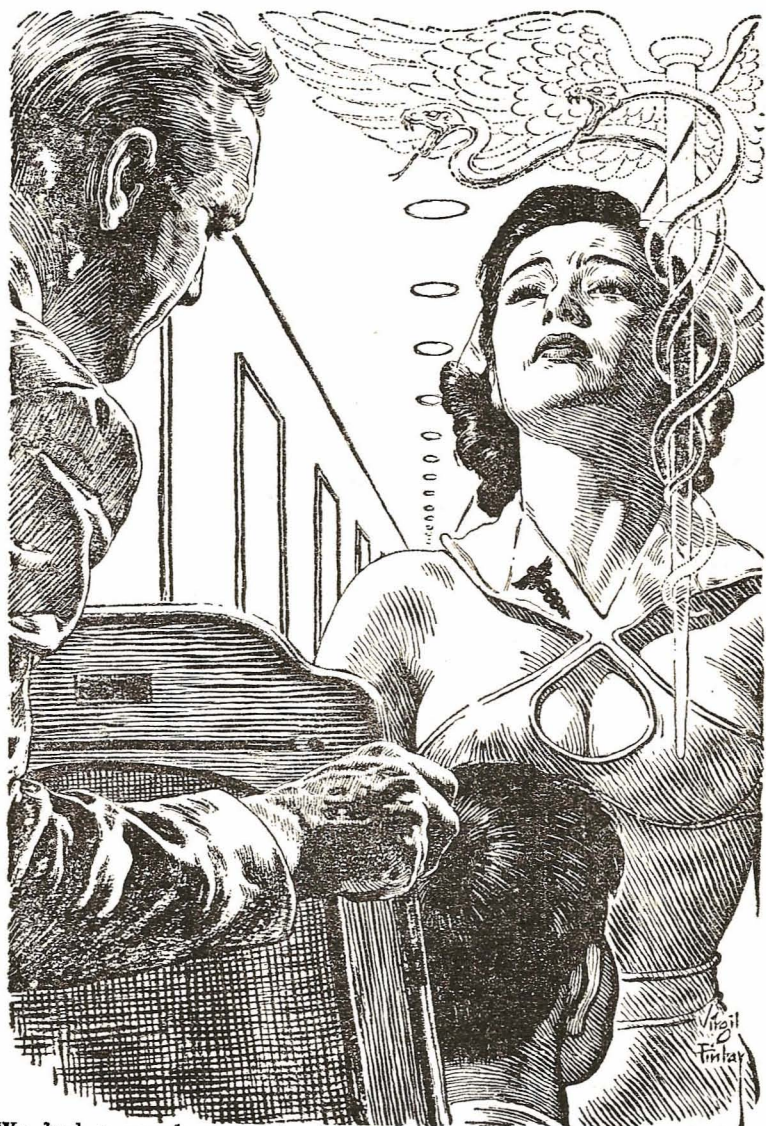
illustrated by FINLAY

It was a tyranny that only a minority considered oppressive at all — the medarchy, the sane and healthful society where the doctor's prescription was law, and everyone had to carry a medical chart with him at all times. How could the underground of the maladjusted—the mallies—hope to overturn such a system, when so few could see that cradle-to-grave regulation of a person's life, in the name of "health" robbed him of all human dignity? And now, Cyrus Tarn, Virginia Carling, and her ten-year-old brother, were fugitives from the medarchy, depending upon the underground to get them out of the country. For if they were caught, they wouldn't be executed—they'd be cured, robbed of their memories and individualities (after revealing all they knew) and would spend the rest of their lives in forgetful contentment...

*Send for the doctor, send for the  
nurse;  
Send for the man with the alligator  
purse.  
—children's skip-rope rhyme*

**T**HE MAN, inconspicuously and not too well dressed, had few char-

acteristics that one would remember long. He was neither tall nor short, and had short gray hair. His face had some lines of middle age—but not many—a rather large nose, and lips which might have been full



"We had a rough moment when we were stopped by one of those arrogant nurses."



if they were not kept habitually pressed together. He barely finished getting the suitcase from the steps onto the station platform (the boy had made the jump impatiently, releasing a fraction of the energy repressed during the long ride) when the locomotive strained impatiently at the mixed train. The engine, like all the rolling stock on this deliberate anachronism of a railroad—built generations after the age of railroad construction—was a museum piece. It was just barely adequate to the job of hauling the combination baggage and passenger coach, three freight cars and a caboose, up the hard grades. They jerked past the man as he stood there, momentarily indecisive, his guard down and his resolution slack.

"I don't see Vicky," complained the boy. "You said Vicky would be here."

"Not at the train, Hank. We've still a little way to go. And be careful about names—especially hers."

"Aw, there's nobody around to hear."

The man patted his compan-

ion's shoulder affectionately; the boy was irritable after the confining journey. At the same time his fingers conveyed a message, calling attention to the minute building with the sign, *SECARROS, ELEV. 1563; S.F. 217*. The boy looked up questioningly, and then back. A woman strolled out and came slowly but determinedly toward them.

*Been watching us, the man thought, sizing us up. Naturally. Not caduceus, but the ophthalmoscope ought to be the ubiquitous symbol of the medarchy. Sees all, knows everything, peers into your insides. Big Brother, MD.*

For the hundredth time, he blessed Victoria's inspiration in picking this spot as hideout and rendezvous, in spite of Alex's opposition and his own, and Stuart Yester's doubts. Inaccessible except by train or plane, Secarros was the playground established by the heads of the great pharmaceutical houses—the Medarchy's 60 Families—where well-known or socially-aspiring specialists had weekend cabins or more elaborate summer homes.

All roads ended abruptly at some doctor's gate or continued grudgingly to his private airport, the hunting lodge used by his guests, or his servants' quarters. The thirty-five mile highway with which they connected supported only cars and trucks freighted here on the railroad; it joined no other thoroughfare.

**T**HERE WAS no law or medical regulation which said you couldn't come to Se-carros if you chose, but no one ever used the passenger section of the thrice-weekly train except the meanest employees—that is to say, those clearly beneath suspicion. Only a very stupid or a very clever mallee would expose himself to the obvious dangers. As Vicky had pointed out, just before John Rald had said in his own odd way...

"Your charts."

The elderly woman evidently combined the functions of stationmaster, district nurse, and Medical Police; the man hardly needed the confirmation of the black caduceus pinned next to the red-white-and-blue one. He handed her the thick sheaf

loosely bound in transparent plastic, and the thin one in the pliofilm envelope.

She glanced at the first page of his chart. "Who are you going to work for, Cyrus Tarn?"

No "mister", just as there had been no "please" attached to the initial curt demand. He thought wryly of the elaborate politeness of the orderlies in the cities, and the exquisite, omniscient courtesy of the subcuties. This woman's roughness was infinitely preferable because it didn't suggest limitless resources of coercion.

"No one, Lieutenant," he answered deferentially. "We're just on a visit to my brother. He's a gardener at Dr. Ford's."

There was an undergardener named Phil Tarn at Ford's; the man had learned Phil's history by heart. Electro-tranquillization—the modern substitute for lobotomy—memory very defective, probably couldn't recall whether he had a brother named Cyrus or not. Never a mallee in the political sense, or suspected of not being a Patient, Phil Tarn's confinement and treatment had been for ordinary maladjust-

ment—attempted murder, to be exact. And no known connection with an old friend of a friend in the mallie underground. Nor could the MP check immediately on his story; Dr. Ford had no phone.

**T**HE MP grunted. There was a hint of asthmatic wheeze which would have kept her off duty almost anywhere else—until the symptom was at least suppressed. “In here then, if you’re not going to be on a staff where there’s a regular check. I’ll have to bring your charts up to date myself.”

*And she resents the extra annoyance, thought Cyrus, pleased. Means she’ll be in a hurry to get through. Unless I antagonize her into doing something spiteful.* “Sorry to cause you the trouble, Lieutenant,” he apologized.

She grunted again as she led the way to the stationmaster’s office. There was no sign of the antiseptic atmosphere characteristic of examination cubicles; this, too, gave Cyrus comfort. The woman took thermometers out of a glass tumbler of alcohol; he had his lips

and teeth obediently parted as she stuck one under his tongue. Despite his experience, the boy was slower; she had to say brusquely, “Open your mouth,” before she could do the same for him.

Her fingers were unpleasantly pulpy on his wrist. Cyrus hoped that the danger she represented, comparatively remote though it was, wasn’t making his pulse race. Consciously he breathed steadily, evenly. His eyes moved over her desk to the aging posters on the wall above: *Wanted For Treatment*. No one there he knew. Down to the inkpad and forms. These were the least of his worries; his own prints were on the chart of Cyrus Tarn.

**S**HE REMOVED the thermometer. “The boy, Henry Goodspeed. Not your son?”

“Grandson,” supplied Cyrus, watching him out of the corner of his eye. How long did it take a child to get used to the ways of guilt? And Hank was particularly vulnerable after the school raid, detention, hospitalization, and kidnapping—to say nothing of the secrets he

had been barely saved from revealing.

"Fifty's young for a grandson of ten." She took the thermometer from Hank, read it, shook it down, popped it back into the alcohol. Was she suspicious? Or had the remark been faintly sociable?

"My daughter's boy," Cyrus explained, simulating prideful garrulity. "Norah was a nurse like you, Lieutenant, though not in the Medical Police." He hesitated for an instant, wondering if he were daring too much. "Respiratory trouble. Victim of the Mercifuls." The boy was used to these glib histories; he had passed as Cyrus' son, nephew, pupil, cousin.

The MP's pale lips pursed; her breathing became more audible. "Dirty murderers," she snuffled through her teeth. "Dirty psychos. I'd like to give them the old-fashioned shock-treatments. Tranquilizing or euthanasia's too easy on them. They ought to feel."

*And they'd like nothing better than to stab a lancet—or whatever the currently favored means is now—under your shoulderblades, put you out of*

*your misery. What a world! What a world, when you and the mercifuls don't realize you're twins.*

HER TONE was distinctly less hostile as she finished her notations. "It's a dreary place here," she said. "Unless you're somebody important. And I notice the bigshots are always taking off for somewhere else."

*The lonely MP, he reflected. Next thing she'll be inviting us for tea. I was just a shade too successful in getting chummy. "We're only staying a couple of days. Three at the most."*

"Don't forget to be here half-an-hour before traintime," she warned. "I'll have to go over your charts again before you leave."

"Certainly, Lieutenant."

"If you need attention meanwhile, don't wait until something develops. Remember, we're not as young as we used to be." (*My fatal charm, he thought. Why did I lay it on so thick?*) "There's a neuropathic history here." She tapped his chart. "Some people think they can save money by ignoring



symptoms, but their case histories always catch up with them. It's cheaper to pay a fee, or a dozen fees, than to have the Credit Bureau bill you for hospitalization. You got a referral here, of course?"

This was the weak point of his story, though one which would never be exposed in a hundred times. "Of course, Lieutenant. Doctor Caliggs."

She frowned. "Caliggs, Caliggs. Oh. . . yes. Specialist. Not here very often."

"My doctor wasn't sure there were any general practitioners in Secarros. He mentioned Dr. Caliggs was an old personal friend. I hope it's all right."

"Of course it's all right if the doctor said so. Hmmmm. Well, if you can't find him, get in touch with me right away."

"I surely will, Lieutenant. Thank you."

"Thank you, Lieutenant," echoed Hank, as he had been drilled.

"Your brother's not meeting you?"

"No—he couldn't get off. But I know the way. From letters," he added, not knowing how long she'd been in Secar-

ros. "Up the road from here to the highway, then left. Southward for about two miles across the bridge, until we come to the road marked F. Follow that westward to Dr. Ford's driveway." The route—which he had no intention of taking—unfolded maplike in his mind.

"Right," she said, unconcerned. "I'm only here at train-time. If you need me, the phone's 633."

**F**OR A MOMENT, he feared that she might start walking with them. "Come on, Henry. Let's not take any more of the Lieutenant's time."

He was relieved when she turned her back and began locking up. They stepped out into the sunlight; he picked up the suitcase and they walked swiftly up the gravelled, dusty road.

"She'd call the orderlies, Si, wouldn't she, if she'd been suspicious? I mean, we'd sort of be on our way back to the hospital if those charts hadn't looked OK?"

"Everything's all right, Hank. Maybe it would be better not to talk about it right

now. And call me 'Grandfather' or 'Gramps' for a while—just to keep in the habit."

"Sure, Gramps. Guess I'm kind of rattled—she had me scared. More than the subcutes. She's a sort of orderly, isn't she?"

"Yes, Medical Police. The black pin she was wearing shows that. Subcutes—Surgical - Bactericidal - Custodial Technicians..." he rolled the full title out, thinking how little the derisive nickname mitigated the horror they inspired "...are more dangerous than orderlies because they're smarter. And they don't wear pins or uniforms. Now remember, Henry Goodspeed, you're on your way to see your Uncle Phil, and you never heard of anyone named Victoria Carling."

"Sure, Gramps. I'm not a dope. I just got scared back there."

"I'm always scared," confessed Cyrus. "It's not comfortable, but it keeps you healthy in the Healthfare State—so long as being scared makes you careful, not panicky."

"I'm careful, but I don't know what I could do if a couple of orderlies jumped up and grabbed me."

CYRUS SHOOK his head. "Nor I. I only wish they hadn't got into the fixed habit of using parapentothal to listen in on things we'd rather they didn't know about."

"You can't help yourself, can you? I mean, there's nothing you can take or do to keep from spilling everything when they give you that stuff?"

"Maybe there is, Hank. We haven't got it and don't know about it. Don't worry, though—you're safe now."

They walked for a little way in silence, the boy kicking up loose pebbles or stopping to pick a blade of grass to chew on. *We're badly handicapped, Cyrus thought. A few hundred years ago, all you needed was numbers or muskets. Now you needed knowledge. Lack of it keeps us under their thumbs. More than that, it makes it ever harder to convince Patients that the Ama could ever be wrong about anything.*

It was all, "The Doctor

says", "The Doctor ordered", "The Doctor knows". Mallies weren't merely subversive—they were virtually blasphemous. And the few doctors who were in sympathy with the underground were allies, rather than partners. They'd go so far, and no farther; they condescended to be helpful. If Alex knew the answer to parapentothal, he kept it to himself.

One couldn't even trust the mallies you worked with to overthrow the Ama with medical lore. Hippocratic oath: "...and to none others."

Perhaps a new generation—would the medarchy last so long? Sadly Cyrus admitted the probability—perhaps a new generation would take a different approach, train doctors of their own. If they could. There had been a time when medical schools weeded out social undesirables, including men and women with unprepossessing manners. Now they were interested only in your family and your family's friends. Any history of maladjustment barred you. Permanently. No more baldheaded barbers...

No, the only possible credit

item was consequent overconfidence. Not just at the top. (What did he know about the top? Gossip, rumors, guesses.) On the part of the underlings. Cyrus thought about that MP. She was pretty lax after all. She might easily have kept them hours: bloodpressure, wassermans or urinoanalyses, because there were no recent ones shown on his chart. (There couldn't be—that added danger if checked with the doctor supposed to have given them.)

Unprepared criminals were blundering criminals, and blundering criminals were caught and examined, held for observation and psychiatry, subjected to psychotherapy—p s y c h o - pharmacology or electro-tranquillization (they said that surgery had gone out; lobotomy was too crude for the age; but who *knew?*)—until they were discharged, criminals no longer. Mallies no longer, nonconformists, rebels, individuals no longer.

The strength of the organized mallies (*strength? organized?*) Cyrus smiled wryly; no one knew better the emptiness

of the words) lay in comrades like Victoria and John Rald, who were able to foresee all sorts of contingencies. He himself was prone to make the mistakes of over-elaboration, being forced to rectify them by improvisation.

*Suppose she'd taken a notion to look down Hank's throat and seen the tonsils whose presence contradicted the unavoidable notation? What improvisation would have helped then?* Gooseflesh gathered at the consciousness of how easily betrayal could have come.

**T**HE WEIGHT of the suitcase made him switch it to the other hand. He had packed the clothes he thought Victoria might want, some things of Hank's, his own toothbrush and razor. The bulk of space and weight was for the several hundred pages of manuscript, begun by her father, and worked on from time to time by Victoria: *A Factual and Critical History of the Doctors' Dictatorship*.

Would it ever be possible to convey the flavor of the med-archy to those who hadn't lived

under it? The very fact that Cyrus didn't fear to carry the unfinished book around with him was symptomatic. Only as an accidental afterthought would a subcute or an MP search the baggage of a fleeing mallie. They didn't look in suitcases, but into minds and bodies.

The healing art—caduceus wild. In the Eighteenth Century, the doctor had been a figure of fun—the barber-chirurgeon with his leeches, cups and basins, salves and catheters and purges. Quack, from quick-silver, mercury, the specific for syphilis; dose them, bleed them, watch them die; then the fad for Jenner's cowpox (the smallpox did for the Sun King in twenty-four hours what the great pox couldn't do in fifty years). Matter of taste; well and good.

**B**UT THEN came the subtle progress from valet to authority, Figaro to Lord Lister, servant to master. "Science" in upper case, "The Age Of", pulling medicine to its pinnacle. If Science could invent a breechloading rifle to kill a

man a mile away, then Science could save his life. If Science could wipe out whole cities, it established a right to rule those spared. The doctor could perform a caesarian section and rip MacDuff untimely from his mother's womb; didn't this give him authority to prescribe which wombs should bear, and whose seed was unfit for procreation? *Brother Mendel, innocent monk, your cherished generations of peas have borne poisonous fruit.*

But only for the good of mankind, of course—only to make people healthier, happier, longer-lived. If in the process the doctor became an object of veneration (Microbe Hunters, Men in White, The Country Doctor), no harm was done; patients recovered more quickly when they had perfect faith in the physician. So who took fright or even noticed when the kindly, overworked healer became priest and despot?

"Are you really fifty?" asked the boy suddenly. "Or is that just something down on the chart?"

"I'm really fifty," Cyrus confirmed, restraining a pedantic

impulse to add, "When you make a false chart, stick to the truth as much as you can. Never leave an unnecessary lie to trip over." Hank was already too burdened with illicit knowledge.

"Fifty's awful old. Vi—I mean, somebody I know's only twenty-four and she's been grown for years."

Yes, thought Cyrus, *Victoria is only twenty-four. I'm too old for her—not merely in the eyes of the Ama, who wouldn't give us a marriage license if we dared ask for one—but in Hank's eyes, and our friends', who are too considerate to show it.* Fifty and twenty-four; perhaps not May and December, certainly not, but spring and autumn.

It was still more obvious three years ago: the old lecher—friend of the family, her father's age—and the child just turned twenty-one. And the humiliation for her to run into a gynaecological right after: "Don't you realize, young woman, you're supposed to report immediately for examination and prophylaxis? Glad to see you've kept up your shots at

least." (The chart was false of course; Victoria had never had such injections.) "Any lapse there could be serious for you. We're not interested in morals except as symptoms of adjustment, but standards of medical care mustn't be jeopardized by false modesty. Next time. . ."

"This where we turn?"

HE LOOKED up with a start; the road they were on came to a perpendicular end at a wider, smoother one. Beyond, a rail fence, as consciously antique as the railroad, enclosed a pine woods. "Right," he said.

"You told her left, back there."

"Well, let's go right, just to be contrary."

Hank glanced at him gravely, then decided it was a joke and smiled politely. They continued to climb. There were woods on their left; on the right, iron pickets of a high fence which had somehow survived the scrap drives of World War III. From behind them, two dogs voiced their detestation of pedestrians. Or mallies?

A "Y" branched off the

road; they followed the westerly arm. The rail fence gave way to a masonry wall—granite boulders a man could climb without too much trouble. The pines in back seemed both taller and farther apart. His pulse quickened at the sight of an arched gate inscribed, *Galentry Private. Visitors Phone From Gate For Admission.*

He walked around the little wooden cupboard housing the phone circumspectly, as though it contained heavy explosives. His information was that no electronic eye or telephoto camera guarded the entrance, but Cyrus was still wary. The information, so hastily gathered, might not be accurate, or improvements might have been made.

Because the key lay, not in static facts, but the fluidity of people. What did he know of Chris Mallup? When Victoria had said "Secarros!" and Alex had said, "Ridiculous!" John Rald murmured, "I know a fellow there. He'll put you up."

What did it mean in terms of their safety; in terms of precautions to be taken at the moment? Mallup worked for the



owner of Galentry; he was privileged. Now go on from there.

**W**AS MALLUP the sort of man who would mention their coming? Would it fit in with his status? Was Victoria—would Hank and Cyrus be—acknowledged openly, or furtively hidden? If Mallup had mentioned their coming, surreptitious movement would only excite suspicion. And if he hadn't...

Unsure, dissatisfied, Cyrus at last approached the gate and pushed it open. It swung easily, silently. No alarm bells were audible, no watchdogs gave sudden tongue. "Inside. Quickly," he whispered.

He swung the gate back into place, wondering whether it might contain some device for counting the number of times it was opened. In unspoken agreement they slid behind the shrubbery between the driveway and the pines. The silence remained, neither ominous nor promising.

"All right," he muttered. "I think it's safe." He knew every step of the way from here, al-

most every bush and topographical oddity. The ironical part was that he had naturally—whatever that meant—a rather poor memory. Only intense discipline and application had made it possible for him to retain an intricate combination of facts, symbols, numbers or geographic details—often mutually contradictory, since at times they served for an ostensible story as well as an actual guide—in a mind simultaneously burdened with plans, forebodings, calculations.

They followed the roadway without intruding on it, keeping fairly well concealed behind the convenient landscaping, without giving an appearance of undue stealth if by chance they were observed. Cyrus caught glimpses of the big house up ahead as the road twisted; it was bluff, ugly, domineering and costly. A man who would build or buy such a house must be not only arrogant but assured beyond doubt of his self-importance.

**A**S THE ROAD turned toward a wide portico, he signalled the boy. They struck

across open ground toward a group of structures whose location and architecture indicated they were the service, maintenance and auxiliary outbuildings; the garages, stables, workshop, toolshed, and servants' quarters, of Galentry.

Though he had studied the layout, Cyrus was momentarily uncertain as they threaded their way between a barn and the underpinnings of a large water tank. Then he remembered. He struck off, and down an unexpected path, led the way to a two-storied house which seemed to have no organic connection or relationship with the other buildings.

She was waiting for them, recklessly—or reassuringly—visible, at the foot of an outside stairway. The noon sun caught the loose ends of her hair—the exact color of a cut apple exposed to the air, he had once told her—and turned them pale gold. The knuckles of one hand pressed against that short, exciting upper lip.

“Vicky! Oh, Vicky!”

Cyrus didn't have the heart to hush the boy—he could only motion Victoria to lead them

quickly from the exposed spot. As always, the sight of her was strangely poignant, the reverse of a dream in which the startling unwinds familiarly. For each time he saw her afresh, he realized that her picture, no matter how often he imagined it, had never become fixed. Each time it was new and inviolate, startling. She was so little, so perfect, so young. So desired and known, yet ever desirable and still unknown; the torn half of an amulet, fitting the one he carried. Victoria, incongruously, rightly named: vulnerable and invincible.

**E**VEN AS she cried at reunion with them, her small head was royally unbent; emotion did not lessen her dominion over herself. And as she turned to ascend the stairs, one arm around her brother's shoulders, her free hand in Cyrus' her limp—gained long ago when her broken ankle had been inexpertly set—was graceful. There was no compromise with affliction; it was conquered, incorporated into the easy flow of her motion. It forced her to move slowly; it

could not make her move awkwardly.

The door at the head of the stairs was open. "Everything all right?" Cyrus asked in a low voice, as soon as they were in the hall beyond. It was a normal question that anyone might ask, so long as no betraying anxiety went into it.

She took her arm from Hank's shoulder and opened one of the doors flanking the hall. "I think so."

The cautious answer was more disquieting than an open expression of doubt. He looked inquiringly at her. She shook her head, warning him not to put a further burden on the boy, letting him know there was no immediate cause for alarm. Then she was hugging Hank, and lifting her face to Cyrus.

He bent to give her a kiss of affection, of reunion. Instead, he found himself forcing her head back, pressing her mouth with unappeasable longing. She smiled breathlessly. "Oh... Oh, my dear..."

**H**E REALIZED that he still gripped the suitcase. He

put it down, surveyed the room. Upstairs: bad. Was there an inside as well as an outside stairway? If so, possibly good. Other evaluations would have to wait on what Victoria had to say. There was nothing to be learned from the unmatching twin beds, the dreadnaught mission rocker which must have survived generations of more graceful competitors, the low double dresser, its drawer-pulls decimated in honorable encounter, set beneath the window, or the slightly stuffy air—suggesting only rare use—of this typical servants' room which yet had the faint impress of individuality on it.

He walked to the window. Neither the big house nor the way in could be seen from here: not good. The view was that of a kitchen garden, slightly ragged, a hedge, and beyond, two long, stilt-supported roofs protecting rows of chicken cages. The display of opulent elegance which had marked the rest of the estate was absent; evidently the owner of Galentry didn't believe in sharing all its amenities with the staff. Again he looked questioningly at Vic-

toria, who was sitting on one of the beds with Hank.

"Mr. Mallup is very nice," she said, obliquely answering him. "He hasn't seen John Rald for years, but every so often one or another of John's friends drops in to stay a day or two. I'm Carrie Goodspeed—I'm Hank's half-sister. Can you remember to call me 'Carrie', Hank?"

"Sure. It's a lousy name, 'Carrie'. All right, Carrie. Si still my grandfather?"

"Yes dear. And don't say 'lousy'—that isn't what you mean at all. And Hank..."

"Yeh?"

"Hank."

"Yes... Carrie?"

"Naturally you'll be very careful not to say anything..."

"Gee, Carrie, when did I ever?"

"I know, dear. I just wanted you to be particularly careful in front of Mr. Mallup's granddaughter."

"Granddaughter?" asked Cyrus. "John didn't say anything..."

**S**HE SHOOK her head at him. "Hank, don't you want

to go to the bathroom? It's the door in the middle, opposite."

"No, I don't. You got something to tell Gramps you don't want me to hear?"

"I want you to go and wash your hands. And get the *backs* of them clean. And use soap. I'll look at the towel afterward."

"Aw, I don't need to."

"Henry!"

"Yeh, Carrie."

He went out rebelliously, leaving the door open. Victoria said quickly, "The granddaughter is about sixteen. She's a Caducean."

"What's that?"

"Church of the Caduceus. Logical. And she's about sixteen—just the age for fanaticism. I think Mallup knows all about John, and just doesn't care. The girl's another story."

"Yes. It's a bad angle. All the worse for being unexpected." Still, he was relieved, now the danger was defined. Church of the Caduceus. Evidently the medarchy still had the vigor to produce new ideas. "Fortunately it won't be long—we're getting out sometime tomorrow."

**H**ANK RETURNED, showed the backs of his hands silently to Victoria. She put her arms around him again. "I've been so frightened for both of you."

"Aw," said the boy, "you needn't. You should have seen—uh—Gramps. . ."

"You'd better tell me from the beginning. But keep your voices low. You left for school, then I got a— Then I had to come here. So I really don't know all that happened."

"Well, I got to school, and everything was funny. It's always funny, going to school in different houses all the time, but I don't mean that. It was the right place all right, because Joan Lews and Buddy Wint and Hy Cohen were there, but none of the other kids. And no teachers. After a while we cased the joint. There was cookies and some good jam in the kitchen. . ."

"Oh, Hank, you shouldn't!"

"Well, gee—there was no one around, and if their old cookies were so valuable they should have locked them up. Anyway, Buddy and Hy decided there wasn't going to be any school

that day and went home. I and Joan were just about ready to do the same when the car drove up and these three big men came in. They wanted to know who we were. Joan told, but I didn't say anything. I don't know what they did with Joan. They said for me to get in the car, but I didn't want to, so one of the guys picked me up and carried me. We went to some place with a room with a desk, and another fellow came out and said, 'Well, well, well. And what's *your* name, young man?' I said, 'My name's Captain Kidd and I want to go home.' I was scared, see, but I was trying not to let on or tell my name. Because if they knew, I figured they'd want to know about the mallie TV station. . ."

"Ah," murmured C y r u s.  
"Ah."

"What?"

"Nothing, dear. You were brave and smart, and we're proud of you. Go on."

"So he says, 'All right, Captain, tell me where you live so I can take you there.' What a dummy!" He fell silent, clearly lost in reminiscence.

"Then what happened?" Victoria prompted.

**H**ANK SHRUGGED. "Oh, then he asked me a lot more questions, and another guy—a doctor I guess, with a white coat—asked me a lot more, and they gave me a piece of paper with ink splattered all over it and wanted to know what I saw, and I said, 'Ink spots. What do you see?' And then they started with more questions and I said I was tired, so the doctor he stuck me with a needle—I kicked him good first, though—and after that I didn't feel tired a bit, but I still didn't answer right. Then one of them says, 'I believe this is the boy, all right,' and the other says, 'I'm sure of it.' So then they were swell to me, gave me ice cream and everything, and took me to the hospital where a real sourpuss nurse put me to bed.

"Then I was scarer than before, but I fell asleep and had bad dreams and when I woke up another nurse came in with breakfast and gave me a pill. I tried to hold it in my mouth but she did something

with my throat—it didn't hurt—and I had to swallow it. I felt kind of dopey, didn't really go to sleep, then the feeling wore off and I was just plain scared again. I lied there thinking and thinking, and I couldn't figure out anything to do. I went to the door but it wouldn't open, and the window was too high up from the ground to jump out of. Then a different nurse came in with some lunch and another pill, but she wasn't smart as old sourpuss so I held the pill under my tongue till she was gone and spit it out. Gee, it was bitter. I felt low, real low I mean. I knew it wouldn't be long till they came and gave me something to make me tell everything, and then I'd spill it all. About the mallie school, and the paper Si gets out, and the TV station..."

**T**HAT WOULD have really puzzled them, Cyrus thought. Until they realized that a boy would call all broadcasting "TV", whether pictures accompanied the sound or not.

"... I was just getting a real sweat up, when the door opens,



and there's Si, in white pants and everything, like one of those guys who empties bed-pans. . . ."

"An orderly."

"Uh-uh. An orderly is a cop. This was one of those guys around the hospital the nurses talk tough to. Anyway, it wasn't—it was Si. He was pushing a wheelchair, too. I caught on right away and got in. We went through those corridors like nobody's business (but I sure thought we'd never get to the end of them) and down one of those things. . . ."

"Ramps," supplied Victoria.

"Yeh. And a nurse stopped us and asked where we were going, and Si answered something, and then we went on till he suddenly turned into an empty room. So he took our clothes that were in the blankets on the chair all along and threw his white pants on the bed and said, 'Armor for the next knight.' Because the pants were stiff like iron, see? It was a joke. And then he had a couple of passes in his hand and we walked real slow out of a side-door into a car."

HAD HE REALLY appeared so cool and skillful to Hank? It had seemed to Cyrus at the time—and perhaps more so in retrospect—that his fears and uncertainties must have shown plainly on his face, that every moment of dreadful suspense, every start and tremor of apprehension must have been visible, and the pounding of his heart heard aloud. Cyrus the rescuer was a prosaic fact, a choice made reluctantly and in spite of reasoned opposition by both Victoria and Stuart Yester, but for what seemed good and sufficient reasons. Cyrus the dashing hero was a reconstruction with only the most tenuous relation to reality.

He looked at the trees beyond the chicken pens. Yesterday—an hour ago—the phantoms of discovery and capture were all around him; now all he had to consider was an old man, a largely unknown quantity to be sure, but one who had sheltered mallies before. And an adolescent girl. A Caducean. Church of the Caduceus. Have to find out about it. An experiment? Certainly noth-

ing that had been widely publicised. Or had it? Was it possible that Boyd Carling's insistence on building a new society in the shell of the old had been too successful? Successful in a way Victoria's father had never thought of? That the mallies were losing contact with what went on within the medarchy?

Or was the Church of the Caduceus just some spontaneous fad? (Have to find out, anyway.) Was the Ama its College of Cardinals? What were its dogmas? With spiritual strength added to the medarchy's material appeals, the healthfare state would be just about invincible.

One of the Ama's early—and now forgotten—difficulties had been with the neurotics who had accepted its benevolence too readily—who had been enamored of medicine as an ultimate end and implemented their worship by annoying doctors beyond normal expectation. Given an outlet, canalized and disciplined, this old liability could be a new asset. Cyrus shook his head.

"...funniest darn train you ever saw. The conductor's

name is Mister Woodley. His bloodpressure..." Hank's narrative was drawing to a close; Victoria had been brought up to date. Cyrus left the window, and she moved to him simultaneously. This time their clinging together had less fierceness, more urgency.

**T**HE URGENCY was not new to them; but it was still there, baffled year after baffled year. Now, or in the next few days, it would finally be quieted one way or another. The old way of life—the apartness, the furtive meetings, the sudden, inescapable separations—was finished. Now they would either get away entirely to be free at last, or else...

...or else electro-tranquillization, and whatever else the medarchy's wisdom might prescribe for their maladjusted states. Urgency and emotion—what happened to the flame when the candle was blown out? Urgency and emotion would be part of an unremembered past, blotted out, destroyed, nonexistent.

And not just Victoria. (*Just Victoria!*) Hank, and the oth-

ers; comrades, friends; ideas and the memory of ideas. Angers, passions, ideals, hopes, determinations, fears. All urgency, all the inner burning, all caring wiped out by an impersonal current carried in an impersonal electrode manipulated by an impersonal technician employed by a benevolent and compassionate society. Because you were part of that society, and if you were diseased the entire body was afflicted.

You understand, don't you? (Smile.) You'll be a new man. (Smile.) You'll look back on this with gratitude. (Smile.) All right, now; take it easy; this isn't going to hurt a bit. Not one bit. All right, tech. Now then, your troubles will soon be over. . . .zzz... Told you it wouldn't hurt, didn't I? My, how you must have been suffering. . . .zzzz... Carrying all that load, thinking everyone was against you. . . .zzzzz... Imagine, such ideas for a man of your age. Tch-tch. . . .zzzzzz . . . Really in your prime, you know—you'll be an asset to society, instead of. . . .zzzzzzz... give him the full dose, tech—that fixation for the girl seems

to have been pretty firmly implanted. . . .zzzzzzzz... There—that's that.

AND LATER: why did I fight it? Can't remember what I was afraid of, what seemed to make it so vital to resist. The neurosis itself, of course, the asocial affect. Good thing it's all gone—I feel fine—look at my muscle, listen to my heart. Everything's so peaceful, so well-ordered, so right.

And perhaps seeing Victoria on the street and some buried part of the mind twitching (but only fleetingly) in nostalgic dead pain; he smiling politely at her, she smiling politely at him; both thinking, *Did I know him, did I know her? Was that someone, or is it a resemblance...?* I can't remember (alcohol is C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH; Katmandu is the capital of Nepal; Mozart died in 1791; 13x13 is 169, but still I can't remember). Must have been in . . . the past. Bad. . . sad. . . asocial. . . I was—I was. . . maladjusted. Oh. . . I'm glad I don't remember. I don't want to remember. Doctor, help me, save

me—help me not to want to remember. Give me a shot, give me a pill, give me anything to make me glad I can't remember. And still later: I wonder what that was all about? Some girl I never saw before, but I got sort of upset. (Must have a checkup.) And did you notice? She had a deformed ankle. That's right: deformed! Uh!

He shivered with her warm in his arms.

"They didn't find the station?" she asked.

**H**E SHOOK his head. "Not the last I heard. I don't know how they found the school, but this I'm reasonably sure of: it was no accident."

"Daddy's idea." It was a statement, not a question.

"I think so. Everything seems to tie up. Because your father started the illegal schools, because he hid rather than give you and Hank up, and because—more than anything else—he eternally hammered at the idea of avoiding all contact with the medarchy so far as possible; they are making far greater effort than

they would to find just any three mallies. And that's why we're going at last: we've outlived our usefulness. We've become more of a drag than a help to the opposition."

"You haven't," she protested.

"We're in it together," he said. "All three of us. The plane— Do you think it's safe to talk here?"

"You can't hear what's going on in this room downstairs," she said. "If you mean microphones and things, I don't know. But if Tree has the place wired, he's already heard so much that a little more won't make much difference."

Cyrus considered this briefly. The strength of the medarchy was also one of its weaknesses: unlike other authoritarian forms, it could offer no spectacular rewards to informers. Its supremacy depended on the acquiescence of the Patients, on acquiescence based on the assumption that the Ama was purely benevolent—that those who opposed it were hurting themselves. They might be betrayed for reasons which would have seemed secondary

or irrelevant in the days before the medarchy; they wouldn't be turned in for the reasons—money, power, public adulation—which would have been primary then.

“TOMORROW night at ten.” He could have told her much more: the type of plane, where it came from, the location of the secret field. He could have told her that the only moment of danger would be when the plane landed to pick them up; after that there were no pursuit planes which could fly as high. But he burdened her with no inessential knowledge; that was one of the first things you learned when you began conspiring against the Ama. Secrets could be pried out of you; what you didn't know you couldn't give away. He was sorry he had told her so much; just knowing the time of rendezvous could be dangerous.

“So short a time,” she said. “Oh, it's impossible to believe, really. A few hours, then... Free, and safe...”

Nor could he believe it himself; he dared not allow the

luxury of faith to enervate him. What would it be like—dared he modify that to what *will* it be like?—to live openly together? Man and wife, in holy matrimony, let no man put asunder. No license from the Ama, to be gained—but never by them—only at the expense of all dignity. (Father's medical history: Epilepsy? VD? TB? Poliomyelitis? Daltonism? Mother's history: Nymphomania? Hysteria? Age at menopause? Maternal grandfather: Haemophilia? And on and on.) Just a bored statistical query. Widower of this parish and Victoria Carling, spinster of that. Do you, Cyrus (in using an alias, the trick was to identify himself with the first name); do you, Victoria; if anyone knows just cause; with all my worldly goods; I now pronounce you.

Mr. Tennick, I believe, and Mrs. Tennick (Mrs. Tennick—why had he given Norah as the name of his nonexistent daughter? Poor Norah)—how are things in the States? Shocking, shocking. It was never so bad here; we don't take that sort of thing well, you know. Wind

may enter, rain may enter, but the King, and all that...and after the Harley Street Mas-sacres (they weren't really: a few medical chaps got a bit cut up—no fatalities) restored Constitutional forms... No Ama to say, as it had to the Reverend Boyd Carling: "You can't have a pubile daughter in the same house with you." (How did their host...?) Or as they never got the chance to tell Victoria "You can't bring up a brother..." Hank would have a home and a family at long last.

"Free and safe," he repeated firmly. "And in a few years there'll be an end to the Ama, the subcuties, the Medical Police, the whole Healthfare State."

"God willing," she added.

**H**ANK ASKED unbelievingly, "No more shots and vaccinations?"

"Not unless you want them," said Victoria. "They're voluntary in England now."

"Who'd want them if a bunch of old nurses and doctors didn't grab you?"

"Much worse if you'd been a real Patient."

"I'd never be a Patient. I'm going to be a mallie like Dad was, and you and Vicky."

"I don't want you to use that word after tomorrow, Hank," she said.

"What?" he asked, astonished.

"It's a good, creditable term, here and now," she explained, "and it's come to mean those who hate arrogance and absolutism, who are willing to risk everything for freedom—but it was originally a sneer against us. Now that we're going where they've gotten liberty back, it's no help to all the things we believe in to have to explain we're not really maladjusted—that we just refused to adjust to coercion."

Oh Victoria, thought Cyrus tenderly, dear priggish love. Born a man three hundred years earlier, she must certainly have Fontenoyed, "Gentlemen of France, fire first."

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "I forgot the food."

"Food!" exclaimed Hank. "Boy, could I eat."

"I wouldn't mind too much



myself," said Cyrus. Absently he felt his cheeks; he'd have to be particularly careful about shaving—so many strange eyes to observe him closely. The medarchy forbade all hair below the eyelashes as unsanitary. MPs enforced the use of depilatories on the entire body, but only facial growth was regarded as a symptom of maladjustment. If they got to England, he might grow a beard. Not a bushy beard, just a close-cropped one. "How would you like me in a . . ."

"I think there's somebody listening outside the door," said Hank.

## II

**H**IS MIND raced back over everything that had been said in the last few minutes. Suspicious, not incriminating. Not that this made any difference when you were not dealing with laws, arrests or trials. The suspect were diagnosed, not accused.

"Oh, I'm sure you must be wrong." His sensitized ear caught the forced note in Victoria's voice. "There's no one here who'd listen . . ."

The knock came, precisely timed. "Come in," she called, unstartled, even gaily welcoming. "Come in."

The man who opened the door blinked, and tilted the brim of his flabby felt hat perfunctorily. "Hi, Carrie. Thought I heard voices—wondered if your company had come?"

He was an old man, with leathery, sinewy hands; wide, soft, stubbled jowls. Denim pants hung loose on his thighs, but the brightly-patterned shirt was tight over his heavy shoulders. His little, bright eyes appraised Cyrus and Hank, turned back to Victoria.

"They have, Mr. Mallup, and we were just coming downstairs. This is my brother, Henry, Mr. Mallup—and this is Henry's grandfather, Cyrus Tarn. You'll have to figure out just what relation Cyrus and I are to each other. It's always been too complicated for me."

"That so? Don't pay too much attention, myself. My granddaughter now—she's always interested in first cousins, second cousins, double cousins, and so on. Genetics, you know

—heredity and that stuff. Never did care who was whose father since I got old enough to know it don't make much difference in the end. Tarn, ay? There's a Tarn over at Ford's."

CYRUS SHOOK his head, hoping Mallup's close acquaintanceship didn't include the MP at the station. "No connection so far as I know."

"That so? Well, it's no matter. Like who sleeps with who, I always say, so long as the springs don't squeak."

"Why?" asked Hank.

"Henry, don't bother Mr. Mallup," said Victoria hastily. "We were just coming down—we didn't hear you come up."

"Seldom do," admitted Mallup. "Count the steps when you get to eighty. Used to do a lot of hunting—learned to walk real quiet."

"Did you hunt bears?" asked Hank.

"Bears, bobcats, mountain lions, coyotes, squirrels, rabbits, deer. Speaking of hunting, how about a little lunch for you folks? Got some eggs, not an hour old—eggs more than a day are poison, pure poison—

some fried rabbit from yesterday, all the fresh vegetables you can eat. Grow them myself. Organic soil. No damn chemicals ever touch them."

They moved out into the hall. "You're not a vegetarian like John Rald?" asked Cyrus.

Mallup, starting down the stairs, shook his head over his shoulder. "Old John's a nut. Real ironclad, copper-riveted brass-buttoned nut. John won't eat a chicken because some mean old man chopped off its head. I don't mind that, but I won't eat anything that's fed or grown unnaturally, because it don't taste right. Like Rafe Tree's fancy truck. But there's some of that, too, in the ice-box, if you fancy it. He sends it over and Judy—that's my granddaughter—pecks at it. Anything's good enough for a doctor's good enough for her."

He led the way into a large kitchen; Cyrus noted that it had both an electric stove and woodrange. "It's very kind of you to put us up for a couple of days, Mr. Mallup," he said.

"Stay's long as you want. I'm a sort of hermit myself—stand people only so long, then I have

to go off by myself, where I can't hear voices. But Judy likes company. Judy! Judy—where are you?"

**VICTORIA** said, "No need to bother her. I can fix something for all of us."

"Not me," said Mallup, going over to the woodrange and poking in the firebox. "I've cooked for myself too long. No reflection on you, Carrie—I don't let Judy trifle with my food, either."

"I'm not offended. I just hope Judy won't mind my rummaging around in her refrigerator."

"Not her's. Rafe Tree's, like everything else here. Help yourself."

"Boy," said Hank; "we eat."

"Grandfather — grandfather... Where are you? Oh! Excuse me."

"Adolescent," Victoria had said, but Judy was a very ripe sixteen. Her blouse was pushed well forward; her hips filled her slacks. She was a large girl with a wide mouth, small nose, direct eyes, like Mallup.

"Judy Larch," introduced

Victoria. "Cyrus Tarn. Henry Goodspeed."

The girl threw her right hand backward against her chest. "Health!" she cried.

Cyrus, a little startled, imitated the gesture, and tried to manage her ringing tones. "Health!"

Her smile had not lost the faint remnant of a child's grin. "You're one of us," she exclaimed happily.

"One of you?"

"A Caducean." The smile became uncertain. "Aren't you?"

**HANK BEGAN** hitting himself and muttering, "Health! Health!" till Victoria put a restraining hand on his arm.

"I think Tarn was just being polite," suggested Mallup, scooping some coffee beans from a burlap sack and dumping them into a mill fixed to the wall. The smell drifted tantalizingly through the kitchen.

"But I do want to hear about the Church of the Caduceus," said Cyrus, putting somewhat more warmth into the remark than he had intended. "It

sounds. . .” he reached desperately for the word which would be most welcome “*vital*.”

“Oh, yes!” The smile returned. “You must. . .”

“Hey, how about food?” interrupted Mallup. He finished grinding the beans, emptying them lovingly into a soot-furred coffee pot, ancient dribblings long since baked on to glisten with a shiny patina. He dipped water from a pail on top of them. “Finest spring water a n y w h e r e,” he explained. “Have to haul it myself, but it’s worth it—water run through an iron pipe’s not fit to make coffee, soup or whiskey with.”

“I’m sorry,” said Judy stiffly.

“Let me help you,” offered Victoria.

“There’s nothing to help with, thanks. There’s some shrimp salad and cold duck from Dr. Tree’s. I don’t know what Grandfather’s making on his smoky old stove.”

“Never smokes—I keep the pipes and flue clean. Coffee, omelette, sliced tomatoes. Customers holler before I start beating the eggs.”

“Me for the duck and stuff,” spoke up Hank. “I bet old Doc Tree shoots vitamins on sight. No darn wheatgerm muffins for him.”

“You’re right, son,” agreed Mallup. “Food he eat’s got all the natural taste and values taken out. He has to put them back in with fancy sauces and fortified pills.”

**J**UDY’S BACK was turned to them as she reached into the refrigerator. “I don’t think it’s right to encourage disrespect of doctors. They give up their whole lives watching over us. Sneering at them’s a poor return.”

“I’ll join Hank on the duck if you have enough, Miss Larch,” said Cyrus, hoping to soothe the girl. He tried to catch Hank’s eye with an admonition to be careful.

“Break another egg for me, Mr. Mallup.” Victoria was setting the table as she talked. “Here’s a glass of milk for you, Hank.”

“Raw milk,” said Judy. “Grandfather doesn’t believe in pasteurization.”

“*You* always drank it,” said

Mallup. "Doesn't seem to have stunted your growth any."

She shrugged her shoulders pettishly. "People should take advantage of all the wonderful things Science can do for us. Otherwise we'd still be living in trees and cooking on wood stoves."

"Sounds too complicated," commented Mallup. "I'm willing to take advantages, all right. But I want to do the choosing."

"But Grandfather, that's just exactly why we have scientists and doctors. They *know*. How can you set yourself up against them?"

Mallup folded the omelette over, took it from the fire, put half on Victoria's plate, half on his own. "Don't set myself against them. Live and let live's my motto. Who's for coffee?"

"Grandfather, how can you use that disgraceful old pot? It isn't as though we didn't have a perfectly good electric drippolator."

"Wouldn't use that damned engine on a bet. And my pot hasn't been the same since the time you started to wash it out. You wouldn't believe it. . . ." he

turned to the others with greater animation than he had yet shown "...but that's exactly what she did. Tried to wash my coffee pot."

"It's unhygienic, like most all of the things you use and do. Oh, Grandfather—if you'd only realize how much better off, how much healthier, happier, and everything you'd be in an Age Adjustment Center! How much more useful you'd be to yourself and society!"

**M**ALLUP spoke through a full mouth, unperturbed. "That so? All depends how you look at it. Maybe I'd enjoy having my bloodpressure taken once a week instead of six times a year and being set to weave or knit, or whatever socially useful work the consulting psychiatrist decides suits me best until the same character says, 'Mallup? Mallup? Oh, that old crock? Finish him up and send him to the crematorium—we need the space.' Maybe I would and maybe I wouldn't."

Judy jumped up from the table. "You're impossible!" she said with passion. "Just impossible! You talk like a—like a

*mallie.*" She turned and ran from the room.

"You do for sure," observed Hank. "Are you, huh?"

"Henry! Stop that! How dare you talk to Mr. Mallup that way?"

"Leave the boy alone, Carrie." He poured himself more coffee, unruffled. "No, son. I'm a Patient. Good as any, better than some. Have my chart handy at all times—follow doctors' orders—co-operate from here to hell and gone."

"Including regular check-ups?" asked Victoria.

"Sure. With all doctors do for people, I can't understand running away from them." He looked directly at Cyrus. "Those that do are letting their feelings get ahead of their minds. Like Judy said, they're here to help us. Why, they've saved my life a couple of times. At least, I've lived and been under doctors' care at the same time."

"No coincidence," murmured Victoria.

**M**ALLUP conceded, "Maybe. Hey, you—Henry. Why don't you go out and find

Judy? Ask her to sing you some of those Caducean Sunday school songs. That'll make her happy."

"I don't want to," said Hank.

"Hank." Cyrus put order and pleading into his tone.

"Aw... Sure, Gramps. Be seeing you."

"Nice boy," commented Mallup. "Favor your daughter or his father?"

"What? Uh... I'm not sure."

"Mmmm. You don't act like a working grandfather, Tarn. Now I'd never have any doubt about who Judy looks like."

"Well, Hank..."

"Tain't important. Now, what I was saying: it could have been coincidence, but it didn't have to be. Doctors spend years learning what to do. Maybe saving lives is putting it too strong. But they can make things a lot easier all around."

"Euthanasia," suggested Victoria.

"I suppose so. But I wasn't thinking of that. I was remembering a friend of mine—about my age. Didn't have my sense, though—married twice. Once was enough for me. Anyway,



both his women kicked off. First one died during the war: radiation. Thought he'd never get over it—miserablest human being I ever did see. Tell you all about how unhappy he was before you could say, 'Have a drink.' And when you managed to pour him one, he'd cry into it. Unhappy," he added in explanation.

"I see," said Cyrus.

**“WELL,** AT long last he run out of grief and tried again. Real nice woman, too—didn't nag, made him comfortable, laughed at his jokes. Anyway, she died too, a few years back. Looked like we were all set for another round of hard mourning, but the orderlies picked him up, and the doctors put him on a program of anti-depressant shots. They worked fine. No moaning—no resignation, even. No loss of memory either. Just happy and satisfied.”

“That's monstrous!” exclaimed Cyrus. “No one has a right to interfere with such a private emotion.”

“That so? What good would his private emotion have done

him? And it wouldn't have helped her any, either.”

“I'm curious to know what happened to your friend after he was cured of his grief,” said Victoria.

“Well, to tell the truth, maybe the anti-depressant shots worked a little too well. Got so he didn't give much of a damn about anything: work, washing, changing his clothes, going for his checkups, following doctors' orders. Just sat around being satisfied all the time. He was in an Age Adjustment Center by then, and you can't get away with being socially useless there. So they euthanized him.”

“Thus demonstrating how doctors spend years learning what to do,” taunted Victoria.

Mallup grinned at her. “You're hard on the doctors, Carrie. They do what they can.”

“‘Do what they can,’” she repeated. “Deciding whether you're fit for your chosen occupation—arbitrarily assigning you to a more suitable one if your IQ is too low or too high. Judging if you're fit to marry, and if you are, to predict

whether you'll have a satisfactory sex-life with your chosen husband or wife, refusing to endorse a license unless it seems likely. Saying what genes and chromosomes make the optimum combinations (optimum for what?)—forbidding parenthood to those with different ones. Performing 'indicated' hysterectomies, sterilizations, abortions. Adjusting Patients to a society which may not be to their taste, conditions they might improve, handicaps they could overcome. Quieting the indignant with psycho-pharmacology, and the outraged with electro-tranquilization. Forcing the dissident to testify against themselves with parapentathol. Killing those who have 'out-lived their social usefulness', or suffer prolonged pain—or perhaps have maladies they are incompetent to diagnose."

**M**ALLUP belched politely behind his hand. "That was a mighty pretty speech, Carrie. Only one thing wrong with it: everything's in black and white."

"Whereas it ought to be all in white, for the ministering

angels." A moment ago Cyrus had been uneasy at Victoria's indiscretion—now he was capping it.

"No, you got me wrong. I'm a Patient because it suits me. If it doesn't suit somebody else, I don't say they ought to fall flat on their faces. But there's room—all the space from black to white—between looking on the doctor as God and seeing him as the devil. The doctor says (you say he says—I don't know one way or the other) he checks your IQ and won't let you be a farmer if you're smart enough for an engineer. All right—why not go somewhere and farm, and pretend you're dumber than you are? He won't let you marry. Men and women have managed to get in bed together without, quite a while. He says no kids—do you have to tell him? He can't cut you up if you're not handy. At least, I haven't heard about long distance surgery so far."

"But that's exactly— I mean..."

**M**ALLUP shook his head. "No, it isn't. The Mallies

—people something like you and old John Rald—are *fighting* the medarchy, trying to change it. You aren't satisfied to dodge or hide out or get along. Black and white. Like Judy. If I'm right, you're wrong. Revolution."

"Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God," quoted Cyrus, feeling not only foolish but reckless.

"Maybe. But who's doing the resisting? A few mallies here, a few mallies there. Things aren't changed that way, never have been. I mean *really* changed. Change happens when conditions are ripe for it, not when a few people decide the hour has come and holler, 'To the barricades, comrades!'

"Sure the medarchy cracks down. What would you expect? They're running things and they're going to save people if they have to kill them doing it. Naturally there's people who don't know which fork to use, and naturally these people find a place in the Healthfare State, just as they would in any other. Some get to be doctors who don't like being called in the night just because your wife's

in labor, so they call up the hospital and tell them to hold things up with drugs while they have their sleep out. But there's always been doctors like that."

"But you didn't *have* to go to them," Cyrus broke in.

MALLUP shrugged. "Matter of degree. Just as likely to hit one by chance when you have a choice as when you haven't. Same with those who become orderlies, MPs or sub-cutes—they'd have been cops or prison guards. You don't like them, I don't like them—seems to me the best way to avoid them is not to give them an excuse or a chance to get at you, not by standing up and shouting, 'You're a sadist, you're a sadist!' All you do is make it tough for yourselves."

"It's a point of view," admitted Cyrus, half willing to let the subject drop, but still tempted to outargue the old man. "Maybe you're old enough to avoid the worst aspects of the system for the rest of your life. Maybe if I'm careful enough I could, too. But what about the younger ones? Benevolent despotisms are all

benevolence at first, all despotism in the end.

"When the doctors took over, it was just because they were needed. But you can't run a society with just doctors and nurses and laboratories. You have to have discipline, if only to keep the Patients in line. Hence the orderlies. But the orderlies were no good for checking charts, spotting non-cooperative individuals, cranks. So we got the trained Medical Police. But what could MPs do about mallies who conspired, propagandized, actively resisted? Answer: the subcuties.

"Now children are betraying parents—for their own good. 'Remind your folks to have their shots, Johnny.' 'Did they have their shots, dear?' 'No? They don't like shots? Thank you, Johnny—we'll check on it.' Soon every child will be given a regular injection of parapentathol—and every intimacy of the home will be in dossiers. Perhaps the very, very clever will still find some way to get around it. But it's not dignified, and there will be more and more mallies who won't adjust to society or with-

draw from it. Won't pretend injustice and horror doesn't exist, or preserve a remnant of their own selfrespect while letting others lose theirs."

MALLUP chuckled. "Rather be dignified than comfortable, ay? Personally, I'd rather be comfortable. What's your dignity going to get you? A thorough examination of your mind—stuff dragged up you wanted to forget years and years ago and thought you had. Then treatment—the works. Electro-tranquilization, hypno-paedia, whatever they've got to remodel you with. Why, you'd probably come out screaming for a doctor every time you sneezed."

"Surely..." began Victoria. Then she shook her head. "Haven't you any sympathy for...those who feel that way?" She looked strangely pale to Cyrus, as though the strain of the conversation, counterpointing their situation in a minor key, was suddenly too much.

"Sympathy? I don't know. Why can't they get along the way I do? I carry my charts

and don't try to figure out what's in them every time they change the code. I take my shots when they're indicated—and they're indicated oftener and oftener at my age—swallow my vitamins and whatever else is prescribed. Pay the Credit Bureau promptly. Doesn't bother me at all.

"Every so often I have to cope with them. 'Psychopathic personality,' they say; 'claustrophobia, demophobia, cardiac-neurosis. See Dr. Soandso, the psychiatrist.' I see him. (I have to pay anyway, and if I don't keep my appointment the subcutes'll be around to ask me why.) 'Why don't you move to town, Mr. Mallup?' he asks me; 'Do you dream of crowds, or being crushed? I realize you must enjoy working for Dr. Tree, but don't you think it's time to give up work like that. Don't you ever feel it's slightly antisocial not to be with people of your own age? What would happen if everybody did what you're doing? We've had very satisfactory results with indrawn people once they've become part of a larger group. Especially at your age. And

while Secarros has the finest collection of medical men in the country, there are no clinical facilities there. And so on.'

MALLUP cleared his throat and tapped the table with his finger, a snide grin on his face. "Now the trick with these head-shrinkers is to get them talking. They never get a chance, they're so busy listening all day. Once you get them started, there's no stopping them.

"I feed them some keywords: 'Peacefulness' 'Relaxation' 'Symbiosis with nature'—I tell it feels good to hoe or chop wood. I never mention how much better it is just to sit around in the sun and do nothing—a mallie'd come right out with that and fight for his rights. I never suffer from insomnia because the nights are quiet, and you haven't piled up a lot of troubles to worry over. I ask them if they've never taken a vacation just to get some of the things I have all year around. Sure enough—they've all been to Yosemite for a week, or camped in the Rockies, fished in the Sierras,

or envied the bigshots who live here just like I do. When I'm done with them they let me live the way I want. They even cheer me on."

"But what about the psychiatrists' question? What would happen if everyone acted this way?"

"For one thing, everyone wouldn't. Most people like to be doctored, to be told what to do and what not to do. Saves thinking. Like the army used to be. Remember, that's how the Medarchy happened in the first place: we begged them to take over when responsibility got too much for us, with all the radiation sickness and bacteriological warfare. And nobody can say they haven't made things better. No more unfit administrators, no more alcoholic statesmen, dictators with crippled arms, or ambisexual conquerors like Julius Caesar. No more conquerors at all, since the psychologists began controlling all symptoms of aggression. And not just here, but in Russia, too—between our doctors and theirs' they melted the Iron Curtain fast. The medarchy and the Medbuero. No

more national secrets, no more refusal to exchange ideas and information. No more armies or manpower wasted in making munitions. Just healthy physical training, used to drain swamps, rebuild atomized cities and the slums in the others, control epidemics. Maybe the mallies would like to go back to the old ways, but you don't have to be a good Patient to prefer the medical one."

CYRUS SAID, "You can always buy security at the price of liberty," and wished that the phrase didn't have to sound quite so pompous.

"The doctors were asked to take over when science created a Frankenstein monster in thermonuclear weapons," Victoria said, looking still paler than before. Cyrus wondered how he could cut the conversation short, and tried unsuccessfully to catch her eye. "They thought medicine was the unique profession which combined science and humanity. They never read Lord Acton."

"They know what they're doing," Mallup insisted. "I may not like some of them per-

sonally, but I can get along with them. If I don't bother them, they don't bother me. They're too busy to care whether you approve or disapprove—so long as you don't go around trying to organize an opposition. That's bringing back politics, and the scientific mind's got no time to waste on anything so unscientific. They're really doing everything they can for the good of humanity."

"Exactly," said Cyrus. "Sincere, dedicated men, sure of what they're doing. Gods or fathers. But adults outgrow the need of fathers, and give *voluntary* allegiance to their gods. I don't want to get along with sincere, dedicated men who do things for my own good. I want to be free of them."

"No giving up of any freedom for any security? Myself, I'll trade—though I'm liable to hedge a bit. The only place it's really important to be free is in the mind."

"How free is yours?" asked Victoria. She stood up abruptly, holding on to the edge of the table with both hands. "I... Excuse me."

Cyrus reached for her so quickly he kicked over his chair. "What's the matter?" He put his arms around her shoulders. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing... I— A little dizzy. I'm sorry."

"Better lie down on my bed awhile," offered Mallup, rising and opening a door off the kitchen. "Help her in, Tarn."

"I'm all right now," she protested.

"Don't argue." Cyrus made his voice firm, guiding her into the small, faintly musty room, and pushing her gently toward the gray-blanketed single bed.

"How do you feel?" asked Mallup. "Faint or queasy?"

"Queasy," she answered, lying back and closing her eyes.

"Got something for it. Hold on a minute."

**CYRUS WATCHED** with startled interest while the old man walked over to pull a section of the wall outward. Now he looked closely he could see that one side of the piano hinges were set flush against a narrow batt while the other side showed, despite its paint. But one would have to know in ad-

vance it was there to discover it.

Mallup reached in and came out with a small bottle of brown liquid. "Hold on a minute while I get a spoon from the kitchen," he called over his shoulder as he started out. Cyrus stared with fascination at the suddenly-revealed contents of the recess. Not satisfied with his first cursory glance, he peered boldly in.

"Here, Carrie—swallow this. Just nux vomica—out of style, maybe, but it can't hurt you."

The shallow closet was only the width of the studs between which it was set, except for the lower part, which had been deepened—evidently by the addition of a small overhung enclosure on the outside. Its upper shelves were the equivalent—and more—of the long outmoded and forbidden home medicine cabinet. Cyrus could see the bottles, vials and boxes, some of which were strange to him, others familiar: aspirin, milk of magnesia, calomine lotion, Vapo-rub, ephedrine drops, ointment, merthiolate, gentian violet, liniment. He had no idea what Dr. Tree paid

Mallup in wages, but a large portion must be finding its way into the black market in drugs.

"Thanks," said Victoria.

"Better stay lying down," advised Mallup.

"Self-medication," murmured Cyrus. "Prescribing without a license. For a man who gets along with the medarchy as well as you do, you certainly have a fine collection here."

"That so?" Unperturbed, Mallup replaced the nux vomica bottle on the shelf. "I use liniment when I need it and aspirin when I have a headache. (Haven't had one for years.) Nobody's bothered me yet. I don't make a principle of it and insist that the Health-fare State has got no right to tell me what I can take and what I can't."

**C**YRUS' ATTENTION was now on the rows of books, some in excellent condition, others old and battered. He could not read all the titles before Mallup swung the concealing panel back, but he saw enough to recognize one of the most complete libraries of books on the proscribed Medi-



cal Index he had encountered. "Science and Health" nestled against "Doctor Pierce's Home Medical Book"; Booth's "History of Osteopathy and Twentieth Century Medical Practice" haughtily shouldered Emile Coue. Bates and Huxley were obviously comfortable together, but there was a hostile, empty space on the shelf between Gaylord Hauser and Adelle Davis. Jacobson's books on relaxation, Grantley Dick Read's "Childbirth Without Fear"; "The Science, Art and Philosophy of Chiropractic" by Daniel David Palmer; Shaw's Selected Essays and "The Doctor's Dilemma"; "The Autobiography of A. T. Still", were juxtaposed in catholic conglomeration.

"Well, well," said Cyrus. "Well, well."

"I think she's feeling a bit better now," said Mallup blandly.

"Yes, I am," agreed Victoria. "And I feel foolish too, for making such a spectacle. What on earth are you staring at, Cyrus?"

"A fascinating corroboration of Mr. Mallup's attitude to-

ward the Ama. At least a hundred books guaranteed to upset Patients' minds and make them uncooperative."

MALLUP shrugged. "I don't sell them. I don't try to get people to read them, I don't lend them around. I don't say I even agree with any of them. I just enjoy having them around."

"But just owning them would make a diagnosis of paranoia certain."

"Have to find them first. You going to turn me in?"

"What good does it do you to have them?"

"Does it *have* to do me good? Doctors and mallies are always trying to do good—I leave it to them."

"But the principle..." she began.

"Haven't any principles—that and whiskey's what keeps me healthy. You better rest here, Carrie. Time for me to go outside and pretend Rafe Tree gets his money's worth by having me on the place. Make yourself at home, Tarn."

"Thanks. Thanks for everything. You know, I haven't said

how much I appreciate your letting us stay here. . .”

“Then don’t. Told you I was a hermit. Like to be by myself most of the time—didn’t mind Judy when she was smaller, but now she’s another person in the house, not a child. Anyway, I can go for weeks—months, sometimes—without talking. Except to myself. Slip out when Rafe Tree comes around to gab. Then, all of a sudden, I’ve had all of my own company I want. Usually about that time, old John sends one of his friends out here. Mallies, or—mmmm—people like you. Then I talk my head off for a couple of days. Get it out of my system.”

“The kind of talking you do some of the time makes me wonder if you wouldn’t be just as well working with the mallies.”

**M**ALLUP laughed. “Too old and sensible. Don’t agree with the mallies any more than I do with a lot of doctors. I don’t mind being hospitable sometimes, if it’s handy, but I’m not taking sides.”

Victoria said, “There are

mallies holding all kinds of opinions, but they work together for freedom.”

“That so? Maybe they’ll set up a worse society than the one you—they—overthrew.”

“Possibly,” said Cyrus. “On the other hand it seems more probable it would level out.”

“Sure. Revolutions always level out. Then you have to get a new revolution to change the levels. Well, see you later.” He went out softly, closing the door behind him.

Cyrus knelt beside the bed, laid his face against Victoria’s arm. “What upset you?”

She touched his temple and ear with the fingers of her free hand. “So silly of me. I must have been more worried than I thought.”

“You won’t have to worry much longer.”

Wouldn’t she? The danger hovered, real and ominous. They had both been rash, talking so openly to Mallup. Why should they trust him? Just because he possessed black market drugs and forbidden books? Weren’t those precisely the props one would expect a sub-cute to have? And he had un-

doubtedly been listening at the door upstairs. On the other hand. . .

ON THE OTHER hand, Cyrus did not know the identity of the messenger who was to come for them tomorrow, nor the means he would use to get them to the airfield. If he had not known the field's location from a previous occasion, that too would have been veiled, lest he and Hank be picked up on the trip to Secaros. Conspiracy was second nature to him, decidedly second—he never felt thoroughly at home in it. Intellectually, he agreed readily enough on the necessity of being miserly with information; emotionally, it disturbed him profoundly to have their whole future in the hands of an unknown person, an unrevealed means.

And that unknown person might be Mallup.

"No!" he decided aloud.

"What?" She sat up, startled.

"Sorry. Just thinking."

"Cyrus, who will run the station now? And the paper?"

"I don't know. There was no point in my knowing."

"I was only hoping that whoever took it over would do a good job."

He spoke with heavy bitterness. "What's the good of hoping? How good a job can even the best, most sincere, completely convinced propagandist do? Let's not fool ourselves—we aren't revolutionists, we're rebels. So long as Patients don't feel that the Ama oppresses them, we are talking to incomprehension. When Marat exhorted, the sans culottes could see the gulf between the noblesse and themselves. When Lenin spoke, the workers and peasants had obvious reason to vote with their feet. But when we tell our hearers the medarchy robs them of every liberty except the right to die, they don't believe us. Because the doctors are working night and day to make them live longer, aren't they? To make them healthier, happier, more useful?"

"One of the reasons I asked was because of something Alex said. He suspects—no, that's too strong a word—he wonders if there isn't someone inside our

own group giving information to the subcuties."

CYRUS, TOO, had he wondered, over and over again, since the raids. The enemy within... The double vulnerability. You might plan craftily or improvise brilliantly, take every precaution—it availed you nothing if the man who planned, the man who made the very suggestion which plugged the last loophole was...

"Coincidence," he muttered, trying to keep from communicating his fear to her. "Mutual suspicion is the cabin-fever of the underground. Was that all he said?"

"More or less. To tell the truth, he annoyed me a little. Nothing overt, no passes or anything like that," she added hastily. "Just a—mmm—sort of atmosphere. Enough to make me glad his place was too small to use."

"Well, I'm not going to be jealous of Alex."

"You don't have to be jealous of anyone. Ever."

"That's good. I won't be, then. He got the charts to you all right?"

"Charts? No. I phoned him, as we agreed. He told me when to expect you, but nothing else. Cyrus! Is it very bad?"

"I don't know." There was an unpleasant taste, faintly oily, in his mouth. "He was supposed to deliver a new set of charts for all of us—it wouldn't have been smart for me to travel with them. We were to switch to them after leaving here—just an added precaution if there was a delay or slip-up about the plane. They probably decided it wasn't necessary after all."

But he knew they hadn't. Could something have happened to Stuart Yester since he'd made out the hospital passes? If so...

"There's nothing to worry about," Cyrus said.

SHE REFUSED to be put off. "You think something's happened to the apparatus for forging charts, as well as the school and the station and the paper."

"No, I don't. I'm sure they decided we wouldn't need them."

"And if the machinery's bro-

ken down," she went on, "it means..."

"It wouldn't mean all the machinery. Not even all the local machinery. Just part of it."

"Just part of it. Translate that unfunctioning part into hysterectomies and osteotomies, eugenic abortions, sterilizations and tranquilizations which will be indicated, prescribed and performed."

"Victoria, it isn't like you to build so much on speculation."

"And if something's happened to Stuart..."

*Then the plane won't show, he thought grimly, because he and I are the only two among the five of us who know the location of the field.* Oh, the marvels of science. Once, you put a man on the wrack, or applied the thumbscrew to force him to talk—painful alike to victim, executioner, interrogator, witnesses, society. Sometimes he died with his mouth still shut. An unhappy business. Now you simply gave him an injection and he surrendered his deepest secrets without resistance. No agonies, no broken bones, no silence

unto death. Neat. "Wait a minute!"

"What?"

"If something happened to Stuart, they'd know about Alex right away. I'll phone him—what's the number?"

She gave it to him. "Be careful."

"Of course. Feel better now?"

"Yes. I'll get up."

"Rest a little while. I'll come back and tell you what Alex says."

"All right. Phone's in the kitchen."

**H**E COULD hear Judy singing outside. Evidently her angry mood had softened. The tune was familiar, but he had never heard the words:

*There is only one way,  
There is only one way  
To be healthy and  
happy:*

*'See the doctor,' we say.*

So the Caduceans had their hymnal already. Did they baptize by squirting hypodermics? He picked up the phone, dialed. The ring was steady, hypnotic, unanswered. The girl began another hymn.

*Rock of surg'ry pre-  
scribed for me*

*Heal me like the Great  
MD;*

*Heal my bones and my  
insides;*

*All health in Medicine  
resides.*

The empty ringing continued, in time to the logical sequence in his mind. If they picked up Stuart, they picked up Alex; if they picked up Alex, the three of them would be...

"Hello?" The voice was guarded, tense, not quite right.

"Dr. Caliggs?"

"Speaking." Now the tones were recognizably those of Alex.

"My name is Tarn. Cyrus Tarn."

There was silence for a moment. He heard Hank say, half interestedly, half scornfully, "Know any more?" Then Alex: "Yes, Mr. Tarn?"

"I was referred to you—my doctor was going to send you some capsules for me. I wondered if they had come."

"I haven't gotten them. Not yet."

"I see. I...hope nothing's happened to the shipment."

"Hmm. Most unlikely, I'd say. Perhaps...perhaps your doctor changed his mind about the necessity."

"That's probably it. Thank you, Doctor. If they should come..."

"I'll call you."

"Thanks."

He hung up, at once relieved and uneasy. Logic was logic, even in reverse: if Alex hadn't been picked up, then Stuart and John Rald were all right, too. But he couldn't believe they had lightly changed their minds about making and sending new false charts. It might be a superfluous precaution, yet they had all agreed on it. Nothing was more unlikely...

Aware of eyes fixed on his back, he turned to face Judy Larch, with Hank behind her. The girl was looking at him speculatively, appraisingly. Suspiciously.

### III

HER VERY innocence was a greater possible danger than Mallup's listening at the door or any trail pursued by the subcuties from the hospital to Secaros.

Suppose Judy mentioned to the MP at the depot that a man named Tarn was visiting her grandfather! Why suppose Judy even knew her? Because it was a logical acquaintance: Judy, awe and reverence reserved for doctors, would undoubtedly look for some bond with those below the sacred caste within the medarchy. It might be smart to ignore Judy; it might be wise to try for a favorable impression. Cyrus didn't know. . .

"I heard you singing outside, Miss Larch. It was fine."

Her blush came quickly, faded slowly. "Everybody calls me Judy. No matter what you do around here, they think you're still a child."

"Well, I'll call you Miss Larch, if you don't mind."

She giggled, "Oh, I don't mind, if you don't."

Hank said, "She's been teaching me those Sunday school songs."

Judy blushed again. "I hope you don't object." She was half apologetic, half defiant.

"Why, of course not." He sat down, warning himself not to be too effusive, to stay within

his role. But exactly what was his role? "Do you sing in the choir? Or doesn't the Church of the Caduceus have choirs?"

"I'm hungry again," Hank announced.

"There's still some duck," said Judy. "Sit down—I'll get it for you. It's still a couple of hours till supper."

"Don't let us make a nuisance of ourselves, Miss Larch."

"It's no trouble." She set the remains of the duck, a knife and fork in front of the boy. "I don't mind doing things. I only mind when Grandfather gets one of his streaks and starts talking like a mallie. He's so *obstinate*. No, there aren't choirs—everybody just sings together. After the Testimonies."

"Where's Carrie?" asked Hank.

"Lying down. She was tired."

**D**ID JUDY know about her grandfather's store of illicit medicines, his forbidden books? Surely there must have been times enough, Cyrus thought, when she was younger. . . Perhaps not.

"If he would only see how much better off he'd be in an Age Adjustment Center. But he's always thought he knew better than anyone else. When I was a little girl he brought me here, instead of putting me into an Integrating Home."

Cyrus shook his head miserably.

"And he somehow persuaded Dr. Tree to fix it up so that I could stay with him. Against all Medical Regulations. I'm not criticizing Dr. Tree..."

"I'm sure you're not."

"He's the most wonderful man imaginable. I always think of him when I pray to the Great Physician. They have the cutest babies in the Integrating Homes, so healthy and just *right*. I can't understand why Grandfather didn't send me to one of them."

"I'm going out again," said Hank. "See you."

Cyrus watched him leave. It was interesting that Judy should have fastened on the babies in the Homes—they were such a minute percentage of the inmates. The vast majority were just about Hank's age. Victoria would have been

older than the average by four or five years. What a nice irony it would have been, if Boyd Carling had had a patron like Dr. Tree, to help him circumvent the Ama. And if the situations had been completely reversed—would Mallup have become a dedicated worker in the underground, and Judy another Victoria? Good old forked stick of heredity versus environment: the excluded middle. As it was, Judy was on the way to developing a nice little conflict over her picture of Dr. Tree as a surrogate god and the med-archy as the final repository of wisdom. He doubted if the Church of the Caduceus could resolve the contradiction involved in his abetting her grandfather's evasion of a medical regulation to her satisfaction.

"Penny for your thoughts."

"Uh? Oh, excuse me. I guess I wasn't really thinking. Just daydreaming." Would the excuse make her suspicious again? Daydreaming could be a symptom of maladjustment.

**S**HE DIDN'T take it so. "I often do, myself," she con-



fided. "About how much nicer it would have been if I'd been brought up in an Integrating Home, or how much better Grandfather would be in an Age Adjustment Center, or what it will be like when I'm old enough to join the Health Auxiliaries. Do you like fish?"

"Ay? Oh, yes."

"That's good. Grandfather went fishing this morning." She went to the refrigerator. "He catches them—I clean them." She took out a creel and dumped its contents into the sink.

"Can I help you?"

"Oh, no. I don't mind, really, most of the time. I just get tired of cleaning them when I don't catch them." She began to sing again,

*When the charts are  
read up yonder, I'll  
be there;*

*Vaccines, antitoxins,  
x-rays everywhere.*

*When my chart is read  
up yonder, let the  
Great Physician ponder*

*I'll be healthy, I'll be  
happy...*

She broke off and turned

around. "Don't let me interrupt," said Victoria in an odd voice.

"Oh, you're not interrupting, Carrie. I was just cleaning fish for supper." Victoria shuddered. "You feel rested now?"

"Yes, thanks."

"You look sort of pale. Why don't you let me take you over to Dr. Tree? Unless you have a referral to another doctor here? He won't mind a bit, seeing why you're tired, and I know he's home now."

Cyrus cleared his throat. False charts would pass an MP or a subcute, but not a practising physician giving an examination.

VICTORIA smiled and shook her head. "Thank you, dear. I will, if I feel tired again. It's always better to go to a doctor sooner than later, isn't it?"

"But some people are so obstinate," the girl cried. "They won't see the *simplest* things."

"Isn't that one of the things your Caducean Church can do? Show them?" asked Victoria.

"They don't come. I've tried and tried to get Grandfather

to go, over and over. All he says is, 'Religion's like whiskey—not fit to take until it's aged some.'"

"Supper ready?" asked Hank, coming in and slumping into a chair.

"Soon," said Judy, returning to the fish.

"You just ate," remarked Cyrus.

"Can't help it—I'm hungry."

"Go and wash then," ordered Victoria. "And be sure to get your ears clean."

*How quick we are to put fear away from us, marveled Cyrus. Let us breathe freely for a moment or two, and we are as ready to be concerned with whether Hank's ears are clean, or what we're going to eat, as though danger and destruction were no closer in time and space than the Taiping Rebellion, or the kingdom of the Monomatapa.*

Here, protected by the aegis of Dr. Tree (Aaron's rod?) we act...normally. But not quite. Even in the most secure moments—and this is not one of them—the threads of doubt and suspicion and fear make a pattern. Or a rope. And have,

ever since the day Norah said, "He was really annoyed and warned me against prescribing for myself—told me it was a pure, hysterical fantasy to imagine I couldn't tolerate a massive dose..." Or since Boyd Carling decided the Ama was Antichrist, and he would defy it to the death...

Normal...? It had not been like Victoria to give way under strain, ever. And she had looked so oddly at him, when she came in the kitchen from Mallup's room. "Excuse me," he muttered, and went looking for her.

SHE WAS sitting on the bed upstairs, listless. She raised her head as he came in.

"What's the matter," he asked—"feeling badly again?"

"No, I'm all right. You shouldn't have let your sense of duty tear you away from the kitchen."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing at all."

"Victoria..."

"You'd better call me Carrie. Mr. Mallup doesn't seem to be above listening at doors."

He looked at her helplessly. "Please tell me..."

"You ought to go back and keep on charming schoolgirls. You never can tell when the talent will come in handy."

Victoria jealous? Jealous of a child? It was so absurd, so out of character, that he was completely bewildered. "I was only being polite," he began. "I thought she looked strangely at me when..."

"I'm sure she must have. Well, she's quite pretty, and undoubtedly very healthy."

"Victoria! This is unbelievable. She's a child."

Her silence was pointed, explicit. *So was I—you like them young.* The unspoken words were thrown toward him.

"You're unreasonable. Impossible. You're not acting remotely like yourself."

"I'm sure that's what men always say when they're tired of a woman. I'm not like myself, so you had better go and find someone who is." She sat still, two tears moving slowly down her cheeks.

"Victoria..." He paused, knowing no way to reach, no way to address this strange,

this incomprehensible Victoria, so utterly different from the ever self-contained, poised, invincible woman he had known. A Victoria who wept causelessly, who accused him wildly. A Victoria who put an added emotional burden on him at a time like this, to multiply everything else harrasing them...

**H**E STOPPED short. How selfish, how egocentric could he be? She was upset, desperate—nothing less than desperation would drive her to tears—and he was busy trying to classify her trouble, trying to build up a nice, reasonable speech to present her with. Resolve whatever was troubling her with a concise, smooth argument. Was he a man or an idiot?

"Sweetheart, I don't know what's making you feel this way, but whatever I've done, please forgive me. Help me make you happy, that's all I want. Please, Victoria." He took her in his arms, felt her momentary resistance, refused to be rebuffed.

She cried with long, shudder-

ing sobs. He held her closely, caressing her back, running his hands up to her hair, ears, temple. She relaxed against him. Finally she pulled away just a little. "Give me your handkerchief."

He smiled helplessly. "I haven't got one. And I don't think I packed any. Here, try my shirt-tail."

She took it and blew her nose. "I must look a sight. And I'm a fool besides. Forgive you? You must forgive me. I don't know what came over me."

"The strain," he suggested. "Being so close to escape..."

"I've had strains before. Cyrus, do you think you could put up with an hysterical woman?"

"I can put up with you, if putting up is the right expression, which I doubt."

Hank opened the door. "Hey, you guys—Judy's got the fish going and the old man's sitting down, chomping his gums. What about saving the smooching till after, huh?"

"Henry, that's no way..." Hank closed the door quietly. "You'd better go on down while

I try to make my eyes look presentable."

"They look all right."

"Don't be masculine. Go on."

**I**T WAS A very bad time for her nerves to give way. There was so much that could happen between now and tomorrow night; so many possible emergencies before they got on the plane, in which he might be dependent on her coolness and judgement.

In the kitchen, he looked searchingly at Mallup and his granddaughter. Neither appeared to be hiding suspicion. "Sorry to keep you waiting."

"Didn't," said Mallup. "But Carrie better get here soon, if she wants to taste those trout at their best."

"I'm here," said Victoria, "and I certainly do. They smell wonderful." Cyrus' quick glance showed him no sign of reddened eyes.

"Rafe Tree keeps the stream loaded with them. Don't know why. He doesn't fish. Doesn't eat them, either."

Judy, lips pursed at the implied criticism of a doctor, set

a huge platter in the center of the table. Sliding into her seat, she bowed her head slightly. "We thank the Great Physician for nourishment, and for the health to get and enjoy it." Her voice was clear and earnest.

"Mmmm," said Mallup. It might have been an "amen", it might not. He picked up a fish by the tail, expertly filleting off first one side, then the other with his fork, regarding the bare backbone with satisfaction. "Mmmm."

**V**ICTORIA looked appreciatively at Judy. "They're delicious."

"You bet," agreed Hank. "Say, can you go fishing whenever you want?"

"Mostly," said Mallup, operating on another trout. "I can usually find the time."

"Boy! This'd be a great place to live."

"That's what I think, son. Why I'm here."

"In spite of what would be best for you," said Judy.

"The young always know what's best for everybody," said Mallup. "Get to my age, you're not so sure."

"I wasn't giving my own opinion—the doctors say so. Even if you treat me like a child, you can't pretend *they're* too young to know what they're talking about."

"What I like about the country." Mallup made the apparently irrelevant statement as though it clinched an argument.

When Cyrus looked his inquiry, the old man went on, as though spelling out an elementary axiom. "The Ama's urban. City born—city-chained. The larger cities, particularly. Long before the medarchy, country doctors were out of date, except on TV. Small towns might have a doctor, maybe two—hardly a hospital. They sent their patients to the city. So the cities got to have everything, and when they had the machinery they had to have the people to run it, and what was the use of duplicating it all in the sticks?"

"You went to town to get your case histories taken, and your shots, and your prescriptions. The country just didn't pay off—it would take too many doctors, subcutes, MPs and orderlies to each Patient to

make any kind of a showing. And the country mallies never seem to make trouble. Either they take their medicine like little men, or else they just shut up about their aches and pains, and duck their periodic examinations until they die or stopped showing symptoms."

"Or resort to home remedies," dared Cyrus.

Mallup looked shocked. "Who'd do that? It's against medical regulations."

"Well, at least I'm glad to hear you say that," said Judy.

"Uh-huh." He turned to Cyrus. "Drink whiskey?"

"What? Oh. I've been known to."

**J**UDY SHOOK her head and rose to clear the table. "Please let me do the dishes this time," urged Victoria.

"Oh no, thank you, Carrie. It just takes a minute." She hummed a snatch of one of the hymn tunes, irritation at her grandfather apparently dissipated.

"At the h— some places they have plates you throw away. No washing them," said Hank.

"Plycelandin," interpreted

Judy. "They have them at Galentry. Everybody ought to use them—they're sanitary."

Mallup grunted. "Sanitary, all right. Food don't taste right on them."

"Oh, Grandfather, that's ridiculous. Plycelandin's absolutely tasteless."

"So's anything you put on them. Not for me. I'll pour us a drink, Tarn."

"Come on Henry. Bedtime."

Hank looked outraged. "Bedtime! It's not even dark yet."

"It doesn't matter. I want you to have a good night's sleep."

"Aw, I'm no baby."

"I should hope not. Ten is quite old enough to do things you'd rather not, when they're necessary."

"Aw..."

"Henry!"

"All right, all right—don't get in an uproar." Cyrus felt a twinge of sympathy for Hank. Victoria could be implacable when it seemed right to her. And yet, so helpless—as she had been earlier, in her unreasonable jealousy.

Mallup went into his room, returning with a bottle which

bore no label. "How'll you have it?"

"Straight, please."

"Good man. No use to spoil both whiskey and water by mixing what was never meant to be. Some people even put ice in a drink. Rrrrrrr!" He poured generously into two tumblers. "Health."

CYRUS SIPPED his whiskey. It was good, but very light in color. Possibly moonshine, though he had the idea from somewhere that illicit distilling had stopped a long time ago. As he drank he realized he was tired, very tired. So soon as politeness made it possible, he would slip upstairs.

His so-carefully acquired sense of watchfulness suddenly alarmed him. "Excuse me," he began.

"It's Dr. Tree," exclaimed Judy, smiling widely. "Isn't that nice?"

"I'll be going," said Cyrus. "Good night."

"Sit down," said Mallup. "Rafe Tree don't bite."

The door opened; now it was too late to get out of the room unseen. Was this a trap? How

could he warn Victoria and Hank?

"Evening, everybody. Judy, you're prettier each day; I don't know how you do it. Chris, what did we ever do to deserve so fine a girl?"

He was lean enough to seem unusually tall. Cyrus, who had rather expected someone with plainer signs manifested on the man who enjoyed good food, owned a house of flamboyant architecture and called it Galentry, was faintly surprised at the thin lips, taut cheeks steel-smooth, old fashioned eyeglasses instead of contact lenses. Only the well-brushed silvery hair, the immaculate fingernails and teeth, the gaudy scarf wound high about his throat and tucked with careful negligence into the tweed sports jacket fitted into the preconceived picture.

Mallup waved a hand toward Cyrus. "Down from the city for a few days," he explained. "Dr. Tree, Cyrus Tarn. Don't know what *you* did—I always took care of my old woman while she was alive. Have a drink?"

RAPHAEL TREE smiled pleasantly, shook Cyrus' hand firmly. "Why not? Every man's bound to have one perverted taste—mine's for your liquor. Got a glass for me, Judy?"

Judy finished working on the tumbler she was polishing to a sparkle and set it down deferentially before him. Mallup pushed the bottle over. "This one's been worked on some, but there's more."

"There always is," said Tree, pouring. "You know," he said, turning to Cyrus, "Judy doesn't really approve of alcohol."

She blushed. "Oh, Dr. Tree, I wouldn't dream... I mean, I..." She turned away in confusion.

"Doctor knows best," grunted Mallup.

"About some things," amended Tree. "We never intrude authority in fields where we're not competent."

"Health and happiness," said Mallup. "Covers a lot of ground. Where do you come to the 'Keep Off' signs?"

Tree drank slowly. "It's hard to say, Chris. Probably not at the same spot with different

people. A man with an ulcer will probably have his private life more deeply invaded than one with a broken arm."

"Mightn't both be symptoms of a psychosomatic illness?" asked Cyrus.

Tree nodded. "Surely. And the only adequate judge is the physician. He'd be doing less than his duty if he didn't try to reach the anxiety which caused the ulcer, or made the patient accident-prone."

"I can't imagine anyone who wouldn't be grateful," said Judy, turning from the sink.

"Be surprised," said Mallup. "People are obstinate."

"Not so much obstinate as shortsighted," corrected Tree.

"They don't know what's good for them," ventured Cyrus.

Tree gave him a keen look. "Sometimes. More often it's an inability to see that what may be painful or distressing to them, personally—and at the moment—is the best for society."

"Mallies," suggested Cyrus.

TREE FROWNED. "It's a loose term. Some of the in-



disciplined may be maladjusted—that's a matter for diagnosis. Others are simply uneducated. Perhaps we've been so busy with the present that we haven't given enough attention to the future. That's why it's so heartening to see a girl like Judy."

"No problems with her generation?"

"It's too soon to tell. All we know is that, so far, the level of indiscipline seems to be stationary. And it doesn't seem to make much difference whether we're dealing with people of Chris' age, or yours, or the next younger."

"Ah," said Cyrus. Was the Ama admitting it could never hope to wipe out maladjustment? No... and anyway, Tree was not the Ama.

"Sad example last week in Seattle. A man tried to kill an obstetrician when it was necessary to euthanize his newly-delivered child. The mother had been treated as usual, of course, and it usually isn't difficult to make the fathers understand."

Cyrus looked at Tree. The man was obviously no callous

monster. "What—what was wrong with the baby?"

"A number of things. They might have taken a chance on later correction if it hadn't been for a badly misshapen spine. The poor little fellow would never have had a chance at normal life. People staring, and then pretending elaborately. Then there would always be the danger of the Mercifuls... You know, we didn't begin to euthanize the new-born until we were startled by the sudden rise in the number of pre-adolescents who had to be thanatized. We'd overlooked the malformed births resulting from the war and post-war irradiation. We'd have been a nation of freaks if we hadn't tightened up. That's why we're so careful about who's allowed to beget and conceive. Even so, mistakes happen, like that one."

Mistake Jones; Error Smith; Blunder Johnson. Rest In Peace.

**J**UDY BUBBLED, "It's so darling to look at a little baby these days. They're always so perfect and cuddly. No

wonder the mothers are so proud of them. It makes you feel good all over."

"Mmmm," said Mallup, pouring again.

"Who actually makes decisions in such cases, Doctor?"

"The OB's responsible, but there's plenty of redtape to guard the Patients' rights. In extreme cases, the attending physician can take sole responsibility, but when I was in active practice I felt better with one or two confirming views. Among other things, if it's a one-man decision, a great many extra reports have to be made out, with ante-and post-mortem details included."

"It's a great responsibility," said Judy. "You'd think Patients would do everything to understand, instead of questioning what's done for them."

Tree shook his head indulgently. "The majority of Patients co-operate as well as they can. Unfortunately there's an old and deep-rooted tradition that a man's health and happiness are his own exclusive business. Privacy. Individuality. Like Chris."

"Let me go to hell in my

own way," confirmed Mallup amiably.

"Fine. The trouble is, when you go to hell in *your* own way, you don't go alone—you take others with you, either by physical or moral infection. In protecting the individual against his non-conforming impulses, we're protecting society against decay."

**D**ESPITE his resolution, Cyrus couldn't help saying, "There used to be a theory that a society made up of all shades of opinion was healthier than one where everyone thought and acted alike."

"Oversimplification," said Tree. "No society ever tolerated members too far one side or the other of its norm. Dissent was banned as soon as it became a life-or-death matter. We don't ask everyone to think or act alike—there are fields in which anyone is free to disagree with his doctor."

"Such as?"

Tree waved an arm. "Art. Literature. Religion."

Mallup grunted. "Nothing scientific."

"How can you disagree on

what can be measured? Can you have diversity of opinion on whether the earth is round, or on the square root of minus two? Is astronomy a matter of opinion? Can you choose to disbelieve in inherited characteristics? Can you have a private idea of time, or an unequal-sided square, or vote on the composition of phenol?"

Cyrus restrained his impulse to ask, *Why not? Why not, even if you're wrong by every standard so far acknowledged?* Instead, he said, "You mentioned religion, art and literature as things in which disagreement was possible, Doctor. But hasn't the medarchy decided that non-representational painting, abstract sculpture, atonal music, extremely esoteric poetry, and whole categories of fiction, are symptomatic of a psychotic condition. And aren't those who believe in a physical ascent by Mahomet, or a literal revelation at Sinai, or any number of Christian dogmas considered subject to possibly dangerous illusions?"

**F**OR THE first time Tree's manner betrayed some stiff-

ness. "It isn't what the medarchy decides or considers, Mr. Tarn. We are dealing with facts when psychologists discover that mental aberration shows itself in certain forms.

"Anyone is free to prefer Van Gogh over Cezanne, or Elliot to Tennyson, and so on. And all abstract design isn't regarded as unhealthy, either—it's the extreme instances. When someone, for example, puts three blobs of prussian blue on a canvas of burnt umber, and titles the result, "*Mood After a Naval Engagement*", then the services of a psychiatrist are called for. Not only because the painter is very likely unstable, but because—if examination shows that he is—his instability can confirm a similar but latent instability on the part of those who look at his picture. As for religions—well, again, all societies have suppressed the more primitive ones and encouraged the more rational ones."

"Granting you are right, Doctor, this narrow choice isn't exactly what people mean by 'freedom'."

Tree tapped a cigaret on his

thumbnail, fitted it in a holder, accepted a light from Judy with a smile. "We didn't narrow the choice—science simply excluded the palpably false from the field of the permissible. You don't allow children to play with live bombs, or neurotics to indulge delusions. We have seen what happened when they were so allowed. If we had taken over earlier, we would certainly have averted the third world war—and perhaps some of those that went before. I could give you a very long list of famous men who ought to have been hospitalized. Instead they led nations into disasters for centuries. Alexander, Tamerlane, Napoleon, Hitler. . ."

"Franklin Roosevelt?" prodded Cyrus. "Lincoln? Jefferson?"

"Roosevelt certainly—the mind is affected by any malfunctioning of the body. Lincoln probably—what was called 'melancholia' in his day we should undoubtedly recognize as some form of paranoia. Jefferson?" Dr. Tree frowned. "I don't know. A man with some sort of rudimentary sci-

entific approach, but victim of all sorts of unscientific superstitions. Definitely an eccentric—possibly an advanced neurotic. I imagine we would have excluded Jefferson from public life as a precautionary measure.

"You may raise your eyebrows, Mr. Tarn, and think the loss greater than the gain—I assure you, you're wrong. For every Gandhi we would have suppressed, a dozen megalomaniac Stalins and Goebbelses would have been restrained. Our mistake is not in the application of scientific methods today, but in not applying them sooner. We should have accepted responsibility long before we did, long before it was forced on us by catastrophe. Previously we were too selfish, too narrow-minded. Saving lives and seeing that the lives were worth saving was some kind of ideal, not a necessity. We were too aloof, too tender. Afraid to excise a cancer because it might hurt. Waiting for the patients to come to us. Saying in effect, 'May I have your permission to save you from suffering?'"

"White man's burden," said Mallup.

**TREE LAUGHED.** "Treat me better than that, Chris, or I'll ship you off to an Age Adjustment Center after all."

"Grandfather would be so much happier, if he only realized." Judy had dried and put away the last dish. "I've been trying to tell him."

Mallup poured all around, emptying the bottle and shaking the last drops out. "Bunch of damned mummies—not a bottle of whiskey in the place."

"And no room for a still either," agreed Tree. "I told you Judy doesn't approve of alcohol. Youth is very strait-laced, and it's just as well—one doesn't tamper with regulations lightly."

"Then there are occasions when you feel it's all right to tamper with them?" ventured Cyrus.

"A few," admitted Tree. "When it's done by a responsible authority who has all the facts. As when I made it possible for Chris and Judy to live here together. Now Judy thinks I was wrong."

"Oh, no. No, I don't. Of course you know best, Dr. Tree."

Cyrus repressed a quotation from Goering, "In the Third Reich, I decide who is a Jew."

"But you've been reading Hygeia's *Guide for Patients*, ay? And it doesn't always agree with Rafe Tree? Tell me, have you read it all through?"

"Oh yes, three times. You have to know it thoroughly to get into the Health Auxiliaries."

"You've got a couple of years yet before you'll be eligible," Tree reminded her.

"I can hardly wait," she said simply.

"And when you finally get into the Ahas you'll pick yourself a genetically right boy and marry him?" Tree teased.

**SHE BLUSHED.** "I want to get married and have babies—if the doctors say I can. But I never thought of going into the Auxiliaries to meet boys. They're more important—they can do so much to help the Ama."

"Well, well—in the meantime, you've still got the church. Learn any more songs?"

"One," she confessed. "Would you like to hear it?"

"Of course," he replied. "I always enjoy your singing."

*Shots will help me, this I know,*

*Because the doctor tells me so;*

*He is wise and kind and strong;*

*He will cure me all life long.*

*Shots will help me,  
Checks will guard me,  
Pills will cure me—  
Doctor tells me so.*

"It's mostly for the little kids," she apologized. "They don't understand the harder ones. But I like it because it's got a real swing to it."

"And you sing it as though you meant it," complimented Tree.

"I do mean it, Doctor."

"I'm sure you do. I hope you'll mean it just as much when you get into the Ahas."

"Why shouldn't I? Sometimes you sound as though—as though you didn't like the Auxiliaries. Especially when you call them by that mean nickname."

TREE'S VOICE softened.  
"Was I mean, Judy? I'm

sorry if I hurt your feelings. Like them? I suppose many, if not most, are fine young people, using their surplus physical energy in medically helpful ways, spotting the ill and the maladjusted, taking some of the load off the orderlies and the subcutes, acting as an educating influence on the Patients and supporting the Ama in its work. But just because it is a lay group anyone who can pass a simple test—oh, I know it seems hard to you right now, Judy—can join. There are no years of training, and further years of internship, to weed out the undesirables.

"And because it's unofficially approved by the Ama, all sorts of self-seekers, crackpots, and politicians get in and pervert, or try to pervert, the whole organization. The Ahas are a two-edged sword."

"Would you do away with them, Doctor?" inquired Cyrus. Was it possible the Ahas represented the potential power to overthrow the healthfare state? No. Undoubtedly the medarchy was simply looking prudently at all eventualities...

"Abolish them? No. Because of the very nature of the medical profession and the services it does for Patients, there is—there has to be—a gulf between the two. A lay organization of enthusiastic young men and women who understand what the Aha is and what it does, can be a very useful bridge across this gulf. I just don't want Judy to be too sadly disillusioned if she ever finds that all the Ahas are not as earnest as herself, that's all."

"Drink up," said Mallup. "I'm going after another bottle. What about getting some sleep, Judy?"

She stamped her foot. "I'm not tired!"

"Run along, Judy," said Tree—"that's a well-adjusted girl." He smiled gently at her rebellious back. "Poor child—so full of faith."

"Isn't that what you want?" asked Mallup, returning.

**D**R. TREE frowned. "Want? It's necessary, but the two aren't always identical. I hope it will not be too great a blow to her if the Church of the Caduceus should be dissolved."

"Why should it be dissolved?" asked Cyrus. "I'd think it would serve exactly the purpose you were ascribing to the Ah—to the Health Auxiliaries."

"That's the argument for it," said Tree. "Against it is its mysticism. Oh, I know the supernatural elements are reduced almost to the vanishing point, but there's an irreducible minimum left. And that may be dangerous. Man has had too many gods that failed."

"Hell," said Mallup, "you use hocus-pocus and ritual and protocol in your office every day. What's wrong with doing it extra fancy once a week?"

"There's a difference between a doctor impressing a Patient with the seriousness of his work and erecting a theological system. The doctor dies or retires, and his place is taken by a younger, better trained man. The Caduceans' abstract Great Physician is immortal and unchanging. Such a concept may well lead to illusion. And illusion—any kind of illusion—is a symptom of maladjustment."

**M**ALLUP drank. "Here we go again. When you adjust

the rabbit to the tiger, does the rabbit get ferocious? No, sir—the tiger gets a meal.”

“Not at all,” replied Tree. “If the rabbit is well adjusted, he runs away.”

“And if the tiger is adjusted, I suppose he runs after him.” Cyrus told himself to shut up at this point. Quickly. “But there’s a paradox or a non sequitur or something involved.” Was the whiskey, which he had been sipping so cautiously, affecting him?

“Go on, Mr. Tarn,” urged Tree.

“Well, then, if adjustment isn’t an abstraction, the rabbit and the tiger have to be adjusted to something. To each other, or to their environment—it doesn’t matter. In either case, they both can’t win—either the rabbit is eaten, and that shows he’s not well adjusted, or he isn’t, and that proves the tiger’s not well adjusted.”

“Chop-logic and false analogy,” said Tree, smiling. “No society is composed of rabbits and tigers. Anyway, it isn’t a case of winning—it’s a case of surviving to the best advantage. Only an idiot would wear

shorts and sandals in Antarctica.”

“I dunno,” commented Mallup. “The really adjustable type might grow fur.”

Tree dismissed the frivolity. “We all have to adjust—we all do adjust—one way or another, in greater or lesser degree. Some mallies would be maladjusted only in this society—some who fit in perfectly here and now would be unable to find a place among the Tauregs of the Sahara. Your rabbit in a tigers’ lair, or your tiger on an island devoid of prey, would be misfits. Beyond this, many misfits tend to be misfits in any time or place.”

“A mallie is a mallie because he’s a mallie,” Cyrus murmured.

**T**REE DID not seem to hear. “We all have to adjust,” he repeated. “Parents to their children, the child to his parents. We adjust to adolescence, maturity, age. Some men have adjusted to celibacy, others to marriage.”

Mallup cackled. “You’ve adjusted that way as often as any.”



"Five times." Dr. Tree finished his drink, reached for the bottle with a coordination which seemed a little slower than before. "Five times; I might try it again before I'm senile. Or after. The idea is to make your peace with the mores of your society. Conform as a price for security alias respectability. Conform. Conformity has been maligned—what's wrong with it? We're bipeds—we'd hate unipeds and tripeds with equal ferocity, and we'd be right. No place for them.

"Conformity's a law of life. A necessity. The individual belongs to the group, not the group to the individual. Individuality was overrated before the medarchy—'be different' 'express your personality' 'stand on your own feet'. Nonsense. All men are created unequal, but they can all *become* alike. Psycho-pharmacology—and electro-tranquilization if necessary—makes it take a little longer. A generation, or even two—by then the mallies will have died out. The children will be adjusted because we'll see to it. Only the other day the sub-

cutes uncovered a mallie school—it must be a couple of years since they did that before. Fewer and fewer as we get more efficient. Naturally there's going to be some suffering in the meantime—suffering the mallies bring on themselves—but we want as little as possible."

**M**ALLUP said, "Reminds me about Grace; I hear she's a bigshot now."

"'Man by suffering shall learn,'" quoted Cyrus. It was stupid and pointless—it wasn't even relevant—and could bring swift disaster. If he felt a compulsive need for bravado, he ought to be satisfied with endangering himself alone, not expose Victoria and Hank.

"Thank God there's no apostolic succession—the Personal Physician's physician remains only a good doctor with great but not different responsibility. And Grace is a good doctor, make no mistake about it. She not only keeps Higginson in top shape, but she's devised this technique of giving him checkups at irregular and unannounced intervals, so as not to excite or depress the public."

He reached over and replenished his drink. "On the other hand. . . Oh, never mind. 'Man by suffering shall learn,'? Do you think so? Man brings suffering on himself. He insists on it, cherishes it, refuses to be parted from it. And the only thing he learns is that suffering never gets him anything but suffering. We've given people the utopia so long dreamed-of: health, happiness, security, freedom from war. Some of them still aren't satisfied. The ones who would never be satisfied."

"Divine discontent?"

"Refusal to accept reality. I've seen too much suffering to have faith in its therapeutic value—too much discontent to believe it leads to serenity. If it's man fate to be discontented, that's not divine—just stupid."

"Don't hold with getting stirred up about things, myself," commented Mallup. "But if the mallies won't adjust to the Ama, let the Ama adjust to the mallies."

**S**URPRISINGLY to Cyrus, Dr. Tree nodded. "There's

a few in the Ama who seem to agree with that point of view. Whitelands of the *Medical Journal* is one of them. But it's impossible to act as though maladjustment were the sole business of the affected person. You can't afford to let the sentimentalist keep his deformed child, or grieve excessively over his poor old mother who ought to have been euthanized years ago, or worry himself into a breakdown over the possibility of being cuckolded—because every one of these 'private' concerns touches the general welfare somewhere. Suffering, discontent, maladjustment, can be spread as surely as typhoid or smallpox. And carriers must be isolated and cured. Or at least have his malady arrested. It's the only ultimately humane course." He looked straight at Cyrus, his eyes suddenly stern and sober.

It was not quite a warning, still less a threat. Yet, even as he felt the chill of the admonition, his mind was busy with what Tree had said about Horace Whitelands. It would be well to let whoever came for them know that Whitelands

was already considered too liberal by the Ama. Suspicion of the editor of the *Medical Journal* might lead to exposure of the fact that he was even more liberal than they thought. That he was, indeed, in loose contact with the mallie underground.

## IV

**D**R. RAPHAEL TREE arose. "Well," he said easily, "it's been a pleasant evening."

Mallup yawned. "Tired myself. Had a rough day."

"Too many trips back and forth to the still," diagnosed Tree. "I suppose I mustn't complain—I recognize your courtesy in keeping it off Galentry. Although I'm not too enthusiastic about the holes you've cut in my damnably expensive fence."

"Sorry," apologized Mallup, not at all contritely. "I'll fix them one of these days."

Tree moved toward the door. "It will never be the same. Incidentally, you ought to change your trail again—visitors are likely to mistake it for the main entrance."

"That bad?" asked Mallup. "All right—I'll change it."

"You see how adjustment works? Chris keeps his still, but not on my property. I adjust by drinking the whiskey and not being inquisitive about working time. Good night."

"Good night, Doctor," replied Cyrus. Mallup grunted. The door closed.

"Your room's next to Carrie's," said Mallup.

"I know. Do you mind telling me something?"

"Depends on what it is."

"Isn't it risky to moonshine? Even though Dr. Tree seems strangely tolerant?"

"Nothing strange about it—he likes liquor and he's got a thrifty streak in him, though it hardly shows. Danger? It's not even neurosis. If some nosey character stumbled on it, they'd send me to a psychiatrist who'd probably prescribe occupational therapy in a brewery. Night."

"Good night," said Cyrus.

**T**HE HALLWAY was dark. He felt his way gingerly toward the stairs, hoping the lack of light wouldn't make it too

hard to find Victoria's room or cause him to stumble and wake Judy. When he got halfway up he saw with gratitude that the bathroom door was open, giving a small light.

"Cyrus! What kept you so long?"

He waited till they were inside before answering. "Dr. Tree came over for a drink of Mallup's whiskey. He's just left."

"I went downstairs after Hank fell asleep and heard voices. I was nervous."

"I'm sorry," he said contritely. "I couldn't get away. Tree came in so quickly, I was trapped. Is Hank all right?"

"He's asleep. Finally. For a long time he tossed and cried out. Pleading with the doctors, telling them he'd had a check-up—not to give him shots."

This was what Tree had called being humane, what Mallup had shrugged off. "It won't take him too long to forget it all," he said with a confidence largely synthetic, "once we're free."

"Help me," she begged simply, quietly. "I'm afraid."

With his arms around her, he

searched for some reassuring formula, some convincing set of words to ease her. Tree was no brute, no monster—his relations with Mallup and Judy revealed him as kindly, even gentle. And it was exactly this which made his fixity of purpose so ominous. "Don't," he said. "Don't be afraid. It's only a matter of hours now."

"Do you really think so?" she whispered. "Do you really believe it yourself?"

"Of course I do." Tiredness and tension combined to make him yawn audibly.

She pulled away from him slightly, spoke briskly. "You need sleep as much as Hank, and I'm keeping you up."

"I'm not tired any more." But he was...

**H**OW LONG he slept, or what wakened him, he had no idea. All his senses were alert as he sat up, straining his ears in alarm. Moonlight brightened the room. Victoria's face was utterly composed on the pillow.

He slid out of bed, reaching for his clothes. "Quick," he whispered. "Something's wrong."

He could not define what it was, or how he knew. No sound broke the quiet. Had someone entered the next room? Had Mallup come upstairs? Or was it something more immediately perilous?

She too came awake instantly, not wasting time to ask, "What's the matter; what is it?" As he struggled into his trousers, she dressed quietly, then woke the boy efficiently, neither startling him nor allowing him to cry out.

The door opened quietly; there were at least three of them in the hall behind the man in the doorway who was holding them in the glare of his flashlight. "There's no good in moving—we're prepared to use gas if we have to. Come with us."

"Are you orderlies?" Victoria asked in a clear, strong voice as she shoved Cyrus toward the window with her elbow. Her intention was clear. Resistance was hopeless; unburdened by a child and a handicapped girl, Cyrus had a bare chance to get away. To try and effect a total escape meant that everything would be

lost. He could not spirit her or the boy from the room; there was only the faintest possibility for himself. Yet...

"Stop!"

**H**E REACHED out with a speed and strength he had not thought himself capable of, seized Hank under one arm, Victoria by the wrist, whirled them toward the window. He sprang to the dresser, crouched on the sill, and bracing himself, gave a tremendous heave with both feet which sent the cumbersome bureau crashing forward at the intruders. With sudden elation he noted that she had not hesitated, but in that sped second had lowered Hank out of the window and begun to climb through herself. He spun around, grasping her hands, leaned far out, letting her drop just as he felt hard, relentless fingers digging into his shoulder.

"Got him! Get the girl and the kid. Outside!"

Could there be really only two of them in the room? He jerked his elbow hard back, striking out with bare heel at the same time. The grasp loos-

ened slightly, ever so slightly, but enough to give him the chance to twist, duck, and find himself breathlessly, unbelievably free.

The crack of the revolver and the soft spang of the bullet in the wood over his head came simultaneously as he threw himself outward. It was a long—a sickeningly far too long—drop to the ground. His arms somehow did not receive the shock properly; his first feeling was one of chagrined amazement that he had so miscalculated the jump. And Vic-

toria, Hank? If she landed on her bad ankle... Then he realized the impact had been on his knee. His right knee, in which the sensation of great pain was rapidly overcoming the momentary numbness.

“Cyrus!”

He put his palms flat, tried to raise his body, and almost collapsed. Knee—sprained or broken? Either was disastrous. But... He tried to be sure of the direction of her whispered voice. He had to know; separation now would be separation forever.

[to be continued]

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Now  
Every  
Month

# THE ORIGINAL SCIENCE FICTION

STORIES

Volume 9

FEBRUARY, 1959

Number 6

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Second  
of  
Four  
Parts

# CADUCEUS

## WILD

by Ward Moore  
& Robert Bradford

illustrated by FINLAY

*Who had betrayed Cyrus Tarn, Virginia Carling, and her brother, Henry, to the medarchy? The first problem, now, was to escape the sub-cutes, but the riddle of a traitor in the underground loomed before them, too...*

### Synopsis

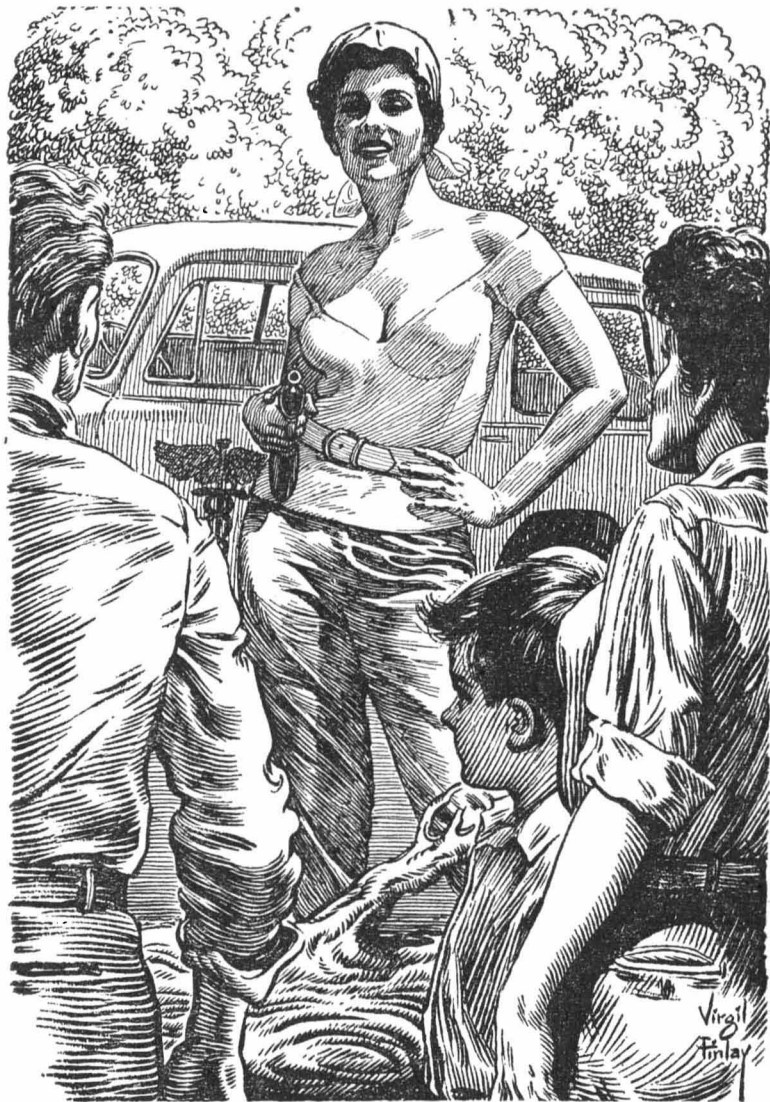
**D**R. RAPHAEL TREE was neither a mad scientist nor a megalomaniac. "You don't allow children to play with live bombs, or neurotics to indulge delusions. We have seen what happened when they were so allowed. If we had taken over earlier, we would certainly have averted the third world war—and perhaps some of those that went before."

In this day, when the medarchy was supreme, such a statement almost sounded believable. CYRUS TARN could not deny that certain benefits had come from the rule of caduceus, where every citizen had to report to his doctor for a health check-up regularly, and where the doctors' decisions were the law. People weren't oppressed in the old-fashioned way; they had freedom of speech, of the press, of vote on political

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This story began in the January 1959 issue. Copies may be had from the publisher at 35c.





"I'm sure the three of you can lift a tree out of the way of my car,"  
Dr. Tavistock said.

matters, and of worship—except where these infringed on public health. What constituted public health was, of course, determined by Ama.

TARN (alias Tennick) sat at the table with Dr. Tree and CHRIS MALLUP, who worked for Tree, drinking whiskey and wondered how much they knew or suspected about him and about his companions. Ten-year-old HENRY CARLING was being passed off as Tarn's grandson; the boy's sister, VICTORIA CARLING, was still supposed to be his sister—only her name was now CARRIE GOODSPEED.

"Man brings suffering on himself," stated Dr. Tree. "He insists on it, cherishes it, refuses to be parted from it. And the only thing he learns is that suffering never gets him anything but suffering. We've given the people the utopia so long dreamed-of: health, happiness, security, freedom from war. Some of them still aren't satisfied. The ones who would never be satisfied."

He was referring, of course, to the "mallies"—the "mal-adjusted", those who refused to adjust themselves to the sane and sanitary regimen of the medarchy. Cyrus, Victoria, and Henry were all members of that ubiquitous minority—which could do

little more than rebel, and try to convince the majority that the rule of caduceus wild robbed man of all dignity. They believed—that denying a man the right to make a mistake, even a harmful one, made him less than a man.

Henry had just escaped from a medarchy raid on the mallie school with which he was connected—the boy had been kidnapped and brought to a hospital. Before he could be given treatment—drugs which would make it impossible for him to conceal anything he knew about the mallies—Cyrus had rescued him and, prepared with forged charts, set out for Mallups', where they would have refuge until a plane would take them out of the country. Victoria had gone on ahead, and was waiting for them. Their local "doctor", to whom they would refer, was ALEX CALLIGGS, a member of the underground. He was supposed to bring them new charts before they left Mallups', to go to their rendezvous with the escape plane.

If they were caught, it would be the end for all three of them. Not a firing squad, or any other sort of execution chamber, no overt torture. Just treatment—electrotranquilization and whatever

else the medarchy's wisdom might prescribe for their mal-adjusted states. No marriage between Cyrus Tarn, age fifty, and Victoria Rald, age twenty-nine, slightly crippled, could possibly be approved. They would be treated and—what happened to the flame when the candle was blown out? Urgency and emotion would be part of an unremembered past, blotted out, destroyed, non-existent. They'd never recognize each other afterward. For Henry, the process would be less drastic, but the result would be the same. And before it was over, the medarchy would know everything each one of them knew or suspected about the mallie underground.

Mallup was an eccentric, who put up a show of outward conformity, thumbed his nose at the medarchy in private, and did pretty much as he pleased—and got away with it. He had a private library of books prohibited by Ama, most of them quack literature; but he never tried to get anyone else to read them, he said, didn't sell them—and didn't agree with most of the stuff in them himself. He just liked to have them, that was all. It was a position, Cyrus thought, which made Chris Mallup ideal for a medarchy counter-

mallie agent. And something was definitely wrong; there was a traitor—at least one—in the underground. First the school had been raided; then the promised new charts for the three fugitives hadn't come through. Perhaps a change of decision, Dr. Calliggs suggested, when Cyrus telephoned him.

Yes, Alex Calliggs might be a traitor. Or Mallup. Dr. Tree might be learning important things through his protection and friendship with the old eccentric. And he mustn't forget JUDY LARCH, Mallup's 'sixteen-year-old granddaughter, fanatic in her support of the caduceans, unswerving in her faith in anything the doctors said. She was upset by the grandfather's flouting of health regulations, was certain that he ought to be in a home for the aged. There could be no doubt that if Judy suspected, she wouldn't hesitate a moment to turn Cyrus and the others in. She'd probably get in touch with the medarchy lieutenant at the station—who had given Cyrus and Henry cursory examinations, and looked over their charts. Traveling without a chart meant immediate and thorough examination in the nearest hospital.

Victoria had been upset

over what had appeared to be Cyrus' undue attention to this ripe, pretty sixteen-year-old, and Tarn was worried. Such extreme jealousy on so little grounds was unlike Victoria. She was waiting for him upstairs, now.

At length, Dr. Tree finished his whiskey sampling and said goodnight—not an evil man, which was the worst of it, Tarn thought. Few, if any, of them were malicious—they believed they were doing good, bringing health, happiness, and security to all. But one thing Tree had said stuck in Cyrus' mind. An ex-wife of the doctor's was personal physician to Horace Whitelands, editor of the all-important *Medical Journal*. DR. GRACE TAVISTOCK was an extremist, a member of the small faction in the medarchy which believed in immediate and thorough measures in dealing out the mallies. Whitelands must be warned before their suspicion that he was too liberal—favoring a moderate, gradual course against the maladjusted—exposed that fact that he was loosely connected with the underground, too.

Victoria was feeling better, though still upset. Then, in the night, something awoke Cyrus. Had someone entered the next room? Had Mallup come upstairs? He had

thought that Mallup was listening in on them before. He awoke Victoria, who at once awoke the boy; all three began to dress quietly. The door opened, to reveal at least three men behind the one in the doorway who was holding them in the glare of his flashlight. "There's no good in moving—we're prepared to use gas if we have to. Come with us."

"Are you orderlies?" Victoria asked as she shoved Cyrus toward the window. Tarn managed to take them by surprise, as they obviously did not realize that the three were fully awake, or would dare to resist. Victoria and Henry got safely out the window. Cyrus was not so lucky—the impact of landing was on his knee.

"Cyrus!"

He tried to get up, and almost collapsed. Knee—sprained or broken? He tried to be sure of the direction of her whispered voice. He had to know; separation now would be separation forever.

## V

**T**HIS TIME Cyrus got to his feet, dizzy, noting without passion how the pain grew. His knee was not broken anyway, because some-

how he was running in a lopsided, hobbling fashion. Another moment and they'd have gotten away easily. Easily, easily. *Victoria, where are you?*

The revolver again, nervous, vindictive, reptilian. The pursuers were not fooling. Not when they dropped the constantly-publicised pretense of being armed only with the means of subduing recalcitrant patients, never lethal weapons. They wanted Cyrus Tarn alive, but better dead than not at all. He braced himself for the next shot. If it hit him, would he hear it first? Or not at all?

He managed a stumbling turn, around the corner of the house, out of the moonlight and the line of fire. Her hand touched his; relief blotted his fear. "Victoria. Oh, Victoria..." His knee was now a focus of agony.

**H**E FELT her mouth against his ear. "There's trees and shadow all the way to those buildings." She pointed to the agglomeration of sheds and servants' quarters he had noted when they came.

"No," he whispered back, "we'd only trap ourselves. Mal-

lup has a still on the other side of the fence. Keep to cover—try to find it."

What good would it do them to get to the still, unless there was a way out—a secret, unknown, illicit way out—on the other side from Secarros? Nothing could be more unlikely. Way out or not, the idea of the still represented—at least for the frantic moment—safety, a refuge.

*Run!* screamed part of his mind. *Never mind the gun, never mind your leg, never mind logic—run, run, run!* But they were invisible for the moment; perhaps the moment could lengthen out, second by second, conferring greater and greater immunity all the time.

No, no—how foolish. Don't stand still, petrified, transfixed. Go by stealth, noiseless step by step. Not hard in bare feet. Victoria had managed to get her shoes. Hank?

Cyrus walked ahead, scouting, assuming leadership. (Why? Elder male; the Old Man who knows, guardian of women and children. Weak reed.) The shelter of the house ended too soon, leaving only its

shadow thrust angularly into the moonlight as a fragile, deceitful protection. He stood poised on the edge, unsure, awaiting some unknown impetus.

"There they are! Stop! You can't get away!"

Maybe not, but they would try. His irresolution dropped; the patch of open ground—Mallup's vegetable garden? yes, it must be—between them and the line of cultivated shrubbery was large, a yawning gap, not to swallow but expose. No choice. Cyrus ran, stumbling, stones and stubble lacerating his feet, hunching his shoulder reflexively, expecting another bullet, steeling himself for the noise.

Then the texture of the ground changed. Clods to trip, furrows to throw him off balance, plants to whip themselves around his legs and cling. The torment of his knee could not blot out his fear, nor his shame that he was not seeing Victoria and Hank to safety while he held back to face the subcuties. "Brave, brave," he muttered between his teeth— "Women and children last."

**WOULD THE** patch never end? Mallup's indifference must be false; the old man must have worked like mad to cultivate so large an area. Mallup? Was he sleeping through all this, or observing their flight and pursuit—the informer watching with satisfaction? Mallup? Judy, righteously doing her duty? Or Tree? Being humane. Run. Run from Mallup, Judy, Tree. Run from humanity.

The promise of the shrubbery was false; what had seemed solid cover turned out to be only shoulder high, with wide spaces between the bushes. "Come on."

They must make perfect targets. Surely they must be seen; surely the gun must be aimed by now; surely a finger must be pressing on the trigger...

Beyond — infinitely beyond the shrubbery—were real trees, growing where they willed, clustered, shouldering. Have... to ...dodge...out...of... The words came to his mind in gasps, as though he were trying to pant them aloud. In time to the jolting of his heart, the whistling of his breath.

The shadow of a tall pine was like a pool; he dropped flat into it, knowing it offered only brief concealment. He heard the others drop beside him, allowed himself the faint lessening of tension afforded by the sight of Victoria before dutifully turning back to watch for their pursuers.

**T**HE SHORT, illusory pause allowed his mind to open, to half withdraw from the intense, searing concentration of waiting, watching, forcing his uncooperative body to suppress its rebellion against the shaky dominion of his will. How had it happened?

Tree? Mallup? The girl? If one of them had called in the subcutes, would they have been shot at? The shot seemed to argue that their identity was known, that the attempt to capture them was a follow-up to the first raids. But if not Tree, if not someone at Galentry, what had gone wrong? What had gone wrong so quickly? Accident? Routine? They had known there were three mallies in the room. Known they were man, woman, child. Alex had

not been caught and made to talk. Or had he—between the time of the telephone conversation and the raid...?

Two men were suddenly where no one had been. Two men were coming swiftly, trampling over the open ground, swaying slightly from side to side as they ran. Two: one must have waited for the other to join him; any mallie dangerous enough to be shot if he couldn't be taken alive was too dangerous for a single subcute. Even as the taste of fear filled his mouth, Cyrus Tarn was aware of the curious, suicidal satisfaction the fact brought. It vanished as they slowed, coming as though by instinct straight toward the tree.

**A** NUMBING tinge of relief edged his despair. It was clearly impossible to escape discovery for more than another heart-beat. They were caught. And it was just as well; for what was to be gained by running and hiding, running and hiding, hour after gasping hour, only to be taken at last? Let there be an end to it now; now, this moment. They might

let him rest, they might let him sleep, before they began questioning him. They might even do something for his knee. And...

But it need not be the end for Victoria and Hank. If he went forward now with his arms raised, the others would have a chance to get away. An infinitely greater chance than in their keeping all together. And Cyrus would be giving up nothing not lost already.

"There they go!"

*They? Who?* The voice was by the house; the shout came from behind the others.

"Up the hill—by the big house!"

A third subcute, evidently confused by the moonlight's distortion of some innocent object, or any one of the sudden sounds so alien and disturbing to the urban ear. The realization that there was a boundary to the opposition's efficiency, that they were fallible, capable of being misled by trivial circumstances, gave Cyrus a hope he knew to be as undependable as his resignation of the moment before. Still, it remained: the pursuers were men who

could make mistakes; he must be a man who could take advantage of them.

He broke cover as the two spun around to follow the shouted injunction. "Again the trees," which had looked so close, were suddenly far off. Had the pursuers already found that the alarm was false? Were they even now turning to take cool aim at the retreating backs? Running, his flesh shrank from the anticipated impact of the lead slug—shrank triply: Vicky, Hank, himself.

**M**IRACULOUSLY, the trees closed around, sheltered them at last. He touched Victoria lightly, reassuring himself, and put his hand on Hank's shoulder. Leaning against a tree, Cyrus Tarn eased his trembling leg, and peered back. There were lights in Mallup's house at last, downstairs and up; they silhouetted no forms, nor could he see the subcutes in the garden or anywhere beyond.

Again the shouts came, this time from a greater distance. The hunters were evidently shielded from view by the



house; they must be going directly away from them. Were they chasing a phantom, or could there be still another fugitive hidden on the place? Or . . . could Alex somehow have learned of what was about to happen, and organized a diversion? If not Alex, then Mallup? No, no; either was impossible. The excited pursuers had been bemused by a fleeting shadow, an odd shape manufactured by the treacherous moonlight; Cyrus' desperation, his guilt at his own inadequacy, strained to infuse hope into the impossibility.

The detailed map of Galentry, so meticulously committed to memory, failed him now. A fence ran through these woods, bounding the estate in long, angular slashes—but was it a hundred or five hundred yards from where they stood? A few hours ago, he had known; now he could not bring up the topographical lines for examination. And even if he could, where were the holes Mallup had cut in the fence—to the east or to the west? Suppose they were in completely exposed places, suppose the fence were impen-

etrable elsewhere; as soon as the subcuties recovered from the shock of the escape, they had only to organize a methodical beating of the grounds to end the chase. Mallup's still had been Cyrus' decision; was it the wisest one? What happened after they got there, supposing they did? A dead end, in all likelihood, from which they could neither reconnoiter nor return.

**H**AD HE BEEN right in automatically rejecting the thought of taking refuge with Alex? Was the rejection overzealous, quixotic? Or timorous? Again the riddle: why had the subcuties shot at him? That fact almost clinched the certainty of Alex' having been taken. Almost, not quite. It was a tormenting puzzle.

If he dared—if he were truly the dashing, swashbuckling, dramatic figure of Hank's imagination—perhaps he would have led them straight to the big house, to hide in one of the many spare rooms, to take shelter right under the roof of Dr. Raphael Tree. Where he could incidentally find shoes

and shirt and jacket... Shame caught him: did the boy have anything on his feet?

Suppose Tree had not called in the subcutes; was there any hope of mercy from him if they were discovered? Not that they need be discovered in a place like that; it was really an inspired solution, a logical follow-up, a pinpointing of Victoria's choice of Secarros...

Even as he calculated, Cyrus knew he didn't possess that kind of gamblers' courage. It was not simply that they could expect no mercy from Tree: let him once suspect that three notorious mallies were in his house, and he would personally lead the search. And if he didn't, if they found some presumably secure retreat, what guarantee was there against some officious servant coming in to clean? Or the subcutes deciding routine required an extra thorough search?

"Guess we gave them the slip this time." Hank's exultant whisper had an undertone of doubt.

"Shush, Henry!" Victoria warned. "Sounds carry."

**Y**ET...THE idea of doubling back and hiding in the typhoon's eye was solid sense. Not the big house, perhaps, but... The servants' quarters were out; they would be combed minutely—if not for them specifically, then on the principle that where one group of criminals hide, there might well be others. The garages were too easy to search. The barn—there was one, and now Cyrus remembered its location, at the point of a triangle whose base was a line from Galentry to Mallup's—might be an ideal place.

Or the stables, where they might steal a horse as soon as the clamor died down. A car could not leave Secarros, but a horse... Unfortunately his information included no knowledge of whether Dr. Tree kept horses or not. Tree didn't seem the equestrian type, but he might provide mounts for visitors...

Romantic! Cyrus cursed himself back to reality. He was standing there dreaming, bemusing himself with pleasing mirages. It was time, and more than time, to move on. The re-

luctance he felt to abandon their present vulnerable spot must be the same as that which made men in snowstorms lie down to sleep and freeze to death.

Paralysis of the will. Will power. Force himself to go on. Hare and tortoise. Dogged tortoise, a turtledog. Who appointed him leader anyway; what divine accolade? Victoria was better suited a hundred times. Mind getting woozy. Sleepiness? Terror? Pain? "Come on," he muttered.

He tried to ignore the stiffening leg, but it was impossible; the pain grew worse steadily. He could not put any weight on it; he longed for a crutch as he might have longed for some rare treasure. The ground was getting rougher, too; did that mean they were coming closer to the fence? For all he knew they could be wandering in circles.

A CLOUD crawled over the face of the moon; it might be quite dark for ten minutes or so. If he were only sure of his bearings this would be an ideal opportunity. Cyrus

stepped hard on his good leg and walked forward.

"There's something over there, Si." The boy's low voice was anxious.

"Where?"

He felt rather than heard Victoria leave them and move forward. He wanted to hold her back, or say, *Wait*—but dared not. In the crisis she took over naturally, protecting them, exposing herself. In a moment she was back. "It's the fence," she whispered. "What do we do now?"

"Find one of Mallup's holes. We've got to get through it." He looked back again, but now everything was hidden by the trees. The moon was still covered. He limped ahead; suddenly the steel links of the fence caught the faint light.

"I can climb that," said Hank.

"Not in your bare feet. Anyway, I couldn't," said Victoria quickly. Too quickly; she was so evidently prompted by the knowledge that whatever she or Hank might be able to manage, Cyrus now could not.

If only the darkness would last, a blanket to cover ~~them~~

while they puzzled their way to the still, unharrassed by man as well as nature. But in a few minutes the cloud would drift unheedingly away; the moon would be mercilessly bright again.

The clearing made for the erection of the fence was not yet overgrown; it offered a straight and easy path. Too straight and too easy: as soon as the moon came out again they would be revealed in terrifying clarity. As they walked—Victoria delicately; Hank nimbly, acknowledging a stone or sharp stick only by a quick, "Ow!"; himself trying to avoid hazards to feet and knee without keeping his eyes always on the ground—Cyrus Tarn scrutinized the diamond links of the fence. He had no way of knowing whether Mallup had cut recklessly or neatly, whether his thoroughfares would be visible from far off, or whether they would be skillfully concealed as careful mends. But perhaps there were other ways through the barrier beside Mallup's.

**T**HE LINKS ran up and down, they ran diagonally

in an infinite number of sal-tires. Never a broken one; never a sag in the three strands of barbed wire running along the top; never a gap between the lower edge and the earth. Dig under (with what?); burrow, like a—what was it?—badger. Have to find Mallup's triumphs over the fence's invincibility.

A new sense of impending danger pivoted him sharply. A strange pinpoint of light showed for a moment from the direction of the big house, then blossomed into a blinding glare as the beam swung around grandly, moving up and down, pausing, retracting, always probing. It passed high over their heads; on the next sweep it was cut off from them by the trees. On one of its circuits it would be on the right level, and there would be no trees between it and them.

"Fast work," he mumbled.

"What?"

"Getting a searchlight here and rigging it up so quickly. Unless it was here all along. Could be—war relic. Remember how everyone was sure the Russians were bound to land on the downcoast? No, of course

you don't. You were too young."

"Is it very bad, Cyrus?"

He knew he should evade, answer equivocally, if only for Hank's sake. "It's not good. They're efficient." And that was something mallies weren't, not even organized mallies—with or without quotes around the adjective. (Was it only such a little while before that he had taken heart from the opposition's fallibility?) What chance had they now? The pursuers might become confused, as they had earlier, blundering away from their quarry; but eventually numbers and resources, training and all the intangibles which aided authority and hindered those opposed to it, would tip the balance. More than tip it; pull it down swiftly and surely. (*Now, Miss Carling, for your own good...*) Aloud, he said, "Still, they're looking for three needles in a large and scattered haystack."

**W**ERE THEY following the fence in the right direction for sure? Cyrus had taken it for granted that Mallup would

have his still toward the western side of Galentry, where the vast hogback—which was the ridge on which Secarros stood—sloped down into canyons and arroyos to the ocean. He had taken it for granted, but there was no absolute reason why the old man should not perversely have set it up closer to the road. And if he had, they were getting deeper with each step into a corner from which there would be no escape except into the arms of the subcutes.

The searchlight was unnerving him. No longer making majestic revolutions, its course had become erratic, moving in jerks, stopping short for long seconds, wavering on—only to double back swiftly. It was a game of russian roulette, played over and over: sooner or later the beam would catch them as they crossed one of the spaces aligned in an open path to its source.

Then, as though to prove complete aberration, it outlined the figure of a man standing by the fence not more than a hundred feet ahead of them. Outlined, and held him in its

glare. Cyrus Tarn ducked, and pulled Victoria and Hank to lie beside him on the ground. He heard the boy's teeth chatter, felt the girl trembling uncontrollably.

It was impossible to distinguish the man's features. Subcute? Neutral? Or friend? Ascending order of unlikeliness. But if a subcute, why was he waiting, exposed and useless instead of hidden to ambush them as they came along? Was this all a game of double blindman's bluff with all contestants blundering around?

**N**O SHOTS. Did that mean they had identified the figure? (Someone standing by the searchlight with binoculars?) Or was this some kind of subtle trap? Perhaps it was not so subtle, Cyrus' suddenly-wakened mind reflected. Perhaps the subcute had been deliberately stationed there, deliberately caught in the light, in order to drive them away from the fence, back to where they would be captured.

No... He acted as though he were searching, too; could they have learned of Mallup's

tampering with the fence? But of course they could; even if Tree or Mallup had not summoned them, either would have told the subcutes right away. Especially if, as they had suspected, there was a trail out of Secarros down the mountainside from the still. At any rate, Mallup's breaks in the fence would have been the only unguarded exits from Galentry. Unguarded at first; now they were too late.

The man in the light moved, signalling with his arms. The light followed him; when he stopped, so did it. He must have found at least one of the cuts then, and was inspecting it. To determine if they had gone through it? How could they tell? And if they couldn't tell, wasn't it possible they might assume the three of them had got through the fence ahead of the pursuit? That they were even now on their way down the mountain?

It was a fascinating subject for speculation. Or would be, if so much didn't depend on guessing right. Cyrus tried to hold himself down to a calm appraisal, ignoring everything

but the problem. (*Let A equal the subcute at the fence, his mind mocked.*)

**I**F HE ONLY knew how many of them there were. Three? Five? Seven? Again it depended on who had betrayed them; whether they were merely trying to round up three suspected mallies, or whether they were angrily searching for Tarn alias Tennick and the children of Boyd Carling. A logical mind, given the essential data, could figure out anything. Either Cyrus' mind wasn't logical or he didn't have the data...

He knew there were at least three, but that didn't help; there might be two or six or none surrounding the house when the three had routed them out of the bedroom. Try it another way: there was the man in sight, there was another at the searchlight; could there be only a single one exploring the grounds? No— Unless they were firmly convinced they knew exactly where their quarry was.

A rectangular patch of the links sagged, slithering and collapsing in the light. The man

walked through, was hidden by the trees. The searchlight resumed its probing swing.

What now? Their concealment was only a trifle less precarious than their earlier one had been; they had nothing to depend on but the black shadow created by the blinding light. If others were to follow the man through the fence, or look for Mallup's other ways in and out...

Once more it would be sensible to be greatly daring—to pursue the pursuer, to follow him to the still, to make their way out of Secarros behind him while he thought of them as being ahead. And if he turned? Or if his companions joined the chase?

**T**HERE WAS only one course, and to succeed it must be followed soon. Cyrus put his mouth to her ear. "Victoria..."

"We must go back," she whispered. "We must try for Alex'."

"It won't do—at least not for all of us. There's too big a chance that he's been taken, and they'd be waiting in his

place. But you're right, we must go back. Part way. Then we'll have to split up."

"No," she said.

"Listen to me: I've thought it all out. When that subcute comes back through the fence, you and Hank must run for the still as fast as you can. It's pretty obvious now that there's a trail from there. It probably leads to the coast highway. You go north..."

"No," she repeated. "It's no use, Cyrus. We're not going to separate."

He simulated anger. "Don't be a fool. This is no time for sentimentality."

"No, it isn't. And the rankest sentimentality of all is self-sacrifice."

"What do you mean? No one's suggesting self-sacrifice. Separating doubles our chances because it divides the subcutes. You must make your way to the airfield..."

He calculated rapidly. About twenty-five miles—less than thirty, anyway. They couldn't possibly walk it, but there was a chance of getting a ride from a motorist on the highway. Even if—even when they cap-

tured him, they might not send out an alarm for Hank and Victoria. Again, it all depended on whether the subcutes knew their identity or not. The medarchy never liked to appear oppressive, or give mallies undue public notice. Anyway it was the best—or the least bad—chance. Only he must warn her to scout the airfield, to be wary of entrapment at the last moment. "...the airfield," he repeated. "You go north..."

"Cyrus!" She made no attempt to whisper now. "I won't do it. I can't do it."

**T**HE SEARCHLIGHT passed them, sweeping the ground short of where they were. "Come on back," he whispered. "That's what we have to do, whatever happens."

His knee had stiffened while they rested and argued. He staggered to his feet in a flopping, fishlike motion, jolted by pain and unbalanced by the useless leg. It would have been impossible for him to descend any rough trail in this condition; it was next to it to cover the short distance allowed by the revolution of the light. He



sank to the ground again, grateful to be halted, more determined to put his plan into effect.

"Listen," he whispered sternly, "you must be logical. Our chances will be doubled. While they're chasing me, you and Hank can get away. We'll meet at the airfield."

"No."

"Don't you understand? I can dodge them better alone."

The light passed over them again. He must force them to leave him. Then he would give himself up. Immediately. And demand to be taken to Dr. Tree, to relieve his knee. Maybe they would let him rest, even sleep, before they began questioning him. He was almost sure they would. And it was the only course. Self-indulgence, like suicide? Why not?

"I can dodge them better alone," he repeated.

"With a limp?"

"Your limp is a handicap, too," he said harshly. "We can make it separately, or at least have two chances instead of one."

"I don't want chances that don't include you."

"This is no time to be romantic."

"Isn't it? Cyrus, do you know why I was ill today?"

"What has that got to do with it?" But he knew, even as his mind struggled feverishly to deny the knowledge. No, not now. Not now.

"I'm pregnant, Cyrus."

**T**HE INCREDIBLE irony of it; the overwhelming incongruity of the news and the situation. The responses which bubbled up were equally incongruous. This was no time to ask, *Are you sure?* Or, *How far along...?* Or, *Why didn't you tell me before?*

Four lives instead of three. And this time it was a life in the meaning of actual existence which was in raw danger of extinction; no matter how far along she was, they would abort the child, kill it. Mallies must not be permitted to marry, must not reproduce. "Mistakes mustn't be allowed to happen," said Dr. Tree gravely—"society must be protected against predisposition toward maladjustment." And who could be better predisposed

than Boyd Carling's grand-child?

So Cyrus Tarn would not have the ultimate luxury of giving himself up, the relief of resigning from the struggle. Now they would have to go on for another hour, another two hours, another three or four, until they were shot or taken. A duty to his never-to-be-born child.

"So you see we must go to Alex after all," she said.

"Yes." But he didn't see it at all. The odds were vastly that Alex had been taken. How else...? But the alternative—any alternative—which ought to be forming so readily and smoothly in his mind refused to come. "Yes, I suppose so."

My child; my son; my daughter; a mere blob of matter. Terminated pregnancy. Unless... Was there a chance they would finish treating Victoria and let her go before they discovered her condition? Could she hold back the fact in spite of parapentathol; the instinct to protect unborn life was supposed to override all others. Believe any absurdity in order to hope...

At this moment he ought to have his arms around her, be comforting her, sharing with her. Instead, there was the nearest to antagonism that there had ever been between them. She had cheated him out of surrendering, out of yielding; forced him back into responsibility.

**B**ETWEEN swings of the light, they paralleled the fence back toward the road. How far was it? If he could only recall that map, so clear only a few hours before—what a mind for conspiratorial work! You learned to impress every detail of a bogus personality, a forged history, or a chart for reconnaissance on your memory; and then at the moment of acute need, the impression failed.

It was no use to tell himself the subcuties had proved their fallability; they would certainly have a guard posted where the fence joined the stone wall. It was such an obvious escape route. Unless they didn't have enough men. Unless they were convinced the fugitives had already got out by Mallup's still.

(In that case, why the searchlight? Mere extra insurance?) Unless they were sure. . .

Her pregnancy— Wasn't that all the more reason why Cyrus should try to hold back the subcutes while she and Hank got away? A father was the most expendable member of the group, especially at this period. He began to marshal the arguments: Victoria, the child— No, it would be useless.

A looming shape outlined by the light dropped them panting. He had known they would not have neglected to post someone in so obvious a place. What now? The big house seemed to be the only answer. But how could they make it?

The light's next sweep showed the figure exactly as before. "It's a bush," Victoria whispered, but he was not satisfied until the beam had come around again to confirm her discovery.

How could she retain her control? But then she had known, even when the subcutes came. She must have planned to tell him later, when they were on their way to freedom

—when it would have been joyful instead of horrible news.

THEY OUGHT to have covered the distance along the fence to the corner by now. Perhaps not; the combination of the moon and searchlight was doubly deceptive. And add that each step Cyrus Tarn took seemed like four. Like four? Like five. Still, surely there ought to be some sign of the landscaping he had noticed behind the stone wall. Surely it wasn't possible they had become so disoriented in flight— no; they had to be going in the right direction.

A new set of sounds—muffled—caught his ear. Hank was crying, softly, fighting it, and Victoria was comforting him. "Monstrous," Cyrus muttered—"monstrous." But the word was utterly inadequate. Just as the word fear was inadequate. They were beyond terror or rage or hope. All they had left was dogged, helpless persistence.

The wall? Where was the wall? Suppose they came to it finally; suppose it stayed stationary at last and stopped re-

treating before them? What then? Alex's house was not far as the crow flies (do crows with bad knees fly straight?); perhaps half a mile—could they make it? It was inconceivable that the wall would be left unpatrolled. And if they evaded the guard or guards, there were still two roads to cross: double danger. Reason said, *Swing around, come upon Alex from the opposite direction*. The railroad tracks? Reason was utterly unreasonable.

Hank had stopped crying. What time was it? Cyrus didn't know when they'd gone to bed, how long they'd slept. But dawn could not be too far off. And dawn...

"There's the wall," whispered Victoria.

## VI

**K**NOWN TO one group of his associates as Monty; and to another as Alex, Marchmont Caliggs, MD, smiled a dimple into one cheek—a cheek looking as though it had been shaved only an hour or two earlier, yet would need shaving again an

hour or two hence—and rubbed the stem of his pipe gently against the cleft of his chin. "It was my mistake from the beginning," he admitted. "I should have insisted on all of you coming here, instead of depending on something so undependable as a friend of Rald's."

Cyrus Tarn felt divided, segmented, unable to draw his mind back into a cohesive unity. Alex not taken, after all; Victoria pregnant. There was a possible chance they might get to the airfield... his damnable knee... He tried to shut out the vital things, clutching at the comparatively unimportant. "No. The decision was right. If we could only know what went wrong. And where. Or who."

"Who... Yes, who?" Alex looked at him earnestly, large brown eyes serious, lips parted to show bright teeth. "Whoever or whatever it was, Vicky would have been better off here."

One of the smaller segments inside Cyrus smiled, recalling what Victoria had said about Alex. "No," he said aloud. "One thing we can't afford is to have the faintest suspicion

fall on you—one doctor on our side is worth a hundred ex-Patients. I wouldn't have come here, even tonight—this morning—if I hadn't been panicked by the thought of them getting Victoria and Hank. I still don't understand how they could have got the dope on us without knowing you had helped us."

**A**LEX FROWNED. "One of those puzzles—so clear when you know the answer that you wonder how you could have missed it. As far as I can see, the only thing that fits is that someone has been planted on us."

"It's possible. Yet Tree, the girl, or Mallup all had motive and opportunity. And if one of them called the cutes, everything is simple."

"If it was one of them, why did the subcutes shoot?"

"I don't know. The shot supposes they knew who we were. But if they knew who we were, that assumes someone beside you, John, and Stuart knowing we were here."

"Does it?"

*Victoria is pregnant; at any moment the subcutes will burst*

*in; meanwhile Alex and I will reason.* "I don't know—my logic seems to have got jolted around. Coming here is evidence of that. I was panicked." (*I had an easy way out, and then Victoria said...*)

"You did, the only possible thing," insisted Alex. "'Panicked'! I'd have been scared out of a year's growth and grown a long white beard if I'd been in your shoes."

"No shoes," Cyrus reminded him. How easy and pleasant they were chatting together, as though disaster didn't and couldn't threaten. He looked down at his feet, easy at last in a pair of Alex' slippers, too big for him. He touched his sore knee questioningly and winced. Alex had diagnosed it as a bad sprain half an hour earlier, and bound it tightly. Too tightly for comfort—but then it was not comfort he was looking for, but ability to use his leg. And he was able to use it better; the discomfort of the tight bandage was nothing to the pain he had felt before.

**H**E LOOKED over toward Victoria, resting on the

only bed beside the sleeping Hank. There were shadows under her eyes, and a smudge of dirt across her cheek. He knew that the appearance of fragility was deceptive; it belied her strength and stamina. *Had believed*, he corrected himself; how did he know what her new anxieties had done to her resilience? It was no use telling himself women gained fresh buoyancy in the first months of pregnancy; women in the first months of pregnancy were not usually hunted down and pursued with the threat of having the child taken from the womb.

Her eyes were closed, but Cyrus was sure that she was awake, listening. They had escaped last night; they were still free, thanks to their own luck and the blunders of the subcuties. But they could not depend on the combination. They should be planning now, planning carefully, getting ready to move on—no, moving on; at any moment the subcuties might pick up the trail. This had been a deceptive refuge; that they had had no other only pointed up its vulnerability.

People did hide, and for long

periods, in odd places: attics, closets, under floors. There were none of these facilities here; Alex's large but unpartitioned cabin revealed everything blandly to the first glance. Anyway, they couldn't wait; if one of the three at Galentry had turned them in, the plane would still show up and they could make it if his knee held out. And if it had not been Tree or Judy or Mallup—well, they had to get out still faster.

ALEX ASKED hospitably, "More coffee? I'd better not, either. It's incredible that the subcuties missed you on both roads."

"I think they didn't bring up enough men. They must have expected an easy capture, knowing exactly where to find us. They didn't anticipate having to comb the country. And that's what they'll do, because by now they'll have gone through our stuff and found enough to identify us if they didn't already know. There's probably a dozen more of them on the way to Secarros right now."

For the first time since their arrival Alex showed apprehension. "That means they'll be here eventually."

Cyrus nodded. "For one thing, the MP at the depot asked for my referral here, and I had to give your name. They're bound to check back and come to that. On the other hand, if they knew everything they'd have been here by now. They would have come for you at the same time they went for us. But if they are just following up the referral, or making a methodical search, they won't start this early. Doctors—especially doctors in Secarros—aren't treated as casually as Patients."

"I don't like it," said Alex fretfully. "The whole apparatus is crumbling. I don't like being tied in with nuts or fanatics. Some chiropractor or religious maniac is bound to buckle and spill his guts."

"You don't usually find subversives among the calm and reasonable."

"Don't get huffy—I wasn't talking about ordinary neurotics, or even psychos. I can work with you and Vicky, but what

about Rald and some of the others? How can I feel easy with my safety—my practice, my license—in the hands of some featherbrain who doesn't believe that germs cause disease, or thinks that research is flying in the face of providence, or that the way to cure the common cold is to pummel the spine, or that matter simply doesn't exist?"

ALEX SHOOK his head. "You can't rely on such people because they never have clear motives you can put your finger on and say, 'Joe Doakes is in this up to his neck—if he pulls out he'll leave it behind.' But how do you know that someone, whose actions are based on the firm conviction that Christ will come again next March Fifteenth at precisely 2:36 AM, Mountain Standard Time—and therefore it's sacrilegious to bother with the ills of the flesh—won't suddenly get a new revelation to the effect that the second advent has been postponed for a couple of hundred years and therefore a little medication—and consequently a little infor-

mation to the Ama—is permissible?”

Victoria spoke from the bed without opening her eyes. “I don’t understand, Alex. Where do you and Dr. Yester fit in with this reasoning?”

*How can she lie there and talk so calmly? How can I sit here and listen so placidly, when our nerves—mine, anyway—are screaming a warning of all the dangers around us?*

Alex tapped the dottle out of his pipe against the rung of his chair. “I don’t know about Stuart Yester—I’ve often wondered exactly what makes him tick. He’s always so busy with the underground I don’t see when he gets time to practise medicine. I know why I’m in this myself, though, and there’s nothing mystic or altruistic about it. I was in on perfecting a technique of transplanting adrenal glands. It was a big thing, what with the necrosis to the adrenal caused by irradiation in the war. We worked like hell building up a bank of healthy adrenal glands, and if you think that’s just like adding five dollars every month to your Christmas savings club,

you couldn’t be wronger. And then the Ama decided it was against medical ethics for us to keep the technique for our exclusive use.

ALEX FILLED his pipe, his eyes smouldering. “Can you beat it? We did the work, and surgeons who didn’t have the ability or persistence to develop such a thing themselves got in on the gravy. They don’t even give us a rebate on our dues to the Ama—more than the old income tax—or the Credit Bureau’s big cut as a reward for our contribution to science. Now there’s a chance we may be on the track of doing something like with kidneys and other glands. Before we get cheated out of that I want good old free enterprise, and I’ll even work with mal-lies—pardon me, individualists—to get it back. But that doesn’t mean I’ve got to feel happy about the chance that some osteopath—or ‘psychologist’ who calls himself doctor by virtue of a PhD and knows I’ve been working against the Ama—can ruin me by stooling.”



Cyrus Tarn had never heard him talk so much before. He decided that Alex must be nervous—and who could blame him? *If I were a very young man I'd call his attitude cynical. Funny how the word disappears from your vocabulary at about forty.* It wasn't because one grew disillusioned, but because you began to understand how complex motives really are, and how impossible it is to pin a simple label on them and let it go. Alex could brag about his unenlightened self-interest, but certainly that wasn't the whole story. (*My knee hurts—damn.*) What was the whole story? What was anyone's whole story? Anatole France: all history in one sentence. But what about Stuart Yester? He was no medical entrepreneur, too greedy for his own good. Why should he oppose the Ama?

*Maybe he doesn't.*

Cyrus' stomach revolted at the thought. Stuart? Nonsense! Ridiculous! Absurd! He'd worked with Stuart too long and too intimately...

Exactly. How did Stuart manage to make a living, and

yet have time for all his subversive activities? When did he tend to his practice? Stuart...

YESTER knew that Cyrus Tarn had gotten Hank out of the hospital and how, because Yester had planned it and given vital help. (*Then why? To cover up treachery? To catch more important mallies?*) Yester knew they were to meet Victoria in Secarros—at Galentry. Yester, in fact, knew more than anyone beside Tarn himself, of necessity. Even Alex and John Rald didn't know the location of the airfield. If it were just the three of them, through betrayal at Galentry, what had happened to the new charts? Yester had the opportunity of giving everything away to the subcuties. Maybe he wouldn't turn in Alex: the bond of medical ethics... Motive? Who was Cyrus to probe motives?

Again Victoria spoke from the bed. "You think Stuart...?"

Alex shook his head doubtfully. "Why Yester? Why not some nut, to get out of a routine sedation for a disturbed state?"

"Because only he had the information they seem to have acted on."

Alex considered this. "You can't go on that. You can't tell what may have come up to make him take someone else into his confidence."

"What about the missing charts?" demanded Cyrus. "That points to a collapse of the organization. But then—how did they miss you?"

Alex shrugged. "Perhaps the crackpot stooling decided we'd been brothers in a former incarnation."

His flippancy reacted on Cyrus to make him remember guiltily his own responsibility to others besides Victoria, Hank, and himself. "If it wasn't Tree or one of the others, there's certainly a stooge close to us. And if it isn't Yester, we'll have to find out who it is and see that he or she doesn't get any more correct information."

"Or eliminate him," said Alex.

**F**OR THE first time, Cyrus Tarn was annoyed with their ally. "Nonsense. Murder isn't

only foolish—it's futile. Amateur conspirators are always talking about killing—old hands know better."

"I'm not exactly enthusiastic at being classed as an amateur," said Alex stiffly.

"Then don't talk airily of 'eliminating' human beings. Euthanasia is approved by the medarchy, not by its opponents."

"Have we really time to wrangle?" asked Victoria. "Shouldn't we be doing something? What about telephoning?"

Cyrus understood how he could diffuse his own thoughts and emotions, but how could she, at such a time? But Victoria was the calmest of them—even calmer than Alex, who had the least to lose. Telephone? No. "Too dangerous. Even yesterday's call was risky, and that was only local. Alex better get back to the city and get in touch. Feel his way around."

"All right. I suppose it's the only thing. Meanwhile, what are your plans?"

"The airfield. We've got to make it. There's a good chance

it's a fool's errand, but we can't just write it off."

"Right," agreed Alex. "How're you going to get there."

"Partly on foot," said Cyrus cautiously. "That reminds me—neither Hank nor I have shoes."

Alex glanced down at the slippers. "Too big, but I have a smaller pair of boots that won't be too bad with heavy socks. I don't know what we can do for the kid, though."

VICTORIA got up. "If you have a couple of pair of those heavy socks, a needle and thread, and an old suede jacket..."

"I haven't one that's very old." He went to a clothesrack and took down an immaculate gray and black garment.

"It's a shame to cut that into soles..."

Alex handed it to her. "I'm afraid I have no sewing stuff, though."

"What about suturing equipment?" asked Cyrus.

"Oh—sure. Surgical needle and so forth."

"That'll do," said Victoria.

"It *is* a shame to cut this jacket up. I wouldn't do it for anyone but Hank. If we get away, I'll send you one just like it. And scissors, if you have them. Oh yes, and I could do with something more convenient than a dress. If you have a pair of levis I could cut them down."

Alex supplied her with the various items. "I'm doubtful about your using that knee," he said to Cyrus. "I don't know how far it is to the airfield..."

"Be glad you don't. The medarchy would give a lot for the information. They'd inject you with every drug in the pharmacopoeia to get it out of you."

"I'm above suspicion. I hope."

"I hope so, too. You're a key man, and the subcutes would be happy to learn all you know. It wouldn't be smart to put any more eggs in your basket. Just in case you were suddenly put through a routine check-up."

"All right. I'll stay ignorant."

"I don't know where the airfield is either, Alex, if that makes you feel any better,"

said Victoria. "Only Cyrus and some others. I don't even know who they are."

*Stuart Yester's one of them, thought Cyrus grimly. If he's the tipoff man it'll just be too bad. But they'd have to walk into the trap anyway. Except that this time I won't discuss Victoria's escape with her before I act.*

**V**ICTORIA said, looking up from her sewing, "We'll need some other things if you have them around."

"What things?"

"A flashlight," said Cyrus. "A canteen, a couple of cans of food."

"Matches," added Victoria, "and a canopener."

"Got them. What about blankets?"

"We won't need them."

"The plane's coming tonight, then?"

"We just can't load ourselves down," Cyrus said shortly. Alex had the curiosity of the scientist, all right.

"I could. . . Never mind. Are you really going to walk all the way? I have the use of a copter over at the community field."

"Copters are out," said Cyrus firmly, using the voice of authority he always heard with surprise when it came from his own lips. "Don't you have a little car you use around here?"

"Sure. . . My Midget. But there's no road. . ."

"The Midget will do if you think three of us can get in the back seat."

"It'll be crowded, especially with that knee. Why all in the back?"

"In case we're seen or stopped, it won't look quite so much as though you were voluntarily driving us."

"But. . . Very well, General. When do you want to leave? It's seven now."

Cyrus looked over toward Victoria and the sleeping boy. They needed all the rest they could get, but they dared not gamble. The subcutes might be here any minute. "Right away."

Alex shook his head. "That knee. . ."

"It'll only stiffen more," said Cyrus, not relishing the thought of walking on it."

**V**ICTORIA took a final stitch; snipped the gut.

"Hank, wake up." The boy burrowed into the pillow. "Henry! Up with you."

"All right, all right."

"I mean it, Henry."

Alex was assembling their supplies on the table, adding cans of beans. "Not so much," Cyrus objected. "It'll just weigh us down."

Alex put half the cans back on the shelf. "I suppose you know what you're doing, but it's certainly against my advice."

"Do you think his knee will get worse?" Her voice was anxious.

"It could."

"Can't be helped," said Cyrus. "Let's go. If we should be stopped, step on the gas—hard. Don't try to bluff by them. Afterwards, report immediately that we kidnapped you. I held a gun at your back all the time."

"It would be good if you had a gun to make it more convincing," said Victoria.

"Sorry I can't oblige." Alex was likeable enough in spite of his moral code, but so... youthful. *He must be forty*, thought Cyrus, *but he's eter-*

*nally playing cops and robbers while being realistic and objective about making money.*

"Don't forget that pair of boots you promised me. Bedroom slippers aren't recommended for the well-dressed fugitive."

HE LEFT the table and began rummaging underneath the hanging clothes. "Yes, sure. Here they are... No. Mmmm. All I can find's a pair of riding boots."

"Riding boots aren't so good for walking," frowned Victoria. "Henry, get up."

"Relax, relax."

"They're good enough," said Cyrus, putting on the second pair of socks and wrestling his feet into the high boots, new, stiff. At least they weren't western, with high heels.

"What am I going to put on?" asked Hank. "And my feet are still sore from walking on things. When do we eat?"

She held up the heavy socks to which she had sewn two thicknesses cut from Alex' jacket as soles. "Wear these. We'll eat after a while."

"But I'm hungry now."

"Later, Henry." She picked up the levis and cut a length off each trouserleg. "If you have a shirt I can wear, Alex?"

"This do?"

"Thanks."

Cyrus Tarn stood up. The stiff boot reinforced the tight bandage to make him feel as though his leg were in a plaster cast. "I'm going to take a look outside and see if there are a few subcuties ready to pounce."

"Better let me." Alex moved toward the door.

"If they..." began Cyrus. "Oh well. Go ahead."

Alex lit his pipe again, using several matches before it was going. "You have guilt written all over you," commented Victoria. "Relax, as Hank says, and stop looking like a man harboring three paranoids."

The specialist in adrenal and other glands put his hands in his jacket pockets, thumbs out, and smiled broadly, deepening his dimple more than ever. "How's this?" He opened the door and left.

**V**ICTORIA slipped the levis on under her dress. Then she pulled the dress up over

head, standing for a moment with her young bosom bare before she put on the plaid shirt Alex had tossed her. "Do you really think..."

"Not now." He stopped with a warning glance in Hank's direction. Even she never seemed to realize fully that the less you knew—if only as hints—the better off you were if you fell into the hands of the orderlies. Involuntarily he strained his ears, waiting for the sound of voices outside, or the noise of Alex' return.

How could he have suffered that fog and forgetfulness last night? Now, with no intervening sleep to help, the map, not merely of Galentry, but of all Secarros, was clear and distinct in his mind again. The railroad ran behind Alex's cabin, shielded only by a wild hedge of mountain lilac, its thorny, grazing branches possibly impregnable, possibly not. In front, the short, rutted driveway clove through a tangle of second growth brush, fiercely competitive, unruly. The driveway led to Secarros' main road, that contrived toy, deliberately double dead-ended so no wander-

ing motorist could accidentally intrude. A bad—and good—place to hide out; a bad and good place to keep under surveillance.

“Cyrus?”

“Ay?”

“Isn’t—isn’t he gone a long time?”

He walked over and took her in his arms. If the miracle happens and we get away, he vowed with an earnestness approaching rage, I swear I’ll never let anything worry her again. His kiss had the same angry determination. Hank, who had been lost in some meditation apparently essential to the process of dressing, murmured, “Break and go to a neutral corner.”

**CYRUS SPOKE** gruffly, still holding her against him. “He’s probably making a thorough check. The scientific mind. No loopholes.” Yet it did seem as though Alex’ absence was unduly protracted. If he had been taken out front, they would have to try breaking through the tangle in back—a thousand to one chance. He went to the plank door—it was

not really one, but a slab carefully simulating planks, typical of Secarros—and turned the lock softly, opening a slight crack. Alex was hurrying up the driveway, looking pale. “It’s all right, I think—he’s coming now.”

Alex shut the door behind him. “Sorry. Old J. J. Blunt-eagle—Aunty Blunteagle—antibiotics and antitoxins till he retired to hoard his millions—out for his morning constitutional. Talk your ear off. I didn’t dare break away too abruptly.”

His knee was making Cyrus irritable and unreasonable. “Shall we go before anyone else stops for a chat?”

“I ought to look at that leg again.”

“Let’s go.”

“Let’s see, have you got everything? I thought I . . .”

“We’ve got everything,” said Cyrus. “Come on.”

“No, but just a minute . . .”

“Damn it to hell,” exclaimed Cyrus, now thoroughly on edge, “are we going to dally all day?”

Alex looked confused. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to hold you

up. I only wanted to make sure we were ready."

"I didn't mean to yell," apologized Cyrus. "We're ready. Come on."

**I**T WAS A snug fit in the Midget. Victoria curled in the back seat, Hank and Cyrus crouching on the minute scrap of floor. "Fun," said Hank, and Cyrus reflected bitterly on the perverse tastes of youth.

Alex warmed the motor with care. Long after it was humming smoothly, he continued to let it idle. "What're we waiting for?" asked Hank.

"Can't score the pistons," explained Alex. "These things are as finely made as a watch."

At last he let the clutch in. Cyrus waited till the slow bumping over the driveway ended in a pause, indicating they had come to the road. "Turn right," he ordered.

"Right? Going north?"

"Turn right," repeated Cyrus. "And remember, don't stop for subcutes or MPs." He tried to shift his leg to ease the cramp, and only succeeded in setting up a trembling in it. That bandage was too tight;

Alex might be a fast man with a gland, but he must have lost his fine touch with a sprain since his internship.

He felt the car slow; this must be a crossroad. Was there another one, further on? He tried to remember, but this end of Secarros was an area he hadn't studied with the intensity of the other. A roadblock could be set up at any crossroad, would almost certainly be at the major ones. He would rather have gone left, south, away from the airfield and doubled back. It would have been better policy, but there wasn't time. And if there was a block, would it be an impassable barrier, or could Alex follow his instructions and drive through? He felt his heartbeat quicken; if Alex stopped, he must push Victoria out...

**H**E TRIED to quell his impatience with reason: it was only intelligent to make the customary stops, to drive casually. It was hard, with his pain, fear, discomfort and apprehension, to hold a judicial mind. *Get on with it, get on with it, get going*, he wanted



to shout; only by grating his teeth together could he manage to keep silent. The sound of the tires altered; they had left concrete for macadam. Unable to bear it longer, he straightened up recklessly. "If they stop us now, to hell with them."

"I don't think there'll be anything before road's end," said Alex over his shoulder. "But they'll certainly miss a bet if they haven't someone stationed there."

"Don't worry." (The calm and resolute leader of the underground made his calm and resolute decisions calmly and resolutely in the face of imminent peril. We owe our glorious success, he modestly told reporters, to my calmness and resolution.) "Just keep on going."

**T**HERE WERE fewer side-roads and still fewer fences now; this was the less settled, less fashionable area. The road worsened rapidly too, slowing down the little car. A roadrunner darted over the shoulder and zigzagged madly ahead of them. Stands of tall trees interrupted the syrupy sunlight.

Cyrus wished his calmness and resolution had extended to noting the speedometer reading when they left; now he would have to guess how much of the twenty miles to road's end they had covered. Seven, eight possibly. His mental map was far less detailed for this section; he had never contemplated the possibility of any excursions here.

"Bet we could hide out here for years and years," Hank dreamed happily. "No houses, no doctors, no hospitals. Real gone."

"No grocery stores either," Victoria pointed out.

"Who cares? We could shoot things and catch fish, like Mr. Mallup."

*I wouldn't mind,* thought Cyrus; *escape to the primitive.* One could build a new society in the shell of the old; have half a dozen kids without benefit of gynaecology. Twenty years ago—Twenty years ago Victoria was just out of diapers. Now she was with child, with his child, both in deadly danger, and he was thinking airily of some romantic, sylvan retreat.

He looked closely at the twisting road ahead, studied the dust puffs settling behind them and the trees on either side. "I think you can stop here, Alex," he said casually.

"Here?"

"Good a place as any."

"But..." Alex' surprised voice died away.

**H**ANK PUSHED open the door on his side, and ran in circles: a young goat suddenly set free. "Say, these things you made aren't bad," he called to Vicky. "Wait till I show them to the fellows."

Cyrus got out gingerly, suppressing a groan as he stood up. He stretched, bent over and reached in for the shopping bag of supplies. Victoria already had it; she shook her head at him when he attempted to relieve her of it. Chivalry, fragile flower, can't survive a drop from a window; every man for himself and the equality of the sexes. Limping Horse has strong woman; carries her own weight in buffalo chips.

"Sure you know what you're doing?" asked Alex.

"Sure he does," boasted

Hank. "You should've seen him in the hos—I mean, you should've seen him."

Alex looked inquiringly at Cyrus, who said shortly, "Let's not waste any more time. So long. Don't forget to warn them about the leak."

"But..."

Cyrus waved his arm with an airiness he was far from feeling, and scuffled through the clustering weeds. He knew very well how completely reckless it was to venture down the mountainside like this without even a compass. And suppose Victoria weakened, as she had yesterday? Experienced hunters got lost in the Santa Lucias; any wild hope of coming upon a trail or a creekbed was a chance so remote as to be imperceptible. It wouldn't be so bad, up here in the trees; but lower down they would run into brush and sheer drops. Should he have let Alex use a copter after all? A copter...

**C**OPTERS. As soon as the subcutes discovered they had left Secarros—and how long could that be?—*they'd* think of using copters. Of

course they'd be at their poorest here where there was so much natural cover, but they would be better than men on foot. And the pursuers had already shown themselves both efficient and determined; witness the searchlight last night. (Only last night? Had he lost a day somewhere? No, it had been last night they began running. They were still running. Figuratively anyway.)

Or dogs. If they hadn't. But surely, if they had it would be all over by now. They'd have got them at Alex'. Anything was available to subcuties; the medarchy rested on their vigilance and thoroughness. Perhaps not in Secarros. No, you can't take my dog. I must have your dog; I represent the medarchy. Young man, I am the medarchy. Subcute baffled; no dog.

Fly them in. A delay—but for how long? A chill: fear. Dogs would follow the trail from Galentry to Alex' in no time. Nice thing to do to him. Him, an individual? The organization, the many, many others. Ah, reasoning like Dr. Tree; gross numbers are what count.

Dr. Tree; Dr. Caliggs. I am Dr. Caliggs; above suspicion. They forced me with a gun. Armed, desperate; homicidal maniacs, ay? Thank you, Doctor; we can pick up the scent again. Here boy; here, Towser, Rover, Prince, Spotty! Get a smell of this! His shoes, Hank's jacket, Victoria's stockings. Good old free enterprise; fastest dog gets the mallie. Yoicks. Tallyho.

"We'll have to stick close together and travel as fast as we can. Can't risk time by getting separated. We've got a long way to go."

"Would it be disastrous if we didn't get to the airfield in time?"

**H**E THOUGHT of the plane landing, with no one to give warning of the danger; the invaluable machine captured. Of continued ignorance of the betrayer within. Of themselves cut off from contact with their comrades. Of Victoria... "It would be disastrous."

"We'll make it," she said.

If only his knee. "Got to loosen this bandage," Cyrus announced.

"Do you think it's wise? Alex knows what he's doing."

"Doctors always know what they're doing until they make mistakes." He sat down on a fallen log, pulling up his trouserleg, dragging it high on his thigh, easing the riding boot down on his calf. The wide adhesive was cutting into the flesh. Instant relief overcame the smart left by the ripped tape. He massaged his leg gratefully, tender at the puffy, swollen part. He wound the bandage back into place, much more loosely this time; it slipped and fell away as he tried to reapply the adhesive. Then she was kneeling in front of him, her fingers warm and comforting.

"Is this too tight?"

He shook his head, wondering again at her loving; thankful but still puzzled. *Oh, Victoria—you deserve so much better.*

It was good to sit on the log, not moving, weight off the knee. Once, some hours ago, he'd sat comfortably—perhaps not very comfortably, but the discomfort hadn't been physical—carrying on a philosophic

discussion of the medarchy with Dr. Raphael Tree. Before a Surgical-Bactericidal-Custodial Technician tried to kill him. Before Victoria had told him she was carrying a child. Before their plans were revealed as flawed.

"Try it," she said.

He stood up awkwardly, not using the leg till the last moment. The pain came back, but it was much less. "I can make it now."

**T**HE TREES were old and the trunks well-spaced; neither fire nor man had come ravaging through. The down slope was gentle, the heavy leafmold was soft under their feet. The sun came through in little warm puddles edged with broken shade. Insect noises, tuneless bird chirps, rustlings which might have been the sound of cautious squirrels, dispelled the stillness of the air.

At Galentry. In Secarros. Had that been the mistake? Or was the basic mistake farther back? In an underground too loosely knit, too undisciplined, too idealistic in its rejection of violence to function well?

Stuart Yester or another—betrayal was too easy, too immune from retribution.

Too simple. Too facile. Like Mallup or Alex: look at the outside. Blind man and the elephant. The medarchy served a fundamental purpose, responded to a deep need. It was not the doctors who were out of tune with the times, but Cyrus Tarn and the other mal-lies. Maladjusted. They truly were. Men shrank from freedom, learned a thousand devious tricks to avoid it. Greek democracy was, of course, not. Even that minimum was gladly jettisoned. And the Romans: *senatus populusque*—first the triumvirates, then Caesar Augustus, god-imperator.

Security. Civilization. Good roads. Caledonia to Parthia. The barbarians were free, so they immediately enslaved themselves to the strongest robbers, the most successful pirates. Liege lord and vassal. John and Magna Charta; Charles I and the chopping block in the window at Whitehall—but then, “You have sat here long enough; in God’s name, go!” The Rights of Man, the Goddess of Reason,

the Republic One and Indivisible giving way to the First Consul. Father, dear Father. Always. The old Wobbly cry, *We are all leaders*, lost in a sea of incomprehension.

**A** PROOF OF it was that so very few went even so far as Mallup in defying the medarchy. The Ama’s authority rested on more than mere sullen acquiescence. It had active and widespread support. Not freakish groups like the Church of the Caduceus and the Ahas; their counterparts could always be found in the most unpopular dictatorships, fawning and being kicked as a reward. Most people took the press releases of the Authorized Public Enlightenment Service—the Healthcare State was dogged by initial misfortunes; evidently it was above being annoyed by them—as absolute truth. Father knows best, Father will take care of me. Father Cop. Father Censor; Father Doctor. In Doc We Trust. Turn and rend the doubters, the blasphemers, the parricides.

On the other hand, man’s spirit was never quelled once

and for all. Revolution might lead to reaction, but reaction bred revolution. It was impossible to look upon tyranny as a permanent condition. Was it the grandeur of their surroundings, the peacefulness of the moment, or the decreased pain in his knee that made Cyrus suddenly confident? A quite uncharacteristic optimism crept warmly over him. "This is wonderful country," he exclaimed. "What a day for a nice, long walk."

"I'm hungry," complained Hank. "You said we could eat when we got out of the car."

"Can you hold out a little while longer?" asked Victoria. "If you eat now you'll get thirsty, and we haven't got a lot of water."

"Heck, why can't I drink out of the creek? That wouldn't use up any of your old water."

"Creek? Where?"

"Over there. I thought you saw it. We've been walking near it for a long time."

**A** PROVIDENCE takes care of old fools who sprain their knees and children, too impatient to travel in

a straight line, who dart this way and that to discover a creek which can only lead to the ocean. *My optimism wasn't just relief, it was foresight based on Hank's powers of divination.*

The thin stream disappeared periodically in gravel, but its course remained always clearly marked. Later they would have to walk in the bed itself; here there was still fairly easy going on the bank. Hank skidded up and down the edge, pausing now and then to balance on a smooth boulder or shy a flat stone into the shallow, ruffling water.

"Better not do that," Cyrus cautioned. "Leaves too good a trail."

"Aw, they're no place behind us."

"I hope you're right," said Victoria. "But we have to go on as though you were wrong."

"MPs and subcuties are so dumb they can't find beans."

"Don't ever believe it, Hank. Don't underrate them. They're trained, careful, shrewd. And they don't give up."

"But they're wrong. That's what counts, isn't it?"

"We think they're wrong," corrected his sister. "They think they're right."

"And we're wrong," added Cyrus. "Not only wrong, treasonable. Until we win. 'Treason doth never prosper; what's the reason? Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason.'" He smiled wryly to himself; was it all as simple as Sir John Harington's couplet? What about the rewriting and re-rewriting of history?

"Anyway, what about eating?" Hank demanded.

Victoria looked an inquiry at Cyrus, who nodded. "Why not? Have to eat sometime."

SHE OPENED three of the cans from Alex' store, discovered he had provided only two spoons. She gave one to the boy; she and Cyrus shared the other, passing it back and forth between mouthfuls. For some reason, this added to the picnic atmosphere and lightened the tension still further. "How do you feel?" he asked her.

She looked down shyly. "Fine. Yesterday... I don't know what it could have been."

A father. A father for the first time. Fatuous? Ridiculous? Or just a few years over-age? Was he glad? Honesty forced him to say, No, not under the circumstances. But if they got away? They *had* to get away...

Hank took his empty can and aimed it carefully. "Don't!" ordered Cyrus.

"Huh?"

"Let's bury them." He thought himself he was being overcautious, but surely that was better than being careless. He collected the three cans and flattened them roughly with a rock. Then he found a place in the creek just a little deeper than the surrounding bed. He sunk them and piled stones on top till they were covered. When the silt stirred up by the operation subsided, they were invisible. "Let's go."

The stream no longer disappeared at intervals, but ran steadily. The ground was changing its character, getting steeper, with outcroppings of rock, and places where the trees—no longer so tall or far apart—had not been able to find a foothold in the loose

soil but gave way to coarse grass and wild flowers.

**VICTORIA** halted abruptly.

"It must be Stuart Yester!"

"Ay? Oh... Yes, it adds up, but what struck you just then?"

"Don't you remember what you told me? That he tried to persuade you to let someone else get Hank out of the hospital?"

"Because he thought it was an unnecessary risk for me to go myself. Anyway, he did help in the end, and I couldn't have made it without him. I'm afraid he may be the finger-man, all right—but if he is I can't quite understand why he let the rescue go through."

"He would have given himself away if he hadn't. And this way they would have got all three of us if everything had worked out."

The thought of Yester quenched the feeling of well-being, and he was again aware of the fiery pain in his knee. "I wish there was a bare hill around here so I could see the ocean. Just for reassurance. This creek might wander around for miles. In fact I

have a feeling we're working southwest instead of northwest."

"I can climb a tree," offered Hank.

"Be careful," urged Vicky. "A third bad leg wouldn't be funny."

"Aw, these trees are simple. Just boost me up to the first branches."

Cyrus started to bend down. Vicky said, "Your knee. Let me."

He made a step out of his laced hands. "My knee—your child. Come on, Hank."

"What child?" asked Hank, his foot poised.

"Come on," said Cyrus. "We haven't got all day." The boy's weight multiplied the pain in his knee almost beyond endurance, but he felt a triumph over the weakness of his flesh, and an added triumph in forcing Victoria to care for hers. She was the stronger; he'd never denied it; he'd leaned on her, using her strength. Now he could contribute as much as he drew; the relationship would not be reversed, but equalized. If... The foreboding if...



**H**ANK'S foot hesitated in his hand, left it with a final, kicking push as he drew himself upward. Cyrus sat down, wiping the sweat from his forehead, leaning back to watch the quick progress from branch to branch. "See if you can tell if the creek goes down fairly straight," he called up—"or if it wanders all around."

"Can't see anything yet. Hay, Vicky, your moccasins—or whatever they are—keep slipping down. Darn it. Wait a minute... There's a sort of smoky blue over there. Must be the ocean, I guess. I can't see the creek through the trees. Hay! There's a trail or something."

A trail would be heaven-sent. "Try to remember exactly where it is, so we can find it."

"I can find it all right. It's easy. Say, this would be a great place to have a tree house."

"Come down now," ordered his sister.

"I want to go just a little higher. I might see something important."

"Now!" she insisted.

**H**E CLIMBED down reluctantly and jumped to the ground. "I just wanted to look a little farther."

"We'll have to try for that trail," said Cyrus. "It may be just a cowpath. Or it may be a better way down."

"I'll show you where it is," cried Hank confidently. "Just you follow me."

"Don't get too far ahead," warned Victoria.

But the boy had already darted off, even before Cyrus reproached himself for resting his knee and allowing it to stiffen again. He did not protest when Victoria preceded him; he was content to bring up the rear.

Silence settled down on them. Then Victoria called, "Henry—what are you doing now?"

Cyrus heard but could not see Hank. "Got to go up again. I lost it. But this is a good tree—don't need a boost."

Cyrus followed to where Victoria had halted beneath a pine with low-hanging branches. "Probably just an excuse to climb again," she said. And then, raising her voice, "Henry!"

He came down rapidly, almost falling, his face frightened. "There's two men in leather jackets on the trail. One of them's got a gun."

**HIS FIRST** thought, before the chill worm crawled through his belly, that it had been such a fine, peaceful morning. It had been too easy, too natural to hope. Unless you repressed the sentiment constantly and sternly, it bubbled up at every chance.

He had been so complacent; patronizingly approving when Victoria warned Hank not to underrate the enemy. And it had been Cyrus Tarn himself, the old hand, the hardened conspirator, who had acted as if there were nothing before them but a strenuous hike. Searching for an easy way down, blithely failing to look back and discover the relentless pursuit.

How had they gotten so close so quickly? An old-fashioned posse, fanning out in every direction from Secarros would have achieved this result, but so far as he knew the subcutes never recruited lay help. That they had brought

in great numbers of their fellows was so unlikely that it could be ruled out: the Ama wanted them, but not so badly that it would be willing to cripple its watchdog. Accident, then? Or had Alex been forced to reveal where he had taken them? What difference did it make? They were defeated.

Defeated, but... "Have to make better time."

Easy to say; he didn't need Victoria's doubtful expression as confirmation. Hank could make better time; the tireless young legs could take him out of sight and back again, silently urging them on, incredulous of their slowness. But Victoria's pace was determined by her ankle, his own by his knee. He tried to increase the length of his stride, felt his leg give way, steadied himself.

They were not a third of the way down, he was sure. Even if he could somehow get Victoria to go on while he gave himself up, there was little possibility she could make it the rest of the way to the airfield before being apprehended. They might as well have waited the inevitable with dignity in Alex' cabin.

THE CREEK bed widened for a short, deceptive stretch, then narrowed to drop in precipitous steps. The rocky outcroppings increased in number, became larger, bolder. The tall trees were fewer, the lower, closer growth sprang up between them. There was only one possible course to take if they were to preserve the illusion of hope. They must leave the creek—if the subcutes followed every trail downward, they would eventually follow every stream also—and strike out as nearly straight north as they could. Literally beat their way...

He winced and shrank as he felt in imagination his feet stumbling on the rough ground, with its never-anticipated obstacles; the clinging branches, the innumerable, shrewd hindrances which would baffle, trip, and ultimately exhaust him. It was more than he could face. Dangerous as the creek was, they would have to follow it.

"Did they have dogs?" he asked Hank.

The boy shook his head. "Didn't see any."

No dogs—yet. That meant they didn't have to walk through the water so long as the going was easier on the bank. Which probably wouldn't be very long. And they would be at an even greater disadvantage, discovered slopping along in the stream. Greater disadvantage?

How did you measure the advantage of a man with a gun over a man who hadn't one. If he had: shoot it out with them. Bang! You're dead. And you, and you. Now we're free; yipee. All the subcutes and MPs are lying in precise rows with arms crossed over their chests. Bugles sound taps as Chris Mallup, hastily summoned, removes his hat. The Personal Physician resigns, after laying a wreath on the tomb inscribed, *Beneath this spot lies a dead subcute, Shot by a mallie doing his duty. "They Thought They Were Right"*. Vocal solo by our own Judy Larch.

"They had to take their chances." Another solo? Fatigue, pain, and fear; bad combination when you were trying to move fast.

**A**N EXPOSED root caught his toe; Cyrus tripped, and was unable to catch his balance. He fell; a rock punched into his ribs.

"Cyrus!"

"M all right," he mumbled. "Keep going. Just. Lost. My. Wind."

Cyrus, you can't keep it up!"

"Uh? Choice? Like Mallup? No, have to."

Have to; ineluctable. Why? To prove Boyd Carling had been right when they tried to take his children from him? Boyd was dead; had died before they realized he could have married them, whether or not the Ama recognized religious ceremonies. Anyway, no: not give up Victoria. And the unborn. Not unwanted, unlawful, unviable. Unprescribed. When Adam delved and Eve span; where was the medical man? Dr. Tree. No more mutants. Too many victims of irradiation; affects the genes for generations. The Reverend Malthus and all the little neomalthusians, so malthusastic. Too many people; too little space. A malthusimatical problem in division

and subtraction. Take away one from one; answer, one. The world is saved; who weeps for a foetus?

The stream turned sharply to widen and level out. Another peaceful, meadowlike landscape, framed by the woods all around. Woods from which might break at any second, men with guns leveled. Come with us. Be my guest. Try a drop of this. Oh, not on your palate. In your veins.

Another turn, and the water funnelled into a natural flume, chewing its way roughly between suddenly narrowed, jagged banks on which there was no foothold. Hank looked back inquiringly at him. He waved his hand. "In the creek; there's no place else."

**T**HE BOY ran ahead, kicking his way through the water with great slurps. How long would the thin soles of the homemade moccasins stand up against usage like that? Worry about the minor and put the major out of your mind. He felt the cold wet soak around his ankles and into his boots with an unpleasant shock. Without noticing it,

he must have cut the leather through on the rocks.

Victoria, steadying herself against the bank, took off her shoes, tying the laces together to hang them around her neck. The push of the current against his heels and the clammy, squelching chill of the stream was harsh and dismal. He could ease his discomfort by removing the increasingly absurd riding boots. In dogged, disdainful misery he refused the final indignity of standing on one foot to tug at the watersoaked, reluctant leather.

If he only had some way of knowing how close they were. Perhaps the trail and creek were miles apart at this point? Ought he to get Hank to climb a tree once more? It would lose time. And what good would it do? Whether they saw their pursuers or not they would have to keep going exactly as they were. "Only faster," he muttered aloud.

"What?"

"Nothing," he said shortly, saving breath.

"Can't you rest a little?"

He shook his head. He was not morally strong enough to

rest; once down, he wouldn't be able to force himself on again. Ashamed, he plodded on.

"Cyrus, I'm afraid we'll have to slow down. I can't keep this pace up."

SHE WAS covering for him; Cyrus Tarn knew she could keep up any pace necessary, but she was trying to favor his knee. Did that mean she, too, thought the flight was hopeless now? If Victoria had given up... The big plane would locate the field (instrument flying? dropping flares? or was there some other way of finding the place without help—beacons, radio, landing lights automatically activated by a timeclock—from the ground?), circle and come down. What then? Ambushing subcuties coming forward, not too swiftly, but implacably nevertheless; surrounding, menacing, triumphant. All lost because the three of them had given up, because they recognized the inevitable.

Surrendered. Separated. Interrogated. (This manuscript that was in your possession, Miss Carling. Your father's?

Mmm. Mmm. An interesting case. Subject to hallucinations, wasn't he? Believed he had—mmm—divine sanction for an antisocial attitude? You feel I'm mistating his position? Sorry, sorry. Let's say he had a pathological rejection of all authority... And so on and on inexorably; ever cool, ever kindly, never revealing—quite possibly never having—anything but a patient wish to assist, to cure, to bring contentment.) Made ready to be quieted down and fitted into a society greater than the sum of its parts.

Perversely, he felt a new surge of determination. "We've got to make time."

Time. Time was a mystic conception. Time was a sailing ship with a bone in her teeth. Ship—ocean. *Smoky*, Hank had said. Ought to be fairly close. Mare Pacificum. The Great South Sea. Stout Cortez. Poets can afford mistakes; other mallies can't. Not get too close. Highway. "Can you see it yet?"

"See what?"

"Highway." He knew she couldn't; the question had been purely compulsive.

"Nothing around here but us rocks," said Hank.

"But the ground's leveling off, isn't it?" asked Victoria.

**HIS** DIZZINESS left him again, and Cyrus looked around. The character of the landscape had changed once more; the open spaces were growing bigger, and there were stands of yellowed grass, dotted with weeds still green. Cattle country—or would be, a very little further down. They dared not follow the creek further; they would not only be exposed, but imprisoned within it. "Listen," he heard himself saying; "we'll head north. Watch the sun. Stay close to cover."

He scabbled at the edge of the bank. It was an easy climb; Hank and Victoria were already out; she was drying her feet on the grass and getting ready to put on her shoes. He rested his elbow on the top, tried first to put his good knee up while bearing his weight on the hurt one. Then he reversed the process. It was absurd and humiliating to be defeated by a palisade of

crumbling earth not more than four feet high. He felt the tears of shame and weakness, and then her hand caught his, giving him the hold he needed.

"Sorry..." What could be more inadequate?

Immediately they ran into heavy brush. He tried to shoulder his way through, to break into another clearing, but the obstinate resistance wore him out, turned him back. "We're still too high," he muttered. "Try... lower down."

He knew they were wasting time now, covering far more ground than they needed to, going yards to advance feet. He lapsed into a barely conscious state. He felt his way around a bush, his feet seeking firm footing between the unstable rocks. "Bad place—careful." The warning came out begat by the situation, not his vocal cords. Left, right; one, two. The rhythm failed to come out right because of his leg. Left, right; one, one-and-a-half...

Victoria said, "Just a second. Something in my shoe."

HE SLUMPED down, listening, willing his ears to greater keenness, straining to catch... What? An advertisement of the pursuers' presence? All he heard was the tap as she shook out her shoe. What did he expect? For the first time he thought of the hunters in direct, personal terms. Not faceless representatives of the Ama but men, keenly relishing the job of chasing them through their endless flight. He understood the despairing joy of standing at last, of turning to fight, no matter how hopeless the struggle would be.

"I'm ready," whispered Victoria.

He got up heavily, relinquishing the fantasy of crashing a handy rock on a sub-cute's skull. He took the lead again; what seemed to be a clear way between two bushes ended in a dense wall. He backed out, searched again. These detours not only took invaluable time and energy, they made him uncertain of direction. The sun was no help now; it was too high. He was no longer sure they were heading north. Circling around

barriers a few more times would get them lost completely; even now they might be going straight toward the subcutes.

His eyes stung with the chaff and grit torn loose from the brush by their passage. He knew about this plateau only in the most general way. At this point it might slope gently all the way to the ocean, or it might take giant steps, dropping fifty or a hundred feet at a time.

"Come on," he urged, aware how often he had said it, and how it lost more and more force at each repetition. *Come on*—the exhortation was superfluous, the vocal badge of an equally superfluous leadership. They would go on just as well without him or his command— But then he realized it was himself who needed the prodding. *Cyrus to Cyrus: come on; if you hesitate, you've given up.*

**H**E DIDN'T see the ford at first; when he finally noticed that the banks on either side were broken down to the level of the water he failed to recognize it for what it was.

It was only when Victoria pointed, whispering. "That must be the trail," that he looked closely.

"No, it's a road. An old one. I don't think it's been used for years." It was deeply leached where the ruts must have run at some time; and there were large holes where the ground had given way beneath pools of water. He could see no signs of tracks, but that didn't mean they weren't there, or in the heavy grass alongside. Pursuers might even now be watching them from behind rocks or brush.

"Bet it leads to an old mine," said Hank. "We could hide in it, and if the cutes come we can go down in the tunnel. There might be another way out and we could leave them behind. Or a landslide might happen behind us."

Follow the road? Not to Hank's harboring mine, but in all probability to some long abandoned shack. They would be exposed—out in the open—but they could not stay with the creek much longer. And at least they would be going



north. He turned helplessly to Victoria. "I'm not sure..."

"I think we'd better take it," she said decisively, and led the way.

He felt a guilty relief, rid—at least for the moment—of the burden of responsibility. For all its dilapidated state, the going was not so arduous, though his knee now felt like a mass of sensitive jelly stuck through with steel slivers. He should never have loosened Alex' bandage...

"Hey, wait," exclaimed Hank, "this hooks on to another road."

"There's something looks like fresh tire-marks," added Victoria. "Cyrus, what do we do?"

**WEARILY**, he walked forward. The new road angled into the old, absorbed it. It was in much better condition, and clearly used quite recently. What did they do now? It was too late to ask; what could they do but keep on? The subcuties might have ignored the disused way; they were bound to explore this one; the fresh danger seemed to clear his head. "If they

come, separate," he ordered.

He did not look at her to note if, even now, she would refuse. He walked on, again taking the lead. Had the car that made the tracks been going toward the highway or away from it? There was no way of telling since the road was running parallel. Perhaps it didn't join the highway at all. But that was impossible...

"Let's walk quietly as possible."

It was not any noise they made which betrayed them, but an unexpected curve bordered by equally unexpected trees. Rounding it, they came within a few feet of a dead tree, stripped of its bark and twigs by the weather, fallen to block the road. Just beyond it was the nose of a station-wagon. He motioned quickly with his hand, and began back-tracking softly, but it was too late.

A woman got out swiftly, a rifle in her hands.

"Hey, don't shoot," exclaimed Hank. "We're not doing anything."

She rested the riflestock under her arm, her finger still

on the trigger, the muzzle unwaveringly pointed. With her free hand she tucked a lock of wiry black hair under her tight scarf. "I'm sure you're not. Please come a little closer."

**H**ER AIR of authority made the gun almost superfluous. She was tall as Cyrus, in her late thirties or very early forties, dressed in a bright plaid shirt and faded denim levis. Her rude vigor and imperious tone seemed almost as shocking as the leveled gun.

"I'm sorry if we're trespassing," apologized Cyrus.

"Are you? I'm not sure I am."

"We were just out for a walk," said Victoria.

"Really? The gentleman has rather a bad limp for that."

"I stumbled back there. I'll see a doctor as soon as we get to town."

Her smile showed very white teeth, just faintly too large, set off by her high complexion. "How lucky for you. I'm a doctor. Dr. Tavistock."

"I wouldn't think of bothering you, Doctor."

"No trouble at all. I'll help you—you'll help me. I'm sure the three of you can lift that tree out of the way."

"We'll be glad to help," offered Victoria. "You needn't keep that pointed at us, though."

"I suppose I needn't. It just makes me feel more comfortable. Just call it an eccentricity."

Cyrus looked the tree over. Using the butt end as a pivot, it ought not be too difficult to swing it around. Seizing hold of a likely place, he motioned Hank to take another, shook his head at Victoria.

"Don't be silly," she said, "I'm not brittle. All right, Doctor—we're ready."

"Go ahead then."

"Aren't you going to help?"

"I'm afraid not. Please hurry."

**C**YRUS OPENED his mouth to argue; then shut it. He tried to remember what little he had ever known about women miscarrying. Nothing at all. He heaved, feeling it in his knee. The tree moved upward, twisted painfully. The jagged edge of a

broken bough dug into the ground. And then it was pivoting almost as he had planned, around, and enough out of the way to permit the car to pass. He looked anxiously at Victoria: she was smiling slightly and seemed none the worse for the exertion.

"There you are," he said with false cheeriness. "Now we'll be on our way."

"No. Please get in the car, all of you."

"Now, see here..." began Cyrus.

The pleasant expression disappeared briefly, then returned. "This is a lonely road, and it's on my property. Believe me, I'm quite capable of using this rifle. Let's not have any bother—just do as I tell you and get in the car."

"Do you always greet strangers like this?" asked Victoria.

"When I think they may be useful. Particularly if they happen to be three notorious mallies whose description I've just heard on the car radio."

"How do you like that?" murmured Hank. "'Notorious'!"

"Be quiet, Hank. Doctor, there must be some mistake."

"There often is. Let's you and I get cozily in the back seat. The young woman can drive, and the boy sit beside her. That way I can shoot either one if need be. Oh, by the way: it's not my intention to turn you over to the orderlies—if you do as I say."

"I can't drive," protested Victoria.

"Really? Then I'm afraid you're going to learn awfully fast. Get in and follow instructions."

**S**HE WAITED until Victoria was behind the wheel, then she motioned Cyrus in, taking her own place with the gun on Hank, who got in last of all. "Start the motor. If you actually don't know how to drive..."

"I'll drive."

"Good. Back up. There's a wide space where you can turn around close by."

"But you were going out," said Hank.

"I was. I met you. Now I don't need to. Clear?"

Victoria started the motor. The car moved uneasily in reverse.

"And not too fast. It would

be too bad if you tried to jolt the rifle out of my hands, and it went off and shot your brother. It is your brother, isn't it, Miss Mmmmm...? I never can remember names on a broadcast."

Victoria drove slowly. The beating of Cyrus' heart slowed, then speeded up again. Naturally she had thrown off the remark about the orderlies in order not to make them desperate. Should he make a quick lunge and try to wrench the gun away? Dr. Tavistock looked efficient, capable. He might or might not get the gun from her; she would almost certainly be able to shoot Hank first. What had his blundering done to them? Now they would not only be turned over to the subcuties, but by a doctor who might well take a personal interest in their adjustment.

"Say, you've got a lot of room around here," commented Hank. Bravado, wondered Cyrus, or sheer unbelief that Dr. Tavistock would carry out her threat?

"Ten or twenty thousand acres, I forget which," she said carelessly. "My husband

gave it to me instead of alimony."

Tavistock, Tavistock? Land instead of alimony? Of course! This was the "Grace" Mallup had referred to, the ex-wife of Dr. Tree. And Tree had spoken of her as one of the group who wanted to euthanize all mallies.

**T**HE TREES alongside the road grew taller, further-spaced, deeper-shadowed. "Now you can turn," said Dr. Tavistock.

As Victoria maneuvered the stationwagon, he watched feverishly to see if the woman would relax her vigilance for a moment—it would be so easy. But no opportunity developed; the car was turned around, and the road began to wind steeply upward. A break in the trees showed the ocean, blue and far off. Then, without warning, they were in front of the house.

It was surprisingly large and urbane—there was a suggestion, almost a satirical suggestion, of H. H. Richardson in its lines—for so remote a spot. Hank started to open the door and then looked back

questioningly. The woman nodded; he and Victoria got out. Dr. Tavistock took a key from her pocket and threw it toward Victoria. "Open the front door."

Victoria stooped. *How graceful she is*, marveled Cyrus; *graceful with a grace learned of necessity, to compensate*. How unbelievable—how impossible—to think that they would cut or manipulate, shock or drug part of his mind; that he would forget her, or remember only in a hazy, apathetic way.

The picture of Victoria seen through a witless fog, a woman on whom he would look with indifference, without that edge of desire just short of pain, was unbearable. He closed his eyes to shut it out; the vision of a strange creature with a faint limp was on his retina. He dug his fingernails into his palms. No! He would fight. Kill. Kill this insolent woman; she could not hold her rife on them indefinitely. Kill her...

**T**HERE WAS the predictable large living room with exposed rafters and wide-

mouthed stone fireplace. Without consultation Cyrus, Victoria, Hank moved apart. "No!" said the woman sharply. "In there."

She motioned them through a door, into a space too dim to make out details. Should he jump her now, he asked himself as he stood sidewise, waiting for the next command, measuring the distance, tensing his muscles. *Shall I throw myself on her suddenly*, hoping...

The moment was lost when she pressed the switch. He saw bare, pastel-tinted walls, austere and windowless. There were cabinets of shining stainless steel, some glassfronted, showing an array of instruments within, others bluntly uncommunicative of their contents. Overhead were batteries of fluorescent lights. There were no chairs, only an operating table; behind it, short and tall cylinders, and a tubular coil ending in a mask.

"Everything for a quiet weekend in the country." Cyrus' eyes searched for something—anything—to use as a weapon. So sterile, utilitarian; nothing lying around loosely.

If her attention flagged or was somehow distracted he might get something out of one of the cases. Providing he were fast and she slow... "And so delightfully private," he added, with a wild notion of provoking her, distracting her into letting down her guard.

VICTORIA picked it up instantly. "In a Patient," she wanted to know, "wouldn't it be diagnosed as neurotic? Isolated, antisocial, a compulsive desire for secrecy? To cover guilt...?"

Dr. Tavistock smiled. "In a Patient," she agreed. "Suppose we drop formalities now, and get down to business? What were you planning when I found you?"

"Planning? I told you we were just out for a walk."

"Don't irritate me. What's your name—it's short and easy to remember—hmm... hm... Lake... Pool...? No. Well, it doesn't matter. You were hiding out at Rafe's. *Rafe's!*" Her laughter sputtered for a moment, then her face became set. "All right. If you want to be three innocent hikers, I don't care. Three

hikers without charts. I could shoot you, or I could turn you over to the subcuties, or I could..."

She paused. "You could what?" asked Hank.

"I could help you."

It was Victoria's turn to laugh. "Why?"

The woman gave her a contemptuous look and turned back to Cyrus. "Quid pro quo," she said. "I have something I want done. Do it, and I'll..."

Hank broke in. "I hear a car."

"What?"

He nodded his head. "Sure. Coming up the hill."

*This is the moment*, thought Cyrus; *right now*. He bent his knees slightly, ignoring the hot twinge of pain, preparing to leap. The sprained one buckled; he had to grab the edge of the operating table to prevent himself sprawling forward.

THE WOMAN'S voice was hoarse with tension. "Listen. I'll shoot the boy if you don't do what I say."

"Murder's still a crime—they're coming."

"Too late to save him. You!" she motioned to Victoria. "Open that closet. Get out two smocks, caps, masks. Put one set on. Now you," she said to Cyrus. "If these are subcuties, I'll turn you over unless you do as I say. Take off your shirt and get on that table."

"Why should I?"

"Because you hope to get away. I'll help you—if you obey. If you don't, I'll shoot the boy first and turn you both in. Quickly, now."

If his knee hadn't given way at the critical moment...but it had. Try again? When she put down the rifle, as she must? Could he hope to shoot his way out? And then there was the faint hope she really might help them...

He lifted himself onto the table, stripped off his shirt. Dr. Tavistock snatched it from him, opened another closet, tossed it in. "Crawl in here," she ordered Hank. "Don't make a sound."

Without waiting to see if he obeyed, she leaned the rifle in a corner, slipped into the smock and cap, adjusted the mask over her mouth and nos-

trils. Cyrus heard footsteps in the big room. Was he being unbelievably foolish in trusting—no, not trusting—in putting them all at her mercy? But...

She came briskly to the table. He tried to read the expression in her eyes, but they conveyed nothing to him above the forbidding mask. She threw a sheet over the lower part of his body. "Relax. Pretend you're under the influence of cyclopane. Close your eyes. You'll have to put yourself completely in my hands, no matter what I seem to be doing. If you show consciousness, it will be all up with the three of you."

**T**HERE WAS a rap on the door. Not loud, but very assured.

"No," she cried sharply. "No one can come in here now!"

Cyrus Tarn willed himself to lie still, hunching his shoulders into place, putting his ankles gingerly together, forcing his hands to lie limp against his hips under the sheet. "Hold this over his face," she directed Victoria. "It's turned off," she whispered.

Again the knock. There was

impatience in it now. "Authorized medical business. You'll have to let us in."

Cyrus felt the gauzy weight on his face. A strong overhead light beat against his closed eyelids. He heard a gasp which he knew came from Victoria, then something made a long sting down his chest. He felt metal nick and pinch his flesh together on either side. *She has cut me with a scalpel—no, an electronic knife—but very superficially, and then applied surgical clamps. Why? It doesn't make sense.*

Her voice was as steady as her hand. "Authorized or not, you can't come in here. I'm a licensed physician and surgeon, and I have a patient undergoing operation."

"Sorry, Doctor. If you don't open this door, we'll have to break it in."

He heard her pull open and close some drawers, and there was the soft sound of a rubber-tired dolley moving across the floor. "You will indeed be sorry, whoever you are. Open the door, Miss."

This would be hardest of all; not only to stay rigid when they came in, but to lie there

with Victoria under their searching eyes. He heard footsteps, faint upon the linoleum floor.

"I'm sorry to disturb..."

"Then don't. Get out."

"...disturb you, Doctor, but three dangerous mallies are loose arund here."

**H**E FELT her fingers through the thin rubber gloves on the clamps, pair by pair. "Find them, then. You have my permission to search the grounds. The house, too, if you think they might have been foolish enough to sneak in. But get out of this room or I won't answer for the consequences. My patient is a critical cardiac case. If this intrusion causes complications, the responsibility will be yours and I'll see that you accept it."

"We'll accept it, Doctor. I notice you are using an old, an obsolete technique. And you have only one nurse. No anaethetist, no standby physician."

"Observant, aren't you? Subcute?"

"Surgical-Bactericidal-Custodial Technician. And you



haven't answered my implied questions."

Cyrus felt the exquisite stab of a needle drawn through his flesh. "Implied questions receive implied answers. I'm busy."

"The surgery you've been performing is nearly finished?"

"No surgery is finished till the patient is discharged." The needle worked relentlessly. He was sure his chest must be rising agonizedly with each stitch. Even the most skilled surgeon can be balked by interruptions and annoyances. You are free to look for your mallies anywhere on my property. What else do you want?"

"May I have the name of your patient?"

"Certainly not."

**T**HE SUBCUTE'S voice took on a note of reproof. "Doctor, you're not very cooperative. We technicians are essential to the Healthfare state. It is the duty of every qualified medical man to assist, not hinder us."

"A little more cyclopane, Nurse. Watch his pulse."

"May I have the name of

your patient, Doctor?"

"What for?"

"The man on the table may be one of those we're searching for."

"What? You stupid oaf! You think this patient, whose pleural cavity I opened less than an hour ago, just jumped on the table in time to be sewn up?"

*She's overdoing it,* thought Cyrus. *I should have...*

"Doctor, we have no proof you opened his pleural cavity an hour ago. Incidentally, his chest doesn't seem to have been recently shaved. And your stationwagon—I assume it's yours since it has your name on the white slip—is still warm."

"Why shouldn't it be? It was hot—boiling—when my nurse drove it up. As for the pleural cavity, look in this basin. What do you see?"

"Shreds of tissue, blood, and some sort of fluid. What does that prove?"

"What do you expect to see when someone dives into a man's insides? Gizzards and a craw?"

**T**HERE WAS a strained silence. Was she wearing

them down, overawing them?

"You still haven't answered my questions or told me your patient's name."

"I don't think you're entitled to know. If you think you are, why don't you take me in for observation? And my nurse for good measure? Watch that pulse, Nurse."

"Yes, Doctor." Victoria's voice: calm, dutiful. Her fingers on his wrist: faith, love.

"Look, Dr. Tavistock, I'm just trying to do my job. It's an important job, especially important to the doctors who speak and think sneeringly of us as subcuties—we get under their skins. But every doctor knows, or ought to, that our function is to take some of the burden of responsibility off his shoulders. Most Technicians at one time dreamed of being doctors ourselves—I made it to the second year of medical school. No one has deeper respect for the profession. I would not have been accepted as a Technician in the first place if I hadn't had it. I'd be separated immediately if I lost it."

The man's voice took on a tone of gentle dignity. "I'm hurt by your implication that

I could suspect an accredited physician of unethical conduct. If you can imagine a 'subcute' being hurt. At the moment, we are after a dangerous psychopath—Cyrus Tarn, alias Silas Tennick, alias Simon Thompson, alias a dozen other names. He needs treatment desperately, as does his woman companion. And the child he kidnapped from a hospital when he was about to undergo some very important tests. They were last seen near your property. It's my duty—my duty to you, Doctor, among other people—to account for everyone in this vicinity. Your patient must be checked as well as everyone else."

The needle went in and out and stopped. "My patient will not be out of the anaesthetic for some time; he cannot be questioned for at least twenty-four hours."

"Very well, Doctor. One of us will be here to interview him then. Meanwhile, I'd like to see his chart."

"I can't stop you. It's there."

"Thank— What! Oh... Now I understand the absence of additional witnesses. You

have a terrible responsibility."

"You aren't making it any less by keeping me from giving full attention to my patient."

"But why weren't Technicians called in as guards? Where are his regular orderlies?"

"Secrecy. A policy decision which concerns neither you nor me. That's why his identity must not be known."

"I'll report it only to my chief."

**CYRUS** COULD no longer control his trembling. He heard the retreating steps; the cone was lifted from his face. Victoria was taking off her cap and mask; Dr. Tavistock had already removed hers. "The door is self-locking. But he's undoubtedly waiting close to it."

"What now?"

"A short conference is indicated."

"Can't I let Hank out first?"

The woman gave Victoria a contemptuous nod. "Very well." To Cyrus she said brusquely, "Lie back."

"What for?"

"Do you want to go around

with those unnecessary stitches? Hold still now. There. Just a minute. All right." She wiped off the blood with a swab. "A little alum and you'll be as good as new—even the scratch is hardly visible. While you're here I might as well look at that leg. Here, pull off that boot."

**HE** OPENED his mouth to protest, but Victoria was already working the riding boot down. Dr. Tavistock took hold of his trouserleg; his knee was so swollen the cloth would barely go over it. "Hmm. Hurt when I press here? Here?"

"Ouch," exclaimed Cyrus. "Yes. It's a sprain."

"How do you know?"

"A doctor looked at it," said Victoria.

"Nonsense. A doctor would have bound it."

"He did," said Cyrus. "Too tightly. I had to take it off."

"Some mallie quack. Don't call him doctor."

"But he's..." Victoria stopped in mid-sentence.

She was more deft, more assured in her actions than Alex had been. "Tarn. I knew I had it on the tip of my tongue.

Have you a chart to go with that name?"

"Of course."

"But you aren't carrying 'it on your person at all times' as medical regulations prescribe. I suppose the Surgical, Bactericidal rigamaroles have it. You're putting them to a lot of trouble—they won't forget it."

"Why don't they leave us alone, then?" asked Hank.

She finished the bandaging. "There. Try out that leg now."

He let himself off the table. Except for a slight twinge, the pain was miraculously gone. The tape was firm, but nowhere near as tight as Alex had made it. He was able to flex his leg and still feel the comforting support of the bandage. "Thanks."

**S**HE LIT a cigaret. "I won't even put a bill through for it. The Credit Bureau will want seven dollars less that you wouldn't have paid, anyway. What do the subcutes want you three for, anyway?"

"For our own good—you heard the man. We're dangerous to ourselves and the profession. We must be observed, diagnosed, treated."

"You object? You didn't object when I fixed your knee. Why should you object..."

"To having my mind fixed? Bound tightly so I can feel no pain?"

"Not bound. Healed. However, that's your business."

"That's not what the Ama thinks."

"The Ama has been taken over by sentimental snufflers. You may have gathered that I'm not in complete sympathy with its present policies. I agree with you mallies that a man with part of his brain stultified isn't worth keeping alive."

"That's not a mallie contention," said Victoria sharply. "Far from it. That's the sort of thing the Mercifuls believe."

"Mallie, Merciful." She was indifferent. "Psychopaths are psychopaths, whether you diagnose them as maladjusted individuals or megalomaniacs. The Ama has coddled them too long and too much. Those who object to treatment ought to be eliminated before they pass on their weak genes or infect others by suggestion."

"Then the only difference between you and the Mercifuls

is one of motive," Victoria said. "They think they're being kind by murdering those they put out of their misery. You want to murder anyone differing from an arbitrary norm as the easiest way of preserving it."

**D**R. TAVISTOCK answered Cyrus, as though it were he who had spoken. "Euthanasia isn't murder. Any physician can administer lethal matter at his discretion. I would merely make it mandatory to thanatize uncooperative mallies instead of optional."

"I wonder why you didn't give me a fatal injection while I was on the table."

"Because there's something I want done, as I told you. You can do it for us."

"Us?"

"A slip of the tongue. Me."

"And if I do whatever you want, you can dispose of me afterward."

"I said I'd help you in return, and I'll keep my part of the bargain. If you do what I want, you'll be provided with a new chart with any name and case history you choose."

"That 'you' was singular?"

"Oh, if you want charts for them I can arrange it. Every man to his taste."

He glanced at Victoria. "Thanks."

"I can also put my hands on several thousand dollars."

"Money's not a problem at the moment. There's another way you could be useful to us."

**H**ER NOSTRILS flared disdainfully. "What is it?"

"Let's hear what you have in mind, first," Cyrus said.

"I want a man killed."

Victoria snapped, "We're not murderers."

"I was talking to Tarn."

"I'm not a killer," Cyrus replied.

"You can learn. It's not hard."

*Yes, I suppose, you could, especially if you thought of it as thanalizing or eliminating.*

"And if I don't want to learn? You can't very well call in the subcutes and say you made a slight mistake—it was me on the table, after all."

"Don't play with me, Tarn. I've been easy on you so far. Just believe me—I have resources."

How many refusals would convince her he was sincere when he finally gave in? The idea of overpowering her was out; if they got away, their chance lay in her help. "What's the name of the man you want killed?"

"Do you want them to hear it?" She nodded toward Victoria and Hank.

"Why not?"

"Whitelands."

"*Horace Whitelands? Of the Medical Journal?*"

"Also Assistant to Dudley Higginson. Yes."

Cyrus' look crossed Victoria's. Did Hank know about Whitelands? Not likely. "Well," he said, "at least you're not asking me to go after Higginson himself."

"No—that wouldn't be necessary. That subcute was anxious to know the name of the patient you impersonated. I terminated the Personal Physician on this operating table, yesterday afternoon."

(to be continued)

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The struggle for power among the rulers of the medarchy has begun, as the extreme fanatics take their first step. What will this mean to the underground? In particular, what will it mean to Cyrus, Victoria, and Hank—who are forced to trust Dr. Tavistock—for the moment, at least. You cannot afford to miss the next suspenseful installment of "Caduceus Wild", which appears in our *March Science Fiction Stories*—on sale early in January. Reserve your copy today at your newsstand—or, better still, take advantage of our money-saving subscription offer.

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**Volume 10**

**MARCH, 1959**

**Number 1**

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Third  
of  
Four  
Parts

# CADUCEUS

## WILD

by Ward Moore  
& Robert Bradford

illustrated by FINLAY

*The subcutes were bad enough: if Cyrus Tarn, Virginia Carling, and Hank were captured by them, the fugitives would be "cured". But there was something worse than the subcutes — there were the "Mercifuls", ever on the lookout for suffering people they could "help"!*

### Synopsis

**D**R. RAPHAEL TREE was neither a mad scientist nor a megalomaniac. "You don't allow children to play with live bombs, or neurotics to indulge delusions. We have seen what happened when they were so allowed. If we had taken over earlier, we would certainly have averted the third world war—and perhaps some of those that went before."

In this day, when the medarchy was supreme, such a statement almost sounded be-

lievable. CYRUS TARN could not deny that certain benefits had come from the rule of caduceus, where every citizen had to report to his doctor for a health check-up regularly, and where the doctors' decisions were the law. People weren't oppressed in the old-fashioned way; they had freedom of speech, of the press, of vote on political matters, and of worship—except where these infringed on public health. What constituted public health was, of course, determined by Ama.

TARN (alias Tennick) sat

This story began in the January 1959 issue. Copies of parts one and two may be had from the publisher at 35¢ each.





The helicopter was landing, but Cyrus would keep its occupants from getting out...

at the table with Dr. Tree and CHRIS MALLUP, who worked for Tree, drinking whiskey and wondered how much they knew or suspected about him and about his companions. Ten-year-old HENRY CARLING was being passed off as Tarn's grandson; the boy's sister, VICTORIA CARLING, was still supposed to be his sister—only her name was now CARRIE GOODSPEED.

"Man brings suffering on himself," stated Dr. Tree. "He insists on it, cherishes it, refuses to be parted from it. And the only thing he learns is that suffering never gets him anything but suffering. We've given the people the utopia so long dreamed-of: health, happiness, security, freedom from war. Some of them still aren't satisfied. The ones who would never be satisfied."

He was referring, of course, to the "mallies"—the "mal-adjusted", those who refused to adjust themselves to the sane and sanitary regimen of the medarchy. Cyrus, Victoria, and Henry were all members of that ubiquitous minority—which could do little more than rebel, and try to convince the majority that the rule of caduceus wild robbed man of all dignity. They believed that denying a man the right to make a

mistake, even a harmful one, made him less than a man.

Henry had just escaped from a medarchy raid on the mallie school with which he was connected. The boy had been kidnapped and brought to a hospital. Before he could be given treatment—drugs which would make it impossible for him to conceal anything he knew about the mallies—Cyrus had rescued him and, prepared with forged charts, set out for Mallups', where they would have refuge until a plane would take them out of the country. Victoria had gone on ahead, and was waiting for them. Their local "doctor", to whom they would refer, was ALEX CALLIGGS, a member of the underground. He was supposed to bring them new charts before they left Mallups', to go to their rendezvous with the escape plane.

If they were caught, it would be the end for all three of them. Not a firing squad, or any other sort of execution chamber, no overt torture. Just treatment—electrotranquilization and whatever else the medarchy's wisdom might prescribe for their mal-adjusted states. No marriage between Cyrus Tarn, age fifty, and Victoria Rald, age twenty-nine, slightly crip-

pled, could possibly be approved. They would be treated and—what happened to the flame when the candle was blown out? Urgency and emotion would be part of an unremembered past, blotted out, destroyed, non-existent. They'd never recognize each other afterward. For Henry, the process would be less drastic, but the result would be the same. And before it was over, the medarchy would know everything each one of them knew or suspected about the mallie underground.

Mallup was an eccentric, who put up a show of outward conformity, thumbed his nose at the medarchy in private, and did pretty much as he pleased—and got away with it. He had a private library of books prohibited by Ama, most of them quack literature; but he never tried to get anyone else to read them, he said, didn't sell them—and didn't agree with most of the stuff in them himself. He just liked to have them, that was all. It was a position, Cyrus thought, which made Chris Mallup ideal for a medarchy counter-mallie agent. And something was definitely wrong; there was a traitor—at least one—in the underground. First the school had been raided; then the promised new charts for

the three fugitives hadn't come through. Perhaps a change of decision, Dr. Calliggs suggested, when Cyrus telephoned him.

Yes, Alex Calliggs might be a traitor. Or Mallup. Dr. Tree might be learning important things through his protection and friendship with the old eccentric. And he mustn't forget JUDY LARCH, Mallup's sixteen-year-old granddaughter, fanatic in her support of the caduceans, unswerving in her faith in anything the doctors said. She was upset by the grandfather's flouting of health regulations, was certain that he ought to be in a home for the aged. There could be no doubt that if Judy suspected, she wouldn't hesitate a moment to turn Cyrus and the others in. She'd probably get in touch with the medarchy lieutenant at the station—who had given Cyrus and Henry cursory examinations, and looked over their charts. Traveling without a chart meant immediate and thorough examination in the nearest hospital.

Victoria had been upset over what had appeared to be Cyrus' undue attention to this ripe, pretty sixteen-year-old, and Tarn was worried. Such extreme jealousy on so little grounds was unlike

Victoria. She was waiting for him upstairs, now.

At length, Dr. Tree finished his whiskey sampling and said goodnight—not an evil man, which was the worst of it, Tarn thought. Few, if any, of them were malicious—they believed they were doing good, bringing health, happiness, and security to all. But one thing Tree had said stuck in Cyrus' mind. An ex-wife of the doctor's was personal physician to Horace Whitelands, editor of the all-important *Medical Journal*. DR. GRACE TAVISTOCK was an extremist, a member of the small faction in the medarchy which believed in immediate and thorough measures in dealing out the mallies. Whitelands must be warned before their suspicion that he was too liberal—favoring a moderate, gradual course against the maladjusted—exposed that fact that he was loosely connected with the underground, too.

Victoria was feeling better, though still upset. Then, in the night, something awoke Cyrus. Had someone entered the next room? Had Mallup come upstairs? He had thought that Mallup was listening in on them before. He awoke Victoria, who at once awoke the boy; all three began to dress quietly. The door opened, to reveal at

least three men behind the one in the doorway who was holding them in the glare of his flashlight. "There's no good in moving—we're prepared to use gas if we have to. Come with us."

"Are you orderlies?" Victoria asked as she shoved Cyrus toward the window. Tarn managed to take them by surprise, as they obviously did not realize that the three were fully awake, or would dare to resist. Victoria and Henry got safely out the window. Cyrus was not so lucky—the impact of landing was on his knee.

"Cyrus!"

He tried to get up, and almost collapsed. Knee—sprained or broken? He tried to be sure of the direction of her whispered voice. He had to know; separation now would be separation forever.

Yet...escape seemed futile. He was crippled, and Victoria lame; what chance had they against the ruthless efficiency of the subcuties? Cyrus thought that, after all, they should separate, and meet at the landing field—in fact, he could see no other course but to let himself be captured while Victoria and the boy escaped. But Victoria would not hear of separation; and it was fairly apparent that she knew what he had in

mind. "I'm pregnant", she told him.

That put a different light on everything; they had to stick together now. And the chase showed that the subcutes were not infallible; even with a searchlight, they did not spot the fugitives, who finally made their way to Dr. Calliggs' cabin.

Who was the informer? Who had put the subcutes on to the fact that three important mallies were at Mallups' place? Had Dr. Tree suspected? Was it old Chris himself, or his fanatically loyal granddaughter? Or—worse still—was there a traitor in the mallee underground?

Alex Calliggs himself was not entirely above suspicion—yet, what could be his motive? He had a definite grievance against the medarchy, and admitted that he was with the mallies because of it, rather than due to any particular sympathy with most of them. "I don't like it," Alex said fretfully. "I don't like being tied in with nuts or fanatics. Some chiropractor or religious maniac is likely to buckle and spill his guts."

"You don't usually find subversives among the calm and reasonable."

"Don't get huffy—I wasn't talking about ordinary neuro-

tics, or even psychoses. I can work with you and Vicky, but what about Raid and some of the others? How can I feel easy with my safety—my practice..."

Alex was nervous, and his binding of Cyrus' knee was tight and uncomfortable. He did, however, manage to find some sort of clothing for them, and food and water; and he took them in his car to the point where Cyrus decided to make for the woods and hike it. They hadn't told Alex exactly where the landing field was, and Calliggs' curiosity on this score didn't increase Cyrus' confidence in the younger man. Still...he had helped.

They followed a stream, discovered that men with rifles were on their trail, and came at last to a road, which rounded an unexpected curve where they saw a station wagon blocked by a fallen tree. It was too late to duck back: a woman got out swiftly, a rifle in her hands, and forced them to move the tree, then to get into the car and drive to her house.

"Do you always greet strangers like this?" asked Victoria.

"When I think they may be useful. Particularly if they happen to be three notorious mallies whose description

I've just heard on the radio."

The woman was Dr. Tavistock—whom Cyrus suddenly remembered as an ex-wife of Dr. Raphael Tree. Tree had said that "Grace" was in sympathy with the extreme faction in the medarchy—the faction which wanted to exterminate all mallies without any further nonsense, as quickly as they could be tracked down. Yet, Dr. Tavistock told the fugitives, she could help them—there was something she wanted done, and she would make a deal. She'd give them all new charts, let them go, and not report them to the subcuties.

All she wanted them to do was to kill someone.

It was while Cyrus was arguing, that a car drove up, and voices outside, demanded entrance. Dr. Tavistock told Hank to get into a closet, then said to Victoria, "Get out two smocks, caps, masks. Put one set on. Now you," she turned to Cyrus. "If these are subcuties, I'll turn you over unless you do as I say. Take off your shirt and get on that table."

When the subcuties entered, Dr. Tavistock was apparently performing an operation; she refused to answer any questions, and ordered the intruders out. Finally, she let them see the chart of the "patient"

—they were suspicious at the fact that there was only one nurse in attendance, and that the "patient's" chest had not been shaved for a "cardiac operation". The leader of the squad looked at the chart, then said, "Oh... Now I understand the absence of additional witnesses. You have a terrible responsibility."

That seemed to satisfy the subcuties; they left, and Dr. Tavistock did a competent job of dressing Cyrus' knee, observing that the earlier bandaging had been somewhat inept. Finally, Cyrus asked who she wanted killed.

"Whitelands."

Horace Whitelands! Whitelands of the *Medical Journal*, and assistant to the head of the medarchy, Dudley Higginson.

"Well," Cyrus said, "at least you're not asking me to go after Higginson himself."

"No—that wouldn't be necessary. That subcute was anxious to know the name of the patient you impersonated. I terminated the Personal Physician on this operating table yesterday afternoon."

## VII

**R**EGICIDE, thought Cyrus—what more convincing evidence of maladjustment could you

have? Charles I and Louis XVI were the anointed of God; to chop off their heads was sacrilege as well as murder. The Personal Physician to the President of the Pan-American Union was the called of the Ama, whose choice had been duly ratified by the electorate at the polls when they voted for the presidential candidate who promised to appoint him.

Remembering Dr. Tree's conversation, he knew that the woman's "us" had not been used loosely any more than it had been a slip of the tongue. She could not have acted on impulse, even though she was the Personal Physician's doctor, and had established a pattern of getting him away secretly for his checkups. Obviously she was part of an organization—a powerful one. But not one with which allies could co-operate; the ideological chasm was too great for opportunism to bridge. She was not engaged in revolution but in an attempted coup d'etat.

But, if the assassination of Higginson had been planned, why was that of his probable successor left to chance? And

where had the woman been going when they met her? The answers were important, but Cyrus Tarn couldn't fit them together. Not with a subcutane in the next room...

"He was my patient, suffering from a malignant growth on his lung. Had it become known, the Mercifuls would have made every effort to get him."

"So you anticipated them."

"I applied euthanasia, as I had an unquestioned right to do."

"Why not start a rumor that Whitelands has the same complaint? Or get him to call you in, too?"

**H**E TRIED to make his glance at Victoria an assurance that he was not going too far.

"It doesn't concern you, Tarn."

"All right. Get a Merciful for your little errand."

Whitelands in power. No one could be sure he'd be appointed, but precedent was in his favor: Horace Whitelands, Personal Physician—Horace Whitelands, who thought that the Ama ought to resign much

of its power, particularly over marriages and births; who secretly favored abolishing the subcutes. It was more than anyone could have hoped for.

"Will you stop beating around the bush? I want a yes or no."

"Yes—under certain conditions."

"You're in no position to bargain."

Cyrus walked around the table for the sheer luxury of putting his weight on a leg that no longer tormented him. "You want Whitelands disposed of. Either get someone else, or meet my conditions."

She looked at him curiously. "What do you want?"

**I**F WHITELANDS were to be Personal Physician, he could want nothing from her. That hadn't happened yet; it might not happen at all. In the meantime they had to get away; Whitelands' liberalism could not restore minds already tampered with. Cyrus had to convince the woman that his bargaining was sincere, that he was ready for an exchange of services. "I want appropriate documents and

paraphernalia of a retired physician."

"Doctors don't retire at your age."

"Think of something else then. Something foolproof, so we're not likely to be bothered by subcutes or MPs."

"You sound like a Patient—all doctors have divine powers. I'm flattered."

"You were the one with promises."

"And I'm also the one with threats. I've fooled around long enough—do as I say or your malformed little doll won't be around much longer." She turned on Victoria. "If you'd had that ankle cared for years ago, you wouldn't be a cripple now."

Victoria's face flushed, then paled. "A doctor set it. He wasn't a very good doctor. When we took off the cast a month later, it was like this."

Grace Tavistock's normally high color turned a dark red. "No doctor would do that—it's like Tarn's lie about a doctor binding his knee. 'Not a very good doctor'! I suppose he wouldn't hop into bed with you."



"I was fifteen," explained Victoria coldly.

The woman stared at her. "How fascinating. An ex-lover, then—some drunken malle posing as a doctor."

"My sister doesn't tell lies." Hank said. "She won't let me, either."

"Quiet, Hank. According to medical ethics, all doctors are paragons." Cyrus turned to the woman. "Incidentally, if I say I'll kill Whitelands, how do you know I will? Or can?"

"It's a six or seven hour drive to the city. You'll drive there as soon as we get rid of the subcutes."

"How do you expect to do that?"

"I have some influence. When we settle things between us, a phone call will pull the watchdogs off. You'll drive my stationwagon. The cripple and her brother will stay with me. If I don't hear of Whitelands' death within three days, they'll follow Higginson. I'll also see the subcutes get help in catching you."

"Gee," murmured Hank, "you talk rough, lady."

**I**T MIGHT be safe to give in now. "Mmmm. Yes. I'd say

that guards your interests. All right. Put your call through."

"I'll have to give the technical gentlemen outside something to quiet them first. Coffee, perhaps—with soporific qualities. By the time they come to, their radio—I assume they have one—will be recalling them."

"You're efficient, aren't you?" commented Victoria, without admiration.

"Quite efficient, Miss... aah... Miss. Much more than you are. Because you—all mallees—do things primarily for yourselves. What I do is for humanity—what happens to me is incidental. You might try that approach sometime. Now..." she suddenly reverted to her earlier suavity "...if you'll excuse me, I'll see about the coffee for our problem idiots."

She went to the door, unlocked it. It was thrown violently open. The subcute held the gun ready as he came through.

"You're efficient, Doctor, but we're not quite idiots. Line up there, all of..."

She lunged at his shins, reaching upward at the same

time to grab the revolver. "Get him, Tarn!"

CYRUS hesitated only long enough to despair of his inability to sacrifice the possibility of escape to principle. He used his right fist like a mallet (*I must be not only unscientific but wide open, not to mention ridiculous*, he thought) and smashed it against the jaw. With his left he hit the man in the temple. Neither blow was hard enough to bring him down, but they evidently startled him sufficiently to allow the woman to wrench the gun away. She struck him expertly with the butt; Cyrus saw the impact of the metal on yielding flesh. The man fell sideways.

"Shut the door," she ordered Victoria. "Watch him, Tarn. If he comes to, slug him again." She crossed to a cabinet and brought out a hypodermic syringe. Then she bent down to the prostrate subcute and pulled up his sleeve.

"Hey, you forgot to put anything in that," exclaimed Hank.

"What are you doing?" cried Victoria

Dr. Tavistock did not answer as she found the artery and raised it between thumb and finger. Cyrus took an irrisolute step forward, hand outstretched. "Wait! You can't..."

She pushed the needle in, pressed the plunger down. He halted; she was undoubtedly giving him a strong sedative, something to hold him while she telephoned.

She put her finger on the subcute's wrist. There was a long, trickling wait, then the chest heaved convulsively, the body shuddered twice and collapsed into stillness. Dr. Tavistock rose. "He won't bother us again."

CYRUS stared down. His horror was not directed at the woman but at himself; by giving in to her demand for help he had become an accessory to murder.

She said briskly, "Needless to say, our plans must be changed."

"Needless to say." One didn't look back. "I think you can modify your own, somewhat. You wouldn't like me to tell his superiors just what

happened, before they begin treating me."

"That doesn't worry me. You're an opportunist, Tarn, but you don't think fast enough to be a successful one. I've already decided we'll all have to go to the city together."

Victoria, still shaken, demanded, "We? What makes you think we'll go with you?"

"You killed him," muttered Hank awedly. "He's dead."

"And that's why you'll come with me."

Victoria caught her lip between her teeth. "She's right, Cyrus. Whatever our ultimate relations with her, our interests are the same for the moment. Now, Doctor—were you going to leave that body on the floor?"

Cyrus considered it likely; the woman seemed to do everything by impulse rather than calculation. Something like this might have happened with Higginson. She might not have intended to kill him at this particular time, but had yielded to the opportunity. Overconfidence? Like the plotters against Hitler in 1944.

Never draw conspirators from the ruling classes, he

thought. Fear hasn't sharpened their wits to the proper edge. No one he knew—except possibly Alex—would have failed to take proper precautions against that subcute's leaves-dropping. Wouldn't have had to kill him either, and embarrass themselves with his corpse—to say nothing of being put in a bad position both morally and practically.

"What about your changing clothes with him?"

**H**E SHOOK his head. "There were three of them. The other two must be close by..."

"One of them followed this one into the room before. You didn't know, because he said nothing."

"So even if I slipped into the car without their noticing—an unlikely supposition—they'd eventually come in here and discover that the body was their companion's, not mine. I don't suppose your equipment here includes a handy little private crematorium?"

"No. And Higginson's in the only refrigerator drawer."

He thought a moment. "There's only one thing to do,

then, and it's risky. I hope you won't make it more risky by being trigger-happy again."

Her eyes flashed. "You seem to forget who's in command of the situation here."

"If you're in command," said Victoria, "go ahead and run things."

Again she was pointedly ignored. "What do you suggest?"

"Is there another way to your station wagon except through the front door? Yes? Good. Or at least, fair. The three of us will sneak around and get in unobserved, if we can. Meanwhile, you call the other subcutes and tell them that this one has died of a heart attack—I suppose an autopsy will confirm it?"

She nodded.

"Tell them that you're going for help. Then you can drive out, apparently alone."

"If you haven't made off with the car first."

"You have the keys, haven't you?"

**V**ICTORIA spoke decisively. "It won't do, Cyrus. They'll have spotted the phone wires. Why should she go for

help instead of telephoning? Calling them in is all right, only it must be to tell them he caught sight of us heading through the trees and wants them to follow."

"You forget the dogs. They'll soon show there's no trail to run down."

"Not dogs," corrected the doctor—"electronic spoor-counters."

Of course. They would have something like that to enable them to follow as quickly and accurately as they had. But how did it happen that neither Alex nor Yester had heard of the device?

Victoria bent over the dead subcute, unzipped his leather jacket. From the large inside pocket she drew out the familiar pliofilm envelope. "His name was William Horton Hartney."

"Euphonious," remarked Dr. Tavistock, condescending to notice her.

Victoria paid no attention. "Does your knee feel well enough to run a mile—perhaps two?"

Cyrus winced; the idea was not attractive. "Yes."

"I think it's the only way.

Swing around through the woods down to the road. As soon as you have a good start she can tell them that Hartney is after you and wants them to follow right away. The counter will pick up your trail. Then we'll put Hartney in the station wagon and meet you. That will save her from anything worse than suspicion, and get us out of here."

"It sounds possible. Are you willing, Doctor?"

"They may come back and find the other body."

"Suppose they do? You weren't going to hide it permanently, were you?"

"I wanted his death concealed while Whitelands was alive. With both of them out of the way, the Ama will be beheaded, and doctors with some sense of medical ethics can take over."

"Take it or leave it," said Victoria. "Of course you could pick up the rifle and shoot us all, but that won't help your position."

**D**R. TAVISTOCK seemed undecided for a moment, her earlier assurance gone. Finally, she bent her head.

"Come along."

She moved over to the corner and retrieved the rifle. Resting it over her arm, she went into the living room, then beckoned. Cyrus tried to convey some reassurance to Victoria, but it was she who said to him, "It will be all right—I know it will."

In the big room, Dr. Tavistock peered out of the window. "There they are. They don't seem to be very active."

"They probably figure that Hartney has the situation in hand. Waiting for orders. All the better—they'll be ripe for your message." It was best to encourage her; she looked as though she might go to pieces now.

Dr. Tavistock led the way through another door into an L-shaped kitchen, as warmly lit and homey as the surgery had been bleak and efficient. "The old road winds, but you'll find it easier than scrabbling through the trees. It meets the new road where we turned around. Wait there."

"All right. How do I find it?"

"That way." She pointed. "When you hit it, turn left."

**R**UN, Victoria had said, but he didn't trust the new well being of his knee that far. The trees had been cleared only to keep the kitchen in sunlight; toward the front of the house, they crept closer. He made for their shelter, expecting the sound of pursuit or a bullet; when none came as they screened him, he looked back. No sign. He walked rapidly.

Had he done right to leave Victoria and Hank with the woman? Was there some way Dr. Tavistock could find to accuse them of Hartney's death and turn them over to the other subcutes? Or would she purposely delay long enough to let them capture him? Then whom would she get to kill Whitelands? Still, he couldn't rely on logic. She had tried to procure assassination on the spur of the moment; she might abandon it as impulsively.

He came upon the old road, in even worse shape here than it was down below. He would have to watch every step, lest he put his foot in a sump-hole, or trip in one of the miniature gullies. Run, Victoria had said, but already his leg was tired.

Suppose they got there ahead of him? Would they dare wait? They would have to. But suppose the subcutes had refused to believe...? Or suppose only one obeyed, while the other stayed to keep his eye on the house? Suppose they were unable to get the body into the station wagon? Suppose... .

A mile or two. It made a difference: a mile—or two. He could walk a mile in fifteen, twenty minutes. What time was it—noon? One? Now that his leg no longer agonized, Cyrus Tarn was able to realize how helplessly tired he was. Sleep... .

**T**HE SUBCUTES would have no reason to play cat-and-mouse with him. The three fugitives would be small game compared to Grace Tavistock if the subcutes discovered that she'd killed one of their number. Or Higginson.

Kill, kill. Kill or be killed; justify. Hank had been shocked, Victoria dismayed, himself only startled and made slightly unhappy. And how long would it take Hank to become injured? How long be-

fore he himself began carrying a gun for self-defence? And then using it, since offence is the best defence? What was the moral difference between a mallee and a medarch?

Behold the Ama. Thunder on the left; violence from the right. Only Whitelands might save the situation. If he could. The question was, *could he?* Could one man, no matter how highly placed, do anything against a crystalized system? The Tavistock women and her fellows must believe that. Their beliefs changed nothing; the situation was not subjective; it existed independently of anyone's conclusions about it.

One trouble with peoples' thinking was a confusion about the nature of the medarchy. It governed, but it was not government. The 86 States of the Pan-American Union were still sovereign. Legislators still enacted laws; policemen arrested, courts tried, jailers executed sentences. Only now there was something above the law, above the government, and aside from it. Laws were laws, but medical regulations were paramount. Laws were

laws, but the lawbreaker was no longer a criminal, able to hold some remnant of pride, to pay a debt to society by serving a sentence. Now he was just another maladjusted individual, protected by no legal presumption of innocence, but having testimony wrenched from him by a medical examiner whose opinion carried the ultimate weight with judges and juries, even in the face of old-fashioned evidence.

Cyrus stopped, suddenly alert, and listened. Nothing. Or was it the faint sound of a motor? Or something else? No, nothing. He was limping again, though the fierce pain had not returned. A mile? Not two, certainly. "Perhaps a helicopter," he muttered. "Perfect conditions." It was time. Also, a copter would have no trouble spotting the airfield.

**H**E HAD forgotten, of course. The subcutes already knew where the field was. The subcutes... But the subcutes could be defeated, even if only momentarily. By killing them. A price higher than he cared to pay, though he had paid it. But what of

Victoria's child? Plead her belly. . .

A rabbit bounded from the undergrowth, legs whisking him over the road in panicky backward sweeps. Instead of crossing and finding refuge the nearest way, it followed the man-made track, as though helplessly compelled. If the subcutes had dogs, instead of the counter, they might have become excited at the scent of game and delayed the pursuit. He finally began to run.

He was panting, and his leg was hurting again when he came to the junction of the two roads. Surely the station wagon should be there, waiting. He tried to calculate how much time had passed since he left the house. Half an hour? Allow ten minutes to convince the subcutes; fifteen to get the body into the wagon, less than five to drive down. Something must have gone wrong.

In spite of his knee, he paced anxiously up and down. He visualized a dozen different forms of calamity. What an incompetent fool he had been to leave them! And what could he do now, with the sub-

cutes a mere ten minutes behind him, at most?

**T**HE WOMAN was driving. Victoria sat in the rear seat on the opposite side, looking grim; Hank, beside her, looked shaken. Cyrus opened the door and slid in next to Dr. Tavistock, after glancing back to assure himself that Hartney's body was where it should be—on the floor behind the seats. Victoria held the rifle on her lap.

"She was going to leave us behind," Victoria explained, "after we got the body in. She might have, if she hadn't forgotten the gun. She left it lying on the ground. Hank picked it up and threatened to shoot her tires."

"I would have, too, only I wasn't sure I ought to. I couldn't let her beat it without us, but what good would the wagon be with holes in the tires?"

"You did fine," Cyrus commended him abstractedly, wondering just why the woman had tried to desert them. He could not see that she had anything to gain; did she think that he would be more willing to kill



Whitelands with Victoria and the boy in the hands of the subcutes? Or perhaps she had meant to leave him behind also, to abandon her plan of beheading the Ama in panic to save her own skin. Yet this didn't fit in with what he had observed. Her impulsiveness was reckless, overbold; not fearful.

"More hallucinations. Delusions of persecution," she sneered.

"Does it matter?" he asked. "Our business now is to put as much distance as we can between ourselves and the subcutes, and dispose of the body."

"And then, I suppose, use the rifle on me." There was anger, but no alarm in her voice.

"You're the one with a habit of murder, not us. We have no intention of applying any of the current euphemisms to you—neither thanatize, euthanize, nor dispose of. Perhaps you won't believe it..."

"Let her disbelieve it then," Victoria interrupted harshly. "I assure you, if she tries any more tricks I won't hesitate to use the gun."

DR. TAVISTOCK laughed. "You mallies can't even adjust to yourselves, can you?"

"No," answered Cyrus. "And you may have trouble understanding that we don't particularly want to. An individual is an individual, not a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. 'A peece of the maine' certainly, but what two pieces of the main are adjusted to each other? They live in perpetual change while retaining their essential differences."

"Change is another word for adjustment."

"No it isn't. Society may change man, but man changes society. Someday we shall end the power of the Ama—not by beheading it, or assassinating its members, but simply by refusing to conform to its dictates. That's why we don't shoot you."

"Except in self-defense," amended Victoria.

The never-failing plea. "Shouldn't we be close to the Coast Highway by now?"

"Just around the next bend."

"We'll have to watch it. It's possible that the subcutes radioed for help."

Would it be smart to have everyone lie down, leaving only the driver visible? Then those looking for a car with four people... No, if they were really looking, such a simple stratagem would be unlikely to work; they would be at a further disadvantage for nothing. What speed was the station wagon capable of making? Nothing spectacular, he judged. They would have to depend on luck again, a dependence which worried him increasingly. Trusting to luck was the best way to end up unluckily.

**T**HE HIGHWAY at this point ran along a cliff edge; the ocean was flat far below. The sun was high. "Say, I'm hungry," complained Hank.

"It was thoughtful of Dr. Tavistock to provide lunch for us," said Victoria. "If I hadn't suggested it, we wouldn't have gone back for the food and gun and might have been left behind after all. The bag is next to the subcute, Hank. Reach it and we'll eat. Can I pass you a chicken wing, Doctor?"

Cyrus was puzzled; this needling was not like Victoria. Her resentment of the attempted desertion was understandable, but there was nothing to be gained by harping on it. Or was this symptomatic of her condition, like the outburst of baseless jealousy yesterday?

"This is good," mumbled Hank, through a full mouth. "I never knew doctors could cook."

You did adjust, despite lofty proclamations of nonconformity. Disdaining violence, you took advantage of its use, or threatened it yourself. You tried to save a child from the horrors of the medarchy; and in the process, you taught him to watch a man being killed in cold blood and enjoy a refreshing meal inches from his stiffening body. Since it was impossible to withdraw entirely from the world, every gesture of participation condemned you that much deeper to its patterns.

There was little traffic, and they sped along. The highway dipped, climbed again. How many miles...? No, he'd have to find it by the landmarks. With luck... That word again.

The greatest luck in the world couldn't make the trip to the airfield any less desperate.

**T**HE ROAD turned inland, through a great grove of redwoods. How close to the field did they dare go in the station wagon? Too far left them exposed to curious observation; too near gave the women a dangerous clue to where the airfield was. If that made any difference...

The highway became unexpectedly straight; they could see windswept miles ahead to a lump of land plumped into the sea, with a lighthouse topping it. "That's a police-car coming toward us," Victoria mentioned casually.

"Sheriff's car," corrected Hank. "Man, oh man."

"It's all right." Cyrus spoke with more confidence than he felt. "Just repeat the multiplication table. And Doctor..."

"Six times six is thirty-six," Victoria complied.

"Six times seven... Say, what *is* six times seven, Vicky? It's gone right out of my head."

"Yes?"

"...if you should suddenly get a notion to hail the police..."

"Forty-two. Six times eight..."

"Why should I?"

"I'd point out where your puncture entered. That would dispose of a heart-failure story."

"Blackmail is low, Tarn."

"Whereas kidnapping and murder are highly honorable," snapped Victoria. "Six times nine is fifty-four..."

The deputies' car passed without slowing, the jaws of its two occupants moving gently, their glance perfunctory. "Nothing to it," Hank boasted.

"Maybe, but you'd better brush up on your sixes," admonished his sister.

**C**YRUS concentrated his attention on the hills and arroyos, sloughed seaward by the mountains and cut or bridged by the highway. Each had its distinct characteristics, yet there was a familiar similarity about them. If one lived here, or walked along the road, the differences would stand out; in a speeding car, it was

hard to distinguish one from the other. It wasn't easy to correlate a map and a description—neither recently studied—with the actual, physical objects. If he had not been expecting someone to take them to the field, or if he were not so weary... That cut, over there? No; it was too high, too steep, too short...

What if his mind was too beset with fears, his memory too blurred with tiredness to recognize that particular succession of bridge, cut, ravine, cut... Wait? "You can slow down now," he said casually.

"What for?"

"We're leaving you here."

"But... Now, look here..."

He reached over and shut off the ignition, removing the key. "Sorry. This is as far as we want to go."

She brought the car to a halt on the shoulder of the highway. "Don't be a fool. You're sure to be picked up right away. If you come with me to the city, I'll see that all of you are well-hidden—and as soon as you put Whitelands out of the way, I'll get you charts, money... a safe way to leave the country, if you like."

HE OPENED the door. "Come on, Victoria. Don't let loose of that gun, but if a car comes along point the muzzle down, as though you were just getting out to bag a deer."

"Out of season," objected Hank.

"I'll get you those papers you want—for a retired physician."

"Thank you, Doctor. Some other time, perhaps."

"You fool, I see what's in your mind. You think you can escape by sea—there's an old fisherman's landing somewhere around here..."

"That's ridiculous," he exclaimed, trying to make it seem as though she had uncovered the secret.

Her triumphant look vanished. *Thinks we'll shoot her after all, to keep her mouth shut.* He closed the car door and turned away. "So long. Thanks for the ride and the chicken."

"But you can't leave me with the body. You promised to help dispose of it."

"I don't think so. I seem to recall saying we would take it along and that it would have to be gotten rid of. You can do a

better job than we. Goodbye, Doctor."

"Damn you," she said.

He waved his hand. "You and Hank start down toward the ocean," he directed in a low voice. They obeyed. He began walking along the highway back toward the south. The car door opened; he heard her shoes on the loose gravel of the shoulder.

"Are you going off with my keys?"

"Oh, I'm sorry." The keys were still in his hand. He offered them to her.

**S**HE MADE no move to take them. "You're making a stupid mistake. I can protect you, get you anything you want."

"I want freedom."

"You pompous ass!"

He nodded. "I've noticed the tendency myself. Afraid it's become a habit. Here are your keys."

"Freedom for what? Your mallie friends are so busy scurrying away from authority and knowledge that they can't stop for freedom to do, to be. You needn't tie yourself to a crew of paranoids, weigh yourself

down with a cripple who'll be a shrew and a hypochondriac before she's thirty. You have capabilities for something besides silly plots in dingy flats. You could be somebody of importance, someone..."

"Power is the last thing in the world I'm interested in, Doctor. I just want to live as I please, think as I like..."

"That's a child's dream!"

Between them, they could spin the argument out for hours. He turned and strode down the road, conscious that the rest had again driven the pain from his knee.

"Come back!"

He waved, and turned off the highway on the side opposite that taken by Victoria, hoping this would confuse her. The bank was overgrown with wild blackberries; the thorns raked his skin as he pushed through, and finally blocked his way entirely. Both dignity and caution forbade his peering back to see if she were still standing there; he waited, face turned away, feeling extraordinarily foolish.

At last he heard the starter's faint whirr; it sounded as though she were stamping

furiously on it; and the brief grinding of tires on the shoulder. He came back slowly; the highway was empty.

**T**HE WAY down to the beach was one he could not have negotiated earlier. Loose stones gave way under his feet; solid footholds crumbled; firmly anchored plants tore free when he grabbed them to steady himself. Whatever megalomania possessed the surgeon, Grace Tavistock was unquestionably a better hand with a sprain than Alex Caliggs had been.

The sand stretched impassively between two shoulders of spongy rock which plunged into the ocean. The rollers breaking so regularly on the beach were ferocious beyond the rocks, slamming themselves against the wall, spewing spray up and over them, sucking and hissing. Hank was capering up and down, dragging a long chain of stranded kelp behind him. Victoria was leaning, broodingly, on the rifle.

"Did you take a touching farewell of the lady?" she asked.

"Oh quite," he said lightly.

"She offered me half her kingdom, but I wasn't in the market for subdivisions."

"That's nice. I suppose she told you how foolish you were to tie yourself to a cripple."

He repressed his start and smoothed her hair. "Let me offer you half *my* kingdom," he said. "Or I'll take half yours, if it has a swimming pool, or even a bathtub in it."

"Well, she..."

"Hush. If I'm right, we're less than three miles from the airfield. The question is, ought we to go there now and try to find out if the subcuties have discovered it—as I'm reasonably sure they have—or wait till it's near plane time?"

She did not speak immediately, frowning. Finally she threw off the sullen look. "We could tell more in the daytime, couldn't we? I mean, at night they'd be hidden, and we wouldn't know anything till they pounced on the plane."

**H**E CONSIDERED. "I don't know. By going there in daylight we're exposing ourselves to the chance of being accidentally seen."

"We'll have to be careful."

"And the basic reason for going there has changed. It's no longer to escape—though we certainly will if we can. We have to warn the plane off if the subcutes are laying for it. That either means two trips, or staying there till night. Both additional risks."

Was it caution or simply tiredness speaking? She was right; they would have to go to the field right away. "Victoria, please listen to me: there's only one sensible thing to do. You and Hank stay here while I go ahead and find out."

"We've been through that argument before. We'll go with you." Her expression softened. "Don't you understand, Cyrus? I don't want to be safe when you're not."

"But... you..." He suddenly felt awkward about mentioning it.

"But that's just when a woman can't bear to be parted. Perhaps after the child is born I could sacrifice you to it. But not now."

"And Hank?"

"Hank will have to take his chances. It may not be fair—it isn't. But I'm a ruthless fe-

male and you're stuck with me."

He kissed her. "Hey," said Hank, who came up behind them, "no smooching on company time."

They walked along the hard-packed sand, then on the dry, soft beach above the highwater mark. A gully clove the palisade, its sides humped and warted, evidently a runoff for floodwaters in the rainy season. It had once breached what was now the highway; a large concrete culvert, high enough for them to walk through erect on the debris paving its floor, confined seasonal depredations.

THEY WERE not the first wayfarers to pause here; the curving walls were scrawled with legends at various heights and in varying hands. "J M & J/4.7.55" "30 days vag Stay away from baugh" "See Winnie in Seaside. Ten bucks. Worth it." "Heres a spesamin for you doc."

Beyond the culvert, the gully lost itself quickly in bare outcroppings and young oaks. The going was, in some ways, the roughest they had yet ex-

perienced. Whenever they struggled free of the brush, they were faced with the sheer face of exposed rocks, not unscalably high, but high enough to make climbing laborious.

"Golly, there must be a better way up than this."

"Maybe, Hank. But I think this is the least conspicuous."

"From the ground, sure. What about the air?"

Involuntarily Cyrus Tarn looked up. The sky was blue and bland and cloudless. "Not a thing," he said cheerfully, in spite of his leg.

"You're looking. I'm listening."

"I don't hear anything. Do you, Victoria?"

"No. . . . Wait. I don't know."

"Aw, just open your ears," urged Hank scornfully.

They stood still. Faintly—or was it an illusion?—he heard the syncopated beat of an unmuffled motor. Some car on the highway?

"There she is!" Hank pointed triumphantly.

Far to the east, so close to the hilltops that it seemed to be gliding down them rather

than flying over them, was a helicopter.

## VIII

CYRUS muttered, "It doesn't make sense."

"Why doesn't it? You've been expecting them to bring in copters all along."

"We're not so important as the plane. If the copter is out to spot us, they're giving away the fact that they know where the airfield is."

"There's no one but us to warn the plane. If they can get us first, they'll be that much more certain of getting it."

*Give up, thought Cyrus. The plane is doomed—there's nothing to be gained by this futile attempt.* "We'll have to try," he said. "We'll just have to avoid being seen."

Standing motionless, they watched the copter slide through the air toward them, its vanes revolving so slowly that it seemed impossible they could keep the awkward body in the air. It veered northward, hovering almost out of sight, then drifted idly, till it was



almost overhead. "Don't move, at all."

The copter circled, flew seaward and back, hovered again above the treetops; then, as though finally satisfied, it quickened its pace and left.

"I wonder how long it'll be before there's another one along. Or two, or three."

They climbed another rock-face and found themselves on the grassy plateau again. Only here, instead of sloping, it was almost level; the hillocks and hollows were at a minimum. He guessed that farther along it was perfectly flat, made so either by nature or design, the one spot for miles suitable for a landing strip.

**K**EEPING close to the cover of the trees and bushes, their eyes constantly roving the sky for the returning copter, they moved steadily northward, detouring where the irregular boundaries of the grassland yielded to the encroaching shrubs. Gloomily, Cyrus calculated that they were at least doubling the length they had to travel; doubling or tripling. With his knee acting up again this was,

to put it mildly, inconvenient.

They must have been so intent on scanning the sky that they paid less than the mandatory attention to things lower down and closer at hand. So it happened that just as Cyrus was saying, "This must be the field," Hank, who had grown impatient of their slow progress and run ahead, inadvertently emerged into the open. They heard a woman's voice exclaim pleasantly, "Why, hello my dear. What brings you out here?"

He squinted through the brush. Hank was standing a few feet ahead of him, confusion and indecision apparent in the set of his shoulders and the nervous scuffling of his foot. Beyond him were three obvious picnickers: a woman, sweetfaced and whitehaired, plaidskirted, sitting on her ankles; a girl no older than Victoria; and a man with wide shoulders, heavy muscles bulging his thin shirt, standing, whose face showed traces of resemblance to the woman on the ground.

"Lost, son?" asked the man pleasantly.

"What difference does it make?" inquired the girl.

"Why, Edith, what a thing to say," exclaimed the woman. "If the child is lost, he's suffering. And if he's suffering we must help him."

"I'm not lost," said Hank. "Goodbye. Got to go now."

**H**E STARTED back; the big man followed with a swift, easy stride. "Careful, son. You could easy..."

Then he was face-to-face with them; their startled looks reflected. "Uh," said Cyrus.

The man recovered quickly. "You folks must be with the boy. Come on over—we're just about to have a bite to eat." He took hold of Hank's arm. The boy tried to pull away, but it was clearly impossible.

"No thanks," said Victoria. "We can't stop. We must be on our way."

The man made no move to relinquish Hank. The woman rose to her feet; both she and the girl came closer. "Been hunting?" The man motioned toward the rifle. "It's closed season, you know."

"Besides, dear," said the woman, "don't you think it's

cruel to kill animals? They're fellow-creatures, after all."

Cyrus felt some of his tension go. These were clearly no subcuties or Medical Police. "Just brought the gun along against mountain lions," he explained. "They've been seen around here."

"Oh, but they're fellow-creatures too," expostulated the woman, backing away a little.

The man reached for the rifle with an easy sweep and took it from Victoria's startled grasp. "No use making Mother unhappy," he explained with a disarming smile.

"But... Give that back to me!"

**H**E SHOOK his head. "No animal would come within a hundred yards of so many humans. You won't need it." He still had his grip on Hank; as he followed his mother and the girl, the boy was involuntarily pulled along.

"Wait a minute," began Cyrus.

The woman paid no heed. "I've never been able to understand what makes men go hunting or fishing. It isn't as

if we had to take life in order to live. Why, the land is teeming with food. Even weeds are good and nourishing, you know."

It was impossible to see anything sinister in her cosy chatter; the snatching of the fire-arm was neither attack nor affront, merely an awkward assertion of its uselessness. "Yes Ma'am," agreed Cyrus. "That's very interesting. But we have to be getting along."

"Hurry, hurry," said the man, shaking his head. "Everybody's in a hurry. What does it get you?"

"Let go of me," said Hank.

"Yes, please let my brother go and let me have our gun."

**CYRUS MOVED** forward. He could not hope to best the big man in any test of strength, but he was sure it would not come to that: there was no animus visible. He could not mean to hold the boy against his will.

"Why," exclaimed the mother, "the poor man is limping. You must be in pain."

"Not much," said Cyrus. "Just a little sprain, and it was

bound up only a few hours ago."

"Compromise," muttered the man, shaking his head. "Bandaging and poulticing, medicating and doping. Cutting off and grafting on. Compromise, compromise."

"How right you are, Edward. Just like your poor, dear father."

"What you need is strength," said the man. "A couple of these sandwiches of Mother's, and you'll feel like new."

"Do you really think so, dear?" asked his mother. "Oh, I do hope so. Of course they're very nutritious. Pure, stone-ground wholewheat bread, filled with raw peanut butter and soybean jelly, fortified with molasses, powdered milk and brewersyeast. We never eat animal food."

"Mother Jones, you know that people—most people—don't..."

"Aw, Edith," protested the man, "don't argue with Mother."

"It's all right, Edward. I know that Edith is not really humane at heart yet. I only hope she'll grow into it from

seeing your example. Oh, I fervently hope so."

"We have friends who are vegetarians," remarked Cyrus. "I'm sure the sandwiches are delicious. It's just that we haven't time."

"I'm going to build a fire," announced Edward. "We'll have some coffee. We're not food faddists—we don't eat animal food, to avoid causing pain." Still holding Hank, he gathered up a handful of fallen twigs. Edith, looking sulky, brought him an armful of branches. Not unskillfully, he started the fire.

CYRUS LOOKED apprehensively at the thin blue smoke. The copter—but then, the copter could not help spotting the whole group. But subcutaneous feet would see or smell the smoke. If the man would let go of Hank, he would willingly resign the rifle.

"We understand," explained Victoria. "We're not refusing your sandwiches because we don't think they'll taste good. But we must hurry. . ."

"You are limping too, dear," cried the mother. "How awful!"

"It isn't awful at all. I mean, I hardly limp at all, except when I'm very tired. And even then it doesn't hurt."

The glances of Cyrus and Victoria met. These people were clearly nuts of some kind; to cross them would make new, unnecessary enemies. Nor could they do anything while Hank was captive, despite the danger of the fire advertising their presence. Victoria sank easily to the ground. At the same moment, Edward released Hank's arm. "That's better. Do have a sandwich."

They all took one and Edward put the coffee pot on the fire. Cyrus bit dubiously into the bread, found to his surprise that it was quite palatable. He noticed that Edith made a face over hers, put it down half-eaten. He also saw that the action didn't escape the attention of Edward's mother.

"I do hate waiting," she said plaintively. "I think putting things off is simply terrible."

"Oh, don't be a fanatic," urged Edith. "We'll all feel better after a cup of coffee."

"I don't think you ought to talk to Mother that way, Edee."

"Edward, I don't mind, really I don't. I know she doesn't understand. But I'm so worried about these people..."

"About *us*?" asked Victoria.

"Yes, dear. You may belittle that limp, but I noticed it. Let me see it." Deftly she took hold of Victoria's foot, gently prodded the slightly enlarged ankle. "Just as I thought—it's been broken and didn't heal well."

"That was a long time ago. It hasn't bothered me for years."

**E**DWARD SUDDENLY became articulate. "How do you know? How can you judge what emotional and psychological pain it has caused you? How can you measure the constant hurt of knowing yourself inferior to everyone around you, or the growing warp of being unable to walk or run naturally? To be unlike is to have an open wound—you may grow accustomed to it but it still bleeds, still saps your vitality. I understand how you think you've recovered: the surface pain is gone. The brain has defensive powers which keep us from seeing our own

problems objectively. But remember yourself as you were before—don't you admit there's a difference?"

"Of course there's a difference. I learned to appreciate life, to love it better because of what I suffered, physically and psychologically, from this ankle. I've not been made inferior by it or warped. It taught me a lot and I think it made me stronger, more capable, better."

"You don't understand. I'm sorry to say, Patients never seem to."

"I have a hunch these aren't Patients," said Edith. "Where are their charts?"

"That's a point," agreed Edward, pouring out the coffee into enamelware cups and handing them politely around. "Where are your charts?"

Cyrus Tarn rose. "This has been a most interesting conversation. I'm sorry we can't continue it. We're going now."

Almost lazily Edward took a pistol from his pocket. "Sit down, Mister," he ordered softly.

"Why are you tormenting us?" asked Victoria.

EDWARD'S mother looked shocked. "He wouldn't torment anything, not anything. When he was just a little boy he used to hide the flyspray. You don't understand. Our lives are dedicated to helping people. To eliminating all suffering."

"Vicky!" exclaimed Hank. "These people are..."

"Yes, dear? Are what?"

"What difference does it make what people are called?" asked Edward.

"None, son. You're quite right. Now that we've had our coffee, let's not postpone things any longer. It isn't kind."

"What kindness do you propose to do us at gun's point?" inquired Cyrus.

"About you we have no doubt, poor man. You must be helped."

"...Mercifuls," said Hank. The word fell heavily.

"Ah," said Edward regretfully. "Names. Tags. Labels."

"Do you deny it?" asked Victoria.

"They're m a l l i e s," said Edith. "They cling to pain."

"A living dog is better than a dead lion," quoted Cyrus desperately.

"A cynical remark, made by a cynic," said the woman.

EDWARD sighed. "They don't understand. They have no idea what it means to devote your life to eliminating pain. We discipline ourselves. We don't drink: it might cloud our judgement. We don't smoke: it might dull our senses. We don't dance or go to entertainments: there is no place in our lives for frivolity. We are vegetarians, we mortify the flesh, we risk our lives constantly to help others. And what is our reward? Misunderstanding, hatred, slander. We're hunted by subcuties and orderlies—we're subjected to shock treatments, lobotomies or psychotherapy if we're caught."

"It hardly seems worth the effort," murmured Cyrus.

"Oh, but it is, you poor man," said the woman. "All self-sacrifice is. That's why we'll risk our lives to help you."

"Why bother with us?" asked Victoria. "We aren't worthy."

"Don't belittle yourselves," said Edith.

"Don't be flippant," Edward admonished sternly. "Not a sparrow falls..."

"I really don't know how you can think of marrying her, Edward," his mother complained. "I've told you and told you. She's not dedicated. She's playing—the way such people have always played. They used to become fascists or communists. Now they pretend to be humanitarians, to get a—a *thrill* out of an act of mercy or two. Then one day they have a headache and meekly revert to being Patients. You can't trust her, Edward dear."

"What a sweeping diagnosis," sneered Edith. "One would think from listening that you yourself understood something besides kill, kill, kill."

**H**ANK SUDDENLY broke down. "Don't kill us. We haven't done anything. Please don't kill us."

"They won't," Victoria proclaimed fiercely, taking him in her arms. "Don't worry, Hank."

"We wouldn't hurt you for anything," the woman assured him earnestly. "Our whole lives

are spent saving people from pain."

"It says here," gibed Edith.

"Knock it off, will you?" urged Edward.

"We'll be glad to arbitrate your differences if we live long enough," suggested Cyrus.

Edward smiled agreeably. "It's a problem, you know. Edith and I are thinking of getting married. Mother is afraid she'll be so miserable she'll have to be helped out."

"You're all I have left, dear," his mother said sadly.

"Your own fault," snapped Edith. "Being merciful to your own husband."

Edward looked shocked. "Edith! You know there was every reason."

"'Reason', 'mercy'," cried Victoria. "You sound like an old-time judge or executioner. How can you call murder anything but murder?"

"Murder," said Edward contemptuously. "After all the care and risks we take, you call mercy murder. In the old days, right after the war we used to shoot those in pain because the doctors refused to put them out of their misery, kept them

alive—sometimes for years—just to demonstrate their own scientific skill. Then euthanasia was legalized, and no matter what they say, it was partly because we had shown the humane way.”

**E**DWARD'S face took a cast of dedication. “At the same time we gave up shooting—except where there was no choice, as there would be if you tried to get away right now—because it wasn't always really instantaneous. We took to using finely honed razors across the juglar, but this often caused undue anxiety, if only for an instant. We tried different hypodermics— I suppose you know what happens to anyone but a physician or nurse caught with a hypodermic needle—at great risk to ourselves. We finally settled on a mixture of curare and resperine. It's a glorious way to end all suffering. You literally relax out of life, feeling neither pain nor apprehension. Yet. . .do we get any appreciation for all the trouble we go to, for all the chances we take, the need to cover our actions or disguise our instruments?”

Without shifting the pistol from his right hand, he took a small black tube—some sort of pen, to the cursory glance—from his pocket with his left.

“But we don't want your mercy,” remonstrated Cyrus.

“Neither did her husband,” commented Edith. “That didn't stop her.”

“That's a lie,” said the woman calmly. “He begged for mercy.”

“I don't know how you can talk that way to Mother. You know her life has been devoted.”

“When I was a girl,” said the woman, “we had race horses. My family hadn't learned to give up worldly things. Our special favorite was a black stallion named Meteorite. One day he broke his leg. He was heavily insured. The insurance company paid off, but demanded Meteorite—alive. They splinted the poor, suffering beast's leg, and made their money back in stud fees. If you could have seen that wonderful animal who had been so happy; so spirited, now hobbling wretchedly around, kept alive only for mercenary purposes, I'm sure your heart



would have melted. Just as mine did."

"Sure. That's no reason to kill people," objected Hank.

**S**HE WENT on, as though there had been no interruption. "Then my mother developed cancer. This was before pressure by Mercifuls—believe me, Patients and doctors who hate us so, owe us a good deal—made euthanasia legal. Mother lived for three years; and the last six months the strongest narcotics failed to deaden her pain. She screamed steadily for the last week of her life. I decided then if I ever had a chance to shorten a living creature's misery I'd do it."

"How dared you take such power to yourself?" demanded Victoria.

"I'm a humble instrument," she replied simply.

"But your own husband," marveled Victoria. "How could you?"

"What'd he have?" inquired Hank, suddenly recovering. "A splinter?"

The woman's face was nobly sad. "No, my boy. Neither a splinter nor anything else to joke about. He was taken by

subcuties, soon after helping one of them—the poor fellow had been shot by a mallee, and was in terrible agony—and he was subjected to treatment. When they got through with him, he was completely changed. Not himself any longer.

"I'd never been suspected of any non-conformity—people with my background are invariably Patients—so he was returned to my custody as a Post. I remembered him as he had been: so aware, so deeply concerned with everything that went on, so ready to dare anything for the right. Now he sat all day, staring at his hands, or if I asked him to do something he went at it mechanically, unquestioningly, unthinkingly, until I told him to stop. He who was always ready to defy any power, no matter how great, was now docile and obedient. He wasn't even a caricature of himself any longer—just a familiar body without a suggestion of the old spirit. It was mercy, certainly, to help him slip away. I knew what he wanted, and I did it."

"But..." Vicky stopped, shaking her head.

CYRUS SAID, "Don't you see you're really not doing anything to oppose the Ama this way? You're accepting their action and then palliating it, instead of removing the cause."

"We're removing pain," insisted Edward.

"Believe me," Cyrus said, "I'm what I've always been and I don't want to be helped to slip away."

"Nor m-me," stammered Hank. "My sis-sister neither."

Edward addressed himself to Cyrus. "There's no doubt about you. You need help. I don't know about the others."

"There's nothing wrong with the boy," said Edith. "He may be obnoxious, but I don't suppose it hurts him. Besides, what will become of him if both the others are helped?"

"We must steel ourselves to be kind to him also." The woman's eyes had a withdrawn, hazy look. "Think how unhappy he'd be in an orphanage. They can call them Integrating Homes all they want, but they're still orphan asylums."

"You're a monster," cried Victoria.

"I'm not sure you're right,

Mother." Edward pinched his lower lip doubtfully. "I'd agree about the girl if it weren't for the boy, and I can't see helping him. And if we don't take compassion on him I don't know that we can be merciful to her."

"There can be no exceptions, Edward. It's our duty. If we begin making fine distinctions, saying we'll act only when misery reaches a particular point, or when pain is this sharp or unhappiness that bad, we are shirking our duty. We have no choice—we must give mercy to all three of these poor creatures."

"You can count me out," declared Edith. "There's a limit."

MOTHER Jones turned to her son. "You see, Edward dear? Remember what I've told you? She's unwilling to act. She sets her own whims above the inescapable humane necessity. It's too easy an evasion—these half-hearted people are always ready to make it."

"I'm not a fanatic," said Edith obstinately. "Neither is Edward, down underneath."

"Don't set yourself up

against Mother, Edee. She's much wiser than we are."

Cyrus looked longingly at the rifle, firmly edged under Edward's massive rump. Force? Violence? He would not have hesitated a split second.

"Thank you, my son." She turned earnestly to Victoria. "Surely you can see it's the only right thing to do. For the child's sake."

"You're a monster," Victoria repeated.

The woman shook her head. "If I were helpless or suffering I'd bless the one with courage to help me."

Cyrus stood up. As soon as Edward made a move, he would throw himself at him; this time. Hank and Victoria would have to obey his injunction to escape. The old woman couldn't stop them—he was reasonably sure the wavering Edith would make no more than a half-hearted try. Meanwhile...

"It's only fair to warn you," he said, making his voice as firm as he could, "that there are subcuties close behind us."

"We're not Patients," said Edith. "They won't bother us."

"We're not, either. They

want us, and they're going to be very interested in anyone who interferes with their getting us. Alive or dead."

EDWARD looked from Cyrus to Mother Jones. "I wish we'd never run into you three. Putting us in a difficult position like this."

"He's bluffing," said the mother unhappily. "Unfortunately people cling to their misery at all costs. If subcuties are really following you, they would have seen the smoke of the fire and been here by now."

"They will be, any moment," affirmed Victoria. "You must have heard on the radio of the hunt being made for Cyrus Tarn and the two other mallies he helped escape."

"So you're Tarn," said Edith, looking at him with new interest. "How many subcuties have you killed?"

"It doesn't matter. Edward!"

Edward shook his head, but at the same time fumbled with the pencil-like weapon. "Mother..."

"Duty is duty. Hurry!"

Cyrus was almost in his spring, calculating to hit Ed-

ward's shoulders with his own, knock him backward, pin him to the ground. He took a full breath. Then he heard the rising sound of a motor.

"He wasn't bluffing after all," said Edith.

"It may not be anything. There's still time. Hurry, Edward."

"Let's get out of here," cried Edith. "I want no part of this."

"We have a duty. We've got to help these poor souls."

"If the subcutes take you, you'll never be able to help anyone again. Remember what they did to your husband," Victoria urged. "Balance us three against hundreds in the future."

"She's trying to fool us Edward. Quickly!"

"They'll catch us," screamed Edith. "They'll catch us and hurt us. It doesn't make any difference to you—your life's practically over anyway. But Edward and I could be happy. Please, Edward." She began to cry.

"Mother, it's a long way to the car. We'll be cut off. We won't have a chance."

**T**HE MOTOR—it could not be anything but a copter—was closer. Much closer.

"Are you going to think only of self? It isn't like you to be so callus, Edward."

"But I'm not sure about the boy. And why should I risk everything for Tarn?"

"Give it to me. I'll do it myself!"

"Mother, wait." He rose, holding the weapon above his head. His mother reached for it, pulling futilely at his arm. He stumbled, caught his balance, but in doing so kicked the fire, scattering the blazing embers over the dried grass. It caught, with a quick, widening crackle. Cyrus lunged for the rifle, clasped it gratefully in his hands.

The fire spread rapidly in an almost perfect circle. "Let's get out," shrieked Edith. "We'll be cut off."

Cyrus pointed the rifle at the woman. "Yes, I think you'd better go."

She looked shocked. "Surely you wouldn't shoot me?"

"I'm pretty sure I would if I have to."

"But that would be murder."

"Yes."

"But I'm not in pain. You have no reason..."

"Edward, let her stay if she wants to and get killed. I'm going." She began walking rapidly away.

Edward hesitated only a few seconds. "Mother, she's right this time. Please come."

"Edward..."

"No, Mother. I'm going. And you can't help them without me. Come on." Not too resolutely he followed Edith.

The woman looked compassionately at Cyrus. "It's such a terrible mistake," she muttered. "It's not right to leave you suffering like this." She followed her son, calling brokenly, "Oh, Edward, come back and do your duty."

**T**HE FIRE in the grass had reached the bordering brush. A gnarled bush expanded in blazing flame topped with black sooty smoke. Hank said, "Are they really gone? Aren't they going to kill us?"

"Oh Hank, darling, darling! Oh no: they've gone, thank God." She held him close. Cyrus, still clutching the rifle, put his arm around both.

The fire, erratic, had left clumps of untouched brush behind. Beyond them its progress was marked by a widening ring of smoke. Her trembling gradually quieted. "The subcuties!"

"If they're really close behind us, they're stopped by the fire. We're safe till they get it out."

"Are we?" asked Hank. "What about the copter? It's come back."

So it had, the sound of its motor obscured by the noise of the fire. Now it hovered ominously almost overhead. They were completely exposed, completely vulnerable.

## IX

**V**ICTORIA asked, "Is—is there any chance it's just here to spot the fire?"

Cyrus Tarn shook his head. "Too quick. I'm afraid there's no way out."

The machine circled, came lower. "Let's run!" urged Hank.

"Run into the fire? Better to wait, I think. Maybe if there aren't too many of them..." H gestured with the rifle.

"Cyrus! You wouldn't!"

"I don't know. I was certainly ready—I think—to kill those Mercifuls."

"They were going to murder Hank."

"The subcutes will murder his mind. Besides, we were all ready enough to take advantage of the Tavistock woman's bit of murder. I even helped her."

"That was different. Acting on the spur of the moment. This would be in cold blood."

"You yourself were talking about self-defense a few hours ago."

The copter made a last circle and came daintily to rest within yards. The door opened.

"Get behind me," Cyrus commanded. He would order them back in. If they refused. . . He wasn't sure.

No one came out of the opened door. Instead, a face appeared, a familiar face. "Hiya, folks? Want a ride?"

"Dr. Yester!"

Cyrus Tarn gripped the rifle hard. "Stuart, get your subcutes and your copter out of here if you want to go on living."

"Don't be a jackass. Climb up in and let's get going."

"No thanks. *You* get going."

"Listen: the cutes are all waiting outside the fire, ready to pounce. You can't get away from them. I've been coming here ever since I got word they jumped you in Secarros."

CYRUS' FACE hardened. "They jumped us because you told them where we were. Now you've come to finish the job. Don't get out. I'll shoot. Believe me."

"Vicky." Yester's freckled face tightened into unaccustomedly sober lines as he appealed to the girl. "*You* must know I didn't give you away. Why should I? Even if you don't believe me, let's get out now and argue later."

"Come out, you and your subcutes, and leave the plane to be taken quietly when it lands."

"It won't land. It's been warned off. And I have no subcutes here. Only Dr. Calliggs."

"Alex!" exclaimed Victoria. "What's he doing with you?"

"Acting a little morose at the moment—he's been quite cramped in here. I didn't think

either of us should get out after looking the field over earlier. Security and all that, you know."

"I meant, why is he with you?"

"Oh. Big meeting. You're expected—come as you are. Didn't want him to miss it, of course, so I picked him up. Satisfied?"

Cyrus pondered. The meeting might be invention. Still, he had the gun, and the position here was hopeless; it could hardly be worse elsewhere. "Move back from the controls. I'm coming in to make sure the cabin isn't full of cutes."

"You'd be punctured by now if it was." But Yester's face obediently vanished. Cyrus climbed up awkwardly, finger on trigger, only too conscious that the rifle pointed skyward, waiting to be seized and disarmed. He was sure that he was not acting with any great intelligence.

**T**HE SMALL cabin was dim.

Alex rasped, "I want to go on record that this is all against my judgement, having all of us in one spot, particularly in something so vulnerable as a

copter. If Dr. Yester were deliberately offering a tempting package to the subcutes he couldn't have done better."

So Alex's suspicions of Yester hadn't been lulled. "Ok, Alex." Apparently there was no one else in the cabin, but Cyrus had to make sure. Someone might be pointing a revolver at Alex. "Got a flashlight?"

"Here," offered Yester.

"Turn it on the cabin. Down low. In the corners."

"There you are. Satisfied?"

"No." He motioned Victoria and Hank to climb in. "We'll come with you, but I've still got the rifle."

"Thanks for the warning. Nothing like friendly gratitude, I always say."

"We'll be grateful when we know why and to whom."

"It's a deal," said Yester cheerfully. "All right, here we go. You may find it somewhat rocky—this is only my fourth time running one of these things. Alex could do a better job, but I wanted the fun."

"Boy! Doctor Yester, would you let me try?"

"No, Henry," said Cyrus. "Even if he would, I wouldn't."

"Aw, I never get to do *any*-thing."

**T**HE COPTER lifted, tilted, righted itself, rose higher. The perimeter of the fire became visible, burning raggedly, already smoldering out in patches where the vegetation was sparse. On one fairly wide front, however, it was still vigorous enough to be impassable to the two subcutes who stood there, staring upward. The copter had not yet gained so much altitude that their faces had lost definition. There was the faintest of resemblances between them: wide jaws, large necks, thin mouths.

One half-drew a revolver; the other laid a restraining hand on his arm. Why didn't they shoot? Because they didn't know he was in the copter? Or because they did, assured he was safely captive?

Stuart Yester grinned over his shoulder. "No use letting them know our course. Give them a little puzzle to work on." The copter flew south-east, staggering each time it rose to clear a tier of hills or veer between them.

"Radar!"

Yester nodded. "It's a chance. The only alternative would be flying low over the water. We'd avoid radar, but we'd be as highly visible as a fly on a bald head."

The answer fitted innocence. (*If not Yester, who?*) It fitted equally the theory they were being flown into the arms of the medarchy. Only... "It seems hardly worth it," Cyrus said aloud.

"What?"

"All this trouble and expense for three unimportant mallies."

"Mallies are increasingly important. After all, the Healthfare State has outgrown its experimental stage." Yester changed course.

"Where are you going?" There was alarm in Victoria's voice.

**D**R. YESTER looked at her. "Think I ought to mention it? Somebody gave away our using Galentry as a hideout. What a nice bit of information the location of this meeting would be."

"Do you think Cyrus or I—or perhaps Hank—brought the



subcutes to Secarros?"

"Odder things have happened, my queen-empress. Si could be an agent provocateur, you might have sold out, and Hank-size children have been worked on before."

"Pat but unconvincing," said Victoria. "Please stop swinging this machine around. I don't want to be airsick."

"Do my amateur's best," he promised.

"What about the medarchy's experimental stage?"

"Well, sociology isn't my science, nor political economy. If they were, I'd hesitate to generalize anyway. So I won't say that there are two times when a set-up like the Health-fare State puts an extra premium on conformity, with all the accompanying emphasis on informers and secret police: when it's getting established, and when it feels it's in danger of falling apart."

"If the medarohy's in danger of falling apart," broke in Alex, animated for the first time, "then I'm a Buddhist-vegetarian-antivivisectionist mystic screwball like the other psychos who are against it."

"But you *are* against it?"

Alex looked scornful. "As I explained to Vicky and Cyrus, the Ama hit me in the pocket-book. That's reason in any language. Reason enough to work with a bunch of eighteen carat psychos, if they represent the only opposition. And a pretty poor one, if you ask me. By the way, Doctor, I'm not sure I ever understood exactly what *you* have against the Ama."

YESTER pondered for a moment. "Not too sure myself, Doctor. Nothing nice and neat like economic determinism. The Ama never did me out of a nickel as far back as I can remember. Just say I have too much respect for the medical profession to feel it ought to have any authority beyond what it earns in the exercise of its good offices. I suppose if we had a literate state—a republic of letters—there would be writers who objected to forcing everyone to read their novels, or carry around test papers to prove they understood the meaning of their short stories, or suffer frequent examinations by official literary critics to determine whether

they knew what happened on June Sixteenth, 1904."

"Doctor, you're an idealist. The trouble with idealists is that they sometimes change their ideals—yesterday's fetish becomes tomorrow's abomination. For my part, give me the man whose actions are motivated by self-interest. He's more reliable—or at least more predictable."

"We're over the top of the mountain," exclaimed Hank. "I can see everything for miles and miles. Man, I'd like to have one of these things for my own!"

"Selfish interests change too, Doctor. The sufferer whose sole interest today is the removal of a malignant growth, may find tomorrow that there's nothing more important than bilking the surgeon who took it out."

Alex turned away from the conversation. "How's the knee?"

"You bound it too tightly. A lady who thinks euthanasia is the only sovereign remedy did a more comfortable job. Perhaps you know her—a Dr. Tavistock?"

ALEX NODDED. "I know her by sight. Grace Tavistock. Thoracic surgery. Your knee would probably have been more comfortable by that time with no bandage at all. The one I put on was right for the condition it was in."

"Wasn't that the hen who used to be married to old Rafe Tree?" asked Yester. "'The nurses' delight,' they used to call him twenty-five years ago. Evidently he didn't delight her, or else they disagreed on a diagnosis. I heard she nicked him for a big hunk of property west of Secarros. What's this about her enthusiasm for the happy despatch?"

Cyrus gave them an edited account of their experience, relating fully her attitude toward the Ama and her hints of a group with similar ideas.

Alex, who had evidently been brooding over the slight to his skill with sprains, showed excitement. "Why, it's a natural! These people really mean business—they're not just a bunch of conversationalists. If we were working with them, we might get some results."

"It depends on what results you want," said Victoria. "If

it's a matter of killing, we might just as well enlist Mercifuls. Like the three who were going to put us out of our misery just before you came."

"Mercifuls operating around here? They're getting bolder and bolder. The Ama isn't what it used to be."

"It never was," said Alex bitterly. "The medarchy can't do anything about a bunch of assassins. They're too busy poking their noses into things that don't concern them."

**F**RANK SAID, "They were <sup>the</sup> really going to kill us too. They were much creepier than the lady doctor. She talked tough, but they pretended to be real nice."

"You see?" contended Yester. "More Mercifuls every day. Medical royalists like this Tavistock suddenly busy as a jar full of diphtheria culture. Even mallies whisk around the country in copters these days."

"Yes" said Victoria. "Only the Patients are happy and harmless."

The copter dipped lower until it was barely clearing the tops of liveoaks. They skimmed over several fields. "Going to

put her down," Yester announced. "Sorry if I shake you up a little."

Cyrus started, realized he had been dozing. For how long? He gripped the rifle. "Remember," he warned, "I'll shoot if I have to."

The copter circled, bumped, twisted, bumped again, stopped. "Made it. All right, pile out—we've got to put this thing under cover before it's spotted. Si. if you must have that cannon ready to defend your honor, I wish you'd turn it over to Vicky. We need all hands to get this windmill moved."

"You'll have to work a little harder or take longer, then. Someone tipped off the subcutes before. This time I'm prepared."

"Someone did. I think we'll find out who in the next few hours. Very well—come on, the rest of you."

Cyrus was the last to get down. They were at one end of a large pasture. At the other end, a group of horses crowded against the fence in shock. Close by the copter was a huge barn partly remodeled into a hangar; a piper cub

stood nonchalantly before it. Beyond the pasture was a brown ranchhouse; two men were walking from it.

**SUBCUTES?** There was something familiar about them even at this distance. A trick of the failing light. Cyrus Tarn watched their progress while still keeping track of the others pushing the copter into the hangar. Led by Yester, they moved the piper cub back to mask it. Was all this elaborate pretense? He swung the rifle to cover the approaching men. The tall one, his over-long white hair ruffling slightly in the breeze, the creases of age cross-hatched over a weather-toughened skin was—yes, certainly—John Rald. And the other looked like Hammerfield.

“Cyrus! That’s John over there. John, oh John!”

Tarn lowered the rifle. Rald was more than unimpeachable—Cyrus would as soon have suspected himself. And he had worked with Eugene Hammerfield often enough to believe him absolutely trustworthy.

“Silas Tennick, what are you doing with that weapon of destruction? Vicky, darling, tell him to put that thing away before I spank him with it. Hank, old man how are you? And you, Stu Alex?” He picked Victoria up by her elbows, easily, and kissed her. “Silas, what’s this about being roused out in the middle of the night by subcutes?”

“They came in shooting, but Vicky and Si were too fast for them. I had to run in my bare feet. Si hurt his knee. But we got away.”

**HAMMERFIELD**, tubby and soft-cheeked, took off his spectacles and put them back on. “Concise reporting. If you’re going to fill in the details, I suggest you save it. Everyone else will want to know what happened and there’s no use going over it twice.”

“Who’s everyone?” Cyrus demanded, suspicious again.

“All the delegated nuts from Northern California,” John Rald informed him cheerfully. “Two good sisters from the Ursuline Convent. Two osteo-

paths, a chiropractor—at least he was there the last time I looked—and a fine assortment of poor misguided heretics, not to mention a young man who has discovered a loophole in the second law of thermodynamics, and a young woman who is convinced that her future lies in bed. Any bed.”

“Business as usual,” agreed Cyrus.

“It certainly is,” said Alex. “And I can think of nothing more pointless than to be dragged away from a few day’s rest and toted around in a copter like a ferris wheel, in order not to miss a precious moment of three or four hour’s bleat and blatt.”

The other three came up: Mendenall, wanted for treatment; Clonter, a faith-healer;

and Hissip, whom Cyrus already knew slightly, a militant vegetarian, active against the medarchy because of its use of animal matter in medical preparations. Feeling increasingly sheepish about having a fire-arm in a world suddenly returned to the normal pattern of talking about the horrors of Ama tyranny (but experiencing no more of them than the prospect of mandatory inoculation), a world where subcuties didn’t shoot to kill or pursue their quarry with scientific devices of the chase, Cyrus felt as though the gun had swollen to many times normal size. Still, somewhere in the heterogeneous opposition, someone had relayed information to the orderlies. He grasped the rifle again.

[to be concluded]

Cyrus, Virginia, and Hank are momentarily safe, but how safe are they? Among this group is the traitor who informed on them. Is this meeting of the underground another trap?

You can’t afford to miss the concluding chapters of this story, which will appear in the May issue of *Science Fiction Stories*, on sale at all stands March 1st. Reserve your

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# CADUCEUS WILD

Last  
of  
Four  
Parts



by Ward Moore & Robert Bradford

*Like many revolutionary groups in the past, the Mallie Underground believed that freedom for the individual could only come when everyone was free. The subtle tyranny they opposed, the Medarchy, was concealed behind its sincerely-believed protest that it prescribed for the people's good. And there was no point in substituting one form of compulsory treatment for another. But Cyrus, Victoria, and Hank had been betrayed by a fellow Mallie, and the Underground had to decide what should be done to the traitor!*

## Synopsis

**D**R. RAPHAEL TREE was neither a mad scientist nor a megalomaniac. "You don't allow children to play with live bombs, or neurotics to indulge delusions. We have seen what happened when they were so allowed. If we had taken over earlier, we would certainly have averted the third world war—and perhaps some of those that went before."

In this day, when the medarchy was supreme, such a statement almost sounded believable. CYRUS TARN could not deny that certain benefits had come from the rule of caduceus, where every citizen had to report to his doctor for a health check-up regularly, and where the doctors' decisions were the law. People weren't oppressed in the old-fashioned way; they had freedom of speech, of the press, of vote on political matters, and of worship—except where these infringed on public health. What constituted public health was, of course, determined by Ama.

TARN (born Tennick) sat at the table with Dr. Tree and CHRIS MALLUP, who worked for Tree, drinking whiskey and wondered how much they knew or suspected about him and about his companions. Ten-year-old HEN-

RY CARLING was being passed off as Tarn's grandson; the boy's sister, VICTORIA CARLING, was still supposed to be his sister—only her name was now Carrie Goodspeed.

"Man brings suffering on himself," stated Dr. Tree. "He insists on it, cherishes it, refuses to be parted from it. And the only thing he learns is that suffering never gets him anything but suffering. We've given the people the utopia so long dreamed-of: health, happiness, security, freedom from war. Some of them still aren't satisfied. The ones who would never be satisfied."

He was referring, of course, to the "mallies"—the "mal-adjusted", those who refused to adjust themselves to the sane and sanitary regimen of the medarchy. Cyrus, Victoria, and Henry were all members of that ubiquitous minority—which could do little more than rebel, and try to convince the majority that the rule of caduceus wild robbed man of all dignity. They believed that denying a man the right to make a mistake, even a harmful one, made him less than a man.

Henry had just escaped from a medarchy raid on the mallie school with which he was connected. The boy had been kidnapped and brought



to a hospital. Before he could be given treatment—drugs which would make it impossible for him to conceal anything he knew about the mallies—Cyrus had rescued him and, prepared with forged charts set out for Mallups', where they would have refuge until a plane would take them out of the country. Victoria had gone on ahead, and was waiting for them. Their local "doctor", to whom they would refer, was ALEX CALLIGGS, a member of the underground. He was supposed to bring them new charts before they left Mallups', to go to their rendezvous with the escape plane.

If they were caught, it would be the end for all three of them. Not a firing squad, or any other sort of execution chamber, no overt torture. Just treatment—electrotranquilization and whatever else the medarchy's wisdom might prescribe for their maladjusted states. No marriage between Cyrus Tarn, age fifty, and Victoria Rald, age twenty-nine, slightly crippled, could possibly be approved. They would be treated and—what happened to the flame when the candle was blown out? Urgency and emotion would be part of an unremembered past, blotted out, destroyed, non-existent.

They'd never recognize each other afterward. For Henry, the process would be less drastic, but the result would be the same. And before it was over, the medarchy would know everything each one of them knew or suspected about the mallie underground.

Mallup was an eccentric, who put up a show of outward conformity, thumbed his nose at the medarchy in private, and did pretty much as he pleased—and got away with it. He had a private library of books prohibited by Ama, most of them quack literature; but he never tried to get anyone else to read them, he said, didn't sell them—and didn't agree with most of the stuff in them himself. He just liked to have them, that was all. It was a position, Cyrus thought, which made Chris Mallup ideal for a medarchy counter-mallie agent. And something was definitely wrong; there was a traitor—at least one—in the underground. First the school had been raided; then the promised new charts for the three fugitives hadn't come through. Perhaps a change of decision, Dr. Calliggs suggested, when Cyrus telephoned him.

Yes, Alex Calliggs might be a traitor. Or Mallup. Dr. Tree might be learning im-

portant things through his protection and friendship with the old eccentric. And he mustn't forget JUDY LARCH, Mallup's sixteen-year-old granddaughter, fanatic in her support of the caduceans, unswerving in her faith in anything the doctors said. She was upset by the grandfather's flouting of health regulations, was certain that he ought to be in a home for the aged. There could be no doubt that if Judy suspected, she wouldn't hesitate a moment to turn Cyrus and the others in. She'd probably get in touch with the medarchy lieutenant at the station—who had given Cyrus and Henry cursory examinations, and looked over their charts. Traveling without a chart meant immediate and thorough examination in the nearest hospital.

Victoria had been upset over what had appeared to be Cyrus' undue attention to this ripe, pretty sixteen-year-old, and Tarn was worried. Such extreme jealousy on so little grounds was unlike Victoria. She was waiting for him upstairs, now.

At length, Dr. Tree finished his whiskey sampling and said goodnight—not an evil man, which was the worst of it, Tarn thought. Few, if any, of them were malicious

—they believed they were doing good, bringing health, happiness, and security to all. But one thing Tree had said stuck in Cyrus' mind. An ex-wife of the doctor's was personal physician to Horace Whitelands, editor of the all-important *Medical Journal*. DR. GRACE TAVISTOCK was an extremist, a member of the small faction in the medarchy which believed in immediate and thorough measures in dealing out the mallies. Whitelands must be warned before their suspicion that he was too liberal—favoring a moderate, gradual course against the maladjusted—exposed that fact that he was loosely connected with the underground, too.

Victoria was feeling better, though still upset. Then, in the night, something awoke Cyrus. Had someone entered the next room? Had Mallup come upstairs? He had thought that Mallup was listening in on them before. He awoke Victoria, who at once awoke the boy; all three began to dress quietly. The door opened, to reveal at least three men behind the one in the doorway who was holding them in the glare of his flashlight. "There's no good in moving—we're prepared to use gas if we have to. Come with us."

"Are you orderlies?" Vic-

toria asked as she shoved Cyrus toward the window. Tarn managed to take them by surprise, as they obviously did not realize that the three were fully awake, or would dare to resist. Victoria and Henry got safely out the window. Cyrus was not so lucky—the impact of landing was on his knee.

"Cyrus!"

He tried to get up, and almost collapsed. Knee—sprained or broken? He tried to be sure of the direction of her whispered voice. He had to know; separation now would be separation forever.

Yet...escape seemed futile. He was crippled, and Victoria lame; what chance had they against the ruthless efficiency of the subcutes? Cyrus thought that, after all, they should separate, and meet at the landing field—in fact, he could see no other course but to let himself be captured while Victoria and the boy escaped. But Victoria would not hear of separation; and it was fairly apparent that she knew what he had in mind. "I'm pregnant", she told him.

That put a different light on everything; they had to stick together now. And the chase showed that the subcutes were not infallible; even with a searchlight, they did not spot the fugitives,

who finally made their way to Dr. Calliggs' cabin.

Who was the informer? Who had put the subcutes on to the fact that three important mallies were at Mallups' place? Had Dr. Tree suspected? Was it old Chris himself, or his fanatically loyal granddaughter? Or—worse still—was there a traitor in the mallee underground?

Alex Calliggs himself was not entirely above suspicion—yet, what could be his motive? He had a definite grievance against the medarchy, and admitted that he was with the mallies because of it, rather than due to any particular sympathy with most of them. "I don't like it," Alex said fretfully. "I don't like being tied in with nuts or fanatics. Some chiropractor or religious maniac is likely to buckle and spill his guts."

"You don't usually find subversives among the calm and reasonable."

"Don't get huffy—I wasn't talking about ordinary neurotics, or even psychoes. I can work with you and Vicky, but what about Rald and some of the others? How can I feel easy with my safety—my practice..."

Alex was nervous, and his binding of Cyrus' knee was tight and uncomfortable. He

did, however, manage to find some sort of clothing for them, and food and water; and he took them in his car to the point where Cyrus decided to make for the woods and hike it. They hadn't told Alex exactly where the landing field was and Calliggs' curiosity on this score didn't increase Cyrus' confidence in the younger man. Still...he had helped.

They followed a stream, discovered that men with rifles were on their trail, and came at last to a road, which rounded an unexpected curve where they saw a station wagon blocked by a fallen tree. It was too late to duck back; a woman got out swiftly, a rifle in her hands, and forced them to move the tree, then to get into the car and drive to her house.

"Do you always greet strangers like this?" asked Victoria.

"When I think they may be useful. Particularly if they happen to be three notorious mallies whose description I've just heard on the radio."

The woman was Dr. Tavistock—whom Cyrus suddenly remembered as an ex-wife of Dr. Raphael Tree. Tree had said that "Grace" was in sympathy with the extreme faction in the medarchy—the faction which wanted to ex-

terminate all mallies without any further nonsense, as quickly as they could be tracked down. Yet, Dr. Tavistock told the fugitives, she could help them—there was something she wanted done, and she would make a deal. She'd give them all new charts, let them go, and not report them to the subcutes.

All she wanted them to do was to kill someone.

It was while Cyrus was arguing, that a car drove up, and voices outside demanded entrance. Dr. Tavistock told Hank to get into a closet, then said to Victoria, "Get out two smocks, caps, masks. Put one set on. Now you," she turned to Cyrus. "If these are subcutes, I'll turn you over unless you do as I say. Take off your shirt and get on that table."

When the subcutes entered, Dr. Tavistock was apparently performing an operation; she refused to answer any questions, and ordered the intruders out. Finally, she let them see the chart of the "patient"—they were suspicious at the fact that there was only one nurse in attendance, and that the "patient's" chest had not been shaved for a "cardiac operation". The leader of the squad looked at the chart, then said, "Oh... Now I understand the absence of addi-

tional witnesses. You have a terrible responsibility."

That seemed to satisfy the subcutes; they left, and Dr. Tavistock did a competent job of dressing Cyrus' knee, observing that the earlier bandaging had been somewhat inept. Finally, Cyrus asked who she wanted killed.

"Whitelands."

Horace Whitelands! Whitelands of the *Medical Journal*, and assistant to the head of the medarchy, Dudley Higginson.

"Well," Cyrus said, "at least you're not asking me to go after Higginson himself."

"No—that wouldn't be necessary. That subcute was anxious to know the name of the patient you impersonated. I terminated the Personal Physician on this operating table yesterday afternoon."

The assassination of Higginson, it turned out, was a spur-of-the-moment project on the part of Dr. Tavistock. "He was my patient," she said, "suffering from a malignant growth on his lung. Had it become known, the Mercifuls would have made every effort to get him."

Cyrus bargained a little while longer, then agreed. But what were they going to do about the subcutes outside? Dr. Tavistock would serve them doped coffee, she

said, and told Cyrus to let them in. But it was clear that she was not an experienced conspirator; she hadn't even considered the possibility of her conversation with the fugitives being overheard. Thus, she was taken completely by surprise when the subcute entered with gun drawn. It was only combined action that overcame the man. Then she gave him a shot from a hypodermic.

An empty hypodermic. There was now another body to dispose of.

The subcutes had to be put off the track. Cyrus would make a break for it, and Dr. Tavistock would put the subcutes on his trail, Victoria said. They didn't use dogs; they had electronic spoor-detectors. "Swing around through the woods down to the road. As soon as you have a good start, she can tell them that Hartney is after you and wants them to follow right away. The counter will pick up your trail. Then we'll put Hartney's body in the station wagon and meet you. That will save her from anything worse than suspicion, and get us out of here."

It worked, though not as Dr. Tavistock had planned. She'd intended to leave Victoria and Hank behind but was careless and left the rifle lying on the ground when

they put the dead subcute's body in the car. Now Victoria had the rifle.

A sheriff's car approached, and Cyrus reminded Dr. Tavistock that, should she get the notion to hail the police, "I'd point out where your puncture entered. That would dispose of a heart-failure story."

The trio had the upper hand for the moment. They made Dr. Tavistock let them out at a point Cyrus recognized, and drive on while they plunged into the woods again, finally making their way down to a beach. If Cyrus was right, they were now less than three miles from the airfield, where the plane was supposed to pick them up.

Then they discovered a helicopter, obviously seeking them. They climbed the rocky declivity, up to the grassy plateau again.

Disaster came suddenly. Hank, who had grown impatient of their slow progress and run ahead, inadvertantly emerged into the open. They heard a woman's voice exclaim pleasantly, "Why, hello, my dear. What brings you out here?"

The three seemed to be picnickers: a woman, sweet-faced and whitehaired; a girl no older than Victoria; and a man with wide shoulders, powerful. But the man seized

the rifle from Victoria, saying that the season was closed for hunting, and it was cruel to kill animals. Then the older woman exclaimed, "Why the poor man is limping. You must be in pain!" And later, when she noticed Victoria walk, "You are limping too, dear. How awful!"

**A**T FIRST, the old woman and the man seemed to be eccentrics, but the tone of their conversation showed that they were more than that—they were Mercifuls. The girl, Edith, shrank from "helping" the fugitives. "They're mallies," she said. "They cling to pain."

The man, Edward, sighed. "They don't understand. They have no idea what it means to devote your life to eliminating pain. We discipline ourselves. We don't drink: it might cloud our judgement. We don't smoke: it might dull our senses. We don't dance or go to entertainments: there is no place in our lives for frivolity. We are vegetarians, we mortify the flesh, we risk our lives constantly to help others. And what is our reward? Misunderstanding, hatred, slander. We're hunted by subcutes and orderlies—we're subjected to shock treatments, lobotomies or psychotherapy if we're caught."

And they would "help" the three—two cripples, and a boy who would only know the horrors of an orphan asylum afterwards, if they didn't help him. Then Cyrus heard a motor, and warned them that the subcutes were near.

"There's still time," the mother said. "Hurry, Edward". The "help" would come by way of poisoned darts—swift and painless. In the uncertainty, Cyrus finally got the rifle, and scattered the embers of their fire over the dried grass; then he trained the rifle on the Mercifuls and told them to go.

The fire was spreading, and the subcutes would be drawing closer. The woman was shocked at the thought that Cyrus might shoot her. "But I'm not in pain," she protested. "You have no reason..."

The man and the girl hesitated no longer; they left then the old woman followed her son, calling brokenly. "Oh Edward, come back and do your duty."

**T**HE FIRE would block the subcutes—but not the helicopter which was hovering ominously almost overhead. Finally it landed, a few yards from them.

"Get behind me," Cyrus commanded. He would order the occupants back in.

Only it wasn't the subcutes;

it was Dr. Yester, and Alex Calliggs was with him. Hesitantly, and making sure that no one except the two were in the copter, Cyrus consented to go with them to the mallie hideout, where an important meeting of the underground would take place. Was it a trap? He suspected that they'd be flown to the subcutes, instead; but when they landed, even as he swung the rifle to cover the men approaching them, he recognized John Rald and old Hammerfield. These two were above suspicion if such a thing were possible at all.

Cyrus and Hank related the barest outline of what had happened, and Hammerfield said to save the details for later; everyone else would want to know, and there was no point in going over it twice.

"Who's everyone?" Cyrus demanded, suspicious again.

"All the delegated nuts from Northern California," John Rald informed him cheerfully. "Two good sisters from the Ursuline Convent. Two osteopaths, a chiropractor—at least he was there the last time I looked—and a fine assortment of poor misguided heretics, not to mention a young man who has discovered a loophole in the second law of thermodynamics, and a young woman who is con-

vinced that her future lies in bed. Any bed."

Feeling increasingly sheepish about having a firearm in a world suddenly returned to the normal pattern of talking about the horrors of Amarytyn, Cyrus felt as though the gun had swollen to many times its normal size. Still, somewhere in the heterogeneous opposition, someone had relayed information to the orderlies. He grasped the rifle again.

**T**HE RANCHOUSE was kin to Dr. Tavistock's except that fussy touches had been added: false shutters, scalloped boards pretending to be valences, concrete ducks in a touching if stony family group. Six or seven Pekinese dogs ran at them, yapping and snuffling. It was all understandable, as soon as it was realized their hostess was Mrs. Guinivere Queedly—a lady of some wealth, devoted both to Christian Science and the breeding of this particular variety of pet. She came forward now, completely authentic, to the black velvet band around her neck and the prismatically flashing rings which overemphasized the swollen veins on her hands. "So

good of you to come," she murmured.

"So good for them, too," amended John Rald. "Lots better than the psycho ward."

"Nothing can hurt the children of Love—error will not touch them, even there."

"Bet it comes darn close, though," muttered Hank. Cyrus, finally abashed, stood the rifle under a corner whatnot loaded with china figurines, hoping that no one would notice it.

Hammerfield spoke mildly. "I think we ought to begin right away, and get through as soon as possible. We have business which will take some hours, anyway—many of us have come a long way. Any large gathering is dangerous. It would be disaster if the subcuties rounded up such a whopping bunch of mallies."

A man bluntnosed, bluntn-fingered, white-toothed, tapped him on the biceps. "I object to that term, sir. It is a vulgar abbreviation for maladjusted person. I particularly object to it applied to myself or my patients. We are adjusted, sir, in every way—perfect form means perfect function."



**H**AMMERFIELD pushed his spectacles up on his forehead. "Forgive me, Doctor. I was not thinking of adjust in the osteopathic sense..."

"There is no other, Sir. There can be no other. Adjustment means adjustment—mal-adjustment, maladjustment. Misuse of these words is part of the intolerable conspiracy of the MDs to drive people deeper into ignorance and ill-health so they will become more certain victims to their drugs and poisons, unnatural and ineffective."

"Odd to hear you say that, Doctor." A youngish man in a loud sport jacket thrust himself between the lay analyst and the osteopath. "Very odd. Where Chiropractic depends on manipulation and natural diet, osteopathy..."

"Gentlemen—please! We have important business. Let's get on with it. Can we select a chairman?"

"What for? No chairman, no straight-jacketing rules, no elections, no ayes or nays. Let everybody speak freely," roared Mendenall.

"My comrade, an unphilosophical anarchist," explained

Rald. "God love you, brother, for your militant spirit. *You* don't need rules, any more than you need a cop to make you good, or a doctor to make you healthy. But *we* have to be tolerant of these poor people who think they have to have such crutches. Bear with them, brother. Love them, God bless them."

Mendenall bit his thick black mustache—defiant mark of his challenge to the medarchy—uncertainly. Cyrus allowed himself to realize for the first time that the flight of the last eighteen hours was over—or at worst transferred to a more accustomed plane, where safety was not unobtainable, not unthinkable. Hammerfield took advantage of the lull to engineer his own election to the chair. Polishing his spectacles, he began, "Someone in this organization..."

"I protest," cried Mendenall. "I recognize no organization. No laws, no rules, no..."

**J**OHAN RALD put his arm over the other's shoulders. "How right you are. I don't recognize organizations or any

such unChristian tools of force either. . . ."

"I'm an atheist," growled Mendenall.

"Are you now?" asked Rald, giving him a hug. "God bless you—I'll pray daily for your conversion. Once in my pride I called myself an agnostic. I knew no better. Well, brother, you and I don't recognize these tools of force, but does it do *us* any harm if these good people use words like 'organization' when they mean 'a free association' . . ."

"Kropotkin . . ."

"Exactly, brother, exactly. Kropotkin and Emma Goldmann and Blessed Dorothy Day . . ."

The two nuns, sitting demurely together, looking brightly out from under their cowls, crossed themselves.

" . . . would all have tolerated such a political, not to say theological, error. Forgive them, brother, and let's get on with it."

" . . . someone in this loose association of opponents of the Ama is a stool pigeon."

The dead silence hung expectantly. Everyone in the room looked furtively at his

neighbor, then quickly down. Someone coughed; stifled it.

"The son of a bitch! I'll cut his throat myself," vowed Mendenall. The shocked murmur seemed to come as a relief.

**H**AMMERFIELD went on, as though he were dealing with something utterly commonplace. "Three members—three of our number who were hiding from the Medical Police . . ."

"Why?" asked an unidentified voice. "Why should they hide? Why didn't they go gladly to their doom, witnesses for truth?"

"I don't know," answered Hammerfield. "Probably didn't want to. Anyway, their hiding place was betrayed to the subcutes. This could only have been done by one of us."

*But that's not so*, thought Cyrus. *Judy, Mallup, Tree.* What was the matter with Hammerfield? Had he got the story garbled? True, everything pointed to Yester, but the other three were possible suspects. Should he say something now? Or wait till later?

"I warned you a long time ago not to let doctors in," the

faith-healer, Aloysius Clonter said in a strong, singing voice. "Men without faith are bound to be faithless."

"I assume you mean MDs," one of the osteopaths said, "and I agree with you..."

"I mean all who think healing is man-made and not spiritually achieved..."

**CYRUS PUSHED** his way past the speaker, seeking Victoria. "The wrangle is on, and Hammerfield seems to have got everything askew. No wonder we never get anywhere. Where's Hank?"

"Fed and bedded down. What did you expect? Regimented storm-troopers?"

"But this is chaos."

"The Ama has order. Everything is neat and prescribed. Is that what you want?"

"Right now I want sleep."

"Poor darling. It'll be hours till you get any."

"Why should I stay awake and listen to this stuff?"

"Because, my dear, this is the only way Patients will ever achieve impatience. Revolution by formula and discipline means counter-revolution by another formula and better dis-

cipline. The only permanent revolution is that made in the heart."

"Just being in the same room with John Rald makes you talk like him. I'm jealous."

She patted his cheek. "And me with a fondness for older men, too. So you better hurry them along before I elope with John."

"Hurry them along—try and speed up a glacier."

**ALEX**, WHO had been trying to say something for a long time, now shouted, "All of you who are so busily chirping that doctors are untrustworthy allies don't take time to understand that we have something to lose. You haven't—you're all playing, while we..."

"Don't do us any favors," snarled Mendenall. "We're not Patients."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Hammerfield. "This is a deadly serious business. Instead of complaining about each other, we ought to be trying to find out who this individual is."

"I hope we won't overlook the possibility that one of the

three victims may have been forced to inform against himself," put in Yester.

Cyrus felt his annoyance mounting. "If you really suspect me of turning myself in, just so you could practice on a copter, I'm willing to take a shot of parapentothal and be questioned. Providing you take one yourself," he added.

"Good deal. It just happens, as they say, that I have some with me. Also a hypo. But why just you and me? Vicky and Hank are suspects, too. They ought to be in on this."

"Hank's asleep."

"We'll leave him to the last, then. How about Vicky?"

"I'm ready when you are."

"Good girl. And since the medical profession has been blanketly impugned, it'll be only fair to bring Dr. Calliggs in on the deal."

"There will be no medicines given or taken in my house. I will not be a party to the spread of error."

"But Mrs. Queedly, this is a vital matter," argued Cyrus. "Aside from the question of whether an injection of parapentothal can be called taking medicine, we're faced with the

fact that we can't keep on functioning if the Ama knows as much about us as we do ourselves. For our protection, we must find the source of the leak."

A SLIM GIRL, who had been sitting in an upholstered chair much too large for her, asked, "Why? Why should we hide and conspire and be secret? Why not let the Ama know everything? Our weapons are moral weapons, our force is not in numbers but ideas..."

"You religious fanatics are all alike," complained Mendenall. "Scratch the surface and you turn out to be nothing but counter-revolutionary scabs."

"The record of Jehovah's Witnesses speaks for itself," the girl said proudly, without raising her voice or moving from her chair. "Christendom has persecuted us, but we have not flinched before the cells of the federal penitentiaries, Hitler's gas chambers, Soviet slave camps, or the operating tables of the medarchy."

"What good does your martyrdom do? What good are your moral weapons? What we need is a few thousand—or

even a few hundred—resolute people to knock off the medical bigshots. This is a class struggle. Religious nuts and the idle rich—” he made a sweeping gesture, indicating, not Mrs. Queedly’s taste, but her ability to exercise it “—always wind up on the wrong side of the barricades because they’re from the right side of the tracks.”

“Barricades went out when machine-guns came in, and tracks are not the demarcation line they once were,” commented a middle-aged man. Cyrus had the impression that he was an optometrist.

“I’m speaking metaphorically,” said Mendenall.

“Brother,” John Rald assured him, “you’re right about God being on the side of the poor. . . .”

“I said no such thing. There is no God.”

**T**HE NUNS crossed themselves again and began fingering their rosaries.

“God love you— if you want to call Him Historical Materialism, I doubt if He will mind. He has so many names. You’re right about His being on the

side of the poor and oppressed, but brother, what other weapons dare the poor use? The Ama employs force. If we compete with them, how are we different from them?”

“They use force to make us do things,” said Hissip, the vegetarian. “If *we* used force— I’m not advocating it, I’m just trying to clarify—it would be to avoid being compelled to do things against our conscience.”

“As of now,” said Rald. “But are you sure that eventually you wouldn’t use force to compel people not to kill animals? Or to stop taking aspirin? Or booze? Brother, means and ends can’t be put in different boxes.”

“There’s no use asking any of you to address yourselves to the chair,” said Hammerfield wearily.

“I’d like to know if there’s general agreement that we don’t care how many informers we have here, or whether the Ama gets our names, descriptions, and addresses first thing tomorrow.” said Cyrus. “I should think you’d be interested too, Mrs. Queedly.”

“They can’t do anything to me. Thanks to Mrs. Eddy’s

teachings, I know that the flesh is unreal and so-called diseases are illusion."

"I agree we must find out who the stoolie is," cried Rald. "Not to preserve our skins, but to save his immortal soul, which he has imperiled by pride and avarice."

**T**HE SECOND osteopath rubbed a loose-skinned hand over his bald head. "I don't know why the idea of self-preservation should be disgraceful. I've heard a lot about liberty, and moral weapons, but surely the one thing on which we all ought to be agreed—the one thing that brought us together originally, and ought to hold us together now—is the desire to protect ourselves against the Ama."

"Quite right, Doctor," agreed the chiropractor. "It seems to me we have allowed ourselves to be divided into two factions: those who are concerned with practical matters, and those who are more interested in philosophy. I think we ought to keep our feet on the ground at all times and avoid ideological arguments."

"Two factions, hell!" Alex

burst out. "I don't know how many there are in this room, but there are probably that many factions. None of you can agree on anything. No wonder the Ama has everything its own way. The marvel is that you *all* haven't been picked up and treated."

"Some of us have," Mendenall informed him grimly. "Shock therapy and carbon dioxide and post-hypnotic suggestion doesn't always lead to quiescence."

"Maybe you need something more drastic," said Alex.

Rald shook his head. "If every mallie were perfectly adjusted tomorrow, there would be just as many the day after. God loves difference, brother. That's why no two blades of grass, or grains of sand, are identical."

"I'd like to ask Dr. Calliggs a question." Hammerfield was so astonished at this lapse into parliamentary usage that he nodded speechlessly to Stuart Yester to go ahead. "Was that 'you' plural?"

"What? I don't understand what you mean."

"You said Mr. Mendenall possibly needed more drastic

treatment. Perhaps you'd like to include some of the rest of us in your prescription?"

"Perhaps," snapped Alex.

There was a shocked silence. "Interesting," remarked Yester.

ALEX WAS irritated beyond discretion. "Are you implying that paranoia is desirable, Doctor?"

"I'm not a psychiatrist. I couldn't say with assurance what is paranoid and what is a longing for justice."

"I see," sneered Alex. "Nor tell the difference between trying to reform what is burdensome, and the megalomania which goes to fantastic lengths—like illegal schools for mallies?"

Victoria's voice was frigid with fury. "You disapprove of the schools so many have sacrificed everything for?"

Alex laughed nervously. "Everyone knows about your father fixation. The mallie schools are sacred because Boyd Carling helped start them. It doesn't make any difference to you—because it didn't to him—that these brats are being taught to go to

quacks. Or that they are being unfitted to live in any society except a dream-world. That's the fixation that accounts for why you aren't interested in any man who isn't at least twice your age."

ALEX HAD never concealed his contempt for the mallies, Cyrus Tarn thought, but he had always implied an exemption for Victoria and Cyrus from it. Evidently whatever rebuff Victoria had given him must have rankled deeply. Yet on second thought, was he acting only like a man whose masculine pride had been hurt? Or like someone whose nerves had been strained enough so his self-control had broken? "Alex," Cyrus asked softly, "why did you put such a tight bandage on my knee?"

"I told you. Are you questioning my competence?"

"I wonder if your disgust for mallies couldn't have influenced you to make it tighter than necessary."

"You see? Delusions of persecution. Every doctor is automatically an enemy, even when he's doing everything to help."

"But the bandage was too

tight," insisted Cyrus. "It slowed me up."

"You got away, didn't you?"

"Yes... Thanks to luck. I wonder..."

"What I wonder," said Victoria, "is why you were gone so long just when we were ready to leave your place?"

"I told you. Old Cramson..."

"It was Blunteagle the first time."

"Slip of the tongue. Are you going to keep on asking pointless questions?"

"A pointed one is, why did you look so startled when we arrived? And why were you so disturbed at the spot we picked to leave you?"

"Why does an obviously secure middle-aged man go around seducing young girls to reassure himself, and why do they compensate for physical handicaps by letting themselves be seduced?"

"Maybe they like it," said Yester. "Anyway, how did the subcutes know Vicky was at Galentry? And how did they get on the trail so fast after you drove them out of Secarros?"

"That's right. Even with

their electronic sniffer they would have found some difficulty in locating our trail so quickly..."

"If someone who knew where we'd gotten out of the car hadn't told them the approximate location," finished Victoria.

"Doctor Calliggs..."

**A**LEX'S BLOW sent Yester sprawling against Mrs. Queedly, who stepped back in alarm, allowing him to fall to the floor. An elbow in Hammerfield's padded ribs pushed him aside, and a kick aimed at the younger osteopath forced a hasty retreat. Only a pale little man, a theosophist, stood between Alex and the front door. Cyrus and Hissip started forward at the same time. They found themselves facing a revolver in Alex's hand.

"Stay where you are," panted Alex. "I won't hesitate, and there won't be any consequences if I plug a few of you. I joined you in good faith because I thought you really meant to do something about the Ama's interference in everybody's business, but I soon found you didn't care about



anything except your own eternal jabber. There's not one of you who wouldn't be better off under restraint until you're cured or euthanized. And the most dangerous psychos here are people like Tennick, whose symptoms are so deep they don't show on the surface, or Yester, who sells out his own profession."

The girl from the big chair slid down and glided unobtrusively forward. In a moment she stood between the others and Alex—so close that the gun was not a yard from her chest. "I don't think you want to shoot," she said calmly. "But if you must I'm not afraid of temporary death. Because we can't let you go on like this."

Alex retreated half a step. "I'm not fooling, sister. If you think I wouldn't shoot a woman, you don't know how many of them I've seen trussed up like chickens ready for the oven, waiting for surgery."

**J**OHAN RALD walked slowly up to the girl. "Bless you, my dear, you were fine. Now then, Doc, let me have that gun."

Alex laughed harshly. "You

old fool! I'll let you have it—right in the guts. Do you think I wouldn't?"

"Yes. You can't shoot out love, like an electric light. You might be able to pull that trigger if either of us were afraid, but we aren't. So give me the gun, and then we'll talk about the futility of informing."

Victoria's hand covered her mouth; the sisters were on their knees; Hissip had picked up a bulky vase and was circling to get a clear aim. Stuart Yester rose from the floor; Mrs. Queedly's lips moved soundlessly. "Stand back," Alex ordered.

Rald's hand went out. It did not dart. He made no attempt to snatch the gun. His fingers closed around the barrel slowly, without deflecting Alex's aim, which was now for his abdomen. For a moment both men stood face-to-face, each holding onto the revolver, staring into each other's eyes. Then Rald stepped back, the weapon in his sole possession. Everyone in the room exhaled together.

Hissip, still ready with the vase, muttered, "We'll have to get rid of the bastard."

"Let me," volunteered Mendell. "He's nothing but a dirty scab, and I know what to do with *them*."

Rald held the gun gingerly, as though its touch was contaminating. There was no obvious place to get rid of it; he dropped it, butt first, into his pocket. "Lord love you, brothers, let's not have any of that talk. The poor soul's in trouble enough with his own conscience without our threatening him. Besides, if we offer wrong for wrong, we justify his sellout instead of bringing him to understanding with love."

"Love!" spat Alex. "You hypnotized me, damn you!"

**R**ALD SHOOK his head. Someone called out with authority, "You can't be hypnotized against your will."

Victoria said, "Alex, how could you? Hank's only a child: how could you bring yourself to condemn him to pain and misery?"

Calliggs threw his head up. The dimple in his cheek, the cleft in his chin, no longer gave the impression of amiability; now they were scars, indentations pressed upon unwilling

flesh. "You mallies are always weeping over something or somebody. What's one kid in an overpopulated world? Especially one with all sorts of hereditary predispositions toward psychosis—you ought to be able to observe Boyd Carling's savior complex in yourself. Anyway, I had nothing against any of you—the Ama offered—But that's none of your business. And I let you get a head start, didn't I? I didn't call the cutes in while you were in my place, did I?"

"Instead of wringing your hands in self-pity, why don't you give a thought to other people? I built up a good practice out of nothing by my own skill. I saved lives—thousands of lives—by my technique. Which is more important: that, or the uncovering of a few paranoids who would obviously be better off for treatment?"

"Who are you to judge?" asked John Rald.

"Who are you to weigh *my* judgement? If you haven't got guts enough to kill me—and it doesn't look as if you have—then you've got to deal with me. I don't know what proposition you can make me that's

better than the Ama's—but if you want to try, go ahead."

The osteopath with the square hands said slowly, "I'm not an MD, and I don't believe in euthanasia, but I'm willing to make an exception in your case, Sir. It will be practically painless, just a little-pressure in the right places..."

Mrs. Queedly shrieked. Cyrus heard the quiet voices of the nuns, "...*now and at the hour of our death...*" He calculated rapidly: Mendenall, Hissip, the osteopath who had just spoken, probably his colleague, and the chiropractor—five almost certain votes for death. Against that, Rald, Mrs. Queedly, the sisters: four. Hammerfield and Stuart Yester might agree with the majority; he had no idea what stand the Jehovah's Witness girl would take, and he was not too sure of the faith-healer or the theosophist. It would be a close thing. He and Victoria could have the deciding voice.

## X

**M**ENDENALL demanded, "What are we waiting for? Or is

there anybody here stupid enough to try and buy him off?"

"Just a minute," said Yester. He turned to Calliggs. "I don't think we're that stupid. For one thing, there's no guarantee you'd stay bought."

"Even if there were," added the Jehovah's Witness, "we would not bargain with evil."

"Let's not be fanatical," urged the chiropractor. "Perhaps there's some way..."

*Whitelands*, remembered Cyrus. If *Whitelands* became Personal Physician, then the heat would be off, and Alex would be harmless. But not immediately; all the present directives, all crystalized policy would remain for...how long? A week? A month, a year? Long enough to endanger Mrs. Queedly; long enough for the subcuties to pick up many of those present, long enough for Victoria to lose her child. And *Whitelands* was no enemy of the medarchy—merely a protestant against its excesses and rigidity. Even with his sympathies translated into some kind of action, he was only a long-range hope. Nor could he be used for counter-blackmail to

threaten Alex, since White-lands' attitude had to be kept secret if he were to be at all effective.

**S**TUART went on conversationally, "There's another question, Doctor. Are you really in a position to bargain with us at all? The sad story of the great big naughty Ama cracking down on the enterprising surgeon who's only trying to make an honest fortune by perfecting better techniques is quite touching, but you and I know it isn't the whole picture."

"No, it isn't. 'Fortune'! The incompetent and lazy always think what you earn by your own work automatically amounts to a fortune. I stuck to my profession—didn't play politics or become a do-gooder so long as I was left alone. I never had delusions of persecution like most of you general practitioners. You're all eaten up with envy for the man who has brains and initiative to specialize. You mallies aren't fundamentally different from the Ama after all. When things are running smoothly, neither of you can leave them alone."

"Aren't you forgetting something? About the time when you were a do-gooder? When you did that voluntary stretch as house-surgeon at the Fresno Age-Adjustment Center?"

"That was before I'd learned how damned thankless Patients were," muttered Alex.

"But after you'd learned how grateful—in terms of dollars—they were for black market drugs. However, that's another story. The Ama cracked down on you for putting your personal advancement against that of medical knowledge. They'd have cracked down harder if they'd known what we can—and perhaps will—tell them about how you perfected your technique and got your supply of adrenal glands."

"I don't know what you're talking about, you—you paretic."

**S**TUART clucked softly. "Lapses of memory already? Hallucinations? Any signs of schizophrenia? I'm talking about the suddenly-accelerated rate of induced terminations during your stay at the Center. I've some interesting statistics on how many of the

euthanasia orders you signed and carried out yourself. It runs in direct proportion to the amount of transplanted adrenal operations you and your partners performed at the time. I've collected all the proof necessary for the Ama. It's up to you whether they get it or not."

"It's a lie. It's all lies."

"If it is then you have nothing to worry about."

"Threats! Diplomacy!" exclaimed Mendenall disgustedly. "What next? There's nothing to do but get rid of him. I demand a vote."

"Brother!" cried Rald. "Have you forgotten your principles? Voting! Parliamentary procedure! What next, indeed?"

"All right," said Hammerfield. "If you don't want to come to a conclusion by voting, you can arrive at it by divine inspiration for all I care. Only let's make up our minds. What do we want to do with him—turn him loose, let him go on his way?"

"That's too dangerous," the younger osteopath protested.

"If you want to stay clear of danger, this is no place for you," warned the girl. "Let him

go; he can bring harm only to our bodies."

"That's all the medarchy can do," said Victoria. "For one thing, I suppose Stuart has his proof where one of his friends could put his hands on it..."

Yester nodded.

"...so if he telephones now to release this proof any time he doesn't hear from Stuart for twenty-four hours..."

"Sounds OK to me. Use your phone, Mrs. Q?"

CLONTER broke in. "Hold on a minute. I'd think by now you'd have learned not to trust these pill-givers. You've just found out that one of them is a spy, so you're going to put your confidence in the other."

"Brother, for a man who heals by faith, you seem a little short of your own remedy. The real issue..."

"One of the real issues," broke in Hammerfield, "is that we've all taken the risk of coming here on important business. Is he going to stay around to hear it?"

"The real issue," said Rald, "is whether society is numbers or people. If it's numbers, then

it doesn't matter what becomes of us, or Alex, or anyone else. Shoot them, shock them, terminate them, turn them over to the cutes, or threaten them with disgrace. It's all the same—it doesn't mean anything. Number one hundred and ninety-five million is replaced by number one hundred ninety-five million and one—no one ever knows the difference. But if they're people—precious individual souls, equal in the sight of God and loved alike by Him—then we have to accept the responsibility of dealing with people. The danger to our lives, the danger to our safety, the danger to our personalities isn't any greater than the danger to Alex's soul just because there's more of us. Instead of worrying over our own hides we ought to be praying for his conversion."

"Pie in the sky," said Mendell.

"It doesn't sound very practical," said the chiropractor. "I mean—with all respect... well, that wouldn't be of much immediate use, now would it?"

CYRUS SAID, "It seems to me we're all getting away

from what concerns us by searching for security. Even John is looking for security—nothing personal, nothing selfish—through Alex's conversion. And the rest of us want assurance—either through his death or enforced silence—that he won't betray us again. But securities and guarantees are what the medarchy—what any totalitarianism—deals in, and the price is not exorbitant for anyone who really wants them beyond anything else. On the other hand, anyone who wants freedom more than safety has to chance all the dangers of freedom.

"And remember: final solutions are for the Ama, for the believers in the ultimate sanctity of Science. The dogmatists, the unskeptical, the Patients. Our horizons expand—they have to, else we would be prisoners of yesterday's newest marvel, the latest miracle drug, the newest neurological technique—toys for children to play with, illusions to keep the immature marvelling. We have to concern ourselves with reality, with ultimate truths. And ultimate truths have disturbingly many facets.

"The philosophy of the Ama has only one: its subjects must be made and kept physically healthy, intellectually quiet (has anyone written a good book, composed a great quartet, painted an exciting picture, or designed a building adequate for anything more than dental offices under the medarchy?) and socially adjusted. We are here now just because we've rejected those concepts. John is right when he speaks of the value of the individual. I don't think that means we ought to resign ourselves to death or mutilation rather than tamper with it. I don't know. It seems to me we must take some measure of self-defense, short of killing or torturing, but we can't afford to compromise our own dignity in the process.

"I can't go along with John's non-resistance far enough to believe we should suffer without retaliation. Neither can I advocate killing Dr. Calliggs to save ourselves, or imprison him to suit our convenience. I'm willing to let him go on the understanding that he will be exposed if he betrays us further. This means that we have to take the chance he will be fool-

ish enough, or angry enough; to inform, even if it brings disaster on himself."

"You always were a wind-bag," said Alex. "It's your most obvious symptom. I notice with all the rhetoric thrown around here that while you're too chicken to kill anyone, you think it's fine and moral to steal from them."

MRS. QUEEDLY left her chair. "I don't know how much you expect to lose by not helping the orderlies further, but if the sum isn't too great I think I could get some people to help me raise it. Won't you let me drive you to the bus? We can talk it over."

"Just a minute..." began Mendenall.

"Let them go," said Hammerfield. "We'll never get any nearer a solution."

The evening and the room were warm, but Cyrus shivered. The lack of sleep, the terrors of the day—everything that had happened since the knock on the bedroom door—culminated in this moment of drunken exhaustion. He staggered to a place on the couch and put

his head back. Alex, the Ama's bitter enemy the logical...

Mallup. As between Mallup and the mallies, the old man seemed to have the best of it. For the moment, under the circumstances, noting the contrasts. On the other hand, with all the cross-purposes and confusions—the last ironical note, unintentionally introduced by Mrs. Queedly—they were not resigning. No, yet... He dozed, jerked awake when the weight of his body cramped his arm, turned over, and slept.

He dreamed he was hauled, pinioned and struggling, before a stern council of elders, all wearing tall hats and the gray Puritan dress with white jabots. "Ten Eyck, renegade Dutchman from Fort Orange, you have had carnal connection with one Mistress V—V—V..." The elders all snickered lewdly without relaxing their straight lips; the reader held up two fingers spread wide apart. "We have adjudicated and decided you are not in a state of grace. You are therefore sentenced to the pillory. It's a joke, see: pill-ory. Take your medicine." But when they dragged him out and locked

him in, it was not a pillory but the stocks in which he found himself. Anachronistically he was whistling *Dalla Sua Pace* from *Don Giovanni*. Sir Christopher Wren appeared, saying, "Dr. Guillotine, a friend, will take care of you from now on." He awoke with a stiff neck.

ONE OF THE nuns was speaking in a soft, clear voice. "...naturally we were first concerned with saving a human life and we tried to warn Dr. Higginson his murder had been planned. We may have gotten the message through in time—I pray we have—but I'm terribly afraid we may have been too late. After we did what little we could, it seemed imperative—I suppose you know," she broke off apologetically, "that the Church takes sides neither for or against the medarchy. But many of us, as individual Christians feel that Her teachings, especially those dealing with the sanctity of unborn life, and condemning murder, no matter by whom or with what motive—Oh, dear... where was I?"

"Felt that the teachings of



the Church, Sister," took up her companion, "leave us no choice, as individual Christians, but to oppose the practices of the Healthfare State. For that reason we came to give you this information about the Personal Physician..."

"The Personal Physician is dead," cut in Victoria.

**T**HERE WAS a stir in the room. "How do you know?"

"We were told—under circumstances which rule out doubt—he was legally terminated by the doctor who killed a subcute early this morning. Or was that yesterday morning? The same group plans to assassinate Whitelands, who will probably be his successor."

In the copter they had told Calliggs about Grace Tavistock; he would probably get in touch with her. With the medical Tories, Alex would find a comfortable haven; whether they would see enough use in him to accept his adherence was something else.

"Whitelands any worse than Higginson? Anybody know?" inquired the younger osteopath.

"What difference does it

make?" asked Hissip. "These figureheads don't make policy. The Ama remains the Ama."

It would be unwise to say openly that Whitelands was a sympathizer. Besides, the word was subject to so many modifications that in the end it meant little or nothing. "I think we must warn him."

Yester said, "I know something about Whitelands. Moderate man. Used to be a GP himself before they made him editor of the *Journal*. Politician, naturally—they don't make administrators out of practicing physicians — but doesn't go along with the specialist crowd. I don't believe he'd want more stringency in the Ama, maybe less. Wouldn't be surprised if he favored taking back some of the power from the subcutes and the MPs."

"Would he relax the persecution of osteopaths? And other non-medical physicians, of course?"

**Y**ESTER declared bluntly, "No MD would do that if he could, and he couldn't if he would. Let's not get the idea that rubbing out the Personal

Physician means the millenium."

"You can't expect revolutions from the top," said Mendell, recovering eloquence finally. "Upheavals come from below."

"What do you suggest?" asked Hammerfield indulgently.

"Knock them all off. Smash the offices and clinics. Raze the hospitals. Wreck the drug-stores."

"And then?" prodded Hammerfield.

"What do you mean, 'and then'? And then there'll be no more forced examinations, no more compulsory inoculations, no more truth serums, mandatory treatments, involuntary surgery, euthanasia."

"Suppose someone breaks a leg? Or has complications in childbed? Or gets syphilis, tb, or cancer?" asked Cyrus.

"By natural methods and the dominance of the spirit, I can take care of any of these afflictions," asserted Clonter.

"Granting you can," argued Victoria, "you and the osteopaths and the chiropractors..."

Mrs. Queedly, who had re-

turned a few minutes before, sighed. "All unnecessary, all erroneous. A practitioner can remove the false impression of disease."

"Very well. Granting all this, and even assuming you are suddenly multiplied in numbers sufficient to care for everyone including hypochondriacs, my point is simply this: what will the Patients say?"

"Probably, 'Thank God!'" said Hissip.

"Will they?" questioned Cyrus. "Personally, I think they'll lynch you for taking away their security, their father-image, their refuge in time of stress."

JOHN RALD sighed. "Silas, you know the medarchy is evil. It would be wrong to follow the course suggested by our enthusiastic brother. But because it's wrong to kill and pillage doesn't mean it's right to do nothing."

"What do you suggest?" asked Hammerfield.

"A demonstration. The natural confusion and uncertainty coming with the announcement of Higginson's death makes this a good time. Not a

revolution as our friend wants, since revolutions must come from the bottom, as he says. But something to make the average Patient realize he isn't entirely alone and friendless in the hands of the doctors."

"What do you mean by a demonstration?" the Witness wanted to know.

Rald beamed on her. "I mean, my dear, good old non-cooperation. Tried and tested civil—in this case, medical—disobedience. Let's get every Patient we know, or who can be reached simply, to defy the doctors. Let them leave their charts at home. Not show up for their shots or appointments. Let them bite the thermometers and spit out the glass. Let them not pay the Credit Bureau, or report any ailment not a life-or-death matter, let them..."

"But that would be condemning thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of innocent people to torture, perhaps death. In a revolution, it might conceivably be worth it, but you're talking about a demonstration..."

"That's right. In a revolution there would be no holding back

—it would be win or lose. This would be only a show of strength—it would cost nothing to withdraw partially or wholly. Patients should not martyr themselves. If they're taken in for observation, let them give in right then and cooperate. The purpose will have been served."

"Isn't there always an implicit threat of force behind civil disobedience?" asked the theosophist innocently, clearly not expecting the whirlpool of argument which followed.

**STUART YESTER** came over to Cyrus. "You and Vicky and I have some decisions of our own to make. Let's sneak out to the kitchen. They'll never miss us."

*Casual, so casual*, thought Cyrus. He didn't doubt that they would agree on the demonstration in the end. Their absence would make no difference one way or the other. Nothing was ever really accomplished in these meetings, no matter how strongly they were labelled "urgent" or "vital". The real work—if any—was done in small, autonomous groups, as the preparation of

the demonstration would be. If these meetings had any positive value it was as vents for differences, and a reassurance that each mallee was not lost in single, hopeless rebellion.

As soon as they were out of the room, Victoria said, "We owe you an apology, Stuart."

He lit a cigaret. "What kind of talk is this? Without some protective suspicion we'd all wind up in a subcute examination room."

"But everything did point to Alex. I don't know why we were too stupid to see it."

"It doesn't seem to come easy to suspect those who brag about their lack of scruples. Honor rooted in dishonor and so on. I mightn't have suspected him myself if I hadn't known I didn't turn you in."

"That didn't rule out Dr. Tree, Mallup, Judy."

**Y**ESTER frowned. "Not Mallup—only the girl and Tree, who would have no reason to suspect anyone but Cyrus, except by association. The timing, the shot—extremely dangerous mallies, something *they* would not have known—ruled those two out. And Mal-

lup just didn't fit psychologically, from what John Rald said about him. No, of all those who knew where you were, only Alex had the combination of opportunity and motive. Also, I distrust specialists—particularly ultra-specialists."

"Still, he didn't know the airfield—or wasn't it discovered after all? I mean before the subcutes who were following us got there?"

"We warned off the plane on the supposition that it was. Actually, the exact location wasn't an issue. Alex knew it couldn't be too far from Secarros—deduction, topographical knowledge, and copters couldn't help but find it."

"You know," said Victoria irrelevantly, "of all the names you've used, I like Cyrus best. I don't think I'll go back to calling you Silas now." Then she came back to the pertinent. "With the plane out, what happens?"

"Ship, I suppose," said Cyrus. "Sounds tough."

"It won't be easy," admitted Yester. "But not as hard as the day you've just put in. Charts, passports, certificates of inoculation. Thank heaven,

there's money enough floating around in the underground to buy all these things. Only it may take time."

"And time means hiding again," said Victoria. "I can't face it. I want to get out right now. Tonight."

Yester opened his eyes. "If I didn't know you so well Vicky, I'd say you were close to hysterics."

"I am. I'm quite unreasonable, too. I'm ready to remind anyone that my father and I and Cyrus have earned the right to be helped..."

"My dear girl, no one doubts it. What do you think we are? The sort of characters who would neglect or liquidate you the moment your usefulness is over?"

"Talk, talk, talk. I've heard talk all my life. If words and money could make a revolution, the medarchy would have vanished long ago."

"Wait a minute—I'll be right back."

**H**E DISAPPEARED in the direction of the living room. Cyrus looked at Victoria anxiously, then took her hands in his. "Don't be upset," he

mumbled. "We'll make it all right."

"I suppose we will. And I suppose I'll be calm and controlled again, and ashamed of breaking out. Only right now I want to scream. Loudly. I think I will, too."

Yester returned with John Rald who took one look at Victoria and said, "What you need is something to eat."

"No I don't. I don't ever want to see food again."

Rald opened the door of the immense refrigerator. "Orange juice. Hmm. The rest seems to be all remains of dead animals. Oh, here's a head of lettuce."

"You try the lettuce and orange juice," suggested Yester. "We'll get along as best we can with the dead animals. How about a cold lamb chop, Vicky?"

She shuddered. "Is there a lemon in there?"

Rald investigated. "Yes there is. But it's cut..."

"Give it to me." She sucked on the half lemon, apparently content.

"Now about getting on a boat—it wouldn't be too hard, if you weren't in such a rush."

"What rush?" asked Rald.

"I mean, what more than usual?"

"Vicky says she won't hide out any more. She wants to leave for England tonight."

**B**OTH HE and Rald looked at her, waiting some word. She went on sucking the lemon. Cyrus said, "Darling, it takes time to..."

She took out the lemon and inquired, "Do you want me to scream?"

John Rald said, "Go ahead, my lamb, if it will make you feel good. Now, look: there's always an English ship or two in the bay. It wouldn't be impossible to smuggle you three on board without papers and such, but it's a matter of making contacts. I know..."

Yester snapped his fingers. "Collitt!"

"What?" asked Cyrus.

"Consul or consul-general or something. Hates the Ama, but— Well, it's a chance. He can say no, but he won't tip off the subcuties. Want to try it?"

"Put not your trust in consuls," warned Rald.

Cyrus looked questioningly at Victoria, who shrugged. "How do we get there?"

"That's the simplest part. Forethought. We have the one means of transportation orderlies will think a long time before questioning: a nice, shiny ambulance."

"I'll go and get Hank," said Victoria, still holding the lemon.

"OK. Good idea to start before the meeting breaks up. No one will miss us."

"I'll take a last listen. Be right back." Cyrus went into the living room.

**H**AMMERFIELD was saying, "We know our broadcasts and leaflets have been effective. We need new people to carry them on, since some of our workers have become known to the Ama. We particularly need teachers."

"I understand that the schools have been closed since the raid," said the older osteopath. "Perhaps it would be smart not to do anything about them until we know what the new policy of the medarchy is going to be."

"Backside-to," said Hissip. "It's the existence of the schools, the radio, leaflets, the mallies themselves that makes

the policy of the Ama. Where there's no discontent, there are no concessions. If you're going to have schools at all, you've got to have them as big and as good and as frequent as possible."

Yester tapped Cyrus' arm. With more familiarity with Mrs. Queedly's house than would be expected of an MD in the home of a Christian Scientist, he led them out a side door into a multiple garage. "How do you happen to have an ambulance? Or is it part of the standard equipment here?"

"Drove it down from the city on the chance it would come in handy."

"I never rode in an ambulance before," said Hank, sleepily. "Can I sit in front."

"Sorry—you're going to be the patient."

"Heck! I never get to do anything."

"Put this on, Vicky. It was the only one I could get. White coats for you gents up front. I hope you can drive with that leg."

"This is the second time I've had a nurse's uniform on."

"It's becoming. You can't

see in this light, but I'm leering."

Cyrus tested his knee by reaching for the starter. The motor was powerful, making the big ambulance tremble gently, like an eager horse. "Feels fine so far. If it gives out I'll switch with John."

"Not me. I'll drive nothing more vicious than a bicycle."

The glass partition between the cab and the body of the ambulance could be slid open for conversation. "Don't use the siren or the red light if you can help it," cautioned Yester. "The less attention we call to ourselves the better."

**CYRUS DROVE** cautiously onto the driveway, past the parked cars, and turned left on the highway. He touched the gas pedal gently; the ambulance sped smoothly on, taking the curves effortlessly. "Can't I sit up now?" asked Hank.

"No, Henry—just lie quietly. Try to sleep. It's at least a two hour drive."

"Si's doing his best to cut it down," observed Yester.

He had no feeling of excessive speed as the road led downward, the curves becom-

ing less sharp with each drop. An occasional car hugged the opposite shoulder respectfully as they went by; twice they turned out to pass vehicles ahead. Some of the tension built up since Secarros began to fade. Without taking his eyes off the road, he turned his head slightly. "John, do you think the whole business is hopeless?"

"Not to hope would be to betray man's nature."

"There are times when I have a sneaking sympathy for Alex's and Mendenall's viewpoint. We do spend most of our time countering each other instead of the medarchy."

Victoria, evidently forgetting her earlier outburst, said, "We have to work with what we have."

"That's right. Revolutions aren't made by men with sets of blueprints."

"What about Lenin?" objected Yester.

"Was that a revolution or a coup d'etat?" asked Rald. "Real revolution is practically always the same in origin: nuts and screwballs get together and find that none of them like the way things are. Dress them up

in short haircuts and tall hats and they're Lollards or Levelers. Put them in kneebreeches, and they're Sons of Liberty on one side of the water, believers in the Rights of Man on the other. Seventy-five years later they're Narodniks, city intellectuals burning with the conviction that salvation comes from the land and the grimy peasants who till it."

CYRUS THOUGHT, *My dream—telepathy? No: the Lollards. Wrong.* "Mrs. Queedly's no Narodnik," he said, heeding a stop sign, then pushing the ambulance uphill and northward.

"No, but the dear girl from Jehovah's Witnesses is right in the line from the Puritans who cut the cross from the Union Jack because they'd have nothing to do with idolatry. If Mendenall had been around at the right time, he'd either have shot at the lobsterbacks on Boston Common, or dumped tea in the harbor. Both, maybe."

"Mrs. Queedly is a dear in her way. I think she would have been one of those ci-devant aristocrats who sided with



the sans-culottes," said Victoria.

"And got it in the neck from their pantless friends," added Yester. "Hey—what am I doing? Come the revolution, *all* doctors will be shot. Especially those who went against the medarchy."

"The shooting's not unavoidable—it's just hard for humans to have enough sense to avoid it. Proto-revolutionaries, like the mallies, are always in love with ideas—all kinds of ideas. They're too busy with them to think about erecting the machinery of suppression even if they had the temperament for it. But after the nuts and screwballs have churned their ideas and ideals, and disseminated them into the air—like spores, likely to light anywhere and keep on growing—they disappear . . ."

"Which?" asked Yester.

**CYRUS** HAD slowed the ambulance down the long hill and through Monterey. Finally past a dreary stretch of motels and stores, he resumed normal speed.

"The people who want heavens on earth," said Rald.

"They do disappear. Some of them die young, some live for the rest of their lives on memories, a lot become disillusioned and mean. The practical politicians take over, the people who look at an idea to see whether an idea is going to help the party or not. If it isn't, they try to stamp it out. From stamping out ideas to executing the ones who have them is only a short step. Cromwell turned on the Levellers. Trotsky ordered the Kronstadt sailors shot down. They shape and modify the revolution, replacing one rigidity with another."

"If you feel like that, I'd think you would have quit long ago," commented Cyrus.

"Maybe that's because you've got a bit of the politician in yourself. If you can't put a coin in the slot and get back a nice, tasty result, it isn't worth it. For the love of God, men have to strive after perfection, knowing they aren't going to achieve it."

Opportunism . . . The charge, coming from Rald, disturbed Cyrus no more than when spoken by Dr. Tavistock. He had never pretended to selfless dedication. Men and women

with absolute purity of motive were too rare to produce the ferment Rald spoke about. Rald himself, certainly; perhaps the girl witness; after that, the progression shaded all the way to the complete self-interest of someone like Alex.

**I**F NORAH TENNICK had not wanted a child badly enough to defy medical regulations requiring a certificate of desirable heredity, his life might have continued uneventful, unhurried, in one architect's office or another. He had been an adolescent during the War; like most everyone he had been undisturbed by the swift rise of the Ama. It was still hard at times to realize how quickly the medarchy had established its absolute mastery and changed the necessary rules for avoiding the epidemics which followed the atomic devastations into the means of dominating society.

Because contaminated water must be avoided, domestic life had to be overseen to the smallest detail; because radiation sickness might produce monsters, the warped genes must not be passed on. So Norah, for

the obvious good of posterity, had been deprived of her child, and then, because the doctor wasn't accepting any lay opinion about tolerances for antibiotics, of her life. All in the name of keeping society healthy, physically and psychically. Without Norah's death, he would not have become a rebel; far from being a Rald, a Mendenall, a Hissip, he had not even the impulses of Stuart Yester, or the acceptance of a doctrine like Mrs. Queedly. He was a synthetic revolutionist, a Mallup who had been differently conditioned.

And if he had not turned against the medarchy, changing from Silas Tennick—good enough to get a job but never good enough to get a commission—to the man of many names, the jack of all subversive trades, who could run a mobile transmitter or a mimeograph, if necessary teach the elementary grades in a mallie school, he would never have met Boyd Carling. And then...

**T**HEY PASSED through Gilroy, elongatedly dismal. "Watch it," instructed Yes-

ter. "This is the place where the flycops study all night. If you see a squad car or anything that looks as though it might have orderlies in it, use your siren and step on the gas."

"I have a feeling we've used up all our quota of narrow escapes," said Victoria. "I wouldn't be surprised to go all the way to Alaska without being stopped."

"I would," muttered Cyrus. "Anyway, we're not headed for Alaska. Incidentally—I just happened to think—unless the consul sleeps in his office we won't be able to get hold of him tonight."

"Why not? I'll bet he'll be delighted to have a crew of mallies drop in on him."

Cyrus knew that it was quite irrational to be irritated at Yester's airiness. But he was exhausted, worn out, worried, driving the ambulance with a sore knee, while Stuart sat back there relaxed and chatted lightly. "I meant, how will you know where to find him?"

"Oh that? Nothing to it. Remember about a year or so ago, the Authorized Public Enlightenment Service—the apes—

gave him some rough publicity? Big pictures of his house in Atherton: 'Envoy of Unmedical State Cosy Among Doctors.' Almost as many MDs there as Secarros. And he was too much the bull-headed Briton to notice the jabs."

"You know where the house is?" asked Victoria.

"Near enough—don't let it worry you."

**E**ASY ENOUGH for you—your girl isn't pregnant, thought Cyrus. You aren't fighting to keep awake. Keep awake; that's right. Don't doze, don't drowze. Going too fast. Too neat: see hazards through, fall asleep, wreck—all dead. Fitting. Irony. Only hazards...not yet...through...

"Isn't an embassy, or whatever, considered part of the country it represents?" Victoria wanted to know.

"An embassy, but not whatever," answered Rald. "A consulate's just an office, like any other."

"San Jose bypass ahead," Yester informed him. "Might as well turn on the red light and floorboard it."

"What? Oh. Sure." More

speed. Stay awake. He fumbled with the knobs; the siren's wail came back into him, jarred him back almost to normal awareness. But the ululation soon grew accustomed and eventually narcotic; he nodded forward and jerked back. Stay awake.

Time must be passing. Miles. Still the lights and siren. No one told him to turn them off. Mustn't then. Leave them on. Speed. Hold the wheel. Stay awake...

Yester reached through and tapped him on the shoulder. "Switch them off and slow down. That's it. Now left, and take it easy. Mmm—no. Let me see..."

"Do you know where it is or don't you? Damn it, I don't want to drive a rubberneck bus."

"Easy does it. Try turning right here."

Easy does it turn right, turn left. You never could find a house around here, even if you knew what you were looking for. Wild goose chase. Who chased wild geese? Count the wild geese and fall asleep before you reached a hundred...

"Turn left and go slow.

Yes...almost sure. Mmmm. Whee—I should have been a dowser! That's it, all right."

"Nice," muttered Cyrus, braking, reaching to turn off the ignition.

"Hey, no! Can't stop here. Go ahead a couple of blocks and park. This thing's as conspicuous as a lighthouse in a fog."

Fog, thought Cyrus. Fog—to be sure. Fog: London Particular. Here we come. Only...

**H**E MUST have driven to the curb and stopped without remembering, because he heard Victoria rousing Hank. Faint excitement tingled in him, then dulled away. He could stay in the ambulance and lie down on the stretcher. Sleep. They didn't need him...

"Hey, wake up, will you? Wake up! Vicky, he's passed out on us."

*No, I haven't*, he wanted to say. *I'm just resting a moment. Just a moment.* Then he felt her lips on his face, her hands helping him out of the white jacket. "Just resting," he repeated.

"What's cooking now?"

asked Hank sleepily. "More meetings?"

"A meeting of minds—we hope," said Yester.

Cyrus sucked the cool air in. How many times could he revive, respond to a new stimulus, before he finally collapsed? Right now he was sleep-walking, no more. And Victoria...

"Well, here's where we take the lion by the horns—unicorn by the horn, I mean. No lights—we'll be a pleasant surprise."

"I wonder," said Victoria. "And are you sure this is the right place?"

"Pretty sure. We'll soon find out."

*Nice if it isn't, thought Cyrus. Suppose it's the home of some Ama bigshot. One look at us and he'll know what we are and holler for the cutes.* Nor was Stuart Yester preparing a more welcome reception by first pressing the doorbell with the heaviest of thumbs and then banging away at the wood.

## XI

**T**HE DOOR opened so violently that the chain across the six inches of space vibrated tautly. "What

the devil do you mean by such a damnable racket, ay? There's no call to bang a man's door apart in the middle of the night. Who are you anyway? Some blasted orderly or Medical Policeman on some nasty bit of business? Be off with you!"

The light behind him showed only tallness and bulk topped by an irregular shadow of uncombed hair. Cyrus got the impression that the chain was left on not for protection but to restrain the consul himself.

"Mr. Collitt?" Yester asked. "Mr. Wilfred Collitt?"

"Who the devil did you expect to find answering my front door—what's left of it—Dr. Crippen? I'm His Majesty's consul—diplomatic immunity and so on. You can safely assume my name's Collitt. I don't see what consequence my given name's to you."

"I meant no offence."

"Didn't you? No gentlemen is ever rude unintentionally. Now then..."

"We need your help," said Victoria simply.

"Ay? What's that? A woman? Help? What help?"

"May we come in and ex-

plain? I'm afraid we're a little conspicuous out here."

"You're speaking for them ay? No American man can state his business if there's a woman around to do it for him. Secretaries, nurses, mothers. No masculine responsibility in this country. How many are there of you? Can't see a thing out there."

"Myself, three men, and a child. We won't take much of your time..."

"You will take none of it tonight, Madam. If you've business with me, my office is open from nine to six. The English conduct business during office hours only, a practice which avoids the nervous conditions which Americans suffer from constantly."

"This lady is appealing for your protection," said Cyrus. "Surely courtesy..."

"**I** DON'T KNOW who you are to teach me manners," said the consul furiously. "Who are you, Sir? I say, who are you, ay?"

"My name will mean nothing to you. However it's Cyrus Tarn."

"Damned silly name, if you

ask me. British subject?"

"Ay?"

"I asked, 'Are you a British subject?' Simple question."

"No, I..."

"And the lady?"

"No I'm not, Mr. Collitt, but..."

"We're fellow members of the human race," said John Rald. "children of God, seeking your help because all men are brothers regardless of who presumes to rule them."

The consul made a gargling noise in his throat. "'God', by God. By God! Wake a man in the middle of the night, take his time, to tell him he has the fortune to share the world with you. Be off with you."

"We're appealing to the English sense of fair play," urged Yester. "Surely you won't turn us away without a hearing?"

"Come to my office. I'll hear you through. Goodnight, Sir. And take your foot out of my door before I-nip it off."

"Come on, Victoria. I was afraid it was-a faint hope..."

"Ay? What's that?"

"I was explaining to the lady..."

"Do you take me for a fool? I didn't think you were address-

ing a horse. What did you call her? Ay?"

"My name is Victoria Carling."

"Is it now? Is it indeed? Victoria, ay? I mean, it really is your name, not just something you picked up?"

"My father was a minister of the Gospel, and I've every reason to believe I was properly Christened."

"**W**ELL, WELL," muttered the consul resentfully. "I suppose it would have to be. Anything to keep a man from his bed. Even over-rated and unpredictable English sentimentality. Drop a tear for the nobs who have to do their own charing. Suppose my mother's name had been Alexandra instead? Well, come in. What are you waiting out there for? And I suppose these—these fellows may as well come in also." He unhooked the chain, held the door wide, closed and bolted it behind them.

"Why are people always locking us in or out?" wondered Hank. "You'd think we were dangerous characters or something."

Mr. Collitt whirled around

and stared at Hank. "Boy, I try not to hold American children responsible for their manners, but it is difficult. Hold your tongue."

"The boy meant no harm, brother," said John Rald mildly.

"I'm no brother of yours, Sir. Not even with a bend sinister. My father was a miner. He couldn't afford by-blows."

"Glad to hear it. Blessed are the poor."

"All the training I went through overcoming my background, and then to be banished here. You'd think they might have had the decency to send me to Bhutan or Antarctica." He led them through the doorway. A fluorescent bulb nervously flickered alight.

"What a pleasant room," exclaimed Victoria.

"Good enough. I sit here and read when I can't sleep." He went to a large desk and sat down, looking fretful. "And I certainly won't be able to now. Not for hours unless I take one of those abominable tablets. I detest being doped or drugged."

"**V**ERY SENSIBLE," remarked Rald. "I never

take stimulants or soporifics myself."

"You would if you were plagued by insomnia. Well, well. Victoria, ay? All right, I'll give you five minutes. What do you want?"

"A s y l u m," Victoria said quietly.

"Asylum? You're political refugees?"

"You could put it that way. We're what are known as mallies."

"L u n a t i c s," said Collitt. "You were right, boy. I needn't have locked the door—the dangerous characters were inside already."

"Brother, a lunatic is someone who sees things differently from the man who calls him so. Can you be sure you wouldn't be a mallie yourself if you were an American?"

"I wouldn't think of being an American."

"We're sane," said Cyrus wearily, "by any medical standards prevailing in free countries. The Ama calls us maladjusted because we are no more docile than the English were in 1215 or 1688. Or ever, for that matter."

"But asylum... Unthink-

able. Stretch the term political all you like, and it still won't cover the situation. You don't like doctors. Between us, I'm not too fond of them myself. Tried to make me stop reading at night. I was a scholarship boy. Had to study all night to catch up with the public school boys. Habit now—and insomnia. Doctors—take a pill! But they're your royalty, not ours. Prefer the House of Windsor myself—it's easier to control well-trained, genteel persons than a whole profession bent on cutting you up or making you do things for your own good. Very well, we are agreed on not liking doctors. Good-night."

"This is a matter of life and death," said Yester.

"**H**OW? DON'T fancy in-  
oculations? Or something of the sort? None of our business. You aren't British, you're obviously Americans—yet four adults and a child have the temerity to call it life and death because you don't like being physicked or psycho-analyzed."

"It's much more than that," said Yester. "And we're not



all asking for help. Only three of us—including Victoria and the boy."

"Why not all of you? And your families and friends? Why be so modest when you ask me to violate international law?"

"We have no families," said Victoria. "And our friends are staying to fight the medarchy."

"You shouldn't tell me such things," said the consul fretfully. He crossed the room to a buffet and returned with a bottle. His robe flabbed open, revealing thin white legs.

"Say," whispered Hank, "he hasn't got pajamas. Or else they shrank."

"Henry!"

Collitt filled his glass deliberately, held it up to the light, sipped. "Nightshirt," he said. "Flannel. There were no pajamas for coalminers' children. Soon as wear a straightjacket, anyway. So you want to go to England, boy?"

"I don't care. I want to go where Vicky goes. And Si."

"You wouldn't like it. You wouldn't like it at all. Cheek your elders there, my lad, or your headmaster, and you'll get the slipper or the cane be-

fore you can say John Dewey. And with American schooling you'd never pass the Eleven-plus examinations. No firsts at Oxford for you."

"I'm not scared," Hank muttered.

"Good. You're not quiet either. You will not speak in this house again unless I speak to you."

"Why not?" Hank was interested.

"Henry, do what Mr. Collitt says. I mean that."

**CYRUS JERKED** almost completely awake. He tried to take advantage of the momentary silence to say quickly, "We don't want to impose too greatly. If you could just help us get on board one of the English ships in port. . ."

"By heavens," said the consul. "By heavens!" He poured himself another drink, his hand shaking a trifle. "And that's what you call not imposing too greatly? Risk my job, my reputation, my years of trying to better myself, my mother's sacrifices. And that's all—*all*—you want."

"You wouldn't be the first Englishman to help people

fighting for their liberty. Byron..."

"You're not fighting, you're running. And damn Byron—lords can afford grand gestures that are just too expensive for common men. Back in 1958 an attache in Prague was soft enough to hide a Czech in the boot of his car. The fellow banged loudly on the bootlid at the border where newspaper photographers were waiting. Naturally the attache was fired by the F. O."

"We're not agents provocateur," Victoria said with weary coldness. "Do you imagine we'd use a child?"

"It's been known. But even if you could prove your good faith, I couldn't interfere in your country's affairs."

"Not even to save lives?"

"Whose life is in danger?"

"My unborn child's," said Victoria.

Rald and Yester looked at her. The consul lifted his glass, put it down. "Ah. Unauthorized pregnancy?"

**V**ICTORIA nodded slowly. Cyrus thought she had never looked so regal. "We have money for our passage,"

he put in, realizing immediately that he had said the wrong thing.

Collitt gave him a scathing stare and turned back to Victoria. "Where's your husband?"

She touched Cyrus' arm. "We'll be married as soon as we get to England. Or maybe the captain..."

The stare had been benevolent compared to the one Cyrus got now. "So that's the sort you are? Take advantage of young girls, ay? You monster!"

"Don't you dare call Cyrus a monster," cried Victoria.

"Ay? But the fellow sedu— Well, I like spirit in a girl. Three of my own—no boys. Sit down, my dear. Do you feel all right?"

"Yes. I mean, I think so. A little dizzy..."

"Have some brandy. Good thing for the nerves. Even helps insomnia sometimes."

"Thank you. I'm sorry I snapped at you."

"Quite all right. I daresay you don't find him a monster. Still... Well, what's done is done." His look at Cyrus con-

tradicted his statement of resignation.

"Cyrus wants to marry me," she said. "Give him a chance."

"This isn't a matrimonial clearing house. Who put me in this unhappy position by naming you Victoria?"

"**M**Y FATHER. He was a great admirer of that Queen. He was writing a history of the medarchy which the subcuties have got, but if we get to England I intend to rewrite and publish it."

"Freedom of speech, ay? Tell the truth and shame the devil? Publish and be damned, as Wellington said. Now look here. Suppose—just for argument's sake, you understand—suppose you get on a British ship and go to England. Well, then, your child will be born there. Can't get around that. And if he's born in England he'll be a subject of His Majesty the King. Can't help but be."

*Unless we register him at an American consulate,* thought Cyrus, keeping his mouth tightly shut.

"And if he's going to be a British subject—well, these

philosophical fellows say time is nonexistent—he's one right now for all practical purposes. What difference does a few months make? Yes, a British subject. As such it's my duty to aid him in every way. What?"

"Your reasoning's very logical," said Yester.

The consul glared at him. "Gilbert, sir. The great and only W. S. Gilbert. Not *my* reasoning. Now where were we? Oh yes. Duty to aid a presumptive British subject. Can't very well help him without helping you, my dear, ay?"

"Thank you. I was sure you would help us. Oh, thank you."

"No, no. I'm supposed to aid a British subject. And his mother. It's plain duty. Besides there's precedent. I recall the case of four Hungarians who would have been deported if one of the women hadn't been pregnant. The Home Office made an exception for her. Since we couldn't think of separating a family, we had to make an exception for her husband too. And then it would hardly be right to deport the other two just because they weren't expecting a baby. English justice. Now, let me see...

"Your sense of timing's convenient—almost suspicious. There's a ship in whose captain would give anything but his beard to cock a snook at the medarchy. Black beard, full and bushy—drives the orderlies and MPs mad. They tried to keep him from coming ashore. I had to protest. The whole crew—except one lad who couldn't—grew sympathetic beards. I could take you down to the docks in the counsular car. I have the pestilential orderlies in hand enough so won't ask anyone with me for their charts."

**V**ICTORIA was having some difficulty in speaking. "Oh... Mr. Collitt..."

"Silliest thing I've ever done. Reversion to childhood sentimentality, no doubt. Most inconvenient time and place I ever heard of to get fatherly."

"Oh, Mr. Collitt, please... You've been so unbelievably kind to me. But... Oh Mr. Collitt, I can't go without Hank and Cyrus."

The consul's face hardened. He took up his brandy again. "The boy, Henry—don't tell me your reverend father also

admired Harry the Eighth."

"No. I won't tell you anything but that I've taken care of him since he was born, and if the subcuties got hold of him they would do everything to make him talk. He knows too much, you see."

"I see, but it's none of my business, none of the Crown's business. If you people don't like the medarchy, why don't you get rid of it? You booted out George III fast enough when it suited you. If you hadn't been in such a beastly hurry, you might never had the Ama on your necks."

"You wouldn't expect me to leave a child to face..."

"Not the point, my dear, not the point at all. It isn't the terrors of the medarchy that make the system so ghastly. Every regime has its seamy side. When you come right down to it, everything we've done hasn't been... well, everything it ought. But however we've gotten off the track, we've always stood basically for decency and individual rights. Hypocrisy, it's called by those who don't believe it's better to fall short of a high standard than conform to a low

one. The fundamental evil of the healthfare state is not the wretched things done out of an excess of zeal, but the existence and dominance of that kind of zeal in the first place—the zeal to impose a pattern on people for their own good. To lump individuals in groups, treat humans as though they were animals to be cared for, fattened, and eventually put out of their misery.”

**A**H, THOUGHT Cyrus, another congenital malle, born in the wrong country. You can always tell us by our outstanding symptom: loquacity.

John Rald said, “Brother, you’re right. No man should have the dreadful pride to play God. or to rule another.”

“That’s nonsense, absolute nonsense. However I’ve no intention of getting into an argument with *you*. Question now is the status of the boy. Family ties—precedent, you remember. Uncle of a British subject. It’s stretching things but we’ll take him along. That settles everything, ay?”

“You haven’t said anything about Cyrus.”

“Victoria, I’ll join you later.

Don’t worry about me. I’ll get a chart and the other papers and try for the next ship. Everything will be all right.”

“Will it? Will it indeed? By heaven, I knew you were what you are the first time I laid eyes on you. You have a shifty look. First you lead this poor girl astray—then, when you’ve had your will of her, you’re ready to desert her and sneak off. Next boat indeed! I know your kind—probably got your eye on some other innocent already. Well, this time it won’t wash—you’ll go with her and the captain shall marry you if I have to tie you up myself.”

“Oh thank you, Mr. Collitt. Thank you, thank you.”

“Nonsense. Man’s a monster—always said so. I’ll see he marries you, my dear—after that, he can cast himself overboard, and good riddance. If I’m sending His Majesty a new subject, the least I can do is to see that he’s legitimate. By the by—when you get Home...”

“I know,” said Hank. “She’ll have to go to a doctor.”

“A good doctor,” amended Cyrus.

“A very good doctor,” agreed Victoria.