

fantastic

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CONTENTS

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THE THIRD GUEST	
By B. Traven.....	4
THE DELICATE DINOSAUR	
By William Markham Altman.....	37
THE COLD GREEN EYE	
By Jack Williamson.....	56
SOMETHING FOR THE WOMAN	
By Ivar Jorgensen.....	66
THE SWORD OF YUNG LO	
By Maurice Walsh.....	74
STOP ON THE RED	
By Franklin Gregory.....	90
ESCAPE ME NEVER	
By J. T. M'Intosh.....	102
ROOT OF EVIL	
By Shirley Jackson.....	124
A STAR FALLS ON BROADWAY	
By Harry Fletcher.....	130
THREE WISHES	
By Poul Anderson.....	132
CLASSIC REPRINTS:	
THE DEVIL GEORGE AND ROSIE	
By John Collier.....	139
THE TOURISTS	
By Billy Rose.....	159

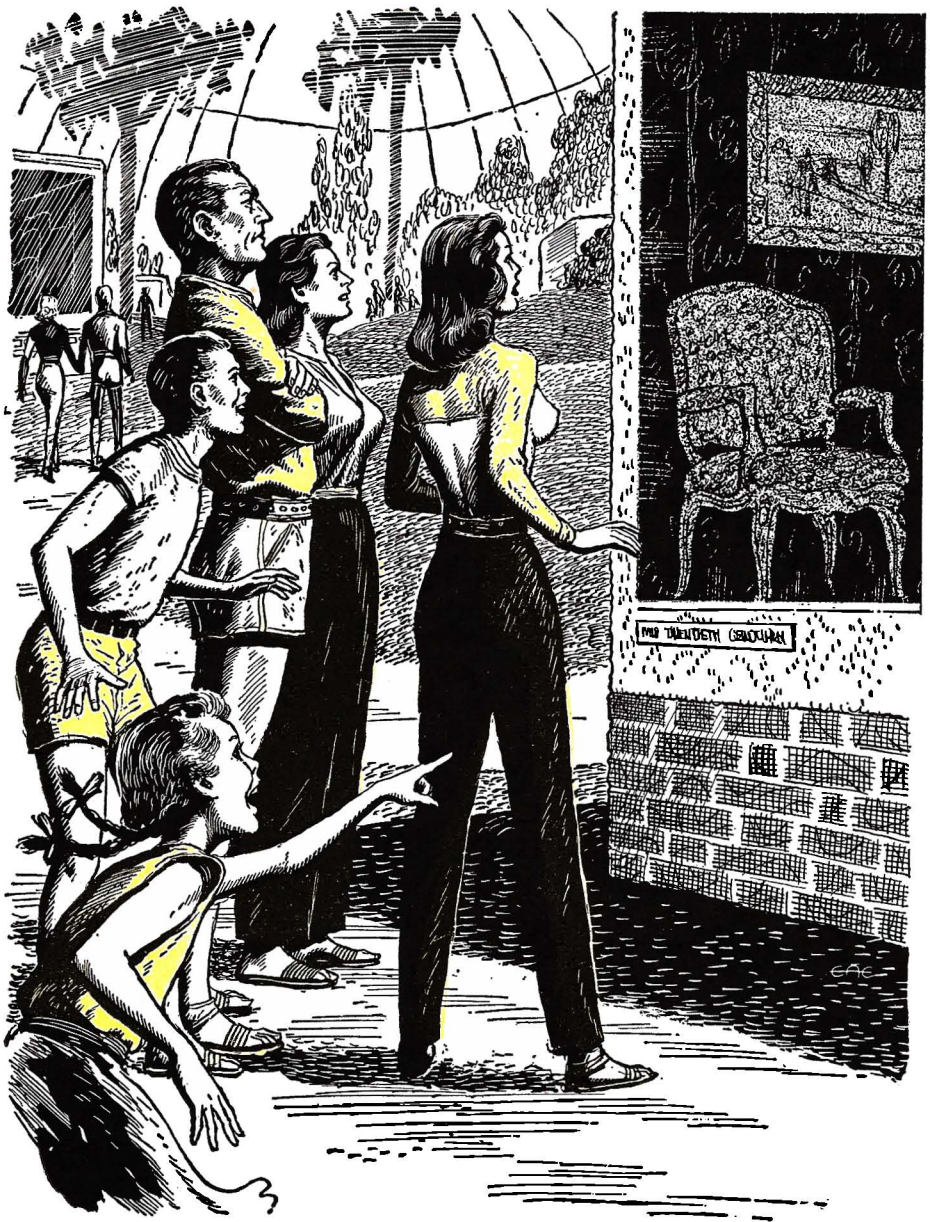
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By J. T. M'INTOSH

ESCAPE ME NEVER

An idea: a few centuries from now, scientists dig up ancient bones from some graveyard and recreate the man who once owned them. Then let's say they stick this freak in the local zoo for the kids to laugh at on Sunday. What's going to bother most this man from yesterday?

Being laughed at? Not so; you get used to that. Loss of freedom? Well, perhaps. A feeling of inferiority? Only in a vague way. No; the way we see it, one factor will make our exhibit a real problem. A three-letter factor, spelled S-E-X. . . .

THE Scientist looked young, but the Savage knew he must be eighty or ninety.

"Say what you have to say," said the Savage resentfully. "I'll dress as you talk. It would be ridiculous for me to expect to have any privacy."

"I'm sorry," replied the Scientist mildly. "I came early because I wanted to see you before —"

"Before it's time for the wild animal to go on exhibit again. I know. Get to it. What is it now?"

"We didn't want to keep you in suspense," said the Scientist apologetically, "expecting something that wasn't going to happen. We have decided not to recreate a woman for you."

The Savage turned white, then red. "Just as well," he retorted bitterly. "This sort of life would be hell for her. Good you realize it. Anything else?" He jerked the lapels of his gray lounge suit and frowned at himself in the mirror.

"No. We just wanted you to know."

"All right, I know. I remain unique. Come one and all — come and see the missing link, no longer missing. Homo sapiens, who preceded homo superior — poor fellow. Are you going now?"

The Scientist went, with a last half-sympathetic, half-vexed glance at the Savage.

So that was the end of that dream. The Savage wasn't entirely sorry. He didn't really want them to recreate a girl, as they had him, from a few dead fragments dug up from rock or soil. They wouldn't have been able to give her back her memory of life thousands of years ago, any more than they could give him his, so she

wouldn't remember and regret the past. But she would find herself in a present where she was only a living exhibit in a museum. Where there could only be one companion for her, a prisoner and an exhibit like herself, though she would see thousands of people not physically different from herself.

Yet, from the selfish point of view, it would have been pleasant to meet and live with a woman, an equal, whose present problems and past history and potentialities were similar to his own. Her presence would have supplied so many goals in life which were lacking now.

There had been a time when the scientists of the Third Century had seemed aware of their obligations to living beings plucked from the past to increase their knowledge. The Savage had dim traces of recollection of his former life — as if his very bones had remembered a little — but the scientists had had to base their guesses about the long-gone time when he had lived and died on what he was, not what he could tell them. His real, clear memories were all of the Third Century. And clearest of all was how they had treated him at first with sympathy and understanding, as if they knew they had done him a great wrong by bringing him to a world in which he had no place and meant to make all the repayment that was in their power.

Then that stopped and he went on view to all who cared to come and look. The people who came to see how early homo sapiens looked and had lived were still human and sympathetic, but the scientists, on the comparatively rare occasions on which he saw any of them now, were blunt, laconic and noncommittal.

He sat in an armchair and read a book. It was a detective novel, and he found it irritating that this book, one of the very few to survive from his time, should be quite as incomprehensible to him as to the people of the Third Century. Well, perhaps not quite. He could understand the underlying tones of conflict better, how men could come to kill each other, treat women brutally, cheat, steal and lie for power. He could understand fear, for his body, so incredibly, minutely recreated, had once known fear. He could understand, too, the feelings of the hunters, the men who tracked down criminals with all the resources of science and mind and body. Hunters had to have a blood lust, a sort of controlled hate, cold and patient and calculating, which he could appreciate and the people of this world could not. The question had occupied his thoughts a great deal recently, because —

"Can't you speak, Savage?" asked a friendly voice.

He had ignored the shuffling

of feet and the movements he caught in the corner of his eye. There were no bars in his cage, but it was a cage nevertheless. Though it seemed he could get up and touch the people who looked frankly, curiously, into his room, he knew that between them and him there was a paper-thin region of particularly resilient nothing through which only air could pass.

He looked up and saw a family. There were others watching him, but the family stood as a unit — mother, father, seventeen-year-old brunette daughter, fourteen-year-old son, eleven-year-old blonde daughter. It was the brunette who had spoken.

Anything to pass the time.

"Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't," he told them. The bitterness, absent for a while, crept back into his voice. "Occasionally I give lectures on myself. That's my privilege. People are prepared to listen to me talk."

"Why, you talk just like us!" said the girl, disappointed.

"Don't be misled by that," he answered with ironic courtesy. She was very pretty, the elder daughter, and it was inevitable that he should want to make a good impression on her. "What's your name?"

"Mirune."

The heroine of the book he was reading was called Maureen. It had been translated, of course, a long time ago, perhaps even sev-

eral times; but maybe the proper names had been left untouched.

"I'll call you Maureen, if you don't mind. My education was just the same as yours, Maureen," he said smiling, "only I had to take it quicker. So it's not surprising I talk just as you do. I don't know the language I used to speak — it wouldn't mean any more to me now than to you."

The news was spreading that the Savage was talking. He didn't often do that. People crowded on the other side of the force-field. The Savage nearly went back to his book and ignored them all. But the girl was still there, still excited at the idea that she was talking to a man who had been part of ancient history, still as pretty as she had been thirty seconds ago. So he went on talking to Maureen, ignoring the thickening crowd outside the cage. They seemed to understand he was holding a private conversation, and kept quiet.

The Savage had picked up some of the standards of his own time from the few books, chiefly novels, which had survived, and he found it mildly interesting that Maureen was dressed in one of the few styles of the Third Century which his own people would have considered indecent. By the old standards of convention, the women of The Third Century were never more than half dressed, but

seldom less. Maureen wore severe navy-blue slacks and pale-blue silk wings. Wings, a new garment with an old name, covered arms, shoulders, shoulder-blades and throat — no more.

Other women in the crowd — none of them was fat, thin, rough-skinned, short-sighted, toothless, or obviously old — wore forbidding tunics above trunks or shorts, if they wished it to be known that they had beautiful legs, or brief bodices over slacks or long skirts, if they were proud of arms and shoulders. Only Maureen of the women in the crowd outside his room had happened, that day, to decide to leave her breasts and diaphragm bare and be modest about everything else.

But the Savage, as starved of sex as he was, even forgot that abruptly as he realized that a plan had come into his mind. It took an effort to continue to talk easily to Maureen, pretending that nothing had happened to change his whole outlook on this world and his place in it. He made it, however. There was nothing to show, he hoped, that one moment he was a caged, resentful animal and the next a man with a purpose once more.

"You're cleverer than I am!" Maureen exclaimed suddenly. "You're not a primitive man at all!"

He smiled. "Argue about that with your scientists. They know me better than I do."

"But it's a shame to put you on show like this when you're so intelligent."

The Savage cast a quick glance at the crowd. They were sympathetic, as always, but much more so than usual. He didn't always try to make such a good impression.

"It's not as bad as it looks," he said. "I have a lot more freedom than you might think. I can even write to you, if you like."

"Oh, please do!" She rattled off an address eagerly, while mama and papa looked at each other and smiled indulgently. "Aren't you going to write it down?" she asked.

He laughed. "I was given a new, clean mind," he said. "Things stick better. I won't forget. Look, Maureen, you're getting crushed there." The crowd moved back at once, but he went on: "Come back if you like when there isn't such a crowd."

"And if I write — how shall I address it?"

He laughed again. "The Savage, Anthropological Museum, Chago," he said. "That'll find me."

She went with her family then, and the crowd thinned to the usual trickle. But the Savage's brain was racing.

If anyone was to help him, it must be someone he met in this way. He saw scientists, individu-

ally; but he wrote them off. No, if anyone would help him, it would be someone young, eager, innocent, emotional. Someone like Maureen.

Help him to what? Freedom, of course. Like all healthy, caged creatures, the Savage had planned escape from the moment he realized he was caged. He couldn't escape to his own time, and he wasn't sure he would want to if he could. What he wanted was a place in this world. He thought he could make it for himself, with a little help. He didn't want to die, but he was ready to risk death. He had seen the way the Third Century scientists killed animals: humanely, cleanly, but utterly without feeling or regret. The people who came to look at him might be sympathetic, but he knew that to the scientists he was just another animal, more intelligent than the others.

If it had not been for the scheme of bringing a woman of his own kind to live with him, he would have made his bid for freedom long since.

It would be better, of course, to wait until he had talked with hundreds of people as he had talked with Maureen. Maureen might still be the one, but it would not be obvious. As it was, the scientists and psychologists who were responsible for him would find out about the incident of that morning and go to Maureen at once. But

there were other reasons for not waiting. One was that he was sure the strongest impression on Maureen would be *now*.

Another was a good reason only to himself — he couldn't wait any longer. He would almost prefer to fail now than succeed in six months' time.

Through the day he read books, ate meals, drank coffee and ignored the spectators. Some of them spoke to him, perhaps having heard how the sulky Savage had unexpectedly opened up that morning. He paid no attention.

The room in which he sat was a twentieth-century lounge. People could come and see the Savage in his natural habitat, a room with patterned wallpaper, leather armchairs, an oak desk, a glass-fronted bookcase and thick carpets.

At last the trickle of people thinned and stopped altogether. The museum closed. But the Savage didn't move. He had no other home. He lived here, like the apes on the same floor and the fish in the aquarium downstairs.

The attendant brought him his evening meal, friendly as ever. The Savage watched disinterestedly as he stepped through the force-field as if it weren't there; shorted round him, probably. He came alone, but the Savage knew there would be no advantage to jumping the man.

"Like some company?" asked the attendant. "I'll bring in a couple of friends for a poker game if you like."

"No, thanks," said the Savage coldly. "I just want to be left in peace."

"So it's like that tonight," the attendant said agreeably. "Okay. Ring if you need anything. Or if you change your mind." He stepped through the force-field again.

The Savage ate his meal without noticing what it was. When he wanted to be left in peace, he was. The attendant wouldn't even come back for the dishes, but would collect them the next morning when he brought the Savage his coffee.

Could it be so easy to escape and hide among the people of the Third Century? Could it be possible? The Savage told himself that it was. He glanced across at the detective novel he had just finished and had half understood.

His contemporaries were more experienced in crime than the people of the Third Century. A good twentieth-century detective could trace anyone, any time, anywhere. But there were no fingerprint files now, no police in the sense of the police in the novel — only the psychiatric bureau.

He might be wrong, but he was certain he had a chance. How much of a chance depended on Maureen.



As soon as he had finished his meal he opened the desk and took out a silver paper-knife. It was useless as a weapon, but it was quite a good screwdriver.

In the bedroom there was a ventilator covered by a grill. Rapidly the Savage removed the frame. The opening was just large enough for him. A little tunnel led three yards, then bent out of sight.

Obviously no one thought it was

possible to crawl through the ventilating system. It certainly wasn't easy, but it *was* possible. The Savage had already been in one of the attendant's rooms, and no one had been any the wiser. He had returned on that occasion because he had no plan, because he had no hope of escape then, because of the girl who was going to join him — and because he wanted to keep to himself the fact that he could

squirm through the ventilating system any time he wanted to.

He stripped naked and pushed his head and arms and shoulders into the smooth metal tunnel. It would be a waste of time trying to conceal how he had escaped; he could not replace the grill anyway. He couldn't turn in the pipe, and he had to be face first to remove the grill at the other end.

It took him two hours to work his way along to the attendant's room, only a few yards away. There were two bends, and each of them held him up for nearly an hour. He had to strain and inch himself round, millimetre by millimetre, pushing at the smooth walls of his lightless prison with hands and chin and knees. Perhaps when his prison was constructed from some suite already in existence, they had sent someone along the ventilator to see if it was possible to escape that way, and decided that it wasn't.

After two hours of straining and cursing silently the Savage reached the room where he had once before stood panting, wondering whether to try to escape or not. As before, it was dark and empty. The room was used by one of the night attendants who looked after him and the other animals in the building, and he would be on duty elsewhere.

It took fifteen minutes' patient work to remove the ventilator grill which he had himself replaced the

last time he was here. Once it was off and the Savage had climbed into the room, he really began to feel free. He might be caught at any moment, of course; but he didn't think it was likely.

He looked for a depilatory. Shaved clean, as he was, he was still obviously the Savage. Everyone else used an ointment, but this he had never been given. He found some in the bathroom, and in five minutes his face was as smooth as a baby's. He took the hair off his chest and from under his arms, too. He left the soft down on his legs. That was still common among men.

Still naked, he searched for something that would stain his skin slightly. There were still people with white skins, but only about one in twenty. He wanted to be as undistinguishable as possible. That meant he had to find a faint brown stain — lighter than a sun tan, but distinctly darker than his shoulders and chest and stomach. He found a brown ink which, many times diluted, served his purpose. He stained every inch of his body.

Clothes and money were no problem. In five minutes, wearing shorts and a soft shirt, his hair swept straight back and a little money in his pockets, he looked no longer the Savage, but exactly like a hundred men who had passed in front of his cage that day.

Getting out of the museum was no problem. He simply walked out. He had to leave unlocked a door which had been locked on the inside, but otherwise he left no clues he recognized.

In the brightly lit streets of Chago at night he walked rather defiantly at first, but gradually his false confidence became real confidence. If he walked, he was completely ignored. People walking were going somewhere, not just passing the time. When he stopped, friendly people would pass remarks on the usual things — not the weather now, for that was controlled, but everything else. He found it easy to start, carry on or terminate these casual exchanges. Nobody saw anything strange about him. His accent was perfect, and apparently he knew all he had to know.

A wave of resentment flooded him at the thought. If the people had been different — much more intelligent than he was, physically changed, thinking a different way — he could have understood the scientists' keeping him a prisoner, a man apart. But he was a man as these were men. He remembered a line from a poem which still had something, despite an obviously lame translation: *A man's a man in spite of all these other considerations.*

Angry, he wasn't too careful about where he was going. He brushed hard against someone,

grunted and passed on. Then, abruptly, he swung round. The man had spoken and was still speaking; apologizing for the fault, which was clearly the Savage's. The Savage turned and the man stopped, his eyes wide and frightened. The Savage made a tremendous effort.

"I'm really terribly sorry, sir," he said apologetically. "My thoughts were far away."

The man smiled uncertainly and murmured, "Think nothing of it. My fault entirely." But he wasn't happy; he had seen flaming anger in the Savage's face.

The Savage knew the dangers of over-elaboration, but he wanted to satisfy this man. "I'm an actor," he explained. "I was thinking about a part."

The man's face cleared. "Of course," he said. The dark passions still ruled the stage. He smiled at the Savage and went on. People had lost their adulation of actors and actresses. They would go and see and applaud them, but never imagined they were gods and goddesses.

The Savage walked on. He would have to watch that.

He didn't have to ask anyone the way. Chago, like most cities, was laid out in such a way that the name of a street told its location. He reached the house where Maureen lived and looked it over.

There were still rich and not-so-rich — there always would be,

now that people had at last realized the fact that all men were not born equal. Maureen's father, presumably, was successful. The house was fairly large, a private house. The Savage got into the gardens by vaulting a low wall. Finding Maureen couldn't have been easier. As he was standing against a tree surveying the house, light suddenly blazed from an upstairs window and Maureen came to the window and shut it. He saw her only for a moment, but that was enough.

If he had seen the whole family at the museum that morning, there seemed no reason for him not to break in at the nearest window and go openly to Maureen's room. Burglars were almost unknown. So were servants. The younger son and daughter were presumably asleep by this time, Maureen was in her room, and her mother and father would be sitting quietly in the front room where a glimmer of light showed. Crime was a very simple thing in a world which had next to no criminals.

It was as easy as he had expected. Three ground-floor windows were open. He hesitated outside what he had decided was Maureen's room. Then, boldly, he pushed the door open, went inside and closed it after him.

Maureen was in bed reading. She looked up at the sound, and

the Savage was so surprised at her expression that he waited for her to speak first. She was disappointed, that was all.

"So it was all a sham," she said, disillusioned, explaining his appearance to herself. "Mom and pop knew about it, I suppose, and were laughing at me. And I was so sorry for you —"

"Were you really?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, I've been thinking about you all day. But you don't come from the past at all, do you? It's just a sideshow like those at the carnival. . . ."

The Savage crossed the room and sat on her bed. She didn't shrink from him at all, or reinforce her filmy nightdress with the coverlet. But he would have been surprised if she had done either.

"Listen, Maureen," he said, quietly but intensely. "There's no sham. I come from the past. I was a prisoner. And your mother and father certainly don't know I'm here. Nobody does, yet."

Her reaction was again unexpected. The frown died from her face, leaving it cool and interested. "Explain, please," she said.

He explained. He concluded: "So you see, what happens now depends entirely on you. If you won't help me, I haven't much chance. I'm bound to give myself away when I go to a hotel, or try to get a job, or travel. I know your world well enough for casual con-



tacts with people, but not well enough to fit into it. So I'm asking you — I don't even know what I'm asking you. I'm just saying *please help me.*"

He meant what he said. Maureen didn't argue, or say it was impossible, or that it wasn't her affair. She said, "Go into the bathroom for a minute, please. I want to dress."

The Savage nearly warned her not to give him away or he'd — But what was the use? She could lock him up now or give him up in a week's time, as she liked. He went into the bathroom.

Staring blindly at the chrome fittings, he wondered. Maureen was different. That morning he had taken her for an empty-headed seventeen-year-old girl, pretty, sentimental, naive. He knew already he had been wrong. Seventeen? No, she must be nineteen or twenty. Not sentimental, but warmly sympathetic, from the way she was disappointed at the idea that his plight was all sham, and the way she said she had been thinking about him all day. Not naive either. Now that something had happened which mattered, she could be calm and reasonable. Even if she was ringing up the museum at that moment, there was much more to Maureen than he had thought.

"Come in," she called quietly, and he went back. She wore an

ankle-length grey dress which glinted as she moved. "I never wear this," she said, "so mom and pop will throw anyone who asks off the track. I'm going to dye my hair, too."

"What's happening?" the Savage asked quietly.

She spun to face him. "When will they start to look for you?" she asked. "Exactly, I mean. To the nearest minute."

"Eight-thirty tomorrow," he said. "Maybe before then, but it's unlikely."

"I'm taking you to Australia," she said. "I've never been there. My folks will think I went to the Continent or Canada."

The Savage did something he didn't mean to do. He caught her shoulders so that she had to tilt her head to look up into his eyes.

"Maureen," he said quietly, "are you sure you want to do this? I came to ask for help — advice, money, a little exertion on your part, perhaps. I never meant to ask for you."

"You're not getting me."

"Don't make a joke of it. Your coming with me — linking yourself with me — taking responsibility for me. Are you sure you mean to do that? If you had a day to think about it, would you do it?"

"Yes," she said.

It was from that moment, as her gray eyes stared so frankly and fearlessly and yet so understand-

ingly into his, that the Savage loved Mirune Kirk.

He had time to wonder, while she went for some money, at his unselfish reluctance to accept Maureen's offer to come with him. He wouldn't have expected it of himself. In fact, he told himself wryly, it was rather ridiculous. A hunted animal couldn't afford delicacies of feeling. It had to take what it could get, not nobly refuse assistance greater than expected.

He *had* been wrong about Maureen. She wasn't a saint or a genius or a great personality. But she was level-headed and could take a decision. He had been very lucky.

She slipped quietly into the room again. "I've got a thousand franks," she said. "That will last for three months, if necessary. But we'll hope things are settled long before that."

"How do you mean — settled?"

"Oh, the obvious things," she said, a little impatiently. "You may be voted citizenship in absentia, once representations are made. An offer may be made to you, if you come forward. There may be a country where you'd automatically have full legal rights, I don't know. It may turn out that no one had any right to keep you in a museum. Or perhaps . . ."

She flushed suddenly, and the Savage guessed that she had been thinking of one thing that he had known about. If he married, no

one would take him back. At least, it was very unlikely. The people of the Third Century placed a very high value on marriage. Much higher than his own people, to judge from what he had read. But Maureen didn't want to talk about that. She hurried him into action instead.

They got out of the house the way he had entered. They took nothing with them except a small valise. But first Maureen left a note to her parents. She let the Savage see it. It read:

Dear Mom and Pop,

Now, first of all, there's nothing to worry about. Got that clear? Okay. Remember the Savage we saw in the Museum yesterday? Well, a few hours after you read this I expect people will be ringing up asking if I know anything about him. The conversation yesterday was rather public, you know. Well, I do, and you can tell them that. I've gone away with him, in fact, and you can tell them that too.

But this isn't romance, it's justice. They didn't ask him if he wanted to be recreated. And when he was, he found himself an animal in a cage. That strike you as fair and reasonable? Me neither. The less you know about me for a while the better, but this much I'll tell you — while you *don't* hear from me, I'm all right. If anything of any kind goes wrong, I'll be back so fast! Love,

Mirune

"I can't tell them," she said, "that I've got money, for I expect others will read this letter. Knowing Mom and Pop, I think they'll show the letter and give no further help whatever. It's my affair, and they won't say anything I wouldn't want them to say."

"From what I've heard of family life a few thousand years ago," murmured the Savage, "it was never like this."

Maureen laughed. It was the first time he had heard her laugh. It was a wonderful sound — but perhaps that was because he was already dimly aware he loved her. "Maybe it's not so different after all," she said. "I don't say they'll entirely approve of the whole thing and assume I must be right. But they'll know I *may* be right, and they'll at least suspend judgment."

On the way to the airfield Maureen went into a women's washroom and dyed her hair blonde. She hadn't done it at home because she might leave traces. When she came out the Savage looked at her with half-amused dismay. "You're still a knockout," he said, "but you're not Maureen."

She smiled, but she seemed to like that.

It wasn't necessary to have reservations, but Maureen insisted that they'd booked a week ago for Safrisco. At least, if she didn't exactly insist, she looked surprised when the girl at the office said

there was no record of a booking, so that the girl said it was a mistake, wrote in the reservation a week back, and gave them their choice of seats; probably merely on the principle that the customer was always right, particularly when it didn't matter.

"Why did you do that?" the Savage asked as they walked out to the plane. "Won't they find out later that one couple insisted they had made reservations a week ago for Safrisco, and hadn't?"

"No. Your scientists, or attendants, or psychologists, or whoever it is, won't come down here and ask about details like that. They'll ring up all the travel depots and ask about couples who travelled tonight, excluding anyone who had reservations. And anyway, that girl won't be around tomorrow morning to explain that what's down as a reservation isn't really. Not when she's on duty tonight."

Silently, the Savage revised a few earlier ideas about crime in the Third Century. Maureen could be a very successful criminal.

They slept on the flight to Safrisco. But it was short, and when they arrived they booked rooms at the airport hotel and disappeared into them, heavy-eyed.

It was late the next morning when the Savage awoke. Maureen was sitting by his bedside, reading, and it took him a few seconds

to explain things to himself.

"You let me sleep," he exclaimed. "We should have gone on."

"Why?" she asked.

It was one of those simple questions which might or might not be stupid, and in any case it was difficult to answer. The Savage let it go.

"I want to get up," he said.

"Well, what's stopping you?"

"The fact that you're here and I have no pajamas."

"You needn't let that bother you. It doesn't me."

"Just for curiosity — how old are you, Maureen?"

"Twenty-three."

He was a little annoyed at that. She was going around under false pretences, looking seventeen. When he first saw her he had felt quite fatherly towards her — well, almost.

"Why the frown?" she asked.

Anger was foreign to the Third Century. He chased it away with an effort. "Anything about me there?" he asked, pointing to the paper she was reading.

"Not yet. Hasn't been time."

While she was hidden behind a double page, he got up and dressed. "What do we do now?" he asked.

She looked over the paper. "It's done," she told him. "Breakfast for you in ten minutes. Clothes — I bought some for you. You don't seem to have noticed it, but those

are different. Reservations — we go on to Sydney in three hours. But not straight from here. We take up a new identity and leave from the other airport. When we leave here we become Mr. and Mrs. John Camber. But only till we reach Sydney. Then —"

He grunted. It was an ungracious sound. She stopped, shrugged, and went back to the newspaper.

Rage had welled up again violently in the Savage. She took so much for granted. She just arranged things. He didn't consider that that was what he had wanted her to do. He was furious. She wasn't even paying the slightest attention to him. He wanted to pull her about by that smooth, false-gold hair. He wanted to shake her till her teeth rattled. He wondered if she would still be cool, reasonable and competent when she was writhing on the floor after he had hit her in the stomach. . . .

His fury burst in a cloud of sparks and he said in a flat voice, "I wonder if that's it."

Maureen threw aside the paper, startled by his tone. "Wonder if what's what?" she asked.

He sat on the bed and gripped her hands. "Maureen, do you ever get angry?" he demanded.

"Yes, why?"

"What's it like?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. How do you describe an emotion?"

I was angry when I thought of what they were doing to you, keeping you a prisoner when you —”

“Maybe I know why they kept me a prisoner. I never realized it before — never quite in this way. The way I get angry has no place in this world. I’m sane and reasonable, as you say. Then suddenly something happens and I want to destroy. To hurt . . .”

He had a vivid mental picture, his earlier thought translated into sight and sound. Maureen standing up, frightened. Himself driving his fist exultantly into her body. Maureen crumpling up, writhing in agony.

He was terrified. His terror was fact, not part of his mental picture.

He wept.

“We’d better go back,” said the Savage. He couldn’t look at Maureen, but he knew her tunic was visibly wet where he had cried on it. He hadn’t told her what had made him weep.

“This picture,” she said quietly. “This thing you think you nearly did. Was it — murder?”

“No,” he said dully.

“Just taking me, then? That’s not such a horrible and unnatural thought.” She laughed. It wasn’t quite a natural laugh, but it was a very good try.

“Not that either. Maureen, have you ever heard of —”

He stopped. He had been going

to tell her, but suddenly he saw it wasn’t necessary. It would never happen with Maureen again. Perhaps the weeping had done something. Broken down a wall, or built one up. Anyway, he knew he would never hurt Maureen. He would never be angry with Maureen.

He laughed. It was such a healthy laugh that Maureen joined in. “Funny how things change,” he said. “You just saw me lose something nasty. I think it’s really gone.”

“So do I,” said Maureen quietly. “And we’re going on to Sydney.”

When they reached Sydney the evening papers had some mention of the Savage’s escape — mention, no more. They frowned at the brief paragraphs.

“This doesn’t really say anything,” said Maureen. “That you’re no longer under restraint at Chago — that might mean they’d let you go. It doesn’t say you escaped. That would imply that you were a prisoner and that someone had a right to keep you prisoner. And no mention of whether anyone’s looking for you.”

“In a book I was reading,” said the Savage thoughtfully, “I read something that indicated newspapers weren’t always free. That some things had to be kept out. Could this be — what was it called? — muzzling the press?”

“I don’t know whether it’s muzzled or not. I expect why there’s

so little here is because they're trying to work out now whether you're a private or public responsibility. What they can say about you and whether they've any right to take you back."

They went to a theater that night, and the Savage enjoyed the show more than anything he could remember. He had ceased reminding himself what a short time he had known Maureen. The time he had known her seemed to be the only part of his life that mattered.

When they said good-night outside Maureen's hotel bedroom door, she murmured thoughtfully, "I suppose it would be odd after an evening like this if you didn't kiss me goodnight. What do you think?"

He didn't think. He took her in his arms very gently and touched her lips lightly. He must have demonstrated the essential difference between depth and violence of passion, for she broke free quickly, met his gaze for a second, slipped into her room and closed the door.

The Savage stood still, wondering. She had been startled, but more than startled. There had been fear too. Not fear of him. Could it be fear of losing him?

Whatever it was, she hadn't meant him to see it.

Wakening early the next morning, he hurried down to the foyer for newspapers. A woman reading a paper stumbled into him, and he

had to grab her arm to prevent her falling.

"I beg your pardon," he said politely, though the fault was hers. She disengaged her arm, nodded with cold civility, and walked off along the passage.

It was only when he was on his way upstairs again with the papers that the Savage realized that he had been less angry than the woman. He remembered the time when he had had to pretend to be an actor. And now the woman looking at him quite hostilely, while he remained polite and solicitous.

Curiously, some of his irritation came back then. What was going on anyway? Was he unconsciously trying to change himself, to make himself conform to the Third Century? To make himself fit for Maureen?

The last thought softened him at once. Yes, if it was for Maureen he was all for it.

She tapped on his door while he was reading the papers. When he saw her he smiled and was happy. He couldn't help himself. She was wearing her blue slacks and wings again, as when he had first seen her. But this time he only noticed that, no more. When there was only one woman, identifying details didn't count.

He almost said, "Don't I get to kiss you good morning?" but bit it back. He couldn't expect her to be as careless of the short time

he had known her as he was.

He said instead, "Well, they've come out with an offer."

She raised her eyebrows. "And from the way you say that, you don't think much of it."

"I didn't know I was making it so obvious. The psychiatric bureau is now behind the people who recreated me. Apparently there's nothing much against me, though there's a hint that I'll be pretty closely watched. But they come right out with it and say to me, wherever I happen to be, that I can come back and live my own life as I like, free to work at what I like, do what I like, go where I like."

"But . . . ?" prompted Maureen.

"As you say. But they're suspicious of my genetic strain. They don't want it in the Third Century. I mustn't marry."

"And how do you feel about this? Will you accept?"

"No."

"Does that mean you want to marry?"

The Savage was silent. Maureen was quite capable of discussing things like this quite impersonally. But he couldn't.

"Or just that you want to feel you can if you should ever want to?" she suggested. "If it's only that — there's nothing against accepting the offer. Nobody would try to bind you for life. Mention

of genetic strain sounds like an excuse. They want to watch you. They're not quite sure. Later, they may feel differently. And if *you* feel differently, you can always say so, and see what happens. So if you've no immediate thoughts of marriage, why not accept?"

The Savage remained silent. The old resentment flared in him; not resentment against Maureen, nor against anyone else, but against things, circumstances, laws, conventions.

"But then perhaps you *have* immediate thoughts of marriage," Maureen went on coolly. "So, of course, you don't want to accept the offer. You couldn't, because even while you promised, you'd be thinking of breaking the promise. Is there a girl?"

Without thinking, he nodded.

"Who is she?"

He surveyed her from a pit of perplexity and indecision with misery at its core. Her tone was only mildly interested. He hadn't told her much about himself. As far as she knew, there could be a girl, another girl — one of the scientists or attendants or psychologists he had seen so often and might, but didn't, know so well.

His perplexity and indecision and misery must have been obvious. "Savage," said Maureen with a catch in her voice, "do I have to go down on my knees and beg you to tell me I'm the girl?"

It was a moment he would remember always; Maureen at that moment was the picture out of all his life he wanted to keep forever. Nothing, to him, could ever be more beautiful. She was as she had been when he first saw her, except that now her hair was blonde, her cheeks flushed, her breasts heaving, her eyes bright. But then she had just been a girl among women. Now, in any way that any woman differed from Maureen, to that extent that woman was imperfect.

There was a tap on the door. The Savage was filled with foreboding even before he saw the psychiatric bureau badge.

The man was alone and he was friendly and apologetic. "Sorry to bother you," he said. "A picture

went out on TV this morning of a couple of people my department would like to find." His manner was open, but he took their cooperation for granted. People didn't obstruct the psychiatric bureau unless they had something to hide. They told agents who asked questions as much as possible in the shortest possible time. That was the best and quickest way to get rid of them.

"I was told the man wasn't very like you, sir, but the girl was exactly like you." He turned to Maureen. "This girl is a brunette, though. I wonder if you'd come down to the department for a couple of minutes. We'd like to test your hair, for example. If you're a natural blonde, why —"

"I'm not," Maureen laughed. "A lot of blondes aren't. Who is



"Now that's enough, John. Our guests aren't interested in your old voodoo hobby."

this girl, and what's she done?"

"Mirune Kirk, from Chago. I believe you only checked in here yesterday. Now —"

Fool, fool, fool, the Savage told himself bitterly. How could he ever have thought he could escape? Yet, he *would* escape, another, more resilient part of his mind insisted. He almost had Maureen. He wouldn't, couldn't give her up. He would stop running and fight. He should have done that long ago.

The psychiatric bureau man's attention was all on Maureen. The Savage brought the heavy base of a table lamp crashing behind his ear. "Quick," he said. "Let's —"

Maureen was crying. Not bitterly, but miserably, despairingly.

"Just a little longer," she said between sobs. "Almost through. Why did you have to lose your nerve?"

"Lose my nerve?" he exclaimed — but she turned and ran from the room.

Perhaps the bureau man wasn't unconscious. Perhaps there had been others with him. The Savage never really knew. But there was sudden blackness which was somehow familiar.

They didn't even let him go back with Maureen. The next he knew he was in his bedroom at the museum in Chago — in bed, weak and dizzy from drugs.

The Scientist — his name was Tom Borden, but his face was the first the Savage remembered seeing, and he always thought of him as just the Scientist — was there, sympathetic as ever. Things didn't look quite real to the Savage, but he knew they were real.

"What a pity," said the Scientist. "What a terrible pity." He seemed aware of the inadequacy of his words, and clicked his tongue tragically. "The escape from here — but that's an old story. You went to Mirune with a trust that was really fine. You didn't hesitate over giving her a chance to betray you. And when you felt responsibility for her; oh yes, that was new. You wanted her to be sure. You needn't have worried so much about the sadism trauma; you were trying to tear it out by the roots. Your frank, conscious realization that you loved Maureen . . ."

He sighed. The Savage tried hard to clear the fog from his brain. "Did I understand you to hint," he asked in a voice that seemed to be speaking in the next room, "that you knew all along what was happening — and that something like this has happened before?"

"Oh yes," said the Scientist. "You might have guessed that when I told you there would be no primitive mate for you it was because we intended you to have full citizenship of this world —"

eventually. May be a while yet," he added absently. "You start with a clean slate each time. Which means you don't automatically start where you left off. You're in a process of forgetting now, of course."

It was true. His attention directed to it, the Savage was aware of the impressions slipping off his mind, like chalk marks being washed away by rain.

"So I'm not really telling you anything," said the Scientist. "I'd put it all more carefully if I were."

"Maureen," said the Savage sharply. "Has she been in it all the time? Or was she new? Did she know? Will it be Maureen again? Have I —"

"Even if I did answer those, you wouldn't remember. I shouldn't really talk at all. Only so much more for you to forget. But some of it was so magnificent. . . ."

He sighed again.

The Savage spoke no more. It was only recent events which were crumbling away. He still remembered the early days. God, hadn't he been afraid and resentful and ashamed and angry and reckless and deceitful then! Perhaps it was steady progress, not just a clean sheet every time. He didn't understand it all. The Scientist hadn't

said enough. He wasn't quite sure what was real and how real. But he did know that a lot had to happen to the Savage he had once been before he could take and deserve his place in this world.

At the end he ignored the Scientist, ceased trying to understand, and clung only to the memory of Maureen, the girl he was going to remember always — always — always. "Do I have to go down on my knees?" The hotel bedroom. "Can't you speak, Savage?" Slacks and wings, brown body; dark hair, blonde hair. Maureen. Could it be that she would come and see him again in his cage, and that even if he remembered nothing, he would know? "Why, you talk just like us!" A beautiful laugh, a laugh he loved. Maureen. He prayed to the Scientist, to himself, to Maureen, to the psychiatric bureau, whoever was responsible for his rehabilitation, that it would be Maureen again.

What did Maureen look like, anyway? For a moment he had thought her real name was Mirune. The drugs were dragging the last dregs of memory out of him. He was forgetting whom he had loved.

But he still remembered *that* he had loved.