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NOVEL

LAST STAND Algis Budrys 4

NOVELETS

LIVE IN AMITY D. A. Jourdan 36

PROTECTIVE CAMOUFLAGE Charles V. De Vet 106

SHORT STORIES

IN WORKING ORDER Ward Moore 55

DESIGN IN STATISTICS Irving Cox, Jr. 63

TELESTASSIS M. C. Pease 78

UGLY DUCKLING Barbara Constant 93

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A man who denies himself anything—even though it is his own choice—ultimately comes to see that denial as a cruelty inflicted on him!

LIVE IN AMITY

NOVELET

by D. A. Jourdan

illustrated by FREAS

GORSE helped Leah into his copter, glad the darkness hid his expression when she deliberately disarranged her full skirt and exposed a generous portion of white thigh.

Entering from his own side he replaced the skirt without comment. "The ancients," he said serenely, "believed that civilization

required people to live under whatever were the most painful, most difficult conditions..." He hoped she didn't know how badly he wanted her; the ancients might have enjoyed that sort of thing, but he did not.

Their duel had been going on for months. They both wanted the same thing, but they had differ-

ent ideas about how they intended to accomplish it. To get his mind off it Gorse tried absorbing himself in his subject. It really was interesting. "They called all natural desires 'sin'; and they actually forbade them..." He paused, wondering if he should go on. His research into old custom was only incumbent on him as a priest in Amity.

It was not good manners for him to force his knowledge on others. Social grace ruled that the cruellest, most destructive thing one person could do to another was to burden his neighbor with unnecessary information.

On the other hand, Leah, too, was a member of the Serving class; as such she had to be inured to the discomfort of education. Too, she was certainly going to be one of his mates. From the way she was holding him off, it was beginning to look as though she would be chief.

He gave in to his desire to share the odd bit of lore with her. "Just imagine, Leah; imagine calling the most instinctive, most essential desires of mankind 'sinful'!"

"What's so important about the name you call a thing?" she said sulkily. She was piqued by his self-control; apparently she didn't realize how close she was to winning what she was after. "Natural desires are natural desires—whatever you call 'em..."

"But these people didn't just



Gorse pictured masses of people killing and maiming each other.

call 'em 'sin' and let it go at that," Gorse emphasized. Airborne at that moment and busy with the plane, he didn't consider how much he was saying. "These people actually abstained from their natural-desires-called-sin..."

"How could they?" Leah was almost more puzzled than shocked. "They'd have nothing to declare! They'd be denied their clearance!"

Feeling her slight shudder, Gorse frowned at himself for saying more than he should have. History was not specifically secret—but all responsible people knew that world Amity rested most securely on the people's conviction that the System was not merely the best way of life, but the only way. Even the intellectuals of the Serving class were rarely aware that there had ever been anything but Amity.

Only the Priesthood at the very top knew of the chaos that had preceded the System; they had to know to be capable of formulating policy. (For three hundred years, though, there had been no need for any further policy, since in Amity mankind had found peace and stability.)

So Gorse could understand Leah's shock at the thought of non-declaration. Homicide, of course, had to be proved justifiable to a board of priests; but aside from that, the one crime in Amity was failure to make monthly declaration.

Gorse set the automatic pilot

and tried to change the subject by putting his hand on Leah's now chastely-covered thigh. "That was a nice party last night," he said reminiscently. "Except that I didn't see as much of you as I'd have enjoyed..."

Leah refused to have the subject changed. As an educated girl with some experience in assimilating new ideas, she strove now to understand this one. "Tell me," she insisted. "How could people abstain from—call it natural desire or sin—I don't care... But how could they? They'd be quarantined as socially undesirable..."

Gorse considered explaining to Leah that there had been a time in history when people were not required to appear and declare monthly that they had properly fulfilled their natural desires to the best of their ability.

He decided against it; the idea would seem too incongruous to her. He thought of pointing out to her mournfully that by her stubbornness she had been making his own declarations so petty as to be dull for months; but he knew better than to expect any sympathy from her about that.

Still stroking the silken fabric over her soft thigh Gorse lapsed in a pleasant state of semi-hypnosis. Leah would make a delightful mate. He knew that if it took him much longer to persuade her, he was going to give in, name her his chief and permanent mate. He said

absently, "What puzzles me is not *how* they could abstain, but *why* . . . Why would any sane person want to abstain from something he badly wanted?"

AS A PRIEST, except for the High Priests who were a secret group and known only to each other, Gorse was at the top of the Serving class. Naturally Leah wanted him.

And he was dangerously close to giving in to her. Only his social obligation to mate with her without naming her his chief, if he possibly could, was holding him back now.

Conquest was the usual solution to a problem such as his, but such success with a girl of Leah's intelligence and foresight was not child's play. She had both imagination and spirit, and he had learned painfully that she was willing to use both. Also, though the system approved both force and trickery in such a campaign, the female was not permitted to be seriously harmed.

She, however, was permitted to use unlimited force to defend herself. Slaying of the male by the female in these circumstances was considered justifiable. And he wouldn't put it past Leah.

Sighing, he gave her leg a final pat and stopped. A girl like Leah was not to be had by force, and priest though he was he had been unable to seduce her. But under

his stroking she had snuggled closer to him. She whispered softly in his ear, "Gorse, love. I'm hungry . . ."

He asked despondently, "Where would you like to go?"

"Butterfly Inn isn't far. And let's take a private room; I don't care to eat chicken in front of people. . ."

Gorse headed for the place she mentioned, gloomily aware that this was just the sort of thing that broke a man down.

Shortly later, following her rippling blue skirt into the pleasant room he was stabbed, exactly as she had intended. There was the usual invitingly arranged, candle-lit table on one side of the room. And on the other there was the usual, capacious, chintz-flowered chaise-lounge. If the couch had not been too large Gorse would have shoved it out the window.

He gave the order. Across the table from him Leah's shoulders were camelia-white, and so rounded he could feel the touch of them in the palms of his hands. The candles transformed the mischief in her eyes into mystery. And as he watched her long, dark hair bob and undulate entrancingly around those lovely bare shoulders, Gorse knew that he was very nearly finished.

The platter full of chicken arrived. Leah examined it judiciously and selected a wing. Gorse, too, had been on the verge of taking

a wing but at that moment he veered to a leg.

MUNCHING on the chicken, Gorse tried puzzledly to understand why he had done so. As a priest, he knew something of human nature—and unless he was mistaken he had just done a strange and perverted thing. He had automatically, and without thinking, refrained from fulfilling an unobstructed natural desire.

He had always preferred the wing, and apparently Leah liked the wing, too. Though there were two of them on the platter, at the moment he had seen her take the wing he had without thinking reserved the other for her—despite his own preference for them.

Gorse put down the leg, wiped his fingers and stared at Leah, badly shaken. He had just depravedly and abnormally resisted a healthy, natural impulse. He, a priest in Amity!

Under his gaze Leah stopped eating. "Is something wrong with the food?"

Gorse shook his head without speaking and reached for another piece of chicken but his mind was made up. It must be frustration that was causing him to behave so insanely; he would resist no longer. Leah had beaten him fairly and deserved to be named his chief.

He waited until they finished eating to tell her. He pretended to

be looking out the balcony at the view. "What would you say if I told you I've just decided to give in to you . . ."

She was on him and in his arms immediately, warm and enthusiastic. He knew that even a lifetime of Leah was not going to seem long. He enjoyed her mouth for as long as he could stand it and then put her from him. She twirled across the room and flung herself down on the enormous chaise lounge. "Come here!"

"Why?" he asked wryly.

"Even kissing," she said, smiling innocently, "is more comfortable in a reclining position . . ."

He smiled, too, but he doubted if his smile was innocent. "Unless you want to risk losing what you've just won, better not invite me. Not until after you're actually named. . ."

"I invite you!"

He came over to her slowly, trying to understand. She was too intelligent, too sensible not to know what she was doing. "You've been holding me off until I'm almost crazy . . ." He frowned down at her. "Now that you've almost achieved what you want—suddenly your desire becomes so strong you can't wait. . . Even though this way you risk my changing my mind afterward. . ."

Her laughter was indulgent. "My desire is neither stronger nor weaker than it was before. But if

you want to give in to me, I want to give in to you; that's all..."

Gorse stared down at her, beginning to understand, but wishing now that he didn't. Something serious—even dangerous—was taking place. Leah really preferred to wait until after she was named to give in to him.

Yet she was denying her own wish, in order to please him. It was, like his giving her the other chicken wing, a deliberate self-denial of an unobstructed natural desire.

Amity called it decadence.

AMITY was based on not merely the right, but the duty of every person to fulfill their natural desires. All citizens were required to appear monthly before their board of priests and make declaration—secret and private, of course, but verifiable—that they had done so. Their monthly clearance testified that they were fit for society.

The monthly declaration was requisite rather than voluntary, lest sick or confused individuals shirk their duty to fulfill natural desires and so create a reservoir of the evil Amity knew to follow self-denial.

Leah's refusal to allow Gorse to make love to her except on her own terms was, of course, her right. Amity ruled that whenever two person's desires were mutually exclusive, whoever felt the most strongly should prevail. The rules,

as on conquest, were simple and reasonable and rarely violated.

Gorse could not, however, escape the fact that both he and Leah had been guilty of decadence—self-denial of an unobstructed natural desire—in the same evening. And it had seemed so reasonable and right. He wondered troubledly if he were becoming contaminated by his research into the past. Perhaps he was not sufficiently balanced to be exposed to the temptations of the decadent past.

Yet at the same time, he felt, sinfully, that perhaps the behavior of the ancients was after all not so evil. And that thought, even though it was contrary to Amity, persisted.

II

TWO MONTHS later, when Gorse was summoned for the first time in his life to appear before his regional director in the eastern capitol, he was still not at ease with his own conscience. Though he had recently turned in what he thought was an exceptionally good analysis on the trends in modern amusement, he was not at all sure that he was being summoned to the capitol for commendation.

Even after he had publicly named Leah his chief, he still found places where he was refusing to fulfill his natural desire. He

knew it was wrong and he tried to fight against it; but no amount of self-disapproval could convince him that the ancients had been really evil in their passion for abstinence. Sometimes, when he failed to be strict with himself, he would almost believe that the ancients' way was more civilized than Amity's.

Nervously thumbing through various priests' trade journals in the director's anteroom, Gorse knew that he expected as much to be called up for untruthful declaration as for congratulation on his work.

The director, Utz, was a sturdy, cheerful looking man with just a suggestion of grimness around the mouth. Rumor said he was a member of the all-powerful, secret body of High Priests, final administrators in Amity for the entire world.

Utz, returning from ushering him in, touched the comfortable armchair nearest him and gave the built-in lazy Susan on his desk a slight turn. "Will you try my tobacco? Or a drink? Or—" his smile deepened and the grimness around his mouth disappeared. "Perhaps a small dose of biothe to help you relax?"

Gorse demanded defensively, "Should I find it difficult to relax?" regretting it before he had even finished speaking.

Utz closed the lid of the humidifier compartment of the wheel and sat down. "Some priests are a

trifle tense at meeting their director for the first time," he said mildly.

"And so am I," Gorse admitted apologetically, but he still didn't help himself from any of the compartments of the lazy Susan. Biothe, which lulled conscious control of one's mind could be introduced into almost anything. Until he had cured himself of his perverse passion for abstaining, it was best he maintain his intellectual integrity.

But it was shameful that he, a priest, should have to close his mind to his superior. He felt himself flushing and tried to believe that with his knowledge and training he should soon be able to cure himself. It wasn't easy to convince himself, since after months of trying he still had no idea why he wanted to deviate.

Utz was studying him, must have seen him redden. He glanced down at the sheaf of papers in his hand. "Gorse Cheyney, age twenty-five. And your work is in entertainment analysis . . ."

Gorse relaxed a little. He still wasn't at ease about his mania for abstaining, but from Utz's attitude he was beginning to dare to hope that he had been brought here for commendation rather than disgrace. He tried not to feel too hopeful.

Utz flicked the papers lightly and laid them on his desk. "Gorse, your work has been excellent ever since you took your vow. But this report here," he pointed toward the

papers on his desk, "entitles you to a rare honor."

Gorse looked at him doubtfully. Though he had been born into the Serving class, the Priesthood was competitive; he had already won his way into this highest of all Services. He frowned slightly, wondering what Utz could mean. He had already achieved the ultimate in promotion. All he hoped to do now was to continue to merit the privilege he had already attained. Even that, he thought nervously, in view of his trend toward decadence, was not going to be easy.

Utz had been watching him. "You've been selected," he said impressively, "for preparation for High Priest."

For one incredulous moment of delight Gorse stared at Utz. Then reality blasted him; the coveted honor was not, could not be for him. As downcast as he had been exultant, Gorse said, "I'm sorry. I can't—"

Utz waited blandly. "Yes?"

GORSE fell suddenly silent in horror of what he had been saying. His balance hadn't been too secure to begin with, and this shock had upset it further. This was something that no priest would ever refuse.

As Utz said, this was the greatest honor—and duty—that Amity offered. The High Priests governed the final policies of the entire world. It was because of the wis-

dom of that secret body of men that for three hundred years, war—mass murder of mankind by mankind—had disappeared from earth.

Only a student of ancient history could appreciate what that meant.

Gorse leaned back in the comfortable armchair, his eyes closed. He had a mental picture of great masses of people turning on themselves, maiming, killing each other. He shuddered, made up his mind. Locked up inside himself, his decadence could do no harm; but a sick mind like his among the body of High Priests might single-handedly destroy civilization. He must refuse, even if it destroyed him.

Gorse looked at Utz dully. "It's a great honor, but I don't feel qualified..."

Utz's tone was kindly. "The board decides that."

"You mean I can't decline?"

"Why worry?" Utz smiled. "Would it be so terrible to be selected as High Priest?"

Gorse flushed. "It's not that..." He couldn't explain that he was not fit to govern, that his mind might prove dangerous to the security of the world.

If Utz suspected that he was abstaining from his natural desires Gorse knew he would be immediately segregated. If he then proved unresponsive to cure, he

would be sent into quarantine for the rest of his life.

He tried to choose his words carefully; Utz was probably suspicious already. "It's just," he said miserably, "That I'm so happy with my present life as I am, that I hesitate to change it in any way..."

Utz tapped the file of papers on his desk. "Strange your last few monthly declarations don't bear out that statement of bliss."

Gorse's heart began to vibrate his whole body. So his untrue declarations had been brought to Utz's attention! He knew that it was impossible to escape the detector, but he had hoped for a little more time before the reports caught up with him. He said stiffly, to hide his fear, "Am I forced to accept this honor, or can I refuse?"

Utz moved the sheaf of papers into exact alignment with the edge of his walnut desk. "In Amity," he said slowly, "we're only forced to do what we desire. However, to be permitted to live with our fellows we must keep ourselves free of the tensions that make vicious animals of men; and Amity knows how men must behave to remain free of such tensions."

Gorse said insistently, "Then I'm not forced to accept?"

Utz shook his head. "You're not forced. But if you refuse, you imply that the good of the System is not your first interest..."

"So I'm allowed to refuse,"

Gorse said bitterly; "only, if I do it marks me as a socially undesirable citizen..." He looked at Utz. "Quarantine?"

Utz's mouth was firm. "I'm afraid so..."

GORSE looked suddenly confused. It occurred to him that he was trying to escape being made a High Priest lest he harm the world—when all the time the fact of his untruthful declaration was known, and he was slated for disgrace—not honor. "I've been stupid," he said. "You certainly don't want me for High Priest, knowing my declarations have been untrue—"

"But we do!"

Gorse looked at him distrustfully. "Socially undesirable as I am? You want to prepare me for High Priest?" He was finally suspicious of the way the interview had been conducted. He scowled at Utz. "Naturally I'd give anything—to do anything—to be High Priest. Any man would. But did you summon me here to prepare me for High Priest, or to quarantine me as undesirable?"

Utz paused, then said carefully, "Both, perhaps..." He asked, "Are you sincere about wanting to be High Priest? If you can be cured of your decadence, of course..."

Gorse stared at him. There was nothing he wanted more in life at that moment than to be safe again

in Amity. Secure in a position of honor. "I'm sincere," he muttered without much hope.

"The cure will be strenuous and shocking," Utz warned; "the reward, you know. I'll do everything I can to help you. . ."

Gorse eyed him warily but with resignation. Utz seemed pleased that he was willing to try to cure himself. Actually he had little choice. Unless he wanted to go into life quarantine.

Utz had been consulting the file on Gorse. Finally he looked at him. "Ordinally we first try to rehabilitate deviates by stimulating their sexual desires. But I don't see much hope in exposing you to any charmers, however celebrated. Since you recently named your chief mate. . ."

Gorse nodded despondently. "No other female could possibly stimulate me more than Leah. . ."

"Yet as much as you desired her, you deliberately abstained from taking her when she made herself available to you. . ."

Gorse gestured, dropped his hands. How could he explain something he didn't understand himself. "She wanted to be my chief. First."

"But she *did* offer herself to you?"

Heavily, Gorse nodded.

"And you *did* refrain from taking her? Though you wanted her?"

Gorse said, "But she wanted—"
Utz raised one forefinger. "It

is *your* desires, or rather the denial of your desires in which I'm now interested. Not hers."

Gorse looked at him hopelessly. "Yes. I wanted her but I waited. I waited until after I could name her. . ." Gorse explained desperately, "But it was only for her sake I waited. I wanted her to be happy. because she was only offering herself to me to make me happy!" He looked for some sign that Utz understood the complex phenomenon.

Utz was adamant. "However you *did* desire her and you *did* abstain from taking her. It does come to that, doesn't it?" Gorse looked down at his hands. Utz said thoughtfully, "So I certainly cannot hope to win you back by any lesser temptation. . ." His tone was abstracted. "Since your satisfaction with her is so complete. . ." He frowned. "Yet even with her—"

Utz broke off, took a deep breath. "How then shall we go about tempting you?" he asked soberly. "In order to persuade you to redeem yourself by following your natural desire, we must first give you something to desire. Something important. . ."

"There's nothing," Gorse said hopelessly. "Nothing I can't abstain from. . ." He stared at Utz. "When you spoke of the High Priesthood, badly as I wanted the honor, here, too. I found myself abstaining. . ." He said slowly, "But in another way I was follow-

in my desire—by abstaining... Since I wanted to..." Gorse's voice faded out as he saw Utz's face.

Utz spoke with amusement. "As a priest, you should recognize when a man is rationalizing to defend his perversity..."

"Then is it rationalizing," Gorse demanded, "to say that in each case I abstained for the benefit of others. So it was really harmless..."

"No, Gorse!" The hard look was back around Utz's mouth. "You may think your behavior was to the benefit of others. But in principle and in fact, self-denial is the basis of all evil..."

Utz continued flatly, "A man who believes that his right and his duty is to do exactly what he desires is a peaceful and contented individual. He lacks that breeding ground of all intolerance, cruelty and vice—a sense of his own virtue; he has nothing to feel virtuous about—he's only done what he wanted. And he has no pain of self-denial to retaliate for..."

"But a man who denies himself—even though he may originally do it because he chooses—ultimately winds up confusing self-denial with virtue, and wanting to make everybody else, also—" Utz's mouth twisted into a grimace of disgust—"virtuous..."

Utz was speaking with powerful conviction. Gorse wondered resist-

antly how he could be so sure. It had been hundreds of years since the ancients had lived under their strange custom of self-denial rather than fulfillment.

Perhaps history maligned them when it said that their society was founded on a bloody intolerance of all men for their fellows. Gorse said sturdily, "When I abstained, it was for good."

"It seemed so to you. But there's good reason for Amity to abhor the principle of self-denial," Utz said urgently. "I repeat: A man who denies himself anything—even though it is his own choice—ultimately comes to see that denial as a cruelty inflicted upon him. So in anger he calls his self-denial 'virtue', and seeks to extend it forcibly to other men. And there is no limit to men's cruelty in forcing their 'virtue' on their fellows..."

GORSE knew that he had no intention of denying others the right of carrying out their desires just because he had. Although, as he thought of it, there had been something kindly and generous about his self-denial in Leah's favor. Or the world's.

He frowned at Utz. All the training of his entire life said it was evil and wrong; yet he was not sure.

Utz stared back at him, his serene face suddenly eager. "Listen, Gorse, I'm going to help you; I

can help you. Since all self-denial ultimately aims toward the abnegation of life, there is something I can do..." He presses a button on his desk. "This will not be easy on you, but we must find out if you are completely beyond redemption—if you are really willing to give your life for your chief mate."

Alarmed, Gorse stood up. "You're not going to hurt Leah?"

Two guards had entered the office and stood, one on either side of him. "I'm not going to touch her," Utz assured him, "nor will I harm you. However I must confine you in order to test your attitude. Only this way can we discover if you'll really carry your self-denial to its logical extreme—and die for this female..."

"How?" Utz was too reasonable a man for Gorse to feel much fear of him.

Utz made a slight gesture. "You will be confined indefinitely. And though you will be served food regularly, if you eat, your chief mate will die—because you will have falsely implied that you're willing to sacrifice yourself for her." He said grimly. "In order to justify your passion for self-denial in her favor, I expect you to be willing to starve yourself to death."

Incredulous first, then enraged, Gorse yanked free of the guards' restraining hands. He leaned over Utz's desk and stared at him.

Slowly, his recent ideas had been

eroding away the cherished convictions of a lifetime; now he knew complete disillusionment. He had never hated as he hated Utz, never loathed evil as he now loathed the creed he lived under. "So Amity, too, like the savage concepts of the ancients, requires the death of those who do not believe in it..."

Utz said sternly, "You know that Amity's only punishment is the quarantine."

"And," Gorse added in despire, "starving a man to death. Under threat of killing someone he loves..."

Utz stood up. "You are mistaken." There was neither anger nor pity on his face. "I am not punishing you; I am giving you my maximum assistance in purging yourself. So that you may—as you yourself said you desired—one day be High Priest. The greatest of all natural desires is the desire to live. I am calling on the most powerful incentive I know to persuade you to cease this perverse restraint and return. To life and to Amity..."

Utz paused for a moment. "You chose to deny yourself in favor of another; this gave you a sense of virtue I am now offering you an opportunity to carry that virtue to its pinnacle. To give your life for another..."

"If," he continued coolly, "you should decide that self-denial is not synonymous with virtue—if

you decide to live—you will be welcomed back into your rightful place. The price of redemption, the life of your mate, is high, but you set it yourself when you questioned Amity."

III

FROM THE beginning, Gorse had known that Utz was sentencing him to death. What he had not known was what a vicious and lengthy torture it would be achieving that death.

At first Gorse had started out to do it the hard way, like a hero. He would leave the tray where the guard placed it, and try to ignore it. After two days of this he grew so hungry he no longer dared to trust to his own control.

After that he didn't pose any more. The moment the guard brought the tray of food he would flush it down the toilet. The first time was the hardest; it had seemed as though he was flushing away his life.

Utz had been very subtle. Since for Gorse to eat meant for Leah to die, symbolically, if he ate he would be engaging in the most animal of all human drives: Cannibalism. The appetizing trays of food the guards brought in no longer looked like food to Gorse. They represented Leah's white flesh.

In a way Gorse was thankful that Utz had arranged it that way.

That horror was the only thing that might have made it possible for him to abstain from the food. He grew weaker as the days passed, and spent most of his time asleep or in a stupor. Always, conscious, or unconscious, in back of his fear of death was Utz's cold, hard face.

Sleep brought another fear. He would dream that while he slept the guard brought in a tray of roast pork and candied yams and that while he still slept, he ate the food.

Even after he would wake up and see the tray, empty as he had left it after disposing of the food down the toilet—or freshly replaced by the guard and still untouched—he never felt quite sure it was only a dream. That he had actually not tasted the food, while still asleep.

That dream always terrified him so he would struggle to remain awake. But of course he always failed.

It seemed to him that he had spent weeks in confinement. He knew it shouldn't take that long to die of starvation and he suspected Utz of force feeding him somehow when he was not conscious.

Often when he would wake up a doctor would be there. By that time Gorse was no longer afraid he might take some of the food while he slept. He knew he knew he was no longer strong enough to

cross the cell without stumbling or falling.

Then one day Utz was there as he woke. The doctor standing beside him was looking down at him with admiration and pity. Utz's face was calm as usual. He said, "Can you hear me, Gorse?"

Gorse closed his eyes again and turned his head to the wall. He couldn't stop the false and vicious creed of Amity from destroying him, but he need no longer listen to Utz—its false priest.

"Then you can," Utz said coolly. "Good. I have news for you. The doctor informs me you are close to death, so I've decided to terminate your cure. Your chief mate, of course, won't be harmed. But you understand this failure means quarantine for you..."

After that came weeks in a hospital while his stomach was re-educated to accept food. Then the flight under guard to prison, the last flight he would ever make.

UNDESIRABLE CITIZENS of the North American region were quarantined on a small, inaccessible island in the San Francisco bay. Built around the twentieth century as a prison, hundreds of years later it was still being used for that purpose. Amity, of course, had little need for prisons, since competition was for honors only—and honors could be neither stolen, embezzled nor forged.

From time to time a rare indivi-

dual was unable to justify a slaying to the satisfaction of his board of priests, but the main group of undesirables—and they were not many—were deviate priests like himself. Gorse soon learned that, like himself, they too had been attracted by the strange customs of the ancients. They too had found them superior to Amity.

He sought his friends among these men and the one of them who fascinated him most was Verl.

Verl was a slender, ascetic-looking man with intense gray eyes and a fierce eloquence. Gorse and he and a dozen ex-priests like themselves gathered in the dismal courtyard of the prison evenings and by talking tried to lance the bitterness in their hearts.

After a long siege of the damp and gloomy days common to the area, Verl was angry. "Here we rot," he exploded one night. "The handful of men in the country who have the self-restraint and dedication to behave higher than the animals..."

Often as Gorse heard them actually praise self-denial, the strangeness of it still alarmed and delighted him. He could not get over having what he believed was his perversity approved. "Explain again," he begged, "why restraint is more civilized than fulfillment."

In the darkness of the Pacific evening Gorse couldn't see Verl's face, but he knew the expression of disgust that would be on it. Verl

said, "Any animal can follow its desires..." His voice rang out majestically. "But only man can deny himself..."

Scornfully, Gorse recalled Utz saying that self-denial made vicious animals of men. It was just the opposite. Gorse wondered hopefully if the secret of civilization itself did not lie somewhere within this strange and painful ability—the ability Amity called decadence.

Eager to share Veri's pride and wisdom, Gorse reasoned slowly, "and we deny ourselves for the benefit of others. Others we love..."

"Not necessarily," Veri disagreed sharply. "Not that it's important. The important thing is that we *do* deny ourselves; we're not animals to follow our every wish..."

Gorse frowned, wished he could see Veri's face in the darkness. Surely Veri must be joking; he couldn't mean that—and yet he was not given to humor. Gorse said doubtfully, "I should think that our reason for denying ourselves is of prime importance. More important than the denial itself."

"Not at all." Veri was absolutely positive. "The denial is the important thing. If you believe that the reason for the denial is of any importance, then when there's no reason, you simply won't deny yourself. And there you'll be—one with the animals again..."

Confused, Gorse remained silent. He had a sudden, terrible convic-

tion that something was wrong. There must be something he didn't understand, something he had missed. For a man to deny himself without any reason made even less sense than for himself under Amity to be compelled to fulfill his desires. He would have liked to have asked Veri more, but Veri usually acted as though anyone who questioned him disagreed with him.

Still unable to understand Veri's meaning, a few days later, cautiously, he questioned him again. "Veri, I know self-denial is better than fulfillment, but I don't know just why. Explain why..."

Veri was working at the counter beside him in the machine shop. He turned to look at Gorse with exasperation. "There isn't any reason; but it's more difficult, so it *must* be right."

With sickening shock Gorse knew then that he had made a terrible mistake. He had hated Utz and Amity so much he had welcomed the opportunity to be imprisoned with others who believed as he did.

But now that he was with them he wished that Utz had not relented and allowed him to live. Dead he would never have learned that these men—his co-believers—made less sense than Amity.

Gorse tried to tell himself that at least these men could not be as cruel as Utz, who preached that it was self-denial that spawned

all cruelty. He knew how cruel Utz could be.

IV

THAT NIGHT, when they gathered in the courtyard, Gorse braced himself to ask the question.

Verl, like most of the men, hoarded his weekly ration of biothe for a period of weeks and then took it all at once. He had just swallowed five weeks' ration of biothe when Gorse put the question to him.

"What would we do with them if we were out and they were in?" Gorse could see the glitter in Verl's eyes in the darkness.

Gorse said anxiously. "Yes. Assuming we're right, and knowing that if we are, some day—even though it may take centuries—we'll have the problem of an opposition to deal with as they do now...."

"What do you mean 'assuming we're right'?" Verl's voice was insulted. "If you're not sure—"

"I'm sure," Gorse corrected quickly. "I mean assuming we're in control...."

The biothe began to take effect and Verl forgot his anger and grew exaggeratedly self-assured. "You don't need to assume that, either; because we *will* be in control, and it isn't going to take centuries."

Arrogant as Verl was, Gorse felt pity for him. Like all prisoners

he dreamed of escape. Biothe made it seem possible. Actually the bay was a death trap of treacherous currents for the strongest swimmer.

Verl sensed Gorse's doubt. "I've made a connection," he boasted; "the opposition is about to get rolling. Amity, watch out!"

It brought Gorse back to his test question. The one that would tell him positively if he had been wrong to forsake Amity. "What would you do with them, Verl? If you were on top?"

"When I'm on top," Verl said with assurance, "all the people need is a leader. They're ready for this idea...."

"Probably you'd put them right here," Gorse tried to lure him back to his subject. "Turn about." For just one moment he enjoyed the thought of Utz locked up, himself free.

Verl sounded supercilious. "So they can figure out how to escape? And turn the tables right back on us?"

"But they let *us* live...." No one knew better than Gorse how cruel Utz could be; but Utz *had* let them live. He said somberly, "We would be behaving even more viciously than they did...."

"Vicious!" Verl, relaxed with biothe, was amused. "It isn't vicious to destroy wickedness...."

Hearing him Gorse felt sick. Utz had tortured him to try to force him back into Amity; but

Verl felt that his own virtue entitled him to destroy any who were not virtuous—exactly as Utz had warned.

Gorse had known his error, really, when Verl said that self-denial was desirable for its own sake. Fulfillment was desirable for its own sake—but there should be some reason for denial.

As he listened to Verl boasting of how many people were ready for his message of virtue through denial and pain, Gorse felt fear. He had already ruined his own life. How tragically wasteful if many other fools like himself actually came to believe in Verl's glorification of self-torture. He knew now why wars had flourished during the ancients' regime; men in pain struck out at their fellows.

He shuddered. He had been willing to sacrifice himself to save the world from his sick mind, but it was another sick mind who really threatened the continued peace and security of Amity. Verl, intense, fanatic, was just the man to lead a movement. If he escaped, he would live to destroy Amity; and he intended to escape.

After that Gorse was with him constantly.

LESS THAN a week later the men were taking their evening rest in the yard when Verl quietly started to walk away. Gorse tried to follow but one of the men

seized his arm. "Don't spoil it; afterward, he'll get us all out..."

Gorse twisted away, drove his fists at the man. Two others grabbed his arms and they all started to sing. A guard glanced toward them from one of the towers and then looked away. Occasionally a whole group would save their biotche for a party.

As soon as the spotlight had passed on, Gorse pivoted suddenly and kned the man on his left. He doubled over, releasing Gorse's arm. Gorse struck at the man on his right with his free left. His captor cried out and let go.

Gorse ran across the yard to directly under one of the guard's towers. Verl was already halfway up a rope ladder suspended from the wall. Gorse followed him.

Verl tried to go faster when he felt Gorse on the ladder, then tried to kick at him. He was too afraid of falling off or attracting attention to be very troublesome. By the time they were at the top Gorse had a firm grip on Verl's pants leg. If he shoved him off, Verl was going with him.

Furious, Verl turned. "Why did you come? The boat only holds one! Later, I'll get you all free!"

Gorse clambered over the edge of the wall still clutching Verl's trouser leg. That Verl would release them all was exactly what he feared; and intended to prevent, whatever the cost.

Crouching, he stared over the



side edge of the wall down to the turbulent, oily swells of the bay below. He tried to sound nonchalant. "Always room for one more..."

Verl reversed the ladder and Gorse made him go down first. The boat was a small, neatly-folded package on the rocks below. Provided, no doubt, by someone aboard the mail-and-supplies launch.

Real evidence of the strength behind the enemies of Amity made Gorse more sure of what had to be done— To the other fools, who, like himself, were jeopardizing the finest civilization man had ever attained.

Verl did something and the canvas became a small boat. Verl almost upset it trying to keep Gorse out. "You'll sink it!" He said finally, "Listen Gorse. If you must come, hang on to the edge and I'll tow you in."

AS GORSE dropped into the cold, stinking water Verl slipped one of the extensible aluminum oars out of its pocket, poised to strike him as he rose.

Gorse anticipated that and came

up beside the boat, too close in for Verl to strike him without overturning. "Hold it," he warned.

Enraged, Verl struck anyhow. The boat turned and dumped him and bobbed away from both of them. Frantically, Gorse thrust toward it. Getting on was not easy, because of the swells, but he managed; the other oar was still in its compartment.

Verl was gasping and crying out and going under, but the waves and the singing inside the courtyard covered the noise.

It took Gorse hours to maneuver the boat to a landing with one oar, but he never doubted that he would do it; he had to see Utz once more.

Ashore he was spotted and recognized for an escapee immediately—but the guards *did* relay his message to Utz. And Utz was willing to see him.

Hours later, again he was being escorted into his office. One of the guards had managed to get him a change of clothes and the plane that had brought him from the coast had facilities for him to wash away the stench of the bay. He felt

completely exhausted, but thankful that he was going to be able to do something to correct the wrong he had done.

Utz was calm as usual. He seated Gorse in the same chair he had occupied once before, helped himself to a cigaret.

Gorse had been planning his speech ever since he first heard Veri's ideas, but it was still not easy to make. Not after what had passed between himself and Utz.

He said finally, flatly, "I was wrong; I was completely wrong."

Utz raised his eyebrows, didn't speak. "I just killed a man—left him to drown." Gorse felt his mouth tightening. "That doesn't bother me. What bothers me is that another will take his place. Another who'll be dangerous to Amity..."

"Do you care?" Utz looked at him.

"I told you I was wrong," Gorse said with helpless anger. "I'm trying to make up for it..."

"What do you suggest?"

Gorse said urgently. "You'll have to kill them: they're too dangerous. The threat they represent is too savage—"

Utz interrupted mildly. "You sound considerably less tolerant than when—"

"Don't you think I know and regret it? How wrong I was!" Tension stiffened Gorse's mouth, made it hard to speak. "But they

must be killed. I, too, if you like. They're dangerous to Amity."

Utz looked at him with something like satisfaction. "Occasionally, Gorse, we run across a man who'll die for someone or something. That's good. More rarely, still we find someone who'll kill for his beliefs. That's even better..." He smiled, got up, gesturing to Gorse.

"But those men in quarantine! They can destroy everything we've accomplished so far!"

Utz smiled more broadly. "What if a few do escape us, spread their gospel of rage?" He shrugged. "Why should we kill them? They are our training ground; we need them..." Again he beckoned for Gorse to accompany him.

"Gorse got up, frowning. "Training ground?"

"For High Priest..." Utz moved serenely across his office to another door. "No man is ready for our supreme council until he has weathered their test..."

A little dizzily, Gorse followed him. "Where," he began, and then stopped.

"To join your fellows." Utz opened the door and a large group of men seated around a conference table grew quiet and arose. "From all parts of the world..." Utz said simply. "You can see we've been expecting you..."