

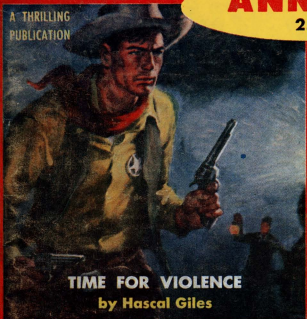
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# STORIES

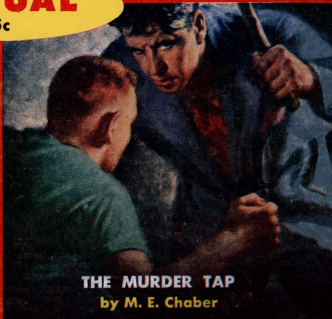
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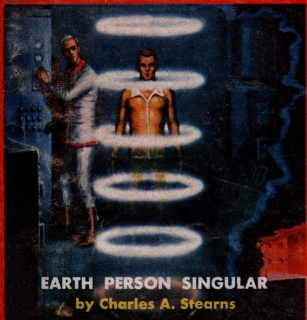
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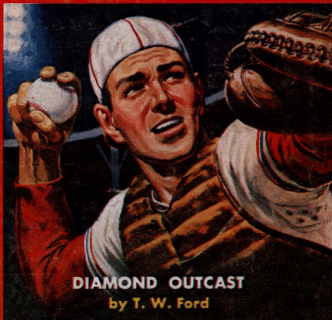
**TIME FOR VIOLENCE**  
by Hascal Giles



**THE MURDER TAP**  
by M. E. Chaber



**EARTH PERSON SINGULAR**  
by Charles A. Stearns



**DIAMOND OUTCAST**  
by T. W. Ford

# STORIES

**ANNUAL**

Vol. 1, No. 1

1955 Edition

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ALEXANDER SAMALMAN, Editor



"If this is on the level," he said, "we can make a fortune!"

# Earth Person Singular

By CHARLES A.  
STEARNS

**T**HREE days Ksarl had listened to the voices of the Green Planet. The ship was dead, and they would not let him help with the repairs because he dropped wrenches, and ohmmeters, and things like that. They said that he was all thumbs. This was untrue; he had only two thumbs each on four of his lateral extremities, and none at all on the others.

But they said for him to keep out of the engine room, anyway, or they would stamp on his flippers.

So he sat and fed the voices of the

*Sometimes an alien's bark can be worse than his cardvark . . .*

Green Planet into the decodeomat, and they came out comprehensible and clear.

It's a fine thing to hear voices when one has listened so long to nothing but the empty whine of space. It made little goose-pimples of excitement rise up all over Ksarl's ridged back to think that an Index Four civilization existed only four millions of miles off the starboard bow, and that here they were, broken down, and he was not on duty. It made him rash.

He climbed into a convenient magnetocar, and after carefully tucking his tail under him, set off for the bow. Taking a square corner too fast, he struck the eighth assistant steward just aft the seventh level port galley, but luckily the magnetocar was undamaged, and in less than thirty minutes he arrived at the Captain's quarters.

He knocked his head soundly on the door four times in the custom of deferential greeting, then fell over the high sill and skidded on his ventral side along the waxed and shining ostium floor that comprised the deck of the officers' level, coming to rest at the feet of his Captain.

The high sills of the self-sealing doors were very vexing. He did not always stumble upon them; sometimes he struck his head upon the upper arch, but either method of entry was painful. Once he had written an epistle of protest to the High Committee, but it came to nothing.

THE Captain's great, red-rimmed eyes burned into his own like twin suns of a dying nebula, and when he spoke it was with gentle admonition that warmed Ksarl's heart at once and emboldened him to ask of the great man what he had decided not to ask.

"You really must be more careful, Ksarl," the Captain said. "I sincerely trust that you have not injured your valuable body?"

"No indeed, sir," Ksarl said, "and thank you, sir."

"Tut!" the Captain said. "It's nothing. For what purpose are you here,

Ksarl, or do you remember?"

"I should like to borrow your gig, sir."

"My gig?"

"Yes sir. You see, sir, the ship's tender was exposed to the tail of a comet during last week's expeditionary maneuvers, and the chemical composition of the train consisted of carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen compounds."

"Indeed?"

"Yes sir. The rocket intakes of the tender are still clogged with molasses."

"Well then," the Captain said, "naturally I shall have to let you have the gig. You fool! You idiot! You thing of a Merusian nightmare! What in the name of the thousand Galaxies do you want with my gig?"

Ksarl recoiled, paling to a jaundiced yellow. He reported, with quiet humility, his extraordinary findings, and said that he would like to explore the Green Planet and bring in a specimen of the advanced race which inhabited it, for observation and study. He said that he would be very careful not to alarm or offend the people of the Green Planet, nor otherwise disturb the planetary balance, as the Kleg Rules admonished.

"No," the Captain said.

"No, sir?"

"No. Now get out of here and let me get to work, even if you have nothing better to do."

It was very disheartening, but there was nothing to be done about it. Ksarl shuffled to the door, measuring it carefully before he slithered through. He thought that he would go down into the storage holds and steal a *kansvir* to eat, and sulk for a while.

"Just a minute," the Captain said, "come back here!"

"Yes sir?"

"It would be far better for the wretches of your Green Planet that we should train the zoot guns upon and make a large, unhappy clinker of their world, but—"

"Yes sir?"

"I have myself to think of. You may take the gig, if you will promise me that

I shall never again see or hear of you until the ship is again underway."

"Thank you, sir!"

"And by the way, if you so much as scratch the paint on one keel fin, I'll sever your sensory stalks and boil them for lunch!"

**G**INGERLY, Ksarl set the tiny rocket down, butt first, among the vegetation. A league to the west he had spied a shining city, but he had carefully skirted it, as one can not be too careful with aboriginals.

A mile away, the cobwebbed tower of a broadcasting antenna needled the sky, and it was this that he proposed to stalk on foot, for from it the voices had emanated.

He unsnapped the stunner ray from his belt which he had thoughtfully borrowed from the locker of his cabin mate, Drigon. His own stunner was in perpetual disrepair, and since Drigon could be very selfish and unreasonable with his effects, he had neglected to ask before taking the stunner: It would only have led to bad feelings, and he hated scenes. Holding the weapon in readiness, he lay flat upon his belly and began to crawl through the tangled mat of vines and bushes.

A mile is not far, unless you are attempting to wriggle all the way. About his head the insects rejoiced, and the heat was greater than he had ever known, while the wait-a-bit shredded his tunic and his skin.

When he had crawled a quarter of a mile and met no enemy except for the mosquitoes and gnats, which could not be eluded in any position, it occurred to Ksarl that it might be safe, after all, to walk upright. This was a clever decision, for he made much better time, and it was not long before he could make out the tower itself.

Cable conduits led away from the tower into the forest. The area underneath the tower and about it was empty of life. There was not a sound or a motion for ten long minutes.

He knew at once what must have happened. The creatures of the radionic voices must have detected his noisy approach and scurried away. Or perhaps they were lurking in ambush for him. He shivered deliciously.

*A faint, rustling sound from the other side of the clearing.*

He moved softly around the open area until he caught the movement of a dirty, grayish patch of hair.

He patted the leaves slightly and had his first look at a person of the Green Planet.

He was not large, but his nose was long and prehensile, and he was so handsomely proportioned that Ksarl was instantly impressed.

Also, the native had an air of solemn dignity. Dignity was a thing which had always been denied Ksarl. All of his life he had coveted and sought the elusive substance, and yet, here was this lesser creature wearing it with the ease of complete familiarity. It filled Ksarl with admiration.

There was a large, cone-like structure. At the crown of the cone, small white things scampered in and out innumerable, with a great show of industry, and the aborigine, licking out his tongue swiftly, ate them, one hundred at a lick.

"I greet you, person of the Green Planet," said Ksarl in English.

The other turned and transfixed him with a wonderfully disdainful stare, in a manner such as Ksarl had often dreamed of transfixing people.

"Please come with me," Ksarl said, leveling the stunner. "You are my guest, and also my prisoner."

This seemed to infuriate the fellow. He took a step toward Ksarl and there was definite menace in his red eyes.

Ksarl discharged the stunner. The creature gave a moan of anguish and flopped over on his back, long-toed feet quivering in the air.

Dropping the stunner in the mud, Ksarl ran forward to inspect him. The return trip was both onerous and difficult. The person of the Green Planet

was heavy, and there exuded from him a pungent effluvium.

**K**SARL restored the gig quietly to its lock, scuffing only a single magnetic fender, and that slightly. He peered up and down the port passageway to make certain that all was clear. He did not want to be apprehended by the others. They always found occasion to mock.

There was no one in sight. He got the prisoner into the airlock, and taking both front limbs in a firm grip, he dragged it down the corridor on its back. It was not far to the ship's library, which was always empty, and he paused there. With an effort he lifted his burden on one of the tables and administered an anti-shock capsule.

It regained consciousness at once.

He was about to question it when he heard footsteps. It was Drigon, whom he least wanted to see. He hoped that Drigon would not notice what a mess the stunner was, with mud all over it, or observing, not recognize it for his own. He tried to keep his own body between Drigon and the native of the Green Planet, but Drigon kept circling the table, attempting to peer around him.

"What have you got there?" Drigon asked.

"It is nothing," Ksarl said. "At least, hardly anything."

"You may be sure of that," Drigon said, shoving him to one side.

"It is a native of that small, green planet," Ksarl said. "It knows of short-wave radio transmission, and it has great cities and is able to cultivate great gardens of forest and shrubbery. That is what gives its world that greenish cast. It is very intelligent, and I have memorized a part of its language."

"What interest have we in primitive civilizations?" Drigon demanded.

"I am interested," Ksarl said.

"He appears to be fairly stupid," Drigon said, leaning close. The person of the Green Planet lashed out with ten-inch claws and barely missed his proboscis.

"He wouldn't do that to me," Ksarl said. "He likes me. Speak to me, oh person of the Green Planet!"

The prisoner was noncommittal.

"The shock of capture must have impaired his faculties, such as they were," Drigon said. "You'd better dump him back where you found him."

"That's so," Ksarl said. "We might use the Phreno-development machine, and repattern his brain. Possibly the stunner—"

"So that's it!" Drigon said. "No wonder he acts stupid. Whose stunner—say, is that *my*—"

"I only borrowed it for a little while," Ksarl said quickly, wiping it off slightly and handing it to him.

"You'll pay for this," Drigon said grimly, holstering the weapon.

Ksarl changed the subject. "I mean to restore its natural intelligence," he said, "by irradiating it with the index of the speech level indicated by the short-wave transmissions. I've recorded a great many of them, you know."

"Go ahead," Drigon said. "You know we're not supposed to trifle with the inferior races of the minor solar systems. If the Captain hears, you'll wish you had never seen the Green Planet."

Ksarl paid no attention. He anesthetized the prisoner once more and tried, without success, to fit the cathode cap down over the creature's elongated head. Failing, he gave up and used a strap. Then he turned on the patterns which he wished to impress, and tip-toed softly away to allow the sleep of regeneration.

After six hours he returned and found Drigon there, skeptical, but nonetheless interested.

"I shall remove the helmet now," Ksarl said, and added, as a measure against further criticism, "If he does not communicate sensibly with me at once, I shall repatriate him to the Green Planet, and you will hear no more of it." In truth he did not intend to give up so easily, but his real plan was far too dangerous to confide in Drigon.

The prisoner, awake, stared dully.

"He is mindless," Drigon said.

"I am sure that he will perform some intelligent action, once he is thoroughly awake," Ksarl said. "He is extremely fond of me by now." He gently shook the creature into wakefulness.

The person of the Green Planet promptly performed what it considered to be an intelligent action.

It bit him.

**G**EOORGIA SPIETH, obtaining no pleasure, as usual, from her solitary state in life, had been leaning upon the outer fence, watching the keeper rake the debris from the anteater's yard. She was one of the bored grandchildren of the Lost Generation, and seldom found anything in life of real interest.

The keeper seemed youthful, and had a broad back, and she wanted to see what the other side looked like. The anteater afforded little amusement, but she had to pretend that it did.

"He likes lettuce," Georgia said. "Look at him eat the lettuce. He's a perfect darling."

The young man in the white uniform turned around. He had a long face. Not a bad face, but much too serious. He said, "Everybody in this zoo eats lettuce. You go downtown, you'll find it's thirty cents a head. You can't afford to eat it."

"He likes lettuce," said Georgia feebly.

"It's all wrong."

"What is?"

"An anteater should have lettuce in September, when a man with a family, he is lucky to afford a soup bone."

"Do you have a family?" asked Georgia demurely, primping her lovely, blonde hair with one hand.

"Bachelor," he scowled. "I eat what I please."

The anteater—or aardvark—reared upon the fence, snuffing its audience with placid curiosity. A plump woman in gorgeous sun-glasses and hardly any shirt, squealed.

Georgia said plainly, "Why do you work here, in a zoo, if you hate the animals?"

**T**HE long-faced young man's jaw dropped. He leaned his rake against the building and came over to where she stood. "Listen," he said, "are you trying to start an argument, lady?"

"I'm not trying to start anything," Georgia said. "Just because this poor aardvark, taken captive and brought all the way here from South America—"

"South Africa."

"—from its natural habitat, and put in a cage, happens to need lettuce to survive, while people can eat almost anything—"

The aardvark said, "*As a matter of fact, I prefer ants.*"

"Wh-what's that?" Georgia stammered.

"Ants," the aardvark said.

Georgia looked around her carefully. The plump lady without a shirt had disappeared. The nearest person was an old man sitting on a bench a dozen yards away, smoking his pipe. That left only one possibility.

"Well, Buster," she said to the keeper, "I suppose you think you're a regular riot."

"My name is not Buster. It's Wayne Thompson, and why, pray tell, am I a riot?"

"That anteater just spoke to me."

Wayne advanced upon her. "I didn't hear anything," he said. "It has never said a word to me since it arrived three months ago." And he smirked horribly.

"*Perhaps you never furnished a very sympathetic ear,*" the aardvark said.

Wayne stared. "Say, that's pretty good," he said. "Do that again!"

"I didn't," Georgia said, paling.

"Didn't you?"

"Wow!" said Wayne. "If this is on the level, we can make a fortune!"

"I must warn you," the aardvark said, "that I do not intend to co-operate in any publicity schemes. Publicity is the very last thing that I want at the moment."

"Then why open your yap and get us all worked up?" asked Wayne, grumpily.

"As a matter of fact, I had hoped to

persuade you to help me hide from my enemies. I am no ordinary aardvark, you know, and it is dangerous for me to be seen until they leave the solar system. One never knows when, or in what guise they may be watching me."

"I'm afraid I don't understand at all," Georgia said.

"It is simple," the aardvark remarked. "A group of vastly superior star-beings happen to be passing through this part of the universe at present. One of them, ill-advisedly, visited this planet and tampered with a specimen of a certain sub-race, giving it an intelligence index as high as that of the dominant race, which is now known to be man."

"Is that what happened to you?" breathed Georgia. He was certainly the most erudite aardvark that she had ever seen.

The aardvark modestly lowered its eyes. "Upon learning of this error," it continued, "I am sure that they will attempt to destroy the affected individual, lest it upset the entire evolutionary process. I have reasoned this out carefully, and I have concluded that I do not wish to be destroyed, therefore I must conceal myself. Will you help me?"

"What's in it for us," Thompson said, "except a stretch for grand theft?"

**A**N EXPRESSION of inconceivable slyness flitted across the aardvark's face, and was almost instantly replaced by a mask of innocence. "Wait here," it said. It went into its cage and returned with a distended jaw. It dropped something at Wayne's feet. He picked it up, and it glinted in the sunlight with a thousand colors.

"My God," he said, "this an uncut diamond the size of a walnut! Where did you find it?"

"I brought it with me," the aardvark said ambiguously. "Does it please you? I think it is rather pretty, though I am color-blind, of course, and can not truly appreciate it, perhaps."

"It's worth a king's ransom—hey, stop that snatching!" Georgia Spieth

had suddenly reached through the fence.

"I just want to hold it," she snapped, making another effort. She got a grip on it, and they tugged this way and that, with irresistible feminine greed plying itself against immovable masculine avarice, and the diamond plunked to the ground.

The aardvark recovered it quickly. "Dear me," he said, "what a display of emotion!"

They looked at him hungrily. "Let's take it away from him," Wayne suggested.

"If you try," the aardvark said quietly, "I shall swallow the diamond and bite your hand. You will find that I am capable of inflicting quite a respectable bite. I shouldn't like to do that. You have only to help me escape and hide, and we shall all be rich."

"Goodness," said Georgia dreamily, "I could go to Paris, Rome and Constantinople, and buy a sable coat, and a Cadillac, and everything I've ever dreamed of."

"Well, I don't know," said Wayne.

"And," urged the aardvark persuasively, "think of all the white ants we could buy."

The aardvark, Georgia Spieth had privately confessed, was holding all the aces, which is to say he was holding the diamond in his mouth.

He held it in his mouth, she had discovered, even while he slept, proving that, while the spaceship story sounded pretty fishy, he was at least nobody's fool. This caused Georgia, who did not intend to have the diamond out of her sight for a moment, and therefore had gone without lunch, to be in a pettish humour when she and Thompson left the zoo at closing time. It had been necessary to wait for Wayne, since she would not have trusted him out of her sight as far as you can throw an aardvark by its tail.

He had suggested that they return that night, free the aardvark, hide it in his woodshed, collect the diamond and get it over with, but she had begged off



with a cold, and it had been agreed to wait until tomorrow night.

NOW that the swift September dusk had fallen, however, she had misgivings. What was to prevent Wayne from coming back to the zoo tonight, while she slept, and making off with the aardvark and the treasure himself?

Naturally, Georgia Spieth would not have dreamed of double-crossing a partner in crime herself, but Wayne Thompson was only a man, and could not be trusted.

So considering, she put on her coat and hat, went down to the corner drugstore, where she made a purchase, and caught a taxi out to the park.

There was difficulty in getting over the fence, and a nylon was slightly snagged in the process. Watchmen were about the grounds, and she felt like a veteran criminal by the time she had crept through the shadows to the aardvark's pen. The pen was in darkness except for one small patch of moonlight against the orange stucco of the building itself.

The hasp of the lock in the gate hung open. This was providence which should not be questioned; nevertheless, it made her uneasy, and when she had entered she stood quietly in the shadows listening.

There was not a sound. "Aardvark dear?" she called softly.

A Neanderthal shape, with a club in its hand, sprang across the patch of moonlight! She knew a momentary thrill of horror until the features of the midnight stalker were revealed.

"Wayne Thompson, what are you doing here, you sneak!"

"Ssh!" he said. "I might ask you the same question."

There was a curious snorting sound, and a small shape waddled out of the cage into the pen. "You see what you've done," Georgia hissed. "You've wakened him."

"Is it you, my friends?" the aardvark said. "I thought I heard something."

"It's very lucky for you that I happened along," Georgia said, "else you would probably have been beaten to death in a trice."

"I only brought the club in case of prowlers," Wayne defended.

"Well, now that we're here," Georgia said, "we might as well get the kidnaping over with. I certainly don't intend to leave the poor thing at your mercy another minute."

"I feel the same way about it," Wayne said, with a snarl. "We'll hide him under a blanket in the trunk of my car until we get past the gate guard. Then he can hole up at my place while we sell the diamond and make arrangements to transport him back to Africa."

"I must say," the aardvark said, "that sounds very dismal."

"Don't you want to go back to South Africa?" Georgia said. "Don't you—"

But the aardvark's little red eyes were staring at a deeper patch of shadow behind them, as though he were in a trance. "Oh dear," he said faintly.

"What's the matter?" Georgia said.

The shadow shifted slightly. An alien voice said, "*So there you are, Ksar!*"

GEORGIA grasped Wayne's arm, and Wayne shifted the club to a defensive position. "Who are you?" he said. "What do you want here?"

"He is Drigon," the aardvark said. "I am very glad to see you looking so well, Drigon."

"Thank you. Doubtless it was for reasons of health that you assumed the body of this beast when my back was turned and deserted to this primitive world, stealing a precious crystal of fuel as you left."

"The crystals are even more precious here," the aardvark said. "I took it for the purpose of barter, in lieu of wage I had coming."

"Give it here," ordered Drigon.

The aardvark spat out the diamond. An amorphous hand reached out of the darkness and picked it up.

"Just a minute," Wayne demanded,

"are we to understand that you're not really an aardvark at all—that you've been lying to us?"

"I admit nothing."

"You don't have to," growled the voice of Drigon. "We guessed at once, when we found your body wandering around the passageways with an even more vacuous expression on its face than usual."

The aardvark shuddered.

"Come back with me, Ksarl, and take your punishment."

"I will not go back," Ksarl said, his small eyes shining in the moonlight, "I like it here. You will never understand, Drigon, but for the first time in my life I am able to command the admiration of equals. They come each day to see me, and they look through the wire and almost never laugh. They remark 'how droll!' or 'isn't he a solemn, dignified fellow?' but they do not laugh. That is the quality of dignity which I recognized at once in this creature, Drigon, and so I exchanged bodies with him. I left you forever, and I am not sorry."

"That is your final decision?"

"Yes."

"We have been friends for a long time, but I must follow orders." Something glinted in the shadows. "This will be quick and painless. The carcass may survive, Ksarl, but no mind can weather the shock. It is a pity, for while it was never a very good brain, I hate to destroy it. Good-by, Ksarl."

"Good-by, Drigon."

The stunner, tuned to highest pitch, made a keening sound. The aardvark rolled over and lay quivering.

"Poor Ksarl," the voice from the shadows said, "he was always such a visionary. There was not a harmless gristle in his body, but science and empire are not built upon whimsy. I go now."

"There goes our diamond," said Georgia, after a moment. She sniffed. Her cold was growing worse.

Mistaking the sniff for a snuffle, Wayne put his arm around her. "Who the hell wanted to be rich anyway," he

said, "excepting me. Consider the aardvark."

"I am considering it," Georgia said. "You were the one that wanted to belt it over the head."

"I wouldn't have hit it very hard," Wayne said. "Don't look now, but I think it's coming out of it. It's getting up."

"I suppose it will be just an ordinary aardvark from now on," Georgia said.

"You may count on that," the aardvark said weakly.

WAYNE, he's all right!"

"Yes," Ksarl said. "Drigon's stunner was clogged with mud. Had he been less abrupt with me, I would have cleaned it for him that day, but I suppose that is providence. Naturally, when I discovered that the stunner was having no effect, I feigned shock until he was gone. Now I shall be safe forever."

"All this is way over my head," Wayne said. "Where do we go from here?"

"I don't know about you," Ksarl said, with some asperity, "but I am going to bed. This has been a trying day. I am sorry that I deceived you with the diamond, of course, and about my identity, but Drigon was right. A stone that size represents quite a bit of fissionable fuel, and they need it."

"I didn't know diamonds were fissionable," Wayne said.

"You have a great deal to learn," the aardvark said, and added more gently, "it is too bad, but we can still be friends, if you wish. If you will promise to bring me a good book to read occasionally, I give my word never to cause any trouble, nor will I speak out against either of you. I shall be content to live here and observe life as I tend my colony of white ants—"

"White ants?"

"I had really grown quite fond of them by the time your hunters captured me, so I brought several pairs along, and they are doing nicely in one corner of the pen. Within a few years there'll be

(Concluded on page 66)

## EARTH PERSON SINGULAR

(Concluded from page 50)

millions of them, and I shall no longer have to eat the lettuce which the humans need. And now, if you will excuse me—” He waddled off in the darkness.

“Isn't he cute!” Georgia said. “Good-night, Ksar!” But there was no answer.

They stood together, shivering slightly, for the night had grown quite cool. “Well,” Wayne said at last, “I suppose it's all over. All the dreams and the big plans we had. We're just two ordinary people again, bound to convention by economics. Does that suggest anything to you?”

“I suppose it means we may as well act conventional,” Georgia said, snuggling closer.

“You mean like getting married, and having a family, and being broke every

other Monday? Say, are you nuts or something?”

“I guess so,” Georgia said.

“Then we may as well get started,” he said, grabbing her to him and kissing her soundly.

He was conceited enough, Georgia considered, to think that she was enjoying it, but since she *was* enjoying it, she could forgive him that. *I could forgive him everything, I suppose*, she thought, *if it would make things easier*. And while he was kissing her, she fumbled in her shoulder bag with the hand she had freed, and took out the bottle of chloroform. She gave it a quick toss, and it made a silvery arc over the fence and landed on the rocks below.

Neither of them heard the crash.