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THE DEMOLISHED MAN

Starburst

ALFRED BESTER

A SIGNET BOOK





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STARBURST



A SIGNET BOOK

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Contents

DISAPPEARING ACT	7	
ADAM AND NO EVE	24	
STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT	38	
THE ROLLER COASTER	54	
ODDY AND ID	61	
THE STARCOMBER	76	
TRAVEL DIARY	110	
FONDLY FAHRENHEIT	113	
HOBSON'S CHOICE	133	
THE DIE-HARD	148	
OF TIME AND THIRD AVENUE	152	



Travel Diary

By the end of the Twenty-second century, and at a cost of lives and money exceeding that of the final World War, communication between the planets of the solar system was finally established.

History of Solar Cities
John W. Lackland

June 10. Venus. Staying at the Excelsior. Everybody speaks English so no trouble at all. But they simply have *no* idea how to make Martinis. Nuisance. Went to that marvelous dressmaker Linda told me about. Bought five *divine* creations for practically peanuts. Tom said: "Exchange favors us." I said: "What means?" Tom: "Our dollars buy more here than home." Self: "Then why can't buy six gowns?" Tom: "Doesn't favor us *that* much." But I notice he bought another camera. Pig!

Ran into the Trumbulls and the Rogers. Took us to a marvelous bistro where Clyde Pippin from the old Key Club is playing. Love his songs. Love that man. Tom too embarrassing adding up check with pencil. It's true they all cheat us, but why can't he show them we don't give a D—— Mars and Saturn next. Then Alpha Centaurus.

Speed was the one barrier to practical communication with the planetary systems of the far stars. When faster-than-light propulsion was at last developed after centuries of research, it became possible to travel to the far stars within weeks rather than years.

Development of Galactic Travel
Ezra Coudert

July 19. Alpha Centaurus. Staying at the Excelsior. Everybody speaks English so no trouble at all. But can't drink the water. Nuisance. Went to that marvelous lace man Linda told me about. Bought five yards for practically peanuts.

People here too dirty and positively amoral. Disgusting.

And rude? !!!! Tom took pictures of some kind of silly ceremony. People began screaming at us. Tried to steal T's camera. Official came along and jabbered in broken English. "They say no more take, please. Break." Tom: "Break what?" Official: "Religious. Sacred. No take look-see. Break." Tom: "You got the nerve to tell me that clowning is religion?" Official: "Yes, please." (Pointing to camera) "Give, please. Must break please." Tom: (to me) "How about that for nerve? Give them my four-hundred-dollar camera to bust just because it's taken a few religious pictures." Self: "If it's good enough for Notre Dame, it's good enough for them." Tom gave them some money and we left.

Ran into the Trumbulls and Rogers. Took them to a marvelous bistro where Clyde Pippin is playing now. Made me homesick to hear the old Key Klub tunes. Love that man. Tom too funny pretending to be visiting dignitary. Said was famous Senator from Saturn. Said was here *investigating*. Scared them all to death. Laugh? I tho't I'd die! Betelgeuse next.

Conflicting cultures brought about inevitable clashes which culminated in the Great Galactic War. Betelgeuse, bankrupt and desperate, attempted a costly and controversial experiment. The government was overthrown and a one-party business despotism established under the leadership of an economic dictator.

The Political Economy of Space Arthur Raskober

July 23. Betelgeuse. Staying at the Excelsior. Everybody speaks English, so very convenient. Can't understand talk about poverty and shortages here. Not true. Food marvelous. Plenty cream, butter, eggs, etc., here in hotel. Not true about unhappiness. All waiters, maids, etc. in hotel cheerful and smiling. And Mudinna certainly has made the planes run on time.

Went to that marvelous beautician Linda told me about. Took all my courage in both hands and *cut my hair*. Tres chic but was afraid to show Tom. When he finally saw, furious!!! Said made me look like a d—ed foreigner. He'll get used to it.

Ran into the Trumbulls and Rogers. We all went to a marvelous bistro where Clyde Pippin is playing. Love that man! After two months travel finally became cos-

mopolitan enough to introduce myself to him. Something would never have dared before. Now, was tremendously poised. Said: "Mr. Pippin, admired you for twenty years. Ever since was child." He: "Thanks honey." Self: "Always *adored* the way you sang *Tree Top*." He: "No, that's Charley Hoyt's number. I never sing it, honey." Self: "Well I never asked Charley Hoyt for his autograph, but I'm asking *you*." I was too sophisticated.

Leave for Andromeda tomorrow. Very excited. Will be high spot of entire trip.

Perhaps the most amazing incident in the course of the exploration of space was the discovery that time-travel had already been developed in Andromeda. Permission for limited use by scientists, historians and students was granted in 2754.

The Exploration of Time
Stark Robinson

August 1. Andromeda. Staying at the Excelsior. Everybody speaks English divinely. Tom and self to authorities armed with letters from Chamber of Commerce, N.A.M., Senator Wilkins, and Joe Cates whose nephew practically runs the State Dept. We wanted time-trip. They said no, not for tourists. Too expensive, only for study. Tom finally laid down the law, told a few lies and made a few threats. They said yes. You have to be firm with these eggheads.

Tom picked Sept. 5, 1665 in London. Self: "Why?" Tom: "Because is date of Great Fire that destroyed London. Always dreamed about. Always wanted to see.:" Self: "Don't be childish. A fire's a fire. Want to see Marie Antionette's clothes." Tom: "No. I swung it. So we see what *I* want." Selfish! Had to exchange money for Seventeenth century money. Had to wear old Seventeenth century clothes. Not properly cleaned, I tho't. Almost didn't go.

Was right. Fire is just a fire. But bought some *heavenly* silver and china and ten place-settings of *divine* flatware. Also tea set. Tom couldn't complain for once. *He* bought six swords and a helmet for the rumpus room decorations. Funniest thing about the trip is fact that we could hardly understand the people there. In 1665 they couldn't speak their own English.

Next week, home!

Faster-than-light speed while travelling through the universe produces a physical paradox. Although the traveller is conscious of the passage of time within the space ship (Subjective Time), actually he is being transported so rapidly that the trip seems to have taken no time at all to the rest of the world. (Objective Time). In other words, a space ship leaves Andromeda on August 1, bound for earth. It is August 1 when the ship arrives. No time has elapsed in the universe. But on board the ship, travelling at faster-than-light speed, seven days have elapsed.

Paradoxes of Space Travel
Oliver Nielson

August 20. Home. Although is August 20 in this diary, is actually only June 14 here on earth. Can *not* get used to Subj. and Obj. time. Have been gone three months by our counting, but only 14 days by earth's counting. Hate this. Makes me feel as if I'd never left home.

Distributed all gifts we brought back. Linda was *imposs.* Insists she told me get her a Shocking Pink peignoir on Callisto. Not Powder Blue. That's a D——ed lie and she knows it. She can't wear Shocking with *her* hair. Tom furious. Forgot to take lens cap off new camera when photographing Great Fire. All pictures blank. Now nobody believes he was important enough to wangle time-trip.

The Trumbulls and the Rogers called. Want us to get together and have reunion. Suggested the new Kolony Klub. Clyde Pippin there with his marvelous act. Dying to go, but had to refuse. Too exhausted. The universe is a great place to visit, but I'd sure hate to live there.

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