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THE FACES OUTSIDE

BY BRUCE McALLISTER

**They were all that was
left of humanity — if
they were still human!**

I wanted to call her Soft Breast, because she is soft when I hold her to me. But the Voice told me to call her Diane. When I call her Diane, I have a pleasant feeling, and she seems closer to me. She likes the name "Diane". The Voice knew what was best, of course, as it always does.

I must mate with her every day, when the water is brightest. The Voice says so. It also says that I am in a "tank", and that the water is brightest when the "sun" is over the "tank". I do not understand the meaning of "sun", but the Voice says

that "noon" is when the "Sun" is over the "tank". I must mate with Diane every "noon".

I *do* know what the "tank" is. It is a very large thing filled with water, and having four "corners", one of which is the Cave where Diane and I sleep when the water is black like the ink of the squid and cold like dead fish. But we stay warm. There is the "floor" of the "tank", the "floor" being where all the rock and seaweed is, with all the crawling fish and crabs, where Diane and I walk and sleep. There are four "sides". "Sides" are smooth and blue

walls, and have "view-ports" — round, transparent areas — on them. The Voice says that the things in the "view-ports" are Faces. I have a face, as does Diane. But the cracked, flat things with small lights circling about them are not pretty like Diane's face. The Voice says that the Faces have bodies, like myself, and Diane. No body could be like Diane's. I think I should be quite sick if I saw the bodies of the Faces.

The Voice then says that the Faces are watching us, as we sometimes watch the porpoises. It took a very long time to grow used to having the Faces watch us, as Diane and I came together, but we learned to do it as simply as we swim and sleep.

But Diane does not have babies. I am very sad when I see the porpoises and whales with their young. Diane and I sleep together in the Cave; Diane is very warm and soft. We sleep in happiness. but when we are awake, we are lonely. I question the Voice about a baby for Diane, but the Voice is always silent.

I grow to hate the Faces in the "view-ports". They are always watching, watching. The Voice says that they are enemies, and bad. The Faces have not tried to hurt me; but I must think of them as enemies because the Voice says so. I ask bad, like the shark? The Voice says, no, worse than the sharks and eels. It says that the Faces are evil.

The "tank" must be high, because the water is high. I have gone once to the surface, and, although I could get used to it, the light was too much for my eyes. It took me

two hundred and seventy kicks to the surface; it took me three thousand steps from our Cave to the opposite "side". The "tank" is very large, otherwise the whales would not be happy.

The fish are many, but the dangers are few. I have seen the sharks kill. But the shark does not come near me if I see it and am afraid. Sometimes I have caught it sneaking up behind me, but when I turn it leaves quickly. I have questioned the Voice about why the sharks leave. It does not know. It has no one to ask.

Today the "sun" must be very large, or powerful, or bright, because the water is brighter than most days.

When I awoke Diane was not beside me. The rock of the Cave is jagged, so as I make my way from our bed of cool and slick seaweed, toward the entrance, I scrape my leg on the fifth kick. Not much blood comes from the cut. That is fortunate. because when there is blood the sharks come.

Diane has grabbed the tail of a porpoise, and both are playing. Diane and I love the porpoises. Sometimes we can even hear their thoughts. They are different from the other fish; they are more like us. But they have babies and we do not.

Diane sees me and, wanting to play, swims behind a rock and looks back, beckoning. I make a grab at her as I sneak around the rock. But she darts upward, toward the surface, where her body is a shadow of

beauty against the lighter water above her. I follow her, but she ducks and I sail past her. Diane pulls up her legs, knees under her chin, and puts her arms around them. She then drops like a rock toward the "floor".

I have caught a porpoise by his top fin. He knows my wish, so he speeds toward Diane, circles her and butts her soft thighs with his snout. She laughs, but continues to stay in a ball, her black hair waving. She is very beautiful.

I try to pry her arms from around her legs gently, but she resists. I must use force. Diane does not mind when I do; because she knows I love her.

I pull her arms away, and slip my arms under hers, kissing her on the lips for a long time. Struggling to free herself, laughing again, she pokes me sharply with her elbow and escapes my arms. I am surprised. She quickly puts her arms around my neck, pulls herself to my back and links her slim legs around my middle. She is pretending that I am a porpoise. I laugh. She pinches me to go ahead. I swim upward, but her thoughts tell me she wants to go to the Cave.

I understand. I carry her through the water very slowly, feeling the warmth and nipples of her breasts pressed against my back as she rests her head on my shoulder and smiles.

The Faces continue to stare. Many times I have searched for a word to show my hatred for them. I shall find it somehow, though. Sooner or later.

“What count of planets had the Terrans infested?” The furry humanoid leaned over the desk and stared, unblinking, at the lesser humanoid in the only other chair in the room. His gaze was dropped as he scratched informally at the heavy fur at his wrist. He raised his gaze again.

“Forty-three is the count, *beush*,” replied the other.

“And the count of planets destroyed?”

“Forty-three planetoid missiles were sent and detonated simultaneously without resistance or losses on our part, *beush*,” the assistant *beush* answered indirectly.

The room was hot, so the *beush* lazily passed his hand over a faintly glowing panel.

The room was cooled, and a large-eyed female with silky, ochrous fur — very desirable to the majority of humanoids — entered with two flared glasses of an odorless, transparent liquid — very desirable to the majority of humanoids. The lesser humanoid was being treated exceptionately well.

The room was momentarily silent as the two sipped at their drinks with black lips. The *beush*, as customary, spoke first. “Inform me of the pre-espionage intelligence accomplishments contra - Energi. I have not been previously informed. Do not spare the details.”

“Of certainty, *beush*,” began the assistant with all the grace of an informer. “The Light and Force Research of the Energi is executed in one center of one planet, the planet being Energa, as our intelligence

service has conveniently listed it. The Energi have negative necessity for secrecy in their Light and Force Research, because, first, all centers are crusted and protected by Force Domes. Second, it is near impossibility that one could so self-disguise that he would negatively be detectable." He hesitated.

"And these Energi," queried the *beush*, "are semi-telepathic or empathic?"

"Affirmative," the assistant mumbled.

"Then you have there a third reason," offered the *beush*.

"Graces be given you, *beush*."

The *beush* nodded in approval. "Continue, but negatively hesitate frequently or it will be necessary to discuss this subject post-present."

His assistant trembled slightly. "Unequivocally affirmative. *Beush*, your memory relates that five periods ante-present, when there existed the Truce inter Energi, Terrans and ourselves, there was a certain period during which gifts of the three nucleus-planets were exchanged in friendship. The Terrans were self-contented to donate to the Energi an immense 'aquarium'—an 'aquarium' consisting of a partly transparent cell in which was placed a collection of Terran life-forms that breathed their oxygen from the dense atmosphere of Terran seas. But, as a warp-space message from the Terran Council indirectly proclaimed, the degenerate Terrans negatively possessed a ship of any Space type large or powerful enough to transport the 'aquarium'

to Energa. Our ships being the largest of the Truce, we were petitioned by the Terrans to transport it. These events developed before the Terrans grew pestiferous to our cause. We obliged, but even our vastest ship was slow, because the physical power necessary to bring the weight of the cell through warp-space quickly was too great for the solitary four generators. It was imperative that the trip be on a longer trajectory arranged through norm-space. During the duration of the trip, feelings of suspicion arose inter Three Truce Races. As your memory also relates, the 'aquarium' was still in space when we found it necessary to obliterate the total race of Terrans. The message of the annihilation arrived in retard to the Energi, so Time permitted us to devise a contra-Energi intelligence plan, a necessity since it was realized that the Energi would be disturbed by our action contra-Terrans and would, without doubt, take action contra-ourselves.

"Unknown to you, *beush*, or to the masses and highers, an insignificant pleasure craft was extracted from Terran Space and negatively consumed with a planet when the bombs were detonated. The ship accommodated two Terrans. Proper Terrans by birth, negatively by reference. One was male, other female. The two had been in their culture socially and religiously united in a ceremony called 'matrimony'. Emotions of sex, protection and an emotion we have negatively been able to analyze linked the two, and made them ideal for our purpose."

The assistant looked at the *beush*, picked up his partially full glass and, before he could sip it, was dashed to the floor beside the *beush* himself. The former helped the higher to his unstable legs, and was commented to by the same, "Assistant, proceed to the protecroom."

They entered the well-illuminated closet and immediately slipped into the unwieldy metallic suits. Once again they took their seats, the *beush* reflecting and saying, "As your memory relates, that explosion was a bomb-drop concussion from the Rebellers. We must now wear anti-radiation protection. For that reason, and the danger of the Energi, you *do* see why we need the formulae of the Force Domes, *immediately*."

There was menace in his voice. The assistant trembled violently. Using the rare smile of that humanoid race, the *beush* continued, "Do negatively self-preoccupy. Resume your information, if contented."

"Contented," came the automatic reply, and the assistant began, "The two humans were perfect for the Plan, I repeat. Before the Energi received the message of the race destruction, it was imperative that we establish an agent on Energa, near the Force Domes. We assumed that the 'aquarium' would be placed on Energa, in the greatest center. That was correct, but negatively yet knowing for certainty, we perpetuated the Plan, with the 'aquarium' as the basis.

"One of our most competent protoplasmic computers stabilized the final steps of the Plan. We were to

subject the two Terrans to radiation and have as a result two Terrans who could breathe their normal oxygen form H₂O—the atmosphere of the 'aquarium', I repeat. We were then to deprive them of memory, except of the inter-attracting emotions, to allow them to live in harmony. Thirdly, we were to place them in the 'aquarium' and have them forwarded under the reference of semi-intelligent aqua-beings from Terran seas. A simple, but quite effective plan, your opinion, *beush*?"

"Quite," was the reply. "And concerning the method of info-interception?"

The assistant continued without hesitation, embarrassed by his incompetency, "A hyper-complex spheroid with radio interceptors, a-matter viewers and recorders and the general intelligence instruments of micro-size was placed in the cranium of the male mutant. The spheroid has negative direct control over the organism. Size was too scarce for use on trivialities. Then an agent was placed behind the larger controls at our end of the instruments."

"And you are the agent?"

"Hyper-contentedly affirmative."

I have done two things today. I have found the word for my hatred of the Faces. The Voice gave it to me. When I asked the Voice, it laughed and told me the word to use was "damn". So today I have thrice said, "Damn the Faces. Damn them."

Diane and I have decided that we

want a baby. Maybe the other fish wanted them, so they got them. We want a baby.

“The two Terrans were so biologically mutated and are so nearly robotic, that it is physically impossible for reproduction on their part, *beush*.”

The *beush* ignored the assistant's words and said, “I have received copies of the thought-patterns and translations. There was something strange and very powerful about the meaning of the male's thought, ‘want’. I query.”

“Be assured without preoccupation that there exists negative danger of reproduction.”

The name I wanted to call Diane was not good, because her breasts are hard and large, as is her stomach. I think she is sick.

I do not think Diane is sick. I think she is going to have a baby.

“Entities, assistant! On your oath-body you proclaimed that there is negative danger of reproduction.”

“Rest assured, peace, *beush*.”

“But his thoughts!”

“Rest assured, *higher beush*.”

There is much blood in the water today. Diane is having a baby; sharks have come. I have never seen so many sharks, and as big as they are I have never seen. I am afraid, but still some sneak among us near Diane.

We love the porpoises, so they help us now. They are chasing the

sharks away, injuring and killing some.

“Entities, Warp-spaced Entities! There has been reproduction.”

“*Yorbeush*,” cried the assistant in defense. “It is physically impossible. But they are mutants. It is negatively impossible that they possess Mind Force to a degree.”

“To what degree? What degree could produce reproduction when it is physically impossible?” The *beush* was sarcastic. “How far can they go?”

“There is negatively great amount they can do. Negative danger, because we have studied their instincts and emotions and found that they will not leave the ‘aquarium,’ their ‘home’. Unless someone tells them to, but there is no one to do so.”

Today I damned the Faces nine times and finally wanted them to go away. The “view-ports” went black. It was like the sharks leaving when I wanted them to. I still do not understand.

There has been much useless noise and senseless talk from the Voice these days. It is annoying because I must concentrate on loving Diane and caring for the baby. So I wanted the Voice to leave it. It left.

“Entities Be Simply Damned! The spheroid ceased to exist, assistant. How far can they go, assistant?” The *beush* rose, screamed hysterically for three seconds and then fired the hand weapon point blank at the neck of his assistant.

The sharks come today, because Diane is having another baby. Diane hurts, and there is more blood than last time. Her face is not pretty when she hurts, as it is pretty when she sleeps. So I *want* her to sleep. Her face is pretty now with the smile on her lips.

“Fourteen thousand **E n e r g i** ceased to exist, spheroid ceased to exist, and another reproduction. Warpspace! How far will they go?”

It has been hundreds of days. Faces keep appearing, but I continue to *want* them to go away. Diane has had eighteen babies. The oldest are swimming around and playing with the porpoises. Diane and I spend most of the time teaching the children by showing them things, and by giving them our thoughts by touching them.

Today I found that none of the children have Voices. I could *want* them to have Voices, but the children's thoughts tell me that it is not right to have a Voice.

The eldest boy says that we should leave the tank, that a greater “tank” is around us, and that it is easier to move around in that greater tank. He also says that we must guard ourselves against Faces outside. That is strange, but the boy is a good boy. Many times he knows that things will happen before they do. He is a good boy.

He is almost as tall as I am. The eldest girl is pretty like Diane, her

body very white and soft but, since I *wanted* it so, her hair is golden, instead of dark. The boy likes her very much, and I have seen them together, touching.

Tomorrow I will explain to him that if he *wants* something, he will get it. So he must *want* a baby.

“Query? The Energi will bomb-drop the ‘aquarium’? War declared against us? War declared? Entities be wholly damned! Negative! Negative!” The disintegrator was fired once more, this time into the orange eye of the *beush* himself, by himself, and for the good of himself.

When, if I ever do *want* the Voice to come back, it will be very surprised to know that Diane has had twenty-four babies; that the three eldest boys have mated twice, once and twice, and have had four babies. The Voice will also be surprised to know that it took all twenty-nine of us to *want* all the Faces around the tank to die, as the eldest boy said to do. We could not tell, but the boy said that six million Faces were dead. That seems impossible to me, but the boy is always right.

Tomorrow we are leaving the the tank. We will *want* to leave it; it is getting crowded. The boy says that beyond the greater tank, which we will also leave, there is enough space for all the babies Diane could have if she lived forever.

Forever, he said. It would be nice to live forever. I think I'll *want* . . . **END**