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*In this highly individual story of interplanetary exploration, Mr. Dee has taken his title from Daniel Defoe, and with it Defoe's absorbing accumulation of minute details and his ability to impart a sense of absolute conviction. But completely Dee's own is the extraordinary pattern revealed when the details have been accumulated, a pattern to demonstrate that there must be meaning in the universe . . . and that there may be more than one meaning in a title.*

# Man Friday

by ROGER DEE

*August Twelfth, 1971  
First Morning on Mars*

Amazingly, there was a propitiary offering outside my sleeping bubble when I awoke this morning.

I found the fruit — a handful of tiny, pale-coral berries — completely unfamiliar, but the liquid that accompanied it was easily identified. It was water, perhaps a cupful of it neatly twisted into a transparent membrane of some sort and more precious here than any nectar, collected drop by drop from God alone knows what difficult source.

Another in my position might be touched by my nocturnal admirer's earnestness, but his attentions leave me neither intrigued nor pleased. To have a planet all to myself — even one so spectacularly bleak and dead — is a singularly satisfying situation, and even so diffident an intrusion as this threatens to destroy my privacy and to distract me from my project.

Ironically enough, at the outset of this improbable undertaking I derived a certain wry amusement from thinking of myself as a sort of latter-day Crusoe, marooned (albeit willingly, in the interests of science and of my own introverted bent for soul-searching) not in the transient isolation of a desert island but in the utter inaccessibility of a desert world. My congenital dislike for companionship, I thought then, must spare me from sharing Robinson's cross; he was essentially a gregarious sort, yearning so desperately for the social support of numbers that he was ready to seize upon the appearance of any fawning savage to realize it, while I am a

recluse by choice. I should not only have resented the appearance of his man Friday, but should have found any such unequal relationship profoundly distasteful.

That history repeats itself is a threadbare banality. That even fictional history may do so, and across an interplanetary gulf, is a signally disturbing discovery.

I share none of Crusoe's gregarious cravings, yet from all indications I shall soon have company. But what shall I do with a man Friday? How shall I adapt my behavior (or my lack of it, from the conventional view) to another presence here, especially to one which may not only be outside my experience but beyond my comprehension?

Crusoe's man Friday was a native. So, obviously, is mine. But what is a *Martian* native like?

Such speculation degenerates at once into pointless guesswork that tends to disturb rather than to reassure; it will profit me instead, I think, though I had not intended to waste valuable time in the keeping of a detailed journal, to put down in the order of their occurrence the events leading up to my present anomalous situation. I choose chronological precedence partly because I despise the popular journalistic urgency which demands that the gist of a story be served up before its introduction, and partly because form has always seemed more important to me than content: as the glaze of a piece of Italian *majolica* is more notable than the coarse clay body of the pot itself, for example, or as the virtue of a Mozart quartet outstrips the personal merit of its composer.

But any recapitulation made in the interests of clarity should begin at the beginning. So shall mine.

My flight in the *Medea* — so named in ironic symbolism by Steven Sobieski, who designed her — consumed some 33 days, none of which I found more interesting or depressing than any other. I spent the entire time, except for necessary interruptions to attend to bodily wants, in my hammock, where I occupied myself alternately with analyzing the seventeen variations of Joseph Sczhau's revolutionary attack at chess and with trying to establish a practical balance between the undeniable logic and the monumental nonsense of Hegel's metaphysics.

The trip was soon over; 33 days is a ridiculously short time for either an assessment of Sczhau's chess or a winnowing of Hegel's dialectic.

The *Medea*, obeying prearranged cybernetic instructions of her own, chose an area just south of the northern polar cap and brought herself gently down. Ordinarily I should have finished the interim projects I had set myself before troubling to see what lay outside — for of what

importance were a few hours when I must spend some two years of waiting for Earth to swing round again and catch me up? — but the ear-ringing silence that followed the sudden cessation of engine noise, coupled with an insidious personal malaise brought on by the lighter Martian gravity, made concentration impossible.

Since the *Medea* has no vision ports — these, according to Steven Sobieski, being found only in the minicomics and the tri-di space thrillers — I was forced to struggle into a clumsy airsuit and go bodily outside.

I had anticipated a certain strangeness and desert harshness, but nothing of what awaited.

A man more susceptible to emotional disturbance, I think, must have been shattered on the instant by the wild alien bleakness that lay on every side; I have spent a lifetime in conditioning myself to accept the different as well as the logical and the beautiful, but I was strongly shaken by the sight and feel of my new domain. I am neither impressionist nor poet, yet I found myself thinking fancifully that here was a scene such as a cosmic Dali might have painted by spending eons instead of hours on contrasting detail, forswearing any petty obscuration of intent in the recording of a theme that was by its own nature surrealistic.

The surface was everywhere eroded and channeled by the action of wind and water into a trackless maze of chimneys and buttes and canyons, a stony wilderness reminiscent of my own Arizona badlands but on an infinitely more extended scale. Perhaps a mile to the north the polar snow, shining with an odd effect of fluorescence under a dwarfed white sun, billowed away in frozen stillness to a horizon surprisingly steep and close. To the south stretched a terrain (anomalous word here, but what other is there?) as rugged as that immediately about me, equally still and bleak but touched with myriad shadings of color from sullen red to ocher and saffron and purple and russet and black. Erosion, the slow leaching away of ages, must have borne away all soil here before there *was* soil on Earth, and deposited it with the melting snows to the south.

There was no suggestion of life, no faintest smudge of chlorophyll-bearing greenery. A dead world, I thought; far from being of any possible promise to the exploiters who had sent me, it was fit only for the two pursuits for which I had come: the enjoyment of inviolable privacy and of reflection.

I may have spent more time than I realized in considering that unforeseen irony, for the sun, already low on the too-near horizon, sank abruptly from sight. There was no twilight; darkness came suddenly with a great sweeping rush that had in it a curious effect of soundless thunder;

the sky, black as sable and utterly free of cloud or haze, blazed from rim to rim with a dazzling pyrotechnic burst of frozen stars.

I went back through the swift-growing cold to the *Medea*, intending to resume my interrupted consideration of Sczchau and Hegel before attacking my project proper, but once inside I found it all but impossible to reach the necessary pitch of detached concentration. The silence of my metal cubicle was like an actual weight, broken only at distracting intervals by the crackling of still-cooling propulsion tubes and the soft purr-and-gurgle of my air purifiers.

A sudden and uncharacteristic restlessness seized upon me. Time enough to begin my thinking tomorrow, I decided; tonight I should devote to orienting myself to my new prospect and to sleeping under the stars.

With that end in view I broke out the collapsible sleeping unit that was a part of my emergency explorations gear and went outside again. It was a truly ingenious affair and performed its function perfectly, as Steven Sobieski had promised; once the oxygen-inflated membrane of the bubble had ballooned to a taut eight-foot sphere about me, I wriggled out of my uncomfortable airsuit and zipped myself snugly into the resilient cocoon of my bed.

So began my first night on Mars.

A strange night passed in a strange setting, but the most satisfactory, I think, of my life.

The first hour or two — I made no check, for of what importance was time to me now? — I spent in studying the stars and their relative arrangements. I know little of astronomy, but it was evident at once that here was a sight to wring tears from one who might. Through the thin night air the stars burned unwaveringly, like beacons; the few I recognized were enormously brighter than from Earth, and there were infinitely more of them — the Milky Way, far from its familiar undistinguished haziness, blazed from horizon to horizon with the cold spectacular splendor of a Frost Giants' bridge of powdered crystal.

The constellations seemed oddly askew — because, I supposed, of the variance in axial inclinations of Earth and Mars — but I made out the Great Bear at once, and Cassiopeia and the Twins. Orion, when I found him, had assumed an urgently ascensive stance, as if the mythical beast he pursued were fleeing uphill, but the individual brilliants of his framework stood out so clearly that I could readily distinguish the tiny continent-shape of the nebula depending from his belt.

I did not abandon my star-watching out of boredom, but because a more promising diversion presented itself — remembering.

The deliberate exercise of memory, when one has a sufficient stock of material to give it scope, is a fascinating pursuit known to few and appreciated by fewer; my preoccupation with it, I think, marks one of my sharpest departures from the conventional average. By deliberate exercise I do not mean the mechanical recapitulation of data learned by rote and retained undigested, but the half-sensuous, half-cerebral faculty of reliving the experience itself, the esthetic savoring again of the incident or passage or theme that once pleased one most.

There is an indescribable pleasure in the mental reviewing of a seldom-seen play (*Troilus*, for example) and recalling the precise stance and expression of a minor character never meant to be remembered beyond the moment. Unfortunately, mine is not an eidetic memory, but I have developed it by careful usage to a surprising degree; I can hear at will thematic progressions of music, gay or somber as my mood chooses, that to most are lost without mechanical aid, or thrill again to the anguish of Euripides' Hecuba crying the vanity of Man.

But on this first Martian night, when I lay wrapped like a chrysalis in my insulated bed with only a tissue-thin membrane of plastic between myself and the frozen bleakness outside, I remembered none of these things. Instead I found myself casting back to the genesis of this moment, to the improbable chain of action and decision that had led to my being the first man on Mars.

Steven Sobieski, whom I had once known as well as I ever permitted myself to know anyone, was responsible for that choice. Steven knew me well; he was astute enough to send to my retreat in the Arizona Mogolons a picked delegation of specialists, with whose aims I might sympathize, rather than a pack of arrogant military men or fat commercial sponsors, and I could imagine precisely how he had briefed his emissaries.

"We're picking a man to stay sane through two years of hell," he would have said in characteristic staccato. "That's Charles Bathory. He'll like it — as soon be in Arizona as in heaven, or on Mars as in Arizona. Damned antiquarian, highbrow hermit; plumbed for ice-water instead of blood, but intelligent. Supercilious bastard — you'll hate his guts — but able. Very. Give us a nice cold-blooded account when he comes back, if he doesn't say the hell with us and stay there."

Steven's strategy worked, as he had known it must. No ordinary inducement could have dragged me from my books and my thinking, but it happened that I had just outlined a project which demanded complete privacy, and the thought of a year of absolute isolation — on Mars or elsewhere, the location was immaterial — was irresistible.

Discomfort I could ignore. Danger? We all die. Loneliness? I seek loneliness as others seek companionship, and value it more than wealth.

I was asked if I would go to Mars. I would.

I landed and surveyed my new hermitage, I lay under the stars in a fragile bubble of plastic and pondered my reasons for being there. I mused, that first night, on myriad varying subjects, without conscious selection but always with an underlying relevance: on the slow rise (or decline, if you should be a Spenglerist) of Man, on his wars and his arts and religions and vices; on two atomic wars and the final planetary union that promised a world state and swift stagnation.

I thought finally of myself and was puzzled to find that my reflection, usually so direct and purposeful, should have run so far afield. I felt a distinct sense of release then and a concomitant relaxation, as if I had escaped from some psychic treadmill and were able again to follow my usual orderly bent.

But there was no pursuing this minor mystery, for the strain laid upon my sensibilities demanded rest. I slept.

And awoke at dawn with a shrunken sun shining in upon me and melting away a gossamer fall of hoarfrost outside. I felt greatly refreshed, invigorated now rather than nauseated by the light gravity, and fired with an unexpected eagerness to begin my project.

I was about to rise and struggle into my airsuit when I saw the offering.

It lay within inches of my face outside the transparent membrane of the sleeping bubble, filmed over lightly with swift-melting frost — a carefully heaped little mound of coral-tinted berries and a shapeless skin filled with something which from the fluidity of its shape before freezing could only be water.

For some time I lay without moving, a little stunned and altogether dismayed to know that I was not alone here after all. That there could be life in such an environment — intelligent life, obviously, since the concept of propitiary offering presupposes a certain amount of imagination — was difficult of belief, yet the evidence was undeniable. It was hard to repress a shudder at the thought that something during the night must have stood (crouched, squatted, perched?) outside my pressure bubble within inches of my sleeping person, fondling its clumsy little offering and watching the white plume of my breath rising and falling on the cold air inside; but my uneasiness stemmed from surprise rather than from fear, and was soon dissipated.

It was more reassuring to conclude that the creature, whatever it might be like physically, was at least amicable and perhaps even friendly, since

the intervening membrane of my bubble could have offered scant resistance if it had been minded to attack. Too, the amount of effort involved in the foraging of its gift presupposed either a generous or a timorous nature, since gifts by their nature are designed either to ingratiate or to placate; calling to mind similar advances made to explorers by Earthly aborigines gave me cause to wonder if my visitor's motive might not even have been one of superstitious awe, and its offering an outright oblation.

The thought, far from pleasing me, left me more disturbed than before. I had no desire to be worshiped even at a distance; my project was already planned in detail and could bear no delay if it was to be completed before the end of the allotted two years forced my return to Earth. I wanted only to be left alone.

But nothing is ever resolved through groundless speculation, and it was evident that the creature was not yet ready to show itself. Accordingly I donned my airsuit, collapsed my pressure bubble again into its bedding unit, and returned to the *Medea*. The crude offering I took with me as a matter of course, since to ignore an advance so earnest were poor policy; commonsense demanded that I accept the gift or risk offending a creature of whose temper and physical capabilities I knew nothing.

Aboard ship I made breakfast — my first meal on Mars — and afterward, in a spirit less of scientific inquiry than of simple curiosity, I crushed a few of the coral-tinted berries and tested them with a chemical solution designed to reveal the presence of any toxic element. They were edible, I found, but I felt no inclination to sample them personally. Instead I sealed them in an evacuated container and forgot them.

Strangely, I still feel no desire at the moment to begin the project that brought me here. Rather, prompted by the same restless and uncharacteristic eagerness that fired me on awakening this morning, I have decided to unbolt the after compartment that houses the *Medea's* auxiliary craft — a tiny helicopter with huge folding wings designed to make the most of the thin Martian air — and fly southward on a preliminary tour of my new domain.

I am ready for that flight now. I bring my journal up to this point so that any who may follow me here will know, if I do not return, in what direction to look for my body.

### *Second Evening:*

I have finished my initial reconnaissance, and the unaccustomed strain of managing the *Medea's* helicopter for so long a period has left me too tired to do more than bring my journal up to the moment before retiring

for the night. The little time remaining is of no consequence; such pertinent facts as I have discovered are soon told.

At no point during my dreary, day-long flight did I find the scene below me substantially different from the eroded desolation in which the *Medea* landed, but my aerial examination did reveal the true nature of several phenomena which have puzzled astronomers for decades.

The *canali* do exist as physical markings, but in actual fact are precisely opposite in nature to the watercourses postulated by Schiaparelli and Lowell. They are not channels at all but outcroppings of stone or mineral strata which have resisted the attrition of time, wind and sand more stubbornly than surrounding terrain, enormous natural traverses which rise hundreds of feet above the usual monotony of buttes and canyons and run at times for thousands of miles in near-straight lines.

The darker areas seen after spring polar thaws are not vegetation but a sort of mottled discoloration arising, I think, from uneven absorption of water vapor by bare surfaces high enough to escape the ever-drifting sand. There is a hardy straggle of lichenous flora that fares somewhat better during the melting season — the pale coral berries left by my diffident visitor of last night, I find, are its fruit — but is so scanty that any exhaustive examination of it would prove an unprofitable undertaking. What a wearisome task the creature must have set itself in collecting even so small a quantity!

I found only one other point of real interest during the day: the two little moons, neither of which is visible from the *Medea* because of the planet's intervening equatorial bulk. Deimos, the farther and smaller, is barely visible by day as a tiny silver spark, apparently stationary and all but lost against a background of stars that shine palely in the blue-black sky. Phobos is hardly more impressive, at its best a near-saffron little disk totally bare of any distinguishing mark.

I made a number of panoramic photographs during the flight, but found on returning to the *Medea* just before nightfall that none of them revealed more than I had seen with my unaided eye. Accordingly I filed them away for a later and more intensive study and busied myself with the preparation of a meal of tinned foods and vitamin paste.

I am ready now to retire to my hammock for a quiet night of reflection upon the project that is to occupy the two-year period of my stay here.

### *Second Morning:*

Last night, for the first time in my adult life, I failed miserably in an attempt to concentrate. The ideas I sought to grasp slid away like wary

fish in a turbid pool. The muted gurgling of the ship's air purifiers was an irritant murmur seeping up through the tubular framework of my hammock to distract my attention, the narrow metal limits of my cubicle seemed to wall me in like one imprisoned in a vault.

The desolation outside appealed to me by contrast as clean and free, so far preferable to the suddenly odious confinement of the ship that I rose at once and donned my airsuit. I had already shouldered my emergency bedding unit and was on the point of opening the exit lock before it occurred to me that I might be visited again by the aboriginal creature that had left its offering outside my bubble last night.

The prospect was not a formidable one; I hesitated only a moment, considering, and when I had weighed the possible danger of sleeping outside against the certainty of spending an unsatisfactory night in the ship I found the risk so small as to be negligible.

I inflated the pressure bubble at the same spot as before, and, shrugging out of my airsuit and into my insulated bedding, was able immediately to relax in a manner impossible inside the metal prison of the *Medea*. The sleeping-bag was very warm and comfortable; the eroded desolation about me, softened by starshine and the faint shifting Phobos-glow from the south, lay like a surrealistic fairyland under an apocalyptic splendor of starry sky.

The project I had intended to consider did not come at once to mind, but its evasiveness seemed no longer to matter. I gave myself over instead to feeling rather than to thinking; and soon, prompted by some obscure urge whose origin I made no attempt to determine, I found myself remembering again.

There is, as I have said, an intense and sensuous pleasure in the controlled exercise of memory. Tonight, with the infinite peace and stillness of utter isolation lying soft and snug as a blanket about me, I turned back to incidents and impressions long dismissed as irrelevant but which returned now with a poignant warmth that stemmed less from nostalgia than from a conviction of significance never guessed before.

I have said too that mine is not truly an eidetic memory — but tonight it was more. I relived, in tactile reality, the formative years of my youth; I saw my parents again, a very ordinary couple preoccupied with the minutiae of living yet perceptive enough to be puzzled and distressed by my variation from the norm; I retraced my solitary way through lesser schools and university, dwelling for a time on my guarded association with Steven Sobieski and wondering for the thousandth time what it was that inspired him to batter as he had at the self-imposed barriers

of my reserve. I remembered the death of my parents, recalling with perfect clarity such minor details as the careful greenness of the cemetery and the soft touch of summer air on my uncovered head, the faint sweet smell of distant honeysuckle and the muted sound of larks singing.

I felt again the slow shaping of character, the mounting sense of detachment from mundane futility that had moved me finally to live alone in tacit dedication to the discovery of true reality through the searching of my own soul.

There was a great deal of remembering, so much that the night was far gone before I had reached the end of it and was ready to consider my position of the moment. I felt a curious sense of incomplete peace — if such a term may have validity — as if I had somehow partially satisfied a powerful and long-denied want, and a strangely comforting conviction that I was the nearer for my very incompleteness to some inexpressibly desirable goal.

For a long time I searched my mind for a clue to the nature of that goal, but arrived at no more than the vaguest of hints. The constellations wheeled overhead in slow procession; Orion left off his uphill chase and went down to the west in inverted frustration before I was able to arrange in any coherent form the half-identified conclusions that emerged.

I felt obscurely that I was somehow not a complete and finished entity — that no man was, or ever could be, alone — and that my lifelong dissatisfaction with such minor realities as I had been able to resolve stemmed from that incompleteness rather than from any flaw inherent in the world itself. That I was different from other men was entirely irrelevant, since that difference was essentially one of degree rather than of kind; those others were even more lost in confusion than I because they had, with a few notable exceptions, never guessed at their own incomplete state. Mine, I understood intuitively now without understanding precisely what it was that I lacked, was not a mental or moral unfinishedness but a psychic one.

With that anomalous conclusion my speculative mood left me as suddenly as it had come. Drowsiness swept over me with opiate authority. I slept.

I awoke for the second time on Mars to find that I had anticipated the dawn by minutes. The palest flush of salmon color in the southeastern sky hinted that the sun hung just below the horizon, ready for rising; the stars had paled a little, though the sky was still black as sable, and some effect arising either from the night's bitter cold or from the sun's imminent appearance had set off a prismatic auroral display to the north

that leaped and danced and flicked wild ghostly fingers down to the polar snow.

A strange enough awakening, but of more immediate urgency was the suggestion of motion that vanished, a shadow among darker shadows, between two tall chimney formations that stood like sentries in the pre-dawn darkness. I sat up quickly, straining my eyes after my aboriginal visitor, and was all but blinded by the sudden glare of the sun's precipitate rising.

When I could see again by shielding my eyes with both hands against the horizontal flood of light, my caller had gone. His — its — offering lay outside the bubble as on the previous morning, within inches of my face, the twisted membrane of water frozen into characteristic liquid curves and the coral-tinted lichen-berries glistening white with hoarfrost.

There was more this time: in the center of a smooth patch of rime already evaporating under the sun's small heat, I saw my visitor's footprint.

It was quite distinct at first, a roughly oval spoor perhaps four inches long and bordered at equal intervals by fainter marks which radiated outward and might have been made by either talons or tendrils. The frost was gone within seconds, erasing the print from the bare rock, but I must have sat immobile for minutes while my imagination struggled to reconstruct the creature itself from its sign.

A futile effort, since I had no way of knowing how many such feet the thing might have, nor even if the member leaving such a track might really correspond to *foot* as I understood the term. It might have only the one, or many; it might have others of dissimilar nature and function. In any case the spoor it left gave me no more knowledge of its mentality and disposition that I had had before.

On that note I gave up speculation and went back to the *Medea* with my folded bed and my second offering. The chores at hand were soon done, for I had no inclination this morning to dawdle; I washed and shaved and made breakfast, and immediately afterward set about arranging the notes I had brought for a beginning on my project.

But again, as yesterday, I found myself unaccountably reluctant to begin the task. The issues that had seemed all-important on Earth seemed now suddenly negligible and impossibly remote; extraneous thoughts rose to distract me, and my wandering attention persisted stubbornly in turning back to the intuitive conviction of personal inadequacy that had come to me last night under the stars.

If a man be an incomplete entity, I thought, then what must he require for completion? What, and where, is his complement?

In essence the problem is as old as Man, and admits of no solution. Men

in all ages have boasted answers devised to fit their philosophies and faiths, basing their conclusions on specious logic or blind assumption; others, with sophistry as vain or conviction as fanatic, have denied categorically that any such incompleteness exists. My own situation, when I had done with considering it, involved a paradox so startling that I was at once bewildered and dismayed.

For I knew with unquestioning certainty that the complement to my personal deficiency lay here, yet I could identify neither lack nor complement — and with an equal certainty that brushed aside any power of logic to deny, I understood that I should know both, and soon.

It was not until far into the morning, when I had given up such fruitless puzzling in despair, that the method by which I had arrived at so singular a conviction came to me of itself with a suddenness that was the more disturbing for being itself without explanation.

I had *remembered* that I should know.

The realization left me torn between anxiety and anticipation, afraid that my sanity might have given way without my knowing yet eager to explore the possibilities inherent in the only alternative that remains.

For to remember with such conviction a thing not yet come about implies, by the very nature of its contradiction, either insanity or clairvoyance. The evidence admits of no other conclusion: I am mad, or I have stumbled upon the psychiatrist's cherished but never substantiated faculty of foretelling the future.

I have rejected as a matter of course the thought of insanity, not because of any real improbability but because the unreason so implied must make any further attempt at logical analysis worse than useless. Its alternative I have considered at length, marshaling up every scrap of pertinent data that came to mind.

My conclusions, if not immediately demonstrable, are at least logical.

I am, to begin with, far better qualified than the average man to develop such a faculty as clairvoyance, which must in essence depend directly upon trained virtuosity of perception. I have never been bound as closely as most by the extraneous concerns which have in all ages distracted men from the truth; here I am able to dismiss those concerns entirely, and the result is a freedom of thought not known before.

In this bleak Martian desolation I have achieved a privacy impossible even on Crusoe's desert island. No human thought or action impinges upon that privacy to inhibit reflection; it follows naturally that total isolation must be the final requisite for the developing of such a power as has come to me, that absolute aloneness is a condition vital to the truly efficient coop-

eration of mind and psyche. I may, through early training and present environment, be the first to approach the full consummation of human understanding.

Thought of my diffident visitor jarred somewhat against my logic but did nothing to shake it; rather, recalling the fugitive shadow I had seen at dawn seemed to spur my newly discovered faculty of remembering the yet unexperienced to further demonstration. The mental picture that followed electrified me with its implications.

For, though I had never explored in the direction of those twin chimneys even by air, *I remembered what lay behind them.*

The sensation was indescribable, though more than anything else like the operation of what the French have termed the *déjà vu*, that singular phenomenon of double memory in which simultaneous recollection of an experience seems superimposed upon the experience itself. The effect is relatively common, but has been catalogued by psychologists as a paramnesiac malfunctioning of normal memory processes — literally a sort of mnemonic backfiring — and dismissed as unimportant.

It is not unimportant. The *déjà vu*, I think, represents the first tentative stirrings of a fledgling perceptive power developing slowly to meet the new confusions that hamper communication between men.

The postulation should be easily tested. I shall put on my airsuit again and explore the terrain, never seen but so well remembered, that lies beyond the twin chimneys of eroded rock that lie just south of the *Medea*. If I find it familiar —

We shall see.

### *Third Evening:*

Some small understanding of the pattern which I pursue has come to me since completing the entry above, bringing with it a measure of confidence that surprises me when I recall the confusion of mind that drove me from the *Medea* earlier. I have achieved a state of comparative calm since, but at that moment I fled the ship as I might have fled a prison.

Passing between the twin chimney-spires was like entering through a familiar gateway. A deep and narrow channel lay behind them, curving sharply to right and left; I followed it without hesitation, recognizing at sight each new downward turn and slant and ignoring a labyrinth of interesting canyons that would have put a Minotaur's maze to shame.

I came finally to the spot to which my timorous visitor had disappeared, and found without surprise that he had fled again before my coming. The channel ended abruptly in a circular pit whose shelving walls reminded me

forcibly of a sunken amphitheater, pierced to the south and west by innumerable minor channels which might have offered escape to the native but were manifestly too small to permit the passage of my own airsuided bulk.

But there was no point in continuing, for here lay the place I had remembered so vividly, the improbable habitat of my aboriginal Friday. The arena floor was bare of any shelter or bedding, a circumstance which puzzled me until I realized that a creature able to endure the bitter rigors of the Martian night would certainly feel no need of protection against the elements. The place actually was quite without sign of occupation except for a curious symbol whose construction my coming had interrupted.

At the center of the pit a precise ring perhaps ten feet in diameter had been outlined in rough small lumps of mineral ores of various shapes and colors, all laid with meticulous care so that each overlapped the one adjoining to form a continuous contact throughout the figure. No single nugget showed any trace of shaping or cleavage, making it obvious that the aboriginal builder had found them in their natural state.

Inside the ring another figure, fashioned from similar but larger lumps, had been begun; I traced the half-finished pattern and found that, once done, it would form a very creditable pentagram whose points would everywhere touch the ambient limits of the circle.

To find such a design here was at once surprising and amusing, for the reason that a circumscribed pentacle is on Earth one of the oldest of cabalistic symbols and is traditionally linked with the conjuring up of demons. For the first time since touching Mars — indeed for the first time in some years — I was moved to laugh outright, for the idea that any such occult hocus-pocus might be intended here was too preposterous for consideration.

The arrangement, I concluded, was entirely irrelevant until I should have more information, being like any other product of an alien mind totally incomprehensible to human understanding. It might represent any concept from the aborigine's crude urge toward esthetic expression to the eminently practical beginning of a nest or dwelling, and revealed nothing more than I knew already of the creature's nature.

The unfinished state of the symbol itself was more informative. That no such bits of comparatively pure metals lay about on the wind-swept surface I knew already — hence, by simple inference, these must have been gathered from somewhere below ground. The planet's crust, subjected through temperature variations to extremely powerful stresses and to the perpetual erosion of melting polar snows, must be fissured and riven with subterranean channels and cavities that might hide any number of such fragments. This in turn meant that the creature who had collected the nuggets before

me must have delved for them into God alone knows what perilous clefts and caverns.

*I remembered such a cavern.*

My new sense of prognosis recalled the place to me in explicit detail, a warped and vasty chamber adrip with frozen stalactites and hushed with the silence of a tomb closed for eons. Its floor was corrugated by ages of erosion that had worn unevenly over harder and softer strata, and in the troughs between projecting ribs of rock I remembered rich scatterings of the mineral lumps needed to complete the pattern at my feet.

The entrance to the place lay just north of the *Medea*, within an hour's walk; tomorrow, I resolved on the instant, I would go immediately after breakfast and bring back as many as I could carry of the nuggets most urgently needed.

But at the moment it was imperative that I return to the ship, for the sun was slanting low toward the amphitheater wall and it could not be long before the shutter-swift fall of night.

I went back at once to the *Medea*, where I made a hasty meal and set about bringing my journal up to the moment. When I have done with this entry I shall put on my airsuit again and go out to spend a third night under the stars, where I shall explore my new faculty to its conclusion.

I hope too that I shall find there the answer to a question which has only now risen to disturb me: why did I resolve so spontaneously, in the pit, to undertake a mission which cannot possibly be of benefit to me?

### *Third Morning:*

The question with which I closed this account last night has been answered in part, though such explanation as I am able to offer relates only to effect and not to cause.

My purpose in gathering nuggets of a particular size and content is to finish immediately the circle-and-pentagram symbol in the pit, but the end involved in a commission so inexplicable is still beyond me. I shall know that purpose once the thing is done — my increasingly vivid "memories" of what is yet to come convince me of that — but for the present I must content myself with such meager information as I have.

I have prepared my morning meal and put on coffee to boil; while it is in the making I shall set down quickly as much as I can recall of what I thought and remembered last night.

My mood from the beginning was a receptive one, colored by a sense of anticipation that exceeded anything felt on either preceding night. The glorious stellar display overhead had lost none of its impressiveness, nor

the bleak eroded wilderness any of its desolate charm; I felt the awesome presence of both more keenly, I think, than ever, but with an added impact of meaning lost on me before.

I had not meant to attempt so soon another beginning on the project that had brought me here, having learned from experience that the pleasure of remembering and the urgency of knowing would permit no serious concentration on a matter so academic. But some perverse quirk of association brought to mind that very project, and I found now that it was not to be denied.

That project was, in essence, to determine for myself not what is reality (for any abstract conception must of necessity be relative, and therefore subject to multiple variations) but what are the possible realities, the probable and the inevitable. The world, said Schopenhauer, is Idea, fashioned by Will — but whose Idea is valid, and whose Will makes it so?

I understood last night, as I could never have understood in the smoky turmoil of Earth, that my project was impossible of consummation because there are no such relative realities lying within the scope of human comprehension. Man is an emmet fumbling myopically at the walls of his nest and theorizing emptily on values that have no meaning except to himself. There are basic realities, I know now, but they are of no concern to us because they are beyond our imagining; greater races than Man have sought them without success, and have bowed to the same finality that has defeated me. The universe is itself a transient thing, ephemeral as a mist in the morning, fragile as a spider's web in the wind. Nothing is eternal, and therefore actual, unless it be silence, which is the ultimate negation of action and of being.

I determined none of this for myself. *I remembered it.*

And almost — so nearly that I struggled up in my insulated cocoon of bedding with a startled, eager cry on my lips — I remembered who it was that had told me.

But the memory was gone at once, or had never been. For a time I lay tense and wondering, puzzling over the death of my old methodical detachment; but the soft warmth of my bed was infinitely comfortable and the lure of exploring my new talent further was irresistibly tempting. I relaxed finally and gave myself over to the exquisite pleasure of remembering.

I remembered, among other things, a tediously pedestrian treatise which likened the mind to an electronic computer with specially reserved sections for the storing of mnemonic data, fitted with complex banks of neurons each holding its hoarded stock of minutiae ready for presentation on demand. A neat enough analogy for describing the gross operation of a mechanistic function, I thought, but one falling far short of the truth. For how could

a purely reactive memory, whose function is based on experience and the recapitulation of experience, contain such a faculty as mine for remembering things not yet happened?

Obviously, memory serves another purpose than that of simple recording. But what other?

My response was not an answer but the promise of an answer.

I should know tomorrow.

Drowsiness came then and I gave myself over to it eagerly, secure in the knowledge that I should have my answer because I had remembered that I should.

At some vague transitional point between waking and sleeping I was dimly conscious of a tiny creature that hopped past my bubble and paused for a moment to observe me with dumb and eyeless regard, but I had fallen asleep before curiosity could rouse me enough to investigate.

The sun was shining when I awoke, and for the first time there was no offering outside my bubble.

I dismissed the matter without surprise, remembering that it had been from the beginning no more than a preliminary gambit and that its further repetition was not necessary, and went directly to the *Medea* with my bedding.

I have had my breakfast now and am ready to go north to the cavern that holds the nuggets I need.

The exhilaration that follows a night of sleeping under the stars is still with me. I have a subdued feeling of wonder that I could so quickly have discarded the selfish logic of a lifetime to pursue a venture not of my own planning, but I feel no uncertainty because I have just remembered that another reward infinitely more desirable than knowledge alone awaits the completion of my mission.

I am eager to claim it.

#### *Fourth Evening:*

I should not bother to make this final entry except for the obligation I feel toward those who sent me here. I owe them at least a complete record of what has happened; that it will not be believed is entirely irrelevant.

Another ship will come some day — it cannot be long, knowing as I do the driving impatience of my own kind — and its crew will find my journal, pore over it and shake their heads. Poor Bathory, they will say, he was a queer one from the beginning. We might have known he'd crack.

And they will search the wasteland and the caverns beneath for my bones, but they will never find them.

I recall having said earlier that form as an esthetic end has always appealed to me more than content, but that conviction has gone the way of many others since the *Medea* brought me here. From this point I shall drop any pretense of semantic exactness; it is enough that I leave word that I have found what all men seek, and have sought, since there were men.

But I must hurry, for my time is short.

I found the cavern precisely as I had remembered it, a vast silent grotto roofed with stalactites that glittered like ice in the light of my hand-lamp. The floor was rough and uneven with transverse corrugations of rock strata, and between the stony ribs, buried in ripples of shining metallic sand too heavy to be washed away by the rushing polar thaws, I found the nuggets for which I had come.

There was no difficulty of selection, for I remembered in explicit detail the shapes and sizes and colors required. I rooted out the water-rounded bits as eagerly as ever a mundane prospector scabbled for gold, discarding some and dropping others into a tough plastic bag brought from the ship. And when the bag was full I carried it up out of the cavern on my shoulders, like a peon bearing ore from Conquistadorial mines, and took it straight to the pit that lay beyond the twin chimney-spires.

A part of my reward was granted when I set foot in the arena with its unfinished symbol. The little foot-shaped creature that had made its print in the hoarfrost outside my bubble was there already, waiting; it looked as eyelessly incurious as it had looked last night when it paused to peer in at me, but I knew that under its blank exterior it was as eager as I.

I remembered a great deal more. It was the little builder who had brought me the tokens of berries and water and who had toiled day after wearisome day before my coming to build up the circle-and-pentagram symbol to its present half-finished state. The creature was native to this desolate place, a quasi-intelligent life form too low on the scale of development to have even a coherent idea of itself as a discrete entity; it identified itself by a vague mental impulse that corresponded audibly to a weak hiss, and it worked, as I worked, for a reward.

But there was a difference: this creature felt none of the sense of incompleteness that had distressed me earlier; its bounty was bestowed only for the present, and it would forget later in its dim alien way that anything unusual had ever happened to disturb its half-sentient existence. My own case was another matter — I should be rewarded further.

By whom?

I should know when the symbol was finished. I remembered that I should, and the memory was assurance enough.

I left Hiss, the little builder, struggling with fanatic precision to align the fragments I had dumped out of my carrying-bag, and went immediately back to the cavern for more.

The design was nearing completion when I returned; the little builder had exhausted its pile of nuggets and was waiting with moveless patience for more. I emptied my bag upon the bare rock for its employment and rested briefly, drinking in the memories that pressed upon me in payment.

It was amusing to learn — paradoxically, by remembering! — that I was right in supposing my mnemonic center to serve a double purpose, for these were not memories at all but registered as such because the faculty for perceiving them directly did not exist in me. One deaf cannot hear sound, but may feel the duller vibrations and interpret them through tactile translation, substituting one sense for another; it was so with me and, after a different fashion, with the little Martian who toiled at my feet. What Hiss and I felt was not communication but the overtones of communication.

With whom?

I should know when the symbol was finished.

My third trip to the pit brought the pentacle to within bare minutes of completion, but I did not linger this time for payment. The declining flood of late afternoon sunlight told me that I should have to hurry if I meant to finish before darkness fell, so I dumped the contents of my carrying-bag for the little Martian to sort and went hastily back to the cavern again.

I had not needed to linger. My reward went with me.

All the way back to the cavern I found myself remembering, with a clarity keener than any recollection, the nature of the one for whom I toiled.

He comes from a world beyond the scattering of stars we know — how can I say *where*, how put down in cold sterile print such concepts (space and time are only two of many) as are beyond any power of print to define? — that is only one of myriads flung across a vaster cosmos of which our own universe is no more than a minor facet.

He is not a corporeal entity in any definable sense, and he travels from world to world without the need of clumsy ships, flashing here or there across the gulf as his fancy chooses. He has traveled so for millennia, and will travel so for millennia more. An ironic truth occurs to me here: he has been revealed to men before, briefly and in varying guises of their own imaginings, through the operation of a natural function stumbled upon by our ancients and hailed by them as a magical law of symbolism.

For while he needs no physical vehicle, he must have a material matrix to collect his energies and project his force-pattern intact, and men have come upon the design of that matrix before. The circle-and-pentacle is such

a one; the crude makeshift which Hiss and I are building is designed to that end, to permit him to focus his energies again for a return to the world from which he came.

How did he happen to be stranded here, helpless, when I came? I know, but cannot explain the concepts involved. I remember a vast confusion of clashing forces that might have been an etheric hurricane lashing the spatial seas between universes, a freakish intergalactic typhoon that cast him adrift.

His name, if the clear strong resonance of thought that distinguishes him from others of his kind can be called a name, resounds within me like the plucking of a giant cello string:

*THRUMM!*

I am the means of his escape, and my reward is completion.

For he and his people are the natural complements of men, and will be so universally when men have climbed high enough to search out the answer to their ancient need. As a slave is without a master — I use the analogy proudly — so was I without *Thrumm*.

I could not bear existence alone now that I have known him, and for that reason we shall never be separated.

I have stopped long enough at the *Medea* to finish the entry begun earlier, but I must go quickly now. I would not risk the delay at all but for two debts which I feel should be honored: to leave behind a complete record for those who sent me here and to acknowledge to Steven Sobieski, that I, who was once too jealous of my freedom to tolerate even the friendship of others, am now a servant or less.

But I do not find my new status debasing. Rather I take a quiet pride in it, and feel a retrospective amusement for the egoism that colored my thought from the moment I first awoke in my sleeping bubble and found the offering of berries and water outside.

For I had assumed that the token was designed, like any other gift in my experience, either to ingratiate or to propitiate. I was wrong; it was not an offering, but an overture.

How does one make friends with a dog? One speaks softly and gives it a bone.

I was as mistaken in thinking of myself as a Crusoe and of *Thrumm* as a supplicant man Friday, for our true positions were precisely reversed from the beginning. But I have retrieved my error. My labors have made it possible for him to escape the desert planet upon which chance made him a castaway, and he has rewarded me with companionship and passage home.

We leave tonight, as soon as his etheric raft is completed — *Thrumm*, the master, and I, his man Bathory.