

# SATURN

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<i>Editor and Publisher</i> .....	ROBERT C. SPROUL
<i>Art Director</i> .....	WILLIAM CLARK
<i>Editorial Consultant</i> .....	DONALD A. WOLLHEIM

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# THE SKITZ AND THE UNSKITZ

by JEFFERSON HIGHE

*For that slick chick of the future, things had to be "real skitz" to be right . . . but, my, what queer notions that Boston longhair had about how a girl should behave!*

THE FIRST burring of the telephone sent an icy drill probing at the bedrock of her sleep and she sat up in the rumpled bed, groping like a drowning person clutching for salvation at the empty air. The room circled and slowly came to rest. Squalor of sleep hung over it like mist over a swamp. Oh God, I'm drunk, she thought and reached for the phone again. Then she realized that it was not the phone which was ringing but the clock and she thought, who's crazy enough to get up at this hour? But the clock hands told her that it was nearly one P.M., and she remembered that this was to be the Day and the Night.

She lit a cigarette and her

hand went automatically to the switch on the table beside her. A side of the room flared into light and sound as the expensive Spellcaster went to work, and an Army colonel, in full color and tridi, stepped out of the wall with a world map in his hands and began to talk of the Quasiwar. It was another of the priority spells which all stations were being forced to cast. She flicked off the switch irritably, wishing, as she had a thousand times, that the Quasi—which had been going on all her life—might finally come to something definite.

With the switch off, the color went out of the room and the miasma of sleep and living came back on the tide of shadow. Better get up she

thought, pushing against the feeling of guilt and terror that she knew was lurking in some corner of her morning mind.

It's a beautiful morning, a beautiful day, she told herself as she touched the switch and a wall became a window and the hard bright day flushed the room with light. With the coming of the light, the lost and guilty feeling came, as she knew it would, and she went on with the litany, like a morning prayer. Beautiful morning, beautiful morning, she crooned to the high noon outside; I'm so happy, I'm having so much fun, it's such a wonderful thing to be alive.

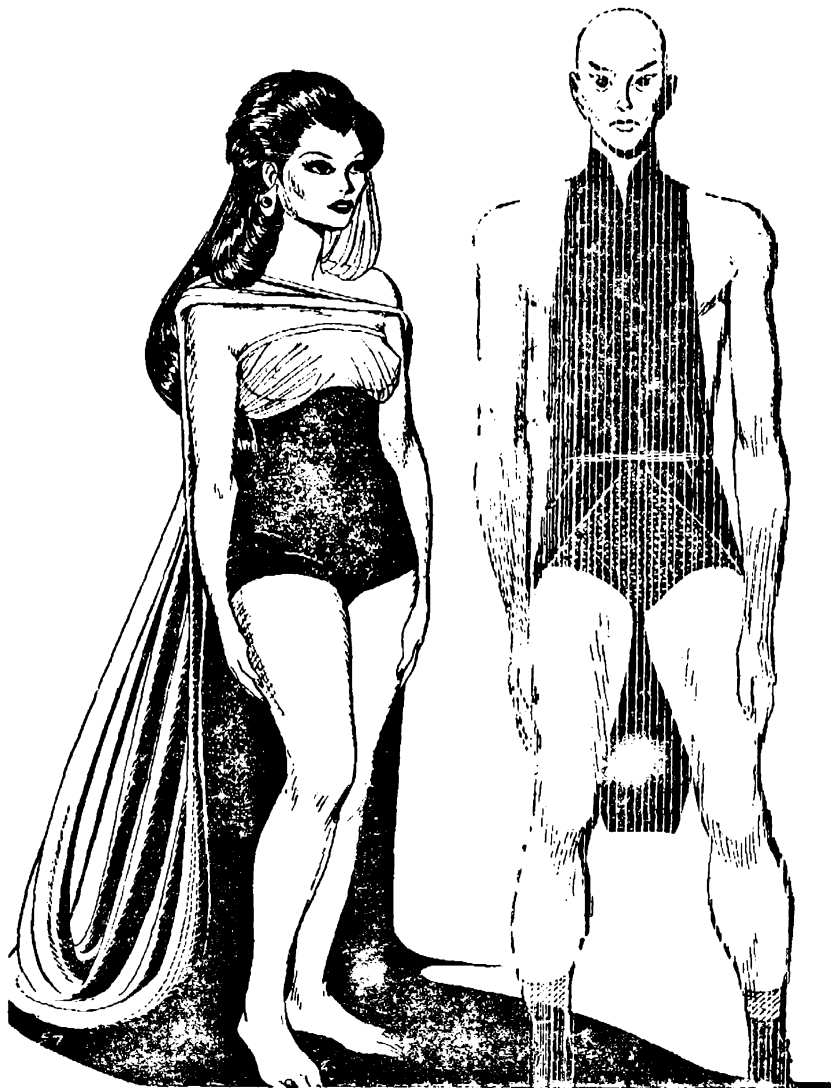
She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror—she was very pretty and blonde and small and strongly curved—and thought that she looked sallow and hungover and blamed it on the harsh light. But she did not touch the switch to control the terrible daylight that came through the wall. Must be outward-going, she crooned to herself and caught a robe quickly around her body; I have so much fun; I have such a good time.

The litany did not help, as it never really did. The scream of a Banshee car came up from the street, there was a clap of

laughter from its occupants and for a moment the sunlight from the wall was blurred by the oily smoke of the Banshee's jet. In the moment of silence she heard the tapping sticks of the Hands. I'm a free woman, I'm happy, I have fun, she told herself, but it was no good, and she spoke aloud into the silence: "Better joy-pop." And went across to the closet that housed the Psychomat.

When she was inside, she began to feel better at once. The red light of the Cosmone came on as she lay down on the couch; she heard the hiss of the concealed valve as the diluted carbon monoxide began to flow, and she did not even feel the prick of the needle as it went into her thigh. Curled like a foetus on the low couch she felt relaxed and at ease. "I want to tell you, Father," she said, whispering into the neutral ear of the Confessomech, "about when I was a little girl..."

WHEN SHE came out of the Psychomat ten minutes later she felt that she was healed. She began to dress rapidly, first the glass stilt shoes, then the new blouse with the peekaboo windows at the breasts, then the lovely long



backless dress. Now, she felt, she was armored for the Day, and she went down the hall to Louise's bedroom.

She entered without knocking, going past the wall where the indefatigable colonel was still booming away in full color, now engaged in balancing a globe on his index finger. She nodded briefly at the young man who was just putting on his tie and who said, "Morning, Jill," and blew a kiss at her as he went out the door.

"Bye, doll," Louise called after the young man.

A woman as long and slender as a snake, dark, with a red slash of a mouth and dark mineral eyes, she moved over on the bed, patting the edge of the bed for Jill to be seated, and switched off the colonel. "Geez, the army is getting cute men these days," she said. "No wonder we're winning the Quasi. Did you watch the spell? *Real skitz.*"

"No. I don't like that kind of thing."

"Honey, you must be real hung not to go for *that.*"

"To tell you the truth, I didn't feel very well this morning."

"Oh?" Louise looked at Jill noncommittally and reached

languidly for a cigarette. "Who are you sleeping with these days, dear?"

"Why, no one, much. No one in particular and not very often."

"No wonder you feel depressed."

"No," Jill said. "It's not that, really."

"Harry?"

"Of course *not!*" Jill said indignantly. "You were absolutely right about him. He wanted to marry me—can you imagine? I haven't seen him in weeks."

"That's good. I thought you were going irresponsible for awhile there, doll. You were getting to be almost like husband and wife together. He looked too much like Tony."

"I know." Jill felt herself blushing. She too had thought, uneasily, of Harry's resemblance to her ex-husband. Why does she always put me in the wrong, she asked herself resentfully. Sure, she has a high Responsibility rating, but does she have to keep waving it at me?

"Who were you with last night?"

"No one. I think." Jill felt the blush on her body deepening. "After all, I *did* get terribly high," she said virtuously.

"Yes, that's true, doll. But *nobody*! Well, that's hardly responsible behavior, is it? And considering that this is the Day?"

Suddenly, unaccountably, Jill began to cry, and Louise flipped on the switch, filling the room with sound and began to dress. The colonel was talking about a recent sighting of flying saucers. "It has been fully established," the colonel said, "that these Sightseers, as the Government Corporation has officially decided to call them, are visitors from another star system and *not*, I repeat, *not*, an invention of the Other Side. There is nothing to fear from them. Perhaps they are interested in learning from us. We may regard them as tourists none the less." He went into a complicated and self-satisfied explanation of the Sightseers, and Louise, finished dressing, whistled into the Service Warp and came toward the bed with a long glass of Hashicola.

"Drink this, doll."

Jill took a long pull at the drink and felt better at once, but she put the glass down on the table.

"I can't drink much of it," she said.

"Hashicola—" Louise began.

"I don't care what the AMA says," Jill told her rebelliously. "I know it's bad for my heart."

"The Association of Medical Advertisers knows what is best," Louise said stiffly. Then she softened and sat down on the side of the bed and put her arm around Jill.

"Look, doll," said said. "I know how it is. Everybody's nervous before the Night. Even old timers like me. That's why the Amalgamated sends us out to live for a month or two with neophytes before they take the tests."

"Yes," Jill said meekly. Then: "I feel guilty!" she blurted.

Louise looked at her for a long moment.

"I think you'd better learn to watch your language," she said coldly.

"I'm sorry—I didn't mean it that way. I just mean wrong. Mixed up. Unskitz."

"That's not very responsible talk," Louise said quietly. "I thought you had the stuff to get through the confirmation tonight. I could be wrong." She let the insinuation lie there between them for a moment. Then she said softly: "Been thinking of Tony again?"

"Maybe."

"Well," Louise said briskly,

"if *that's* all. For a moment I thought it was really something bad. Now finish your drink like a good girl."

Jill took another long drink and put the glass down.

"I don't really need any more," she said. "I had ten minutes of psycho this morning. Wonderful." She stretched luxuriously. "Seemed like months."

"That's all right," Louise said judiciously. "But you don't want to overdo it. I know lots of Joy Girls use it, but it gets them finally. They begin to live in a trance state and it's hard to be a real activist when you're like that. And the next thing Amalgamated drops you. When the hard stuff gets you that way, you're hooked, and the next thing, once they take away the Psychomat, you'll be wanting to work."

"That's not fair!" Jill said angrily. She heard the tapping of the Hands going by in the street and shuddered.

"Come here, doll," Louise said. She put her arm around Jill's shoulder and led her to the high window. In the noon sun the stucco and glass and chrome lashed and glittered.

"Lift your eyes to the hills."

Jill looked up at the great houses, all angles and plate

glass, that went up the terraced sides of the mountains. She saw the geometrized gardens and the emerald flash of the swimming pools.

"All that," Louise said. "All of it's your playground after today. You won't be a Petty-Responsible after tonight—you'll be a part of Amalgamated Joy with the whole world at your feet. And now look at that." She pointed down into the depths of the street.

The Hands were coming off the noon shift in hundreds. Dressed alike, each wearing his Spellbinder hat with the small screen six inches in front of his face, each with the white cane with its electronic eye to guide him, the Hands tapped along the sidewalks toward home. Involuntarily, Jill drew back.

"Yes," Louise said. "Think of it—two dimensional spells—no color—*nothing* but priority programs and you *have* to watch them all the way to and from the factory. That's what happens when you become a work-addict, if you haven't got the stuff for Amalgamated."

"I know," Jill sighed. I suppose it's my Petty-Responsible mentality. After all, taking care of the gallery is a little like—well—like work."

"I know. But you can see where it would lead. After all, if everybody were to become a work-addict, what would happen to the machines? Economic chaos. *Some* of us have got to be responsible."

"Yes, of course."

"That's better. Now, drink."

Without protest Jill finished the drink. The talk had helped, and now with the Hashicola in her blood stream (but with, in spite of the AMA, just the *ti-ni-est* itching at the end of her nose) she began to feel warm and responsible all over and she thought that she would get a real shot of something from the Service Warp. The thought of Tony came into her mind momentarily, but she put it away and whistled into the Warp and began her second litany: I'm so happy! I'm having fun! I'm having fun!

**M**OST DAYS no one came to the little gallery with its old-fashioned grapho-morphic art, but today, as Jill and Louise came down to the shop from the apartment above, someone was waiting to get in. Jill was on the point of telling him that tonight was the Night, and that the gallery was closed, but the Warp had given her what she needed and she felt

relaxed and easy. She touched the control button and the field that served as a door flickered out and she saw that he was a young man, handsome, she thought, in spite of the glasses he wore. Beside her, Louise whistled a confirmation and swayed toward him on her ten inch heels. For a moment of blurry panic Jill thought, he looks like Tony, and then, but now they all do. Then she flicked the switch opening the walls to the light.

"Tony Madison's gallery?" the man asked. He had a touch of accent which Jill could not place.

"I'm Jill Madison," she said. "We have some of his work here; all that's left."

"But the artist?"

"No," she said stiffly. "Not here."

He turned away and pressed the button under the first of the art works. It was a nude—a particularly distorted one, she thought—of herself. It was in slow motion.

"Amazing!" the young man said.

"You're a collector?"

"Collector? Well, in a small way, yes."

"From the East, I bet," Louise said. "That's where they go for this unskitz stuff."



She pushed her breasts against the young man's shoulder.

Joy Girl or not, Jill thought, she's pretty uncoordinated in spite of all her training. "What she means," she said, watching the young man edge imperceptibly away from Louise, "is that in the East they like primitive art of this kind. Out here on the Coast, everyone goes in for the Artomatic. Punch a few buttons and make your own pictures. It's practically the California Way in art."

"I'm told that Mr. Madison has some things painted in the old way," the young man said. "You know—brush, oil paint, canvas..."

"I'm sure you don't realize that what you're asking is illegal," Jill said quietly.

"Illegal! I'm terribly sorry," the young man said. He seemed so upset that Jill smiled a forgiveness at him.

Louise snorted. "How far east can you get?" she asked.

"I'm sorry," the young man said. "Permit me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Liri. I am a curator at a museum near Boston."

"Boston!" Louise laughed. "I guess that must be the last museum in the country. After all, things don't get used up if you save them that way, do

they?"

"But we think that some things are worth saving."

"Make new ones. Isn't that what the machines are for? Saving is uneconomical."

"I'm sure Boston knows what's best for it," Jill said, wanting to save Liri from a political argument. She tried another gambit. "I hear there's trouble with the Indians in the New England Area."

"Oh no. They never come into the cities, and since few of us go into the country there's never any real trouble."

Louise was more interested in Art than in the Indian problem.

"What do you want these old things of Tony's for?" she asked.

"Some of us think them very fine. And since Mr. Madison seems to have stopped painting we'd like to collect what we can."

"Stopped painting?" Louise laughed. "That's a good way to put it. Why don't you get the real story? Ask Jill."

"I used to be married to Tony," Jill said in answer to Liri's questioning look. "We broke up."

"Tony always was pretty irresponsible," Louise confided to Liri. "But nobody thought

he'd go subversive." She turned to Jill. "Tell him about it, doll. Tell him what Tony finally started doing."

"He started to paint," Jill said miserably. "With his hands," she added, feeling the blush travel from her heels all the way up her back.

"And was a '49er," Louise said. "Went east with the pioneers."

"You *don't* know that for sure," Jill protested. "Nobody really knows what happened to him."

"I'm sorry this has been so upsetting for you," Liri said. "I would not have asked if I had known that you were—"

"It's all right," Jill said. "It doesn't disturb me. But this is the Day and if you don't mind, I'd like to close up the gallery. I've got a lot of things to do."

"Of course. Again I want to apologize."

He seemed so genuinely sorry that Jill relented a bit. "Some other time," she said.

"I'd like to, but I'm afraid that may not be possible." He hesitated a moment. "Perhaps I could take you to lunch?"

"You're a sweetheart," Louise said. "Of course she'll go to lunch with you. I have to be running along anyway."

"Doll!" she whispered to Jill

as they were closing up the gallery. "This may be a real piece of luck, maybe just the one you need in the rites tonight. Play him big, honey. Try to find out his RR."

Then she was gone and Jill and the young man were in the street. Around them the great white buildings leaped at the sky, the big houses flashed their chrome geometry on the hills, an occasional Hand tapped along the street.

"I don't suppose," Liri said, "That it's practical to walk to a restaurant."

Jill laughed. Maybe he'll turn out to be Fun, she thought. Now that Louise was gone she felt more relaxed.

"In these shoes? We'll get the belt line down at the corner."

**H**ALF WAY down the block a group of Hands were digging a ditch to lay a sewer pipe. The great machine built for the work stood by in stoic idleness while a timer with a stop watch and guards with B guns cradled in their arms watched to see that the Hands did not work a second longer than the time allotted to them. Without their spell-binder hats, the Hands worked bareheaded and with their shirts off,

laughing and talking as their shovels shifted the earth. One of them was singing. Shuddering, Jill moved to the far edge of the walk.

"They seem happy," Liri said.

"Work-addicts," Jill told him. "Couldn't stand responsibility. They're a terrible drain on the economy, people say, but it keeps them from revolution. Don't you have them where you come from?"

"Not quite the same. But it's not such a big place."

"Los Angeles is the biggest of the Thirteen States," Jill said proudly. "Four-fifths of the population of the whole continent." She wondered why she should be trying to impress a proper Bostonian.

He did not seem impressed. "If you don't mind," he said, "can we go out to the beach on this belt line? I've got a hydrojet out there and we could eat on board."

Hydrojet! Jill thought; he must have a fabulous RR; Louise was right.

They got onto the belt line at the corner, moved across to the Express side, and were whipped westward through the canyons at a dizzying speed. At the beach a water taxi took them out to the jet.

It was the most luxurious craft Jill had even seen. While she scouted it, reading signing like an Apache, Liri was busy with other things.

"What do you want for lunch?" he called.

"Oh, anything. Some All-Purpose, I suppose. Plenty of drinks."

"No All-Purpose on board," he said. "But I'll see what I can put together."

After a while he called to her and she went out onto a small sundeck where he was just finished putting food on a table.

"You mean you *cooked* it?" She could hardly believe it.

"Yes."

"But it's—it's like *work*!"

"Pleasant hobby," he said. "Anyway there aren't any servants here."

"I suppose it's all right."

She picked at the food on her plate—it was real meat—without enthusiasm and was shocked—it tasted very good. A slow understanding came to her and she looked at Liri almost with awe, seeing his work in cooking the lunch as the eccentricity of one rich and powerful enough to afford it.

"You must have a tremendous RR," she said boldly.

Liri was not interested in

the subject. "I suppose so," he said. "You said something about the Day. What did that mean?"

"You don't know about the Day and the Night? Oh, I suppose they do things differently in Boston, but I thought everyone knew about the Day. It's C Day. That's California Day. Or maybe it's Consumer's Day. Some people even say it means Capitalist Day—it started so long ago that no one can really remember."

"Why does it mean so much to you?"

"Because that's the day Amalgamated Joy makes its selections. I thought everyone knew that."

"I've been out of touch, I'm afraid. And is this selection so important to you?"

"It's the day all the Joy Girls and all the contenders are tested. That's how our Responsibility Rating is determined. Some of the old girls are dropped out and some of the neophytes are confined. I'm a neophyte."

"And if you're selected?"

"I'm a full-fledged Responsible, then. I give up the gallery; it means just about everything. I become one of the Veblenite elite—a perfect User."

"Veblen?"

"You know," she said impatiently. "*Theory of the Leisure Class*—that's the book all government theory is based on, they say."

"I see. You use, but you don't make anything."

"Right."

"And the Hands?"

"They didn't have the ability to be Users, that's why they have to drug themselves with work. In the past only a handful of people had the strength of character to be wholly Users. But now, with the training of Amalgamate Joy, lots of us can. And it's more democratic."

"And your husband? He didn't like that?"

"No, Tony didn't like it. Reactionary type, always talking of the old days. Maybe he *did* go east with the Pioneers. People say there have begun to be settlements all through the Unoccupied Territories—Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota." She stopped, a little hazy about the geography.

"Tell me," he asked. "Are you happy?"

"Happy? Of course, I'm happy." Suddenly, terribly, she began to cry. "It's too hard," she sobbed, thinking of the Day, of the eliminations coming up. "It's too hard."

"Why don't you give it up?"

"I can't. Where would I go?"

"It can be arranged," he said.

As she blacked out, she was asking herself, how could I have got so drunk?

**WHEN SHE WOKE UP,** her first thought was that she was in her bed in her apartment. Then she saw the man sitting in a chair against the opposite wall. He was red-headed and angular and handsome and completely impossible.

"Hello, Jill," he said.

"Tony!"

He came across and sat down on the bed beside her.

"Tony! How did Liri—did he bring me to the Unoccupied Territories?"

"Farther than that, kitten. This is another planet, another star system."

"How could he have?"

"That gadget," he said, pointing across the room to what looked to Jill like a tricycle in an odd no-shape kind of box.

"Then he was one of the Sightseers."

"Observers, they call themselves. When a country gets close to space flight, they get

interested. Want to know what their visitors might be like. So they sort of pick up samples."

"But that's not fair! It's kidnapping! It's—"

"It's pretty high-handed," he admitted. "But they don't harm you, you know."

"You mean they've kept you all this time?"

"No. I could get in the machine and go back any time. But I like it here. I have plenty of time to paint, there's no hustle and bustle. I'm free."

"Irresponsible seems to be a better word," she sniffed.

"Let's not quarrel, kitten," he said. "All that talk about Responsibility and Fun and Wholly Using—that's what wrecked you and me before. Here all we have to do is be ourselves. It's a real chance for us to start over, to be happy together."

She started to object, to say that what he meant by happiness was irresponsible and wrong and bad. But she remembered that it was still the Day, in her mind the Hands went tapping down all the streets, her nose itched from Hashicola and she was worn out from her strenuous joy. She thought of Louise, felicity's athlete, and her constant advice. Then she put her arms

around Tony and pulled him down beside her.

For a week it was perfect. Everything was new and strange. Tony painted in the mornings—mostly sketches of her—and in the afternoon they took care of his homestead since he raised most of his own food. When she got over her first feelings about the work taboo she found it fun of a limited sort. She was surprised that there were no flower machines in the garden but only old-fashioned roses, larkspur, lupin. She found that there were oak, chestnut and willow trees not just, as she had believed, palms.

There was no Spellcaster, though. There was not even old-fashioned radio. This lack of material had been at first merely offensive; later she missed them as means of diversion and asked him about them.

"We don't need that stuff, kitten," he said. He went over to her and put his arms around her. "Aren't we the stuff of our own pleasure?"

She pulled herself away. "That's not what I mean, Tony," she said. "That's fine, but after that, what is there to do?"

A week later she had begun

to feel something like cabin fever. She was posing for him and now suddenly the question she had asked knotted itself in her throat and she got down from the stand and asked again. "But what is there to do?"

Tony put down the brush and wiped his hands. "You've got to decide that for yourself, Jill. Nobody can tell you. You might make a life out of just being yourself here, with me. Or we could move to town and you could get some job that you liked. There's plenty to be done."

"But I can't *do* anything," she said sullenly.

"You could learn."

"But work's no *fun*!"

"I can't help you then."

Suddenly she saw that it **was** going to be a real quarrel.

"You mean you won't," she told him.

"I can't."

"You don't really care about me. All you care about is what you call your work." She began to cry, pitying herself and wanting him to pity her. "I'll go back," she sobbed. "I'll go back right now." She went over to the queer tricycle contraption at the other end of the room.

"Jill, I want to help you. If

you know how I can, then tell me."

"No!" she said, screaming now, knowing that she had moved him. "You don't really want to help. It's just the way it was before. You're selfish! Selfish! You don't really care about me."

"Jill, for God's sake! What do you want me to do?"

"Come back with me," she said.

"I can't do that."

Now they were both silent and she knew that it had turned deadly serious and that she had only one more card to play.

"I'll go," she said in a high warning voice like a parent threatening a child.

Tony said nothing.

"Damn you," she screamed, crying again. "You won't help me. And I want to be happy! I've got a *right* to be happy. I want to have fun!"

She pressed a button on the tricycle.

She was in her old apartment. Through the wall, from Louise's room she heard a high hysterical giggle, the clink of glasses, a monotonous and furious sound of lovemaking; a Banshee blasted in the street and then there was the ticking progress of the Hands, and over and around and through the other noises she heard her own voice screaming, I want to be happy! I want to have fun!

**THE END**