

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

FEBRUARY 1957

ALL NEW
STORIES

CHILDREN OF FORTUNE

D. A. Jourdan

SMALL LORDS

FREDERIK POHL

25¢





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Volume 4

February, 1957

Number 6

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, February, 1957, published February, May, August, and November, by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copy 25¢; yearly subscription \$1.00. Entire contents copyright 1956 by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self addressed envelopes to insure return if not accepted, and while reasonable care will be extended in handling them, it is understood that they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in U. S. A.



The citizen picked up a stone, very reluctantly.

In a world where the rulers were picked by chance, war had been truly outlawed, for any man might become one of the Fortunate — that is, if the Fortunate were really picked by chance!

CHILDREN OF FORTUNE

Novel of Worlds To Come

by **D. A. JOURDAN**

(author of "Change Of Color")

illustrated by Freas

TRYL MOVED with awe in his skin-soft plastic sandals over the rare marble of the palace floors. Like other citizens, he had seen reproductions of the dwellings of the Fortunate; but no picture had prepared him for the sense of peace conferred by this vastness of unused space. Always, among the citizens of the 25th century, life was teeming, hectic.

The servant woman, who, accompanied by the six-man palace guard, had been leading him along a wide hall stopped finally beside a broad, carved, double doorway. She opened one of the doors, gestured him to enter.

Inside Tryl hesitated; the door beside him thudded softly shut. Though the room was airy and cool, Tryl, sensing that he was alone in the presence of a member of the Fortunate, started to sweat.

"If you're going to faint," the voice

was a girl's and it was divided between amusement and annoyance, "you'd better come over here to the bed. Our floors are unyielding and I shouldn't want anything to happen to you until I've tested your vaunted talent."

Under the sarcasm; Tryl found himself regaining his poise. He moved toward the luxurious, curtained bed. Dmen, his best friend had, always insisted that the Fortunates were no different from ordinary human beings.

"I'll try not to faint," Tryl said; "but please remember that I have never even seen a member of the Fortunate, much less treated one..."

"I know. Blame it on this special ability you're said to have." The small, brownhaired girl in the rumpled green overall eased herself higher on her pillows, in order to see him better. She grabbed at the icebag on her head, just as it started to slide off, and

looked at Tryl doubtfully. "I suppose this is a mistake on my part," she admitted. "You probably won't be able to help me any more than the doctors, and you'll probably never again be contented as a result of this exposure to the Fortunate."

"I may even," Tryl suggested wryly, "find myself contracting headaches in an effort to imitate you. . ."

The girl looked at him. "Are you making fun of me?" She sounded incredulous. "It would not be pious for an ordinary citizen to make fun of a Fortunate," she warned.

"I could never make fun of anyone in pain," Tryl replied, gently.

"Well, I *am* in pain!" The girl sat up suddenly, ignoring the sliding ice-bag. She flung her body violently forward until her tangled brown hair rested on her knees. "Do something!"

Exactly as he would have done for any ordinary citizen with a headache, Tryl made her lie back and proceeded to stroke her temples. And the girl, like any other person in pain that Tryl touched, knew relief, promptly fell asleep. Tryl smiled inwardly at the thought of Dmen's triumph at this further vindication of his theory—that the Fortunate were physically and mentally no different from citizens.

For one moment, looking down at the pretty relaxed face under the dishevelled hair Tryl had a fleeting desire to kiss the girl's slightly-parted lips. Then, shocked at how far he had come from the almost superstitious awe with which he had first approached his unique assignment, he hurriedly backed away from the bed and let himself out through the double door.

THE SERVANT woman rose from a bench near the door and came over to Tryl. The six-man palace guard stood quietly by, alert as so many dogs—and, Tryl guessed with approximately the same degree of intelligence. The woman said, "My mistress wants something?"

Tryl studied her incurious face. Dmen had said that not only congenital feeble minded were used as servants to the Fortunate. He claimed that when there were not enough low intellects—or when some special service was required—the Fortunates did not hesitate to induce the limited mentality that was requisite for their servants. It would be terrible if it were true. Tryl said, "Your mistress wants only to sleep; when she wakes, she will feel better."

Again—this time even more fearfully—accompanied by the guard, Tryl followed the woman thru the palace. He was finally returned to the Island Security Department, the usual combination of prison and hospital.

But here, what he most dreaded—that they should subject him to treatment of some kind—did not happen. Almost before he was able to realize his unbelievable good luck, he was quickly and efficiently returned from the fabulous beauty of the Island of the Fortunate to his own meager niche in the filthy, drab metropolis of Tole. He was dazed with the narrowness of his escape.

The instant he opened the door to the apartment-dormitory he shared with seven other men, he was yanked inside; and before the door had closed behind him, he was enfolded in a rib-cracking embrace. "You're back!" Dmen exulted. "Alive!"

For the first time, Tryl allowed himself to realize what a tremendous adventure he had been through. "Why aren't you at dinner," he reproved Dmen. "Did you imagine going hungry would bring me back the more surely?" He mocked gently, "Is this some sort of sacrifice, such as your ancient sects might have offered?"

Dmen burst out laughing. "And now I know it's the same you!" he said, clapping Tryl on the back. "They haven't harmed you, thank Fortune!" He stopped suddenly, shook his head in confusion. "Habit," he muttered

angrily. "But I don't believe in it!"

Automatically Tryl glanced toward the closed door. Though the piety of the people necessarily varied, the worship of Fortune was worldwide and government ordained. But Dmen had he had long since decided that the authorities could not watch every man constantly for impiety; their greatest danger would not be any of the dreaded automatic watching devices, but a human enemy.

Tryl said uncertainly, "I don't understand it myself. Why they allowed me to retain the memory of contact with a member of the Fortunate..."

Dmen's grey eyes narrowed in disbelief. "Are you trying to tell me that you know what happened? That you can recall the experience?"

"I'll never forget it," Tryl said reminiscently.

Dmen frowned. "But no one is permitted to retain the memory of any contact with the Fortunate—not even the go-betweens who carry their orders. The memory is always removed. Why should they make an exception of you?"

"Doctor Flag must have told them about me. And though he hasn't said anything to me, I think he suspects that it isn't just by touching people that I get my results. He probably warned them that fooling with my mind in any way might impair my peculiar ability..." He grinned at Dmen, felt his own ribs gingerly. "So will you please try to remember I'm a fragile flower? And handle me gently?"

Dmen ignored his baiting. "They wouldn't have allowed you on the island—near 'em—without first submitting you to examination to assure themselves you hadn't—say, turned yourself into a human bomb, or a germ disseminating station.

"That they did," Tryl said nonchalantly. "Physical and mental examination; but no erasure of memory."

DMEN GRABBED at Tryl's shoulders, his broad, rugged face expressing horror that slowly deadened into hopelessness. "But, Tryl! If they gave you any kind of mental examination at all, they must have uncovered your work..."

"Why should they have?" Tryl objected. "They were interested in my security fitness, not my research." He frowned, said pensively, "Anyhow, it's so completely harmless that if I didn't think the authorities would order me to stop work in it, I'd confess now."

"Tryl! Even hypnosis is forbidden. Mass hypnosis—"

"I know," Tryl sighed. "It's just that I'm not the type for a life of crime." His grin was rueful. "Not even crime for a good cause..."

"They've probably discovered it, but they're just lying low to try and learn your objective," Dmen said gloomily. "They'd never believe that anyone would be so altruistic—or so stupid—" he added with sudden bitterness, "as to go around hypnotizing people just for the people's benefit."

Tryl loosened his overall at the neck, and stretched out on the second bunk from the door in the line of eight bunks. "Now, that, Dmen, is where you're short-sighted." He gazed up at the ceiling, arms behind his head. "All the sadism in the world emanates from people in pain—some kind of pain. Cure the pain and you cure the cruelty." He glanced sideways at Dmen. "So I'm doing—or trying to do—this for my own benefit. Only," he sighed, "one at a time, it's slow work..."

Dmen had not moved from the center of the floor. "I suppose the Fortunate have nothing to do with it. The..."

Tryl swung his sandaled feet to the floor, glanced from Dmen to the closed door.

"They won't be back for another ten minutes. Answer my question."

Tryl rested a foot on the bunk edge,

embraced his knee, his eyes thoughtful. "They dress splendidly and live in unbelievable luxury; but I'm convinced they're exactly like us," he admitted. "You're right about that."

"And what of them?" Dmen insisted. "If limited mentalities could respond efficiently to the more complex tasks, every citizen would be mentally castrated. And you know it." Dmen's voice was unimpassioned but relentless. "What about a minute segment of the people exploiting all the rest... Condemning them to the drab, bare life of animals?"

"How do we know they're ruthless?" Tryl looked harassed. "Or, tell me a better way..."

Dmen sat down on Tryl's bunk beside him. "What makes you so sure they didn't learn anything about your work on mass hypnosis?"

"There's no way of my knowing—naturally; I wasn't conscious. But you can only find out so much about people through their unconscious, unless you know what you're probing for... All the Island Security cared about was whether I was dangerous to them. If my research had been intended for their harm, it would have shown up; but since it wasn't—" He shrugged.

"But what about me?" Dmen said skeptically. "You and you live-ware objectives are fine; your Fortune will protect you." He grimaced. "You believe in it, but I have no such protection. I hate the very word 'Fortunate'; I'd like to wipe it out..."

IT WAS an old argument; nor was Tryl's defense new. "There must always be rulers and ruled. You, Dmen, through your study of ancient ways, have decided that the ideal system would be government by those most qualified by their virtue and intelligence—a Platonic System, I believe you called it. But it wouldn't last; the more virtuous and intelligent men are, the less likely they are to

realize the cunning and dangerous minds of their fellows—and so the less likely to remain long in control..." Tryl's smile was bitter but resigned.

"But why the Fortunate!"

Tryl grinned at his friend's heat. "Why not? At least we of the 25th century are honest. For centuries there were kings, selected—they claimed—by divine right. Then, for a brief period, an attempt was made by a people of the North American continent to demand some degree of achievement as requisite to the right to govern. It didn't last. A European idea ignited Asia—and the whole world eagerly submitted themselves to rule by force, sugar-coating it by the pretense that it was politically expedient. But always, men have been ruled by chance masquerading as virtue."

Tryl stood up, stretched. "We of the 25th century have torn the mask of virtue from chance. Men must have rulers, and there is never any justice in the selection of those rulers. But at least, by leaving the selection of our rulers to Fortune, we are honest about our weakness..."

Dmen looked up at him grimly. "How do we *know* the Fortunates are honest about administering their Fortune to the people?"

Tryl was finally impatient. "What do you mean, 'how do we know?'"

Tryl rarely grew angry, but Dmen persisted. "How do we know that, when they say which citizen shall be raised to the Fortunates, and which shall be sacrificed to the Mass-Guilt, they are truly selecting the names by pure chance? How do we know they aren't just elevating some and destroying some for their own personal reasons?"

Tryl was not only angry; he was alarmed. "Their own guilt would destroy them if they were not honest." He said urgently, "Without some trust, there would always be anarchy and chaos. Some place, men must trust! There is no other way!"

"Trust anything? Even a lie?"

"You have no way of knowing it's a lie!"

"And you," Dmen returned, "have no way of knowing it's the truth." He was now the calmer of the two. "You're wonderfully credulous, Tryl. The rare citizens selected to become Fortunates are invariably the most useful. And the more frequent ones selected to be Mass-Guilt sacrifices are, with equal consistence, trouble-makers who might spark a rebellion." Dmen's tone was gloomy. "If they selected me to be Mass-Guilt sacrifice, you'd probably believe it was pure Fortune..."

The door opened, and three of their roommates came in. Apu, the smallest of the three apparently sensed what the silence marked. "What? You two quarrelling?" His narrowed black eyes focused on the bigger of the two men. "Why weren't you at dinner, Dmen?"

The State disapproved of strong, close friendships between citizens. Dmen showed no expression. "I wasn't hungry."

Apu snorted. "Too afraid for Tryl!" His gaze swung to Tryl and he made an effort to sound amiable. "How did it go, Tryl? If we touch you, will some Fortune rub off on us?"

Tryl did not smile back. "If you touch me," he said coldly, "who knows what may rub off on you..."

Apu backed away from Tryl. Silenced, he returned his small, mean eyes to Dmen; but he did not say anything further to either of the men.

- 2 -

DURING THE night, each time Tryl woke, he awoke thinking of danger—danger to Dmen. Though any man not genuinely pious was in jeopardy as a non-conformist, Tryl knew that Dmen was right about being the most likely to suffer for his

views. Doctor Flag, Tryl's superior, valued him too highly to be easily deprived of his services; but Dmen was a transport pilot, easily replaced.

Unwillingly, Tryl acknowledged to himself that Dmen was right about the regime under which they lived being far from perfect. He was right, too, that the Mass-Guilt sacrifice was its worst feature. But it was equally undeniable that, since the Fortunates had compelled the Mass-Guilt sacrifice, there had been less widespread violence.

For centuries men had been aware that the price they paid for their civilization was a frustrated kill-instinct that burst out periodically in wars. Now, man's need to spill the blood of his fellows was satisfied by the sacrificial murder of one man by a group of his fellows.

No one knew which citizen would be chosen victim, or when the sacrifice would be held, or in what geographical location—though it had been noticed that the sacrifices were being held more frequently, as time went on.

All citizens were required to attend and watch the sacrifices, even though only a small percentage of them could actually fling the stones that resulted in the victim's death. But all participated spiritually; the penalty for non-participation was death beside the victim, and an armed guard was always present to enforce it. Thus all citizens acquired and expiated their blood-guilt; and were, supposedly, at peace. Tryl turned restlessly, unable to sleep.

But all his worrying was wrong. Early the next morning, when the Tole Security Patrol pounded on their door, it was not Dmen they wanted. Tryl was almost relieved to go along with them himself. They could browse as they liked among the channels of his mind—conscious and unconscious—and still not find the slightest degree of treason against the regime of the Fortunates.

A low degree of piety, yes—perhaps even impiety. But until he knew that the regime of the Fortunates was more evil than some other system, Tryl had no wish to replace them. Doctor Flag's ideal—the greatest good to the greatest number—made sense enough for him.

The guards did not take him to the "Information Center"—as the examination section of the Security Department was called, by citizens in no immediate likelihood of visiting it. Instead they again forwarded him to the Island of the Fortunate.

Again he was drugged and questioned, Tryl imagined, as to his fitness to be permitted within that precious area. However, since he was no longer conscious he could only guess at the sort of questioning he received.

Whatever they asked, he knew he must have passed their tests again, since accompanied by guards, he followed the woman servant through the spacious palace once more.

Partly to shatter their solemnity, and partly because he suspected that he might never enjoy even such relative privacy, Tryl decided to test his research on mass hypnotism. Whimsically, as he passed into the Fortunate's room, he mentally ordered all six of the guards and the woman servant to wink at him when he next emerged from the room. In unison.

This time Tryl approached the bed unbidden. This time the girl was wearing a fresh, pink, ruffled overall: The bedclothes, too, were smooth and neat. Tryl stood, waiting for her to speak. The arrogance with which she had viewed him before was no longer noticeable.

SHE BRUSHED her long, curly hair back from her face so that it fell attractively across her shoulders, gazed up at him for a second and then lowered her eyes to her hands, resting on the coverlet. "I have a headache," she said in a low tone of voice.

Tryl did not speak or move.

The girl glanced up at him. "You don't believe me?"

Tryl said mildly, "I didn't say I didn't believe you." He restrained a smile. "Shouldn't I believe you?"

Back again in the low tone, the girl said reluctantly, "I'm a liar..." She sighed. "Not usually; but here..."

"Why?"

"Because my father would not have sent for you if I told the truth."

It took Tryl a moment to realize what she meant by the word 'father.' No citizen knew who his father—or mother—was. The Fortunates, of course, were different. He said gently, "And the truth is?"

"My name is Blis," the girl said formally. "I wanted to thank you for making me feel better..."

Tryl said, equally formally, "You are very gracious." He added truthfully, "It always gives me pleasure to help anyone." He bowed and turned toward the door.

"Wait!" Blis said anxiously; "what if I should need you again?"

It was impossible for Tryl not to smile. She was a Fortunate; she could send for him at any time and never allow him to return, if she chose. And if there were the slightest conflict between his will and hers—or between the will of any Fortunate and any citizen—a simple form of lobotomy permanently resolved that conflict.

It was not an attractive situation for Tryl or the rest of the world; but without some form of submission to authority, there would be nothing but anarchy, and an even larger destruction. Tryl shrugged. "It is most unlikely you will ever need me again..."

"It was unlikely that I, a Fortunate, should have needed you, a citizen, this time..." Blis' voice was firm, even. "But yours is a rare talent, Tryl..."

Tryl was silent. His talent was valuable—but dangerous; the less that was said about, the better.

Blis went on thoughtfully, "I have my own plane. And once—it is forbidden—once I left the Island of the Fortunate, masquerading as a citizen. I wanted to learn wherein they were different from us."

Tryl still did not answer. It was a strange and reckless thing for a girl to have done, but Blis was apparently a person of sensitivity and conscience. If she were, these things would drive her into such behavior. At least it explained where she had learned of him.

After a pause Blis went on. "Your record, Tryl, shows that you were trained to be a physician. For several years, you were an excellent physician, and then, suddenly, you asked to be excused from your duties. You begged to be given physical labor, menial labor, anything but the task for which you had been trained."

Tryl did not raise his eyes to her, so he could not see her face.

Patently, Blis went on. "The government, Tryl, naturally does not like training people who refuse to carry out their function. If one of your instructors, the famed Doctor Flag, had not intervened in your behalf—pointed out that you would be equally useful as his assistant—you might have found yourself at the type of work you requested. In an Isolation Section..."

Tryl, in his light, loose overall, was sweating more copiously than when he had first stepped into the room the day before. Blis, or anyone else who was interested, could find out anything they wanted about him. His record was wide open—and badly blotted.

He could feel her eyes on him. He still didn't look at her. She said, "What the record does not show, Tryl, is *why* you asked to be excused from your task as physician..." Blis said quietly, "I am requesting information, Tryl?"

TRYL LOOKED at her finally, helplessly. "The record must also show the extensive examinations I was

put through; and that none of them ever explained why I couldn't keep on working as doctor..." He did not evade her eyes. "You don't think that I know the answer to something the most profound examination couldn't reveal?"

The girl's face relaxed into a tiny, relieved smile. "Tryl," she said, in an entirely different tone, "yesterday when I was in pain, your touch brought freedom from that pain..." She flung back the coverlet and stood up. "Today," she said, looking at him mischievously, "I am in no pain." She came over to him in two, quick, graceful steps, put her arms around his neck. "I am curious to know what your touch will do under these new circumstances..."

Tryl, kissing her, knew that it was what he had wanted to do from the first moment he saw her small willful mouth.

Later, when they were finally ready to part, Blis said to him tenderly, "You cay go now, my Tryl; but not for long..."

Tryl was suddenly, belatedly aware of how unheard of it was for a citizen to do anything as fantastic as to love a Fortunate. He said nervously, "What do you mean?" Their idyl was over; there would be no reason—no excuse—for his ever seeing Blis again.

"Nothing you need be afraid of." Blis placed his hand against her cheek, then turning her head quickly, kissed his palm. "Only," she smiled secretly, "that I have a feeling you may soon be selected to become a Fortunate..."

Tryl tried to hide his horror. "My chances of that," he reminded fatuously, "are one in several billion..." He was remembering what Dmen had said about his credulity. He knew he wanted Blis, that he had never desired a female so strongly. But much as he wanted her, he was horrified by the possibility at which she was hinting. It would, he thought, be less sickening to be surgically prepared for her. Only

she did not want him as a mindless servant.

Watching his face, Blis said carefully, "Tryl, the Fortunates are permitted the luxury of a permanent connection..." She flushed. "If they wish it..." Painfully, she continued to explain, "We mate from choice and we can keep our children..."

"I know. You are permitted." —Tryl searched for the word—"a family."

Blis nodded. "We are the Fortunate; it is one of the privileges."

Tryl frowned, thinking about Dmen. Through trickery and Fortune, they had managed to remain together, since their school days. But their friendship was a constant threat; permanent loyalties were forbidden to citizens; the Isolation Sections were peopled largely by those who disobeyed.

Blis said persuasively, "You would be very happy here, Tryl; I would make you happy."

Tryl's frown deepened. She was leaving him no opportunity to misunderstand, and no illusions as to Fortune. Though he desired her, he made his voice cold. "It would mean leaving everyone I know..."

Blis' small, warm face turned equally aloof. She said remotely, "Who can tell what Fortune wills? In any case," she shrugged. "You would have nothing to say about it..." She looked at him steadily. "My love, however, is not compulsory." She nodded toward the door. "You may go now, Tryl; but you will soon return to the Island, I think."

LEAVING, Tryl could almost hear what she had left unspoken; he would return soon and remain forever. Her love might not be compulsory, but there was no escape from sacrifice to the Mass-Guilt; and equally, no escape from elevation to the Fortunate. Not that it was conceivable that any man should not want to become one of the Fortunate—except himself. He, Tryl,

did not want it; not this way; not unless it was his honest chance-chosen Fortune.

As he closed the door of Blis' room behind him, he was startled to see every man of the waiting palace guard—and the servant woman—solemnly wink at him, in unison. For one embarrassed moment, he thought that they must have been listening at the door of Blis' room; then he remembered his irreverent experiment in mass hypnosis. Apparently, the experiment was successful. However, these were limited mentalities.

During his return to Tole, Tryl concentrated on trying to recall what had made it impossible for him to continue as physician. Blis' words strongly suggested that Dmen's accusation was true. Apparently the Fortunates were dishonest in their administration of Fortune. If they were, and if there was ever to be any relief from their rule, it would be most likely to be found in something that had escaped their understanding.

Yet, in every way Tryl knew himself to be an average, ordinary citizen. Like every other child—except the Fortunates—he had been conceived, born, raised, and educated by the government. The creation of progeny, for the betterment of the species, was state-ordered and state-regulated. However, sometimes exceptionally-enamoured couples cared enough about each other to conceive, even knowing that the child would be taken from them at birth.

The state had no objection—so long as the same two people never conceived more than one infant. Disobedience of this law resulted in destruction of both children, for two children by the same parents—siblings—posed the possibility of a loyalty that might threaten the state.

Naturally every citizen, Tryl included, liked to think he was the product of such a "love" union. But there was no possible way of knowing, since

all children were taken by the state at birth and raised in groups.

Later, as personalities and intellects began to show signs of difference—and they always did, no matter how uniform the environment,—tests were applied to select children for whatever they were best suited for.

Tryl could honestly think of nothing that might explain what had happened to him a year ago. Until that time he had been perfectly normal; he was certain he had always like his work. But one morning he had awakened knowing positively that he could work as a doctor no longer.

He had not lied, either to Blis or to his examiners, as to his ignorance of why he could not continue as doctor. Luckily for Tryl, Doctor Flag—suspecting Tryl's odd ability to dissipate pain without either drugs or medicine—had pleaded to be given Tryl's as assistant.

He descended the plane at Tole airport and headed for the nearest Food Center. Romance—even with a Fortune—still had the customary effect of making him hungry. He showed the proper clerk the identification tattoo on his arm and went in to the noon meal.

He ate quickly, thinking with some satisfaction, that at least Doctor Flag should no longer be in jeopardy because of having defended him. It was frightening how easily it might have turned out the opposite way.

Finishing, he hurried to the hospital and to the man to whom he owed so much.

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THE HEAVY-SET, grey haired man bending over the bed was not aware of Tryl's soft-footed entrance. When he did see him his voice was exasperated. "Tryl. Good; come here."

Tryl stood beside him while the older man scowled down at the bulky,

unconscious female in the bed. Her moaning lessened as they stood there.

Doctor Flag said curtly, "What took you so long? It's not good for either her or the baby to fill them full of a lot of anaesthetic."

Under Tryl's touch, the woman stopped her moaning completely; her breathing became that of the peaceful sleeper.

Flag's scowl faded. "Why didn't you do that long ago?" he demanded of Tryl, with mock severity.

Tryl started to answer him seriously. "I'm sorry, Doctor Flag, but I was—"

"No, no," Flag interrupted, gesturing; "I was only joking. You were away on duty; that's all I need to know, eh?" He lowered his chin and regarded Tryl through the upper part of his bifocals. "Right, Tryl?" He grinned. "You were away on duty..."

Tryl was silent. Doctor Flag knew what was going on, and was pleased. He, Tryl, would be pleased, too, if the price of his own good Fortune would not be his belief in the honesty of Fortune.

As they walked down the hall Flag commented moodily, "What I wish you could teach me, Tryl, is how you work your magic. I used to think you needed to touch people. Lately, your just being near them seems to help..."

Tryl glanced at him quickly. Their favorite game was investigating his odd talent. Tryl, too, had noticed that lately his mere presence seemed to convey the relief—although he had always been careful to continue to pretend that it was his touch, that did the trick. The state did not approve of mental tricks, considering them impious.

Flag went on gloomily, "Every year, females have a harder time with their babies; yet our breeding is supposed to be an improvement. We're supposed to be getting better control of nature all the time..." He scowled. "Something's wrong..."

"Maybe," Tryl suggested hesitantly, "the babies are not coming along the lines that nature intends..."

Flag grinned at Tryl. "How many ways," he demanded in good natured sarcasm, "are there for babies to come?" Why Tryl was silent, Flag said seriously, "Perhaps I know what you mean, Tryl, but what can I do? I'm only a doctor..." He sighed. "This is the way they want it."

'They,' of course, were the Fortunate. But if they actually thought this form of breeding improved the species, it was hypocritical of them not to allow it themselves. Whether or not it improved the species, it did strengthen the state by eliminating the family; people with no strong loyalties had no reason to fight for anything.

Tryl wondered how many people knew that the Fortunate did not follow the breeding techniques they required of the citizens. He asked recklessly, "Do you think they breed this same way?"

Doctor Flag glanced nervously up and down the corridor, but they were alone. "Who knows what they do?" His tone was fearful but dogged. "But if they do not, it would be a cruel thing for them to make us..."

Like animals, Tryl thought, angrily. But how could he object to their ways unless he had something better to substitute. Dmen would say that exposure of a lie was a form of truth. Dmen liked to say that man's only similarity to the admirable god-figures with which he liked to compare himself lay in his devotion to the truth.

Dmen said, scornfully, that willingly to deviate from the truth, as men knew it to be, was to become lower than the animals, who at least did not know what the truth was:

Tryl knew that the people submitted to the rule of the Fortunate because there was less carnage under it than ever in the past. Again, Tryl

could hear Dmen's insistent thought—that to citizens of honor, life without honor was less attractive than death with it...

ON HIS WAY home to the apartment-dormitory Tryl deliberately delayed, in order to run into Dmen, who finished his plane run later than he finished at the hospital.

But when Tryl neared the building, Dmen was already there, hurried toward him. "I've been waiting for you," he said with irritation. "I got early especially so as to have a private word with you."

"And, I," Tryl grinned ruefully, "dawdled so as to run in to you..."

"What goes on with you and the Fortunate?" Dmen demanded fearfully. "Are you still the same Tryl?"

Tryl shivered a trifle but forced himself to hold his smile. "The same and better," he said cheerfully. "You'll say nothing of this, Dmen, but set your mind at ease. I seem to have made a good impression on the Fortunate whose headache I cured..."

"A female!" Dmen gasped presciently, in a tone of doom.

"A beautiful girl," Tryl echoed, dreamily reminiscent.

"They haven't raised a citizen to the Fortunate for many years," Dmen said thoughtfully. "They might take you..."

"She's hard to resist," Tryl admitted. "Charming and human. I wish I didn't have to..."

"Why should you?" Dmen stared at Tryl. "If ever a man deserved good Fortune, that man is you."

Tryl hesitated. He said reluctantly, "It might be a way to do some good. For you..."

"I'm going to need it. They had me in to the Information Center today..." Tryl's heart skipped a beat. Apu had turned Dmen in; this was what he feared most. Dmen finished, "That they let me go proves nothing." He nodded over his shoulder toward

their doorway. "Because we're again popular with Tole Security."

Tryl hoped that they wanted him again. Irrelevantly, he remarked, "At the Fortunate's palace this time I hypnotized a patrol of six men and the servant woman. Simultaneously. All limited mentalities, though, I think."

Dmen looked less gloomy. "Perhaps you really are Fortunate!" He looked at Tryl with growing enthusiasm. "Tryl, if you're selected to be a Fortunate, I'll believe they're honest after all!"

It was ironic that exactly what would convince Dmen that the Fortunates were honest would prove them liars to Tryl. He said non-committally, "Once, Dmen, you thought I was—some sort of a layer-on of hands, you called it; a holy man. But since what I do is merely hypnosis, and does not really require any laying-on of hands, that disproves your romantic theory..."

"Not at all," Dmen contradicted; "I remember clearly. They called them prophets because they could foretell events. And the best ones—like you—didn't have to touch each person to affect them—"

Tryl made a disgusted noise. "I can't foretell whether it's going to rain tomorrow!" But he did know, miserably, that Dmen was in for trouble.

"I understand it now," Dmen glowed, undeterred. "These prophets must have been mass hypnotists like you... But functioning only under the right circumstances..."

"A prepared audience," Tryl said cynically. "Or a good dark night." He wished he could help Dmen; do something. What good was a talent that couldn't help his best friend.

Fleeing from the Security guards was little help in a world that required a citizen to show his identification before he could eat. All food had to be consumed on the premises that served it. A man could remain hidden for as

long as he could go without eating; no longer.

"Listen, Dmen," Tryl said angrily, helplessly, "if you are sent to an Isolation Section—I'm coming, too. My lovely Fortunate can look elsewhere for a playmate..." It was childish promise; he had no idea how he could accomplish it. But it was the kind of promise Dmen would make to him, and keep.

"You're crazy." Dmen smiled indulgently.

"Somehow!" Tryl's tone was stubborn. "I couldn't love anyone connected with your persecution, no matter how much I liked them..."

Dmen laughed out loud. He made a sudden right about-turn, started pulling Tryl in the direction of their apartment. "We may as well know the worst," he said. He added reasonably, "And, Tryl, don't blame the female for the regime. Even I can be that fair..."

BACK AT their apartment, four of their roommates and the Tole Security guard watched them enter in an awed silence. Tryl noted with a sinking heart that the guard was much larger than customary for an arrest. They must consider Dmen very dangerous to send a dozen men for him.

Tryl hesitated at the door, but Dmen, more resigned, came ahead on into the room. He ignored his roommates and looked at the stripmarked overall of the senior member of the guards present. "I'm Dmen," he said calmly; "I suppose you want me?"

The guard cleared his throat. "Also," he glanced at Tryl and then dropped his eyes, "Tryl." In the silence Dmen's agonized gaze swung from Tryl to the door, though both men knew how brief their respite would be even if they escaped. The guard continued, "Tryl has been selected to be raised to the Fortunate..."

Dmen exhaled noisily in relief. "Tryl!" he exploded. "I knew it! I

always knew it was your Fortune! Now I can believe in Fortune!"

Grimly, Tryl demanded of the guard, "And why is Dmen wanted?"

The guard's voice was no less awed. "Dmen had been selected for sacrifice to the Mass-Guilt..."

Tryl's heart stopped beating. Under his horrified stare Dmen shrugged. "It's my Fortune," he calmed Tryl. He smiled regretfully, "Different from yours, Tryl, but still, my Fortune..."

Tryl seized Dmen's arm, tried to drag him to the door.

The guard barred their way. "Forgive me," he said respectfully, "but I must bring you in; it's my duty."

Furiously, Tryl wished the man would take out his patriotic devotion in singing the national hymn, "*Fortune's Pawn Am I*." He wished they would all sing it; it would give Dmen and himself a chance to escape.

Astonishingly, at his thought, every man in the room started singing. It took Tryl two of the six verses to realize that they were responding to his mental suggestion.

Dmen—shocked, too—stared at Tryl. "Are they crazy?"

"No." Tryl said tautly; "I made them do it." He moved the unresisting, lustily singing guard away from the door, nodded to Dmen. "Come on; let's go."

Dmen spread his legs stubbornly. Tryl couldn't budge him. "Where? And why?"

"Anyplace." Tryl cried. "Do you want to be stoned to death?"

Dmen made a face. "I don't like the idea. But what can I do? It's my Fortune..."

"Not unless you want it." The men were beginning the last verse, and Tryl didn't know how much more mental suggestion he could get them to accept. He said desperately, "Will you come?"

"No." Dmen looked at Tryl with affection. "I know you, Tryl. You would give up your good Fortune, throw it

into the balance to equalize my bad Fortune, but I won't let you do it." He said severely, "Anyhow, it would be impious to attempt to alter one's Fortune..."

"That's all a hoax!" Tryl was furious. "You were right before; it's nothing but a lie! The Fortunatees use their so called chance-chosen Fortune to perpetuate their own regime!"

The men's voices were rising to the high note of the national hymn. Dmen's voice was a warm, baritone counter-point. "Since Fortune has chosen to benefit you," he said stubbornly, "I feel that I have faith in it..."

Helplessly, Tryl watched the singers come to the end of the hymn. The men studied their surroundings with the confused look of people who have dozed off for a moment, and feel that they missed something.

THE SENIOR guard apparently decided to ignore whatever had happened, since both Tryl and Dmen were still there. He asked Dmen nervously, "Will you come now?"

Dmen went to him, smiling encouragement at Tryl. "Willingly."

After Dmen had left, it no longer seemed important to Tryl what he did. Unresistingly he accompanied the other guard detail—his personal honor guard—to the Island of the Fortunate. With Dmen gone, it no longer mattered where he went.

The following morning, a servant ushered him to a rose-scented garden. Blis, dressed in a white satin overall was waiting for him.

Determinedly, she tried charming Tryl into happiness. Instead his gloom infected her. She said sorrowfully finally, "At least I have learned something."

Tryl looked at her without curiosity.

"The Fortunate are gathering to witness our vow of permanent connection... However, now I see that love can only be invited..." Blis added

painfully, "It may be that I do not deserve your love..."

Tryl stared morosely at an hibiscus bush, bright with red blossoms and green leaves. Right now, as Blis spoke of love, citizens in Tole were being selected and ordered to the Mass-Guilt sacrifice; refusal was not permitted.

Though it was always held at the largest of the local Games Stadiums, only a small percentage of the citizens could witness the sacrifice in person. The rest were compelled to watch the ritual over video, with microphones transmitting the muffled thud of each stone as it found its target of human flesh.

Of the thousands of citizens who personally witnessed the ceremony, a smaller group of three hundred would stone the victim to death. Again, unless the unwilling citizen wanted to take his place beside the victim, no refusal was permitted.

Those who shrank from the dreadful obligation to kill, comforted themselves with the fact that before the Mass-Guilt sacrifices there had been wars and a far greater toll of death. They told themselves Fortune had selected their victim—that it might have been themselves.

Tryl, himself among those required to stone the last victim to death a year ago, remembered how desperately he had tried to believe that it was a smaller evil than its alternative—war. But he remembered how horrified he had been that he, a physician, should kill.

THERE, IN Blis' quiet, fragrant garden Tryl understood suddenly why he had no longer been able to continue as physician. Though his gift had not forsaken him, his self-respect had. Examination had not been able to reveal what he did not know himself: now he knew.

Blis said despairingly, "Is there anything I can do to make you love me?"

"You can tell me the truth."

For a long time she was silent. When she did speak her voice was hopeless. "That is the one thing that will surely make you despise me..."

Dmen had said he should not blame the girl for the regime. Tryl said gently, "The Fortunates don't really abide by Fortune—do they, Blis? They merely pretend to, in order to perpetuate themselves."

"If we lie," Blis defended half-heartedly, "it's to be a good end. There is less bloodshed under our rule than ever before..."

Tryl recognized his own defense. That forced him to Dmen's side of the argument. "But how can a lie—and cruelty—ever be right?"

"Would you rather have more blood? More deaths?"

"I would rather have the truth; and one day, if Fortune wills it, no blood..." Tryl gazed at Blis thoughtfully. "Did you say that all the Fortunates would be gathered? To witness our vows?"

"If you would have had it," Blis said hopelessly, "they are waiting for us now..."

Tryl was beginning to hope. He had hypnotized the Tole Security guards; and theirs were not limited mentalities, even if the Island guards' were. Perhaps he might be the instrument of a Fortune that existed despite the Fortunates' own disbelief in it. Perhaps through his freak talent he might sway them...

Tryl said buoyantly, "I will have it; let us go."

Blis nodded slowly; she had come to some decision. She said calmly, "You are going to attempt to depose the rule of the Fortunates. They have been my people, Tryl, but I know what we do is wrong." Her small features were very grave with her thoughts. "I renounce my people and my ways, Tryl; I'll help you."

Tryl hesitated, divided between his need for her help and his fear for her

safety. Deliberately, he had not imposed his will on Blis; he wanted her submission to be as voluntary as she wanted his love to be. Yet here she was, as completely his as if he had commanded her to assist him. He said troubledly, "Blis, this may be dangerous; I don't want you harmed..."

Blis said, "I wish to atone for what has been done." She stood up. "Come."

- 4 -

THE ISLAND of the Fortunate was one of the largest in the Pacific Ocean. Where millions of people had once lived, now a few hundreds of Fortunates held their vast estates.

Blis piloted her small plane to the meeting place. They arrived in minutes, and Blis led Tryl among the gorgeously-dressed, gay, laughing people. Playfully, the Fortunates teased the two newcomers about their imminent vow of permanent connection. Tryl was bitterly aware of what a sacred privilege that vow would seem to the billions of citizens who were denied the luxury of even a close friendship.

Later, in the grand meeting hall, during a silent moment of the ceremony, Tryl focused his mind as powerfully as he could and willed for all the Fortunates present to recite out loud their intention to give up their rule of the citizens.

The low continuing mumble of the one elderly Fortunate, who was leading the ceremony of the vow, came as a bad shock to Tryl's ears. Again, as strongly as he knew how, Tryl, his muscles tightening with the intensity of his effort, mentally ordered the Fortunates to utter aloud their abnegation.

Still nothing happened. Tryl started to turn, to glare openly at the audience who was refusing to do as he willed. Blis' arm on his brought him back to himself.

A glance at Blis—plus the fact of her silence—convinced him that even she was impervious to his thoughts. He couldn't understand it; he had been so positive he was capable of mass hypnosis. At first it had been only people in pain; but later, it had been the guards who had brought him to Blis. Later still, the guards who had come for Dmen and himself.

Only a short while ago, Blis, with everything to lose, had given herself over to his will without reservation. He had finally come to believe in Dmen's superstitious talk of prophets with special powers; he had come to believe that he was such a man. It would have made his mission wonderfully simple had he been.

Sorrowfully, Tryl realized why he had been deceived. In every case, the people he had controlled had been willing to do as he commanded. It was natural for people in pain to anticipate relief. It had been a natural thing for the guard and servant woman ushering him to what—even their limited mentalities no doubt sensed—was a lover's meeting, to wink. And it was natural for the guard, coming to escort him to the Fortunates and Dmen to become Mass-Guilt sacrifice, to be in a fervor of religious and patriotic emotion.

Nor was it strange for Blis, who loved him, to be willing to do as he wanted, even though that meant to die for him. Tryl thought of that as the elderly fortunate droned on with the ceremony. Of Blis being willing to die for him.

WHEN THE ceremony was concluded, as soon as he could get Blis alone, Tryl whispered in her ear, "I must go back to Tole; now."

She was not surprised. "I knew you would, Tryl." She drew him away from the gay crowd. "It's all right for us to leave," she said. her smile was sad; "it's even customary..."

"Not us!" Tryl turned and grasped her two arms. "I must go alone! All

you need do is tell me how to handle your plane to get there."

Blis shook her head. "Not alone; I will go with you."

"They'll kill you," Tryl argued futilely. "Even if the citizens don't recognize you as a Fortunate, the Fortunate will surely notice you are gone. And kill you when you return."

"And you," Blis pointed out quietly, "in Tole will be recognized; even more surely—and killed."

"But I have to go!"

Blis moved toward the field where the planes were kept. "With me," she said firmly; "or not at all. My place is by your side."

Helplessly, Tryl followed her. Where he was going, he did not want her by his side; but without her help, Dmen would die alone. He realized gloomily how useless his talent was where it was most needed. He could not even persuade her to do what he wanted, much less compel her; he followed her into the plane.

The plane was not intended for fast or distant flights. It was nearly dark by the time they had covered the several thousand miles to Tole. The darkness increased Tryl's chance of reaching Dmen's side unrecognized—and made it more urgent for them to hasten. The Mass-Guilt sacrifice was held to strict schedule.

They blended in with the crowd hurrying to the Games Stadium, Blis clutching Tryl's arm, refusing to be separated from him. Tryl was leaving it to Fortune to provide him with the opportunity to escape her.

It was at the brightly-lighted gate of the Stadium that he found that opportunity. Tryl explained to her, "At these gates," he gestured to the orderly line of men and women, who, arm tattoo exposed, were filing past the guards into the building, "enter the citizens selected to kill the victim." Blis looked as he bade her.

"The guards are checking their identifications off on their lists to insure

that those citizens selected are present..."

Sick with the memory of his own blood-guilt, Tryl went on, "The penalty for not fulfilling their religious and patriotic duty to kill is death for themselves."

Blis looked very pale under the harsh lights. Tryl, aware that she was as trapped by the system as he had been, pitied her; she detested it as fiercely as he did.

He drew her along another hundred yards to another, wider gate; at this gate many more people were entering. Tryl said, "Here is where those who need only watch the sacrifice enter. Here is where we may hope to break in."

Blis said fearfully, "But here, too, a guard is checking the citizens' identification. I have none; and yours marks you as the citizen who has just been raised to the Fortunate..."

Tryl's face was grim. "Watch," he ordered tightly. "You'll see that sometimes over-eager citizens, who are not on the selected lists, rush the guards and force their way in anyhow." Tryl said somberly, "Not everyone dislikes the Mass-Guilt ceremony..."

"They—the guards—allow it?"

Tryl's voice was bitter. "It is considered a preventive evil. It is felt that any citizen who is that eager to witness the sacrifice must need the sacrifice to quiet him; and that it is better to let those who want it that strongly have it..."

Blis shuddered.

Tryl spoke with more composure. "So here, we must separate, Blis. You'll notice that these occasional blood-thirsty citizens come in groups for mutual support. But these groups are exclusively male or female; they are not mixed." Tryl explained, "I shall have to join a group of men, you a group of women—"

"I'll lose you!" Blis was not surprised or afraid; her tone held only

heartbreak. "I'll never see you again Tryl."

For a time Tryl did not answer her. He longed to comfort her, yet he did not want to lie to her; and he knew she was right. He smiled down at her to let her see he was not afraid. "We must have faith in our Fortune," he said finally, without mockery.

He kissed her on the forehead, and, merging suddenly with a small group of men at that moment forcing the gate, he made his way into the Stadium before Blis could stop him.

INSIDE, the spectacle was all too familiar. In the very heart and center of the Stadium was the post to which the victim would be fastened. Men in pain, no matter how pious, usually sought to escape their pain; and death by stoning was a slow process.

The post, with its microphone to catch every sound of the dying victim, and its raised platform to highlight the drama, were painted white—white to contrast with the blood of the victim.

The citizens who had been selected to do the killing were also stationed down in the arena, under much heavier guard than the mere spectators on the ramps above.

The pile of stones and the throwing sir was located so close to the victim's stake that no one of the selected three hundred citizens could miss the victim. No matter how little taste they had for the stoning, they were forced to aim well and throw strongly. The stone they flung was identified with their number. If it was not stained with blood or juices of the victim, they would share his fate.

Tryl, making his way along the familiar passageways, wondered how he could have failed to question any method that relied so heavily, and at so many points, on force.

A sudden, swelling cry from many throats warned Tryl his time was short; they had brought out the vic-



tim. Tryl ran down the last tier of steps and presented himself at the solid rank of heavily-armed guards who barred the way to the arena proper.

Here, complete order was necessarily maintained. The occasional hot-headed, bloodthirsty citizens who forced their way into the Stadium would make a speedy and savorless job of killing the victim if they ever crashed through into the arena. The entire effect and meaning of the sacrifice would be lessened by their crude haste and excitement.

When Tryl was within a few feet of the solid line of guards, the three closest to him drew their handguns. The guard in charge of the group came to him. He ordered crisply, "Go back to your place, citizen; the sacrifice is about to begin."

Tryl stared at the guns and came no further. His death here would do no good at all. "I am not a citizen," he said slowly; "I am Tryl the Fortunate."

The nearer guards, hearing, smiled.

The one in command had heard other wild statements from citizens over-eager to participate in the sacrifice. "You are indeed Fortunate," he said, motioning negligently with the gun in his hand. "I'm going to allow you to leave here. Now!" he said sharply.

Tryl came a step nearer him. The head guard grasped his gun more firmly. Tryl bared his identification tattoo. "Have you not heard of Tryl?"

Grudgingly, the guard looked at Tryl's arm. His eyes widened in recognition, and then angry indecision showed on his face. He looked divided between a wish to kneel to Tryl and a desire to shoot him. His confusion was visible enough to shock the other guards into a like awe.

The senior officer said uncertainly, "Fortunate, then, no longer; to return to the citizens is to die. . ."

"And that," Tryl said quietly, "Is what I came for. . ." He looked at the guard. "Now, will you let me pass?"

The guard swallowed. "To disturb the ceremony is forbidden. . ."

"I will not disturb the ceremony." Tryl promised; "in fact, I will make it doubly good. . ."

AS THE guard stood undecided, Tryl heard the noise of the crowd slowly die down into a complete silence. This was the silence with which the crowd listened for the number of the citizen selected to come to the throwing site and fling his stone.

Not daring to wait longer, Tryl shoved the pondering guard aside and raced straight down the short corridor that led to the arena. As he ran, his flesh shrankly anticipated the searing finger of the guns with which the guards could easily burn him down. Protected by their superstitious awe of killing a Fortunate, Tryl gained the arena safely.

Once in the arena, he still had a long way to go. He knew that every eye must be on him as he ran toward the

post to which the white-garbed Dmen was fastened.

Though the number of the citizen who would cast the first stone had already been called, it was a task to which few hurried. No one in the arena moved but Tryl; a murmuring rose from the crowd on the tiers as they watched him.

The murmuring ceased as Tryl leaped on to the white platform and embraced his friend. "Don't think I'm joining you here because you are my friend" Tryl mocked the larger man lovingly. "Actually, I am doing belatedly something that I should have done at my last Mass-Guilt sacrifice. . ."

"Tryl!" Dmen said in horror. "Why did you come? Now they'll kill you too!"

"That," Tryl said serenely, "is what I came for."

The leader of the Mass-Guilt ceremony, aghast at what was happening, shrilly repeated the number he had called. Hesitantly, the summoned man arose. The leader made an angry gesture, and a guard escort surrounded the citizen, herded him toward the casting site. The man marched, shrinkingly, among the guards.

The Stadium was very quiet. Tryl's voice was loud and clear. Tryl pointed at the citizen being unwillingly marched to the throwing site. "Last year, Dmen, I stood in that man's place. . ."

Tryl's voice was full of regret. "A year late, I come to do what I should have done then. . ." The microphone carried his words to every part of the stadium.

The citizen-killer arrived at the casting site, reluctantly accepted the white-painted, black-numbered stone handed him by a guard. Tryl glanced from the first thrower to the remaining two-hundred and ninety-nine citizens who, under threat of death to themselves, would continue to stone

Dmen and himself until they were dead.

Anyone who had ever witnessed the sacrifice and heard the cries of the victim knew that it was a slow and dreadful death. The first citizen was taking a long time to make his cast. To comfort Dmen, Tryl tried to explain it. "I am still very afraid to die, Dmen." He shrugged, broke off helplessly, then said, "But somehow, I want to."

THE CITIZEN hesitated no longer. He flung his stone forcefully to the ground beside him and crossed the short distance to the white platform on which Dmen and Tryl stood. He climbed up on the platform beside them.

The crowd let out a long, low exhalation. The murmur was as though a giant had held his breath for longer than he could bear.

Desperately, the announcer called a second number. Another citizen rose, marched to the throwing site, accepted his stone—and flung it disdainfully to the ground. He, too, moved across to the spotlighted platform. The crowd murmured again, and the murmuring swelled.

Before the announcer could even call another number, an older woman separated herself from the remaining two hundred and ninety-eight killer-citizens; without bothering to go through the routine with the stone, she moved directly from the group to the victim's platform.

The noise from all the tiers of the huge stadium was deafening. Citizens move out into the aisles and started pouring down toward the arena calling and laughing and crying. Even if those in the front had feared the guards' guns, the pressure from behind would have driven them on.

The rest of the three hundred citizens in the arena moved as one mass toward the victim's platform.

Tryl, struggling with the rope that bound Dmen to the stake, finally managed to free him. "Quick," he said

breathlessly; "in this crowd we may have a chance to escape!"

Dmen stood immovable. "What," he asked in an amused tone of voice, "do you think you are escaping from?"

Tryl scowled at him. "Please, Dmen, no arguments; not now!"

"But the citizens are on your side!" stared at his friend. "Is it possible you don't know? You've hypnotized them." He shrugged. "Naturally, I should have known..."

"I can't have!" Tryl, in horror, tried to drag Dmen. "You've got to listen to me Dmen! Many of the citizens *like* the Mass-Guilt ceremony! And I have no power to make people do anything except what they want to do."

"Even the prophets could do no more." Dmen grinned laconically. "Listen!" Among the frenzy of sound could be distinguished oftenest the words, "Tryl! Leader!"

Dmen laughed out loud at Tryl's face. The he sobered. "Only I fear for your charming female Fortunate. This crowd could go on to destroy the entire Island of the Fortunate..."

"She came with me." Tryl anxiously scanned the nearer echelons of the growing waves of citizenry converging about the white platform.

"Wither thou goest, I go," Dmen quoted softly. "Did she, really?"

"That's that *she* said." Tryl replied absently. He knew that Blis could not be far away.

"A quotation from a very old book." Dmen was pleased to show off his erudition, but Tryl had seen the small face he was looking for and gone plunging into the crowd.

Dmen shrugged philosophically and picked up the white rope with which he had been bound. It would make a nice souvenir. Then he shook his head, looped it carefully together. It was too valuable for a souvenir; it now belonged in a museum.