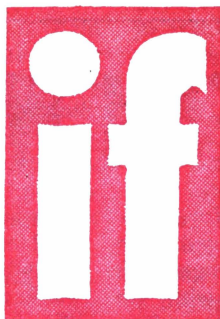


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All Stories New

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THE TEN - POINT PRINCESS

BY J. T. MC INTOSH

**She was a Princess of Love —
so the aliens said. But what
she did spoke only of hatred!**

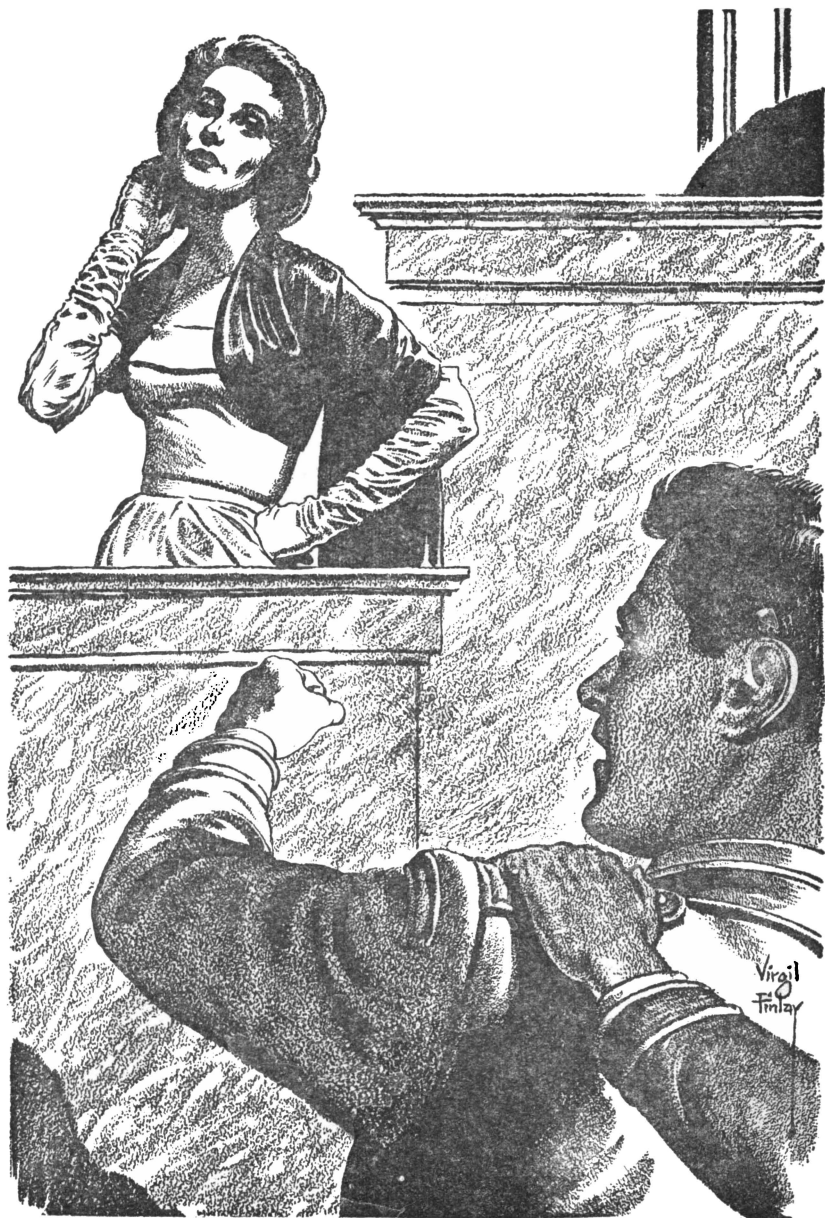
I

The Leisure Club in Leonta City claimed with some justice to cater to all tastes. On the night of April 7th two hundred Leontans and a hundred Terrans, all Army or Naval personnel, were making use of its facilities.

In one small room four men were attempting to play Beethoven's seventh string quartet, Op. 59, No 1. The cellist, a colonel, was sweating over his solos. He didn't mind that the leader of the quartet was a sergeant. But that his technical supre-

macy should be so overwhelming seemed hardly fair. Not for the first time, the colonel considered withdrawing from the quartet in the interests of discipline. The disciplinary problems of the Terran occupying forces on Leonta were bad enough without adding to them.

In another room five men, all Terran Army officers, played poker for high stakes. In the bar the inevitable hard drinking was going on, with the stern Leontan bartenders watching silently to make sure that nobody however drunk, got out of line.



The Leisure Club was not a dive. The Terran occupation troops who wished it was were out of luck. There wasn't a dive in Leonta City. Serving-men's wants were not supplied on Leonta as soldiers' simple needs usually are. The local standard of living being high, the strangers' money for once didn't shout in tones which demanded attention.

Army and Navy personnel of all ranks were freely admitted to the Leisure Club, but only on Leontan terms. It had already been demonstrated several times that the Club was quite prepared to bar all troops if the requisite standard of behavior was not observed. And some individuals were barred permanently.

Over twenty men were in the writing room, writing home. The variety theater, though small, didn't have quite a full house, and soldiers comprised less than half of the audience, the majority being Leontans. Leontan variety was too deep, subtle and serious for most serving-men. There weren't enough belly-laughs and there weren't nearly enough girls. On most other worlds the entertainment would quickly have been changed to appeal more to the large occupying forces. On Leonta everything stayed exactly as it was. If the uninvited visitors didn't like what was on offer, they didn't have to come.

Most civilized forms of relaxation were catered for under the roof of the Leisure Club. But there was no dancing, because there weren't enough girls. There were never enough girls.

The fact that there were some Terran nurses didn't help much, the ratio of men to girls being about twenty to one. It would almost have been better if there had been no Terran girls at all.

Usually, again, the local population of any ten-point human world would have eagerly supplied the deficiency. But Leonta's situation was not usual. Leonta was a highly civilized world at least as rich as Earth, and with the planet's wealth better distributed. Leonta, although beaten in three wars and compelled to put up with an army of occupation, had lost none of her pride and self-respect. Any low-grade Leontans who would have bowed and scraped in order to fleece the Terrans were kept firmly in line by the other ninety-five per cent.

The Number One deficiency of lonely men far from home was therefore more deeply felt on Leonta than it had ever been anywhere else.

Yet there was one small, surprising slit in the curtain. . .

The heavy drapes over an alcove in the bar slid smoothly open to reveal a girl reclining on a sofa. Every male head turned instantly.

She could have been Terran but for the uncanny perfection of her pale skin. Her combination of intelligence, cool aloofness and conscious provocation was enough to drive most men to anything short of murder — and some men, perhaps, all the way.

Her natural attractions were augmented by every artifice to raise her sales appeal, for the alcove was a shop window. That any girl in that particular shop window would have a perfect figure could be taken for granted. It was therefore unnecessary for the revelation of her charms to be vulgarly ostentatious. A few dramatic slits and plunges showed that she wore nothing but her bubble-thin black dress; the remarkable shape she revealed was all her own. Bright white lighting which few Terran women could have stood told frankly the truth and the whole truth about her natural talent.

Naturally she wasn't in the shop window long. Soon she was with a young Army captain, smiling and sipping a glass of wine. A sergeant who tried to butt in was warned by a small, cold look from the girl to keep his distance. The captain also waved him away irritably.

When he failed to heed either brush-off, the girl nodded to the bartenders. The sergeant was promptly deposited on the sidewalk outside. He protested bitterly but quietly, well aware that if the Leisure Club was cleared on his account he would suffer far more at the hands of resentful Army and Navy officers than his official punishment for creating an incident, which would be severe.

The girl Oeea remained in the bar with the captain for about an hour, then they disappeared together. It was only then that the envious officers and men who had been looking on became really jealous.

The opportunity to talk to a girl like Oeea was open to all. Most Love Princesses worked their way conscientiously through the entire list of bidders, Terran and Leontan, before making their choice. Oeea, however, had obviously made up her mind already. All the others were going to be unlucky.

Why didn't the Leontans, such sticklers for convention, stick to their own rules?

Half an hour later, the sergeant who had been ejected from the club, having managed to get into the building again somehow, found the captain beating Oeea brutally, sinking his fists into her body in an ecstasy of sadism.

Oeea was bearing this in silence, but the sergeant did not. With a roar of rage he seized a metal ornament and hit the captain with all his strength. Before the stricken man reached the floor he was dead.

II

The pilot on the landing barge made a fast, unnecessarily showy landing. Major Nigel Duke stepped onto solid earth, albeit Leontan earth, with some thankfulness. Traditionally the Army didn't altogether trust the Navy, and this mistrust had been carried into space. On solid ground, anywhere, any Army officer felt at least two inches taller.

Duke didn't get a chance to see anything of Leona. He was whisked straight to General Bailey, or at least to General Bailey's waiting-

room, without an opportunity to learn anything about the planet beyond the fact that it was cold. Not icy cold, just windy-rainy cold. The kind of world which forced its inhabitants, if they happened to be human, to be hard-working and brisk and efficient, because there was no temptation to lie in the sun, drink long, cool drinks and do as little as possible else.

Duke was a young major, a tall, tow-haired skeleton with whom nobody ever took any chances, because he looked the kind of officer who would relax only after the proper formal foundations had been laid. This impression was correct. Major Duke, an expert in military law, carried legalistic caution into every department of his life.

General Bailey didn't keep him waiting long. And when he was admitted, the general wasted no time at all. Duke knew why he had been sent for before he completed the act of sitting down.

"I want you to get a man shot, Major," Bailey said abruptly. "You're to be trial judge advocate at a general court-martial on Friday. And I want a verdict of guilty and a death sentence."

Duke, who had said practically nothing so far, said nothing now. With General Bailey, obviously, you very soon knew exactly where you stood.

Bailey was a small, bullet-headed man with all the aggressiveness of small men in high positions. tempered by a blunt correctness. "I guess

you know Leonta's historical background," he said, "so I won't bother you with that. Have you spoken to anyone who's served here recently?"

"No, sir."

"You're straight out from Earth?"

"I've been with the fleet law pool for ten months. During that time I've been temporarily assigned to Araminta, Deeswood and Hermitage. Never Leonta."

"I know that. I fought here and I've been in command of the occupying troops since the armistice six years ago. Well, I guess you're wondering why I sent for a hot-shot trial lawyer to prosecute. The truth is, Major, the only law man I've got whom I might trust with this case is already in it — defending. Morgestern asked for Major Francis, and in the circumstances he had to get him."

Bailey paused as if willing Duke to ask questions. Duke waited for him to make his own explanations in his own way.

"Cigarettes in that box, Major," Bailey said. "I don't use them, but—" "I don't either, sir."

"Don't you? Good. Well, Major, here's the situation. The Leontans have fought three tough wars with us and they only stopped because they realize now that we're too big for them. They're not scared of us. And they don't hate us. They just want rid of us. The situation here is moderately stable but uneasy. They stick to all the military and civil agreements and never fail to point out every infringement on our part, ma-

jor or minor, by anybody from me down to the rawest rookie from Earth."

Duke nodded. He had heard about the Leontans: proud, independent, hard-working, cultured. They might have been super-Germans.

"The Leisure Club in Leonta City is open to all ranks, but only just. If anybody doesn't behave, he gets thrown out. The Leontans organize their entertainments as they organize most things—with more organization than entertainment. They don't put on a special show for us. They run their world their way, and we have to conform.

"In the Leisure Club you can drink, gamble, listen to classical music, paint, sculpt, take arty photographs, read, write, put on amateur theatricals. It's a recreation center catering for everything but with a strong bias toward culture. Guys who like string quartets and long-hair stuff get on fine. The ordinary Joe who can't see past women and booze isn't so happy. He can drink, but he isn't supposed to get stinko. And as for women . . ."

"The local girls won't play?" said Duke, because this time the general's silence positively commanded some response.

"As a rule, no. There's no outright ban."

Duke suspected from the general's tight-lipped reluctance to continue along this line that he was something of an ascetic. Just as Duke was deciding, however, that if in-

formation on this head was going to be necessary he'd have to get it from somebody else, Bailey plunged resolutely on.

"Some of our boys are fixed up fine, which is all right from everybody's point of view so long as they have the sense to keep quiet about it. But in general—no girls, except for one rather curious Leontan custom."

Bailey's mouth set disapprovingly, and his words came out like little icicles. "I like the Leontans all right, Major. I guess I even respect them. But this one thing I can't approve or even understand. . . They run a sort of high-class prostitution, clean and tidy and clinical. A very beautiful, intelligent and talented girl is chosen as a Princess of Love—so they call her. She goes on show like a prize heifer and then works her way through the list of bidders. Some men she rejects at a glance, some after five minutes' conversation. Eventually she meets someone she likes."

"And the price is astronomical?" Duke suggested.

"No, it isn't like that. On the contrary, the price isn't particularly important. She has to like the guy."

"Sounds rather like what we've got back at home. Only we don't call it prostitution. What do you dislike about the way the Leontans do it, General?"

Bailey looked slightly surprised, as if he thought he had successfully concealed his feelings about the system. But he answered the question.

"I guess the organization, the cold-bloodedness, the deadpan seriousness

of it. And the way they run it side by side with art and music and drama. . .

"Well, Major, all this is background. Ten days ago Sergeant Morgenstern and Captain Slater were in the Leisure Club. So were over a hundred other officers and men, and two hundred Leontans. A girl called Oeea became available as a Princess of Love. She joined Slater. Morgenstern tried to intervene but was thrown out.

"Later Morgenstern found Slater beating up the girl and killed him. There's no doubt about the facts of the killing. The girl saw the whole thing, and so did two other Leontans. In any case, Morgenstern admits it himself. Major, I want you to suppress any feelings of sympathy you may have for Morgenstern and get him hung."

"Why. General?" Duke asked quietly.

"Because he's a murderer, for one thing. Maybe it would be best if you stuck to that, Major Duke. But since you're sure to find out some of the undercurrents of this business, I'll talk to you again once you've studied the file. Here it is."

"You want me to read this and then report back?"

"No, read the file, go to the Leisure Club yourself tonight, and come back and talk to me tomorrow."

Duke nodded. It had not escaped him that he was being afforded no opportunity to refuse the case.

"Sergeant Bowler will show you to an office you can use," Bailey said. "Glad to have you with us, Major."

Major Duke settled himself in the small, bare room into which Bowler had led him and started his investigation of the Morgenstern affair.

Sergeant Isaac Morgenstern was twenty-five and there were no black marks in his record.

At 10:20 on the night of April 7, two Leontans in the back of the bar saw an Army sergeant rushing along a back corridor. Although they were aware of no reason why he shouldn't be there, not having noticed him being turned out earlier, his manner was strange enough to make them follow him. They were only a few yards behind him when he burst into a room, and they both clearly saw everything which happened in the next few seconds.

In the room a man who was later identified as Slater was punching the girl Oeea in the ribs. She made no outcry, but tried desperately to protect herself from the blows. One of the Leontans said Slater was laughing like a maniac. The other didn't hear this. (A small point which Duke found very convincing: when evidence is trumped-up, witnesses always agree to the finest detail).

Morgenstern shouted, seized a heavy metal lamp and hit Slater on the head with it. Slater pitched on the floor and lay still.

Morgenstern then dropped the lamp and fell on his knees beside the fallen man, seizing him by the throat. But Slater was already dead.

Afterwards, Morgenstern gave no trouble and denied nothing. He made

a statement of which Duke had a copy before him. But Duke put it aside for the moment, reading everything else first.

Morgenstern had been pronounced sane. Statements by other Leisure Club patrons that night, Terran and Leonan, corroborated the facts as Duke already knew them. Morgenstern had tried to interrupt Slater and Oeea earlier in the evening, and had been ejected on the girl's order. Morgenstern had been seen during the next hour prowling around outside the building. Twice he had tried to get in with a party of new arrivals. Shortly before the killing he had been seen going down a dark lane which led to the back of the club.

A confidential report by Slater's colonel stated that Slater was not well liked. He was extremely tough on all inferiors, and particularly on Jews and Negroes. He frequently referred to the Leontans as "stinking natives." Two years before he had been charged with beating up a girl on Araminta, but acquitted.

There was a medical report by an Army doctor who had examined the girl shortly after the incident. Her injuries were detailed: extensive bruises all over the front of the torso and on the arms. The doctor's summing-up was that the girl had suffered a barbarous attack which amounted to torture, inflicted in his opinion by a compulsive sadist.

Although he was trying to read the file with professional detachment, Duke was conscious of an in-

creasing feeling of bafflement. About Morgenstern's guilt there was no conceivable doubt, unless it arose out of the fact that the three vital witnesses, those who had seen the actual killing, were all Leontans. Yet it looked the kind of case in which the accused, having been found guilty on a reduced charge, would get a comparatively light sentence. Morgenstern appeared to have had the utmost provocation, and the killing was anything but a cold, premeditated murder. On all he had read so far, Duke would rather have been defending Morgenstern than prosecuting him, and would have given himself a fair chance of getting the sergeant off altogether.

Why, then, did General Bailey want Morgenstern shot? Why had he given Morgenstern his best legal officer as defense counsel and sent for a fleet law pool outsider to prosecute? Did he — an uncomfortable thought, this — expect his own top law man, Major Francis, to tie Duke in knots and get Morgenstern off, with General Jerome Bailey absolutely in the clear, whatever questions might be asked later?

Duke picked up Morgenstern's statement thinking that it might give a clue to the general's attitude. But it only increased Duke's bafflement. It read:

Oeea is my girl. She's no prostitute. She must have been forced to offer herself the way she did. We've been lovers for weeks, and we mean to get married. We nev-

er quarreled. I saw her only the night before and she didn't say anything about this Princess of Love business. I just couldn't understand it when I saw her in that alcove. Did I know what it meant? Of course I knew what it meant. Everybody knows.

I know all about Slater. He's a skunk. If Oeea had to give herself to somebody, I'd rather it was anybody else at camp than Slater. I can't understand why she went with him. There's something funny going on somewhere.

I got into the club through a cellar. I wanted to see Oeea. After thinking about things for an hour the only thing that made any sense to me was that Slater had got some hold on her, threatening her family or something like that.

When I found them he was hitting her like he was trying to kill her. I don't know what I did then. When I knew what was going on again, Slater was dead. Yes, I guess I killed him. Anybody else who saw what he was doing to Oeea would have, too.

Duke read this several times. He was beginning to wish he had never come to Leonta. He had never had a case he liked less.

III

On closer acquaintance Duke found Leonta's climate as cold and unfriendly as he expected. Be-

fore he reached the Leisure Club he knew why such an institution was necessary. On such a world there was no fun in going for night walks, in sitting in a car, in going from one place of entertainment to another. What was needed was a nice warm place with everything you wanted under one roof.

He expected some difficulty in being admitted to the Leisure Club. But when he gave his name to the two Leontans at the door he was passed inside at once. "General Bailey called and said you'd be coming," one explained.

It was the first time Duke had heard a Leontan speak, the first time he had seen a Leontan close at hand.

They were one hundred per cent human. They didn't even differ as much from Europeans and Americans as, say, Chinese did. The only thing which showed at once that they weren't Terran was their skin, which was pale, very faintly brown, and smooth as matt paper. The men appeared effeminate because Leontan men had exactly the same smooth skin as the women. The girls, although their skin texture showed instantly that they weren't Terran, didn't give the same slightly forbidding impression of belonging to another race. They were, indeed, more attractive than a cross-section of Terran girls, because of their perfect complexions, because they were rarely fat and because their features were never coarse.

Leontan native speech, Duke knew, was liquid, consisting entirely

of vowel sounds, of which there were over a hundred. Terran ears couldn't distinguish all these, and therefore no Terran had ever been able to speak or fully understand Leontan. The Leontans, however, found English fairly easy and many of them spoke it quite perfectly.

Duke found he was allowed to wander anywhere he wished in the Club so long as he was quiet and didn't disturb anybody.

There must have been fifty rooms, ranging up to small halls. The temperature was a steady seventy everywhere, except in the sport courts, which were kept cooler. Duke estimated that there were about three hundred people in the club, of whom perhaps a hundred were soldiers and sailors and six or seven were Terran nurses. Of the Leontans, a hundred fifty were women.

There was no obvious tension between Leontans and Terrans. But parties almost always consisted of one or the other. The only mixed groups were the permanent ones—the theatrical company, the bridge teams, the music groups, the tennis players. Even the drinkers in the bar were segregated in quiet, low-voiced groups of Terrans or Leontans.

It surprised Duke that it was possible to keep Terran Army and Navy personnel so subdued in a club on a beaten world. Yet after all—there was nowhere else in Leonta City to go, and if anyone stepped out of line the Leontans were within their rights in closing the Club to all Terrans. In such circumstances, Terran trouble-

makers would be squashed by Terrans, not Leontans.

Duke sat in the bar for some time just watching before he ordered a drink.

It was a sick spectacle. The Terrans sat around staring gloomily, hungrily at the Leontan and Terran girls who were present, all heavily engaged. Why, Duke wondered, didn't the Army have the sense to recognize this need in places like Leonta? Women could be occupying troops as well as men. Why not send out a thousand women in uniform?

The answer, presumably, was that the Army and Navy were blind to exceptions. Traditionally, armies on foreign, but human-occupied, soil managed to make do with the local talent. The Army did not, would not recognize that on Leonta, a proud, independent, wealthy world, the local talent could and did say No, thank you. The Army, which could be very foolish sometimes, didn't realize how it could lower its own prestige and efficiency on Leonta by not supplying one vital, priceless commodity.

And incidents like the Morgenstern-Slater case became inevitable. Sooner or later such things were bound to happen.

Duke went thoughtfully back to the bar at last.

"I've just arrived," he said to the bartender. "I don't know what you drink here. Wine? Beer? Hard liquor?"

"All are available, sir." The Leon-

tan's manner was impeccably polite without being friendly.

"Then I'll try your wine."

"White or red, sir? Perhaps you'd tell me the Terran type you prefer. Barsac, Graves, Sauternes, Chablis, Moselle? Or Beaujolais, Beaune, Medoc, St. Julien?"

Rather startled, Duke said: "I like a good Rhine wine."

"Then let me recommend Aoeau, sir. I'll give you a glass, not a bottle. If you wish it again, ask for Spring Water — a free translation, but anyone will understand what you mean."

"Thank you."

"You're Major Duke, aren't you?"

Duke managed to conceal his surprise this time. "Yes."

The bartender said no more, but handed him a quite conventional wine glass half full of pale yellow wine. The charge was equivalent to ninety cents. The cost of living on Leonta was not low.

Duke sat down again and sipped his drink. It was a pleasant young wine, more like a light Moselle than a Rhine wine. Possibly the bartender was insulting his taste. And yet, a cool world like Leonta could hardly produce rich wines. There must be warmer areas than this one or Leonta wouldn't produce wine at all.

Without warning a curtain across one wall slowly opened. In a recess a girl reclined. The Terran men present jumped and stared and moved restlessly. The spreading undercurrent would have been felt by a blind man.

So this was how they did it. The

girl, presumably, was not Oeea. According to the medical report which Duke had seen she would still be nursing a good many nasty bruises.

Duke's interest remained detached. It was hardly surprising that the girl was exceedingly beautiful. The cruel effect she had on the Terrans present was not surprising either. Although Duke was trying to retain an open mind about the Leontans, he couldn't help forming a judgment. It was sadistic, and probably deliberately sadistic, to offer an entire garrison of woman-hungry men one or two exquisite courtesans a week, with no guarantee that some Leontan wouldn't win them in the end. It was a million times more cruel than to forbid such relations altogether.

"Ten days ago I was a Princess of Love," a soft voice said.

Duke turned his head. A girl had quietly sat beside him, a girl so like the girl in the alcove that he glanced quickly from one to the other. He now saw that there were differences. The two Leontan girls resembled each other, with the same measurements, the same clothes, the same makeup, the same hairdo.

"You're Oeea?" he said.

"Oeea," she said patiently. The name sounded subtly different, but he couldn't have done any better with it the second time.

Like the girl in the alcove and unlike all the other Leontan girls he had seen, she wore a transparent black dress with slits through which pale flesh peeped wickedly. Already, it seemed, her bruises had healed.

None of the skin her careless gown revealed was discolored. He remembered a hint in the medical report that Leontans healed more quickly than Terrans.

As in his interview with General Bailey, he refrained from starting the ball rolling. She knew who he was and had something to say, obviously; he let her get on with it.

"You're going to prosecute Isaac, aren't you?"

"It's possible."

"Do you mind if I talk to you?"

"You're doing it."

"But not here. Will you come with me?"

He rose, picking up his glass. "May I get you something?"

She looked at the glass. "What's that you're drinking?"

"Spring Water."

"And what do you think of it?"

"Pleasant, light, tolerable."

"The barkeep was testing your taste. I'll get you something better." She led him to the bar, spoke in liquid Leontan to the barman and took a bottle and two glasses from him. She shook her head at Duke when he offered to pay.

"Sorry, sir," said the bartender.

"What for?"

"You *did* know the difference."

Oeea led him to a small room which had low, soft, comfortable furniture. As she poured a glass of wine for him, he found to his annoyance that he was not immune to her physical presence.

"Must you wear a dress like that?"

She stood back to let him see it properly. "I thought you'd like it."

The neckline plunged past her navel. Pale flesh showed at hip, stomach and thigh. Even where the cloth covered her flesh it merely veiled it. And her slim, taut figure was superb.

"Why did you think I'd like it?"

"Most men do — Leontan' or Terran. If you like I'll change it."

"Please do."

She didn't expect that and hesitated for a moment. Then she went out.

Duke tasted the wine. It was fuller, richer, decidedly superior to the Spring Water.

Oeea was back in only a few seconds. She was now dressed, like the other Leontan women Duke had seen, in a short neat garment which hugged the figure and left most of her arms and legs bare. Compared with her black dress it was eminently respectable.

"I have already spoken to Major Francis," she said. "I've told him everything I know which will help Isaac. I promised to testify to it all."

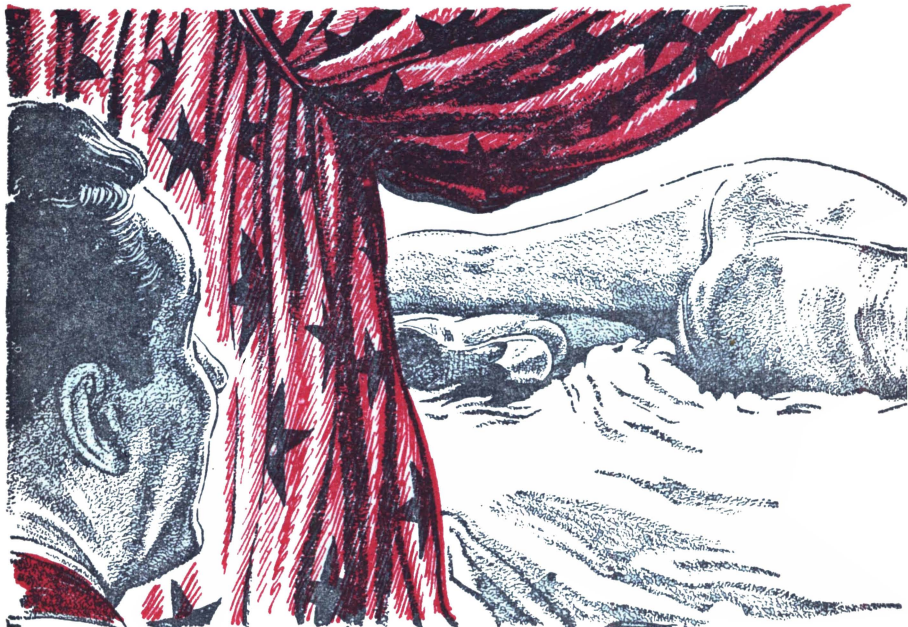
"Why tell me this?"

She poured herself a glass of wine and sipped it. "I don't understand your legal system. Must Isaac be tried? Can't you and Major Francis talk things over and release him?"

Duke thought of many answers and chose the simplest. "No."

"Don't you have a system, as we have, of forgiving even murder if the victim thoroughly deserved death?"

"There must be a trial. If the pro-



vocation was great, the sentence may be light."

"Couldn't Isaac be declared not guilty?"

"According to your own evidence, he killed Slater. Therefore he must be guilty of something."

"And there must be a punishment?"

"Theoretically, yes. In practice, no. He might be awarded some punishment which is no punishment at all."

"And who will decide that? General Bailey?"

There was venom in the way she pronounced Bailey's name. Duke decided instantly to prove this.

"What do you have against General Bailey?"

"He's a hard man. The wrong man to be in charge here. The wrong

Terran. If we must have a Terran general in command here, it should not be General Bailey."

"Why not?"

"He doesn't understand us and doesn't want to understand us. He wants us to persecute Isaac because he is a Jew and because Isaac loves me."

"What do you know about Morgenstern being a Jew?"

"What Isaac told me. Some Terrans, like Slater and General Bailey, hate Jews. Do you?"

"No. You can rest assured that Morgenstern won't be treated unfairly because he is a Jew. About the other thing — why do you say General Bailey hates Morgenstern because he loves you?"



"General Bailey fought us. He doesn't trust us. He still dislikes us, if he doesn't hate us. And things which he doesn't understand, he hates. He hates and despises me because I was a Princess of Love. He thinks I'm nothing more than a prostitute."

"And are you?"

"Isaac told me what you on your own world understand by prostitution. It's dirty there because you make it dirty. Here it is different. Major Francis is going to get me to explain our system at the trial. He thinks it's very important to his case."

Legal ethics made Duke say: "Oeea, if you want to help Morgestern perhaps you shouldn't talk to me at all. Help Major Francis all you like, but don't tell me his case."

"You mean you don't want to understand either? Like General Bailey?"

"I don't mean that at all. I mean —"

"Listen. Even Isaac doesn't understand. Major Duke, we are a cultured, artistic people. Please don't misunderstand me when I say we're more cultured than you are. I mean that among us the general, the average level of cultural awareness and attainment is higher."

"I must admit that the way you speak my language impresses me very much."

"That's one example. If we study a thing at all, first we decide how to study it. We take the best models. Thus I don't speak your language like a London or New York gutter-

snipe, but more as it's spoken at Princeton. But that's a digression. Isn't it only to be expected that a cultured people brings art to more and more pursuits? A savage, primitive society has few arts. A highly civilized culture has many. With us, love is an art. Not all of us study it, any more than every Terran studies all your arts. Women study it more than men, and beautiful, healthy people of both sexes study it more than plain people of moderate health and strength."

"Study can stultify," Duke remarked thoughtfully.

"Of course. Do you think we don't know that too? We know the dangers, and guard against them. Among us, Major Duke, a girl is proud to be invited to be a Princess of Love. It is a great honor. No girl, no matter how beautiful and talented, can be a Love Princess more than three times at most."

"Please," Duke protested. "I understand that you're telling me that among Leontans your exclusive, high-grade Princess of Love system is part of your culture and that a girl who figures in it isn't reckoned to have lost her respectability. Granting all that, I can't see what it has to do with Morgenstern and Slater."

"It has a great deal to do with General Bailey," the girl said in a low, serious voice. "He regards what happened as a vulgar, sordid affair, and his disgust over the whole business is his real reason for wanting to execute Isaac."

She might well be right, Duke

thought. But he kept this conclusion strictly to himself.

IV

"Did you go to the Leisure Club last night?" General Bailey asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you going to get Morgenstern shot for me?"

"May I be frank, sir? I can find no reason why the death penalty should be sought in this case. For my own part, I'd much rather be defending Morgenstern than prosecuting him. And I think I could get him off."

Bailey was thunderstruck. When at last he could speak, he said in a voice in which the grating of ice could be heard: "It seems I've been very much mistaken in you, Major."

"Yes, sir. You wish to appoint another officer as trial judge advocate?"

Bailey already had himself in command again. "Wait, sir. You're going too fast. I asked for the best prosecutor the fleet law pool could provide, and you were the man who was sent. Exactly why are you in such an all-fired hurry to duck out of this case?"

"Because, sir, my preliminary investigations suggest that you're allowing your own prejudices to sway you."

"That what you think, is it?"

Bailey's sudden calmness was the last thing Duke expected. What he had expected had been a burst of fury in the course of which General

Bailey would have blasted him off Leonta and back to the fleet. Making Bailey furious, Duke calculated, was the quickest and surest way of extricating himself from the Morgenstern case.

"Suppose I tell you," said Bailey, "that you're right, and that I still don't feel a twinge of conscience that I want to get Morgenstern shot?"

"Then I'd want to hear what else you have to say, sir."

"That's more like it," said Bailey grimly. "Listen, then. Major, unless you're blind and have never studied any history you must know that every century since the Middle Ages internal military discipline has weakened."

"That's a tenable point of view."

"It's more than that. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries all soldiers obeyed all orders instantly, blindly. Injustices were borne quietly, as being in the nature of things. In the twentieth century, psychiatry gave every troublemaker the excuse that everything wrong he did was somebody else's fault. And kids, teenagers, criminals, neurotics and ordinary enlisted men all learned that they could get away with anything if they put on a good enough act. By the twenty-second century a private could sue his colonel for persecution and get a hundred thousand dollar settlement."

"Only in a very clear, very extreme case, and in peacetime, sir."

"I said it could happen, didn't I? In the nineteenth century, could any private sue his colonel for any damn

thing? This is a trend, Major, and it's still growing. The trouble is, we still need armies. We still even need *peacetime* armies. And in peacetime, on jobs like this occupation of Leonta, the problem of discipline is at its worst. I've got to watch everything I do and say all day and every day in case some disgruntled sergeant or lieutenant or captain decides to get me kicked out of my job."

"Yes, sir. Am I to understand you have serious disciplinary problems here on Leonta?"

"Hell, Major, you only had to open your eyes to see we must have. The Leontans don't like us, don't want us here. So they do all they can to make things awkward. Mostly they back the rights of the underprivileged, as you might say. Treat privates just like colorrels. Act as if we're all Terrans, all soldiers, and what's the difference? Don't you see how that can make things tough?"

"Yes, I — do see," said Duke. He was mentally kicking himself. There was more to the Morgenstern case than met the eye. He should have been the last man to make up his mind before all the evidence was in.

"Now, the Leisure Club. I wanted a separate club for officers, but the Leontans said they'd open the club to all or none. Could I have given orders that the Leisure Club was for officers only? I could not. Then, this Love Princess business. You think it's okay, Major? You think I'm prejudiced?"

Duke hesitated. "Ethically, it doesn't seem so —"

"Major, as far as I'm concerned ethical considerations don't come into it. What concerns me is the effect on my garrison. What do you think of that?"

Duke admitted that the effect must be wholly bad.

Bailey shrugged impatiently. "I could have said all this yesterday, but I wanted you to look around first. Now, let's get down to this case. So you've got a lot of sympathy for Morgenstern? Morgenstern is a sergeant. He's been here quite long enough to know the ropes. Apparently he thought he had a Leontan girl, one of the few lucky enough to be in that position. The Leontans don't like it, but it happens. So long as the two of them keep it under cover, nobody does anything about it.

"Then he saw his girl on offer as a Princess of Love. Sure, that shook him up a bit. But it only proved what he should have known all along — that his girl was a Leontan, and liable to act like a Leontan. It gave him no license to kill a Terran Army captain."

Duke got the first hint of what Bailey was really getting at. He looked at him sharply, wondering if the blunt general was that shrewd.

And Bailey promptly proved he was. "Morgenstern is either a cunning fool or a stupid fool, Major, but a fool anyway. See what I mean?"

"Yes, sir," Duke whispered. "I guess I do see what you mean."

"And though we don't execute

crazy people any more, we often have to execute fools."

"Yes," said Duke quietly. "Yes, we do."

Duke had a busy time before the trial opened. There was a lot of work to be done, and nobody but himself to do it. Neither he nor Major Francis had been provided with an assistant.

Duke didn't meet either Morgenstern or Francis until the court-martial opened. Five officers presided over by General Hebbenton sat at a long table. Duke had a small table set at one end at right-angles. At the corresponding table at the other end Morgenstern sat with Major Francis.

Morgenstern was not at all as Duke had pictured him. He was a good-looking cheerful young man who didn't look the type to kill an officer in a fit of rage. He didn't look the type to kill anyone. There was one thing, however, in his appearance which particularly interested Duke. He looked a cunning fool rather than a stupid fool — if he was a fool at all.

Duke opened his case with the three witnesses of the killing, with Ocea herself last. All three were good, clear witnesses. They knew what they had seen and they weren't going to be inveigled into saying they had seen any more or any less.

Duke was very careful in his questions to Ocea, opening as few doors as possible for Major Francis to barge through in cross-examination.

Duke knew that Oeea was also being called as a witness for the defense. Before Francis had any opportunity to start putting on his case, however, Duke wanted to get all the facts in the record.

Major Francis, rather surprisingly, did not cross-examine. Certainly he would have his chance later. Duke had expected, however, that he would lose no time in bringing out some of the facts which were obviously in Morgenstern's favor.

After Oeea, Duke brought on a Captain Harry Burns who testified that Slater was not well liked, that he hated Jews and Negroes and that there had been trouble before between Slater and Morgenstern. While this witness was before the court, Francis several times objected on various grounds, but none of his objections were sustained.

Duke got the impression that several members of the court were very curious about Slater's previous relations with Morgenstern, and since Burns was the only witness who was going to tell them anything at all about this feature of the case they thought they'd better hear all he had to say.

Then Duke put Lieutenant Sam Borke on the stand.

"You were in the Leisure Club on the night of the killing, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"I was in the bar with several friends."

"Please give their names."

"Captain Bob Morrice, Lieutenant

Tom Rora, Ensign Bill Teiger of the Navy, and a nurse, Marge Brown."

"All Terrans, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was there any contact between your party and any Leontans, apart from the bartenders?"

"How do you mean, contact?"

"Did any Leontans speak to you?"

"Not till that guy came over."

"What guy, Lieutenant?"

"I can't say his name, the guy who saw the killing."

"Two Leontans saw the killing."

"I know, the other guy was with him. They were both there. Anyway, the first guy said —"

"Objection," said Francis, on his feet.

"Objection sustained," said Hebbenton. "You cannot elicit hearsay evidence, Major Duke. And please establish which of the Leontans spoke to the witness."

"Yes, sir. Lieutenant, was it the Leontan Eoae who spoke to you?"

"Yes, that's the guy. The big one."

"What did Eoae do after he spoke to you?"

"Went out to the toilet."

"Are you of your own knowledge aware that he went to the toilet?"

"No. But he said he was going."

With some difficulty, for the lieutenant was not a good witness, Duke managed to establish that the two Leontans who saw the killing had talked to Borke's party just before going out of the bar and that this must have been before they saw Morgenstern murder Slater.

Then he closed his case.

Hebbenton's eyebrows shot up and he asked Francis and Duke to approach.

"Is that your entire case, Major Duke?" he demanded.

"I have shown that Sergeant Morgenstern killed Captain Slater, sir, and that ill-feeling had existed between the two men for some time. What more can I do?"

"That remark comes perilously close to insolence, Major."

"It isn't intended, sir."

Hebbenton struggled with himself. Then he said quietly: "You know the circumstances, Major Duke. All Leontans must, in the circumstances, be considered hostile witnesses. Is Sergeant Morgenstern to be convicted, entirely on Leontan testimony, with no evidence from Terran personnel?"

"Most certainly, sir," said Duke coolly, "if you will not permit me to ask Terran officers what Leontans said to them."

The remark was deliberately rude. Hebbenton nearly hit the roof. Then he realized that rude or not, it was wholly justified. The court had the choice of making no distinction whatever between Terran and Leontan witnesses, or allowing hearsay evidence from Terran officers about what Leontans said.

"But...you didn't even ask your Leontan witnesses about this matter, Major."

"No, sir. Shall we recall them and ask them now?"

Eoae was recalled and asked

about the incident. He said yes, he had spoken to some Terran officers just before leaving the bar. He had offered to show them over the club and had been surprised when they refused. His motives had been purely friendly.

After the Leontan had left the stand, Duke was called before the president again. Hebbenton asked why he had not brought the matter up when the Leontan first gave evidence.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Duke blandly.

On the point of saying more, Hebbenton checked himself. Perhaps it occurred to him too that a cautious witness would be more likely to make an admission on being recalled after others had testified than otherwise.

V

Major Francis put Captain Hinton, an army doctor, on the stand to testify to Oeae's condition after the assault on her by Slater. Hinton took ten minutes and a good deal of medical jargon to say she'd been comprehensively beaten up.

Cross-examining, Duke said: "Exactly how do Leontans differ from Terrans, doctor?"

Francis objected on the grounds that this raised a subject not covered in direct examination. Hebbenton overruled the objection without asking Duke for an explanation.

Hinton said that Leontans were medically exactly the same as Terrans except that they healed more

quickly. Minor cuts, abrasions and bruises cleared up in just over half the time Terrans would take to heal, and there was less risk of scars.

"I don't know whether this is the result of heredity or environment," the doctor, a plump, red-faced man, declared. "In my view, far too little research has been done into this."

"Quite, doctor. But the fact is that Leontan flesh normally is less flawed than Terran partly because skin eruptions are rarer, partly because injuries heal more quickly, and partly because the healing is generally more complete?"

"Exactly so."

"So if you were to examine Oeea again now, she'd probably be completely healed?"

"Very likely."

"Now, doctor, you said you found traces of previous injuries?"

"Very faint. Almost gone."

"Yet according to your own evidence, Leontans heal fast? Therefore the previous injuries could have been caused as recently as two weeks before April 7?"

"Possibly."

"These faint traces of previous injuries you found. Were they visible?"

"No. They showed up in examination with a machine which shows subcutaneous damage. Nothing showed on the surface. Of course, Major, these injuries were of absolutely no medical importance whatever, compared with the quite considerable damage I was primarily concerned with."

"Of course, doctor."

On redirect Francis brought out the fact that although Leontans healed far more quickly than Terrans, injuries they suffered were just as painful at the time. Francis thus squashed any idea that Oeea, being a Leontan, had suffered any less pain at Slater's hands than a Terran girl would have done.

Francis then put Oeea on the stand. Duke was ruefully aware that her very appearance, especially directly after the doctor's evidence, was all in Morgenstern's favor. She was slim as a wand, fragile and very beautiful. Every man in the room — and everyone in the room but herself was a man — must be thinking: If I found anybody beating up this little honey, I guess I'd be pretty mad too.

Francis didn't call her "Miss." "Oeea, the Leontan custom of displaying a Princess of Love has a considerable bearing on this case. Describe the system."

Oeea, demure and composed, made much the same defense of the custom which she had already made to Duke. But this time she made far more of it.

She gave the Leontan name and explained that the translation Princess of Love was only an approximation. Goddess would be nearer than Princess, she said, except that there was no suggestion of actual divinity, only of supreme quality. And the other word in the title included Beauty as well as Love. The title meant, in fact, that a girl had everything. When any girl was invited to

be a Princess of Love she knew that she'd been awarded top marks for looks, personality and intelligence.

"Even among us," she said, "many girls say they'd refuse to act as a Princess of Love if they were ever asked. We *are* a rather strait-laced people, you know. But hardly anyone ever refuses the tests, and I've never heard of anybody actually chosen refusing the honor. . ."

"You're a strait-laced people?" Francis queried.

"Well, aren't we? A lot of you Terrans disapprove of the Love Princess system. Yet you have hundreds of prostitutes operating in every city, all the time, in the most sordid conditions. Among us, one Love Princess or at most two offer themselves in a week, openly, proudly. . .and that's all the extra-marital adventure that's legally and morally allowed among us. The present case can't be taken as typical. I made a bad mistake with Slater."

"Please confine your answers to the questions. You say no girl ever refuses the honor?"

"I've never heard of it happening." She looked appealingly at the president of the court. "I can only explain this if I'm allowed to speak freely."

Hebbenton said nothing. Taking silence as assent, she said: "Perhaps I can explain our attitude best like this. If in one of the countries on Earth where girls are still supposed to be modest, Spain for instance, a highly respectable girl is asked to parade in a bathing cos-

tume, she'll probably decline. But if she's told she's been chosen Miss Spain and is asked to go to America to compete in a Miss World or a Miss Universe or a Miss Galaxy competition, she'll find it very hard to say no. Suppose — and this must be theoretical, but please bear with me — she is told that if she competes she will certainly be chosen Miss Galaxy. Could any girl refuse? Remember, if she *does* refuse, no one will ever know the offer was made, that she *could* have been Miss Galaxy. . . Well, perhaps that gives you some idea of a Leontan girl's feelings on being asked to be a Princess of Love and Beauty. If she refuses, a time will soon come when nobody will ever believe that this supreme honor, this accolade of her womanhood and beauty, was ever offered. If she accepts, she gains something which nobody can ever take away from her. When I am old and ugly, I'll always be able to say that once I was a Princess of Love."

"Thank you, Oeea. You've been very lucid and illuminating. Now it seems that when you were offered this honor you didn't immediately tell Sergeant Morgenstern."

"No."

"Before I ask you why, I want to clarify your relations with Sergeant Morgenstern. Were you in love with him?"

"Yes. I still am."

"You had not previously been a Princess of Love, however? You didn't meet him in this way?"

"No. I'd met him as a very ordi-

nary girl with no thought of ever being invited to be a Love Princess."

"I see. Are you going to marry him?"

"Yes."

"Why, when you were invited to be a Love Princess, did you not tell Sergeant Morgenstern about it?"

"Well, he's a Terran. Suppose the Spanish girl who knew she could be Miss Galaxy was engaged to a handsome, moody, exceedingly jealous man. Suppose she knew he'd be furious if she entered the contest, and would forbid her to go through with it. Might she not decide to have her cake and eat it, if she could? Get the Miss Galaxy title and afterwards try to make her peace with her fiance? That's what I tried to do."

"In other words, you thought you take the honor and afterwards make your peace with Sergeant Morgenstern?"

"Yes."

"Although it meant being unfaithful to him?"

"Leontan girls don't consider election as a Princess of Love ordinary infidelity."

"But Sergeant Morgenstern might?"

"Yes. He did." She and Morgenstern exchanged glances. "But," she added, with what might have been a note of warning, "any Terran who wants to marry a Leontan ought to be clear in his own mind what he's doing. If he wants her to be exactly like an Earthgirl, he should marry an Earthgirl."

"Oeea, we've heard medical testi-

mony about the injuries you suffered at the hands of Captain Slater. How did that situation come about? I mean, how did it happen that you chose to bestow yourself on a man who proceeded to assault you?"

"That was mainly my fault, but partly due to my unfamiliarity with Terrans. Naturally I didn't expect what happened. Sergeant Morgenstern approached me while I was with Captain Slater, whom I had chosen as a possible partner. I knew nothing of Slater, not having met him before. He was a handsome man . . . When Sergeant Morgenstern approached me, I warned him off, as I had to do. Then, realizing perhaps for the first time exactly what I was doing, I became impatient to get it all over with. Provided I fulfilled my obligation, I was a Princess of Love. A Love Princess may not take her title and refuse her love. I had to love a man or I was not a Love Princess. Stupidly I decided that I'd stick with Slater and conclude the business immediately. I didn't take the care that a Love Princess should take, and usually does take. I didn't make certain that the man I had chosen was worthy of me. I simply decided to keep Slater and be released from my obligation that night."

"What happened?"

She shrugged. "We talked. We went to my room and he started to beat me, There's nothing more to it than that. but I'll relate all the details if you wish."

"I don't think that will be neces-

sary." Major Francis turned to Duke. "You may cross-examine."

Duke rose. "Why didn't you fulfil your obligations with Sergeant Morgenstern?"

Oeea frowned. "Pardon?"

"Since you wanted, as you said, to have your cake and eat it, why didn't you do so by accepting the invitation to be a Princess of Love and choosing Morgenstern as your partner?"

The girl's brow cleared. "That isn't allowed. If it were, the system would be a farce. Girls would always choose their own lovers. No, a Princess must make her choice from the men she actually meets after she accepts the honor—from the men who see her at the Leisure Club and sue for her."

"You implied that there are tests?"

"Yes. There is a series of examinations."

"Then it can hardly be a complete surprise to anyone who finds herself chosen as a Love Princess, surely?"

"You're mistaken. Practically all pretty Leontan girls do the preliminary tests. It's still a surprise to be chosen."

"But doesn't a Love Princess have more than preliminary tests? Doesn't she have to pass a very rigorous examination? How, then, if she's undergone all this testing, can it be a great surprise when she's chosen?"

"I could express it in figures, Major. For every fifty girls who are tested, one is chosen. A conceited girl would expect to be the one. A comparatively modest girl is always surprised."

Duke nodded as if satisfied. "When you are chosen, Oeea, do you have to appear at the club on a particular night?"

"No."

"Are you given warning?"

"Yes."

"Then you could have appeared on April 4 or April 6 instead of April 7?"

"Yes."

"Why did you pick April 7?"

"No reason."

"It wasn't because both Morgenstern and Slater were at the Leisure Club that night?"

"No."

"You could have chosen April 4, when Slater was there and not Morgenstern. Or April 5, when neither was there. Or April 6, when Morgenstern was there and not Slater."

Oeea, who had shown no indication of concern, distress or annoyance, didn't seem to think any answer was called for.

"Why." Duke persisted. "did you pick a night when Morgenstern was present?"

Oeea raised her eyebrows inquiringly. "Do you want me to give you a lecture on feminine psychology?"

"No. Just answer the question."

"But that's exactly what I'd need to do to answer the question. I hadn't told Sergeant Morgenstern what was going to happen. I'd seen him the night before and still hadn't told him. But of course I wanted him to know sometime. I wanted him to see me as a Princess of Love. I look rather nice as a Princess of Love. Don't I, Major?"

VI

After a recess. Francis put Morgenstern on the stand. He took Morgenstern right through the events of the evening of April 7 — his surprise and shock when Oeea made her appearance as a Princess of Love, his unavailing attempts to talk to her, his ejection from the club, his impatient prowling round the building, his entry through a cellar, his discovery of Oeea with Slater, who was apparently trying to kill her.

The recital couldn't fail to make a good impression as far as Morgenstern's chances were concerned. Adroitly Major Francis, having already tried to show that the Princess of Love system was not as evil as Terrans were liable to think, now shifted ground slightly and presented his case to say in effect: "Anyway, can you blame Sergeant Morgenstern? How would you feel if you suddenly and unexpectedly found your girl acting as a prostitute? And not only that, but associating herself with a man you had good reason to dislike and distrust? Wouldn't you try to save her? And, when you found her being treated as Oeea was treated, wouldn't you lose all self-control?"

When Duke rose to cross-examine, he knew that in a sense he was the judge in this case. If he failed to make any impression on Morgenstern, the sergeant was going to get off with a comparatively light sentence. And if General Bailey's fears about the situation of the occupying

force were justified, discipline would suffer such a blow that the Terran troops would be off the planet within six months. If on the other hand Duke could tear Morgenstern to shreds, the situation would at any rate get no worse.

Duke was prepared to admit that Francis was showing himself a very competent defense counsel. But Francis had made one mistake. In putting Morgenstern on the stand and covering practically all the events of April 7, Francis had given Duke all the scope he could possibly want.

"Sergeant Morgenstern," said Duke, "you entered the club through a cellar? Was it a coal cellar?"

Morgenstern answered confidently. "Yes, the Leontans use a lot of coal. There's hardly any oil left. Coal is used for heating the Leisure Club."

"Is there a door or hatch or what?"

"There's a sort of trapdoor with a chute below it. I prised up the trapdoor and went down the chute."

"Rather risky, wasn't it?"

"I figured the drop couldn't be too abrupt, or the sacks would burst open. And it was okay. I landed in the dark on a pile of coal sacks."

"Very clean sacks, surely?"

"Huh?"

"Your appearance after the killing has been described by several witnesses. Nobody mentioned coal dust."

"Oh, the Leontans like things to be clean. The chute was spotless. I saw that before I lowered the trapdoor over my head and let myself slide down."

"Are you aware that many of the thousands of men in this garrison have made repeated and unsuccessful attempts to get into the Leisure Club? Men who have been barred temporarily or permanently? Men who knew there were Leontan girls in the Club and would have tried anything to get at them?"

"They just didn't go about it the right way."

"Although all these attempts have failed, on the night when you were ejected you simply scouted around and found a way in?"

"Maybe I'm smarter than most."

"Isn't it true that the trapdoor is generally locked so that it couldn't possibly be prised up."

"I don't know."

Morgenstern was so confident he appeared to be enjoying this. Duke's questions about coal dust worried him so little that Duke, who hadn't been quite sure, became convinced that he had actually gone down the chute as he said. If Morgenstern had entered any other way it would have worried him that Duke seemed to be catching him out. Having actually gone down the chute, however, he felt that Duke couldn't shake his story.

Duke moved on. "You knew Oeea's room in the club?"

"Yes. At least, I knew the room she'd be in. She doesn't have a room of her own there, but there's an arrangement."

"You'd been in that room with her before?"

"Yes."

"On the evening of April 7, once you emerged from the coal-cellar, you rushed straight to Oeea's room and flung the door open?"

"Yes."

"Why wasn't it locked?"

Morgenstern had been expecting this. He almost laughed. "There are no locks in the Leisure Club. You can search all over the place and never see a single key."

"When on previous occasions you and Oeea were in that room, didn't anyone ever try to get in? Think, now, Sergeant."

Morgenstern hesitated and for the first time looked momentarily uneasy. Duke's warning suggested that there was something behind the question, that Duke wanted him to say no and was then going to produce evidence to prove him a liar.

"I seem to recall somebody rattled the door once. What's that got—"

"Are you not aware that although there are no keys in Leontan locks, the doors can be locked by a certain manipulation of the door handle?"

"Oh, sure. Yes, I remember something about that. Never paid much attention, because it was always Oeea who locked the door."

"Locked the door?"

"Well, shut it, then."

"But on April 7, having entered that room with Captain Slater and wishing to be extremely private, she didn't bother to lock the door?"

"I don't know that she didn't. Maybe I worked the lock. . . I was so mad I don't know what I did."

"So mad that you were able to operate a complicated lock the secret of which you didn't know?"

"I don't know that it was locked. Probably it wasn't."

"So Oeea neglected to lock the door that night?"

"I don't know."

"Sergeant, the evidence of the two witnesses and yourself concurs absolutely on this point. You rushed along the corridor and burst into the room. No one mentioned even a momentary hesitation to fumble with the lock."

"Okay, the door wasn't locked, then."

"So the coal trapdoor, which is normally locked, was left open that night. And when Oeea entered her room with Slater for the purpose of making love to him, she left the door open. Although that door, according to the evidence we have heard, was freely accessible to anyone passing by."

Morgenstern said nothing. He wasn't so confident now.

"You testified that when you saw Slater hitting Oeea you were so mad you just grabbed the first thing available and hit him with it?"

"Yes."

"That object being a metal lamp weighing thirteen pounds?"

"I don't know the weight of it. But sure, it was heavy."

"It was an oil lamp, Sergeant?"

"Yes."

"The Leisure Club uses electric light, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"And didn't you just say that the club uses coal for heating because the planet has hardly any oil left?"

"It's an old oil lamp. It isn't used any more. It's kept there as an ornament."

"I see. A useless lamp weighing thirteen pounds is kept on the bedside table. the only object on it?"

"Yes."

"It wasn't by any chance deliberately put there because when you picked up such an object and hit somebody on the head with it you could be pretty sure you'd killed him?"

Major Francis jumped to his feet with an objection which General Hebbenton sustained. The president ordered the last question to be stricken from the record.

Duke turned back to Morgenstern. "Sergeant, when you burst into this unlocked room, Slater was hitting the girl?"

"Yes."

"On what part of the body was he hitting her?"

"Everywhere. Under the ribs, in the belly, on her arms when she tried to defend herself."

"You saw this, Sergeant?"

"Some of it."

"So when you burst into the room, Slater, instead of turning in surprise — for *he* must have thought the door was locked. surely? — went on hitting her while you and the two Leontans behind you watched?"

"His back was to us. And I guess I didn't make any noise at first, not

till I got furious and shouted. And. . . and Slater was making a noise himself, driving his fists into Oeea. And she was gasping—”

“Gasping, but not moaning, shouting or screaming, Sergeant?”

“No.”

“She was in a room with a sadist who was beating her brutally. She had already sustained painful injuries and as far as she knew was going to go on being hurt for a considerable time. The door was unlocked and there were over three hundred people in the club, not counting the staff. But she didn’t cry out?”

“No.”

“Although Slater had his back to you, Oeea could see you?”

“No, I guess not. She was doubled up. . . Slater had been working her in the gut. . . Didn’t the doctor tell you what she was like afterwards?”

“The doctor’s report wasn’t available to you then, Sergeant. All you knew of Oeea’s condition was what you saw. And it seems she wasn’t being hurt enough to bother crying out.”

“Hell, you heard what the doctor said! And I told you I saw Slater half killing her.”

“But she didn’t scream.”

“You keep saying that! How do I know why she didn’t scream? Why don’t you ask her?”

“Maybe we will, Sergeant. On the other hand, maybe you could tell us. The doctor’s report mentioned previous injuries which the girl had suffered. Did you inflict them, Sergeant?”

“Me? Me huh? What are you talking about?”

“Leontans are great artists, Sergeant Morgenstern. They make arts of a lot of things we wouldn’t glorify with the name. The art of making love with a complete stranger, for example. Don’t they also make a special study of maochism?”

Morgenstern was sweating. He looked desperately at the court president and then at his counsel. Francis was frowning at some papers in front of him.

“Did you, too, inflict pain on Oeea with her sanction, Sergeant?”

“Me? No, never.”

“Then who was responsible for the previous injuries?”

“I don’t know.”

“Sergeant, about two weeks before April 7 Oeea had suffered injuries comparable to those which Slater later inflicted. Surely you must have known about them? According to her evidence you were very close at around that time. According to your own evidence, you were lovers at that time. How is it possible that —”

“I remember now,” said Morgenstern quickly. “We had a fight. A quarrel. Yes, I did hit her.”

“Quite extensively?”

“Maybe.”

“This was at the Leisure Club, in that same room?”

“Yes.”

“Yet once again she didn’t cry out, didn’t scream, didn’t —”

Major Francis interrupted. Addressing General Hebbenton, he said that it was hard to see the relevance

of this matter. "We are concerned with the night of April 7. On direct examination, I covered nothing else. The events of some unspecified date prior to April 7 are not in question."

"The court takes note of your remarks, Major Francis," Hebbenton said. "Nevertheless, I am going to permit the judge advocate to continue this line of questioning."

Francis shrugged and sat down.

"Is it not a fact," said Duke, "that the Leontan girl Oeea takes pleasure in pain and cannot or will not make love unless an element of masochism is present? Didn't you frequently beat her, Sergeant?"

"Only twice."

"And on those two occasions did she remain silent?"

"Well, she didn't scream."

"No, because if she had screamed you'd have been interrupted, wouldn't you? And why should she scream, because she enjoyed being hurt, didn't she?"

"Why don't you ask her?" Morgenstern said desperately.

Francis was standing to object again. The officers of the court were staring intently at Morgenstern.

Hebbenton rapped on the table and called the two counsels to confer with him.

"Major Duke," he said quietly, "what do you wish to establish by this line of questioning?"

"Morgenstern's defense is that he was so justifiably enraged at the sight of his girl being tortured that he lost control and killed Slater. If it is true that the girl is a masochist, then she

may have deliberately incited Slater to do what he did. And if Morgenstern knew all about it, the case for conspiracy is strengthened."

"Conspiracy?"

"This is my case, sir."

"To establish that," said Major Francis slowly, "even if it's well founded, another trial would be necessary."

Hebbenton turned to him. "I propose to recall Oeea, Major."

"Yes, sir."

"You have no objections?"

"I have many objections to a great many things in this trial, sir. I have bowed to your judgment because the circumstances are, after all, unusual."

VII

Oeea was as cool as ever when she was recalled. She refused to lie. Yes, she was a masochist. Every time Morgenstern and she had made love he had beat her. This had happened on four occasions. She had not known on April 7 that any trace remained of the last of these occasions. She had thought herself completely recovered.

She denied everything else. But the writing was on the wall.

When Duke made his closing address, he linked together all the little pieces of evidences he had managed to prise out of unwilling witnesses.

Oeea, a masochist, had been chosen as a Princess of Love. Duke cast doubt on the allegation that Morgenstern had known nothing of this until

the curtains were drawn back to reveal her in the alcove. Morgenstern's previous hatred of Slater was well established.

Ejected from the club, Morgenstern knew how to get back in. A trapdoor was left open.

"Now we come to the two Leontans who testified," Duke said. "I submit that they were to be in the back regions at a predetermined time. We have heard how they tried to take a Terran party with them. Morgenstern's justifiable homicide was to be observed by so many witnesses, Leontan and Terran, that no doubt about any of the circumstances could possibly exist. But the Terrans didn't go, and the Leontans had to go by themselves.

"Oeea left her door unlocked, incited Slater to beat her, and kept him turned with his back to the door. The time schedule must have been arranged rather carefully. And everything worked out neatly. Morgenstern arrived and struck Slater with a metal lamp. I have already remarked on the coincidence of such an instrument being readily available. As it happened, Morgenstern only had to strike once. Had it been necessary, he could have finished Slater off, still in his alleged mad rage.

"Morgenstern first said he had never deliberately inflicted pain on the girl. Then he said he had done it once, in a quarrel. His written statement says they never quarreled. Then he admitted he had beaten her twice. The girl herself said this happened on four occasions.

"I must now say a word about the motives of the people concerned. It is a truism that a trial on a capital charge should never be swayed by the political consequences involved. But the motives on the Leontan side are all political.

"Morgenstern merely hated Captain Slater and saw, or was offered, an opportunity to kill him without having to suffer the usual consequences.

"When we come to the Leontans, we have to consider the whole Terran situation here. Discipline is always a difficult problem for an occupying army. Solders wish to be on friendly terms with the local people. But the Leontans aren't particularly friendly. And they exacerbate most disciplinary actions by taking the side of the participant who holds less rank.

"Here the Leontans saw a chance to have a sergeant murder a captain and more or less get away with it. Now as you can all see for yourself, the actual outcome of the case didn't worry them at all. Morgenstern was only a tool to create dissension."

Morgenstern started at this and stared angrily at Duke.

"If he was found guilty of murder and shot," Duke went on, "on the evidence which was supposed to be before us, the verdict would seem cruel and unjust, and the occupying army would have seethed with unrest. If he was given a light sentence or released not guilty, the verdict would be practically a mandate for any disgruntled corporal or private

to plot the death of a colonel or major he didn't like — with Leontan assistance, of course. For something like this which worked once would be well worth trying another time."

He paused to let that sink in. And he didn't say much more. The officers at the table had to make up their own minds whether a conspiracy had been established. There was nothing more he could do.

Francis made the best of a bad job. He pointed out the circumstantial nature of the prosecution case. And he stressed that Morgenstern was on trial, not Oeea and the other Leontans. Even if there was something in the prosecution's theories, Sergeant Morgenstern was, as the judge advocate said, no more than a tool. Morgenstern had killed a man who was beating up his girl. Nothing which anybody said could ever cloud that clear issue. If there was a sinister background, the court could not eradicate it or punish those concerned by harshness toward Morgenstern.

Francis had a good legal point there, Duke thought. But in the defense counsel's place he doubted if he'd have made it. For to make that point he had to accuse his own client of conspiracy with the enemy...of treason.

The court retired for four hours. Morgenstern was found guilty and sentenced to death.

Duke switched out the light and composed himself for sleep. His barge left at six the next morn-

ing, and he was practically ready to step on it. He had one of the four bedrooms at the landing field post.

General Bailey had thanked him gruffly. Duke had done the job for which Bailey had sent for him. To Duke's question whether the verdict would do any real good, Bailey said grimly:

"Major, it's only in storybooks that a situation is solved in an instant. I've never in my army career seen any awkward situation that could be cleared up like switching on a light. Sometimes situations like this clear themselves up, sometimes they die from lack of ammunition. All I know is, my personal position is a little more secure today than it was before. Morgenstern killed Slater. And if you'd failed, it would have been much worse. To that extent, this has been a victory and not a defeat."

Morgenstern had already been shot. Duke wasn't sorry for him. Duke at least was convinced of the soundness of his own case, and satisfied that Morgenstern deserved death.

Nothing could be done about the Leontans, unfortunately. They hadn't murdered anybody. They had hardly even told any lies. They were as pure as the driven snow.

Duke was on the point of dropping off when he heard a knock at the door. "Who is it?" he demanded sleepily.

"It's me, Sergeant Brown."

Duke got out of bed and put a dressing gown over his pajamas. He

switched on the light again and opened the door.

"There's a lady to see you, sir," the sergeant said.

"A lady?"

"A Leontan girl, sir."

That could only be Oeea.

If he hadn't already had to get out of bed, he'd probably have told the sergeant to send her away. But Duke was as curious as the next man. Why should Oeea want to see him?

"Send her up," he said.

She came in wearing a heavy coat. Before saying a word to him she shed this, and then the woolen jacket she wore beneath it, and then her thick slacks.

"You plan to stay?" said Duke politely.

"Yes." She took off her heavy shoes and put on a pair of slippers she had brought with her. She was now dressed in nothing in particular.

"Now, wait a minute," said Duke, frowning. "Oeea, I got your lover shot. I also spoiled a good plan. You can't make me believe I'm high on your list of favorite characters."

"You're not," she said coolly, sitting on a couch and arranging her bare legs provocatively, one on the seat and the other along the back.

"Then why are you here?" For a moment he had a horrible dread that she was going to tell him triumphantly that he'd been wrong all along, that there was no conspiracy, that Morgenstern had been shot when some lesser punishment would have been more appropriate.

He needn't have worried. "Because

you're leaving Leonta. Because I can't believe a man like you can be without influence among his own people. Would you like to beat me, Major?"

"No."

She saw he meant it, and shrugged. "Well, you don't have to. It's an acquired taste, pleasure in pain. I can stay with you and we'll be as tender toward each other as you could wish."

"I don't want you to stay with me."

"No? Maybe you'll change your mind. Major, you don't like me, do you?"

"No."

"Perhaps you'll like me less when I tell you I never cared much for Sergeant Morgenstern. I used him, as you said."

Duke remained silent.

"Major, I still want you to understand me. And us. I know a lot about your people. Like us, they would never submit to dominion by anyone else."

"I seem to remember that when Leonta and Earth fought, Leonta was the aggressor."

"When two peoples have to fight, what does it matter who strikes the first blow? You know that occupation is no good, Major. If Leonta and Earth are ever really at peace, it will have to be as equals."

Duke nodded reluctantly. "I've read Terran history. When you fight a war, you support partisans, don't you? You make use of

guerrilla warfare? Sabotage? Espionage? You use fools and traitors?"

"Yes."

"Then you must understand the Morgenstern affair now, Major. You must open your eyes to it. As a people we're not perfect. Neither are you. Perhaps we have both made mistakes, ethical and logical. At the moment, Earth has an army of occupation on Leonta. We want rid of it. By every means in our power. And on the face of it we haven't many — and most of them dirty."

Duke now had no difficulty in seeing what she meant or in understanding why she had come to him. And reluctantly he concurred.

Leonta was not the kind of world to accept even civilized, convention-

al, treaty-bound slavery. Leonta, like Earth, had pride. Leonta had to fight and go on fighting.

And Ocea simply wanted him to understand. That was all. She couldn't believe he was without influence, she said. Well, perhaps he wasn't. So it was worth while for her to spend an hour with him, perhaps a night with him, so that Major Nigel Duke would understand Leonta better. It might pay.

"You'd do the same if you had to, wouldn't you?" she said softly.

"Yes," he admitted. "I'd do the same."

"Do I go or stay?" she asked even more softly.

He sighed. "You stay."

END