

May  
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# SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

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Number  
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**132 PAGES OF NEW STORIES — NO REPRINTS!**

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Here, at long last, is the theory you've been looking for. If it's true, then someone is going to be very happy to learn about it!

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*Cover by Milton Luros, from "The World She Wanted!"  
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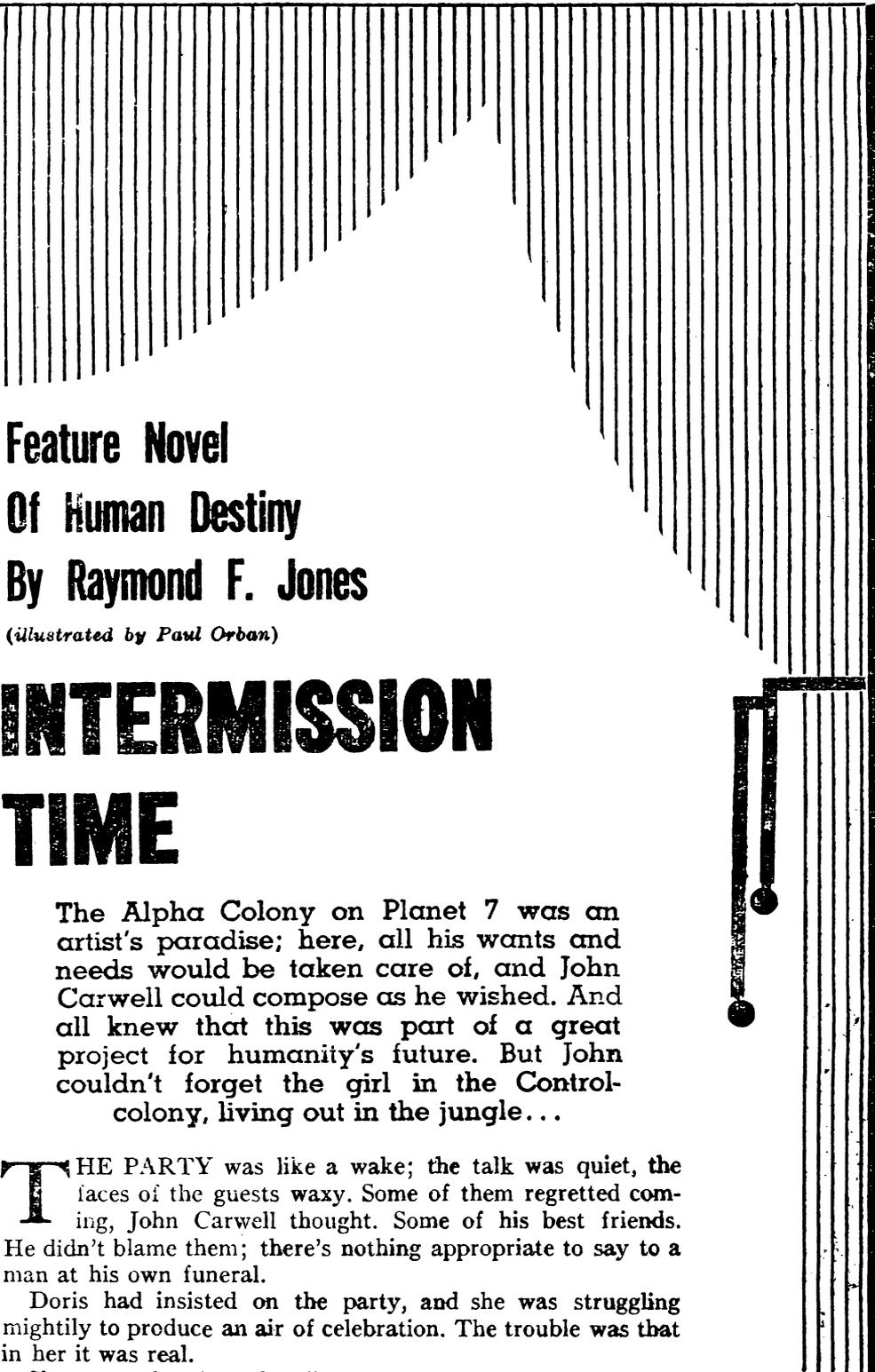
**ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor**

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Doris was fascinated by the layout here, under the dome, but John's fist clenched in anger . . .



**Feature Novel**  
**Of Human Destiny**  
**By Raymond F. Jones**

*(illustrated by Paul Orban)*

# **INTERMISSION TIME**

The Alpha Colony on Planet 7 was an artist's paradise; here, all his wants and needs would be taken care of, and John Carwell could compose as he wished. And all knew that this was part of a great project for humanity's future. But John couldn't forget the girl in the Control-colony, living out in the jungle...

**T**HE PARTY was like a wake; the talk was quiet, the faces of the guests waxy. Some of them regretted coming, John Carwell thought. Some of his best friends. He didn't blame them; there's nothing appropriate to say to a man at his own funeral.

Doris had insisted on the party, and she was struggling mightily to produce an air of celebration. The trouble was that in her it was real.

She sat at the piano, her fingers playing a twinkling song of

springtime. Guests were seated about, or standing in small knots, their attention on her playing. But it might as well have been a funeral march for all the delight reflected in their faces.

John moved silently through the wide doors to the balcony overlooking the garden. In the darkness he almost collided with another figure standing by the railing. He grunted apologetically. "Sorry, George. Didn't see you standing there."

The figure of George McCune, concert agent for John and Doris Carwell, moved like a bulbous shadow. "I'm out here weeping," he said. "That music—it turns me over inside when I think I'm not going to hear it any more."

He placed a broad fat hand on John's shoulder. "I've said everything; I've given you all my arguments. So now I give you my congratulations.

"It's a wonderful thing you're doing, you and your sister. A wonderful thing—and the biggest damn' piece of foolishness I have ever heard of in a life that has been long, and composed of much more than ordinary foolishness. What can I say to show you how crazy—how utterly damn' crazy—"

He spread his hands in resignation and clamped them to his side. "Have you tried to show her, John?"

John's arm went fondly across the agent's low broad shoulders. "There's no use making any more talk," he said quietly. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow Doris and John are but guinea-pigs."

George puffed violently and pushed himself free of John's hand. He looked towards the horizon, across the city of life and ruin. "Planet 7," he muttered. "Human Developments!" It's wonderful that they should take morons and pigs, and make human beings and geniuses out of them; but what in Heaven's name has that to do with John and Doris Carwell?

"You and your sister have genius now, at your fingertips. With your music you make people happy. Is



there any greater genius than this?

"Ah, but we've been through this before. Tell me that you have changed your mind and made Doris understand. Just say the one word that will make an old man happy."

"We leave at noon, tomorrow," said John.

THE NOTES from the piano were like a thousand tiny bells in the air beside them. The two men listened, and dreamed of a fresh spring world uncharred and overflowing with life.

"Doris made the decision," said John. "Ever since our folks died when we were kids, she's been the one to come up with the answer—for both of us. She's older. Things have always worked out the way she said; maybe this will, too.

"I wouldn't go, of course, if it weren't for her; but I'd be far less than half the Carwell piano team if I stayed. You couldn't book me three times a year, alone."

"Listen, boy!" George almost bounced with sudden inspiration. "You could have them standing in the aisles. I *know*. I've watched you—you've got a fire that Doris can never show. Her playing is brilliant—and cold; she's never let you show the things that are inside you.

"Tell her you've decided to go it alone; tell her you're going to live

your life and play your music the way you want to. Then she'll back down, call this Human Developments thing off, and let you lead the concerts the way you always should have."

"You know Doris better than that. She wouldn't back down for the Devil himself, and I'm no Devil!"

"What are you?" George whispered with a sudden bitterness that shocked them both. Then, "Forget it," he said quickly. "I didn't mean that the way it sounded, John; let's go inside."

"No—I'll stay out here. It's Doris' show, anyway."

"Always Doris' show!" exploded George. "But this performance I will not accept. I will persuade her myself. Tomorrow you will play in the auditorium; I will announce it on the radio that you have come to your senses!"

He marched away—squat, resolute, ridiculous, lovable. Marched as if he had not already a hundred times explained to Doris the folly of leaving a career on Earth for the fantastic experiments being run on Venus.

John leaned on the iron railing, staring over the city at the evening star. In a moment he heard the music stop, and the babble of voices. He closed his ears to the debate that fumed again; he was sick of it. They were going, he and Doris. He didn't understand why; maybe Doris did.

Out there on Planet 7, in the Alpha system, they were trying to make a new man because the old man had failed. Homo sapiens had burned up a world.

In the hundred years since, only a quarter of the Earth had become habitable, and its population was less than thirty millions. A sober, stunned, and bewildered humanity rebuilding amid the ruins.

They had accomplished much in that century. There were cities again; there was space-flight; then overdrive and the stars; and the mutants had been wiped out. There was a single coordinated government that united

the efforts of all races and tongues.

It was the ruins that did it, John thought. No matter how drunk or how elated and forgetful man became, he could never get away from the ruins. A thousand years of rebuilding would not cover them all.

But Doris said this was not enough; she said that, in time, men would forget even what the ruins stood for and blast them anew in fresh wars of their own.

Maybe Doris was right. She had always been right, John thought.

He thought of George again. *What are you?* George had asked. John wished he had some kind of answer to that question. He had seen it before—in the eyes of those who watched him and Doris together.

He couldn't understand exactly why the question should be asked. It didn't seem unnatural that he should find his answers to living in the stronger and more brilliant mind of his sister. He felt sometimes as if some blast of energy had shattered all but a minimum of his own thinking circuits, leaving him as dependent as a robot.

He knew the moment when that happened, too—the day he learned their parents were dead and there was no one in the world but him and Doris. He could remember the moment like a great curtain drawing across the portion of his mind where life and initiative and enthusiasm were charted.

He was eight then; Doris was sixteen. It hadn't done to her what it did to him. She'd had strength enough for both of them, and it had been hers that he'd drawn upon ever since.

So—going to Planet 7—

He had no real hope or feelings in the matter. He felt blank to all the torrent of argument that swirled about him. That belonged to the portion of his mind that had been walled off so long ago. Doris said it was right; his own mind could hold no other opinion.

And he could not answer George's

question, because he did not know how else he could be.

**T**HE BABBLE of sound within the room was suddenly split by an angry voice. John looked in at the tall, dark-haired figure of Mel Gordon by the piano.

"Shut up, all of you," Mel said. "Doris knows what she's doing. Most of the rest of us haven't got the guts to think about it, let alone carry it through. Shut up and leave her alone!"

He whirled and strode from the room to the darkness of the balcony. All of them understood the explosion. Mel Gordon didn't want Doris to go, either.

Mel saw John watching from the balcony shadows. "I'm sorry I blew my stack," he said.

"We'd all feel a little better if we did the same," said John. "Did you get a report on your re-application?"

"They turned me down again. Mel Gordon—not even good enough for a guinea-pig. Who knows what will happen when they get through tinkering and tampering, and trying to make homo superior out of you and Doris? Me, they'd have a chance with; but Doris is already what they are trying to find."

"Have you asked her to stay?"

"I haven't the right to ask that; no one has. How many of the rest of us know what we want to do with our lives?"

He looked back into the room as the noise of the stirring guests indicated their departure. "I guess I busted up your party. Sorry, John."

"You didn't bust it up; they didn't like coming to this funeral anyway. They understand how you feel."

"Yeah! Good old Mel—carry the torch high. John, when you get up there, tell her I tried to come, will you? Tell her I tried."



After the guests were gone, they

faced each other in the faintly embarrassing vacuum that surrounded them always when they were alone together. Doris sat again at the piano. Her fingers moved in the melody of a Brahms lullaby, so softly that it could scarcely be heard.

She was the most beautiful thing that had ever lived, John thought. At thirty she had something of the wisdom of a mother, and of the passion of first love. But she knew neither love nor motherhood, nor would she; she lived on some far, cold plane where human destiny was determined by sheer brilliance of reason, and emotion was unknown. He didn't understand such a place; he didn't understand such a mind.

He only knew that Doris was not often wrong.

He was aware that she had stopped playing and was looking at him. There was wistful yearning in her eyes that startled him by its unfamiliarity. "You *do* think it's right that we should go, don't you, John?" she said.

"Sure—it's all settled; you haven't changed your mind, have you?"

"No! It's just that sometimes I wish you could understand how I feel—just a little."



**T**HERE WERE almost a hundred volunteers waiting behind the gates of the spaceport, each the nucleus of a cluster of friends and relatives saying last goodbyes. Some of the groups were quiet, waiting for the inevitable; others were stormy pools filled with last minute tears and clinging.

The sky above the port was cloud-specked and shining, as if Earth herself were putting on a last and final appeal to the emigres to think again of what they were abandoning. John

watched the little whirlwinds on the field and wondered if the dust of Planet 7 had the hot, dry smell of old forgotten lanes in summertime; if you could imagine faces and horses and ships of the sea in her clouds.

He stood near the center of their group. Even the buzz of human voices was a kind of music, he thought. But he wouldn't hear these voices—not ever again.

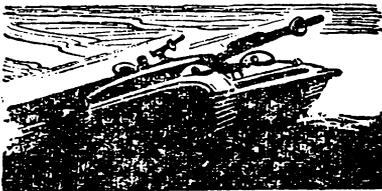
He edged away from Mel's silent pleading; the bustling, explosive fury of George's last minute demands that Doris come to her senses; the mumbled congratulations of the two score fellow musicians; the whine of several hundred fans and musical followers.

It was not hard to escape. Attention was on Doris, incredibly beautiful and untouched by the fact that she was leaving Earth today and would never see it again. John felt that none of the talk was addressed to him.

He watched the star-ship slowly moving to its launching-base, towed by chugging tractors that strained like insects against its mass. He tried to look over the heads of the crowd to see others who would be his own companions on the journey.

And then he caught a startling movement of color threading between the islands of humanity.

It was a girl in a flame-red dress. At the gate she stood on tiptoe, clutching the iron bars like an eager child. He strolled to the gate and stood beside her. "If you're looking for anyone in the crowd, I'm afraid you'll have a hard time of it, now," he said.



"Oh, no." She glanced up quickly. "I'm going to get on the ship. Are you going, too?" Her waves of dark hair trembled and the almost-black pupils of her eyes glistened with light.

Whatever the scientists on Planet 7 considered worth passing on to the future, John hoped they would preserve that light. He had never seen its like before, he thought. "Yes, I'm going," he said.

They watched the big ship. It was motionless now and mechanics scurried ant-like at its base. Hatches opened ponderously.

"Do you think we can help?" asked John. "Do you think humanity a thousand years from now will be better for our going?"

The girl laughed. "I don't know about humanity a thousand years from now; I'm going to help myself."

As if his silence reproved her, she turned her head defiantly. "And anyway, *I'm* humanity! And they don't care *why* you go, as long as you have enough of the qualities of a guinea-pig."

"I wasn't going to scold you," he said; "your attitude is refreshing. It's just that it's customary to speak with a long face, and in solemn tones, of the great things that Human Developments is doing for the future of mankind."

"No one connected with the whole thing cares a hoot about the future of mankind a thousand years from now. The scientists are concerned because it's their business to manipulate guinea-pigs; and they have finally conceived the most colossal guinea-pig show ever dreamed up.

"The rest of us have our own reasons. Some of us are running away; some are going for the fun of it. And others—well, you'll see when you get there. It isn't the noble, self-sacrificing bunch the newsmen like to picture. After all, no one ever comes back to tell what it's like out there."

JOHN STARED at the girl. She was as challenging as a winter morning. And could she be right? He knew there was no nobility in *his* going, but what would she make of Doris' high-minded purposes?

Doris didn't have to run from anything. Her mind was swift and sharp enough to encompass the whole universe including humanity a thousand years from now. The girl's swift estimation of her fellow travelers would hardly apply to his sister. He'd have to see that they met aboard ship, he thought.

But now the gates rumbled aside as the guards removed the pin-locks and chains. Slowly, at first—as if almost reluctant to embark upon the course that had been so carefully and greatly planned—the wave of emigres moved over the field, while guards held back the protesting, well-wishing friends and relatives.

John looked back towards Doris and felt the surge of the crowd separate him from the girl in the flame-red dress. "I'll see you aboard ship!" he called. "I'm in Alpha Colony section."

Her smile, swiftly receding through the crowd, was wistful. "I won't be seeing *you*. I'm going as a Control."

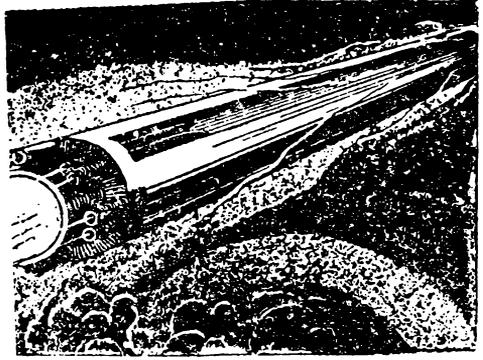


He found Doris cutting her last ties with Earth carefully and dispassionately. She patted George on the cheek as if saying goodbye to a fond puppy. She gave Mel a cool and sisterly kiss. And then she was taking John's arm and hurrying him towards the gate.

The ship had a frightening smell. It caught John in the pit of the stomach and he stopped midway along the elevator ramp. It was not the friendly smell of coal or oil or gasoline, but the sharp ozone sting of outer space, and counterfeit worlds where it was unnatural for men to be.

He glanced upward at the great scarred tube. He had seen the shining arcs in the night sky, but he had never been this near to a ship before. He glanced at his own slender white hand resting on the railing and wondered what kind of men could build such ships as these.

"Move along there!"



He closed his mind to wonder and concentrated on the steel deck of the ramp beneath his feet.

**I**N HIS STATEROOM, John sat down carefully on the bed near the large main port. He had a sudden curious feeling of numbness as if the whole world were something that was happening to him.

He saw in the west, beyond the city, the mile-wide crater now filled with water, like some pleasant lake with the afternoon sun glistening on it. He couldn't see the high, electric fence that walled off the entire area as too contaminated for human occupancy. He didn't know how, but he had a feeling that it concerned him, deeply.

Below the steel column of the ship, the ground—almost two hundred feet away—was littered with moving people, movements at once erratic and purposeful. They were something happening to him, too.

And the girl, the girl in the flame-red dress. *She* had happened to him.

It had always been that way; it was a little frightening to recognize that all his life things and people had happened to him as if he were a prop on some fantastic stage.

He stood up and tried to shrug off the feeling. He heard Doris, unseen beyond the door of her adjacent stateroom, moving luggage, snapping lids, and closing drawers with shattering efficiency. Things didn't happen to her; *she* did the shaping. The world

of Doris Carwell was exactly the way she wanted it to be.

Without unpacking, John shoved his hands in his pockets and strode from the room. He made his way through the corridors, unaware of where he was going, half-angry with himself for not knowing. Abruptly, he found himself in the main lounge. The huge hall was dark and, he thought, unoccupied. Then he spotted a familiar flash of color in a far corner.

It was too much to expect, but there she was, the girl he had met at the gate. She was sitting curled up with a plain yellow cat on her lap. Her fingers stroked its ears gently.

He couldn't have told why it gave him such pleasure to see her. But there was a sudden sense of loss, too, as he remembered her final words. "I hadn't hoped to see you again so soon," he said. "Do you mind if I join you and—?"

"Toby," she said. "This is Toby; they let me bring him along. I'm not supposed to be down here, but he got away when I took him from the baggage room, and I chased him in here.

"I guess we don't have very long before take-off, do we?"

"I didn't understand what you said at the gate," John said. "What was that about a Control? I've heard the word, but it's always been used like a nasty name."

"Maybe it is. The recruiting-agent who signed me up said different." She mimicked: "You will be giving the same selfless, devoted service to mankind that is being offered by those even in Alpha Colony.' Anyway, I wouldn't have come except as a Control."

"What does it mean?"

"They explained that when a scientist conducts an experiment he performs his work on one batch of material, and leaves another completely untouched in order to compare the two and see what changes are made by his experiment.

"So, on Planet 7 there are colonies

of people who live in completely natural circumstances, self-governed and uncared-for, except as they can find subsistence out of the jungle itself. The products of the experimental colonies are then compared with us unfettered Controls to see what the benefits are."

"I shouldn't think it would be necessary to set up special Control-colonies on Planet 7; Earth itself should be sufficient.

"There are too many random factors—social and economic—all of which are too hard to evaluate. At least, that's the way they explained it to me."

"But how can you get away from these things out in the Alpha system? The technology is there; people retain their memories and the same social and economic problems exist."

"On a slightly different level," she said. "When you're turned loose in a jungle, and have to scratch with your bare hands for existence most of the extraneous factors are gradually dropped. That's the word they used, extraneous."

John sat back, horrified. "You mean that's the kind of existence you're going to for the rest of your life? A primitive jungle-life, with no civilization whatever? It would kill you or make a savage out of you."

"That's a thing the scientists want to find out," said the girl. "They say that's the way humanity started out, and we have almost completed a full circle. They want to learn at what point humanity should have turned aside in order to have kept climbing."

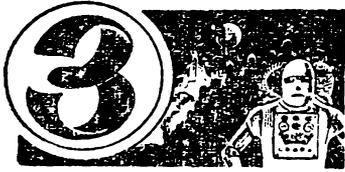
"That's horrible—deliberately turning you into savages in order to test a theory."

"Well, don't feel so sorry for me. Exactly what do you think they are going to do to you?"

"I don't know," he said in sudden weariness. "I think that I would rather never have heard of Human Developments Project."

"Then you'd better get off the ship in a hurry," she said lightly, "because

there's the take-off warning. We've got to get to our cabins and on the take-off couch before the next bell. Come on, Toby!"



**H**E WAS SICK during the take-off. When they were finally in space he sat up, his head balloon-like and his stomach spinning. He saw Doris leaning calmly by the port, watching the dwindling Earth. For a moment he hated her cool competence and self containment. He *would* have to be the one to get sick.

"Feeling better, Johnny?" She came over, smiling with the sympathy of a superior creature. "It hit you pretty rough. The steward said they don't usually go out like that."

"I'm all right."

For the rest of the day he stayed in the stateroom. He watched the fading disk of Earth; the overdrive wouldn't be keyed in for another day. Even though it gave him a sickening vertigo, he could not resist the hypnotic last look at his home land.

He wanted to forego dinner entirely that evening, but when Doris offered to have the steward bring it to his room, he refused the suggestion. "I can make it to the diningroom," he said.

He didn't tell her the one reason he wanted to go; he could scarcely admit to himself that it was only to meet again the girl who wore the flame-red dress and owned a yellow cat. He told himself he wanted to see his fellow passengers, to meet the others who were foolhardy enough to give up all they possessed on Earth for this Human Developments experiment.

He walked slowly through the diningroom, Doris' hand upon his arm. He scanned the surrounding tables for

the one familiar face, but he failed to see her anywhere.

Then he thought he understood. It was a small diningroom, and certainly not all those who had boarded the ship were here. Each colony-group undoubtedly had its own section and facilities; he asked the waiter about it.

The man nodded. "This is Alpha Colony," he said. "Beta, Gamma and Delta recruits are on the other decks. Is there someone you wish to find?"

He hesitated. "I have a friend—a Control."

"I'm sorry, sir," said the waiter; "surely they must have told you. There's no communication permitted between Control-colonists and any of the experimental groups—for purposes of the experiment, you understand. You may check with your indoctrination supervisor, sir, if there is any misunderstanding about this."

There is no misunderstanding, John thought dully. It was just another of the things that were happening to him. And this, he didn't want. It seemed suddenly of vital importance that he see again the girl in the flame-red dress. He did not even know her name. He could not speak of her or ask about her by name, he thought.

"Don't you feel like eating?" said Doris.

"I guess my stomach can't take this yet."

**S**HIPBOARD indoctrination-courses were held for each separate group, to acquaint them further with the work of their colony. A Dr. Martin Bronson was supervisor of the Alpha Colony group. John met him the following day, when he came to the stateroom to introduce himself.

He found he was unable to carry out his prepared determination to dislike Bronson. He estimated the man to be about thirty-five, and there seemed a wistful air about him—as if he wished he knew all the answers he was supposed to know.

"I'm acquainted with your music,"

he said; "I have all your records on Planet 7. It was pleasant to learn that you and your sister were joining us. I look forward to much more of your music."

John indicated a chair by the port. "Is that what we are being brought there for? To be court musicians, as it were?"

Instantly he regretted the bad temper of his remark. A shadow crossed the face of Bronson. "You really don't like music?" he said.

"I'm afraid I really don't like Alpha Colony, if you want me to be honest. It's because of my sister that I came, but I had no goal of my own: I'll try not to be uncooperative in whatever you require."

"There is very little that we require of you," said Bronson. "Almost all we ask is the opportunity to watch you live—in the social and physical environment we provide."

"We have a section in Alpha Colony devoted to the study of esthetics; we want you and your sister in that group. It has always been known that esthetic values contributed much to the rise of mankind, but they have never been adequately evaluated."

"You will live in a small communal group where esthetic occupations only are present: all economic needs are provided for you. Within this group, you may live in complete freedom; but you will be observed and your life charted minutely."

"What are the breeding-aspects of the program?" John asked tonelessly.

"Ugly rumors *do* get around, don't they?" said Bronson. "But I'm sure you were told briefly that marriage between members of the group is freely permitted, but not forced. The only restriction is that it *must* be within the

group, because potential partners are those who have the same qualities which we desire to emphasize and study in future generations."

"How large is this section of Alpha Colony?"

"There are almost a thousand members in the esthetic section."

"What are the Control-groups?" said John suddenly. "I've heard a little about them, just a little."

Bronson watched his face in silence for a long time. "Yes," he said at last, "your diningroom waiter told me you were inquiring."

"Don't try to see her," he said abruptly. "Don't try to see her again!"

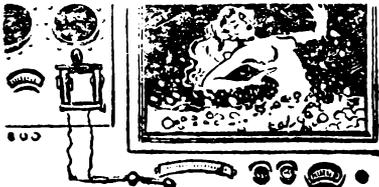
John felt the blood heavy in his face. "You are jumping to conclusions," he said.

"I hope so," said Bronson, "but there is one thing that you must not forget; I'm sure this was adequately explained. Once a person embarks upon this journey, there is no turning back; none whatever. Your signature upon a contract with Human Developments automatically cancels any previous obligations; and all future contracts will be made within the framework of Human Developments. Our restrictions are the minimum required for success of the experiments, but these bounds cannot be overstepped. Do you understand that, John?"

"Yes—yes, I understand that," John said.

**T**HE TIME spent in overdrive was brief, but once out, within the Alpha system, there were days of rocket-travel; before they would reach Planet 7, the only Earth-type world in this family of planets. Man could reach the stars, now, but the impetus to make much use of this ability had nearly died; the discovery had come late, nearly too late. . .

It was on the ninth day of the journey that John saw the cat—the yellow cat belonging to the girl in the flame-red dress. John saw the animal stroll-



ing ahead of him in the corridor leading to his room. He looked around quickly, but no one else was near. Then he called gently. As if in recognition, the cat turned, arched his back, and rubbed against the steel wall. John scooped him under one arm and hurried to the stateroom.

It was stupid, but his hands were shaking, he discovered, as he set the cat down. Momentarily he debated opening the door and pushing Toby into the corridor; but he knew he was not going to do that.

He entered Doris' stateroom, knowing she was out, because he had just left her with Dr. Bronson on the promenade deck. Searching through drawers he found a piece of wide ribbon. Then he returned to his own room and sat down at the desk, and there he stopped.

What was there to say? And why should he believe she would be interested in hearing any word at all from him? He didn't know.

He wrote hastily on a small scrap of paper: *I don't even know your name. Mine is John Carwell. Can I see you again?— In the corridor between the main lounge and your deck, a door marked "Crew Only" leads to the engineers' catwalk. I'll be there after dinner tonight.*

His hands were shaking even more as he folded the paper in a small roll and doubled the ribbon over it. He tied a narrow band about the cat's neck. Then, cautiously, he opened the door and shoved the cat into the empty corridor. "Find her, Toby," he said. "Go quickly."

The long, hollow tube at the center of the ship carried the ten thousand wires and pipes that formed the ship's mechanical nervous-system. It contained an elevator for the use of crewmen, and in each deck there was a small platform for inspection-purposes.

A connecting ladder passed between the platforms from one end of the ship to the other.

It was cold in the catwalk tube, and dark. There was a sulphur smell and the faint sting of ozone in the air. John could hear the whine and click of occasional auxiliary motors, and the deep bass note of the ship's engines.

He waited there in the dim light, knowing himself to be a complete fool. Nine chances out of ten the cat hadn't even reached the girl's stateroom with the message about its neck. He had been clawing experimentally when John last saw him; and the tenth chance was that she would laugh and ignore his message completely.

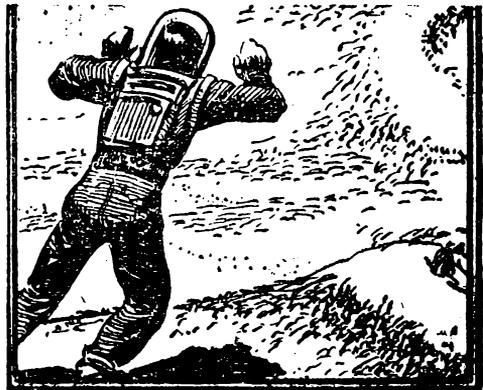
But he was there. He had been there for twenty minutes and he did not know how much longer he would wait. Perhaps until they got to Venus, he thought irrationally.

**A**N OBLONG club of light beat against the dark with momentary suddenness. John heard the thud of the thick insulated door. He flattened against the wall.

Then his breath caught sharply as he recognized her dim profile and the tilt of her head. She called softly, "John."

"Over here," he said.

For a moment they stood facing each other, unable to explain why they had come.



"I wanted to see you again," he said simply, at last.

"I was hoping you would," she said.

And then there seemed nothing more at all to say. In a few more days the ship would land on Venus, and she would go to a savage jungle dwelling, while he would spend the rest of his life in some musical fairyland. It seemed suddenly beyond all reason.

"What is your name?" he said.

"Lora. Lora Wallace."

"Why did you come? Why are you going to Planet 7?"

"To get away from the dead. Earth's nothing but a big tomb. We kid ourselves that we are rebuilding there, but we're not. The Human Developments people know we're not, but not many others do.

"But don't think I have any sympathy for Human Developments; the whole Project is on the wrong track. I came to get away.

"Back home it's the same old thing that has happened a hundred times before. You can't move from one city to another without a thousand signatures on your papers; you can't plan a project any more complex than a backyard garden without consulting twenty-five authorities and experts.

"Oh, they're all so very generous and helpful. And we understand that it is necessary to obey regulations in order to conserve and rebuild the world. But we're in prison, just the same.

"It got so I couldn't stand it any longer. Some of my friends joined the Moon colonies; some have gone to Mars. But I didn't have money enough for either. Becoming a Control-colonist with Human Developments Project was the only way I could think of to get out of prison."

"Do you think it will be freedom," said John, "fighting the jungle with your bare hands?"

"Yes," she said with fierce intensity. "Because no one's going to care where I go, or what I do, as long as I

don't hurt my neighbor. I'd be willing to bet that, in the long run, the only survivors of Earth's culture will be the descendants of the Control-colonies on Planet 7. The only way you can build men and women capable of conquering a planet is to give them a problem and let them figure it out, with complete freedom of action."

"Isn't that what Earth is doing?" said John. "And in a more civilized way? We have the problem—to make Earth habitable again, to create a stable civilization. Aren't we doing that with a greater cooperation than has ever been attained before?"

"No! That's the same old fallacy that has wrecked a hundred nations. Controls, restrictions, bureaus—these things do not mean cooperation; they mean force. And every application of force is one less freedom for some man.

"I don't need anybody to tell me what my job is to be; I'll find my job. I don't need anybody to tell me where is the best place to live; I'll find it for myself. And so will millions of others, when they get a chance. And when we get through we'll have done a far better job than all the boards and experts ever dreamed of doing. If I can't do it on Earth as a free citizen, I'll do it on Planet 7 as a Control!"

He was a little embarrassed by the vehemence of her talk, but it was like a glimpse into a new world. A world he somehow suspected he had long wanted to see.

"Tell me why you came," she said.

"I don't know," he answered. "I haven't any reason at all for being here; I've got to find one. I've got to find some purpose for going to Planet 7."

She shook her head. "You don't find it that way. Purposes are something you live with for months and years. All the years of your life. It's not something that comes overnight or with a moment's dreaming.

"We'd better go back," she said. "Someone might miss us if we stay too long. Let me go first, and you follow in a few minutes."

"Wait." He put a hand on her arm. "Will I see you again?"

She hesitated and smiled up at him. "All right. Tomorrow. The same time. Be careful. They mustn't find out."



**T**HE INDOCTRINATION class next day was endless. Bronson seemed to take particular delight in pointing out the irrevocability of their decision—reminding that there would be no turning back from the course that had been set.

When discussion-period came, John was suddenly on his feet. "What about those who find that they are unable to conform?" he demanded. "What about those who refuse to abide by the rules of the Project?"

"No one is wasted," said Bronson. "Rebelliousness is a trait that has been noted through the ages; we have colonies where its value is now being determined. I may say that preliminary investigations show the value of the rebel to society have been vastly over-estimated."

"But what do you *do* with them?"

"There are jungle-colonies consisting only of rebels, nonconformists, the individualists who believe they can make their way alone. You may appreciate that the members of this colony do indeed have a rough time of it. Miraculously, however, even they manage to survive; and we shall learn much from their survival."

"It's inhuman," cried John. "You can't sentence men to an existence like that for the rest of their lives, because

they find they have made a mistake in coming here."

"Everyone has *volunteered*," said Bronson, "to contribute the remainder of his life and energies to Human Developments. We need the contribution of all kinds. And you must not forget: the rebels get what they want. That is the prime rule of the experiment, to give a man what he wants and find out what he can do with it."

John sat down, his chest burning and a smothering in his throat. He felt the curious glances of the others in the room as if he had questioned the oracle of the ages.

Attention turned away from him. Other discussion became a meaningless buzz while he sat there thinking. It made no difference to him, he had no intention of rebelling; he was just along for the ride. And yet, if this were so, why did his chest burn and the palms of his hands grow hot and moist?

The name of Lora kept ringing through his mind, and he did not know why all his whirling thoughts centered about the name of this girl. It was because she was so sure, he thought, and he was so unsure.

Somewhere she had found exactly the answer she wanted of life. In this she was like Doris. But how different were her answers from those of his sister! And between the two he could find no answer for himself to still the endless whirling questions in his mind.

Lora.

The name was still in his mind, hours later, as he sat in the stateroom watching the slow swing of stars across the port. The door from his sister's room burst open suddenly, and Doris strode in and stood before him.

"Martin knows about it!" she exclaimed. "Why in the world did you pull a fool stunt like that?"

He paled. "Like what?" he said.

"You know what I'm talking about. Sneaking down to the Controls' deck, meeting that girl. I think it's disgusting, John—utterly disgusting and un-

believable. Martin said he wasn't going to do anything about it because he didn't think harm would come of that one visit. But you've got to promise that you won't do such a stupid thing again.

"Who is she? Where did you ever meet her?"

He stood up, his face white and cold. "Doris," he said thinly, "you will please keep your damned nose out of my business!"



**H**E WAS STILL trembling when he reached the rendezvous on the engineers' catwalk much later. He arrived first and waited a long time thinking that she had decided not to come or had been prevented from coming.

He didn't know how they had found out about his meeting with Lora, and he didn't know if he were being spied upon at this moment. In weariness and spiritual exhaustion he didn't care what they knew, or what they did.

She came at last. It seemed as if her slow, cautious opening of the door consumed an eternity and when she was inside on the platform she remained standing quite still.

"Lora." He reached out and took her hand and kept it between his own. It was cold as if she had been afraid of something for a long time.

"They know about us," she said; "did they tell you?"

He nodded in the dim light. "I thought maybe they had kept you from coming."

"They warned me not to do it again, but they didn't try to prevent me."

"Why *did* you come?"

"I don't know." She shook her head as if in violent protest against

something of which he had accused her. "I guess it was just because I promised."

"Why did you promise?"

"I don't know!" Suddenly her hands gripped his arms and she pulled herself against him, her cheek flattened against his shoulder.

"John—John—why did it have to be this way?"

His hands pressed against her back as if to stop the shaking of her body. He stroked the hair beside her forehead. "We'll go back," he said; "we'll make them take us back."

They stood in the silence and the stillness as if trying to press out this moment to eternity. He thought of it: their standing in the cold and sulphurous chamber with the life of the ship about them. And beyond that the eternal night of space through which plunged the slim tube that encased them and held back the cold death outside.

How far they had come to find this moment.

He raised her chin gently with the edge of his hand. "I don't know anything about you," he said. "Tell me. I want to know everything that has ever happened to you, every sunrise you have seen, and every leaf that has fallen near you."

She shook her head and tried to draw away as if the magic had passed. But he held her.

"There isn't time for that," she said. "There's only time to wonder why we couldn't have been born in the same world. You could never understand the harshness of mine—the one I've lived in and the one I'm going to. I would suffocate in yours."

"We'll find a new one, then," he said fiercely. "We'll find one on Earth that will hold us both. I won't let you go."

Sudden light from the corridor burst upon them as the heavy door flung open. They clung together spotlighted for an instant and broke apart as Bron-

son came towards them. Other figures hovered in the doorway.

"You're making it harder for yourself," said Bronson. "I'm sorry you didn't take my advice, John; it will be necessary to confine you to quarters for the remainder of the trip. Please come along now."

He felt Lora's hand stiffen momentarily in his, and then release as she moved away.

"We're going back," John said to Bronson. "I demand that you send us back to Earth on the next returning ship."

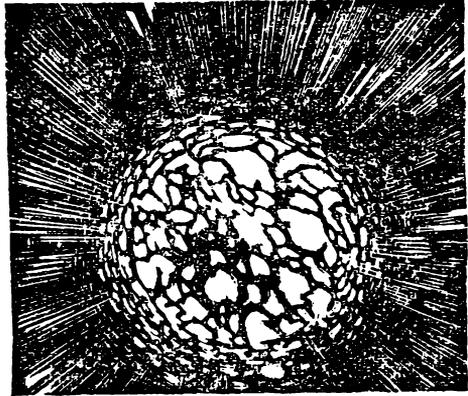
Bronson shook his head. "I guess you didn't understand me. There's no going back; no going back for any of us. In Human Developments you only go forward."

**T**HE CENTRAL continents of Planet 7 are dry desolation where nothing but the foot-long sand monsters exist. But near the poles are belts of verdure almost a thousand miles in width. At the boundary the ugly sand color shades into living green, and impenetrable forest flourishes beside the barren waste.

All the planet's moisture finds its way to the hot rivers and lakes of these polar regions. Here the squalid settlements of native life are found; here Earth men have established their Human Developments Project.

In this fantastic jungle, every conceivable Utopian scheme has been laid out, tried and tested for practicability. Projects planned for a thousand years of time measure the effects of environment and the ability of man to conquer the universe by first conquering himself.

Conceived nearly seventy five years ago by Dr. James Rankin, a government sociologist, the project was first considered a wild impractical scheme to get public money to back fuzzy-headed theories. Rankin proposed the idea shortly after the final settlement of the Great War. Out of the conflict had



come the discovery of the over-drive; the first flush of enthusiasm sent out expeditions to the Alpha system, where Planet 7 was found, and explored, and mapped. But that was when lethargy began to set in; world-weariness sapped human energies, and the reports were shelved, construction of star-ships dwindled off...

Rankin proposed the idea that it would take a new kind of man to survive upon the Earth, but no one knew what kind of man that would be, or if he could be found. Moon-colonies and Mars-colonies had been set up, but something was lacking there...

Rankin's idea took hold, and finally, spontaneous acclaim forced its acceptance upon the government of the world; the leaders seemed to sense that it was the last spurt—there wouldn't be another if this opportunity were permitted to die. Rankin lived long enough to see the first tiny colony established in the forbidding jungles of a far world, encircling an alien star.

Theoretically, it might have been done on some other world in our own solar system, but space-travel made all these worlds seem too close; there was something in the psychological appeal of a planet wheeling around another star—something that proclaimed here was a truly new beginning...

In three quarters of a century, the Project had increased to cover nearly all of the northern polar band with its

various colonies. There was still controversy over the merits of Human Developments. Controversy that was hot and vehement. Demands were made that secrecy be stripped from the Project, and its record and processes be made public. But volunteering as a colonist remained the only way of gaining such information.

It was not a desire to hide its activities from the world, the Project leaders said, but prior knowledge of the activities there had to be kept from contaminating the thinking of those who wished to volunteer as the years passed. Government inspectors were allowed to investigate for evidence of mistreatment or mal-practice; they always gave the Project a clean bill of health, and there had never been a lack of volunteers. Those chosen were the result of careful screening to obtain proper specimens for the various environments and sociologies being tested.

**J**OHAN CARWELL watched the planet slowly fill the port, replacing the star-specked blackness at which he had stared through five long days of imprisonment.

The ship flashed across the barren central zones. He watched the wind-torn wastes and crags, which faded gradually into the green of the polar region.

Then quite abruptly the ship was enveloped in mist, spearing through the perpetual cloud-blanket that rotated slowly about the polar bands. John stared at it, never moving from his position at the port, his hands clasped behind him, and head bowed low. There was mist, and the occasional flash of green that broke through. Rain cascaded down the sides of the vessel, foretelling the greeting that Planet 7 would hand them as they emerged from the ship.

He watched it and hated it. That was the only emotion he could find within him. He hated Planet 7; he hated Human Developments. But most

of all, he hated himself. He should be taking some wild and violent action to defend his position and win him Lora.

But he didn't know what such action might be. He couldn't tear at the very walls of the ship, and he couldn't smash his white fist into Bronson's implacable face. It wasn't that kind of a fist; he was trapped and bound.

The door opened behind him. Doris came up quietly. "We're coming in. Have you got everything ready?"

"Everything but me." He nodded toward the jungle now visible through the slanting sheets of rain. "I'll die out there," he whispered.

"That's not where we're going," exclaimed Doris. "You've seen the pictures; you know what Alpha Colony is like. We're not going to that jungle. That's where the Control-colonies are."

She tried to bite the words off even as she said them. John's face became even more bitter.

"They'll send *her* out there. What kind of fanatics are they?"

"Remember: it's what she wants," said Doris kindly. "She volunteered as a Control. There's nothing you can do. Nothing at all."

"I'll find something. I'll *make* something to do!"



**T**HEY NEVER felt the wetness of the storm. A covered gangway reached out from the protection of the terminal, and clamped its warm mouth to the hull of the spaceship. Through it the passengers moved into the dry pleasantness of the terminal building. John did not get a glimpse of Lora; his group was herded quickly away under Bronson's supervision.

At the opposite side of the building they climbed into a bus that sped them across a paved highway splitting the jungle. Unreality increased for John, as the car nosed through the curtains of rain. It was like going deeper and deeper into a dream—so deep that he might never wake up.

After an hour's ride they slowed. As they made a sharp turn he caught a glimpse of a vast, shining bubble that seemed to shoulder aside the jungle. Its gentle curvature hinted at staggering vastness. Then they halted at another terminal building at the edge of the bubble.

There was no talk from any of his companions. They marched machine-like into the building, as if they had already consigned away all will and initiative. But he sensed that actually they were as stunned as he by the impact of arrival at their *final* destination. It had been adventure and daring when they signed their names to the contract binding them to Planet 7 forever; it had been so far away then. Now—

John and Doris were shown to adjacent apartments once again. He sat down on the luxurious bed and patted it with finality. "So now we're supermen," he said.

The bitterness of his voice cut off any response that Doris might have made. She turned away and walked to the windows, drawing aside the expanse of curtains. She gave a gasp as she looked beyond.

"What is it?" Then John saw beyond the window also. He saw the landscape whose impact was like the sound of some sweet chord struck softly on a great keyboard.

He got up slowly and stood beside Doris. It was ancient Greece; it was an English countryside, the great forests of old Germany.

"It's worth it," said Doris. "It's worth it, John. We'll never have to fight this world."

There were no streets, only foot-paths crossing the grassy expanse. No mechanical vehicles could be allowed to break that scene. The buildings, the houses—they belonged. The whole scene would have been faulty if any one had been removed.

Statuary as glorious as the Age of Pericles was spotted on the vast lawns. Beside this, Earth's cities as John remembered them were but great slums.

"It's our home," Doris murmured, barely whispering. "We'll never have to leave it; we'll never have to be tired again."

There was some strange mood upon her, which he had never seen before, and which he did not understand. It seemed as if he were watching her shed a burden, which he had never known she carried.

But his own could not be dropped. Somewhere in the jungle beyond the great transparent dome that housed Alpha Colony was Lora, unprotected and in savage surroundings.

JOHN WAS called early next morning for the expected interview with Dr. Warnock, director of Alpha Colony. He was faintly shocked by the initial appearance of the director; Warnock looked like anything but the head of such a group.

He was immense and his eyes were almost hidden in the great roundness of his face. A dead cigar projected from between his fingers. The office was business-like, far removed from the glory that was visible from the apartment windows.

"Sit down, John," Dr. Warnock said.

A second surprise lay in his voice, which was soft and kindly, and John found himself hastily changing his first estimates.

"Have you ever done anything useful in your life?" said Warnock suddenly.

John hesitated, flushing. "I—I don't know—"

"That's good enough. I don't know if I have, either. Some people have the most fantastic views of their own accomplishments. I wondered about you.

"We were all pleased to learn you were coming. Papa Sosnic especially. He wants to hear you; he'll be around this afternoon."

"Papa Sosnic?"

"The dean of the group; claims to be the first member. He's almost ninety years old. He's looking for the Great Musician and the Great Music before he dies. He claims the colonies are sterile and have never produced any. But you'll hear all of that from his own lips. Tell me about your music."

John shrugged. "It has been a living."

"Is that all? Don't you like your music?"



He smiled wanly and told Warnock about his childhood with Doris, who had a dream for them both. He told how she had beat him into submission and forced him to endless practice when he was little.

"And so you hate your music," said Warnock.

"No." John shook his head. "That's the strange part of it. I should, but I don't."

"Why?"

"That's hard to say. I've never tried to tell anyone, especially Doris;

she would never understand why I go on playing."

"Can you tell me?" said Warnock.

John found himself doing that, without understanding why. Warnock seemed to him as vast in comprehension as in physical body, and John's feelings spilled.

"The writers, the poets, and the artists have all been men," he said. "The great ones, that is. A woman can't be a great artist. But I could never tell Doris that. It's a man's way of crying and laughing, and saying that the world is a good and happy place; that's why he makes music and writes books and paints pictures.

"A woman doesn't have to do that; she can't. She has a thousand other ways. But a man is supposed to be a mute dumb animal who never thinks of these things. Some of us stumble onto the acceptable way of saying what we have inside."

"Your sister," said Warnock, "why do you suppose she plays?"

John shook his head and smiled. "She doesn't understand music. She plays through her head—not her heart."

"She takes the lead in all your work. Why do you let her do that?"

"I don't know. She wouldn't understand if I tried to tell her how I want to play; I guess I'm afraid that no one else would understand either."

"I think Papa Sosnic will understand," said Warnock. He arose suddenly and extended a hand. "He will be around to see you. And your housing-assignments are being made. We will let you know."

JOHN FELT guilty as he walked back to the apartment. He had said things that should not have been said; he had no right to speak of Doris as he had. But his regret faded before the recurring thought of Lora.

He had almost burst out his problem to Warnock, so strongly had the director invited confidence. But he

felt relief now that he had not. War-nock had received Bronson's report of the incident, of course; but if he chose to ignore it, John could do no better.

But it left him no one at all to speak with about Lora, and in this there was panic and loneliness. From the apartment window he contrasted the Elysian peace of the landscape with the hateful jungle beyond the dome. He had to get Lora out of there, and he had no idea how it might be done.

Doris was out. Papa Sosnic came in the afternoon. He knocked once, bird-like, and entered without waiting for John to open the door.

White-haired and white-bearded, he was a wispy little man as old as an elf. The skin of his hands was like webbing. There was a squeakiness in his voice, but it still held a patriarchal authority.

He introduced himself. "I want to hear you play. I want to know if you are a musician, or just another bab-bler."

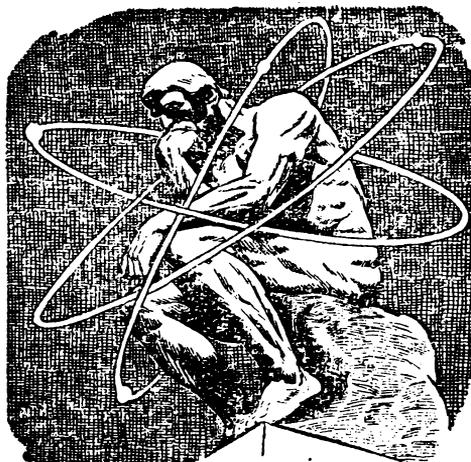
John smiled in friendly regard for the bustling little old man. "You've heard my records," he said. "You know how I play."

"But I know nothing," said Sosnic. "How much of a man's soul can be put on plastic? And besides, all I've heard has been with your sister taking the lead. A wee, timid little boy walking in the shadows where the sun won't scorch and the rain won't wet. Sit down and let me hear you play."

All at once John found himself trembling, ever so slightly, as if a great secret had been found out and he had no place in which to hide.

Then he sat at the keyboard and his fear was gone. He felt in the presence of a friend with whom he could talk as he had never talked before. He began playing softly, a Beethoven Sonata. But after a dozen measures Papa Sosnic threw up his hands.

He almost screeched. "Play! Doris



is not here now. *Play the music.*"

John began again. He held nothing back; he did not play as if Doris were there with her cold, intellectual timing, criticizing his every stroke. He altered the timing, and modulated his touch so that the music no longer drew a diagram with mathematical precision.

It painted a picture now, and told a story. And somehow it became the story of Lora. He sketched the fine sweet lines of her profile as he had seen her in the dim light of the engineer's catwalk.

He told Papa Sosnic all about it with his music. He told him what it meant to be lonely and what it meant to find an end to loneliness, if only for a moment.

When he was through, there were tears in the old man's eyes. He sat down and clapped John on the shoulders and kissed him on the cheek.

"You can play, John," he exclaimed. "You can *play*."

They sat at the piano until it grew dark outside. And then, because he could keep it within him no longer, John told Papa Sosnic the real story of Lora, how they had met aboard the ship and separated again without hope of ever seeing each other again.

The old man groaned. "You mean you let her go?" he said. "That you have done absolutely nothing?"

"What could I do? I haven't given up. I'll find a way to make them send us back to Earth. But that seems so far away now and so completely hopeless."

"Why did you let her get away? You could have gone with her. Didn't you know that? You could have changed your membership from experimental to Control-colony. That's always the privilege of any who get tired of conditions here; didn't they tell you?"

John nodded through a numbing haze. "I guess they did," he said slowly. "I guess it was somewhere in the contract. But you can't mean that we should have given up and both lived in primitive savagery the rest of our lives! That's ridiculous!"

"Ah," said Papa Sosnic, "is love ridiculous? And is there anything else that matters? Even your music—that would not matter because it would be with you always in your heart."

"No," whispered John. "It wouldn't work; it would never work. It would destroy us both."

"So far to go," murmured Papa Sosnic sadly. "You have so far to go, Johnny, before you get out of the shadow. Play for me again, Johnny; let me hear you play again."



**J**OHAN AND Doris selected living-quarters near Papa Sosnic's apartment, from the possible assignments offered them. Doris liked the old musician immediately, and John was pleased. Somehow it seemed very important that she should like him.

John's quarters were a green-and-gold luxury, in which he was served with robotic precision. Gadgetry in

profusion that he had never imagined served his every need. Meal panels served his every taste whim. Silently, and during his absence the place was kept in order and his clothing refreshed. He never saw a single human servant.

It was something of a novelty at first, but it became breathtaking after a few days to realize that this was his for the rest of his life. It was like going to the carnival every day.

He tried to work; he tried to think; he tried to fight his own emotions and plan their solution. And he tried to smother any consideration of the terrible answer that Papa Sosnic had proposed.

To accept that proposal would be to abandon hope forever. The Colonies existed for the fine, high purpose of developing a Man who could survive his own ingenuity. John liked to think that he was beginning to sense that purpose. But the Controls were no more than mere animal standards, by which to measure the progress of Man.

They were necessary to the experiment, perhaps, but there was no escaping the fact that no single Control could think of himself as anything but a blind and obedient sacrifice—his life an utter waste with respect to creation and fulfillment.

He would accuse himself every day of his life, John thought, if he gave up in order to live with Lora in the jungle, only to watch her dwindle and fade, to watch that light in her eyes die away.

Through the years of incessant struggle against the wet and the mold and the night-terrors their love would diminish; it would be replaced by indifference and then by hate. He would rather never see her again than experience that.

He had time now for composition, which had been denied him almost completely by the rigorous concert-schedules on Earth. With whirlwind energy he hovered over the keyboard

and writing table, but his mind never forgot the problem of escape. He studied the colony, the administration of it, the schedule of incomings and outgoings. And at last he knew what he could do.

His first composition left him exhausted emotionally and physically. In it he said some of the things he had yearned all his life to say, and now he didn't know whether he had said them or merely made a fool of himself.

He invited Papa Sosnic over to hear the work when it was finished. The old man was delighted. "I hadn't supposed you would finish anything so quickly," he said. "Perhaps it will do for the Fall concert. Let me hear the piece, Johnny."

It was dusk again, but he scarcely needed to see the keyboard. His hands moved as if with them he was saying what he had wanted to say all his life.

He started with somber tones of bewilderment and loss. Then the music grew wild with fear and shot through with terror. Suddenly, in the midst of it he felt a thrust of panic. He knew it was bad; he stopped, his hands collapsed on his thighs.

Out of the darkness the voice of Papa Sosnic came softly. "Go on, Johnny—"

**A**FTER A moment he raised his hands wearily and picked up the music where he had stopped. He went on with a tale of awesome creation. He told of being alive and aware of space and time and planets and suns and of cold and of darkness. He told what it was like to be lonely and what it was like to be glad.

When he finished, he heard no sound at all from the other side of the room. Then there was an abrupt rustling beside him and the figure of Papa Sosnic was sitting beside him on the piano seat.

"It will do, Johnny," he whispered. "I think it will go very well at our concert. I will schedule it, if I may."

John shook his head. "I don't think so. It's pretty bad, isn't it?"

"It's what's in your heart, Johnny; and the heart of a man is never bad."

John got up suddenly and stood at the window, watching the mock twilight, with his back to Papa Sosnic. "Good or bad, I can't do any more like that. It has kept me from going crazy the last month, but I won't be here for the Fall concert."

"Where will you be? Are you going to Lora?"

"Can I trust you? Will you help me?"

"Of course. If it is to see Lora, there is nothing in the world too much to ask. Music is a trifle; Human Developments Project is a puff in the wind compared with the affairs of a man in love. What is it you plan, Johnny?"

"I'm going back to Earth. I've got it figured out how to get back on the ship next time it's in dock. I know it well enough so that I can stow away during the trip. They'll never find me until it's too late to turn back anyway.

"I've watched the schedule of busses to the terminal. I can get through the gates during the night opening, and I ought to be able to make it on foot to the space port in a day at most. But there is one thing I'll need and that is your help in making an alibi for the following days here, until the ship is well on its way."

Papa Sosnic nodded. "Of course; I could say that you had gone into the forest to live alone in one of the huts to do some work. That is common, and would not be noticed—if I could keep Doris from guessing. You will not tell her?"

"No. I'll count on you to keep her from knowing. She seems so busy, anyway, that I don't think she'll notice."

"And what will you do when you are on Earth?" said Papa Sosnic. "How will that put you closer to Lora?"



"I'll tell them what Human Developments Project is like. I'll tell them of the imprisonment and slavery of those who do not bow to the whims of the Project's managers. I'll tell the whole world a story it cannot ignore."

"Slavery?" Papa Sosnic turned his hands upward in a gesture of inquiry. "I see no slavery here. Earth was never so good as this."

"It's slavery when you can't do as you wish—but there's no use arguing that term. I'll tell them what I know!"

"Yes," sighed Papa Sosnic. "You'll tell them; you'll spend months and years hammering on official doors with wild accusations that will never get you a hearing. Your life and energy will dwindle away. You will be upon Earth, and Lora will be here. Perhaps when you are both dried husks, with youth and beauty gone, they will let you see each other again. Perhaps."

John slumped before the shattering logic of the old man. "And so you would have me become a savage, too, and have Lora and I regard each other daily with increasing bitterness while we fight the jungle merely to stay alive."

"There is one other answer," said Papa Sosnic, slowly. "I have not suggested it because it is such a slim hope. But I would have you try it before taking this wild, stowaway flight to Earth."

"What is it?" demanded John.

"Was Lora tested for the various Colony qualifications?"

"I don't know. She said she volunteered as a Control."

"Then it might just be possible that she could pass the tests for Alpha Colony. If she could, it would be permissible for her to re-apply and she would probably be admitted—if she could pass."

"She would never do it. For some crazy reason, she hates the thought of the experimental Colonies. The only answer for us is something in between. And the only place to find it is on Earth."

"She has been in the jungle for a month now. Perhaps she has changed her mind; perhaps it is not so romantic as she thought."

John turned sharply, decision in his voice. "What can I do?"

"She could be brought here for a period of visiting, and she could be given the examination. It's worth trying."

"Yes—yes, it's worth trying."

**J**OHAN APPROACHED Dr. Warnock early the next morning. He laid before the director the entire story, holding back only his own desperate plan to return to Earth—which he still intended to keep as a final resort.

When he was through, Warnock glanced up and smiled crookedly. "And Papa Sosnic told you this would be possible, this bringing Lora here to visit and inspect Alpha Colony to see if she liked it well enough to stay?"

"Provided she could pass the tests. And I'm sure she can do that!"

"I sometimes wonder who runs this colony—me or Papa Sosnic," said Warnock.

John felt a cold shock traveling slowly upwards from his feet. He realized then that what Papa Sosnic had said could be done was true only in the old man's own opinion.

"It has never been done before," said Warnock, confirming John's sudden fear. "To do so now would come close to shattering the whole plan of the Colony. You don't understand,

and neither does Papa Sosnic, that it *must* be kept in isolation."

"Imprisonment," whispered John, "that's the word you mean."

Warnock smiled a little sadly. "It is quite difficult to put over, to you who come here, the basic reasoning behind our experiments. The moment a man becomes a member of our Colonies it is almost impossible to keep him from adopting a sort of persecution-complex; he develops a prisoner's psychology."

"Perhaps that is more than a trivial comment on the methods of your experiments."

"We have rules, yes—but we also realize we are dealing with human beings. I suppose you think I am going to turn down your request. Well, you are wrong. I am going to let Lora come here—if she will, of course; the decision must be hers.

"I am aware of your potentiality as a productive member of the Colony. We already have a dossier on you an inch thick. We want to know what a man like you can do for the future of mankind when given the freedom to develop all that is in him."

"Freedom!"

Warnock nodded slowly. "You haven't understood, John. There is freedom here on Planet 7; all you have to do is reach out and take it."

"But you said the kind of thing I have asked has never been done before."

"It has never been requested."

John suddenly relaxed and slumped in the chair and laughed uncontrollably, in spite of the conviction that he felt more like crying. "What is the matter?" Warnock demanded.

John told him then about the wild plan to stow away aboard the starship and return to Earth to conduct a campaign against the Project.

"You couldn't have gone without our knowing," said Warnock, "but we wouldn't have stopped you. You would never have seen Lora again."

"Did Papa Sosnic know this?"

"Papa knows a great many things

which we wonder about. Yes, I think he probably understood this very well. He knew how it would be; Papa Sosnic has done you a great service."



**I**T WAS three days before he received word that Lora was coming. When the news came it seemed as if it were about someone he had known long ago in childhood, someone who would be changed by the long years between, and whom he would scarcely know. He wondered what they would say to each other when they met.

Lora's Control-Colony was through the jungle in the opposite direction from the spaceport; it was at the port that it was arranged for him to meet her.

They saw each other across the storm-darkened terminal lobby where the rain smell made it hard to get a full breath of air. He didn't run toward her as he had thought he would. She *was* like some long ago acquaintance of childhood, and he wanted time to absorb the fact of her presence.

He had never seen her as she was dressed now. Her clothing was rough, a green tinged leather that confirmed her as part of the jungle itself. Her face was changed, too; it was thinner and had taken on a brownness.

But her eyes were the same. He felt a warmth of gladness rising within him as he came close enough to see that light in her eyes. It was more alive than ever before, he thought.

Then she was near him, touching him, her hand upon his arm. And he still had not found the thing to say.

Her eyes glistened now. "I shouldn't have come," she said. "But I had to; I had to take this chance I thought

would never come. The chance to see you once again."

"I told you I'd never let you go," he said.

Deep inside him he had really believed this moment would never come, he thought. He had long ago lost the capacity for believing in miracles.

He put his arms about the miracle of Lora and held her close, but it was like enfolding an impatient bird.

"I shouldn't have come at all," she said. "It was a trick, but I knew it was the only chance I'd ever have to see you."

"What are you talking about?" He drew her close again. "You're here now, and this is forever."

"I'm not staying, John; I let them believe I'd take the tests but I won't. I don't even want to know that I might be eligible for Alpha Colony."

His muscles turned rigid, as if time had stopped, and he was cold and hollow inside. He pressed her closer and touched his lips to her ear. "Hush," he whispered. "Tomorrow we can talk."

**B**UT THEY didn't mention it again, neither on the morrow or the next day. Lora stayed with Doris, and John wasn't sure at all how that would be. He still burned with the too-recent memory of her calling his meeting with Lora disgusting and stupid.

But Doris had changed in the past few weeks, he thought, without his being aware of it. Perhaps it was Bronson. The scientist came often to see them—or Doris—and John supposed this was highly irregular, since it was no doubt a contaminating factor in the eyes of the Project directors.

The change in Doris was evident when John brought Lora to her. The two exchanged glances, as if they had some lone secret that united them against the world. John tried to understand the sad, friendly smiles they offered each other.

Papa Sosnic beamed and kissed her on both cheeks when John brought

Lora to see him. She had traded temporarily the crude clothing of the Control-Colony for the exquisite fabrics furnished the Alpha group. Lean and bronze against the white material of her dress, she was quite the loveliest woman in the whole Colony, John knew—and Papa said so.

She loved everything about the house. When they were alone again, she sank down in the soft luxury of a big chair. Through the window she could see the broad, peaceful landscape and the Grecian splendor of the statuary and the men and women playing beside it.

With spread fingers, she held out the skirt of the dress. "I dreamed of something like this when I was a little girl," she said. "And I never did get it."

"You've got it now," said John, "for always."

She glanced through the windows and beyond to the dome that held back the sun and the wind and the stars. She shook her head slowly. "No—I never did like living behind bars; here they are even in the sky!"

He took her about the Colony on the following days, but he had the sick feeling within him that he was losing. He had the feeling of trying to protect a house of sand with his arms, while the waves washed it away despite all he could do.

Lora was delighted with the fantastic gadgetry that served them in the houses, that conveyed their meals from the central, automatic kitchens serving the whole Colony. She was enraptured with the peace of the forest glens through which he led her by the hand. And she stood before the classic statuary groups by the hour while he explained the stories they told.

But she was like a child excited by a visit to a strange and fabulous house. All her delight did not mean that she had accepted it as her own; and this he could not make her believe—that it was her house as well as his own.

Warnock would not give them many more days, he knew; soon they would

ask her to take the examinations given to all Colonists of the experimental groups.

In the meantime, there was the concert festival for which Papa Sosnic had arranged the presentation of John's composition. He had no heart for it, but John agreed to play it in spite of its badness because Papa Sosnic wanted it.

Time and Alpha Colony grew increasingly unreal. He tried to see things from Lora's viewpoint. He stared at the sky through the protecting dome and wondered why Lora had to see in it prison bars.

Was it any more so than the walls of a house? he asked himself. Why was it so wrong to accept protection and peace and luxury that gave time to devote to his music? On Earth, he and Doris had been musicians, but they had worked hard at it—as hard as if they were bricklayers—and he'd had no time for composition.

He tried to explain this to Lora the day of the concert, but she merely laughed. "It would be better if you were a bricklayer by day and a musician by night," she said.

She seemed to live by a whole set of rules and standards of which he was not even aware. And she refused him the secret of the mystery of her reasoning.

He was going to lose her, he thought, and there was nothing he could do. In a day or two, they would ask her to take the tests and she would refuse. She would return to the jungle. He could go with her if he wished—and die slowly there in her presence. Why did she prefer jungle death to the life that was possible here? he wondered for the thousandth time.

**O**N THE evening of the concert she was more beautiful than ever, as if to tantalize him with that which he was about to lose. But the thought baffled him more than ever, for she would lose it, too. In the jungle she would don the green leather jacket and trousers. Never would she look like this again.

The concert was to be held in the central auditorium of the Colony, where all large performances were conducted. John noted distastefully that his name was the very last on the program. A tribute, no doubt, to the neophyte, who could be expected to present something worth only the attention of those who had not already left or yawned themselves to sleep, he thought angrily.

He sat near the front with Lora and Doris, and with Papa Sosnic and Dr. Bronson, whose frequent presence was becoming an increasing source of wonder in the Colony. Until his own number was called, John would sit with the audience.

The program carried a number of names he knew. Names long absent from the roster of artists on Earth, but which had once been great in the halls where John and Doris had played.

The first was one of these, Faber Wagnalls, whose work John had studied intently in the early years. He found himself leaning forward eagerly in spite of his own depression, anxious to hear the new work of this man whom he had not even met since coming to the Colony.

Wagnalls was much older now, and gray, different from the pictures John had seen. He sat at the piano on the spotlighted stage and began playing.

John closed his eyes and listened with all his being. The first notes were strange. It was a new man playing, he thought—not the Wagnalls who had written so long ago upon Earth. John listened to the theme, echoing it in his own mind.

Slowly, it seemed to him as if a cold wind had begun to blow upon his naked body. The music—it was not the great Faber Wagnalls at all. It was a simpering, effeminate tune that pranced and dawdled by turns, and had no loveliness or grace in a single note.

The applause was obviously out of sympathy rather than praise, and John joined in it when Wagnalls was through. But he wondered if it were

really merciful to let the old master make such a fool of himself.

He glanced at Doris who returned his look, her nostrils thin and defiant. She knew, he thought, but she wasn't admitting that there was any bad in Alpha Colony.

Lora caught his eye and grinned maliciously; he wondered exactly why.

**T**HE NEXT performance was a group of string instruments. It was mediocre, not as poor as Wagnalls' performance. John began to wonder when he would hear some of the fine work for which Alpha Colony had been created. Beside what he had heard so far his own would not show so badly, even if it was noisy and brash.

He continued to wonder as the program advanced. He grew sick inside as the parade of inept performers and trivial compositions followed one after the other.

And when his sickness bordered on panic—as if he had suddenly perceived the falsity and trickery of life itself—then he understood.

He understood an infinity of things he had never understood before. He understood himself and Doris, and he understood Lora. He understood why she looked up at the great dome and saw bars in the sky. He understood that the applause for Wagnalls was genuine not in pity.

Dimly, in the midst of panic and understanding, he heard his own name called. He stood up and moved automatically to the platform and sat before the piano.

Then he began to play. And with his playing there came clarity and a new reality. He knew what he had to do.

He tried to tell them with the music. He looked out over the dimly lit faces of the audience. He knew they would not understand, but he told them, anyway. He told them with fury and noise that echoed the anger of betrayal. He told them with a theme of passion and struggle that shocked them.

When he was through there was a

moment of silence, and then a scattering of faint applause, followed all too quickly by a scattering of the audience itself. He was left standing almost alone with his few friends as the hall cleared.

Dr. Warnock came up and took his hand. "It was strong meat for our tender people," he said. "I don't know anything about music, but I liked that better than the twiddling little pieces I hear so often around here."

"You know what I have to do," said John.

"Yes?"

"I'm going with Lora; we'll leave for the Control-Colony in the morning."



**T**HEY GATHERED after the concert at Papa Sosnic's. Papa wore an air of secret mirth as they walked towards the house under the dome-filtered starlight. Bronson seemed puzzled and half-angry, while Dr. Warnock was an interested spectator of the wholly unexpected events of a play.

Lora and John felt a deep contentment as if they could suddenly see all the way to the end of their lives, and knew they were on the right pathway.

But Doris walked alone, ignoring Bronson's presence, as if she had been stunned and swept to the edge of grief by John's words.

When they reached Papa Sosnic's, she was the first to speak as she separated him from the rest and forced him against the wall. "You don't mean what you said," she insisted. "You don't mean you are giving up all we have gained for a stubborn girl who is afraid to face life!"

"I love that stubborn girl," he said softly, "and she loves me."

"Then she can have courage enough to live here like a human being—if she has wits enough. John, you can't do a crazy thing like this."

The others had stopped where they stood, held by the anguish of Doris' voice. They did not want to hear, and could not help themselves.

Lora stepped in from the next room, and heard, but Doris did not seem to care. "I've spent my whole life trying to keep you from knowing how ugly the world can be," she said to John. "I didn't want you to know it. When you were a child, you never knew that sometimes the food you ate was stolen, and that I went without because there was not enough for both of us. I showed you how to make yourself great; and we were great artists on Earth. We couldn't have had more—until we found this.

"And now there's nothing more to worry about for all the rest of our lives. We'll be taken care of, and we can work and create to the full extent of all that's good in us.

"But more than that: we're not only helping ourselves, we're helping all mankind. There'll never be another chance again to become the kind of humans that won't destroy themselves. If we don't change we won't get that chance again.

"It's like the intermission time between the act of a great play. And we've got a chance to change the lines, and rewrite the show—to make sure it doesn't end as tragedy.

"You can't throw away your chance to help in that, John. Lora, you can't ask that of him!"

There was so little he could say now, he thought. He was understanding Doris for the first time in his life. For the first time he saw how the world had looked to her, a place of agony and terror from which she must flee and protect him.

He remembered the day when he met Lora by the gate. She had said that some came to Human Develop-



ments because they were running away. He had thought that such a thing could never be said of Doris; yet, it was true. She had run from the struggle of life to the security of Alpha Colony. And he had thought her the strongest of them all.

And now it was Lora who had the strength. She had claimed to be running away, but she was running *to* life, not away from it.

**H**E TOOK Doris' icy hand in his and led her to the couch beside which the others stood. "You've taken care of me too long, and too well," he said. "Tonight you heard what comes of men and women who are too well taken-care-of. You have heard the kind of creativeness built without need or want."

He looked up at Dr. Warnock. "You know the Colony is a failure, don't you, Doctor?"

Warnock smiled and shrugged. "Papa Sosnic has told me often enough. Myself—I am not a musician, only a sociologist."

"Alpha Colony is a failure," said

John. "The whole project is a failure—all but the Control-Colonies.

"You have thought you could learn about the greatness of men by splitting them up into groups and viewing only a single facet of life. You can't do it; you can't have musicians without truck-drivers and bricklayers. And you can't have a man who is a musician only. All this dividing, and separating, and splitting-up will reveal nothing, no more than would cutting off an arm or a leg show you where greatness lies.

"Greatness can be viewed only in the whole man. This other won't work. Every man needs a touch of cussedness, a pinch of damn foolishness, and all the brain stuff he can cram in his head. Strain out any of it and you have only a piece of a man.

"And above all, you can't make men great by taking care of them. I didn't understand that until I heard the stupid little performances tonight. You have taken great men and made them weaklings. Faber Wagnalls—it's enough to make you want to cry.

"The only real greatness a man ever has is the ability to take care of himself, and twist the world to fit his needs. True, we have almost burned it to a cinder in the process, but that 'almost' is what makes the difference. We haven't failed, and we aren't going to—unless we give up trying to take care of ourselves and create some fatal Utopia. There's no freedom in the Garden of Eden.

"I almost found that out too late; and except for tonight, Lora might never have pounded it into my thick skull."

**I**N THE light of another day, the Colony seemed a place that John had never seen before at all. They walked slowly toward the terminal building, past the great statuary that was somehow shoddy this morning.

He understood why, and he would have seen it before if he had been a sculptor. The images were but copies

—copies made by the faulty memories of men who remembered Earth, but looked forward to nothing.

The lawns and the forest paths were like a child's toy garden, and the narrow confines under the dome seemed to crush in upon him. He looked skyward—and now he could see the bars shutting out the world and the wind and the rain!

Lora hurried him along, as if she could endure no longer the imprisonment of the Colony. At the terminal building they looked out and saw that it was raining again beyond the dome, the eternal jungle rain. John shivered a little as the wind whipped moisture through the doors.

He looked back at Doris and the others. He felt sorry for them, but there was nothing at all that he could do for them. Doris was white-faced, but calm. He took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Bye, Sis," he said.

Then they were out in the rain, moving toward the bus that would take them to the beginning of the jungle trail. Lora was laughing, the raindrops splashing on her face, and running down in trickles.

When the history of Human Developments was finally written, he thought, it would be of the descendants of the Control-Colonists, not those of the poor prisoners of Alpha Colony.

Then he caught sight of his own long, white hands and remembered there would be no music in the jungle. His hands would warp with the labor of building shelters and fighting for food. But no music? He suddenly laughed aloud, remembering the words of Papa Sosnic—"it would be with you always in your heart."

So many things Papa Sosnic knew! John glanced again at Lora's shining, rain-wet face and turned his own to catch the raindrops on his skin.

Their gentle sting assured him that, at last, he was alive.

