

SUPER-SCIENCE

FICTION



APRIL
1967

PARIAH GIRL

by BOYD ELLANBY

35c

THE RIM OF ETERNITY

by KOLLER ERNST

ONE WOMAN FOR VENUS

by WISTON MARKS

INVULNERABLE

by HARLAN ELLISON

IMMORTAL

For the cover of this, the third issue of SUPER-SCIENCE FICTION, we assigned Kelly Freas to do a painting illustrating life-after-death, immortality, the science of rejuvenation. And he came through with a breathless illustration of that split second we wanted.

The split second when a woman three-hundred and seventy-eight years old, wrinkled like a prune, gasping for breath and condemned to the Hole, was brought back to vibrant, proud youth.

On our cover you see Jane Doe of 3866 A. D. having undergone her fifth rejuvenation. They carried her in, laid her down on the light stage of the Rejuvenall and gave it the juice. They said she was dead, doomed to wither. But the bright men of the labs knew better.

So there she is, getting to her feet without help, standing there healthy and full of life, as her grey, matted hair changes to flaming red, as her brittle bones take on new life, as her body fills out and her head rises. She is no longer Jane Doe the old crone, she is now Jane Doe the desirable, beautiful woman, ready to live another two hundred years without aging.

The reason we assigned this subject to Kelly was that this issue contains a sprinkling of stories in that vein, stories and articles on immortality, life-after-death, the structure of TIME and SPACE.

We hope you will enjoy them as much as we did.

W. W. SCOTT

SUPER-SCIENCE FICTION

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ILLUSTRATIONS *by Freas, Emsh and Orban*

W. W. Scott — Editor

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PARIAH GIRL

by BOYD ELLANBY

Illustrated by KELLY FREAS

The native girl Bradford had picked out on the planet seemed to have a criminal record. — But what exactly was her crime? Bradford had to find out the hard way

LT. Charles Bradford stood at the window, watching the suns go down on Hozhan's chief city. He had been waiting more than an hour now for Napersec to process his request, and he could see that Schwartz and Osborne were both getting impatient. Behind him he could hear the evenly clicking relays of Napersec, —Native-Personnel-Selector-Computer, —and he glanced at his watch, ready to give up for the day, when the rhythm of the machine suddenly changed, and his request card dropped into the return chute.

Over the name he had written

so carefully, *Jina Xasast: 17-5-3009*, lay the smudged red stamp: NOT APPROVED: CRIMINAL RECORD.

"So you picked a lemon," said Schwartz.

"That machine must be crazy!" said Charles. "Jina's no more a criminal than I am. She's the nicest girl I've ever met, and with those big, brown eyes, and that cute little skirt thing she wears, and the way she enjoys talking about languages,—I don't believe it! She couldn't commit a crime if she tried."

Lt. Isadore Schwartz shrugged and spread his hands.



"I guess it's hard to tell, with aliens."

Captain Stanley D'Arcy Osborne laughed and raised a sandy eyebrow. "With girls, you mean. Look, Bradford, we've wasted enough time. You know as well as I do that Napersec has all the dope on these people, and if it says your girl's no good, you'd better forget her and pick another."

Through all six feet of his gangling frame Charles could feel the slow rise of stubbornness, the same stubbornness that had kept him plugging away at the Hozhan language when most of his Company had given up the struggle.

"But I like Jina!" he said.

Captain Osborne looked at his watch. "If you don't hurry, we'll be late for tonight's Frater. With at least twenty thousand girls on this planet just waiting to be wifed, why be so particular. Anyway, why be in such a hurry to settle down, when the contract lasts for three long years? Why don't you look over the field first and play it cautious, like me, at least till we find out whether these girls are really as human

as Napersec claims they are?"

"Didn't you hear me, Osborne? I said I liked Jina!"

IN the month since the UP occupying force had landed on Hozhan, the experts had assembled the basic facts of the planetary culture and the psychological patterns of the inhabitants. Only a week ago the data had yielded the preliminary assay: *Population Humanoïd, Class A*. Two days ago United Planets had authorized the first Frater and had issued the expected directive: *Wifing permitted, subject to Napersec*.

Frowning at the card, Charles tried to imagine why Napersec had turned down the girl he had chosen. Of all the hundreds at the first Frater, she had appealed to him most, and had impressed him at once as "different." She was the only one who seemed to have any curiosity about the solar planets, the only one who tried to help him with the Hozhan language, and the only one who seemed more interested in conversation than in sampling the novelty of hotdogs and ice cream.

"You're holding us up, Bradford," said Osborne. "The girls will be getting anxious." Taking out his comb, he began to smooth his curly, red hair.

"Do you have to wear that fancy SD'AO monogram on everything?" said Schwarz.

"Why not? I can't lose things when I have SD'AO on my comb, my ties, my socks, my notebook, —There's an idea, Bradford, I'll lend you my notebook, full of girls' names. Pick any girl on the list, they're all beautiful, all well-upholstered. I'll even let you have Rasha, there're plenty of others."

"I've already picked my girl. Jina."

Schwartz goggled at the well-filled pages. "You sure haven't let the grass grow under your feet, Osborne. Only forty-eight hours since U'P gives us the green light, and look at your backlog! Stanley D'Arcy Osborne, Earth's gift to the Hozhan women. —they sure do go for your red hair and baby blue eyes."

Osborne smiled, and patted his tie. "Did you hear what Rasha told me last night? Said

the girls had about decided I was the handsomest of all the Earth soldiers, handsome enough to be a daromm,—whatever that may be."

"She must have been kidding you," said Charles. "A *daromm* is one of the local animals, ugly as sin. But tell me, what shall I do about Jina? What do you suppose they call a crime, here on Hozhan?"

"Same as with anybody," said Schwartz impatiently. "Theft, mayhem, arson, murder,—"

"Not Jina!"

"Then why don't you ask Napersec for a breakdown?"

Quickly Charles coded "Specific details" and fed his card back to the machine. Within five minutes it returned with the stamp: "Data not in circuits ask Supervisor."

"Well, you tried," said Schwartz. "Better give up."

"Give up? Hell no!"

WITH the problem of Jina on his mind, Charles had almost lost interest in the nuances of Hozhan phonetics, and the next morning's linguistics class seemed endless. Even when he was free to leave, get-

ting to the Supervisor's office was not easy. Outside the walls of the Old City, new buildings were going up. Trying to hurry through the maze of construction, he had to step over and around naked children playing in the dust, and detour to avoid the domestic animals that wandered unmolested in the cobblestoned paths. Once he found his way barred by a *gol*, a long-haired, spotted creature rather like a friendly goat; he gave it a pat on the rump and shoved it out of his way, but when he met a *daromm* a short distance farther on, he circled it widely, for he was wary of the latent force in its huge body, and he disliked its ugly eyes and pig-like grunt.

The road ended finally in an archway beyond which he could see the maze of alleys and thatched roofs of the Old City.

An armed guard stood in the middle of the archway.

"Your pass, Lieutenant?"

"What pass? I just want to see the Colonel. . . Say, aren't you Sismanidis, from Tulsa? You took me for a big pot at poker, the night before we landed here."

The guard relaxed. "I thought I'd seen you before. You tried to fill an inside straight. Sorry, Lieutenant, but this area is out of bounds now."

"What's going on? UP doesn't need any guards on Hozhan. I never saw a more friendly or peaceable bunch of natives."

"I know that's the way they seem, but when Captain Osborne didn't check in last night, the Commandant ordered guards posted at all entrances to the Old City."

Charles stared. "You mean Stanley D'Arcy Osborne got himself lost in there?"

"That's where they found his comb, at least. They way I figure it, he was probably chasing some girl, and he'll show up all right in a couple of days, but until he does. . . You've got urgent business?"

"I've got to see the Supervisor, Colonel Begg. Yes, it's urgent."

"In that case, I'm turning my head, and if anyone slips through, I didn't see him."

COLONEL Begg looked annoyed as he motioned

Charles to a chair. "A native personnel problem, Lieutenant? Surely you know that Napersec takes care of all such matters? If you will just fill out a card and feed it to the machine—"

He looked even more annoyed as Charles recounted his story. "Please note the word was 'crime', not misdemeanor. If the girl has a criminal record, I can only recommend that you forget her. We can't have our men consorting with criminals."

"She's not!" shouted Charles. "I'm sorry, sir, but she's so shy, and gentle, and intelligent. You should have heard the cute way she corrected me the other night when I mispronounced the word for 'house.' 'Ze tone is wrong, Charles,' she said. 'Do not say *naf*, zat means a kind of illness. For *house*, use ze fourth tone, *nap*.' I'll never believe that Jina—"

"I know," said Colonel Begg. "A pretty girl plays up to you, and you take her for an angel."

"But what crime did she commit? What seems wrong to a Hozhan might not seem wrong to us at all. What did she do?"

"I haven't the least idea. Criminal records go to Psychia-

try, not to me. I strongly advise you to drop the whole matter. If you insist on having specific details, I can refer you to Psychiatry, but I warn you, they won't appreciate your wasting their time any more than I do."

Charles hesitated only an instant. Then all his ancestral New England stubbornness asserted itself.

"Thank you, Colonel Begg."

SITTING in the deep leather chair half an hour later, Charles felt that Dr. Kranz's sharp eyes had looked him over, tabulated him, and filed him for future reference in less than sixty seconds.

"The other night I met a girl," Charles began. As he repeated his story, Dr. Kranz began to frown, and on hearing "criminal record," he shook his head emphatically.

"We can find out, my boy, if you insist, but it won't make any difference."

"I still want to know what she did."

"Don't you understand, my boy? It does not matter what sort of criminal act she may

have committed. By Hozhan standards she is a criminal, and that is what counts. A criminal is, by definition, one who transgresses the laws of his society. In German, we call him a *Verbrecher*, one who breaks through regulations."

"I understand," said Charles impatiently. "Linguistics is my field."

"Then you should find the Hozhan language fascinating. I'm sorry about this girl, but I can't help you."

"But suppose she only broke some law we wouldn't approve of, or would even think ridiculous?"

"Possible, but not likely. The Hozhani culture is too similar to that of Earth. Remember, the analyzers rated the people Humanoid, Class A."

"Maybe they made a mistake."

Kranz smiled. "Impossible. Oh, I suppose a few minor aberrations may reveal themselves in time, but nothing that would change the basic classification, otherwise we would never have allowed wifing. Since they are human, obviously they will share our basic con-

cepts of right and wrong, and if they condemn an action as a crime, you may be certain that that same act would be called a crime on earth, at least by some group of human beings, some time, some place."

Charles jumped to his feet and walked restlessly about the room, unpleasantly aware of Kranz's watching eyes. "But why can't you at least give me the particulars? Doesn't a man have a right to know?"

Sighing, Kranz turned to his master file and coded into the keyboard, "Jina Xasast: 17-5-3009." After a minute's wait a microcard appeared in the view-box: INFRACTION OF RITUAL OBSERVANCE.

"But what did she *do*?" Charles shouted. "I've never been given such a runaround in my life! Here we've got a thousand experts trotting around collecting information, and they shove it into a mastermind of a machine, and then when you ask for one simple detail, all you get is a generality!"

"Are you always so excitable?" said Kranz.

Charles sank into the chair and tried to speak more quietly.

"Is it so terrible to break a rule? That's probably all Jina did. Haven't you ever fractured a ritual yourself? If you're going to hand a criminal record on every man that forgets to salute an officer or picks up the wrong fork at a dinner party, we'd all be outcasts."

Dr. Kranz stood up and walked to the door.

"We are not so stupid as you seem to think, young man. This says *ritual*. What would you think of a Moslem who walked into the courtyard of the Great Mosque at Mecca, and spat on the Black Stone? You know very well that his fellow Moslems would kill him on the spot, and justifiably. If you are so unwise as to persist in your interest in this girl, the only thing you can do is to make a personal appeal to the Commandant himself. If you want to risk his reaction, that is your affair. Good day!"

AS Charles stood in line in front of Frater-Hall that evening, moving slowly towards the door, Schwartz shook his hand admiringly. "Man, what a nerve! You mean to say you

wound up with the Commandant himself?"

"It was easy," said Charles. "The Commandant evidently prides himself on two things, his paternal interest in his men, and the infallibility of his snap judgments. I'd hardly finished explaining when he began to mumble, 'Never saw the machine yet that couldn't foul things up, never saw the psychiatrist yet that couldn't make a mountain out of a molehill. Of course I can't go counter to regulations and give you this girl until we've cleared up this criminal record business, but I can give you a temporary permit.' Then he reaches for my card, stamps it APPROVAL PENDING, signs it, and hands it over."

"But you still don't know what she did?" said Schwartz. "Maybe she just wore the wrong shade of face powder one day, but maybe it was mayhem or bigamy. Maybe you shouldn't take the chance."

They had reached the doorway now. "There's Rasha," said Schwartz. "If Osborne hasn't turned up yet, maybe I can make some time with her."

Alone, Charles searched the hall until he found Jina, sitting in a corner by herself. She glanced up shyly, and smiled as Charles presented his stamped card, but when she saw the various stamps, her long-lashed brown eyes became remote.

"Why is your card stamped red, Charles? Ozzer men have green stamps."

Was there ever a more entrancing accent? Charles wondered. Her English vocabulary was still small, but her pronunciation of the words she did know was excellent, and the only sound she couldn't make was the *th*.

"Don't worry about the card, Jina," he said, pulling her to her feet. "Come on, let's join the others there with Schwartz."

She held back, ducking her head. "Zey not want me."

"Of course they want you!" He led her across the room, to the corner where Schwartz was laughing with a group of girls and soldiers. Rasha in particular looked gay and happy, until she saw Jina. Then her face so-

bered, and she stepped back.

"Now don't be like that, Rasha," said Schwartz. "You're just as pretty as Jina, no need to be catty."

"Zey do not want me," Jina murmured. "I am bad."

"Well, they'll have to take you, because you're with Bradford and Bradford comes with me. Come on, Rasha, smile for the man. That's better. Look, Bradford, see if you can understand what Rasha's been talking about, I get only a few words of it."

The girl spoke softly, but so clearly that Charles had little trouble in understanding her. "She's inviting us all to come to her house tomorrow night, in the Old City. Some special banquet. Says her parents want to meet us, and it will be a big honor in their lives if we'll come."

Schwartz looked worried. "Wait a minute! Do you realize we'll have to eat native food?"

"Please?" said Rasha, touching his arm.

"All right, all right. Sure we'll go, Rasha. I'll try anything once."

AT the archway leading into the Old City a guard was still on duty the following night, and he waved them through when Charles presented their passes. With Jina clinging timidly to his arm, he followed Rasha and Schwartz through the gate of a shabby courtyard and up a flight of stone steps to a barred wooden door; Rasha called out softly, the door was unbarred and they walked through a hall into a room filled with color. Silver candelabra lighted the walls, rose-colored carpets covered the floor, and the low divans were heaped with cushions.

From the crowd of Hozhani in the room Rasha's father came forward; with white head erect he spoke courteously to each one until he came to Jina. Then his face changed, he nodded, and turned away.

Charles felt chilled and worried as he took his place on a divan; a cup of amber liquid was placed in his hand, and he sipped it doubtfully,—then gratefully. It was a dry wine with a faint aroma of apricots. His cup was refilled almost immediately, and as he continued

to drink, the party began to take on life.

Leaning back against the cushions, with Jina at his side, he discovered that he was speaking her language more fluently than he had ever dreamed possible. The hum of voices was music, and the world was a delight. Jina seemed more desirable than ever, and the possibility of her being a criminal was ridiculously remote.

Suddenly it seemed imperative to clear the matter up, and what better way to find out the truth, than to ask Jina herself?

The words were very clear in his mind, and he was surprised at how difficult it was to make her understand his simple question. At last he resorted to using English.

She understood him almost at once, and blushed. She evaded his eyes as she answered.

"Yes. Zat is so. I did."

"But what did you do, Jina?"

"It is too bad. You will not like me."

"I'll always like you, but I don't understand you. Tell me again, what was it you did?"

Her faint voice, her inadequate English, and his meager knowledge of Hozhan combined to thwart him. He learned no more than he had known before.

"Were you ashamed of what you did, yourself? Did you think it was bad?"

She nodded her head, looking frightened.

"Never mind," he said, patting her knee. "It's all in the past now, and whatever it was, I'm sure you won't do it again."

The wine came around again, but he seemed barely to have tasted it when suddenly his cup was empty and Rasha's father was speaking to them. People were getting up now, and in a pleasant haze Charles tucked Jina's hand under his arm and followed the others into the dining room.

Baskets of fruit and bowls of nuts ornamented the table, which was set with green pottery decorated with scenes of scarlet birds in flight. The guests stood with folded hands as the servants hurried in with steaming platters. The tantalizing aromas of strange spices drifted through the air as the

men set their platters on the table.

Rasha's father stood, closed his eyes, folded his hands, and intoned an invocation; then, at his signal, the guests sat down.

Even Schwartz should enjoy this banquet, Charles thought as he looked at each dish. He tried to memorize the name of each, and to relate its name to its chief ingredient. Here was *dali*, a giant mushroom, broiled and smelling something like roast peanuts. Here was a cereal very like rice, whose name he did not hear. Here were skewered squares of *gol*, the little goat-like animal that ran in the streets; and boiled *nub*, a shell-fish.

A servant stood at the head of the table, carrying a silver platter bearing a roast of *daromm*, the pig-like creature with ugly eyes.

"To honor the men from Earth!" said Rasha's father, and signalled the servant to begin his round. When he reached Jina, she blushed, and shook her head. Immediately all talk stopped. In utter silence, everyone looked at Jina until, at

a nod from Rasha's father, the servant moved on, and people began talking again.

"Aren't you hungry, Jina?" asked Charles. "Don't you like the *daromm*?"

"Yes, I do not like."

RASHA'S father, he noticed, was still watching Jina sternly—as though she had committed a crime! In that moment, Charles felt a glorious sense of enlightenment.

"Is that what you did before?" he whispered. "At a banquet like this one, with ceremonial food and ritual? And you wouldn't eat some of the dishes?"

There were tears on her cheeks as she nodded.

Charles laughed. "Hey, Schwartz, guess what! I've found out what the 'criminal record' amounts to. Jina won't eat meat! She's a vegetarian. Just wait till I tell this to Kranz!"

"Kranz will just say this proves his point," said Schwartz. "In Hozhan society a vegetarian is a rebel, rebels are bad, therefore Jina is bad."

Timidly, Jina touched Charles' arm. "I am not vegetarian. I eat *gol* and *nub*. Just not—not this dish." She nodded towards the slice of roast *daromm* on his plate.

"Well, that's nothing to be ashamed of, and it's certainly no crime," said Charles, picking up his knife. "It smells delicious, but I will admit *daromm*'s an ugly brute when you see him in the streets."

"Not *daromm*, Charles, *zat* is for every day. For *zis* kind of ceremony we must have *dilaromm*."

He should have used the fourth tone, he noted, rather than the third, but he was not really listening to her gentle correction, for he felt uneasy. Disturbed by the general hostility to Jina, he tried to speak lightly.

"Well, I won't worry about pronunciation when I have such a treat in front of me. I always did like the skin of a roast, when it's smooth and crisp and glazed just—"

He dropped his knife and pushed himself away from the table.

"What is ze matter, Charles?"

Choking, gulping down the rush of fluid in his throat, he stared round the table at the silent, shocked Hozhani. Their eyes condemned him.

What kind of monsters *were* these creatures who were supposed to be human? Wait! What had Kranz said? "...at least like some human group, sometime, somewhere..."

But Jina had refused to conform!

Kicking back his chair, he grabbed her hand and jerked her to her feet.

"Come on, Jina, we're getting out of here! You too, Schwartz! Leave your girl and run!"

Schwartz gaped. "Have you gone crazy, Bradford? You look as though you'd seen a ghost!"

"I have! Remember they said Osborne was handsome enough to be a *daromm*?"

"*D d a r o m m*," said Jina, weeping now as he pulled her towards the door. "You get ze tone wrong again. For zis ritual, we use only *d d a r o m m*."

"What are you talking about?" said Schwartz. "You can see them roaming the streets any day in the week."

"Not this one," shouted Charles from the door. "This one has the monogram SD'AO tattooed on its chest!"

THE END
