

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

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souvenir

by . . . Philip K. Dick

A hideous nightmare seemed the culture of Williamson's world—to men who knew nothing of beauty.

"HERE WE GO, SIR," the robot pilot said. The words startled Rogers and made him look up sharply. He tensed his body and adjusted the trace web inside his coat as the bubble ship started dropping, swiftly and silently, toward the planet's surface.

This—his heart caught—was Williamson's World. The legendary lost planet—found, after three centuries. By accident, of course. This blue and green planet, the holy grail of the Galactic System, had been almost miraculously discovered by a routine charting mission.

Frank Williamson had been the first Terran to develop an outer-space drive—the first to hop off from the Solar System toward the universe beyond. He had never come back. He—his world, his colony—had never been found. There had been endless rumors, false leads, fake legends—and nothing more.

"I'm receiving field clearance."
The robot pilot raised the gain on

Philip Dick's characters have an exciting way of letting their logically-motivated self-interest lead them straight down the flaming road to ruin. We suspect that it is this distinctly individual approach which has made him one of the most admired and widely read of science fiction writers of the past few years. Surely the conflict between adventurous idealism and blind self-seeking makes for spirited reading in any man's language.

the control speaker, and clicked to attention.

"Field ready," came a ghostly voice from below. "Remember, your drive mechanism is unfamiliar to us. How much run is required? Emergency brake-walls are up."

Rogers smiled. He could hear the pilot telling them that no run would be required. Not with this ship. The brake-walls could be lowered with perfect safety.

Three hundred years! It had taken a long time to find Williamson's World. Many authorities had given him up. Some believed he had never landed, had died out in space. Perhaps there was *no* Williamson's World. Certainly there had been no real clues, nothing tangible to go on. Frank Williamson and three families had utterly disappeared in the trackless void, never to be heard from again.

Until now . . .

The young man met him at the field. He was thin and red-haired and dressed in a colorful suit of bright material. "You're from the Galactic Relay Center?" he asked.

"That's right," Rogers said huskily. "I'm Edward Rogers."

The young man held out his hand. Rogers shook it awkwardly. "My name is Williamson," the young man said. "Gene Williamson."

The name thundered in Rogers' ears. "Are you—"

The young man nodded, his

gaze enigmatical. "I'm his great-great-great-great-grandson. His tomb is here. You may see it, if you wish."

"I almost expected to see him. He's —well, almost a god-figure to us. The first man to break out of the Solar System."

"He means a lot to us, too," the young man said. "He brought us here. They searched a long time before they found a planet that was habitable." Williamson waved at the city stretched out beyond the field. "This one proved satisfactory. It's the System's tenth planet."

Rogers' eyes began to shine. Williamson's World. Under his feet. He stamped hard as they walked down the ramp together, away from the field. How many men in the Galaxy had dreamed of striding down a landing ramp onto Williamson's World with a young descendant of Frank Williamson beside them?

"They'll all want to come here," Rogers said, as if aware of his thoughts. "Throw rubbish around and break off the flowers. Pick up handfuls of dirt to take back." He laughed a little nervously. "The Relay will control them, of course."

"Of course," Rogers assured him.

At the ramp-end Rogers stopped short. For the first time he saw the city.

"What's wrong?" Gene Wil-

Williamson asked, with a faint trace of amusement.

They had been cut off, of course. Isolated—so perhaps it wasn't so surprising. It was a wonder they weren't living in caves, eating raw meat. But Williamson had always symbolized progress—development. He had been a man *ahead* of other men.

True, his space-drive by modern standards had been primitive, a curiosity. But the concept remained unaltered; Williamson the pioneer, and inventor. The man who built.

Yet the city was nothing more than a village, with a few dozen houses, and some public buildings and industrial units at its perimeter. Beyond the city stretched green fields, hills, and broad prairies. Surface vehicles crawled leisurely along the narrow streets and most of the citizens walked on foot. An incredible anachronism it seemed, dragged up from the past.

"I'm accustomed to the uniform Galactic culture," Rogers said. "Relay keeps the technocratic and ideological level constant throughout. It's hard to adjust to such a radically different social stage. But you've been cut off."

"Cut off?" asked Williamson.

"From Relay. You've had to develop without help."

In front of them a surface vehicle crept to a halt. The driver opened the doors manually.

"Now that I recall these factors,

I can adjust," Rogers assured him.

"On the contrary," Williamson said, entering the vehicle. "We've been receiving your Relay coordinates for over a century." He motioned Rogers to get in beside him.

Rogers was puzzled. "I don't understand. You mean you hooked onto the web and yet made no attempt to—"

"We receive your coordinates," Gene Williamson said, "but our citizens are not interested in using them."

The surface vehicle hurried along the highway, past the rim of an immense red hill. Soon the city lay behind them—a faintly glowing plate reflecting the rays of the setting sun. Bushes and plants appeared along the highway. The sheer side of the cliff rose, a towering wall of deep red sandstone; ragged, untouched.

"Nice evening," Williamson said.

Rogers nodded in disturbed agreement.

Williamson rolled down the window. Cool air blew into the car. A few gnatlike insects followed. Far off, two tiny figures were plowing a field—a man and a huge lumbering beast.

"When will we be there?" Rogers asked.

"Soon. Most of us live away from the cities. We live in the country—in isolated self-sufficient farm units. They're modeled on the manors of the Middle Ages."

"Then you maintain only the most rudimentary subsistence level. How many people live on each farm?"

"Perhaps a hundred men and women."

"A hundred people can't manage anything more complex than weaving and dyeing and paper pressing."

"We have special industrial units—manufacturing systems. This vehicle is a good example of what we can turn out. We have communication and sewage and medical agencies. We have technological advantages equal to Terra's."

"Terra of the twenty-first century," Rogers protested. "But that was three hundred years ago. You're purposely maintaining an archaic culture in the face of the Relay coordinates. It doesn't make sense."

"Maybe we prefer it."

"But you're not free to prefer an inferior cultural stage. Every culture has to keep pace with the general trend. Relay makes actual a uniformity of development. It integrates the valid factors and rejects the rest."

They were approaching the farm, Gene Williamson's "manor." It consisted of a few simple buildings clustered together in a valley, to the side of the highway, surrounded by fields and pastures. The surface vehicle turned down a narrow side road and spiralled cautiously toward the floor of the

valley. The air became darker. Cold wind blew into the car, and the driver clicked his headlights on.

"No robots?" Rogers asked.

"No," Williamson replied. "We do all our own work."

"You're making a purely arbitrary distinction," Rogers pointed out. "A robot is a machine. You don't dispense with machines as such. This car is a machine."

"True," Williamson acknowledged.

"The machine is a development of the tool," Rogers went on. "The axe is a simple machine. A stick becomes a tool, a simple machine, in the hands of a man reaching for something. A machine is merely a multi-element tool that increases the power ratio. Man is the tool-making animal. The history of man is the history of tools into machines, greater and more efficient functioning elements. If you reject machinery you reject man's essential key."

"Here we are," Williamson said. The vehicle came to a halt and the driver opened the doors for them.

Three or four huge wooden buildings loomed up in the darkness. A few dim shapes moved around—human shapes.

"Dinner's ready," Williamson said, sniffing. "I can smell it."

They entered the main building. Several men and women were sitting at a long rough table. Plates and dishes had been set in front

of them. They were waiting for Williamson.

"This is Edward Rogers," Williamson announced. The people studied Rogers curiously, then turned back to their food.

"Sit down," a dark-eyed girl urged. "By me."

They made a place for him near the end of the table. Rogers started forward, but Williamson restrained him. "Not there. You're *my* guest. You're expected to sit with me."

The girl and her companions laughed. Rogers sat down awkwardly by Williamson. The bench was rough and hard under him. He examined a hand made wooden drinking cup. The food was piled in huge wooden bowls. There was a stew and a salad and great loaves of bread.

"We could be back in the fourteenth century," Rogers said.

"Yes," Williamson agreed. "Manor life goes back to Roman times and to the classical world. The Gauls. Britons."

"These people here. Are they—"

Williamson nodded. "My family. We're divided up into small units arranged according to the traditional patriarch basis. I'm the oldest male and titular head."

The people were eating rapidly, intent on their food—boiled meat, vegetables, scooped up with hunks of bread and butter and washed down with milk. The room was lit by fluorescent lighting.

"Incredible," Rogers murmured. "You're still using electric power."

"Oh, yes. There are plenty of waterfalls on this planet. The vehicle was electric. It was run by a storage battery."

"Why are there no older men?" Rogers saw several dried-up old women, but Williamson was the oldest man. And he couldn't have been over thirty.

"The fighting," Williamson replied, with an expressive gesture.

"Fighting?"

"Clan wars between families are a major part of our culture." Williamson nodded toward the long table. "We don't live long."

Rogers was stunned. "Clan wars? But—"

"We have pennants, and emblems—like the old Scottish tribes."

He touched a bright ribbon on his sleeve, the representation of a bird. "There are emblems and colors for each family and we fight over them. The Williamson family no longer controls this planet. There is no central agency, now. For a major issue we have the plebiscite—a vote by all of the clans. Each family on the planet has a vote."

"Like the American Indians."

Williamson nodded. "It's a tribal system. In time we'll be distinct tribes, I suppose. We still retain a common language, but we're breaking up—decentralizing. And each family to its own ways, its own customs and manners."

"Just what do you fight for?"

Williamson shrugged. "Some real things like land and women. Some imaginary. Prestige for instance. When honor is at stake we have an official semi-annual public battle. A man from each family takes part. The best warrior and his weapons."

"Like the medieval joust."

"We've drawn from all traditions. Human tradition as a whole."

"Does each family have its separate deity?"

Williamson laughed. "No. We worship in common a vague animism. A sense of the general positive vitality of the universal process." He held up a loaf of bread. "Thanks for all this."

"Which you grew yourselves."

"On a planet provided for us."

Williamson ate his bread thoughtfully. "The old records say the ship was almost finished. Fuel just about gone—one dead, arid waste after another. If this planet hadn't turned up, the whole expedition would have perished."

"Cigar?" Williamson said, when the empty bowls had been pushed back.

"Thanks." Rogers accepted a cigar noncommittally. Williamson lit his own, and settled back against the wall.

"How long are you staying?" he asked presently.

"Not long," Rogers answered.

"There's a bed fixed up for

you," Williamson said. "We retire early, but there'll be some kind of dancing, also singing and dramatic acts. We devote a lot of time to staging, and producing drama."

"You place an emphasis on psychological release?"

"We enjoy making and doing things, if that's what you mean."

Rogers stared about him. The walls were covered with murals painted directly on the rough wood. "So I see," he said. "You grind your own colors from clay and berries?"

"Not quite," Williamson replied. "We have a big pigment industry. Tomorrow I'll show you our kiln where we fire our own things. Some of our best work is with fabrics and screen processes."

"Interesting. A decentralized society, moving gradually back into primitive tribalism. A society that voluntarily rejects the advanced technocratic and cultural products of the Galaxy, and thus deliberately withdraws from contact with the rest of mankind."

"From the uniform Relay-controlled society only," Williamson insisted.

"Do you know why Relay maintains a uniform level for all worlds?" Rogers asked. "I'll tell you. There are two reasons. First, the body of knowledge which men have amassed doesn't permit duplication of experiment. There's no time."

"When a discovery has been made it's absurd to repeat it on

countless planets throughout the universe. Information gained on any of the thousand worlds is flashed to Relay Center and then out again to the whole Galaxy. Relay studies and selects experiences and co-ordinates them into a rational, functional system without contradictions. Relay orders the total experience of mankind into a coherent structure."

"And the second reason?"

"If uniform culture is maintained, controlled from a central source, there won't be war."

"True," Williamson admitted.

"We've abolished war. It's as simple as that. We have a homogenous culture like that of ancient Rome—a common culture for all mankind which we maintain throughout the Galaxy. Each planet is as involved in it as any other. There are no backwaters of culture to breed envy and hatred."

"Such as this."

Rogers let out his breath slowly. "Yes—you've confronted us with a strange situation. We've searched for Williamson's World for three centuries. We've wanted it, dreamed of finding it. It has seemed like Prester John's Empire—a fabulous world, cut off from the rest of humanity. Maybe not real at all. Frank Williamson might have crashed."

"But he didn't."

"He didn't, and Williamson's World is alive with a culture of its own. Deliberately set apart, with its own way of life, its own stand-

ards. Now contact has been made, and our dream has come true. The people of the Galaxy will soon be informed that Williamson's World has been found. We can now restore the first colony outside the Solar system to its rightful place in the Galactic culture."

Rogers reached into his coat, and brought out a metal packet. He unfastened the packet and laid a clean, crisp document on the table.

"What's this?" Williamson asked.

"The Articles of Incorporation. For you to sign, so that Williamson's World can become a part of the Galactic culture."

Williamson and the rest of the people in the room fell silent. They gazed down at the document, none of them speaking.

"Well?" Rogers said. He was tense. He pushed the document toward Williamson. "Here it is."

Williamson shook his head. "Sorry." He pushed the document firmly back toward Rogers. "We've already taken a plebiscite. I hate to disappoint you, but we've already decided not to join. That's our *final* decision."

The Class-One battleship assumed an orbit outside the gravity belt of Williamson's World.

Commander Ferris contacted the Relay Center. "We're here. What next?"

"Send down a wiring team. Report back to me as soon as it has made surface contact."

Ten minutes later Corporal Pete Matson was dropped overboard in a pressurized gravity suit. He drifted slowly toward the blue and green globe beneath, turning and twisting as he neared the surface of the planet.

Matson landed and bounced a couple of times. He got shakily to his feet. He seemed to be at the edge of a forest. In the shadow of the huge trees he removed his crash helmet. Holding his blast rifle tightly he made his way forward, cautiously advancing among the trees.

His ear phones clicked. "Any sign of activity?"

"None, Commander," he signaled back.

"There's what appears to be a village to your right. You may run into some one. Keep moving, and watch out. The rest of the team is dropping, now. Instructions will follow from your Relay web."

"I'll watch out," Matson promised, cradling his blast rifle. He sighted it experimentally at a distant hill and squeezed the trigger. The hill disintegrated into dust, a rising column of waste particles.

Matson climbed a long ridge and shielded his eyes to peer around him.

He could see the village. It was small, like a country town on Terra. It looked interesting. For a moment he hesitated. Then he stepped quickly down from the

ridge and headed toward the village, moving rapidly, his supple body alert.

Above him, from the Class-One battleship, three more of the team were already falling, clutching their guns and tumbling gently toward the surface of the planet...

Rogers folded up the Incorporation papers and returned them slowly to his coat. "You understand what you're doing?" he asked.

The room was deathly silent. Williamson nodded. "Of course. We're refusing to join your Relay system."

Rogers' fingers touched the trace web. The web warmed into life. "I'm sorry to hear that," he said.

"Does it surprise you?"

"Not exactly. Relay submitted our scout's report to the computers. There was always the possibility you'd refuse. I was given instructions in case of such an event."

"What are your instructions?"

Rogers examined his wrist-watch. "To inform you that you have six hours to join us—or be blasted out of the universe." He got abruptly to his feet. "I'm sorry this had to happen. Williamson's World is one of our most precious legends. But nothing must destroy the unity of the Galaxy."

Williamson had risen. His face was ash white, the color of death.

They faced each other defiantly.

"We'll fight," Williamson said quietly. His fingers knotted together violently, clenching and unclenching.

"That's unimportant. You've received Relay coordinates on weapons development. You know what our war fleet has."

The other people sat quietly at their places, staring rigidly down at their empty plates. No one moved.

"Is it necessary?" Williamson said harshly.

"Cultural variation must be avoided if the Galaxy is to have peace," Rogers replied firmly.

"You'd destroy us to avoid war?"

"We'd destroy anything to avoid war. We can't permit our society to degenerate into bickering provinces, forever quarreling and fighting—like your clans. We're stable because we lack the very concept of variation. Uniformity must be preserved and separation must be discouraged. The idea itself must remain unknown."

Williamson was thoughtful. "Do you think you can keep the idea unknown? There are so many semantic correlatives, hints, verbal leads. Even if you blast us, it may arise somewhere else."

"We'll take that chance." Rogers moved toward the door. "I'll return to my ship and wait there. I suggest you take another vote. Maybe knowing how far

we're prepared to go will change the results."

"I doubt it."

Rogers' web whispered suddenly. "This is North at Relay."

Rogers fingered the web in acknowledgment.

"A Class-One battleship is in your area. A team has already been landed. Keep your ship grounded until it can fall back. I've ordered the team to lay out its fission-mine terminals."

Rogers said nothing. His fingers tightened around the web compulsively.

"What's wrong?" Williamson asked.

"Nothing." Rogers pushed the door open. "I'm in a hurry to return to my ship. Let's go."

Commander Ferris contacted Rogers as soon as his ship had left Williamson's World.

"North tells me you've already informed them," Ferris said.

"That's right. He also contacted your team directly. Had it prepare the attack."

"So I'm informed. How much time did you offer them?"

"Six hours."

"Do you think they'll give in?"

"I don't know," Rogers said.

"I hope so. But I doubt it."

Williamson's World turned slowly in the view-screen with its green and blue forests, rivers and oceans. Terra might have looked that way, once. He could see the Class-One battleship, a great

silvery globe moving slowly in its orbit around the planet.

The legendary world had been found and contacted. Now it would be destroyed. He had tried to prevent it, but without success. He couldn't prevent the inevitable.

If Williamson's World refused to join the Galactic culture its destruction became a necessity—grim, axiomatic. It was either Williamson's World or the Galaxy. To preserve the greater, the lesser had to be sacrificed.

He made himself as comfortable as possible by the viewscreen, and waited.

At the end of six hours a line of black dots rose from the planet and headed slowly toward the Class-One battleship. He recognized them for what they were—old-fashioned jet-driven rocket ships. A formation of antiquated war vessels, rising up to give battle.

The planet had not changed its mind. It was going to fight. It was willing to be destroyed, rather than give up its way of life.

The black dots grew, swiftly larger, became roaring blazing metal disks puffing awkwardly along. A pathetic sight. Rogers felt strangely moved, watching the jet-driven ships divide up for the contact. The Class-One battleship had left its orbit, and was swinging in a lazy, efficient arc. Its banks of energy tubes were slowly rising, lining up to meet the attack.

Suddenly the formation of ancient rocketships dived. They rumbled over the Class-One, firing jerkily. The Class-One's tubes followed their path. They began to reform clumsily, gaining distance for a second try, and another run.

A tongue of colorless energy flicked out. The attackers vanished.

Commander Ferris contacted Rogers. "The poor tragic fools." His heavy face was gray. "Attacking us with those things."

"Any damage?"

"None whatever." Ferris wiped his forehead shakily. "No damage to me at all."

"What next?" Rogers asked stonily.

"I've declined the mine operation and passed it back to Relay. They'll have to do it. The impulse should already be—"

Below them, the green and blue globe shuddered convulsively. Soundlessly, effortlessly, it flew apart. Fragments rose, bits of debris and the planet dissolved in a cloud of white flame, a blazing mass of incandescent fire. For an instant it remained a miniature sun, lighting up the void. Then it faded into ash.

The screens of Rogers' ship hummed into life, as the debris struck. Particles rained against them, and were instantly disintegrated.

"Well," Ferris said. "It's over. North will report the original scout

mistaken. Williamson's World wasn't found. The legend will remain a legend."

Rogers continued to watch until the last bits of debris had ceased flying, and only a vague, discolored shadow remained. The screens clicked off automatically. To his right, the Class-One battleship picked up speed and headed toward the Riga System.

Williamson's World was gone. The Galactic Relay culture had been preserved. The idea, the concept of a separate culture with its own ways, its own customs, had been disposed of in the most effective possible way.

"Good job," the Relay trace web whispered. North was pleased. "The fission mines were perfectly placed. Nothing remains."

"No," Rogers agreed. "Nothing remains."

Corporal Pete Matson pushed the front door open, grinning from ear to ear. "Hi, honey! Surprise!"

"Pete!" Gloria Matson came running, throwing her arms around her husband. "What are you doing home? Pete—"

"Special leave. Forty-eight hours." Pete tossed down his suitcase triumphantly. "Hi there, kid."

His son greeted him shyly. "Hello."

Pete squatted down and opened his suitcase. "How have things been going? How's school?"

"He's had another cold," Gloria

said. "He's almost over it. But what happened? Why did they—"

"Military secret." Pete fumbled in his suitcase. "Here." He held something out to his son. "I brought you something. A souvenir."

He handed his son a hand-made wooden drinking cup. The boy took it shyly and turned it around, curious and puzzled. "What's a—a *souvenir*?"

Matson struggled to express the difficult concept. "Well, it's something that reminds you of a different place. Something you don't have, where you are. You know." Matson tapped the cup. "That's to drink out of. It's sure not like our plastic cups, is it?"

"No, the child said.

"Look at this, Gloria." Pete shook out a great folded cloth from his suitcase, printed with multi-colored designs. "Picked this up cheap. You can make a skirt out of it. What do you say? Ever seen anything like it?"

"No," Gloria said, awed. "I haven't." She took the cloth and fingered it reverently.

Pete Matson beamed, as his wife and child stood clutching the souvenirs he had brought them, reminders of his excursions to distant places. Foreign lands.

"Gee," his son whispered, turning the cup around and around. A strange light glowed in his eyes. "Thanks a lot, Dad. For the—*souvenir*."

The strange light grew.