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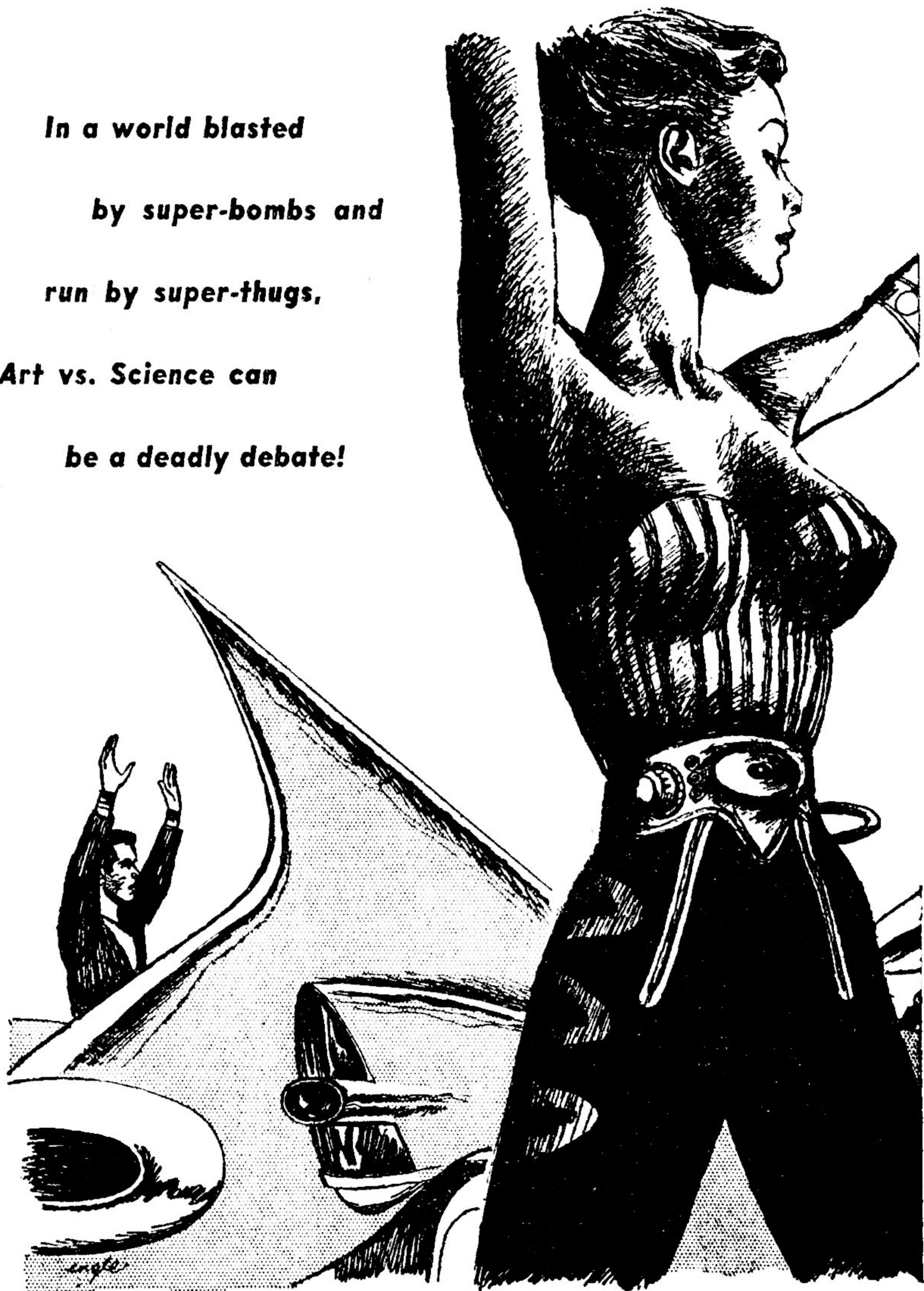
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**In a world blasted  
by super-bombs and  
run by super-thugs,  
Art vs. Science can  
be a deadly debate!**





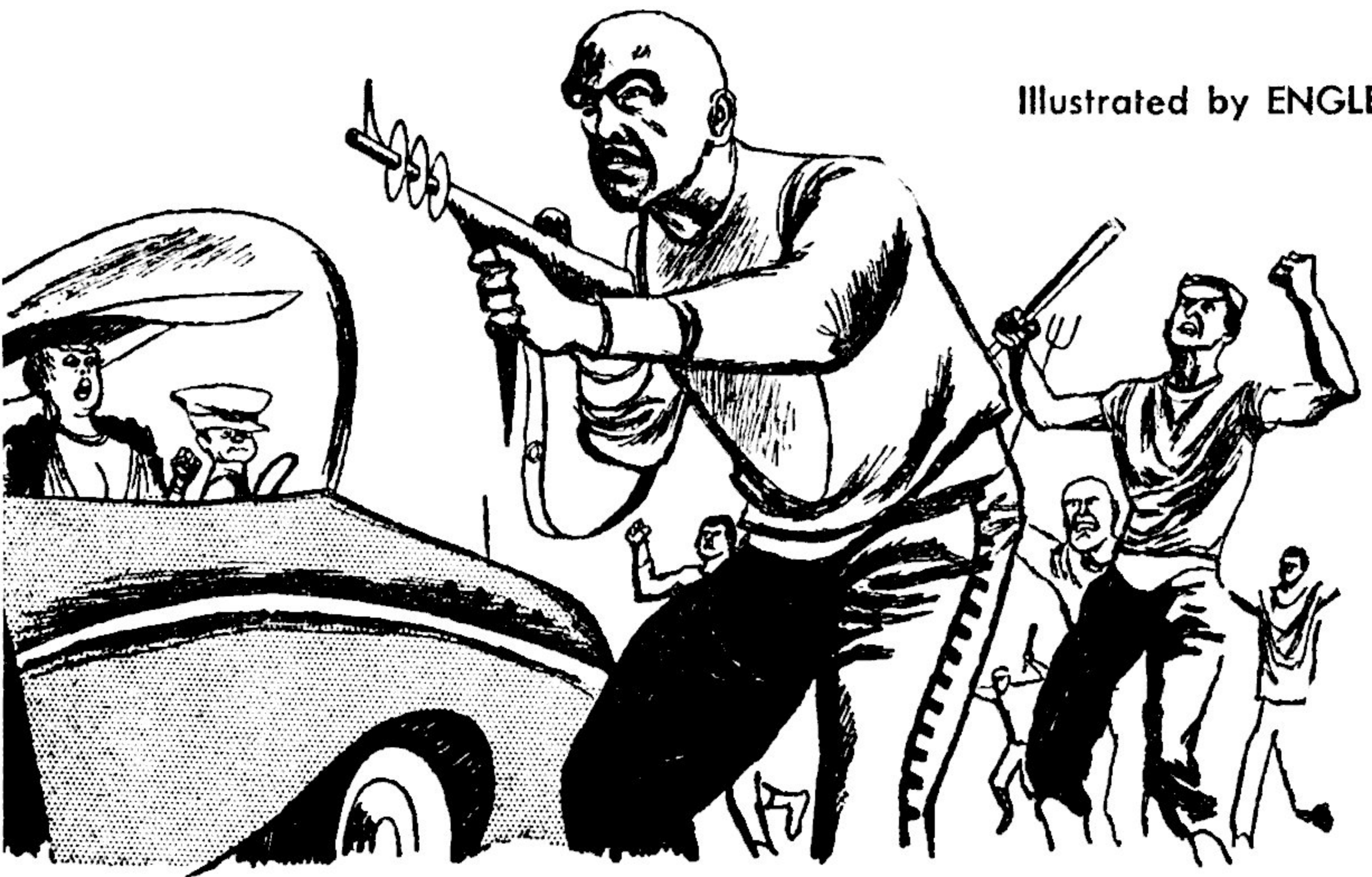
by FRITZ LEIBER

# FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

THE SUN hadn't quite risen, but now that the five men were out from under the trees it already felt hot. Far ahead, off to the left of the road, the spires

of New Angeles gleamed dusky blue against the departing night. The two unarmed men gazed back wistfully at the little town, dark and asleep under its moist leafy

Illustrated by ENGLE



umbrellas. The one who was thin and had hair flecked with gray looked all intellect; the other, young and with a curly mop, looked all feeling.

The fat man barring their way back to town mopped his head. The two young men flanking him with shotgun and squirt-gun hadn't started to sweat yet.

The fat man stuffed the big handkerchief back in his pocket, wiped his hands on his shirt, rested his wrists lightly on the pistols holstered either side his stomach, looked at the two unarmed men, indicated the hot road with a nod, and said, "There's your way, professors. Get going."

The thin man looked at the hand-smears on the fat man's shirt. "But you haven't even explained to me," he protested softly, "why I'm being turned out of Ozona College."

"Look here, Mr. Ellenby, I've tried to make it easy for you," the fat man said. "I'm doing it before the town wakes up. Would you rather be chased by a mob?"

"But why—?"

"Because we found out you weren't just a math teacher, Mr. Ellenby." The fat man's voice went hard. "You'd been a physicist once. Nuclear physicist."

The young man with the shotgun spat. Ellenby watched the spittle curl in the dust like

a little brown worm. He shifted his gaze to a dead eucalyptus leaf. "I'd like to talk to the college board of regents," he said tonelessly.

"I'm the board of regents," the fat man told him. "Didn't you even know that?"

At this point the other unarmed man spoke up loudly. "But that doesn't explain my case. I've devoted my whole life to warning people against physicists and other scientists. How they'd smash us with their bombs. How they were destroying our minds with 3D and telefax and handies. How they were blaspheming against Nature, killing all imagination, crushing all beauty out of life!"

"I'd shut my mouth if I were you, Madson," the fat man said critically, "or at least lower my voice. When I mentioned a mob, I wasn't fooling. I saw them burn Cal Tech. In fact, I got a bit excited and helped."

The young man with the shotgun grinned.

"Cal Tech," Ellenby murmured, his eyes growing distant. "Cal Tech burns and Ozona stands."

"Ozona stands for the decencies of life," the fat man grated, "not alphabet bombs and pituitary gas. Its purpose is to save a town, not help kill a world."

"But why should I be driven out?" Madson persisted. "I'm



*IT'S BEEN three years since a new Fritz Leiber story has appeared in any magazine. That's much too long, especially when you remember the subtly controlled fury of stories like "Coming Attraction" and "Poor Superman." But now Leiber has returned to full-time writing, and "Friends and Enemies," one of the first results, will rank with the best he's done!*

---

just a poet singing the beauties of the simple life unmarred by science."

"Not simple enough for Ozona!" the fat man snorted. "We happen to know, Mr. Poet Madson, that you've written some stories about free love. We don't want anyone telling Ozona girls it's all right to be careless."

"But those were just ideas, ideas in a story," Madson protested. "I wasn't advocating—"

"No difference," the fat man cut him short. "Talk to a woman about ideas and pretty soon she gets some." His voice became almost kindly. "Look here, if you wanted a woman without getting hitched to her, why didn't you go to shantytown?"

Madson squared his shoulders. "You've missed the whole point. I'd never do such a thing. I never have."

"Then you shouldn't have boasted," the fat man said. "And you shouldn't have fooled around with Councilman Classen's daughter."

At the name, Ellenby came out of his trance and looked sharply at Madson, who said

indignantly, "I wasn't fooling around with Vera-Ellen, whatever her crazy father says. She came to my office because she has poetic ability and I wanted to encourage it."

"Yeah, so she'd encourage you," the fat man finished. "That girl's wild enough already, which I suppose is what you mean by poetic ability. And in this town, her father's word counts." He hitched up his belt. "And now, professors, it's time you started."

Madson and Ellenby looked at each other doubtfully. The young man with the squirtgun raised its acid-etched muzzle. The fat man looked hard at Madson and Ellenby. "I think I hear alarm clocks going off," he said quietly.

They watched the two men trudge a hundred yards, watched Ellenby shift the rolled-up towel under his elbow to the other side, watched Madson pause to thumb tobacco into a pipe and glance carelessly back, then shove the pipe in his pocket and go on hurriedly.

"Couple of pretty harmless



coots, if you ask me," the young man with the shotgun observed.

"Sure," the fat man agreed, "but we got to remember peoples' feelings and keep Ozona straight. We don't like mobs or fear or girls gone wild."

The young man with the shotgun grinned. "That Vera-Allen," he murmured, shaking his head.

"You better keep *your* mind off her too," the fat man said sourly. "She's wild enough without anybody to encourage her poetic ability or anything else. It's a good thing we gave those two their walking papers."

"They'll probably walk right into the arms of the Harvey gang," the young man with the squirtgun remarked, "especially if they try to short-cut."

"Pretty small pickings for Harvey, those two," the young man with the shotgun countered.

"Which won't please him at all."

The fat man shrugged. "Their own fault. If only they'd had sense enough to keep their mouths shut. Early in life."

"They don't seem to realize it's 1993," said the young man with the shotgun.

The fat man nodded. "Come on," he said, turning back toward the town and the coolness. "We've done our duty."

The young man with the squirtgun took a last look. "There they go, Art and Sci-

ence," he observed with satisfaction. "Those two subjects always did make my head ache."

ON THE HOT ROAD Madson began to stride briskly. His nostrils flared. "Smell the morning air," he commanded. "It's good, good!"

Ellenby, matching his stride with longer if older legs, looked at him with mild wonder.

"Smell the hot sour grass," Madson continued. "It's things like this man was meant for, not machines and formulas. Look at the dew. Have you seen the dew in years? Look at it on that spiderweb!"

The physicist paused obediently to observe the softly twinkling strands. "Perfect catenaries," he murmured.

"What?"

"A kind of curve," Ellenby explained. "The locus of the focus of a parabola rolling on a straight line."

"Locus - focus hocus - pocus!" Madson snorted. "Reducing the wonders of Nature to chalk marks. It's disgusting."

Suddenly each tiny drop of dew turned blood-red. Ellenby turned his back on the spiderweb, whipped a crooked little brass tube from an inside pocket and squinted through it.

"What's that?" Madson asked.

"Spectroscope," Ellenby explained. "Early morning spectra



of the sun are fascinating."

Madson huffed. "There you go. Analyzing. Tearing beauty apart. It's a disease." He paused. "Say, won't you hurt your eyes?"

Turning back, Ellenby shook his head. "I keep a smoked glass on it," he said. "I'm always hoping that some day I'll get a glimpse of an atomic bomb explosion."

"You mean to say you've missed all the dozens they dropped on this country? That's too bad."

"The ball of fire's quite fleeting. The opportunities haven't been as good as you think."

"But you're a physicist, aren't you? Don't you people have all sorts of lovely photographs to gloat over in your laboratories?"

"Atomic bomb spectra were never declassified," Ellenby told him wistfully. "At least not in my part of the project. I've never seen one."

"Well, you'll probably get your chance," Madson told him harshly. "If you've been reading your dirty telefax, you'll know the Hot Truce is coming to a boil. And the Angeles area will be a prime target." Ellenby nodded mutely.

They trudged on. The sun began to beat on their backs like an open fire. Ellenby turned up his collar. He watched his companion thoughtfully. Finally he said, "So you're the Madson who

wrote those *Enemies of Science* stories about a world ruled by poets. It never occurred to me back at Ozona. And that non-fiction book about us—what was it called?"

"*Murderers of Imagination*," Madson growled. "And it would have been a good thing if you'd listened to my warnings instead of going on building machines and dissecting Nature and destroying all the lovely myths that make life worthwhile."

"Are you sure that Nature is so lovely and kind?" Ellenby ventured. Madson did not deign to answer.

They passed a crossroad leading, the battered sign said, one way to Palmdale, the other to San Bernardino. They were perhaps a hundred yards beyond it when Ellenby let go a little chuckle. "I have a confession to make. When I was very young I wrote an article about how children shouldn't be taught the Santa Claus myth or any similar fictions."

Madson laughed sardonically. "A perfect member of your dry-souled tribe! Worrying about Santa Claus, when all the while something very different was about to come flying down from over the North Pole and land on our housetops."

"We did try to warn people about the intercontinental missiles," Ellenby reminded him.



"Yes, without any success. The last two reindeer—Donner and Blitzen!"

Ellenby nodded glumly, but he couldn't keep a smile off his face for long. "I wrote another article too—it was never published—about how poetry is completely pointless, how rhymes inevitably distort meanings, and so on."

Madson whirled on him with a peal of laughter. "So you even thought you were big enough to wreck poetry!" He jerked a limp, thinnish volume from his coat pocket. "You thought you could destroy this!"

Ellenby's expression changed. He reached for the book, but Madson held it away from him. Ellenby said, "That's Keats, isn't it?"

"How would you know?"

Ellenby hesitated. "Oh, I got to like some of his poetry, quite a while after I wrote the article." He paused again and looked squarely at Madson. "Also, Vera-Ellen was reading me some pieces out of that volume. I guess you'd loaned it to her."

"Vera-Ellen?" Madson's jaw dropped.

Ellenby nodded. "She had trouble with her geometry. Some conferences were necessary." He smiled. "We physicists aren't such a dry-souled tribe, you know."

Madson looked outraged.

"Why, you're old enough to be her father!"

"Or her husband," Ellenby replied coolly. "Young women are often attracted to father images. But all that can't make any difference to us now."

"You're right," Madson said shortly. He shoved the poetry volume back in his pocket, flirted the sweat out of his eyes, and looked around with impatience. "Say, you're going to New Angeles, aren't you?" he asked, and when Ellenby nodded uncertainly, said, "Then let's cut across the fields. This road is taking us out of our way." And without waiting for a reply he jumped across the little ditch to the left of the road and into the yellowing wheat field. Ellenby watched him for a moment, then hitched his rolled towel further up under his arm and followed.

IT WAS stifling in the field. The wheat seemed to paralyze any stray breezes. Their boots hissed against the dry stems. Far off they heard a lazy drumming. After a while they came to a wide, brimful irrigation ditch. They could see that some hundreds of feet ahead it was crossed by a little bridge. They followed the ditch.

Ellenby felt strangely giddy, as if he were looking at everything through a microscope. That may have been due to the



tremendous size of the wheat, its spikes almost as big as corncobs, the spikelets bigger than kernels—rich orange stuff taut with flour. But then they came to a section marred by larger and larger splotches of a powdery purple blight.

The lazy drumming became louder. Ellenby was the first to see the low-swinging helicopter with its thick, trailing plume of greenish mist. He knocked Madson on the shoulder and both men started to run. Purple dust puffed. Once Ellenby stumbled and Madson stopped to jerk him to his feet. Still they would have escaped except that the copter swerved toward them. A moment later they were enveloped in sweet oily fumes.

Madson heard jeering laughter, glimpsed a grotesquely long-nosed face peering down from above. Then, through the cloud, Ellenby squeaked, "Don't breathe!" and Madson felt himself dragged roughly into the ditch. The water closed over him with a splash.

Puffing and blowing, he came to his feet—the water hardly reached his waist—to find himself being dragged by Ellenby toward the bridge. It was all he could do to keep his footing on the muddy bottom. By the time he got breath enough to voice his indignation, Ellenby was saying, "That's far enough. The

stuff's settling away from us. Now strip and scrub yourself."

Ellenby unrolled the towel he'd held tightly clutched to his side all the while, and produced a bar of soap. In response to Madson's question he explained, "That fungicide was probably TTTR or some other relative of the nerve-gas family. They are absorbed through the skin."

Seconds later Madson was scouring his head and chest. He hesitated at his trousers, muttering, "They'll probably have me for indecent exposure. Claim I was trying to start a nudist colony as well as a free-love cult." But Ellenby's warning had been a chilly one.

Ellenby soaped Madson's back and he in turn soaped the older man's ridgy one.

"I suppose that's why he had an elephant's nose," Madson mused.

"What?"

"Man in the copter," Madson explained. "Wearing a respirator."

Ellenby nodded and made them move nearer the bridge for a change of water.

They started to scrub their clothes, rinse and wring them, and lay them on the bank to dry. They watched the copter buzzing along in the distance, but it didn't seem inclined to come near again. Madson felt impelled to say, "You know, it's your



chemist friends who have introduced that viciousness into the common man's spirit, giving him horrible poisons to use against Nature. Otherwise he wouldn't have tried to douse us with that stuff."

"He just acted like an ordinary farmer to me," Ellenby replied, scrubbing vigorously.

"Think we're safe?" Madson asked.

Ellenby shrugged. "We'll discover," he said briefly.

MADSON SHIVERED, but the rhythmic job was soothing. After a bit he began to feel almost playful. Lathering his shirt, he got some fine large bubbles, held them so he could see their colors flow in the sunlight.

"Tiny perfect worlds of every hue," he murmured. "Violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, red."

"And dead black," Ellenby added.

"You would say something like that!" Madson grunted. "What did you think I was talking about?"

"Bubbles."

"Maybe some of your friends' poisons have black bubbles," Madson said bitingly. "But I was talking about these."

"So was I. Give me your pipe."

The authority in Ellenby's

voice made Madson look around startledly. "Give me your pipe," Ellenby repeated firmly, holding out his hand.

Madson fished it out of the pocket of the trousers he was about to wash and handed it over. Ellenby knocked out the soggy tobacco, swished it in the water a few times, and began to soap the inside of the bowl.

Madson started to object, but, "You'd be washing it anyway," Ellenby assured him. "Now look here, Madson, I'm going to blow a bubble and I want you to watch. I want you to observe Nature for all you're worth. If poets and physicists have one thing in common it's that they're both supposed to be able to observe. Accurately."

He took a breath. "Now see, I'm going to hold the pipe mouth down and let the bubble hang from it, but with one side of the bowl tipped up a bit, so that the strain on the bubble's skin will be greatest on that side."

He blew a big bubble, held the pipe with one hand and pointed with a finger of the other. "There's the place to watch now. There!" The bubble burst.

"What was that?" Madson asked in a new voice. "It really was black for an instant, dull like soot."

"A bubble bursts because its skin gets thinner and thinner,"



Ellenby said. "When it gets thin enough it shows colors, as interference eliminates different wavelengths. With yellow eliminated it shows violet, and so on. But finally, just for a moment at the place where it's going to break, the skin becomes only one molecule thick. Such a monomolecular layer absorbs all light, hence shows as dead black."

"Everything's got a black lining, eh?"

"Black can be beautiful. Here, I'll do it again."

Madson put his hand on Ellenby's shoulder to steady himself. They were standing hip-deep in water, their bodies still flecked with suds. Their heads were inches from the new bubble. As it burst a voice floated down to them.

"Is this the Ozona Faculty Kindergarten?"

They whirled around, simultaneously crouching in the water.

"Vera-Allen, what are you doing here?" Madson demanded.

"Watching the kiddies play," the girl on the bridge replied, running a hand through her touseled violet hair. She looked down at her slacks and jacket. "Wish I'd brought my swim suit, though I gather it wouldn't be expected."

"Vera-Allen!" Madson said apprehensively.

"It doesn't look very inviting down there, though," she mused.

"Guess I'll wait for Aqua Heaven at New Angeles."

"You're going to New Angeles?" Ellenby put in. It is not easy to be conversationally brilliant while squatting chest deep in muddy water, acutely conscious of the absence of clothes.

Vera-Allen nodded lazily, leaning on the railing. "Going to get me a city job. With its reduced faculty Ozona holds no more intellectual interest for me. Did you know math's going to be made part of the Home Eck department, Mr. Ellenby?"

"But how did you know that we—"

"Daughter of the man who got you run out of town ought to know what the old bully's up to. And if you're worrying that they'll come after me and find us together, I'll just head along by myself."

Madson and Ellenby both protested, though it is even harder to protest effectively than to be conversationally brilliant while squatting naked in coffee-colored water.

Vera-Allen said, "All right, so quit playing and let's get on. You have to tell me all about New Angeles and the kind of jobs we'll get."

"But—?"

"Modest, eh? I'm afraid Pa wouldn't count it in your favor. But all right." She turned her



back and sauntered to the other side of the bridge.

MADSON and Ellenby cautiously climbed out of the ditch, brushed the water from their skins, and wormed into their soggy clothes.

"We've got to persuade her to go back," Madson whispered.

"Vera-Allen?" Ellenby replied and raised his eyebrows.

Madson groaned softly.

"Cheer up," Ellenby said. And he seemed in a cheerful humor himself when they climbed to the bridge. "Vera-Allen," he said, "we've been having an argument as to whether man ruined Nature or Nature ruined man to start with."

"Is this a class, Mr. Ellenby?"

"Of sorts," he told her. Behind him Madson snorted, flipping his Keats to dry the pages. They started off together.

"Well," said Vera-Allen, "I like Nature and I like . . . human beings. And I don't feel ruined at all. Where's the argument?"

"What about the bombs?" Madson demanded automatically. "By man our physicist here means Technology. Whereas I mean—"

"Oh, the bombs," she said with a shrug. "What sort of job do you think I should get in New Angeles?"

"Well . . ." Madson began.

"Say, I'm getting hungry,"

she raced on, turning to Ellenby.

"So am I," he agreed.

They looked at the road ahead. A jagged hill now hid all but the tips of the spires of New Angeles. On the top of the hill was a tremendous house with sagging roofs of cracked tiles, stucco walls dark with rain stains and green with moss yet also showing cracks, and windows of age-blued glass, some splintered, flashing in the sun, which tempted Ellenby to whip out his spectroscope.

Curving down from the house came a weedy and balding expanse that had obviously once been a well-tended lawn. A few stalwart patches of thick grass held out tenaciously.

Pale-trunked eucalyptus trees towered behind the house and to either side of the road where it curved over the hill.

In a hollow at the foot of the one-time lawn, just where it met the road, something gleamed. As Madson, Ellenby and Vera-Allen tramped forward, they saw it was an old automobile, one of the jet antiques that were the rage around 1970—in fact, a Lunar '69. Coming closer Ellenby realized that it had custom-built features, such as jet brakes and collision springs.

A man with an odd cap was poking a probe into the air intake, while in the back seat a woman was sitting, shadowed



by a hat four feet across. At the sound of their footsteps the man whirled to his feet, quickly enough though unsteadily. He stared at them, wagging the probe. Just at that moment something that looked like an animated orange furpiece leaped from the tonneau.

"George!" the woman cried. "Widgie's got away."

The small flattish creature came on in undulating bounds. It was past the man in the cap before he could turn. It headed for Ellenby, then changed direction. Madson made an impulsive dive for it, but it widened itself still more and sailed over him straight into Vera-Allen's arms.

They walked toward the car. Widgie wriggled, Vera-Allen stroked his ears. He seemed to be a flying fox of some sort. The man eyed them hostilely, raising the probe. Madson stared puzzledly at the cap. Out of his older knowledge Ellenby whispered an explanation: "Chauf-feur."

The woman stood in the back seat, swaying slightly. She was wearing a white swim suit and dark teleglasses under her hat. At first she seemed a somewhat ravaged thirty. Then they began to see the rest of the wrinkles.

SHE RECEIVED Widgie from Vera-Allen, shook him out and tucked him under her arm,

where he hung limply, moving his tiny red eyes.

"Come in with me, my dear," she told Vera-Allen. "George, put down that crazy pole. Pay no attention to George—he can't recognize gentlefolk when he sees them, especially when he's drunk. Gentlemen," she continued, waving graciously to Madson and Ellenby, "you have the thanks of Rickie Vickson." As she pronounced the name she surveyed them sharply. Her gaze settled on Ellenby. "You know me, don't you?"

"Certainly," he answered instantly. "You were my first—my favorite straight 3D star."

"Are you in 3D?" Vera-Allen asked, a sudden gleam in her eyes.

"Was, my dear," Rickie said grandly. She ogled Ellenby through the fish-eye glasses. "Ah, straight 3D," she sighed. "Simple video-audio in depth—there was a great art-form." She began to sway again and they caught the reek of alcohol. "You know, gentlemen, it was handies that ruined my career. I had the looks and the voice, but I lacked the touch. Something in me shrank from the whole idea—be still, Widgie—and the girls with itchy fingers took over. But I'm talking too much about myself. It's hot and you wonderful gentlemen must be thirsty. Here, have a—"



The chauffeur glared at her as she reached fumblingly down into the tonneau. She caught the look and quailed slightly.

"—sandwich," she finished, coming up with a shiny can.

Madson accepted it from her, clicking the catch. The top popped four feet in the air, followed lazily by the uppermost sandwich which he caught deftly. He handed the can to Ellenby, who served himself and handed it up to Vera-Allen. Soon all three of them were munching.

"Miss Vickson," Vera-Allen asked between mouthfuls, "do you think I could get a job in broadcast entertainment?"

Rickie looked at her sideways, leaning away to focus. "Not with that ghastly atomglow hair," she said. "Violet is old hat this year—it's either black, blonde or bald. But give me your hand, my dear."

"Going to tell my fortune?"

"After a fashion." She held up Vera-Allen's hand, squeezing and prodding it thoughtfully, as if she were testing the carcass of an alleged spring chicken. Then she nodded. "You'll do. Good strong hand, that's all that's needed, so you can really crunch the knuckles of the bohunks. They love it rough. Of course the technicians could step up the power when they broadcast your hand-squeeze, but the addicts don't feel it's the same

thing." She looked sourly at her own delicate claws. "Yes, my dear, you'll have a chance in handies if you don't mind cuddling with two million dirty-minded bohunks every night and if Rickie Vickson's still got any entree at the studios." She made a face and dipped again into the tonneau, apparently to gulp something, for the chauffeur's glare was intensified.

"You're from New Angeles?" Madson asked politely when Rickie came up beaming.

"Old Angeles," she corrected. "My home's in a contaminated area. After 3D lighting I've never been afraid of hard radiations. But this time my psychic counselor told me—Widgie, I'm going to put you away in a nice little urn—that the bombs are going to miss New Angeles and fall on Old. That's why George is jetting me to the mountains. Others drink to still their fears. I do something about it—too."

"You mean you're going *away* from the studio?" Vera-Allen demanded incredulously while Ellenby mumbled "Bombs?" through a mouthful of sandwich.

"Of course," Rickie nodded. "Don't you know? Russia's touched a match to the Hot Truce. You charming gentlemen should keep up with these things."

"You see, I told you!" Madson said to Ellenby. "One more



victory for science!"

"Miss Vickson, we better be getting on," the chauffeur interrupted, speaking for the first time. His voice was drunkenly thick. "We aren't out of the fusion fringe by a long shot and I don't like the looks of this place."

Rickie ignored him. Ellenby asked, "Was the news about Russia telefaxed?"

"Of course not." Rickie's smile was scornful. "They never tell the real truth these days. But they said to get out of our houses, and what else could that mean?"

"Miss Vickson, we better—" George began again.

"Quiet, George," Rickie ordered.

George groaned faintly, shrugged his shoulders, and reached out an arm to her without looking. Rickie handed him a red, limp plastic bottle. Just as he was putting it to his lips, he jerked as if stung, vaulted into the car, and began to stamp and punch at the controls.

With a mighty *pouf* the jet took hold. Ellenby skittered away from the hot blast. The Lunar '69 jumped forward.

THINGS hissed and snicked through the air. From nowhere, men began to appear. With a great lurch the car gained the road, roared toward the bridge.

Vera-Ellen jumped up as if to get out, then was thrown back into the tonneau. Rickie lunged forward across the seat to save the red bottle. Her four-foot hat leaped upward, hesitated, and then spun off like a flying saucer.

A man rose from the wheat near the bridge. As the car jounced across it, he leveled a rapid-fire weapon. But just as he got it trained on the car, Rickie's hat landed on him. He went over backwards, firing at the sky.

Madson and Ellenby looked around in bewilderment. There must have been a dozen men. As they stared, another bunch came hurrying down the ruined lawn from the house on the hill.

The man by the bridge got up, went over to Rickie's hat and stamped on it.

Madson and Ellenby jumped as the sky-climbing missiles from his gun pattered down around them. When they looked around again, the men from the house on the hill were closing in.

Their leader was about five feet tall, but thick. His head had been formed in a bullet mold, his features looked drop-forged.

"I'm Harvey," he told them blankly. "What you got?"

Harvey's people wore everything from evening dress to shorts. There were even two women (who drifted toward



Harvey) one in a gold kimono, the other in an off-the-bosom frock of filthy white lace. Everybody was armed.

"What you got?" Harvey repeated sharply. "I know you're loaded, I saw you talking with that rich-witch in the jet." He looked them over and grabbed at Madson's side pocket. "Books, huh?" he said like a hangman, dangling the Keats by a stray page. Then he turned to Ellenby. "Come on, Skinny," he said, "shell out."

When Ellenby hesitated, two of Harvey's men grabbed him, dumped him, and passed the contents of his pockets to their chief. When the spectroscope turned up, Harvey grinned. The eyes of his people twinkled in anticipation.

"Science gadget, huh?" he said. "Folks, there's been too much science in the world and too many words. Any minute now, more bombs are gonna fall. I do my humble bit to help 'em. I'm a great little junkman." He let the brass tube fall to the ground and lifted his foot. "Blow it a good-bye kiss, Skinny."

"Wait," Madson said abruptly, taking a step toward Harvey. "Don't do it." Then the poet's eyes grew wide and alarmed, as if he hadn't known he was going to say it.

Breaths sucked in around

them. Harvey's turret head slowly turned toward Madson, its expression seemingly vacuous. "Why not?" Harvey whispered.

"Don't pay any attention to my friend," Ellenby interjected rapidly. "He just said that on account of me. Actually he hates science as much as you do. Don't—"

"Shaddup!" Harvey roared. Then his voice instantly went low again. "Ain't nobody hates science more'n me, but ain't nobody tells me so. Shoulda kept your mouth shut, Skinny. Now there's gonna be more'n gadgets stomped, more'n books tore."

SILENCE CAME except for the faint sucks of breath, the faint scuffle of shoes on grit as Harvey's people slowly moved in. Ellenby stood helplessly, yet at the same time he felt a widening and intensification of his sensory powers. He was aware of the delicately lace-edged tree shadows cast from the hill ahead by the westering sun. At the other limit of his vision the copter no longer trailed its green caterpillar; for some reason it was buzzing closer along the road. At the same time he was conscious with a feverish clarity of the page by which Harvey dangled the Keats, and without reading the words he saw the lines:



*Beauty is truth, truth beauty—  
that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye  
need to know.*

Suddenly the slowly advancing faces seemed to freeze and Ellenby was aware of something spectral and ominous about the yellowing sunlight and the whole acid-etched scene around him. It was something more than the physical threat to him and Madson—it was something that seemed to well up menacingly from the ground under his feet.

There was a sudden faint thunder and even as something inside Ellenby said, "That isn't it, that isn't what the sky's waiting for," he saw the chrome muzzle of the Lunar '69 bulleting toward them across the bridge with Vera-Allen's violet mop above the wheel.

But even as the braking blasts gouted out redly from under the hood and the car crunched toward a stop in their midst, even as Harvey's people broke to either side and pistols popped with queerly toylike reports, the thunder multiplied until it was impossible that the Lunar '69 was causing it, until it was like the thunder of a thousand invisible jets crushing the air around them. The sky shifted, rocked. The road shook. There came a shock that numbed Ellenby's feet and sent everyone around him reeling, and a

pounding, smashing sound that made any remembered noise seem puny.

The Lunar '69, which had stopped a dozen feet from Ellenby, was pitching and tossing like a silver ship in a storm. Vera-Allen was gripping the steering wheel with one hand and motioning to him frantically with the other. In the seat beyond her Rickie Vickson was jouncing as if in a merry-go-round chariot.

Ellenby lurched as a hand clutched his shoulder and a staggering Madson howled in his ear through the tumult, "Now you've got your rotten bombs!" Between him and the car Harvey's bullet head reared up and as suddenly dropped away. Looking down, Ellenby saw that a chasm four feet wide had split the road between him and the car. Its walls were raw, smoking earth and rock. Down it Ellenby saw vanishing, in one frozen moment, Harvey and the Keats and the little brass spectroscope.

Then Ellenby realized he had grabbed Madson by the shoulder and thrown the two of them forward and shouted "Jump!" For a moment the chasm gaped beneath them and a white little face stared upward. Then the chasm closed with a giant crunch and Ellenby's hand caught the side of the heaving car and he pitched into the back seat.



Through the diminishing thunder and shaking there came the toy roar of the car's jet and a new movement tipped him backward and he was looking toward the hill and it was getting bigger. He tried to put his feet down and felt something bulk under them. For a moment he thought it was Madson, but Madson was beside him on the seat, and then he saw it was George. He looked up and Rickie Vickson was watching him from where she was crouched in the front seat, her eyes without the teleglasses looking as foxy as Widgie's, whom she was holding close to her wrinkle-etched cheek.

"Vera-Ellen had to conk him," she explained, her gaze dipping to George. "The bum tried to betray us."

The pitching of the car had given way to a steady forward lunge. Ellenby nodded dully at Rickie and hitched himself around and looked back.

Harvey's people were scattering like ants through a dust cloud rising from the road.

The house on the hill still stood, though there were more and larger cracks in it and a nimbus of whiter dust around it.

By the bridge the copter had crashed and was flaming brightly. A tiny figure was running away from it.

ELLENBY's face slowly lightened with understanding.

"We were on the San Andreas Rift," he said softly. "Madson, that wasn't the bombs at all. That wasn't Technology or Man." A smile trembled on his lips. "That was Nature. An earthquake."

Madson was the first to comment. "All right," he said, "it was Nature—Nature showing her disgust for Man."

"An idea like that is the sheerest animism," Ellenby reacted automatically. "Now if you try analyzing—"

"Analyzing!" Madson snorted with a touch of the old fire. "You scientists are always—"

"Whoa, boys," Rickie Vickson interrupted. "If it hadn't been for that little quake to confuse things, Vera-Ellen couldn't have snatched you out no matter how pretty she tried. And I'm in no mood for arguments now. I'm not the arty type and all the science I know is what my psychic counselor tells me. Widgie, quit pounding your heart; it's all over now."

Ellenby touched her arm. "Do I understand," he asked, "that Vera-Ellen made you turn back just to save us?"

"Of course not," Rickie assured him. "Her father and his pals tried to stop us a couple of miles back. They'd been radioed by a farmer in a copter and had



the road blocked. George wanted to hand you all over to Vera-Allen's father, but we conked George—he's such a weakling—and got away. Picking you up was an afterthought."

Vera-Allen flashed a wicked smile over her shoulder.

Ellenby realized he was feeling vastly contented. He started to lift his feet off George, then settled them more comfortably. He looked at the violet-topped new chauffeur handling the Lunar as if she'd never done anything else, and she picked that moment to flash him another half friendly, half insulting grin. He nudged Madson and said,

"We'll continue our argument later—*all* our argument." Madson looked at him sharply and almost grinned too. Ellenby wondered idly what jobs they had for poets and physicists in 3D and handie studios.

Rickie Vickson's eyes widened. "Say," she said, "if they were just warning us about that little old earthquake, then Old Angeles isn't radioactive—I mean any *more* radioactive than it's ever been."

"Oh boy," Vera-Allen crowed as the car topped the hill and the blue spires came back in sight, "New Angeles, here we come."

∞ ∞ ∞



AL KAUFMAN

"I paint what I see!"