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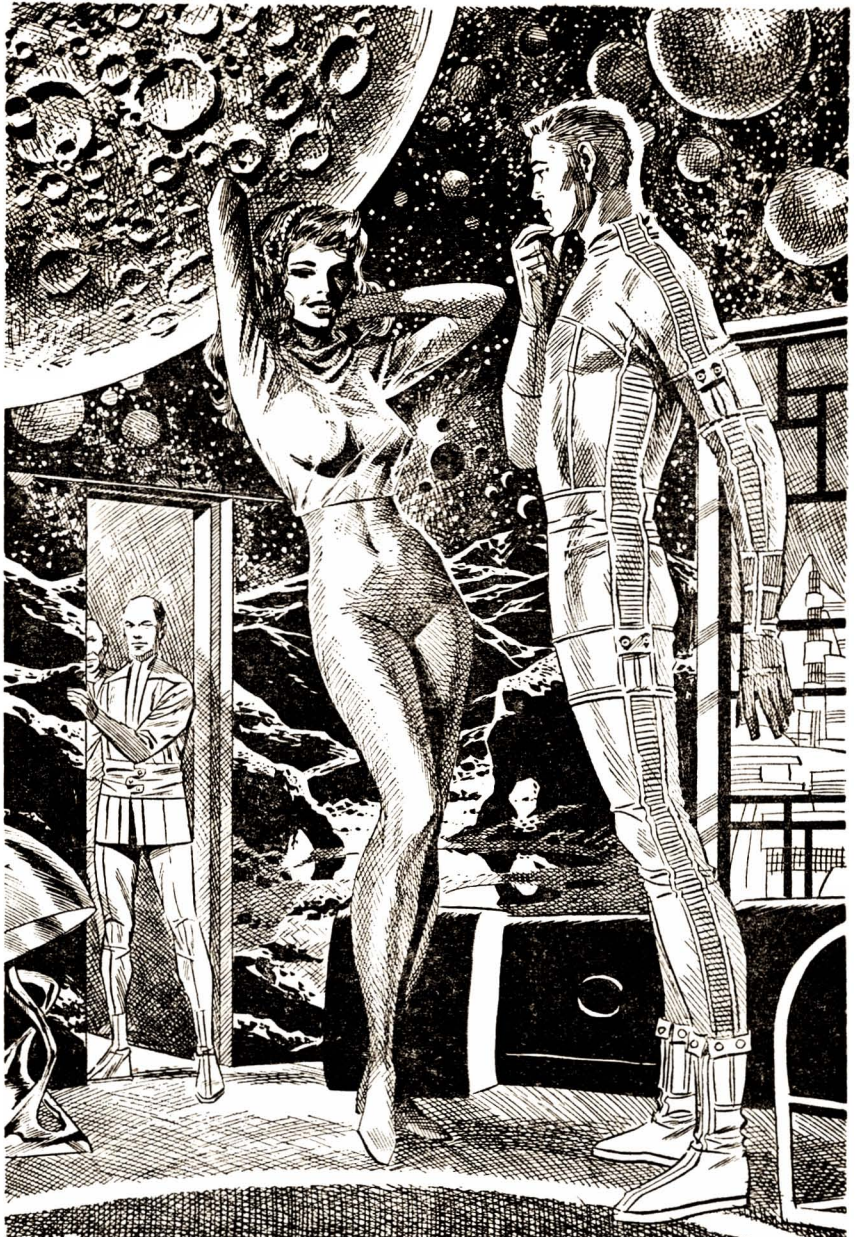
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# THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE SPACE

by Robert Silverberg

*Ed Reese loved his space assignment on Crawford IX, and didn't want a vacation on Earth. But he had to take it, and Carol Dwyer was there to see that he had thirty-four weeks of sheer pleasure!*

I GUESS the root of all my trouble was that I just didn't like cities. Crowds. Soot-cluttered air. Noise. Neon lights. Not that I'm a country boy, you understand; I was



The execs departed, leaving me with Carol Dwyer, who was supposed to start me off on my thirty-four weeks of uninterrupted pleasure...

born in Tarrytown, right in the heart of little old Metropolitan New York. But that was a long time ago—thirty-five years, to be precise; it was 2612—and at the time all this happened, I hadn't set foot on Earth in twelve years.

And that was fine with me, just fine. I was perfectly happy where I was—and everything would have kept on being fine, if some white-collar needlehead in the home office hadn't taken it upon himself to decide that I had some vacation time due me.

I work for Transmat, Incorporated. My official job designation is Maintenance Technician First Class, and my salary is seven thousand Terran dollars per Standard Annum, adjustable to meet local economic conditions on whatever world I might be assigned to. For half of the twelve years of my employ, I had been stationed on Crawford IX, which is a pleasant Earthsize world some six hundred light years from Sol. It's inhabited by about two thousand Terran colonists and by various native forms of life, the most advanced of which is a kind of small monkey with

blue skin, no hair, and a bright green rump.

**M**Y JOB was to look after the big matter-transmitter, which was Crawford IX's only link with the mother world. It would take about six hundred years, more or less, to send a message by radio from Crawford IX to Earth—assuming that any equipment on Earth was sensitive enough to make the pickup—and it would take eleven hundred years, approximately, for any conventional-drive spaceship to make the trip one-way. A faster-than-light ship, naturally, could do the trip in a couple of weeks—but there's the minor drawback that human beings can't survive hyperspace travel. So... faster-than-light ships are sent out unmanned, bearing matter-transmitters, and are landed by self-guiding feedback controls. After that, travel between Earth and the colony-world is carried on by Transmat, simply, instantaneously, and safely.

My job involved sitting around in the Transmat office on Crawford for the eight transmitting hours of each day,

making sure that nothing went wrong. A minor oscillation of the wavicle amplifier and a person might arrive at his destination inside out, you see. So I ran a daily check on the Thorson tube that powers the Transmat; I took heat readings; I sent through confirmations of functioning each day, before any transmission began.

The rest of the time I was free to loaf, and Crawford IX is ideally suited for loafing, with its unspoiled lakes and virgin forests, its clear blue skies and its utterly fresh air. There isn't any industry on Crawford IX, you see; the colonists won't permit it. Most of them are farmers—though there are a few composers, writers, and philosophers living here and sending their output via Transmat back to Earth for consumption there (and for pretty good money, too, may I add.) Life is simple, life is pure on Crawford IX. Every night there's a meteor shower that makes even old hands gasp for the very beauty of it. There are three moons that orbit in a dazzlingly-complex pattern, and so at night no shadow ever stands still.

A GOOD place to live, in other words. I liked it. I was looking forward to spending the rest of my life there, putting in my daily maintenance stint and then getting out into the fresh air with a book or a block-and-tackle (no newfangled magnetic dredges for *me*, thank you!) or a bottle of something easy on the gullet. And then, one balmy Fourth-month morning, after I had okayed transmission for the day, I scooped out the newly-arrived morning mail and found, sitting on the top of the stack, a Transmat flimsy addressed to *Mr. Edwin Reese, Maintenance Division*.

Ed Reese is me. And the only mail I get is my paycheck, once a month—and not due for three more weeks. I don't have any parents, brothers, sisters, wives, or mistresses back on Earth who might want to write to me.

I flipped the "Acknowledge Receipt" lever to show I had got the stuff; I dumped the rest of the colony mail into the basket for the postmaster to sort out later; and I slit my letter open with shaky hands.

**I**T WAS from the home office, New York.

It said:

*A routine check of our records discloses that you have not applied for vacation leave since entering our employ in 2635. This oversight should be corrected at once. You are entitled to thirty-four Standard Weeks of accumulated leave, with full pay. Upon your acknowledgment a relief man will be sent out to handle your duties until your return from Earth.*

Frowning, I switched on the vocotype and dictated an answer in my best official tones.

"I am in receipt of your communication regarding my accumulated vacation time, and wish to inform you that I have no wish to use this time on Earth. If it is possible for me to spend my vacation here on Crawford IX, send a relief man at once; otherwise, forget the whole thing and I'll continue as before."

I looked the flimsy over, checked it for spelling and punctuation, folded it, put the home office address on it, and deposited it in the pickup cubicle of the Transmat, along

with half a dozen packages scheduled to go out in the morning mail. I yanked the lever; cool green flame filled the cubicle, and a moment later it was empty.

**F**ORGETTING all about the interchange of notes, I got going on my morning routine of maintenance. About two hours later, though, the bell rang, signalling an arrival. In the cubicle I found three cartons addressed to locals, a set of replacement bulbs I had ordered a week back, and a new note from the home office.

*Be advised that the terms of your work contract require you to take regular vacations for the sake of continued efficiency. Through a bookkeeping error you have not been reminded of this clause till now, but the situation must cease. The quality of your work may be seriously impaired if you remain on continuous duty. We must insist that you leave Crawford IX as soon as practicable and return to Earth for a period of rest and diversion.*

I scowled and made angry snarling noises deep in my throat. Dammit, I didn't want





Dave gave the cop a shove into the Transmat...

a vacation. I didn't want to go back to Earth.

I switched on the vocotype and started mentally composing my reply. I would say something haughty, to the effect that in twelve years—six of them in continuous stay on Crawford IX—I had a 100% safety record; that I detested Earth and loved the bucolic beauty of Crawford IX; that vacations, anyway, were for clods. I had a host of fine arguments, but none of them coped with the minor fact that, by contract, I was required to go back to Earth once a year for a change of scene, that I had been getting away with it all these years, and that I had no way of wiggling out of that clause now.

I shrugged and dictated a brief note allowing as how I was willing to be relieved, if the company insisted. And that was how I came to make my visit to Earth.

**M**Y RELIEF man popped out of the Transmat about a week later. By that time, I had tidied up all my loose ends, paid my outstanding bills in town, and generally forti-

fied myself for the departure.

The relief man was a kid of about twenty-five, with a pleasant grin and a lot of untidy blond hair. "All set to go?" he asked me.

"I suppose I am," I admitted reluctantly. "Come on—let me show you around this place."

I spent the next two hours briefing him. He knew his technical stuff, all right; I could see that there wouldn't be any problems about his care of the Transmat. I showed him the place where he was to stay, gave him a few tips about how to get along with the colonists, told him where the fishing was best, and that was it.

As I stood on the lip of the Transmat cubicle I said, "And remember—don't get yourself too comfortably ensconced here. I'm only going to be gone thirty-four weeks."

"Don't worry. I know I'm only a temporary replacement."

"Just don't forget it." I stepped into the cubicle. I felt a little uneasy about making the trip, even though I knew there was no chance of trouble. It was six years since I had



last made an interstellar Transmat jump. I was a little out of practice, you might say.

"Ready?" he called.

"Ready," I said.

**H**E THREW the switch. I saw the green flame coming at me, but before I had a chance to close my eyes it was dying away again—only I was somewhere else. Somewhere else, six hundred light-years away. I was in a Transmat cubicle the size of a small room, and there were faces looking in at me from outside.

"Mr. Reese?"

"That's right. Where am I?"

"New York office of Transmat, Incorporated, naturally. If you'll come out of there, we can discuss your vacation plans with you..."

"Sure." I realized with a tinge of embarrassment that I was shyly hanging back, inside the Transmat cubicle. I climbed out of it, a little uneasily, and found myself in a lush office.

Only "lush" is a rather feeble word for it. The furnishings could be contained in that term, but I can't think of a one-word description of the

walls and ceiling which would tell you anything. It took me a moment to realize that there *were* walls and a ceiling, because at first I thought I'd stepped out onto the surface of an alien planet, with no atmosphere whatsoever. Then I realized that where the carpeting ended, a three-dimensional mural gave the effect of weird terrain extending to a far horizon, and that the stars, moons, and planets visible all around were more of same, worked into the ceiling. (A little while later, I found that the "sky" rotated to give more of the planetarium effect, only it was no sky that anyone had ever seen, in any galaxy.)

I gasped, then realized that I was breathing perfectly good, pure—well, good at least—air. Four men who looked, by their harried expressions and thinning hair, like middle-level executives, were smiling at me.

"Welcome back to Earth, Mr. Reese," one of them said. "It was a terrible oversight, letting you go so long without a vacation..."

"I didn't mind," I said.

He ignored my interruption. "You have thirty-four weeks of

sheer pleasure ahead of you, Mr. Reese. Here we have your vacation pay, with accumulated interest. . . .”

**H**E HANDED me a check. It was for just about one year's salary: I stammered something incoherent.

“Naturally,” he went on, “you'll find Earth a bit strange to you at first. There have been twelve years of progress and expansion since you last were here, and no doubt you'll be a trifle unsettled at first. . . .”

“Especially since,” I said, “I don't know a blessed soul on the whole planet. I don't have any family, and after twelve years I wouldn't know where to find my old friends. . . .”

He smiled. “Certainly. We understand the situation. Miss Dwyer, would you come in, please? This is Miss Dwyer of our secretarial staff. We've asked her to look after you for your first week on Earth, until you've grown accustomed to our ways once again. . . .”

I gaped. Miss Dwyer, who entered from the left, was a tall, shapely girl with turquoise hair, golden eyes, and lovely,

full, kissable—but turquoise—lips. She was wearing a blouse transparent in front—only the transparent area kept shifting so you couldn't get a very long view of any one given segment of her anatomy—and a pair of skin-tight brown leggings. All in all, quite a sight. There was a good deal of casual and thoroughly non-erotic nudity on Crawford IX, but this sort of carefully-calculated display had my hormones in a whirl within seconds. It's one thing when a colonist woman peels to the buff for a refreshing afternoon dip—that happens all the time, and it's done with such innocence that you stop noticing it pretty quickly, believe it or not. It's an entirely different matter when a girl's blouse plays a startling game of peek-a-boo with you.

“Hello,” she said. “I'm Carol Dwyer. You're Ed Reese?”

I nodded.

At that point the four executives faded out of the room with cheery goodbyes, leaving me standing stupidly gripping my vacation paycheck and goggling at Carol Dwyer. If I had known that anything as winsome as this would be tossed

in on my vacation, I wouldn't have waited twelve years to take it. I said as much. Carol flushed prettily.

CAROL SAID, "They tell me you haven't been on Earth in Twelve years."

"That's right. Six years on Monroney VII, and six years on Crawford IX."

She chuckled. "I suppose current Earth fashions haven't penetrated to such primitive places yet. You seem surprised at the way I'm dressed."

"It is rather—ah—startling," I said.

"Oh, turquoise is simply *the* color this year," she said. "It may look a little strange to see a woman with turquoise hair now, but you'll get used to it in a little while."

"Um. Yes. Turquoise," I said, keeping my eyes away from that tempting area of transparency that kept oscillating around her blouse.

She walked to the wall, nudged a peculiarly-shaped projection of "rock", and a section of the mural depolarized itself to become an ordinary window. As it cleared, looking even madder than the scene

there before, she said, "I've got a lot of things lined up for this week. We'll really do the town. You like sensie-shows? Scentoramas? There's so much we..."

I made a hollow gasping sound.

"Something the matter?" she asked.

"Out—there," I said. I pointed through the window at the chaos outside. We were on perhaps the eightieth floor of an enormous skyscraper. As far down as I could see, the air was crisscrossed with bridges strung from our building to others in the neighborhood. Far, far below motor vehicles whirled back and forth like mad little beetles. A sluggish river of many colors ebbed along—and I realized it was a mass of pedestrians jammed up against each other. Everything outside seemed noise, confusion, incoherence.

I resisted the temptation to race from the window back to the Transmat cubicle. Instead, with as much dignity as I could muster, I turned slowly around until my back faced the window.

I gulped. I was bathed with

sweat. "It's—pretty overwhelming, isn't it? I guess I'm not used to cities any more."

"Oh, it doesn't take long to get used to them."

"Maybe not." My legs felt watery. "Can we—can we get a drink in here, though?"

ONE OF THE executives had a private bar in his office, and Carol returned, a few moments later, with a crystal-clear drink that might have been a martini, except that it didn't taste anything like the martinis I remembered. But it had a marvelous calming effect on me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Rocket fuel."

"That's a peculiar thing to call a cocktail."

"It isn't *called* rocket fuel; it *is* rocket fuel," she said.

"Huh?"

"It's an old alcohol-based propellant from the pre-Transmat days; they used to use it on the Moon runs before the Transmat was invented. Someone whipped up a batch recently for a gag and found out it was good to drink. It's the rage all over, now. Want me to get you another one?"

"Ah—no thanks," I said. I felt very strange inside. The drink had gone down smoothly enough, but the whole idea of drinking propellants didn't agree with me.

I was fortified by the drink, though, enough not to mind leaving the cozy security of the Transmat Inc. office and heading out into the street. We took an elevator that dropped so long I thought we were in free fall—the tallest building on Crawford IX is four stories high—and then emerged in the howling madhouse that was the street. It was a lucky thing there was a company limousine waiting for us. More than five seconds' exposure to the bedlam that is New York on an ordinary business afternoon would have snapped my mind for good.

CAROL AND I nestled back in the plush limousine and she started pushing buttons. There was no driver; five years ago, the automatic cars had been developed, she told me. All the old models were prohibited now from entering city limits, on the reasonable

grounds that it was no longer possible for a mere human being to pilot a car through New York traffic and survive.

I'll say this: I can't accuse the company of niggardliness. They had provided me with first-class guide service, a handsome car, and unlimited leisure. Of course, they can afford it; as the transportation company that makes the universe go round, they have more money to throw away on petty cash than most corporations earn in a century. But I couldn't appreciate their generosity very much just then; I was scared stiff.

Carol shepherded me around to the entertainment high-spots. We took in a scentorama, which is an art-form a bit too subtle for my colony-blunted esthetic perceptions, and then we went to a sensie show, which didn't require *any* esthetic perceptions at all. I'll confess it seemed a little shocking to me. Carol seemed to enjoy it, though, without any qualms. It wasn't subtle at all, unless you're the type that thinks there's something subtle about being made love to by a t h r e e-dimensional electronic

field-projection with tactile and olfactory presence.

**F**ROM THERE, it was on to the Coliseum to watch android robots banging each other around in the gladiatorial contests. These, too, had been developed since my departure from Earth. The androids seemed to bleed real blood when they were wounded. I wasn't amused.

And, everywhere we went, the *people!* Thousands of them; hundreds of thousands. All making noise, shouting, yelling, laughing. Women in peek-a-boo dresses and worse; women with turquoise hair and green hair and blue hair and pink hair; women naked to the waist and covered with blue-and-yellow polkadots. The men were dressed more conservatively, but they went in a lot for beards cut in exotic shape and dyed unlikely colors. Carol assured me it was all in the normal evolution of Terran fashions—that if I had been on Earth while these styles were developing, I'd take them quite for granted.

Maybe so. But all I knew was that Earth had become a



wild and weird place where I wasn't happy at all. Twelve years of rural peace had left me unprepared for this sort of life.

I absorbed two or three more cocktails during the course of the day, and they damped my nerves down so that I didn't get a fit of shakes every time we stepped out of the limousine. It was reasonably late at night by the time the robot-slaughter ended. I had every hope that my fair companion was willing to call it a day and take me back to the hotel room Transmat Inc. had rented for me. I said so.

**S**HE POUTED prettily. "But the fun is just beginning, Ed!"

"Oh, no. We've been at it for seven hours, and you're just *beginning?*"

"I promised some friends of mine I'd bring you over tonight. They're having a party and they're just *dying* to meet you!"

I groaned quietly. "Look, Carol, I'm dead tired, and all this excitement the first day..."

"This? Excitement? Don't be an old fogie, Ed!"

"But I *am* pretty beat. Can't we meet your friends some other night? I'm going to be here eight months, you know..."

"Oh, all right," she said, but I could tell it wasn't. "I guess we can skip it, if you're so exhausted. But I told everyone you'd positively be there."

I could tell from her voice that she'd hold it against me if I refused to go. So I shrugged and said I would. She melted at once, called me a dear, and snuggled up against me in the back of the car.

En route, I tried to make that transparent spot hold still. I got slapped; things hadn't changed *that* much on Earth.

**T**HE PARTY was being held at somebody's apartment in Nyack, which was just about eighty miles from where we had watched the robots slice each other up. I settled back and tried to get some rest. The car travelled at better than 150 mph along an electronically-controlled highway, and about half an hour later we were

pulling up outside of a lofty apartment house.

It was eleven P. M. Ten hours ago, I had been on blissful Crawford IX. Now, with three or four slugs of rocket fuel under my belt, and a king-size headache already developing, I was enjoying "rest and diversion"—so they called it—on good old Earth. As we shot upward in what felt like a jet-propelled lift, I shut my throbbing eyes and tried to calm down. I couldn't. Mournfully I told myself that after thirty-four weeks of this kind of life I *would* need a vacation—and a long one—on some planet far, far from civilization.

The party was being held in a four-room apartment, which Carol said was immense by current Terran standards. About fifty people were packed into the place, and they had all been there long enough to be well lit up.

The host, a lanky, civilized-looking fellow with a long purple beard and waxed red mustachios, threw his arm around Carol affectionately in a way that obscurely annoyed me, and gave me the big hand-

shake. "So you're the vacationing outworlder, eh! Well, we'll help you have fun while you're on Earth, friend! Drinks over there!"

**A**N ANDROID bartender was mixing them. I asked for and got a Rocket Fuel, not daring to request any of the old and familiar drinks for fear I'd be considered old-fashioned. I put the drink down my throat in a hurry, too; all these people packed into so little space made me feel uneasily claustrophobic. Parties on Crawford IX have room to spread out.

I had another drink, and another. There was dance music playing; Carol dragged me out on the floor, gave me a sketchy idea of what the steps were, and led me through it. It seemed pretty much like an Aztec fertility rite to me, though that may have been just because the dance floor was so crowded. I began to get that warm, hazy feeling about the universe. If I didn't drink, my nerves would be jangled by the raucous partying going all around, so I drank and gradually got accustomed to the racket. I began to feel mellow

and relaxed. I also eyed some of the other women at the party with a good deal of interest. They were nifty, by any standard—but in my eyes Carol outpaced them all. I decided I had been quite lucky to draw her as my guide to Terran civilization.

**I** MET SOME of the men. They seemed to be young execs-on-the-way-up, who made a lot of money but not enough to live within their means; they were uniformly good-looking, well-dressed, and (to my s o m e w h a t alcohol-soaked mind) witty. There was Monty Somebody and Alex Somebody and Dave Somebody—no one owned up to a last name—and around my eighth Rocket Fuel of the evening they began to wake up to the fact that I was a Transmat technician.

"Hey!" Monty said. "I got a great idea! Let's you and me and Dave and our friend Ed here go down to the Transmat office next block and have some fun."

"Great idea," Alex said.

"Great," Dave echoed.

"Swell," someone else said.

Before I knew what was

happening, I was being propelled through the crush and out of the apartment, flanked by Monty, Alex, Dave, and Somebody Else. I caught sight of Carol wig-wagging desperately at me from across the floor; then the door closed, and I was outside.

The fresh air did a little to s o b e r me, but—alas!—not nearly enough. Like five wobbling-legged musketeers we went careering down the street, singing songs rich with the heritage of centuries, and turned the corner into a business district.

**T**HERE WAS a Transmat office on the corner. Transmat offices are open round the clock, but there isn't much of a staff in them late at night. There was just one clerk in this one, sitting behind the counter reading a book, when we came rollicking in.

I still had only the dimmest notion of why we had come here; and I don't have a very clear recollection of the sequence of events. I recall Monty and Alex grabbing the unfortunate clerk, and dragging him into the back office where the Transmat machine itself

was. I remember Dave saying, "You know how to work this thing, don't you?" and I remember saying I did.

"Okay," Monty said. "Just for a starter, let's send this twerp off to Sirius."

Obligingly I set up the coordinates while the clerk jabbered in terror.

"H e a v e-ho," they cried in unison, and tossed him into the Transmat cubicle. I pulled the lever; the clerk vanished in green flame.

"What now?" I asked.

"Us next," Alex chortled. "We wanta go on vacations for nothing!"

"Sure, sure," I said. "Leave it all to me!"

With the calmness of utter intoxication, I set up Transmat coordinates from memory. Alex clambered into the cubicle and I sent him off to Feinberg XII, a jaunt of nine thousand light-years. At standard company rates, a trip like that would set a person back \$5000 or more, but tonight everything was on the house.

"Me next," Monty cried—and off he went to Betelgeuse XXIX.

I WAS SETTING up coordinates that would ensure Dave's safe arrival on Hardecanute IV when the front door of the office burst open and a swarm of people entered. I recognized Carol, the host, and half a dozen other parties. There were also three men in the traditional garb of policemen, and I suppose I thought they were fugitives from a masquerade ball.

"Ed!" Carol shrieked. "What have you been doing? Where are Monty and Alex?"

"On vacation," I said with a snigger. "And now it's Dave's turn. This is fun!"

"Good Lord!" someone yelled. I turned my back on the crowd and finished setting up the coordinates. As I nudged the last dial into place, I felt a hand grasp my shoulder tightly.

I glanced around. It was one of the policemen. "That's about enough of this stuff, bud," he snapped.

I wriggled loose from his grasp. Dave gave him a push. He grunted and tumbled into the Transmat cubicle.

I yanked the lever; Carol shrieked; and the cop departed

for Hardecanute IV, thirteen thousand five-hundred light years from Earth.

I collapsed.

**I**F THERE is a Supreme Being who orders the events of this universe, I devoutly pray that He will not afflict me with more such mornings-after as I experienced the next day.

I was in jail, for one thing.

A speaker grid set in the ceiling said, "A visitor for Prisoner Reese."

Radiant bars of force that had been hovering in the air a few feet from my nose blinked out long enough to permit Carol Dwyer to step into my cell; then the force-field returned.

Carol was wearing an off-the-shoulder blouse that was off-the-bosom as well, at least so far as her left breast was concerned. She wore mildly-translucent trousers that might have been sprayed on; but the effect was totally lost on me. I surveyed her out of bloodshot eyes, and said finally, "Okay. When do they execute me?"

"You really went wild last night, didn't you?"

"Did you come here to rub it in?"

She sat down facing me. I put my head in my hands.

"I didn't realize how secluded from civilization you'd been," she said. "If I had known how small the colony is on Crawford IX, we would have gone a lot slower in introducing you to Terran culture again."

I merely groaned. "How much was the damage? And have they got everyone back yet?"

**"THE** POLICEMEN, the company clerk, and Monty are back. There isn't any word from Alex yet, but I suppose when he sobers up he'll explain to the authorities, and they'll send him back."

"What's it all going to cost?"

"Upwards of \$75,000, by economy-class rates."

"Ten years' pay!"

"Poor Ed," she said soothingly. "Why don't you try to get some more sleep? Everything's going to work out okay."

"Glad you think so," I said sourly.

She left, and I tucked my



aching head under my arms and slept some more. A few hours later she was back, with the news that Alex, very overhung, had checked in from Feinberg XII shortly before.

She also had some good news.

"I had a talk with some of the company brass," she said, "and they're going to let you off with a light reprimand. They'll absorb the cost of the rumpus last night."

"What?"

She nodded. I felt my headache ebb away. "I argued that it wasn't fair to hold you responsible for the impact of Terran civilization on you, after all the years you'd spent in the back woods. After all, it was partly their fault for letting you go so many years without a vacation. So they decided to forgive you—and to let you spend the rest of your vacation wherever you like."

**A**S YOU SEE, it all worked out pretty well, if you don't count the four-day hang-over I had after that party. A Transmat lawyer took care of the disturbance-of-the-peace charge; the costs of shipping

four human beings to distant parts of the galaxy were written off by the company; and I was shipped back to Crawford IX post-haste, to finish the rest of my thirty-four week layoff roaming the woods in peace.

Oh, yes, Carol came with me. It was time for *her* vacation, you see, and she decided to try a relatively peaceful place, for once. So she tried Crawford IX, and she liked it fine, just fine. Liked it enough to apply for permanent residency, as Mrs. Ed Reese.

So now it's business as usual for me: I run the Transmat office on Crawford IX, with Carol helping out a bit, and when the time comes, I'm going to take my vacation—right here on Crawford IX. Carol is a little homesick for Earth, but not homesick enough to really want to go back to all that noisy foofaraw. Earth may set the fashions for the rest of the galaxy, and Earth may make more money than any other world. It's an exciting place, in its way, only it's not for me—or for Carol, any more. We like it just fine here. As they say, there's no place like space!