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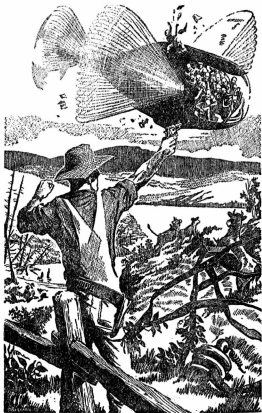
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They were out of place in the Manly Age—Stonecypher, a man who loved animals; Moe, a bull who hated men. Together, they marched to inevitably similar destinies . . .

Thy ROCKS *and* RILLS

By Robert Ernest Gilbert

Illustrated by Tom Beecham

PRELUDE

M. STONECYPHER lifted his reed sun hat with the square brim, and used a red handkerchief to absorb the perspiration streaking his forehead. He said, "The pup'll make a good guard, 'especially for thrill parties."

L. Dan's golden curls flickered in July 1 sunlight. The puppy growled when Dan extended a gloved hand. "I don't want a guard," the hobbyist said. "I want him for a dogfight."

A startling bellow rattled the windows of the dog house and spilled in deafening waves across the yard. Dan whirled, clutching his staff. Light glinted on his plastic cuirass and danced on his red nylon tights. His flabby face turned white. "What—" he panted.

Stonecypher concealed a smile behind a long corded hand and

said, "Just the bull. Serenades us sometimes."

Dan circled the dog house. Stonecypher followed with a forefinger pressed to thin lips. In the paddock, the bull's head moved up and down. It might or might not have been a nod.

The crest of long red and blue-black hairs on the bull's neck and shoulders created an illusion of purple, but the rest of the animal matched the black of a duelmaster's tam. Behind large eyes encircled by a white band, his skull bulged in a swelling dome, making the distance between his short horns seem much too great.

"He's purple!" Dan gasped. "Why in the Government don't you put him in the ring?"

Stonecypher gestured toward the choppy surface of Kings Lake, nine hundred feet below. He said, "Coincidence. I make out the ringmas-

ter's barge just leavin' Highland Pier."

"You're selling him?"

"Yeah. If they take 'im, I'd like to see 'im in the ring on Dependence Day."

Glancing at the watch embedded in the left pectoral of his half-armor, Dan said, "That would be a show! I'll take the dog and fly. I've a duel in Highland Park at 11:46."

"The pup's not for sale."

"Not for sale!" Dan yelled. "You told—"

"Thought you wanted a guard. I don't sell for dogfights."

A sound like "Goood!" came from the paddocked bull.

Dan opened his mouth wide. Whatever he intended to say died without vocalization, for Catriona came driving the mule team up through the apple orchard. The almost identical mules had sorrel noses, gray necks, buckskin flanks, and black and white pinto backs and haunches. "Great Government!" Dan swore. "This place is worse than a museum!"

"Appaloosa mules," Stonecypher said.

Catriona jumped from the seat of the mowing machine. Dan stared. Compared to the standard woman of the Manly Age who, by dieting, posturing, and exercise from childhood, transformed herself into a small, thin, dominated creature, Catriona constituted a separate species. She was taller than Dan, slightly plump, and her hair could have been classed as either red or blonde. Green overalls became her better than they did Stonecypher. With no trace of a smile on face or

in voice, Stonecypher said, "L. Dan, meet Catriona."

LIKE A hypnopath's victim, Dan walked to Catriona. He looked up at her and whispered, but too loudly, Stonecypher heard. His hands clamped on the hobbyist's neck and jerked. Dan smashed in the grass with sufficient force to loosen the snaps of his armor. He rolled to his feet and swung his staff.

Stonecypher's left hand snatched the staff. His right fist collided with Dan's square jaw. Glaring down at the hobbyist, Stonecypher gripped the staff and rotated thick wrists outward. The tough plastic popped when it broke.

Scuttling backward, Dan regained his feet. "You inhuman brute!" he growled. "I intended to pay for her!"

"My wife's not for sale either," Stonecypher said. "You know how to fly."

Dan thrust out a coated tongue and made a noise with it. In a memorized singsong, he declared, "I challenge you to a duel, in accordance with the laws of the Government, to be fought in the nearest duelpen at the earliest possible hour."

"Stony, don't!" Catriona protested. "He's not wo'th it!"

Stonecypher smiled at her. "Have to follow the law," he said. He extended his tongue, blurted, and announced, "As required by the Government, I accept your challenge."

"We'll record it!" Dan snapped. He stalked toward the green and

gold butterfly parked in a field of seedling Sudan grass. Horns rattled on the concrete rails of the pad-dock.

"Burstaard!" the bull bellowed.

Dan shied and trampled young grass under sandaled feet. His loosened cuirass clattered rhythmically. Raising the canopy of the butterfly, he slid out the radioak and started typing. Stonecypher and Catriona approached the hobbyist. Catriona said, "This is cowa'dly! Stony nevah fought a duel in his life. He won't have a chance!"

"You'll see me soon then, woman. Where'd you get all that equip-ment? You look like something in a circus."

"Ah used to be in a cahnival," Catriona said. She kept Stonecypher in place with a plump arm across his chest. "That's wheah you belong," she told Dan. "That's all you'ah good fo'."

"Watch how you address a man, woman," Dan snarled, "or you'll end in the duelpen, too."

Stonecypher snatched the sheet from the typer. The request read:

Duelmaster R. Smith,
Watauga Duelpen, High-
land Park, Tennessee.
L. Dan challenges M.
Stonecypher. Cause: In-
terference with basic
amatory rights. July
1. 11:21 amest.

Stonecypher said, "The cause is a lie. You got no rights with Catriona. Why didn't you tell 'em it's because I knocked you ears-over-endways, and you're scared to fight without a gun?"

Dan shoved the request into the slot and pulled the switch. "I'll kill you," he promised.

While the request was transmit-
ted by radiophotography, minutes
passed, bare of further insults. Ca-
triona and Stonecypher stood near
the concrete fence enclosing the
rolling top of Bays Mountain. In-
terminable labor had converted 650
acres of the top to arable land. Be-
low the couple, the steep side of the
mountain, denuded of timber, dan-
gerously eroded, and scarred by
limestone quarries, fell to the rag-
ged shore of Kings Lake. Two
miles of water agitated by many
boats separated the shore and the
peninsula, which resembled a wrin-
kled dragon with underslung lower
jaw distended. The town of High-
land Park clung to the jutting land,
and the Highland Bullring ap-
peared as a white dot more than
four miles from where Catriona
and Stonecypher stood. The ring-
master's barge was a red rectangle
skirting Russel Chapel Island.

Dan pulled the answer from the
buzzing radioak. He walked over
and held the radiophoto an inch
from Stonecypher's long nose. It
read:

Request OK. Time: July
4. 3:47 pmest.

Two attached permits granted
each duelist the privilege of carry-
ing one handgun with a capacity of
not more than ten cartridges of not
less than .32 caliber. Below the per-
mits appeared an additional mes-
sage:

L. Dan due at Watauga
Duelpen. 11:46 amest.

For duel with J.
George.

"Government and Taxes!" Dan cursed. Throwing Stonecypher's permit, he leaped into the green and gold butterfly and slammed the canopy. The four wings of the semi-ornithopter blurred with motion, lifting the craft into the sky. The forward wings locked with negative dihedral, the rear wings angled to form a ruddervisor, and the five-bladed propeller whined, driving the butterfly in a shallow dive for the peninsula.

CATRIONA said, "Ah hope he's late, and they shoot him. Ah knew you'd finally have to fight, but—"

"You keep out of it next time," said Stonecypher. "I happen to know that feller's killed two women in the pen. He don't care for nothin'. Oughta known better than to let him come here. He made out like he wanted a guard dog, and I thought—"

"Nevah mind, Stony. Ah've got to help you. You nevah even fished a gun."

"Later, Cat. The ringmaster may want to stay for dinner. I'll look after the mules."

Catriona touched Stonecypher's cheek and went to the house. Stonecypher unharnessed the Appaloosa mules. While they rolled, he took, from an empty hay rack, a rubber-tipped spear and a tattered cloth dummy. The dummy's single arm terminated in a red flag.

Stonecypher concealed spear and dummy beneath the floor of the

dog house. Going to the paddock, he patted the bull between the horns, which had been filed to a needle point. "Sell goin' through with it?" Stonecypher asked.

"Yaaaa," the bull lowed. "Yaooo kuhl Daan. Err'll kuhl uhhh kuh-lerrr."

"All right, Moe. I'll kill Dan, and you kill the killers," Stonecypher stroked the massive hemisphere of the bull's jaw. "Goodbye, Moe."

"Goodba," the bull echoed. He lowered his nose to the shelled corn seasoned with molasses, the rolled oats, and the ground barley in the trough.

Stonecypher walked down the road to the staircase of stone that dammed the old Kingsport Reservoir, abandoned long before Kings Lake covered the city. A red electric truck crawled up the steep road hewn from the slope of the gap formed by Dolan Branch. When the truck had crossed the bridge below the buttressed dam, Stonecypher spoke to the fat and sweltering man seated beside the driver. "I'm M. Stonecypher. Proud for you to visit my farm. Dinner's ready up at the house."

"No, no time," smiled the fat man, displaying stainless steel teeth. "Only time to see the bull. I thought we weren't going to make that grade! Why don't those scientists develop synthetic elements, so that we can have atomic power again? This radio-electric is so unreliable! I am Ringmaster A. Os-well, naturally. This heat is excruciating! I had hoped it would be cooler up here, but something seems to have happened to our in-

land-oceanic climate this summer. Lead us to the bull, Stonecypher!"

Clinging to the slatted truck bed, Stonecypher directed the stoic driver to the paddock. The electric motor rattled and stopped, and Ringmaster Oswald wheezed and squirmed from the cab. The ringmaster wore a vaguely Arabic costume, in all variations of red.

The bull lumbered bellowing around the fence. His horns raked white gashes in the beech tree forming one corner. He tossed the feed trough to splintering destruction.

"Magnificent!" Oswald gasped. Then the ringmaster frowned. "But he looks almost purple. His horns are rather short."

"Stay back from the fence!" Stonecypher warned. "He's real wide between the horns, ringmaster. I reckon the spread'll match up to standard. Same stock my grandfather used to sell Boon Bullring before the water. Wouldn't sell 'im, only the tenants are scared to come about the house."

Oswald fingered his balloon neck and mumbled, "But he's odd. That long hair on his neck . . . I don't know . . ."

The bull's horns lifted the mineral feeder from the center of the paddock. The box rotated over the rails and crashed in a cloud of floured oyster shells and phosphate salt at the ringmaster's feet.

Oswald took cover behind the truck driver, who said, "Fergus'd like him. Jeeze! Remember dat brown and white spotted one he kilt last year on Forrest Day? Da crowd like ta never stopt yelling!"

Ringmaster Oswald retreated far-

ther, as, under the bull's onslaught, a piece of concrete broke from the top rail, exposing the reinforcing rod within. "Fergus does like strange ones," he admitted.

Stonecypher said, "Don't let the mane bother you. There's one of these long-haired Scotch cows in his ancestors. He's not really purple. Just the way the light hits 'im."

Oswald chewed lacquered fingernails with steel dentures. His blood-shot eyes studied the spotted and speckled Appaloosa mules chasing around the pasture, but the sight failed to register on his brain. "The crowd likes a good show on Dependence Day," he proclaimed. "I considered trying a fat Aberdeen Angus with artificial horns for laughs, but this may do as well. I must find some shade! I'll take him, Stonecypher, if fifteen hundred in gold is agreeable."

"Sold," Stonecypher said. The word cracked in the middle.

While the ringmaster, muttering about trying bulldogs sometime, retired to the narrow shadow of the dog house, the driver backed the truck to the ramp. Stonecypher opened the gate and waved his handkerchief. The bull charged into the truck, and the driver locked the heavy doors.

From within his red burnoose, Oswald produced a clinking bag. "Fifteen hundred," he said. From other recesses, he withdrew documents, notebooks, and a pencil. He said, "Here is a pass for you and one for any woman-subject you may wish to bring. You'll want to see your first bull on Dependence Day! And here is the standard release absolving you of any damage

the bull may do. Oh, yes! His name and number?"

"Number?"

"Yes, his brand."

"Not branded. Make it Number 1. Name's Moe."

Oswell chuckled. "Moe. Very good! Most breeders name them things like Chainlightning and Thunderbird. Your GE number?"

"I'm not a Government Employee."

"You're not?" Oswell wheezed. "How unusual! Your colors? He'll wear your colors in his shoulder."

"Yeah. Black."

"Black?"

"Dead black."

Oswell, scribbling, managed a faint smile. "Sorry I can't accept that invitation to lunch." He struggled into the truck. "Hope this bull is brave in the ring. Nice antique old place you have here! I don't see a feed tower, but you surely don't use pasture—" The ringmaster's babble passed down the road with the truck.

Stonecypher watched the vehicle descend the dangerous grade. He lifted his square hat from his black hair, dropped it on the ground, and crushed the reeds under a booted foot.

The temporary house, a squat cubical structure, stood at the end of a spruce-lined path beside the ruin that a thrill party had made of the century-old farm house. The plastic screen squeaked when Stonecypher opened it. He stood on the white floor of the robot kitchen and dug a fifty dollar gold piece from the bag Oswell had given him. Glaring at the head of the woman with Liberty inscribed

on her crown, he muttered, "Thirty pieces of gold."

Catriona called, "Oswell's lucky he couldn't stay foah dinnah! Ah had the potassium cyanide all ready."

Stonecypher passed through the diner door into a room containing more yellowed history books and agricultural pamphlets than eating utensils. Catriona waited by the table. She held a large revolver in her right hand.

INTERMEZZO

STONECYPHER stood on Bay Knob, near the ruins of the old FM transmitter station, looking down at the Tennessee Lakes. Catriona sat behind him and held the revolver on her thigh. Stonecypher said, "I never see it but I wonder how it looked before the water."

Before him, North Fork, an arm of Kings Lake, twisted across the Virginia line four and one-half miles away, while to Stonecypher's right, Boone Lake sparkled like a gigantic, badly drawn V. He did not look toward Surgoinsville Dam securing Kings Lake far to the west.

The Tennessee Lakes were born in 1918 when Wilson Dam spanned the Tennessee River at Muscle Shoals, Alabama; but their growth was retarded for fifteen years, until an Act of Congress injected them with vitamins. Then the mile-long bastions of concrete crawled between the ridges. Norris, Wheeler, Pickwick Landing, Guntersville, Watts Bar, Kentucky, Cherokee,

Fort Henry, Boone, Sevier, Surogoinsville—almost innumerable dams blocked the rivers. The rivers stopped and overflowed. The creeks swelled into rivers.

Congressional Committees investigated, the Supreme Court tested the dams against the Constitution, ethnologists and archeologists hastily checked for Indian relics; and the dams, infused with youthful vigor, matured. Beginning with Norris, which backed up the Clinch and Powell Rivers to inundate 25,000 acres and displace 3,000 families, the dams expanded mighty aquatic muscles. The Tennessee, the Little Tennessee, the Nolichucky, the Holston, the French Broad, the Watauga, the Hiwassee, the Little Pigeon—all the rivers spread their waters into lengthy, ragged lakes, changing the map of Tennessee more than any natural cataclysm, such as the great earthquake of 1811, had ever done. The Lakes provided jobs, electric power, flood control, soil conservation, a fisherman's paradise, milder winters, cooler summers, and they covered all the really good farming land in the eastern part of the state.

Catrina loaded the revolver. It was an obsolete .357 Magnum with a 6½ inch barrel, and the cartridge cases of the metal-piercing bullets had a greenish sheen. "Now, put it in the holster, and be careful," Catrina said.

Stonecypher wore the holster, a leather silhouette studded with two spring clips opening forward, on a belt and secured to his leg by a thong. Gingerly, he took the revolver and slipped it under the

clips. "I've kept outa duels all my life," he said, "but, so long as it's for you, I don't much mind."

"Ah'll mind if he kills you. You do like I tell you, and you can beat him. Why, mah best act in the How-To Cahnival was How to Win a Duel. Cou'se, they didn't know ah was really drawin' befoah the buzzah sounded. Why, ah used to set two plates ten yahds apaht, draw two revolvahs, and shoot both plates, all in foah-tenths of a second!"

Stonecypher grinned. "Sorry I missed that carnival first time it came through here. I coulda seen you in that costume they poured on you, three years earlier."

"Nevah mind the veiled compliments. Now, try it!"

Stonecypher faced the target, a sheet of plastiboard roughly sawed to the shape of a man, and backed by a heap of earth removed from the new, as yet dry, pond in which they stood. Catrina pressed a small buzzer concealed in her palm. Stonecypher's big hand closed on the revolver butt, pushing the weapon up and forward. The sound of the shot rattled away over the mountain top.

"That's good!" Catrina cried, consulting the sonic timer. "One and two-tenths seconds from buzzah to shot!"

"But I missed," Stonecypher protested. "Look bad on tevec."

"You'll hit him. Watch the recoil next time."

Stonecypher drew and fired a second wild shot. He snorted, "Confound Westerns, anyhow!"

"Weste'ns?"

"Sure. That's where this duelin'



started. Used to, almost ever' movie or tvece was called a Western. Sort of a fantasy, because they were just slightly based on real history. They generally showed a feller in a flowered shirt, ridin' a Tennessee Walking Horse, and shootin' a gun. Ever'body in these Westerns had a gun, and they all shot at each other.

"The youngin's were hep on 'em, so they all wore toy guns, and a whole generation grew up on Westerns. When they got big, they carried real guns. I've heard my great-uncle tell about it, how before the Government built duelpens and passed laws, you couldn't hardly cross the Lakes without runnin' into a bunch of fools on water skis shootin' at each other."

"You leave the histo'y books alone foah awhile," Gatriona commanded, "and practice. The tenants and ah'll tend to the wo'k. Try it loaded and empty. Hook this little buzzah to the timeah, and practice. Ah've got to go see the chickens."

"Bye, teacher." Stonecypher dropped the buzzer in his pocket and watched her vanish into the grove. He fired the remaining shots, nicking the target once. With the revolver holstered, he followed the path to the summer pasture.

BELLY-DEEP in red clover, twenty-four cows, twenty-four calves, and twenty-four yearlings grazed or played in the shady field.

Stonecypher cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, "Smart-calves! Smart-calves to school!"

The entire herd turned sorrowful eyes on him. Seven of the calves and four of the yearlings trotted to the gate, which Stonecypher held open, and jostled out of the pasture. As the calves began to lie down under the trees, a white heifer-calf nuzzled Stonecypher's hand and bawled, "Paaapy going a fyightt?"

"Yeah, he's goin' to fight," Stonecypher answered. "Your pappy's gone to the bullring. He suggested it, and made the choice himself. He's got real courage. You oughta all be proud of him."

The calves bawled their pride. Including those remaining in the pasture, they presented a colorful variety of spots, specks, splashes, browns, reds, blacks, and even occasional blue and greenish tinges. Stonecypher sat facing them from a stump. He said, "I'm sorta late for the lesson, today, so we'll get on with it. Some of this will be repetition for you yearlings, but it won't hurt. If you get too bored, there's corn and cottonseed meal in the trough, only be quiet about it.

"Now. To look at you all, nobody would think you're the same breed of cattle; but you, and your mammys, and Moe are the only Atohmny cattle on Earth. It's usually hard to say exactly when a breed started; but you all started a long, long time ago, on July 16, 1945, near Alamogordo, New Mexico, when they exploded the first Atomic Bomb."

At mention of Atomic Bomb,

who had succeeded the Bogger Man as a means of frightening children, one of the younger calves bawled. Her polled, brindled mother ran in ungainly fashion to the fence and moosed with great carrying power.

"All right!" Stonecypher yelled. The cow closed her big mouth, but stayed by the gate. "Can't go by what you hear the tenants tell their kids," Stonecypher cautioned the calf. "Atomic Bomb is as dead as the tank and the battleship.

"Now, like I was sayin', the scientists put Atomic Bomb on a hundred foot tower and blowed him up. There was a flash of fire, and an awful racket, and the blast raised up a lot of dirt and dust from the ground. All this dust achurnin' around in the cloud bumped into little bits of metal and stuff that was highly radioactive. That means, the basic atoms of matter had been thrown out of kilter, sorta deranged. The protons and electrons in an atom oughta be about equal for it to be stable, but these were shootin' off electrons, or beta particles, and givin' off something like powerful x-rays, called gamma rays, and things like that.

"Anyhow, this radiation affected all the sand and bits of rock and dirt in that bomb cloud. This radiation is dangerous. Some of it will go right through several inches of lead. Enough'll kill you. Your ancestors were ten miles or so from where Atomic Bomb went off.

"They were just plain Whiteface cattle. They weren't supposed to be there, but I reckon none of the scientists bothered to warn 'em. The

dust started settlin' all over your ancestors. In about a week, there were sores and blisters on their backs. The red hair dropped off. When it grew back, it was gray.

"The scientists got real excited when they heard about it, 'cause they wanted to see how horrible they could make Atomic Bomb. So, they shipped fifty-nine cattle up to Oak Ridge. That was a Government town, a hundred miles south-west of here, where they made some of the stuff to put in Atomic Bomb. The University of Tennessee was rannin' an experimental farm there. They had donkeys, and pigs, and chickens, and other animals that they exposed to radioactivity. Then they killed 'em and cut 'em up to see what had happened. I know it's gruesome, but that's how it was.

"The awful fact is, the scientists slaughtered more than half that original Atohmny herd for experiments. Some of the rest, they—uh—married. Wanted to see if the calves had two heads, or something; if radioactivity had speeded up the mutation rate.

"Back then, they didn't understand much about mutation. Some claimed a little radioactivity would cause it, some said a whole lot, and some said it wouldn't hurt a bit."

"Whaa mootyaonn?" asked the calf which was not yet assured of the extinction of Atomic Bomb.

"Well, you-all are all mutations. I've told you how life starts from one cell. This cell has thread-like things in it called chromosomes, and the chromosomes are made up of things called genes. Mutations, sort of unexpected changes, can take

place in either the chromosomes or the genes. You see, when this one cell starts dividing, every gene makes a copy of itself; but, sometimes, the copy is a little different from the original. Lots of things, like x-rays and ultraviolet rays, heat, chemicals, disease, can cause this. Radioactivity had caused mutation in some experiment, so the scientists were anxious to see what happened with these cattle.

"Genes determine the way an animal develops. Two mutant genes can start reactions that end up as a man with one leg, or maybe as a bull with the intelligence of an eight-year-old man. Lots of mutations are recessive. They may be carried along for generations. But, when two like mutant genes come together in reproduction, the animal is bound to be something different, the way you eleven calves are.

"Now. The scientists watched the Atohmny cattle for fifteen or twenty years, and nothin' much happened. They started sayin' radioactivity wasn't dangerous, and a man could walk into a place right after Atomic Bomb went off, and it wouldn't matter. They should be here to see the mess in Japan today. All the time, though, I think the cattle were changing. It may have been in little things like the length of hair, or the shape of an eyeball, or the curve of a horn, so the scientists couldn't tell without they made exact measurements all the time.

"Then, a bull-calf was born. He had shaggy black hair, and his horns grew in a spiral like a ram's. Some scientists said, 'I told you sol

It speeded the mutation rate!

"Others said, 'He's a natural mutation, or else, a throw-back to prehistoric wild cattle. It happens in every breed. Atomic Bomb had nothing to do with it.'

"They married the bull, and then they fixed to slaughter 'im to see what his insides was like. The bull fooled 'em, though. He came down with contagious pleuro-pneumonia, the first case in years, 'cause it was supposed to have been wiped out in this country away back in the Nineteenth Century. They had to cremate the bull for fear the disease would spread. Ever' one of the calves were normal Whitefaces.

"Finally, the nineteen Atohmty cattle that were left were put up for sale. My great-grandfather, Cary McPheeter, bought 'em and shipped 'em here to Bays Mountain. He's the man started this farm where there was nothin' but rattle-snakes, and trees, and rocks."

"Why theyea sell um?" a red roan calf interrupted.

"Well, they sold 'em 'cause Oak Ridge had been condemned. That was several years after the German Civil War. It was peace time, for a change, and folks were sick of Atomic Bomb. Anyhow, new, modern plants for makin' the stuff had been built in secret places a lot easier to defend. The women were cryin' for more automatic kitchens, so the Bureau of Interior Hydro-electric Power (that's the name Federal Power, Inc., went by then) put another dam across the Clinch River below Norris. Bush Lake covered up Oak Ridge.

"There wasn't much mutation, except for color, in you Atohmty cat-

tle, till seven years ago when your pappy, Moe, was born. I remember—"

A hoarse excited voice shouted from a distance. "Thrill party!" it cried. "Thrill party!"

STONECYPHER leaped off the stump, stamped his right foot to restore circulation, and yelled on the run, "That's all today! Stay under the trees!"

He loped along the pasture fence and across the makeshift target range. Two tenants, Teddy and Will, stood on the dirt heap with pitchforks in their hands. Over Bay Knob, an old Model 14 butterfly hovered on vibrating wings. Sloppy white letters on the sides of the aircraft spelled such slang expressions as, "Flash the MAGNETS," "SuperClossalSonic Flap ship," and "Redheads amble OTHER canop."

An impossible number of middle-school-age boys bulged from the cabin windows. Methodically, they dumped trash and garbage over the transmitter station ruins. The butterfly wheeled and flapped over the pasture. Red clover bent and writhed in the artificial wind from the ornithopter wings. Cows bawled and ran wild. Calves fell over each other.

Stonecypher jumped the fence. He wrested the revolver from the holster. "Clear out, or I'll shoot!" he howled.

Voices spilled from the butterfly. "He got a handgun!"

"Dis ain't legal!"

"Whatcha say, tall, bones, and ugly?"

Stonecypher aimed the Magnum

at the shaven head in the pilot's seat. The boys looked faint. Agitated air thundered as the butterfly lifted straight up two hundred feet and glided away in the direction of Surgoinsville Dam.

Teddy and Will stood by with pitchforks unrelaxed. Will spat a globule of tobacco juice. "The thangs these here psychologists git made law!" he sneered. "You want me to make out a Thrill Damage Claim?"

"No, Will," Stonecypher said, "just deduct it from taxes."

Teddy looked at the revolver and said, "Ever'body oughta take guns to them crazy youngin's. Reckon you'll git into trouble?"

"No. It's an empty antique. That's legal. You guys did all right. Let the calves back in, huh?"

The tenants left by the gate, and, with a minimum of driving, urged the calves into the pasture. Stonecypher watched the men pass through the grove. Although the tenants undoubtedly recognized the peculiarities of the calves, they never mentioned them. Since the late 1700's, through Revolution, Civil War, automobile, the Department of Internal Revenue, the multiple bureaus that had controlled the Lakes, the Moon rocket, and the expedition to Pluto, these people had remained suspiciously interested in strangers, suspicious of indoor plumbing, doubtful of the Government, quick-tempered, and as immovable as Chimney Top. They had exchanged little except log and frame houses for concrete. The tenants, not really tenants, had been squatting on Bays Mountain when Gary McPheeter bought

the farm; and there they stayed.

Stonecypher vaulted the fence. Catriona, with hands firmly planted on hips, stood in the dry pond. Stonecypher said, "If I just knew what these thrill parties think they're up to, it might help."

Catriona shook her head of red-yellow hair. "Nevah mind them. Ah told you to practice shootin', but the minute ah turn mah back, you run off and staht teachin' those calves! You've got to practice, Stony! You've nevah done any shootin', and L. Dan's killed ten people. Ah—"

"Watch the tears, or you'll have red and green eyes," Stonecypher said. Clumsily, he ejected the shells and reloaded the revolver. He occupied two seconds in drawing and firing. The bullet struck dirt a yard to the left of the target.

SONATA

A SHORT vicious thunderstorm lashed Bays Mountain on the afternoon of July 3. As the storm passed, a blood-red butterfly, with a pusher propeller in the tail and a plastic bull head on the nose, descended in the young Sudan grass. Stonecypher dropped the saw—he had been clearing away a beech limb the storm left in the abandoned paddock—and strolled to greet Ringmaster A. Oswell.

"Stonecypher!" the ringmaster announced. "That storm almost caught us!" Oswell's stainless steel teeth clacked, and the breezes trailing the thunderclouds ballooned his orange silk kimono. "I never liked these butterflyers.

They're too slow, and that swooping motion! Five hundred miles per hour may seem fast to a man your age; but in my day, back before petroleum was classified as armament, we had jets! Real speed!"

"Come on up to the house, ringmaster," Stonecypher invited. "I'll mix up some dextrose and citric acid."

"No, no time," the fat man panted. "Only time to see you about that bull you sold me. The storm took a limb of your beech tree! Almost the only one left, I suppose. About that bull, Stonecypher, you know I was a bit hesitant when I bought him, but my driver talked me into it. I'm so disappointed I had him drafted immediately!"

"But, what—" Stonecypher attempted to ask.

"The young woman there in the butterfly is a much better driver and pilot," Oswald babbled. "I wouldn't have believed it of a woman! She weighs a good ninety-eight pounds, too! That bull—he has changed completely since we put him under the stands. He eats well, but he shows no spirit at all. Tomorrow is the big day, Stonecypher! I can't disappoint the crowd! I thought he might be sick, but the vet says not. That bull let the vet come into the cage and made absolutely no attempt to kill him!"

"But does Fergus—"

"Fergus's manager saw the bull! He's all for it. Fergus made an extremely poor showing on Memorial Day, and the manager thinks this odd bull would provide a real comeback! I advised against it. This heat is terrible! The storm didn't

cool the air at all."

Stonecypher maneuvered the perspiring ringmaster into the shade of the beech. He said, "I wanta do the fair thing with you, ringmaster, so I'll give you a guarantee, in writing if you want. If that bull's not the bravest ever fought in Highland Bullring, I give you double-money-back."

Oswell's face wobbled in a tentative smile. He counted his stubby fingers. "Double-money-back?"

"Yeah. I wanta get into the business. My grandfather used to sell bulls. Then my father came along, and he wouldn't sell a one."

"Yes. Yes, I once tried to reason with him, but—"

"He had funny ideas," Stonecypher pressed his advantage. "I never did understand the old man myself. He used to lecture me on something he called the Man-Animal War. He said one of the worst things in the war was the thousands of bulls that had been tortured to death."

"Peculiar idea. Of course—"

"He claimed bullfights slipped up on this country. Back when it wasn't legal, they spaded up the ground real good. There were movies, and books, and magazines, and foreign broadcasts, all ravin' about how brave and noble it was for a bunch of men to worry and torture a stupid animal like a bull, till he couldn't hardly hold his head up, and then run a sword in 'im."

"Naturally, you—"

"I don't know how many times he told me a bull had more brains than a horse, but less than a jack-ass. He said bullfightin' wasn't a sport, even if the bull got a man

sometimes; and he had the idea the worst thing was the four or five horses, that ever' bull killed, took with 'im. They had some bloodless bullfights in California, and the nut colonies out there like it so good, first thing you know, we really had it. It came to East Tennessee 'cause this was one of the biggest cattle-raisin' sections, before the Lakes took the grazin' land."

"Surely, Stonecypher, you—"

"My father always claimed if the bullfighters were near as brave as they said, they'd take on a really intelligent animal sometimes, like a man-eatin' tiger. He even thought a man was mentalill to fight a bull in the first place." Stonecypher grinned. "No, you don't need to worry about me, ringmaster. I hate to admit it, but the old man is the one who was mentalill."

Oswell revealed all of his steel teeth in a broad smile. "You had me worried!" he wheezed. "Now, your offer."

"I'll go even better," Stonecypher said, "just to show how set I am on gettin' back in the business. If Moe's not brave, I got two yearlin's you can have for free."

"How generous! You've reassured me, Stonecypher. I have confidence, now, that the show will be a great success! I must go! You have no conception of the life a ringmaster leads before a fight. I won't require a written guarantee. I trust you, Stonecypher! See you tomorrow, I hope! I never liked July. If the Government would only make more Lakes, it might cool off! I hope—"

The whirl of the red butterfly's wings terminated Oswell's dis-

course. With a face like a gored bullkiller, Stonecypher watched the ringmaster's departure. Another butterfly hovered above the mountain. This one was green and gold with the canopy pushed back and a glint of twin lenses in the cockpit.

Will appeared at Stonecypher's side. He spat in a long arc and said, "That's a new one, ain't it, peepin' from a butterfly? I reckon L. Dan never got kilt in that other duel like I hoped he would. You want us to git you outa this, Stonecypher?"

"No, Will."

"We can see you git to the Smokies. The Government'll never find you down in there."

"I'll be all right, Will. If he does kill me, take care of Catriona. And look after the calf records."

"Sure thang."

Stonecypher walked slowly toward Catriona's open-topped sunbathing tent.

DANSE MACABRE

DUELMASTER R. Smith adjusted his black tam. "Do not touch your shooting hand to your weapon until the buzzer sounds," he instructed. "Otherwise, the weapon may be carried as you wish. At the slightest infringement of the rules, a robot gun will kill you. If you have any elaborate last words, say them now; because the pen is soundproof." He laughed an obviously much rehearsed laugh.

L. Dan wore orange tights today, but no armor, since the rules required dealists to present naked

torses for probable bullets. Stonecypher faced the duelist. "I reckon this room is the only place a man really has free speech," he said. "You're dead, and can't see good enough to read lips, and me or him will soon be dead."

"I don't believe in this duelin'. It gives a man who's wrong a chance to kill one who's right. A man shouldn't oughta have to die because he's right. Just like ever'thing else in this Manly Age. It's painful. That oughta be our motto, More Pain, just like in the Machine Age it was More Gadgets At Any Cost."

"Why don't you go on teevy?" Dan jeered. "She'll soon forget you, farmer."

Stonecypher's words rolled over the hobbyist. "I reckon the Manly Age came because a man started thinkin' he wasn't much of a man any more. He was just as fast as his car, and just as strong as his electric lawn mower. And a loud minority of the women was claimin' they could do anything a man could, and maybe better. So the men started playin' football in shorts and huntin' each other on game preserves, and the women went back to the kitchen and bedroom. Lots of things that went on undercover come out in the open. Cockfights, dogfights, coon-on-a-log, duels, stallion fights, bullfights.

"And people like you, L. Dan, went on livin'. You got no right to live. You don't do any useful work. The Earth is slowly starvin', and you take the grub out of some feller's mouth who might could help a little. That's why—"

"Time!" announced the duel-

master with his face close to a large clock on the wall. He opened the door. Two men carrying a body on a stretcher passed. The body had four bullet wounds in it.

Dan said, "That drivvel gives me a real reason to kill you, farmer. I'll be good to her for a few days."

As prearranged, Dan took the right branch of the corridor and Stonecypher, the left. A hooded man gave Stonecypher the Magnum revolver and shut him into a space resembling a windowed closet with a door on either side. Stonecypher secured the revolver in the clip holster. His bony hands formed knotted fists.

The pen door slid back. Stonecypher stepped into a room thirty by ninety feet with three bullet-marred concrete walls and a fourth wall of bulletproof glass, behind which sat the ghoulish audience. Dan, crouched and with his pistol in the crook of his left elbow, advanced. His right hand fluttered an inch from the pistol butt.

Stonecypher, grotesque with thin chest exposed and overall bib wrapped around belt, waited. Two photoelectric robot machine guns followed each movement of the duelists. A buzzer sounded. Dan's index finger failed to reach the trigger, for a guardian machine gun removed the hobbyist's head in a short efficient burst. The noise of a louder buzzer punctuated the execution.

When the soundproof inner door of the closet opened, the hooded man, who had a pair of crossed pistols tattooed on the back of his right hand, said, "He was too anxious."

"Yeah," Stonecypher grunted.

The man watched Stonecypher pass out to the street. Stonecypher snapped up the bib of his overalls. An extremely rare bird, a robin, hopped from his path and continued a fruitless search for insects. Stonecypher walked down Watauga Street until the pavement vanished under the brownish-green water of Kings Lake.

Catriona squealed when she saw him. Ignoring all Correct Procedures, she almost knocked him down and attempted to smother him. "Ah told you it just took practice!" she blubbered. "You did it, Stony!"

With muffled mumbles, Stonecypher managed to put her in the Tenite canoe. The few people along the quay, who had witnessed the illegal manner of their meeting, watched with shock, or with incredulity, or with guarded admiration. When they saw that Stonecypher's hand rested on a holstered revolver, they lost their curiosity.

Wading, Stonecypher shoved the canoe off and hopped aboard. As he took up the paddle, his hand trailed in the water and released the small buzzer that had made possible Catriona's best carnival act.

FOR July, the afternoon was cool. Blue-gray clouds drifted before larger dirty white masses. To the southwest opened the mile-wide mouth of Horse Creek; and, far beyond, the great blue pyramid of Chimney Top Mountain stood defiantly above Sevier Lake. The world seemed water broken only by partly submerged hills and mountains.

Stonecypher gazed across the Lake at Bays Mountain and at the five Cement Islands apparently floating against that backdrop. Softly, he said, "Some folks call the big one Martyrs Island. There's a marble pillar right in the middle. Nobody knows who put it there, and the Government never bothered to knock it down. I reckon the poison ivy's covered it by now, but I went and read the inscription, once, when I was a boy. It says:

"They moved me off the Powell River.

They covered my farm with water.

I bought me another near Beans Station.

The water covered it.

I was getting old, but I built at Galloway Mill.

When they flooded that, I gave up and lived in Kingsport.

I will not move again."

The canoe bounded over the choppy water, one hundred feet above the silted streets of the flooded city of Kingsport. Stonecypher said, "The time I was there, you could still find a few copter-trooper helmets and old caskered shells. Couple of years back, a diver brought up two skulls off shore."

Catriona's eyes remained moist, but she smiled. Her teeth were beautiful. "It'll be all rahght, Stony. You can't change the wo'ld in one day. You did fine, and Moe will too."

"I told you to stay at the bull-ring." Stonecypher said.

"Ah couldn't watch that! And those puny, little, mousy women stare and talk about me, because theah's a little meat on mah cah-

cast. Orwell said Moe would be last, anyhow. Ah was so worked about you, ah couldn't sit still."

Only a few boats, mainly those of piscatorial maniacs, were on the lake. Stonecypher glared at them and muttered, "I hope I did right by Moe. He wanted to fight. Maybe, Catriona, if I'd had you when I found out he could talk—not just mimic—I'd of raised him different. Maybe I shouldn't have shown him that bullfight movie, but I wondered what the only bull to see a bullfight from outside the ring thought about it.

"That led him to wantin' to know all about the Man-Animal War. I told him the best I could, how one of a man's basic drives is to exterminate, ever' since prehistoric times when he did in the woolly mammoth and rhinoceros. The do-do, quagga, passenger pigeon, great auk, aurochs, Key deer, bison, African elephant, gorilla, tiger—there's an awful list. Why, five hundred species of mammals, alone, have become extinct since I A. D., 'bout four hundred of them since 1850. A man'll even kill off other men, like the Neanderthals and the Tasmanians!" Stonecypher rested the paddle and grinned, faintly, at Catriona reclining in the bow. "I guess you've heard this before."

"Go rahgt ahead, Stony," Catriona sighed. "Ah like to heah yoah speech. It's the only time you really get angry, and you look so fine and noble."

"Yeah. Well. I told Moe how a man exterminates useful or harmless species, and then he lets dangerous ones, like rats, eat him out of house and home. Course, I ex-

plained this was just kinship. Folks used to argue man come from a monkey, or from spontaneous combustion, or something. Now we got fossil proof he's not like anything anybody ever saw. He's a case of straight line development all the way back to the first mammal, a sort of rat."

The canoe glided past Highland Pier. Every type of small watercraft, from a punt, through an electric motorboat, to a sloop, had docked. More boats lined the shore on either side of the pier. The flying field contained so many butterflyers and copters that there seemed no possibility of any of them taking off. Human voices welled in a mob roar from the great open cylinder of the bullring. A huge banner draped on the curving white wall proclaimed, in ten-foot letters:

DEPENDENCE DAY
BULLFIGHT
HONOR THE GREAT
GOVERNMENT ON WHICH
WE DEPEND
SIX BULLS—THREE KILLERS

Stonecypher ran the canoe aground in a patch of dead weeds, exposed by a slight lowering of the lake level, and helped Catriona over the rocks that lined the bank. He said, "I told Moe other things men do to animals. All the laboratory butchery, done because it would be cruel to treat a man like that, but it's all right with a animal, like takin' out a dog's brains and lettin' 'im live. I told him about huntin', how the kudu become extinct 'cause a bunch of fools wanted to see who could kill the one with

the biggest horns.

"I told him the things done to domestic animals. Dehornin', emascu-
lating, brandin', slaughterin' with
sledge hammers and butcher
knives, keepin' 'em in filthy barns.
A man tells hisself he's superior to
other animals. If he does somethin'
bad, he uses words like inhuman,
brutal, animal instincts, instead of
admittin' it's just typical behavior.
And the psychologists take some
animal, say a dog, and put him in
a maze, something the dog never
saw before. If the dog don't run
the maze in two seconds flat, they
say he's a pretty stupid animal. He
just operates on instinct, but they
can't say how instinct operates.
They'll have a time explainin'
Moe's instincts.

"I reckon the American bison
made Moe madder than anything.
They killed the bison off, 'cept for
protected herds, in the Nineteenth
Century. A hundred years later, the
herds had got pretty big, so they
declared open season on bison. No
more bison."

A recorded voice growled, "No
guns permitted in ring. Deposit gun
in slot. No guns permitted in ring."

Stonecypher moved his permit in
ineffectual passes before the elec-
tric eye. He shrugged, dropped the
revolver into the slot, and left his
thumb print. Catriona displayed the
passes Ringmaster Oswell had given
them. The tever blinked, and the
gate granted admission. They rode
the escalator to the sixth tier and
squeezed through pandemonium
to their seats.

The male portion of the crowd
wore every possible style and color
of dress, in complete emancipation

from the old business suit uniform,
but the women wore sober false-
bosomed sundresses and expressed
excitement in polite chirps. Stone-
cypher pressed his mouth against
Catriona's ear and whispered
through the din, "You got to un-
derstand, Cat, whatever happens,
Moe wanted it. He says he can
scare some killers into givin' up
bullfights and maybe help stop it."

"He'll do fine, Stony."

Several spectators stopped vent-
ing their wrath on the unfortunate
man in the ring to gawk at the
couple. Catriona's unorthodox
physique aroused sufficient amaze-
ment; but, in addition, Stonecy-
pher gave her the front seat and
took the rear one, the correct place
for a woman, himself.

Below, through a rain of plasti-
bottles and rotten eggs, a tired man
walked to the barrier which Oswell
advertised as the only wooden
fence in seven states. Behind the
killer, a small electric tractor
dragged out the bloody carcass of
a bull.

A gasping, gibbering little man
grabbed Stonecypher's arm and
yelped, "Illard is the clumsiest kill-
er, he ran the sword in three times,
and the kid with the dagger had to
stick twice before they finished, Big
Dependence Day Bullfight my jet!
This is the worst in years, Fergus
made the only clean kill all after-
noon, and I flew every one of
eighteen hundred miles myself to
see it, this last bull better be good!"
The little man waved his bag of
rotten eggs.

Although the bullfight followed
the basic procedures established by
Francisco Romero in the Spain of

1700, changes had occurred, including the elimination of all Spanish words from the vocabulary of the spectacle since the unpleasant dispute with the Spanish Empire twenty years before. The gaudy costumes worn by participants had been replaced by trunks and sneakers.

A purring grader smoothed the sand. The crowd quieted, except for those near the box of Ringmaster Oswald. They suggested in obscene terms that their money be refunded. A trumpet recording blared. A scarlet door, inscribed, "Moe of Hays Mountain Farm," opened. The crowd awaited the first wild rush of the bull. It failed to materialize.

GRAND FINALE

SLOWLY, Moe came through the doorway. Above, on a platform inside the barrier, stood a gray-haired man who stuck identifying, streamered darts into bovine shoulders. His hand swept down, carrying Stonecypher's chosen colors, black.

Moe's walk upset the man's timing. His arm moved too soon. Moe's front hooves left the ground. Horns hooked. The gray-haired man screamed and dropped the dart. With a spike of horn through his arm, between bone and biceps, he gyrated across the barrier. He screamed a second time before cloven hooves slashed across his body.

The crowd inhaled, then cheered the unprecedented entrance. Kill-

er Fergus's team stood rigid, not comprehending. Then men dashed through shielded openings in the barrier, yelling and waving pink and yellow capes to draw the bull from his victim.

Moe ignored the distraction, trotted nonchalantly to the center of the ring, and turned his bulging head to examine the spectators jabbering at his strange appearance. The short horns, the round skull, the white-banded eyes, the mane that seemed slightly purple under the cloudy sky, and the exaggerated slope from neck to rump that made the hind legs too short—together they amounted to a ton of muscle almost like a bull. "Where'd you trap it, Oswald?" someone near the ringmaster's box yelled.

Forgetting the mess Illard had made with the previous bull, the crowd commented. "It's the last of the bison!"

"He's poiple! Lookit! Poiple!"

"The bull of the woods!"

"Howya like 'im, Fergus?"

Killer Fergus posed behind the barrier and studied his specialty, an odd bull. Two stickers, Neel and Tomas, flourished capes to test the bull's charge, with Neel chanting, "Come on, bull! Come on, bull! Come on! Bull, bull, bull!"

Moe did not charge. He moved, in a speculative walk, toward the chanting Neel who tantalized with the cape and retreated with shuffling steps. The charge, when it came, occurred almost too fast for sight. Neel wriggled on the horns, struck the sand, and the horns lifted him again. He smashed against the barrier. Tomas threw his cape over the bull's face. The

left horn pinned the cape to Tomas's naked chest over the heart.

Moe retired to the center of the ring and bellowed at the crowd, which, delirious from seeing human blood, applauded. Blood covered Moe's horns, dripped through the long hair on his neck, and trickled down between his eyes.

Quavering helpers removed the bodies. The first lancer, livid and trembling, rode a blindfolded horse into the ring. "He'll fix this horse!" the crowd slavered. "We'll see guts this time!"

Moe charged. The lancer backed his mount against the barrier and gripped his weapon, a stout pike. Sand sprayed like water as Moe swerved. On the left side of the horse, away from the menacing pike, Moe reared. The lancer left the saddle. A tangle of naked limbs thrashed across the wooden fence and thudded against the wall of the stands.

Twenty-five thousand people held their breaths. The blindfolded horse waited with dilated nostrils and every muscle vibrating in terror. Moe produced a long red tongue and licked the horse's jaw.

Fergus dispersed the tableau. Red-haired, lean, and scarred with many past gorings, the popular killer stalked across the sand dragging his cape and roaring incomprehensible challenges. In the stands, the cheer leaders of the Fergus Fanclub lead a welcoming yell. "Yeaaaa, Fergus! Fergus! Fergus! Rah, rah, rah!"

Moe wandered through the helpers trying to distract him from the horse and looked at the killer. Fer-

gus stamped his foot, shook the cape, and called, "Bull! Come on! Charge!" Moe completely circled the killer, who retired in disgust when another lancer rode into the ring. "Stick him good!" Fergus directed.

The pike pointed at the great muscles of Moe's back, as the bull charged. Moe's head twisted in a blur of violence. Teeth clamped on the shaft behind the point. Too surprised to let go, the lancer followed his weapon from the saddle. He released his hold when Moe walked on him.

Like some fantastic dog stealing a fresh bone, the bull trotted around the ring, tail high and pike in mouth. The crowd laughed. Wild-eyed men carried out the trampled lancer.

A third, and extremely reluctant, lancer reined his horse through the gate. A pike in the mouth of a ton of beef utterly unnerved the man. He stood in the saddle and jumped over the barrier where a rain of rotten eggs from the booing fans spattered him thoroughly.

AN UNINJURED bull pawed alone in the sand when the trumpet recording announced the end of the lancers' period. The crowd noises softened to a buzz of speculation, questions, and comment, as the realization that weird events had been witnessed slowly penetrated that collective mind. The bull had not touched a horse, no pike had jabbed the bull, and five men had been killed or injured.

"Great Government!" a clear

voice swore. "That ain't no bull, it's a mooster!" This opinion came from a sticker in Illard's team. Fergus attempted to persuade the man to help, since both of Fergus's stickers were dead. Part of the crowd agreed with the sticker's thought, for people began moving furtively to the exits with cautious glances at the animal in the ring. They, of course, could not know that the bull had been trained, with rubber-tipped pikes and dummies, in every phase of the bullfight; that he knew the first, and only, law of staying alive in the ring. "Charge the man and not the cloth."

The clouds that had obscured the sky all day formed darker masses tinted with pink to the east, and the black dot of a turkey buzzard wheeled soaring in the gloom. Carrying, in either hand, a barbed stick sparkling with plastic streamers, Fergus walked into the ring. His assistants cautiously flanked him with capes.

Moe dropped the pike and charged in the approved manner of a bull. Fergus raised the sticks high and brought them down on the humped back, although the back was not there. The sticks dropped in the sand.

As the killer leaped aside in the completion of a reflex action, a horn penetrated the seat of his trunks. The Fergus Fanclub screamed while their hero dangled in ignominy from the horn. Moe ignored the flapping, frantic capes. The killer gingerly gripped a horn in either hand and tried to lift himself off. Gently, Moe lowered his head and deposited the man beside an opening. Fergus scabbled to

safety like a rat to a hole.

Four helpers with capes occupied the ring. When they saw death approaching on cloven hooves, two of them cleared the fence. The third received a horn beside his backbone and tumbled into the fourth. A dual scream, terrible enough to insure future nightmares, echoed above the screeching of the crowd. Moe tossed the bodies again and again across the bloody sand.

Silence slithered over the Highland Bullring and over a scene reminiscent of the ring's bloody parent, the Roman Arena. Men sprawled gored, crushed, and dead across the sand. A section of the blood-specked barrier leaned splintered and cracked, almost touching the concrete wall. Unharméd, Fergus stood on one side of the battleground, Illard on the other.

Fergus reached over the wooden fence for red flag and sword. Turning his back on the heaving Moe, who stood but ten feet behind, the killer faced the quaking flesh that was Ringmaster Oswald, high up in the official box. The killer's voice shook, but the bitter satire came through the sound of departing boats and aircraft. Fergus said, "I dedicate this bull to Ringmaster Oswald who has provided for us this great Dependence Day Bullfight in honor of the Great Government on which we all depend." He turned and faced the bull.

Moe, for once, rushed the red flag, the only thing that made bullfights possible. His great shoulders presented a fair target for the sword.

Fergus, perhaps the only bull-

fighter ever to be gored in the brain, died silently. The sword raked a shallow gash long Moe's loin.

In the sixth tier of the stands, saliva drooled from the slack mouth of the little man seated beside Stonecypher. "Now's your chance, Illard!" the man squalled. "Be a hero! The last of the bull-fighters! Kill him, Illard!"

Illard walked on shaking legs over bodies he did not see. He was short, for a killer, and growing bald. He picked up the sword Fergus had dropped, looked into the gory face of the bull, and toppled in the sticky sand. The sword quivered point-first beside his body.

RECESSIONAL

A WIND whipped down into Highland Bullring. Riding the wind, blacker than the clouds, the inquisitive turkey buzzard glided over the rim of the stands with air whistling through the spatulate feathers of rigid wings. The buzzard swooped a foot above Moe's horns and soared swiftly over the opposite side of the ring.

That started the panic, although Moe's charge accentuated it. He crashed into the sagging section of the barrier. Cloven hooves scraped the wooden inclined plane, and Moe stopped with front feet in the first tier of the stands. He bellowed.

The bull killed only one spectator, a man on whom he stepped. The hundreds who died killed themselves or each other. They

leaped from the towering rim of the ring, and they jammed the exits in writhing heaps.

Moe's precarious stance slipped. Slowly, he slid back into the ring, where Ringmaster Oswald, quivering in a red toga, gestured from the darkness under the stands. The fat man squeaked and waved. Moe's charge embodied the genuine fighting rage of a maddened bull. The scarlet door closed behind him.

Stonecypher, with fists bloody and a heap of unconscious fear-crazed spectators piled before him, sat down. "Well, Moe," he whispered, "I reckon you got even for a few of the bulls that's been tortured to death to amuse a bunch of nuts. Maybe it wasn't the right way to do it. I don't know. If I'd only had the gun—"

Catriona turned a white mask of a face up to Stonecypher. "They killed him, in there?"

"Sure. Bullfightin' never was a sport. The bull can't win. If he's not killed in the ring, he's slaughtered under the stands."

"You have moah smart-bulls, Stony."

The black copter came in with the sunset and hovered over the sand. The face of Duellmaster Smith peered out under his black tam, while a hooded man, with pistols tattooed on his hand, aimed an automatic rifle. The duellmaster smiled at Stonecypher and cried, "You really should have waited until you were farther out in the Lake, before you dropped that little buzzer in the water."