

Infinity

PDC

SCIENCE FICTION

Feb.

35c

Damon Knight
L. Sprague DeCamp
Pohl • Kornbluth
Charles Beaumont



Dazzling Space Novelet by **RANDALL D. GARRETT**

∞ **Infinity**

SCIENCE FICTION

FEBRUARY, 1956

Vol. 1, No. 2

NOVELETS

THE BEST OF FENCES	Randall Garrett	4
QUARRY	Kenneth Bulmer	64

STORIES

TRAUMEREI	Charles Beaumont	23
INTERNAL COMBUSTION	L. Sprague de Camp	30
GLOW WORM	Harlan Ellison	48
THE FUTILE FLIGHT OF JOHN ARTHUR BENN	Edward Halibut	58
COURSE OF EMPIRE	Richard Wilson	60
A LIKELY STORY	Damon Knight	95
THE ENGINEER	Frederik Pohl & C. M. Kornbluth	112

DEPARTMENTS

FANFARE	92
INFINITY'S CHOICE	Damon Knight 121
FEEDBACK	The Readers 124
BY THE EDITOR	129

COVER, illustrating Kenneth Bulmer's *Quarry*, by Ed Emsh.

ILLUSTRATIONS by Emsh, Engle, Remington, Stallman and Wilimczyk

Publisher—IRWIN STEIN

Production Manager—HELEN SKALET

Associate Editor—LENORE HAILPARN

Assistant Editor—JOHN C. JOHNSON

Editor—LARRY T. SHAW

Art Director—ROBERT V. ENGLE

Art Associate—FULLER GRIFFITH

INFINITY SCIENCE FICTION, published bi-monthly by Royal Publications, Inc., 47 East 44th St., New York 17, N. Y. Single copy, 35¢; subscription (12 issues) for the U. S., its territories and possessions, and Canada, \$3.50; elsewhere, \$4.50. Copyright 1955 by Royal Publications, Inc. Application for second class entry pending at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction, and any similarity between the characters and actual persons is purely coincidental. Printed in U. S. A.



EMSH

**To the Rachens, it was just good clean sport—
Dirk Gilmore, it was a business proposition.
But either way, it was Gilmore's life that was at stake!**

QUARRY

by KENNETH BULMER

Illustrated by EMSH

DIRK GILMORE signed his death warrant with fingers that had long ago forgotten how to tremble. You kept a stony face and hard eyes if you wanted to stay alive. In this city you learned that early. More often than not that wasn't enough, though, with the Rachens running everything—and then things got really tough.

Like now. Like the hunger that lay waiting in his stomach, ready to rend his guts if

he dared eat. Like the rags that stretched across his shoulders, too pitiable to pawn. But clean. Libby always kept him and Jimmy clean, if nothing else.

"That's fine, Mr. Gilmore, just fine." Across the plastic desk the fat man's eyes chuckled with good humor, making Gilmore want to lean across and push a bony fist into the swabs of fat. Rachen-toad! Just a dirty Rachen-lover.

"When do I start?" The words were rasped rather than spoken.

"Now, now, my boy, take it easy." Fatso waggled a soggy forefinger. "We've got to put you in good shape before you start hunting."

"I get to eat, then?"

Fatso looked shocked. "Of course. Why, Metropolitan Safaris has a great reputation. Yes, sir, the very finest. We have to maintain—"

"Save it. I've signed."

Fatso coughed, his flabby face reddening. He waved a hand.

"Through there, Mr. Gilmore. Mr. Hammond will take care of everything."

Gilmore stood up. He didn't bother to answer. No one likes to look his own degradation in the face. Especially when you have to try to make it worthwhile to live with it. He went across the deep pile rug, his broken shoes soundless. Fatso stared after him with narrowed eyes and Gilmore shifted his broad back under the scrutiny, feeling the muscles pull across wasted flesh.

He'd come back, he told himself, fists clenched. He'd come back. Sure, he'd be one of the guys who did come back. But he didn't really believe it. *Libby—Libby, you*

she-devil. Just for young Jimmy, that's all. Just for Jimmy. God! The things a man did. He went through the door.

Hammond was one of the new school that had shot up like unhealthy fungus since the Rachen came in their faster-than-light ships to take over the Solar System. He was an Earthman all right, like Fatso, without that indefinable tang that all Rachens had, that alien sense that put kitten-footed itches up your spine. He had a thin black mustache and wet lips.

"Mr. Gilmore!" Hammond was looking at him with a detached professional pity. "We'll have you processed in no time at all, no time at all."

"When do I draw the first check?"

"As soon as Medical has finished with you. You'll have to spend a little time getting into shape and until we know you are going to be suitable for hunting, well, we—"

"You don't pay out on bum-starters. All right. Just make it fast."

Hammond went across to a wall panel and fiddled with the controls. He said, without looking round: "Someone—someone special—waiting on this money, Mr. Gilmore?"

"Yes."

KENNETH BULMER is well-known in his native England, having written several pocket-sized books as well as stories for all the British science-fiction magazines. When he visited the United States recently, as his country's official delegate to the 13th World Science-Fiction convention at Cleveland, the editors of INFINITY lost no time in persuading him to start submitting to us as well. Ken in person is erudite, reserved, and exceptionally pleasant; his first "American" story is concerned with suspenseful action in a grim future. You'll get a jolt from QUARRY!

Hammond faced around suddenly. His eyes were distant, uninterested in what his lips were saying.

"Mr. Gilmore, you get twenty-five thousand dollars out of this deal. Ten thousand and as soon as you pass fit for hunting, the rest at the finish."

"That I know." Gilmore allowed his face to sag just a trifle, enough so that it looked as though he might be smiling. "And I might get the other fifty."

He didn't like the way Hammond laughed. Hell—some guys collected that extra fifty. Not many; but some.

"Listen to me, Mr. Gilmore. If you'll agree to accept a final payment, here and now, of five thousand, we'll consider the whole deal washed up. You'll flunk medical, and walk out of here five grand up. How does that sound?"

"It doesn't figure." Gilmore was genuinely puzzled. Who would buck the Rachens, offer

to bribe a man out of their schemes? There was no Underground on Earth any more. The Rachens didn't like opposition. The only answer was that this was some subtle psychological test, to grade him in toughness and discover just how much he had in him.

He said: "Five grand is kid stuff. I want the jackpot."

AFTER that there was nothing further to be said. Hammond processed him smoothly: blood count, cranial index, respiration, muscle co-ordination, ear and eye indices. They were neat operators, Gilmore had to hand them that. In five days that passed in monochromatic similarity they built him up so that he felt as fit, as tough, as he ever had. Which, in his case, meant plenty rugged. Nothing further was said about the five thousand offer. It was the only sour note.

Gilmore became used to the barracks, the long eating

rooms, the gym, the exercise yard. Here in the center of the city, one hundred stories up, Metropolitan Safaris groomed its stock in trade. He met other men. The subject of why they were here was never raised. Why bother? It was all so painfully obvious.

Came the day when Gilmore was called into Fatso's office. This time the rags, the broken shoes, the wasted flesh were gone. In their place a sharp suit of suntans and rolling muscle. Gilmore felt good.

"A check is being mailed out to your wife today, Mr. Gilmore," Fatso began.

Gilmore cut him off. "I don't want that. Make it payable to Jimmy Gilmore. My son."

"As you wish. It isn't important."

"It is to me."

Fatso brushed that irritably aside. He steepled his podgy fingers. "We've decided to run you as one of a pair—"

"No dice!" Gilmore said hotly. "You can't welch on me like that. Pairs don't collect the full twenty-five, even I know that."

"If you'll just let me finish, you might understand the situation." Fatso was getting angry.

"Well, it better sound good."

"Mr. Gilmore. You applied for a position with this company. We decided to take you on, give you the chance to earn twenty-five thousand. I think you owe us a little civility."

"All right. I'm civil. Now just tell me how I get that twenty-five running paired."

"You've heard of the Prince Dar-Lesseps, of course."

"Son of Mars' Controller. Yeah—I've heard."

"He is tired of safaris on Mars. He has honored this company with his business. We have to put on a full-scale hunt for him on Earth. He has had no prior experience of safaris in big cities."

"How miserable he must have been."

Fatso's nostrils quivered, but he went on speaking as though explaining two-times-two to a non-Euclidean.

"He is young and anxious to experience new things. He is willing to hunt according to Earth City rules. But he wants a paired hunt. More fun, he thinks." Fatso smiled. "Personally, I agree with him."

Gilmore almost said: "You would." He decided against it. He'd needled Fatso enough.

Instead, he said: "Earth City rules. That means projectile weapons only. No energy weapons. Could be the boy's biting off more than he can chew."

A shadowed uncertainty appeared in Fatso's eyes. Gilmore caught it. The fat guy was worried. Something here was wrong; something had a bad smell. Gilmore filed that away, although he knew with sardonic self-condemnation that there was precious little he could do about anything once he had signed. The Rachen paid big money,—but big—for their hunts, and Fatso would challenge the Devil for a slice of it. Gilmore wondered if he'd go up against a Rachen for that money. Somehow, he felt that the fat man would.

"The hunt is scheduled for the day after tomorrow. The Prince gets in from Mars tonight and has some official calls to make."

Gilmore sucked in his breath. So soon. And here came the sixty-four million dollar question: "How long?" Fatso was eyeing him analytically, watching to see if any sign of a breakup showed.

Fatso said: "Hunt's for twenty-four hours."

Gilmore couldn't say anything. A great weight seemed

to be pushing his chest in. It was hard to breath.

He got air into his lungs and nodded. "That makes it a cool twelve thousand overtime, then. A thousand an hour over twelve hours."

"Correct, Mr. Gilmore."

"Jimmy can use the money, at that."

"You appreciate that, because we have such an important customer, we are paying single rates for your paired run?"

"Thank you."

There was no question that Metropolitan Safaris would try to welsh. They had a reputation to maintain. Jimmy ought to do nicely on the money coming to him. There remained the final question. Gilmore asked it.

"You'll meet your partner day after tomorrow, at zero hour. We have to take some—that is—"

"Save it. The Prince'll make out okay. Your precautions won't alter what happens very much."

"I'll see you just before you begin, Mr. Gilmore. Until then—"

But Gilmore wasn't listening. Running paired meant he might have an easier time. But it might mean that he couldn't pull some of the dodges he had been working

on. And he desperately wanted to come through alive, now, more than ever. Funny how your morale went up and down with the incidence of eating and shaving. And he'd come through—and to hell with his partner.

EVERYTHING that he needed to know had been explained to him by the time he entered the elevator and shot down to ground floor. The clock said six. The foyer was a desert of glass, with distorted reflections from outside lying like puddles of mercury across the floor. A technician strapped the tracer on his wrist, keying the infernal gadget so that he couldn't take it off without removing his arm as well. Gilmore grunted. That sort of clinched things.

Fatso and his sidekick, Hammond, were there, smiling. Across at the bar a group of men and Rachens were drinking desultorily. Gilmore repressed his instinctive surge of hate and loathing for the men. Men? Hell, no! Rachen-toads! Men who could work with the Rachens.

It occurred to him that he, too, was working for the aliens. He knocked that stupid idea out of his mind angrily. If he could kill one of

them he'd do so as thoughtlessly as stepping on an insect.

The clock indicated that it was time to get started. He wondered how Prince Dar-Lesseps had filled in his time on Earth so far. Fatso, giving the impression of cringing, went over to the Rachens and they came back with him. Gilmore stood cold and contained, fighting his nausea.

"Mr. Gilmore, this is the Prince Dar-Lesseps." Fatso went on introducing Gilmore to the others of the party. Gilmore eyed the Prince. Young, brash, ultra-fashionably dressed, with a nervous tic in his eyelids that could come from too many Earth drinks, or too much of other Earthly relaxations.

"I trust you'll give us a good run, Mr. Gilmore?" The Prince's voice was high and hard, habitually used to being the boss.

"I'll do what I can," Gilmore said flatly.

"Good." Dar-Lesseps looked round. "And where is the other?"

"Here," Fatso said.

Gilmore hadn't noticed her before, standing a little to one side. She had a crew cut, wore dark shirt and pants like himself, with heavy-duty brogans giving her slender legs

a clumsy look. He didn't notice her face.

Something boiled up inside him.

"You can't run me with a woman!" he shouted. "Hell, what is this, a slaughterhouse or a safari?"

Fatso began making clucking noises. Dar-Lesseps looked as though an offensive smell had won through his scents. Gilmore didn't care. He had mentioned a slaughterhouse and they were shocked. So all right. What chance would he have lugging a woman around?

"The Prince especially desired a woman, Mr. Gilmore. You will have to accept that. It is in the contract you signed."

There wasn't much point in arguing further. He would have to go along with the deal, for Jimmy's sake. Clamping his mouth shut so that his jaws whitened, Gilmore clumped outside onto the sidewalk.

The city was huge, bright with morning sun. Glittering, palpitating, soaring skyward—and completely dead.

This was where men had once lived together. This was the personification of all their dreams, from the stone cave through the atomic and electronic age. And now the Ra-

chens had come and decided that the city would make a pleasant playground. So men had been moved out, to settle in other places and try to forget the wonder they had created and had had stolen.

A streetcar went by soundlessly, completely empty, the remote control drive operating from Traffic Center. It stopped, waited, the doors opening and closing, and then went on with a cheerful *ding!* of a hidden bell. It was still early enough for a Sanitation Department cleaning truck to whirl busily down the street, spraying and brushing and mopping. Somehow, Gilmore felt very lonely—far more lost than he had when answering the advertisement on first arriving here.

Prince Dar-Lesseps beckoned to his gun bearers. He still looked as though he'd caught a whiff of some sewer; but he spoke to Gilmore pleasantly enough.

"Would you care to inspect the guns now, Mr. Gilmore?"

More because he was interested than because he feared any infringement of the rules, Gilmore took the proffered weapon. He kept his face immobile when he racked back the bolt on an empty chamber. No one was likely to trust him with a loaded weapon

just now. The rifle was a bolt action .280, with peep back-sight and facilities for a clip-on telescopic sight when required. Gilmore checked the magazine. Ten, and one up the spout—say eleven shots. Worth remembering.

He was about to hand the gun back when the girl said: "Do you mind?"

Gilmore was startled. He thrust the gun at her, off-balance from preoccupation with one consuming desire. If the girl was his partner then she had every right to inspect the hunting party's weapons. He felt impatience bubble in him. He wanted to get started, get away into the hungry concrete and glass jungle of the city. Fatso coughed and rubbed his hands together.

"Well, Prince, I guess that about ties things up. Tracers working okay? Good. Now, Miss Ransome and Mr. Gilmore, if you'll just move off we can have a drink while we're waiting."

Hammond moved across officiously. His face had a waxy look.

"You fully understand the limits on this hunt? The wire will be de-activated twenty-four hours from now, directly across Town Center. Here are tokens to operate automats for your food." The

nervous way Hammond licked his lips puzzled Gilmore. The aide moved across so that, for a brief instant, he was between Gilmore and the Ratchens. Gilmore felt the tokens in his hand, small round coins, and then, with a shock that sent electric tingles through him, the hard and unmistakable outline of a spurt gun. Without thinking he thrust the thing into his pants pocket.

Fatso waved his hand. Hammond, his face ghastly, stepped aside. Gilmore and the girl began to walk slowly along the street.

The hunt had begun.

AT THE first intersection they took a streetcar. Sitting on a rocking-horse when he was a kid had once made Gilmore sick. He felt like that now. The girl didn't say anything, just sat looking back the way they had come. Gilmore looked ahead, trying to decide the best place to leave the car. That was the first problem. After that came the question of the spurt gun and why Hammond had acted in the way he had.

"We'll get off here," the girl said, her voice a metallic bell over the sibilance of the car. She stood up.

Gilmore lifted an eyebrow

at her. "We'll get off when I say so, Sister."

Her smile was unpleasant, the way it disfigured the soft curves around her cheeks. She pulled the stop cord.

"Here, Buster." The doors opened with a pneumatic clash. "We're getting off here. We can transfer to a downtown car and make them think we're heading for the dock section."

"That's where I intended to head for."

"Sure. And don't you think they knew it? Get wise, Buster."

Gilmore flushed. He jumped down onto the street and together they cut across the intersection. No other car was in sight and all the eerie hollowness of the deserted city came down to overwhelm him.

"Gives you the creeps, this place." She was twisting the tracer on her wrist in a reflex action that held Gilmore's eyes. "You keep expecting to meet someone . . ."

"Snap out of it, Sister," he said roughly. "So long as this tracer chains us together, just so long you keep out of my hair."

"All right, tough guy, I'm not getting the screaming heebies. And, say, I kinda don't like being called Sister. My name's Trina. Use it."

"Mine's Dirk," he had said before he realized just what this little bit of hearts and flowers might mean. She'd had her own way about where they got off the car. That would be the first and last time, Gilmore vowed. He glanced at the wrist watch supplied by Metropolitan Safaris.

"When do they start?" Trina said.

"Fifteen minutes. We'd better take this car for ten or so and then dive. Agree?"

"Roger." They waited for the car to stop and pick them up and ten minutes later, with the feeling that he had left it far too late, Gilmore pulled the cord. "The docks are down there," he said, running at her side towards a granite building towering seventy stories. "That's as good a start as we'll get. Once they figure we didn't head that way they'll have quite some territory to cover."

Trina said: "They'll find us."

They ducked into the building. It was dark and cool, with water splashing somewhere not far off. Gradually, reacting to their presence, automatic hidden fluorescents came on.

"Sure they'll find us." Gilmore was trying to sort out

the map of the city he carried in his head. "Sure. But under Earth City rules, tracers are fixed to operate only inside a half-mile diameter. They'll take time, too."

"Correct me if I'm wrong," Trina said casually. "But these tracers dim out at a hundred yards. They've got to be within a quarter mile of us but not closer than a hundred yards—"

"Sorry, Trina. Wrong." Gilmore's voice was bitter. "These tracers are set for fifty yards—or didn't they tell you?"

"The dirty low-down double-crossing bums!"

Gilmore laughed. The sound crackled in brittle echoes across the glass foyer, under the lights, played around the fountain. She looked so cute and mad that he almost forgot what this was all about. "So they played tough girl Trina for a sucker. Well, well."

"Hadn't you better be seeing about spotting them, Buster?"

"Okay. We'll take the elevator up. Not much risk this early in the game."

Riding the cage up, Gilmore tried to make up his mind just how he should handle this unwanted girl who had been foisted on him. She ap-

peared capable, but that might be only talk. It was easy to talk tough; when the bullets came spattering around was the time to act, and talkers often didn't act.

He liked the look of her, though. He liked the slim, lissom back; the way she had of holding her head back when she spoke; the way she filled the dark shirt; the way her eyes were clear and unsmudged. Hell—he was getting sentimental, with a safari breathing down his neck.

Well—not quite. The view from the roof was immense, scouring away emotion by its scope. They spoke desultorily, in semi-whispers, their eyes searching and probing the canyon streets below. Of course, they wouldn't see anyone yet. But they would—they would.

Gilmore checked his watch. "Eight o'clock."

"Twenty-two and a half hours," Trina said.

"That's right." Gilmore could feel the weight of the spurt gun in his pocket. The possible motives behind Hammond's behavior stimulated his imagination. He'd always considered that there most emphatically was not an Underground left active on Earth. He could be wrong. First Hammond had tried to

buy him off. Then he had given him a gun, a nasty little weapon that fired ten .5" slugs for a range of twenty-five feet and then, its air reservoir empty, was tossed away. Why?

"Listen, Dirk," Trina said with an odd inflection to her voice. "Don't you think it would be a good idea to check how much rope these tracers allow us?"

"Sure." He began to walk away from her across the roof. Above him the sky was blued milk. It was going to be a hot day. And then the pain hit. His wrist was encircled by a living ring of biting insects, gnawing, tearing, thrilling his nerves with unbearable agony. Trina stumbled towards him, her mouth open, eyes glazed. Quickly, Dirk caught her in his arms, felt the panting surge of her body as she fought the shudders.

"Ten feet," he said. "That's all they allowed us."

Pearls of moisture made a diadem across her forehead. She tried to smile, swallowed, and said: "I'm okay. Sorry."

"Let's get out of here," he said roughly. The roof was suddenly an ugly place.

ON THE street again, they peered cautiously uptown. A

single robot taxi, cruising in the hope of fares long since dead, passed on silent tires. Beyond it, at the intersection, they saw a streetcar stop, ding its bell, and go on.

The car seemed full of people.

Gilmore said: "We go the other way."

He hadn't realized, until they were in a car traveling uptown, that she had been holding on to his upper arm with fingers that sank into the muscle. Despite his first reaction of annoyance, he let her hand stay there. They were in this together. They had to be a team.

"Why doesn't this car go faster?" Trina was saying.

He didn't answer.

He couldn't tell whether the hunting party had picked them up or not. If they had, their first reaction would have been to leave that car and spread out for the kill. Of course, they might have spotted the quarry and decided to let it run for a while, give it a fright, a sight of the gun, added impetus for a better chase. Gilmore's insides tightened up into an impotent knot.

They went downtown, then cut across, and rode uptown again on the subway. The city was a blanketing weight on

their spirits. Empty. Echoing. Clean. Scientifically designed to house, feed and transport ten million people. And in all that area only they lived—and the hunters.

Except for Metropolitan Safaris in their offices atop the tallest building—and they might as well have been in another world.

"Let's go take a look at the wire," Gilmore said.

"All right. Might be a good idea, at that."

"They'll expect us to look it over before nightfall, anyway; but I have a hunch they won't bother us too much until then."

"What time is it?"

"Quarter after ten."

"Twenty hours and fifteen minutes. That's not so long."

Gilmore grunted. "It all depends on the viewpoint."

On the way to the wire they stopped off at an automat and ate fresh fried chicken from plastic plates. It didn't seem in the least unreal to Gilmore. Incongruous, perhaps; but the world had become tiredly used to incongruity since the Rachen had come. Oh, no, they weren't iron-heeled, jack-booted conquerors. Why should they be with the sweet set-up they had? They had said, simply, that they wished to integrate with Earth's

economy, and they had done just that. The funny thing was that a graduating Earthman and Rachen, leaving college, always seemed to wind up at opposite ends of the social scale.

The government was one hundred percent Rachen. If Terrans questioned that on legal grounds they found they had none. If they tried to alter their overlords, they were met with dirty politics, and if they attempted to overthrow the government—well, the law said they could be shot. They were.

As if by sleight-of-hand, Earth's birthright had been taken away. Earth's sons starved, and died, and gazed despairingly at the picture of their world they could no longer understand.

Like Gilmore. An honor graduate, happy to be a street-sweeper, and slowly starving. Then even that job went to another with more pull. He'd fought so hard to make a life, with no help from Libby, that the scars were deep in his mind. He wished there *were* an Underground—the spurt gun dragging down his pocket seemed, suddenly, like a holy grail.

And, remembering his life, he felt that he would never recall that humiliating expe-

rience ever again in quite the same way. He didn't like to think of the looks Libby had sent his way. So he'd been a failure—hadn't there been plenty of others? And how many of them had the guts to get a job with a Safari company?

Other people made some sort of living in the world, held on to crumbling standards. Superficially, there wasn't a lot of difference between the post-Rachen world and the pre-Rachen. Except that the Earth gave of its bounty to aliens. And the aliens liked sport. And they could pay.

Everyone knew that there was no more deadly quarry than man.

Which made the human safari business quite profitable. Unfortunately, it was also wasteful. Lying on his belly under a traffic ramp Gilmore tried to hold onto his conviction that he wouldn't be wasted.

IN FRONT of them the wire stretched taut and uncaring across the city approaches. They stared at the tall, gray, inhuman rampart, noticing the insulators at regular intervals and the rainbow colors playing along the interlacing wires. It was like a giant chicken wire.

Grass tickled Gilmore's nose.

"If you walked into that now, you'd fry," whispered Trina.

"There's the gate," Gilmore nodded his head. "Remember."

"We're going through there, Dirk, both of us. Safely."

They lay there until Gilmore felt he couldn't look at his prison wall another minute. The wire penning them in the city was an obscene thing. He began to stand up and the bullet sent a clod of earth to sting his cheek. He dropped. They rolled under the ramp.

"Saw two of them getting out of a taxi," Trina said. She had been looking into the city, and her face under the dirt marks was strained. Gilmore remembered the hard feel of the spurt gun when he'd rolled over.

"We can shake them through the ramp. Come on."

They raced through the shadows, came cautiously out into sunshine again. Across the street a car was gliding to a stop. Panting, they were in it, hearing the *thunk* of the doors. The car started. Bullets made a lace pattern of the rear windows.

"Clumsy work," Gilmore said, wiping his face. "Just

trying to scare us. They're beating us back for the Prince."

"Yeah. He's the big wheel."

"It's his hunt. No one else will dare make the kill."

"So—we stay away from his high muckiness."

Gilmore looked at her. "And where is he right now?" he snapped, an edge to his voice that brought the girl erect in her seat.

"You're the brains of this side, Buster. You figure it."

Gilmore laughed. His hand closed over the girl's.

"Okay, Trina. So we shake on it."

She waited a second, and then, quite easily, freed her hand. She kept her face towards the window, and Gilmore could see only the way the sunlight caught the stiff hairs of her crew cut and turned each one into a shining spear. He swallowed.

"Let's duck this car here," he said. "They know we're aboard."

"All right." Her voice was strangely subdued.

They ran afoul of other members of the Prince's hunting party later that morning, and threw them at the expense of a gashed arm and leg. The automat vended bandages too, and Trina dressed her leg and Gilmore's

arm. They ate. Then, a luxury that they'd contemptuously dismissed because they could never afford it, they smoked cigarettes.

"The condemned man—" began Gilmore.

"Shut up, Dirk!" Trina's face had gone stiff with strain. "Don't talk that way! We're coming out of this alive."

"So we do—okay. Only a joke."

"What's the time?"

"Three-thirty."

"Fifteen hours."

Gilmore looked past her head through the window and saw the men come running from the street. He took her arm and flung her violently into the back of the store. They rummaged frantically for a side exit, found one, fell through and began running up the street. Their feet made applause on the flags. Granite walls caught the sound and flung it back, magnified and mocking, taunting them with their stupidity.

"Quick! In here!"

Trina thrust Gilmore roughly into the revolving glass doors of a department store. They clattered past the empty counters, where still lights burned over lavish, pathetic, displays. They slid to a halt and bundled them-

selves, panting, into a crevice between counters. The glass doors revolved—no one came through.

This was the hell of it, Gilmore knew with repressed fury bubbling inside him, this was the worst part. The waiting. Not the leisurely waiting of a moment ago; but the strained, tense, panicky expectation of the next second's bullet. Trina was breathing rapidly, trying to control it, failing, and making a noise like a little trapped thing of the woods.

The doors whirled slowly to a standstill. Gilmore decided he could risk a quick look beyond, and, with his muscles tensed to lift him, heard the soft slur of feet on marble. In a single flurry of movement, he sprang at the man's throat, caught him, came back with two stiff fingers in his nostrils, then kicked twice, quite scientifically, as he was falling.

"I—I didn't see him!" Trina said, horrified.

"He was smart. He came in the side exit. Okay, leave him. Let's go."

"Just a minute." Trina bent over the body, took the knife, looked up helplessly. "No gun."

"No. Just a beater. Come on."

"But—"

"Come on!"

A PLASTER dummy, shaped like an anatomically impossible film star, sprayed plaster and dust over them. It crashed over. Another fan of bullets brought down an immense glass cabinet.

They broke for the back of the building, slipping through a fire exit barely in front of a succession of solid thuds on the metal. They crossed the street, the sun throwing long wavering shadows before them, went at a dead run down the subway incline. In the car, clattering over the ties, Trina put a hand shakily to her hair. Gilmore saw the gesture, recognized that the crew cut was an innovation.

"The beater ran into us unexpectedly," he said thoughtfully. "The guns were slow. That is—if they meant it that time."

"But—I didn't see him!" Trina said again.

"You will, when it matters," Gilmore said. Cold comfort; but the girl was obviously shaken. It was only then that he began to wonder just what she was doing here at all. No one ever mentioned reasons at Metropolitan Safaris—Gilmore knew that. And, anyway, he hadn't seen

the girl there, during his period of recuperation and preparation for the hunt. Perhaps—the thought struck a dagger of revulsion through him—she was here only as an added filip in the Prince's game. Perhaps she was on their side, to string him along, and come in gloating at the end. He looked at her, his brows drawn down. She smiled back shakily, doubt clouding her eyes.

"What is it, Dirk?"

"Oh, just wondering. How you got here, f'rinstance."

"That. Well. A man, Money. You know."

"Anybody special?"

"I used to think so. Not any more. When I get back, I'll . . ."

"We'll get out of this, and collect that extra fifty thousand each." He leaned over and squeezed her hand. "You will see."

"What time is it?"

"Three forty-five."

"Fourteen hours, forty-five minutes."

Gilmore nodded, and found them cigarettes. They alighted at the next stop, crossed the platform and rode back again. Still he could not quite bring himself to tell this girl about the spurt gun. Later; yes, later. When he could see what would happen more clearly.

Later turned out to be a long wait.

THEY criss-crossed on the subway, figuring that that gave them even chances. The tough time would come when they made their way through to the wire. They had to be there, ready to break out when the electrification was shut off. That would last a quarter hour. If they missed—well, they'd be shut in the city again for another twenty-four hours. Nice people, Metropolitan Safaris. Nicer customers, the Rachens. Gilmore spat.

Gradually the sun lost its balance and tipped down the western sky. Shadows already stood high on the buildings. Then, with the artificial abruptness of the big city, darkness came. Lights went on along the avenues; but there were ugly pools of shadowed menace in too many places. Last through the night, Gilmore told himself, and make ready for the big rumble that was due at dawn. Now, he didn't in the least feel like a hunted animal. When they dined in style at an automat, sitting crosslegged, concealed behind a change booth, the idea of an alien stalking him with a .280 rifle seemed absurd.

Until he moved his arm and caught the twinge from the gash. And until he saw that Trina's leg was causing her pain. The eerie quality of unnaturalness of the empty city gripped him by the throat then and he hated every part of the Rachens and what they had done to the world.

"Well, Buster," Trina broke in upon his thoughts. "What plans has the mastermind for tonight? Watch and watch, I suppose?"

"That sounds fair. I've been considering a good place to hole up. An elevator stuck between floors. How's that sound?"

"Fine." Trina's eyes shone. "That gives us a chance to rest."

"We're going to need it. They'll be waiting with everything they've got for us to break for the wire. That's when they get their big kick. That's really living!"

"Yeah. They have themselves a big time. Bastards."

"Well—they're only lousy aliens. If we'd figured the angles on getting to the stars first, we might be sitting at the other end of some energy gun, waiting for the Rachens to break out like rabbits. Although—I doubt it."

"So do—" Trina began. She stopped, her face turning

rigidly to stare down the street beyond the door. "Do you see them?" she whispered.

Gilmore stood up very quietly. He reached out and took the knife, then motioned the girl behind him. He could feel icy drops trickling down his spine. He wanted to be sick with his fear.

In the center of the street, sniffing and snuffing, came two creatures like animated heaps of garbage. Their red eyes were wicked. They snorted and licked the paving stones. They stank.

"Drochumins," Trina said, her voice loathing.

"Hold still."

"Rachen bloodhounds," Trina chattered. "Following our scent. What chance do we stand now—"

Gilmore put his left hand across her mouth and nose and pressed. Then, walking as though on dodo eggs, he propelled her towards the elevator. They went in just as the leading Drochumin snuffled triumphantly into the automat. Gilmore thumbed the top-floor button. He watched the alien bloodhounds. The elevator did not move.

Gilmore stabbed the button again, mouthing curses. He was so afraid that it hurt.

The Drochumins slobbered across the floor. Gilmore's

nerve almost went. He almost hung onto the button too long. Then, his stomach churning, he whirled out the elevator door, dragging Trina, and raced away into the cavernous depths of the back section of the store. The two animals emitted a bestial squealing. They followed, their claws clicking.

The two men were dragged along on the leashes that were lengthy enough to allow the Drochumins to finish their ghastly business far enough away from their masters so the masters would not get sick. Even the Rachens had stomachs. Gilmore and Trina ran.

"Get in that alcove, Trina," Gilmore rapped. "And be still."

He waited, knife poised. He knew, even in that mad instant of fear-bolstered courage, that now was not the time to use the spurt gun. Even when he was facing two hunters and their blood-hungry dogs.

There was a better way.

In the tricky illumination which threw lazy pools of light and shade over the floor the cast had to be as near perfect as he could make it. It was vital that he hit flesh. He took a deep breath, held it, balanced the knife along his palm

and wrist for a heartbeat and then flicked it towards the hunters. The knife turned over once and a trick of light sent a flash of electric fire from the blade. It hit. Gilmore saw the hilt above a welling redness in the first man's throat.

Instantly the two Drochumins went mad. The scent of blood inflamed them to murderous fury. They leaped back on the leashes, began to tear the knifed man to pieces. His companion tried to intervene, got blood on his arm, and was included in the massacre.

GILMORE and Trina vanished into the shadows. They came out onto the street, to gulp at the cool night air.

"That was smart, Dirk," Trina said.

"An oldie." The fear was dying now, the suffocating sense of a hand at his throat. He wiped sweat from his forehead with a finger. "They must be tiring of the game, or we've thrown them too well today. They wouldn't use Drochumins otherwise."

"It's the Prince, you can bet your fifty thousand on that. I heard that if he succeeds his father on Mars he'll stir up a few changes that'll rebound on Earth. You know, the usual Rachen politics." Trina's face

was sombre in the harsh artificial lighting of the avenue. "Dirty politics, just like ours."

They cut off at the first street, and Gilmore wondered if, just outside the edge of vision, Rachen hunters watched their tracers tell where the hunted pair was. It was not a comforting picture. Then he absorbed what Trina had been saying and wondered afresh at her knowledge of worldly things he had hitherto regarded as the prerogative of men. He said: "What do you know about politics?"

"Enough," Trina said calmly. "Enough to steer clear of them. Had an uncle once who dabbled. Learned quite a bit from him. Like this Prince Dar-Lesseps set-up, for instance. If the Prince doesn't succeed to Mars, it will make a hell of a difference to Earth. The picture has been building up for the past ten years."

"Sounds vague to me," Gilmore said.

"Maybe. It isn't important to us, anyway. We've only one interest in the Prince."

"That's right." Gilmore hesitated. Should he tell Trina about the spurt gun? About Hammond? Something evil in the back of his mind urged him to remain silent. Later, he told himself.

A momentary vision came to him of the drama being enacted in this ghost city. A man and a woman, running like animals, hunted by small, grim parties of men and aliens, through the cavernous streets and avenues of this sprawling, deserted city. Looking at it like that, with a calm, detached, almost professional eye, the set-up was loaded with possibilities. And, from what Trina had said, it was now certain that someone wanted the leader of the hunters killed off. It had needed her casual statement to bring home to him that what went on in this segment of the world, apparently cut off and with no possible influence on the remainder, was in reality of vital importance.

The thought came that they might, here and now, be deciding future history.

He shrugged that off, forced his mind to grapple with the immediate problem. They had most of the night before them and they had to find a place where they could rest. He didn't feel tired, yet; but he knew that he couldn't expect to chase all over a city all day without some fatigue. That was where the hunters scored. In all probability the Prince hadn't even entered the arena.

They had been walking in the shadows of the pyramiding buildings with the stars overhead cut off at regular intervals as they walked under crosstown traffic ways. Looking up, Gilmore saw the stars dim, saw their frosty glitter fade. Clouds. Might be a storm. Surely, in a storm they would have a better chance to duck the killers?

Trina shivered.

"Blowing up for a storm," she said, her voice muted against the granite piles.

"Could be helpful."

"Hope the Prince gets his feet wet and catches his death of cold," Trina said vindictively.

From such a small, inconsequentially petty remark grew, Gilmore realized in a flash of insight, the basis for a complete understanding between them. His fears that Trina might be an agent for the Rachens were dispelled. He felt the consuming need to talk to her, trust her, unburden himself of the cloying miseries that had fouled up his life and eventually brought him here, into the arena of death. And not just because of her remark; that was merely the catalyst that stirred his emotions into high.

He took her arm, feeling the flesh soft yet firm under

the dark shirt, and guided her into the archway guarding the next building they passed. In faint light that seeped from scattered tubes, she looked at him, incipient surprise drawing up her eyebrows and rounding her eyes.

"Okay, Trina," he said harshly. "Let's lay out our cards. What interest have you got in the Prince, in this set-up—why did you volunteer for Metropolitan Safaris?"

She had composed herself, he saw with a twinge of annoyance. Any chance there might have been to catch her off balance had gone.

She said: "I told you, Buster. The usual reasons a girl does things her mother wouldn't approve. And as for the Prince, it so happens that my uncle—of whom you may have heard me speak—told me the score. The boy's bad medicine for Earth. His death won't solve anything dramatic, but will at least prevent Earth being even more sold down the drain. Follow? Or is all this heavy cranial stuff too much for your pea-sized brain?"

For answer Gilmore took the spurt gun slowly from his pocket.

TRINA said: "Oh!"

Gilmore said: "Hammond

gave me this. You know, Fatso's aide. Any ideas why?"

Thunder rolled somewhere shockingly. Gilmore glanced up from Trina's face, bemused. He saw that they were in the vaulting space of a railroad station.

"I might have good guesses," Trina said. "Such as Hammond isn't such a snake as we thought. He knows the score. He wants the Prince Dar-Lesseps out of the way. Who do you say Hammond was working for, Buster?"

"But that isn't possible!" Gilmore was profoundly moved at being forced to face the fact that he had been wrong. Just being wrong didn't matter much, if you straightened things out; but to re-orient your way of thinking—that was upsetting.

"It must be possible." Trina was matter-of-fact.

"There is an Underground, then. Earth is still fighting."

"Seems like it."

"You knew about this before." Gilmore said that with sudden conviction.

"Sure. Only I didn't know Hammond was in on the deal."

Gilmore said slowly: "He tried to buy me off. When I didn't play he trained me, turned me into an efficient hunter—and gave me a gun.

Yes," he finished with steel spikes sticking out of his voice. "Hammond wants the Prince killed."

"So?"

Gilmore laughed. "So I do my damndest to kill the rat! Easy. Come on, Baby, let's go!"

He hustled her out of the station between the flanking columns. His mind was inflamed. Head for the wire fence, wait—the Prince would show up. Blam! Blam! Blam! Out and away. Safe. And all those lovely greenbacks . . .

He didn't even think of Jimmy until afterwards.

Out on the street, Trina said: "What's the time?"

"One-thirty."

"Five hours."

Rain drops hit the paving stones. They sizzled against still warm walls and rapidly turned into miniature rivers. Gilmore exulted in the coolness against his fevered skin. Trina was staring up the road. She nudged him and, coldly, said: "Take it easy, Superman. The hoods are around."

Gilmore saw the taxi sleet-ing water away in a shining wake under the lights. It stopped, the motor whining patiently. Sheltering in the shadows under the Terminal arch they saw men get out,

stand to peer at their tracers, begin to walk unhurriedly towards them.

"Inside." Gilmore spat the word, frustration tearing him.

"Take it easy, Dirk," Trina spoke sharply, concern in her voice.

"I'm okay, Trina. We must shake these boys, get out to the wire."

"This might be the final one. They might mean it, this time."

"So they mean it. We'll make out."

Back inside the terminal, Gilmore headed through a gate to the darkened platform beside a northbound track. He found an air ventilator, with warm air pumping up from the subway cooling system beneath. He fished out two cigarettes, lit them up, and laid them carefully above the grating.

"What—oh, I see." Trina's eyes shone. "Clever guy."

Gilmore wasted no breath on replying. At his insistent pressure they ran softly towards the entrance, hunkered behind the dim bulk of a vending machine. He watched, his brain icy, as four men came into the cavernous platform section. This close, they were inside the tracer range. The four men paused.

One said: "There they are.

Smoking. What is this, anyway—"

Gilmore caught the stench of the others as one answered.

"We will decide. Close up on them. Quietly."

Rachens! Gilmore's flesh went goose-pimpled. He waited, breathing with carefully controlled rhythm, until the hunters had passed into the building. Trina stirred softly. They stood up, walked silently out and down. Gilmore was sweating and the sweat ran with the rain to cover his body with a slick film of water. His mouth was parched.

This time running away was different. This time he was bypassing those fools who were busily stalking two cigarettes back there, with his every sense strained on reaching and attacking the chief enemy. The hunter was now the hunted—although as yet he didn't know it.

THEY were about to climb into the cab when another cruised silently past. Gilmore waved it down. He lifted the hood of the cab in which the hunters had arrived and did rapid things with the wiring. Beamed central power, coming in over the pick-up aerial, normally was fed by trans-

former to the electric motor. Gilmore knew quite a bit about power beam engineering, and quite a bit more about the guts of motors. He straightened up, a nasty smile on his face, and bundled Trina into the second cab.

The cab slogged through the rain.

Even then he wasn't prepared to believe they had gotten away with it. The sickening sense of failure wrenched at him as bullets hammered into the car body. Trina cried out, quick and high. A window disappeared in a smother of glass splinters. A ricochet made a frantic screaming.

The slug that hit Gilmore seemed, at first, merely an extension of his own thoughts. When the bullet smashed into his shoulder he didn't feel anything beyond a growing numbness. The pain would come later.

Trina peered excitedly through the rear window. Gilmore reached over with his right hand and yanked her down.

"But—" she began.

"Wanna get killed?" he snarled. Then he realized the ludicrousness of the question. Trina knew what she was doing. He knew now, in this instant of terror in the rain, that she was the sort of girl

Jimmy should have had for a mother.

The interior of the cab was lit briefly by a lurid glow. Orange fire reflected from every piece of chrome. The explosion almost lifted the cab forward. The engine whined. There was a smell of burning rubber in the air, caught and held to earth by the blanket of the rain.

"They bought that one," Gilmore grunted.

"Booby trap. Now what?" Trina faced forward, bumped against Gilmore's arm. A groan he could not prevent welled past stiff lips.

"You big ape," Trina said hotly. "Why didn't you tell me you were hit?"

He submitted to the urgent probing of her fingers as the cab tore through the rain-dark streets, wincing as the tires screamed around corners and threw them against the upholstery. There was a tearing sound, and presently bandages were wrapped around the wound.

"You're lucky, Buster." Trina used the word Buster now in an entirely different way. "High velocity, clean. Right through. I've stopped the bleeding. If you don't get infected, you'll do okay."

"Thanks, Trina. You're a good egg."

"Why. Say. Thanks."

But for all her sarcasm, Gilmore sensed the warm glow of appreciation that went through her. That was the trouble with this world. People took each other for granted, never had time to say what they really thought.

The cab lurched over a grade road and stopped. They got out. Wind and rain tore at them. Up ahead the rain was sizzling in violent pyrotechnics from the fence and already a brown muddy river had formed to flow gurgling alongside the road.

Trina swore as the wind whipped her shirt out her pants. Gilmore saw that the tail was missing. Bandages. Together, they scuttled into the storm-drenched darkness, above them the thrashing tempest of waving branches. It was very dark. They waited a long while. After a time, somehow, Trina was in his arms, her skin cool and damp against his. The storm built up, tension flowing like thickened cream in the atmosphere, the vibrations of unseen things around them, hemming them in, compelling them to seek security in each other.

When the first searchlight shrieked through the blackness, sweeping back and forth like the lolling tongue of a

bloodhound, Gilmore felt nothing at all. He raised himself on an elbow and knuckled water from his eyes. The warm green smell of wet earth was everywhere. Mingled with that Earthly scent was the familiar yet horribly alien tang of Rachen.

"They're near," Trina whispered.

"Lost us on their tracers. Must be within fifty yards."

"What time is it?"

Gilmore checked his watch.

"The hell!" he said, shocked.

"What time is it?"

"Six o'clock."

"God! We've got to work this smart."

"If we can get out without tangling with the Prince—"

"No, Dirk. No good."

Trina's voice was hard. "That's our job. That's why we're here. We represent everybody on Earth who hates and loathes the Rachens. We have to do their job. It's our pigeon, whether we want it or not."

"I'm not sure I do—now. I want out, with you, and Jimmy—"

"If you fail Earth, Dirk, you'll never have me." He could see her eyes, and knew she meant it. "Oh, sure, I know it sounds corny. Heroics. But, Dirk, I mean it."

"But—"

"Whenever a war is fought someone gets the sticky end. There's always got to be some guys stupid enough to be up front. This time it's us, you and me."

"Why me? Why? Hell, just when there is a chance that I can get back my self-respect, go into the world again, start over. The money will do that—yours and mine. We can live our lives out in comfort without worrying about Rachens, or—"

"Sorry, Buster. You lose." Trina pointed. Over their heads the searchlights had been beating a crossword puzzle against the darkness. Now that darkness was lightening, the storm-retarded dawn was climbing wearily to survey its new day. "They are here."

And, following the girl's pointing finger, Gilmore saw that they were.

MEN and Rachens, fanning out, carrying their guns as though on a rabbit hunt, when the wheat has been cut down to a solitary island in the center of the field. Gilmore peered through narrowed eyes, weighing, sizing, deliberating. He couldn't see the Prince.

He had made up his mind. He would avoid this lot in

front, skulk inside their tracer range through the skirts of the storm, and break for the gate. His watch said six-twenty. Time enough.

The men made a great semi-circle between him and the city. In front the wire fence stretched, bleak and watchful—and yet supremely beckoning. His mind ran on. Of course, if the Prince got in the way—his hand reached for the spurt gun.

He went rigid.

The spurt gun was gone.

"I thought you were a man, Buster." Trina's voice was quite calm and controlled; yet it carried overtones of contempt such as Gilmore had never known could exist.

"I'm getting out," Gilmore said sullenly.

"Sure—after we settle with the Prince."

Sharp, nerve-fibrilating reports rang out in the dawn stillness. A few isolated birds wheeled up across the misty haze over the sun, their cries croaking and discordant. The rifles spat again. Bullets smacked wetly into the mud. Gilmore felt a tremble go through his legs, up his thighs, engulf his entire body. And he'd forgotten how to tremble.

Like hell he had.

Trina was lying on her

stomach, shirt all mud-splattered, her lips drawn back over white teeth. Panic gibbered at Gilmore. He saw over Trina's crew-cut hair the advancing Rachens, could almost see the grins of anticipatory lust on their faces.

This shouldn't be. This was no way to die!

Trina looked back, once, and then turned her head away. She said: "Jimmy will be looked after. Isn't that what you wanted?"

Something in Gilmore almost broke—but not quite. Something he didn't know he possessed, something that all the tough talk in the world couldn't hide, stood up straight and proud.

He lay down beside Trina. He said: "You said it was corny, Trina. And it is. But—I'm an Earthman."

"Dirk!"

"Go on," he said bitterly. "Laugh. Tell me what a goddam sucker I am. You would mention Jimmy. All right, you clever bitch, you. I'll show you how to die."

Trina didn't answer, snuggled the spurt gun closer.

"What's the matter?" Gilmore shouted. "You deaf, or something? I said I'd go along with you. Are you satisfied now? Isn't that what you want?"

The leading figures were waving. Gilmore twisted his head. Other Rachens rose from the wire, where they had been sitting all the time. He swore.

"Why, the dirty, double-crossing— Look, there's the Prince. Waiting for us to run for it. The swine. Well, we've spoiled his game."

Trina aimed the spurt gun. They pressed their faces into the mud.

Mud splashes began to shower them. Bullets cut above them. Gilmore knew that he would never have made it to the wire. Now all that mattered was the Prince. And that fine gentleman was hanging back, taking potshots with his shiny .280 magazine rifle.

"Hey!" Gilmore yelled, suddenly tremendously angry. "Hey, you stinking Rachen. Come on and get us. You alien monster, you! Baby-eater!" He began methodically to categorise all the filth that would upset a Rachen. The rifles answered almost hysterically. The fold in the mud saved them. They could not be hit from that angle.

"They must come closer," Trina said. Her mouth was pale, her cheeks flushed. The spurt gun was as steady as the city's foundations.

"All right, you scheming minx! All *right!* So I'm a failure. So I'm no good." Gilmore grabbed her in his arms, kissed her, feeling the rain and mud on her face. "So, okay. I'm no good. You got me into this situation, you jockeyed me into the dying business. So okay. I'll die."

Trina said: "What are you waiting for, Buster?"

"My God," Gilmore said, aghast. "You got no heart at all?"

"Hurry up! I'm hit! I'll bleed to death before you quit your heroics. *Move!*"

"*Trina!*"

"Do it, Dirk. Draw them. But hurry. Hurry!"

"Oh, Trina! God! God!" Gilmore began to shout and rave, to pray and curse. But he stood up, a shambling, filthy wreck, with blood-caked rags swathing his shoulders, and began to run. He ran frenziedly, waving his arms. His eyes were glazed. "Trina! Jimmy!"

BULLETS cut him to pieces. As he fell, with the sardonic face of the Prince rising to stand over him, with no feeling at all in his body, he wanted one thing before he died.

That one thing was vouchsafed him.

Lying like that, his head twisted up, glaring into the brightness of the new day, with the ugly blob of the alien's head cutting a harsh silhouette, he saw the Prince stiffen. Saw the incredible look of horror, surprise, agony on that star-spawned face.

Then, bisected by the spurt gun, the Prince's body fell on Gilmore. That dead alien would never rule Mars—or Earth.

As blackness, followed by supernal radiance, engulfed him, he was conscious of a regret for unfinished business. He never would collect that extra fifty thousand dollars.

∞ ∞ ∞