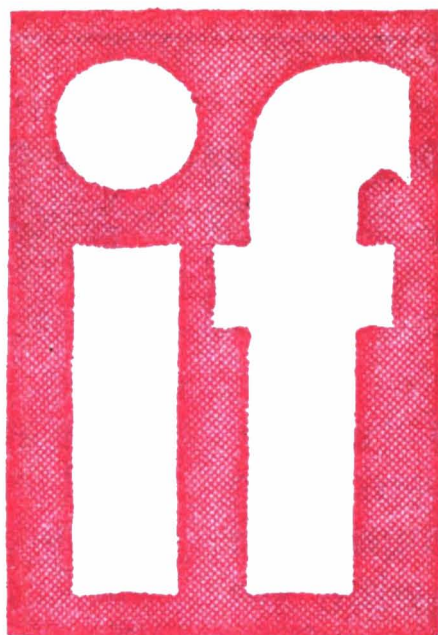


worlds of



MARCH 1963

All Stories New

science fiction

Vol. 13, Number 1

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Cover by Virgil Finlay from The Time Tombs

Next issue (May) on Sale March 14th

IF published bi-monthly by Digest Productions Corporation, Robert M. Guinn, President, Vol. 13, No. 1, Main Office: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, New York. 40c per copy. Subscriptions 12 issues \$3.60 in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South and Central America and U. S. possessions, elsewhere \$4.60. Second-class postage paid at New York, New York, and at additional mailing offices. Copyright by Digest Productions Corporation, 1963. All rights including translations reserved. All material submitted must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction, and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coincidental. Printed in the U. S. A. by the Guinn Company, Inc., New York 14, N. Y.

THE ABANDONED OF YAN

BY DONALD F. DALEY

**The Abandoned have nei-
ther rights nor hopes.
They only have revenge!**

After her husband left her, Mari-
gold filed a protection-request
form and an availability form.

She did not do this immediately. She stayed up for the better part of the night, hoping that he would come back. She could not bring herself to believe that he would really walk out on her and leave her available for confiscation, or for the slavery pool. She also thought for quite a while about the possibility of somehow getting back to Earth, where she would not be available for either.

She even went to the fantastic expense of televiewing there to talk with her father and mother. They had been shocked and unfriendly.

They had said good-by with a finality which left little room for doubt as to what they thought of an Abandoned. They had never had one in their family, they had pointed out, neither of them, and they did not intend to have one in their family now. They had warned her that they intended to report the call to the Beta III Protection People.

This did not worry her much. The call almost certainly had been monitored anyway. If they wanted to go to the considerable extra expense of reporting it, in order to impress the Protection People with their loyalty, that was their own lookout. She understood that, now, she had no fam-

ily. She thought for a moment of going up-ramp to say good-by to the children, but she knew that this would not help.

Besides, it was illegal. They were no longer hers. She was an Abandoned.

She had never known what a tremendously harrowing experience filling out an availability form could be. Name, age, Sector, race, size-classification, beauty-index, fertility tests, personality scores, aptitudes, psyche-rating and so on, and so on and so on. It was like undressing for an auction. The protection-request form was much simpler, except for that one question: STATUS? Her hand shook almost uncontrollably as she wrote. *Abandoned.*

After that she did not know what to do. She had stood for nearly twenty minutes before the document file, listening, thinking desperately that he would come back; that if she only waited a few minutes more he would come back. She had made herself refreshment. She had sat with the filled-out documents on her lap looking, from time to time, longingly at the entrance-ramp. But he had not come back. Finally, with a low moaning sound, she had pushed the papers through the document file slot. She made the deadline by a scant three minutes.

Now she knew that whatever else happened, the Protection People would be there in the morning to pick up the children. She knew that it could show in her favor if she were to get together the things they

would need to take with them. She could do this without seeing them and without talking to them, which was forbidden, but she could not bring herself to move.

The red light on the atmosphere control blinked warningly. Soon it would let out a piercing scream. She was tempted to just let it. Another of Clytia's suns must have set. She found that she had no sense of time. She had only the conviction that this would be her last night. The last night that mattered to her at all. She wanted it to be a long one. She had adjusted the atmoset. She had done this every night for the seven years of their marriage. She began to sob uncontrollably. She took her Status Married card and tore it in half. Then she held the halves to her cheeks, her face wet and wretched between them.

After a while she dialed the credit balance at her account. The figures came back indicating a balance of 1300. He had left her quite a lot, when you considered that she had televiewed to Earth. She cried hard again because she knew that he had not had to leave her anything at all. This made her certain (although she had known it already) that he was not coming back.

She sat for quite a while studying the 1300 credit indicator. She thought about using the money to buy a "pick-up-immediately advertisement" on the omnivision. She was not sure of the rates, but she thought the amount might even

stretch to include a picture of her. She did not know. She did not even know if she would be expected to be nude or dressed for the picture. In the end, she decided not to try an advertisement because there would not be time enough to employ a reply-receiving address. All that would be accomplished would be to put every predator within miles in possession of the address of an Abandoned.

She took a dictator and said into it: "Dear children, I am leaving you 1300 credit." She stopped then and shook her head. The tears made it so that she could not see, and she did not seem to be able to think. "Correction," she sobbed. "Erase preceding. Dear Children of Yan, I make you this gift of 1300. I am sure that your excellence will continue to deserve much more than so small a gift. I send love with this small gift."

There could, of course, be no signature. An Abandoned had none.

She wished that she had not made the Earth call. There would have been much more to leave them then. He had left an astonishing amount in her account. It was almost as though he had expected her to try to get away. She wished now that she had thought before taking action. There might have been some way out.

She must have fallen asleep. The morning announcements came on as usual, waking her. She listened to the instructions for that day, and the areas announced as forbidden.

She made no effort, however, to indicate them on the day-map. She knew that, now, none of this applied to her.

With a very great effort she got up and shut off the children's ramp, so that they could not come down. She knew how much this would count in her favor. Then she began, as hurriedly as she could, to collect the things they would need. She knew that she could not possibly get the things together in time, and that so late an effort was more likely to count against her. She was not even close to finished when the announcer flashed on.

Without asking who it was, she pressed the admitter. She was glad that they had troubled to announce themselves.

She offered to go into another room while they removed the children. They did not answer. One of them threw a sack over her. After a moment, they took it off again and, rather apologetically, asked her to indicate where the child-ramp control was. She showed them. Their leader said that perhaps it would be all right for her to go into another room if one of them went with her. When she saw the one chosen, she put the sack back on herself. They laughed so hard at this that she did not hear the children leave.

When the children had been taken out, the leader came back and removed the sack from around her. He asked if she had applied for protection. She showed her card.

"Well, that's too bad," he said. "Do you have any refreshment left?"

She did not dare to lie to him. She showed him. He helped himself.

"How about credits?" he asked.

"I gave it all to the ones who were here," she answered carefully. She felt quick panic because she remembered that she had not so instructed her account. She had merely dictated it to the children. If he didn't find out, though, that would be all right. The dictation was proof enough. But while she was still in this house, the credits were still in her control.

"My credit indicator is here," she said, holding it out. He didn't take it.

"Thanks for the refreshment," he said, getting up. "Make yourself comfortable. The others will be here shortly."

She had nothing to do to make herself ready. She could not take anything from this house. Sometimes they let you wear what you were wearing, if it did not look as though you had put on your best things. They did not always allow it, but they did sometimes. She remembered that she had expressed strong disapproval of that to Yan, when they were newly married. Then they both felt the same way about Abandoned.

She indicated to her account how she wanted the 1300 disposed. Then she waited. After a while, the Protection People came and led her out of the house. They did not touch her or speak to her, they merely formed a square in the center of which she

walked. They led her to a records room where an interview apparatus prepared a report on her.

"You have filed availability papers?" it asked.

"Yes," she said, and gave the file number.

"This is being checked," the apparatus said. "Have you any claims upon the State?"

She came very close to mentioning the children. "None," she said in a very small voice. It was difficult to remember that the interview apparatus was not at all sensitive.

"Have you credits in your possession?" the machine asked.

"None," she said.

"You are eligible for exclusion from the slave classification in what way?" That part of the recording seemed a bit worn. At least she did not hear it very well.

"In no way," she replied.

"You will wait," said the machine, "until we have a report on the availability petition which you have filed. Please take a seat."

There were no seats. This was an older machine which they had not bothered to replace, or even to correct. She stood in horror as the long minutes passed.

Her number was finally called.

"I am here," she said as the machine hummed, and she gave her number.

"Your availability petition has been taken up," said the machine. "You are however to receive twenty-eight demerits for disposing of

6300 credit after having been abandoned. Do you accept?"

"I accept," she said. She was so dizzy that she could hardly stand. The machine whirred and produced a reception-area card. She read it, and walked as in a daze to the indicated reception area. Yan waited for her there.

"You look terrible," he said as he put his arm around her. "I'm sorry. You made me do this to you. I didn't want to. It's all over now, don't cry."

She thought that she was going to faint.

"Thank you for receiving me," she said, according to the formula. "I am the Abandoned of Yan, of the Estate . . ."

"Stop it!" he said. "I know who you are! Stop it!"

"Do you have children at your estate?" She asked it as one asks a polite, social question.

"They'll be there when we get home," he said. "Don't do this. I didn't know it would hurt that much. I wouldn't have done it if I had. They're your children again now." He held her shoulders as he looked at her.

"I came to you with twenty-eight demerits," she said. "Shall I work them off before I come to your estate?"

"Please, stop it!" he said. "They were paid when you accepted. I waited here all night. No one else could have claimed you. Please, come on home now?" He handed her a brand-new wife-status card.

"Thank you," she said. "I shall try to deserve the opportunity which you restore to me." He smiled as she recited the formula and took his arm. Yet he did not look as if he felt like smiling.

"Come home," he said. "Come home now. I'll not hurt you again." He led her back to their estate.

That night, feeling entirely justified, she abandoned him.

"Mommy," the children shouted. They ran to her and hugged her. They had missed her, and had resented the disturbance in their routine. "Mommy!" They danced and shouted, "Mommy! Mommy, Mommy!"

When it was their bed time, he left her alone with them. He said good night to them himself, kissed them and squeezed her shoulder. "It's good to have you home again!" he said. His eyes filled with tears and he hurried from the room.

"Tell us a story, Mommy." It was the custom of the household.

There were tears in her eyes and her voice trembled a little, but she said in what seemed to them a perfect narrative style:

"Once upon a time there were two very good and loving children who found that it was their duty to denounce their father to the state and to see him publicly flogged to death. You must listen very carefully to this," she said, "both of you.

"At first, they thought that this was a very sad duty . . ."

END