

# Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

MARCH, 1950

Cover by Lee Brown Coye

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D. McILWRAITH, Editor

# Two Face

BY FRANK BELKNAP LONG

**T**HE ship came sweeping down into the valley like a great silver gull, its vanes catching the sunlight and throwing a wheeling shadow on the green world below.

The men crowding the view room were like children set free in the warm October, after a month of school, given leave to shout and cheer, with bells ringing like mad and the whole town in a holiday mood.

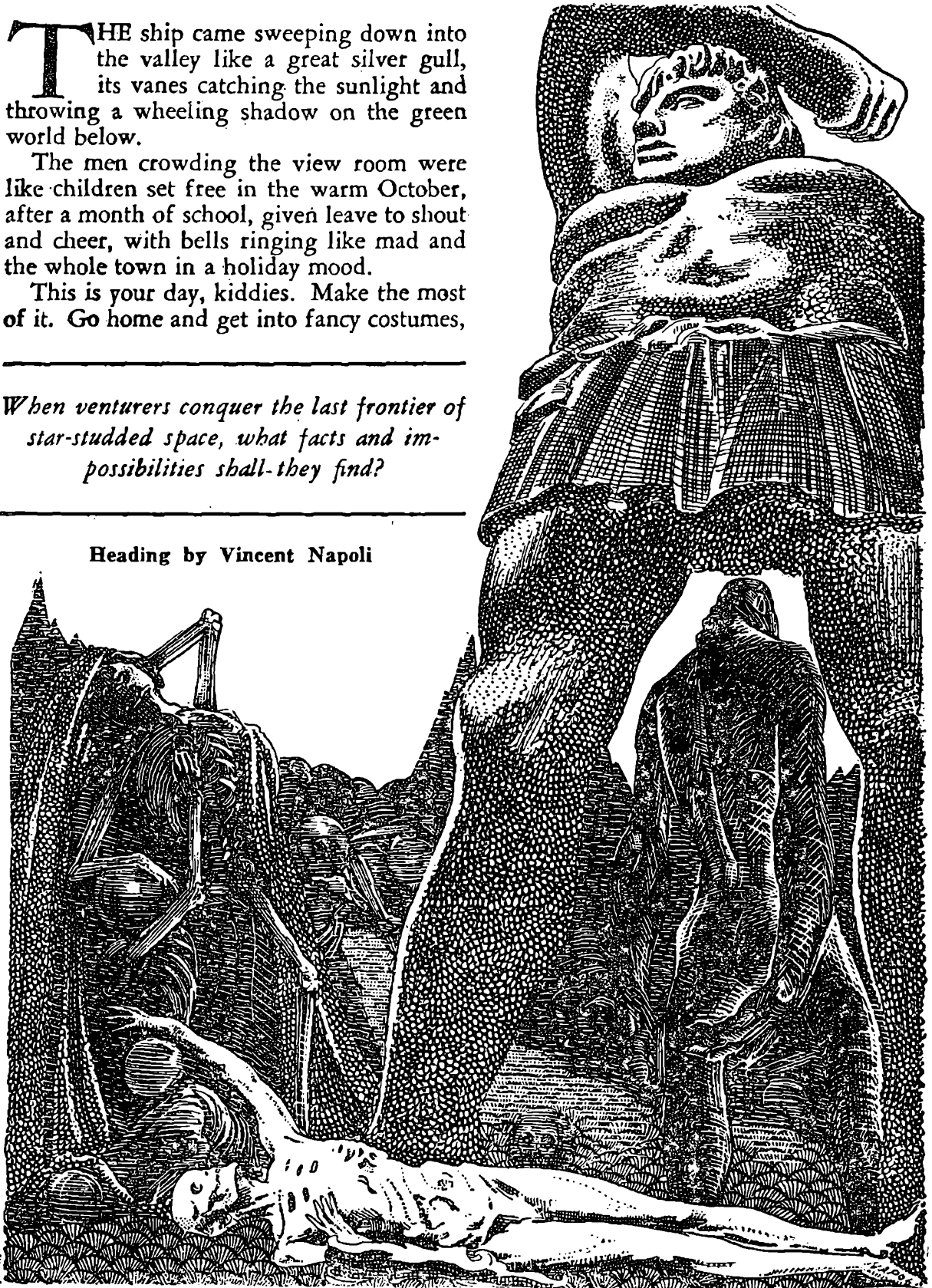
This is your day, kiddies. Make the most of it. Go home and get into fancy costumes,

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*When venturers conquer the last frontier of star-studded space, what facts and impossibilities shall they find?*

---

Heading by Vincent Napoli



break open packages of colored chalk, cut eye-holes in pumpkins, race up and down stairs dressed up for Hallowe'en, Thanksgiving, Christmas.

The men crowding the view room felt sweat break out on their necks and hands. They were not altogether convinced that the green world was real.

How could a man ever be sure that the great day was real? The torturing anticipation, the high-soaring hopes and fears, the travail, the weariness, the discipline of long days and nights in star-dusty space could give birth to strange doubts which even the shimmer of sunlight on a green valley could not dispel.

How could one be sure when the sun was not Sol, but Alpha of the Centaurs, and the green world was not Mars or Venus, but the warmest of little inner planets swimming in a dreamed of tomorrow that had suddenly become today.

Today, now, this instant, as the great ship circled and wheeled, its shadow lengthening on the walls of the green ravine.

"Steady as she goes!" Captain Paul Hendry called out, his shoulders held straight in the port gleam, a dawning wonder in his stare.

Equally eager and straight stood John Hoskins, meteorologist, a little man with keen hawk eyes, and Fred Allison, a man of strength and girth and a Gargantuan appetite for the good things of life. Jim Miles, still pale from his museum chores on Earth, had lost a leg in World War IV, and it was a little difficult for him to stand as straight as the others. But his eyes were as eager, his lips as tight.

Each of the dozen men stood straight in his own way, some with a straightness of the spirit, and others with a straightness of the body, and a few with a straightness that was simply a relief from anxiety, from the fact of fear.

As the men watched the valley sweep up, widening and deepening, a bulkhead panel swung open, and a slim girl came into the view room. She had tawny hair and clear blue eyes.

The men turned and by a curious quirk of identification their minds placed the val-

ley glow about the head of the girl, and by a curious quirk of sympathy they transferred their own emotions to the lucky fellow who stepped forward to take her in his arms.

It was inevitable that Allison should be the lucky one, for Barbara Maitland, archaeologist, she of the shining skills and tight-braided hair, preferred strength and confidence to caution in a man.

"It's good to know this belongs to everybody!" the girl breathed. "We've crossed space to another star and we've proved that it could be done, and now it belongs to every man, woman and child on Earth. We mustn't ever allow ourselves to forget that!"

"Not a chance!" Allison laughed, holding her in a tight, waltzing embrace. "We'll go on from here! This is just a beginning!"

Around and around they waltzed, while the men grinned, cheered, shouted, wept. Captain Hendry brought his fist down on his palm with a resounding smack and said: "Break it up, lads! Save the fireworks until we've set her down!"

THE ship came to rest on a sloping green hillside, with hardly a tremor, and Captain Hendry busied himself with the duties peculiar to his command and the experts went to work and long-nourished fears, doubts and trepidations vanished like tallow in bright sunlight as the good news spread through the ship.

Everyone seemed to be talking at once.

"The air is just right, sir! A little high in oxygen content, but we can take the excess in our stride, sir!"

"The temperature is just dandy, sir. Couldn't be better. Sixty-five in the shade!"

"We won't need spacesuits, sir! We can go outside whenever you give the word!"

Just give the wonderful, bright, shining word and we'll all go outside and scoop up handfuls of the new earth, and breathe the new air deep into our lungs and flash the great news back to Earth on a radio with a range of light years. Just give the word, sir!

Captain Hendry gestured for silence and called for three volunteers. The first man to step forward was Fred Allison, with a quick intake of his breath. Jim Miles wet his lips

and reached Allison's side in two limping strides, a little ahead of Hoskins, who moved with the deliberation of a scientist refusing to be rushed.

"Now then, men!" Captain Hendry said, his eyes flashing. "We'll just go down into the valley and have a look around. I've a great deal of respect for the captain who marched all of his men down a hill and marched them straight back again. He had a fine flair for the dramatic. He should also have been handed over to a lunacy commission!"

"We'd all like to go outside, sir!" a foolish lad protested. "We really would, sir!"

"You'll get your chance!" Hendry laughed. "We'll be here a long time."

Without further ado Captain Hendry swung about and walked toward the gravity lock. Allison, Miles and Hoskins fell into step at his heels, feeling suddenly organized and confident, ready to follow the captain to the ends of the earth. For surely this was an earth, even if it were not Terra. Just as warm and friendly, just as green, just as ripe for exploration.

The air was cool and sweet, good to breathe, and as the gravity lock closed with a gentle murmur the four men stood for an instant directly in front of the ship, stood utterly motionless with a shivering wonder in their thoughts, drinking in the fresh new vista. Then they swung about and went striding down into the valley, walking four abreast, compact little energy weapons jogging on their hips.

On such a mission Captain Hendry had no desire to take the lead. Share and share alike, in danger and glory, and let each man be a captain in his own right.

**E**XPLORING a new world was like pouring a generous measure of champagne into a glass and watching the bubbles collect in frosty beads. You had to be a little careful about drinking the champagne. Like as not it would be bad for you. The pouring was the thing, savoring the aroma of a new world, watching the bubbles sparkle and dance.

Green grass under their feet, a caressing wind on their cheeks and the valley sloping

away to a misty glimmering. The valley widening out and each of the four thinking: This is it! This is the great day and we are the first! This is our moment to bequeath to our children's children, this is our fine, bright, new gift to the world of tomorrow!

They were a thousand feet below the ship when the thin mist rolled back and the glimmering heart of the valley swept into their view.

Captain Hendry stopped walking, the beauty and wonder crashing about him like a shattering house of glass. Miles cried out hoarsely, and let fear and revulsion sweep him, making no effort to conceal the way he felt.

"Look! Oh, look!" Hoskins muttered, pointing, a spasm twisting the muscles of his throat.

Only Allison took the sight in his stride. Only Allison stood up to it, throwing out his arms in a gesture of defiance and fierce human pride, throwing his arms out and back as if to embrace that incredible challenge to humanity and hold it in a crushing hammerlock.

In the still green depths of the valley a great stone figure loomed. Titanic in girth, aureoled in radiance, it straddled the valley with a terrible, possessive strength.

The colossus was a brutish parody of the human figure as evolution had shaped that figure on Earth. It was apelike and yet not quite an ape, manlike but in no sense a true man. The barrel chest, the long, dangling arms, and the bared teeth were wholly simian. But the cranial bulge above the massive eye-sockets was more pronounced than the brain bulge of *Homo sapiens*, and the long, apelike arms terminated in slender-fingered hands, white and almost feminine in their delicacy.

The stone giant was staring straight up the valley slope, its brutish arms outspread, its malign, heavy-jowled face flashing glints of sunlight into the eyes of the staring men from Earth. Briefly and fantastically the sunlight flitted over the bulging eyeballs of the brute, etching blue shadows into the sunken cheeks, filling the mouth with fire.

The colossus was still with the stillness of a carven gargóyle crouching on some

cathedral fastness in an age of blood and strife.

"If that statue is an idol it would debase the most primitive cult of cannibals on Earth!" Hoskins choked.

"Yes, you are right, Hoskins!" Captain Hendry agreed. "It sickens me just to look at it. We'd better go back!"

"Go back!" Allison stood against the glare, facing the valley slope. "You can't be serious, sir! It took genius to carve a figure like that out of solid rock! It's the greatest of all great stone faces! More than a face, a complete humanoid shape! This planet is inhabited by craftsmen, by heaven!"

"Craftsmen?" Hendry muttered. "Craftsmen, did you say? You mean barbarians with a terrible, naked hatred of life! A love of cruelty and death. Just look at that face. Let its expression sink into you, man! If you give it half a chance—it will remold your brain to fit the way it feels about you!"

Allison threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"It seems to amuse you, Allison!" Hendry said.

**A**LLISON turned with a defiant shrug. "If that's the kind of idol they prefer to worship—it's their funeral, not ours! We carry powerful weapons. We can take care of ourselves. Let's not be childish about this."

Captain Hendry turned and put his hand on Miles' shoulder. "What do you think, Jim? Shall we go back?"

Miles shut his eyes before replying. In his mind's gaze he saw Barbara Maitland standing by the view port, framed against the stellar night, her hair a tawny web of glory.

He remembered how she talked, laughed, sat, walked. In his thoughts he reached out and took her into his arms. In his thoughts she broke away from him, mocking him with her healthy straight young body. How could she love a man who limped, who seldom smiled, who was wedded by temperament to cold precision instruments and the dry dust of museums?

What did it matter that they had been

childhood sweethearts, when choking dry dust now rose like a cloud between them.

A reckless young cub, Allison. Untamed and callow, a lion cub in his cruel playfulness. As ready to slap a woman as to love her, trading on his bronzed, first-youth boyishness, his winning smile. What incredible fools women were to be taken in by rippling muscles and the thinly disguised ugliness of an outsized human brute masquerading as a laughing Apollo.

Just how much happiness would Barbara lose if the lion cub went down alone into the valley and never came back? Not much, surely.

No woman could be happy for long in a lion cub's playful embrace.

"Well, Jim, what do you say?" Captain Hendry urged.

Jim turned with a shudder of self-loathing. "Allison has made up his mind, sir," he said. "We can't let him go alone."

"I can order him back!" Hendry protested. "What do you think this is, a debating society?"

"No, sir. But if you order Allison back he'll refuse to obey. You'll have to discipline him."

"Say what you mean, man!" Hendry flared. "You mean I'll have to blast him down."

"That's correct, sir."

Hendry reddened. "Are you suggesting that I allow him to flaunt discipline?"

Miles shook his head. "No, sir. If you order him back and he refuses everlasting regret will walk with us. Why give him a chance to flaunt discipline, sir? You can untie your hands by killing him. But wouldn't it be simpler to go along with him? How about it?"

Deeper in the valley the Captain fell to arguing again. "I was crazy to listen to you, Jim," he said.

Miles frowned, jogging on. The colossus loomed above them and the valley sloped away and the hot sunlight beat down. Allison had fallen back, to join the others. Another minute and Captain Hendry would have forgotten his anger, would have accepted him again as a comrade in arms. But that minute never came.

**T**HERE was no time for further talk, a shifting of perspective, the satisfying realization that discipline on a new world was less important than Captain Hendry had dreamed.

For the valley was suddenly swarming with living men and women, tawny-skinned and lithe of limb, wearing primitive garments of some rough cloth and carrying themselves with the natural, easy grace of barbarians everywhere.

They came swarming up the slope, shouting and laughing, straight toward the four men from Earth. A sing-song kind of speech they had. It certainly wasn't Chinese, but it was good to hear, warm and rich and vibrant.

"Don't let them come too close!" Hendry warned, his hand darting to his hip.

It was a needless warning. For when the laughing barbarians came close fear went away. Uneasiness and suspicion went away.

Allison burst out laughing. "They're like children!" he said, laughing very hard. "Friendly children."

"Yes!" Hoskins agreed.

Miles said nothing. He simply stood still and accepted the warm tribute of friendliness in stunned disbelief. An incredible outflowing of pure good will it was, a thing that could be instantly sensed. The men came up and patted the four men from Earth on the shoulder. With gratitude in their eyes, with appreciation and respect and loyalty and hometown pride, as though they were greeting football heroes at the end of a great game.

A truly great game! It was a heartier greeting than any handshake, a thing of wild enthusiasm. It was like being lifted on the shoulders of a cheering crowd.

The women were more circumspect. They simply knelt and embraced the feet of the men from Earth.

The friendly people. Ah, how friendly they were, how incredibly kind. Kneeling at Allison's feet a sloe-eyed woman crooned to him in tender rapture as Captain Hendry paced slowly back and forth. Had an hour passed or an eternity?

Of course, it wasn't real. Of course they were all dreaming, and this couldn't be real.

In a moment it would crash and dissolve, splinter and whip away, like a great ship ripped asunder by a collision in space, floundering in the black gulfs and throwing out pinwheeling splashes of light as it shattered into dust.

The four men from Earth were in a lush green valley with a high windy cave behind them. They were being slowly suffocated with friendliness. It was impossible for them to break away.

Miles felt a vague uneasiness as Hendry paced, a desire to talk to Hendry. He stood up and walked slowly to the captain's side, and joined him in his pacing.

"This is incredible!" he said.

"Quite!" Hendry agreed.

"We ought to be getting back to the ship, sir!"

"All in good time!" Hendry said.

"You're not resigned to staying here, sir?"

"What do you take me for?" Hendry stopped pacing to glare at Miles. "We'll be getting back soon enough."

"But blast it, sir, why don't we go immediately?"

"Because I don't want to antagonize these people!" Hendry blurted out. "We've got to live with them. Another planet of another star—inhabited by a really friendly race of human beings. Do you realize what that means, Jim?"

"It has been making my head spin!" Miles acknowledged. "They're not at all like us, sir."

"I know, Jim."

"There's no suspicion, no malice in them. Where are all the instinctive tribal antagonisms you'd expect to find in a barbarian culture? We're strangers here, outsiders. But that doesn't mean a thing to them!"

"I know, I know!" Hendry muttered, looking concerned. "There's something horribly wrong here, but I can't put my finger on it."

"Wrong? You don't like it? Look here, sir. This friendliness is the real thing. It's genuine, deep-seated. Don't ask me how I know but I do know, sir. I can feel it in my bones!"

"So can I!" Hendry conceded. "And I

still don't like it. It's not natural, it's not—well, human."

HENDRY raised his eyes and stared at Allison. The big man sat on a boulder, with a barbarian maid on each of his sun-bronzed knees. Another girl crouched at his feet, staring up at him with the rapt absorption of an Indian basket maker. Ensnaring him in a warm and friendly way, but not at all possessively.

"They're just naturally free of guile, sir!" Miles commented. "Simple and generous and kind. They don't even hate one another!"

"I'm not blind," Hendry grunted. "Sex antagonism is pretty basic with us. Just about rock bottom basic. Those girls aren't even jealous."

Hendry turned as he spoke, and contemplated Hoskins. Hoskins was doing an incredible thing. He was engaging in athletic competition. The friendly people were disc throwers.

Before the cave three tall native strong boys were hurling flat wooden discs at a distant stage. The discs were perforated, and the game was quite obviously a far Centaurian variant of an old rustic game which still survived on Earth.

The first disc thrower missed the stake by a good two yards. As he grimaced and groaned another strong boy came closer. The skillfully hurled disc of number three grazed the stake with a vibrant twang. Hoskins made a ringer!

It was an incredible feat, for the punched-out center of the disc barely fitted the stake. The three strong boys surrounded Hoskins and lifted him to their shoulders. They pranced around with him in a wild fury of acclaim.

"We can be good losers, too!" Miles breathed quickly.

One of the barbarian girls came up to Hoskins and locked her arms about his neck.

The three strong boys drew away and grinned at Hoskins. Hoskins flushed guiltily and straightened a little, as if anticipating trouble. But the strong boys continued to grin. Their expressions said as plain as words: "You're a better man than we are,

Gunga Din! That young lady is just about the cutest trick on this planet. But you've won her honestly, in fair competition. Compared to you we just don't rate!"

It was amusing, in a way, because Hoskins wasn't the hairy-chested type. He just happened to be good at disc throwing.

"Well, now!" Captain Hendry said.

"We can be good losers, too, sir!" Miles reiterated, with vehemence, as if eager to convince himself.

"Oh, sure, sure we can!" Hendry agreed.

"Only—suppose an athlete from another country beat us to the punch. Beat us at something we're really good at. We might applaud him a little with a wry face, being careful to conceal our resentment. Part of that applause would be honest, too. We're not incapable of generous impulses.

"But suppose the blondes and the red-heads went all out for that big, brave hero from another land. Would we retire from the arena with good grace, with pleasure and delight?"

"Of course not, sir, but—"

"He'd be lucky if he escaped with his life. Wars start that way, son, and don't you forget it!"

"But the friendliness of these people embraces everything!" Miles protested. "They're just naturally friendly, brimming over with good will!"

"I know," Hendry said, scowling. "It won't hurt us to think about Freud for a minute or two. We may have the answer there!"

"Freud, sir?"

"You know the old theory. It has never been disproved."

Hendry stared up at the colossus as he spoke, a look of fear-tinged exasperation in his stare.

"Look at it this way, son. The subconscious is a mysterious thing, brimming over with all that's hateful in man. You've got to have some outlet for that jungle part of yourself, or you'll be pure brute, a beast with the intelligence of a man.

"If you try to keep it locked up in your mind, deny its existence, you won't behave like a man. Certainly not like these people. But suppose you let that jungle heritage

flow out in a vicarious, harmless way. Suppose you think about it, and accept it? Suppose you talk about it for all the world to hear?"

"Talk about it, sir?"

"Exactly. Suppose you make a work of art that's the embodiment of primal hate, fear, rage, pure animal cunning and treachery, everything a truly civilized man despises in himself."

Hendry threw out his arms in a half gesture toward the colossus straddling the valley glow. "Look up there, son! That's it! There you see the subconscious brute in these people given substance, personified, made objective for all the world to see! And now these people are free. By making an open confession of their guilt they've purged themselves and attained real nobility."

Miles started. "By heaven, sir, I believe you've got something there!"

"Wait a minute, son. Let me finish. You can make a false confession too. The ancient Romans did that. They pretended the jungle heritage didn't exist. They worshipped a false nobility. The Magna Mater. A great stone image of a serene and beautiful woman, the soul of nobility, incapable of treachery or malice. And the Romans were quite the most bloodthirsty people in history."

"But, sir, you can't be serious!" Miles said, aghast. "That's not what we've been taught to believe. Brutal people *have* fashioned cruel primitive brutal idols!"

"That's true, son! But they still failed to make an honest confession. Take the Nazi hordes—or the hordes of Genghis Khan. They were twice as hypocritical as the Romans. They worshipped a brutal, *veiled* idol. The veil of mystical mumbo-jumbo distorted the brutality, so they could still pretend it didn't exist for them."

Miles looked up at the colossus and saw that it wore no veil. Its naked ugliness was unique.

MILES looked again at the friendly people. There was a sweet-souled gentleness in the eyes of the girl who knelt at Allison's feet. Miles realized suddenly that the girl would have liked Allison all for

herself. Surely that was natural, human enough. But she was willing to relinquish Allison if holding on to him meant hating. Hate she could not abide.

She had made a confession, an honest confession, along with all of her people. Now she found it desirable to be grown up.

What a pity that Allison was such a scoundrelly brute. Incapable of loyalty to any one woman—

Wait, hold on. Such thoughts were jungle-spawned.

Miles looked at Hendry and said, "Sir, I've a confession to make. It confirms your theory, in a way!"

"Well, son?"

"Coming down here I experienced an upsurge of primal hate, sir, directed against Allison. I wanted to see him dead. I'm pretty sure you know why."

"I can guess, son," Hendry said.

"I let myself go, subconsciously. I didn't try to hide it from myself. I didn't try to tell myself that I was just being noble and protective. Oh, I did at first. But then I really let myself go. I saw red. My hands were pressed against Allison's windpipe and I was throttling him. Do you understand, sir? I was all brute, for a minute."

"Ah, yes—yes, son," Hendry sighed. "Our neolithic ancestors were all brutes for a good many minutes."

"It ceased to be just a subconscious thing, sir. It flowed up from the dark depths of my mind into imaged clearness. It became like that colossus, a conscious work of art, all evil, an honest confession which I made to myself!"

"And then you were free of it? It left you?"

"A good deal of it left me. I was a better man for it. Maybe if I had a lump of soft clay right now and could push it around and make it look like Allison—"

"That's what honest art is for, son. To tell us as much as we can endure to know about ourselves. Otherwise, we just go on being primitive and—two-faced, son!"

Two-faced!

Hendry raised his thin, bony hands in the sunlight and looked at them. Fiercely he told himself that he was not an old man.



There was one test of youth—and only one. You couldn't tell how old a man was by pressing a stethoscope to his chest and testing his blood pressure. You had to look deep into his eyes. You had to ask him about—his memories.

The memories of an old man were like withered leaves falling on a stagnant pool at midnight. Not fresh and green and alive. And the scars of an old man were quite different from the scars of youth. An old man could not point to his scars as Hendry could and say: "There's room on my body for a hundred more. Even in pain and blindness I would not shrink from shining adventure!"

When a man remembered that way, when a man was proud of his scars, seventy-two years could not rob him of his right to feel young.

Hendry looked at the young girl in Allison's arms and a convulsive spasm twisted the muscles of his face. He did not begrudge Allison his day in the sun. No—he was two-faced in a different way.

Within him fierce tides of youth hammered and battered against the citadel of calm, mature wisdom he had become in the eyes of the world. No one suspected what a young colt he was still, how devil-may-care his thoughts could be. He had to keep all that under lock and key.

Miles suddenly realized that he was being stared at. One of the barbarian women was standing just outside the cave, looking carefully at him out of wide, dark, wondering eyes.

For a moment Miles did not breathe. He was acutely conscious of his limp, his intolerable scholar's shyness, his mental scars. If he walked toward her, limping, would she draw back? Turn and flee perhaps, into the cave?

For the first time he became fully aware of the true grace of these people, their childlike charm. Their features were strong and mobile, their complexions clear and they moved with the quick, free-limbed ease of forest creatures on Earth.

The women were as alert as gazeless, as easily startled, as quick to turn their large, limpid eyes upon a man and search for hid-

den, friendly meanings in the face he kept turned to the world.

Miles told himself that a deer hunter with a gun under his arm, emerging from a thicket, looking stern and harsh, would be totally disarmed by such eyes.

And why should he not respond to the shining tenderness and complete trust in the eyes of a woman who was in all respects the exact opposite of a hunted creature? Was she not edging toward him even now, a challenging eagerness in her stare?

Almost before Miles realized that he had moved the barbarian girl was in his arms. He kissed her, gently at first, because kissing was new to her and must have seemed very strange.

After a moment only Miles found it strange. Strange that he should be holding one woman in his arms and thinking of another, strange that warm lips could seem cold, the hair that fell across his shoulders remote, unreal. Strange that the barbarian girl was in no sense precious to him.

**D**ISENTANGLING the girl's arms, Miles looked quickly away. If only he could speak to her in her own language, could tell her how sorry he was that he could not love her as she deserved to be loved.

A bitter despair took hold of Miles. He suddenly found that he couldn't endure the friendly people any longer. Just looking at them was pure torment.

He turned and walked into the cave, not caring whether he was followed or not. It was a quite ordinary cave, but as he moved through the gloom a curious relief crept upon him. Tension diminished, fell away.

With slow, confident steps he walked on. The cave was cool, spacious. Fresh, scented winds blew through it, carrying the fragrance of valley meadows, the peace of noonday glades. Clean earth smells were in his nostrils, the good magic of the earth, uncorked here on an alien world by the hypnotic tug of his thoughts.

He forgot the passage of time, his duty, the need of remaining in contact with his companions. A passage from a half-forgotten poem flashed through his mind. *And I*

*shall have some peace here, for peace comes dripping slow, dripping from out the vales of the morning to where the cricket sings . . .*

As he walked on a glimmer of light came swimming toward him and grew brighter. The cave walls seemed to waver and recede and he suddenly found himself standing in the open again, staring up at a colossal stone figure.

THE figure was valley-spanning, lithe-limbed and athletic in aspect. It seemed to grow out of another figure which faced away from it—a misshapen, brutish figure. It seemed to be the Siamese twin of a pair of figures, one facing out into the valley, the other toward the cave mouth.

Above the towering stone body of the nearest figure was the carven face of a youth of great nobility, as serene and passionless as the stellar night.

For an instant Miles did not realize that he had emerged from the cave behind the brutish colossus, and was staring up at what should have been its back.

Then, slowly, his vision adjusted itself to the valley glare, and the significance of what he saw etched itself on his mind with the searing bite of an acid wash.

From the mouth of the cave to the base of the colusses the valley slope was strewn with human skeletons. Skeletons alone and in groups, huddled together as though for warmth, impaled in solitary agony on spits of garish sunlight, bent double, in fleeing attitudes, in attitudes seeming to denote uneasy repose.

Skeletons with their knees drawn up, their arms twisted inward. Skeletons flung headlong as if by some impossible-to-imagine violence, their bony fingers clawing at the earth. Skeletons standing upright, as still as the colossus itself, with long, glittering spears projecting from their backs.

There were at least a hundred skeletons between the cave and the towering stone youth. A hundred hideously impaled skeletons between the dark, earth-scented cave, and that stone-carven symbol of calm nobility and athletic grace.

The words seemed to form deep in the time-shadowed depths of Miles' mind—

little whirling echoes of sound at first. Echoes taking form slowly, revolving and twisting in a fearful way, like maggots boring up to the sunlight through the deep subconscious murk.

Two-faced! The friendly people are—two-faced!

Abruptly the words crackled like thunder, bursting unbidden from Miles' shaking lips.

"Two-faced—two-faced—two-faced!"

Unaware that he had turned, Miles suddenly found himself running straight back through the cave, careening like a man with a fearful load on his shoulders, his breath coming in choking gasps.

Captain Hendry was still sitting on the rock when Miles emerged. A weary-eyed old man on a firmly-anchored gray rock, immune to alien pitfalls, resigned now to letting the friendliness seek out a younger target. Allison was still basking in the friendliness and Hoskins was hurling discs again. He seemed to like the game.

Miles could see the shadows of his companions on the stones, moving back and forth or hovering immobile while time itself seemed to stand still.

He walked straight up to Hendry, stooped and whispered hoarsely: "Something terrible has happened. I've made a discovery that changes everything we've believed about these people! Everything, do you understand?"

"Well?" Hendry said, with a hint of weariness. "What is it, Jim?"

Miles told him.

Hendry blanched; then leapt up with a startled cry. "I might have known!" he groaned. "Parallel evolution, up to a point. Then a divergence so wide it strikes at the very core of life."

Miles nodded. "The divergence is mental. Their minds must metamorphose at intervals."

"With the sun, perhaps!" Hendry muttered, his eyes glittering. "A cyclic change. They may be noble by day, evil by night. That's just a guess, of course. The change may come once a month, or once a year."

"Or hourly!" Miles said.

"Yes, yes. Hourly. When they're friendly they make an honest confession, to purge

themselves of evil. They keep before their eyes the image of a brute. When they're cruel and evil they make a lying confession. They worship a noble youth!"

"We've got to get back to the ship, sir!" Miles said.

"Yes!" agreed Hendry. "I'll tell Allison."

Captain Hendry turned, walked to the cave and talked for a full minute to Allison. The shadows seemed to deepen as Miles watched. There was an illusion of twilight.

For a moment Allison sat very still, frowning. Then, suddenly, he was laughing. The light grew dim and red as he gestured out into the valley.

Miles felt a cold horror constricting his chest. Was Allison quite mad?

When Captain Hendry returned to Miles' ~~side his lips were tight.~~ "He doesn't believe you, Jim," he said. "He refuses to budge!"

"Tell him to walk through the cave and look up!" Miles said, passionately.

"It's no use, Jim!" Hendry affirmed, with grim finality. "He doesn't want to believe."

"Then we'll have to leave without him, sir. The safety of the ship comes first."

Hendry shot a quick, searching glance at Miles.

Miles nodded grimly. "I don't hate him now, sir. When I saw those skeletons all that was purged away."

Hendry raised his eyes and stared at the cave for an instant in silence. His shoulders jerked. "Very well, son," he declared finally. "I'm glad you have the courage to face facts bluntly, even if it does seem to put you in a bad light."

"The hell what kind of a light it puts me in, sir. We've got to clear out."

"Right!" Hendry's face showed genuine relief. "I'll tell Hoskins."

Ten minutes later the three men from Earth were high on the valley slope, walking back to the ship with the valley mist deepening about them.

Suddenly Hendry stopped. He laid his hand on Miles' sleeve, his lips white. "Listen!" he said.

It was a human cry that tore out of the stillness, long-drawn, agonized. Yet in some ways it resembled more the cry of a wild beast with its leg caught in a trap.

THE cry was followed by a silence. Then a pattering began deep in the valley and grew swiftly louder. It was not a difficult sound to identify. It was unmistakably the sound of running feet, of many feet running. Treading softly, lightly, but ascending the slope toward the three men from Earth.

Captain Hendry tried to turn. But something seemed to twist him about and hold him rooted, his body as rigid as a metal spike driven deep into the ground.

Hoskins fell back, shading his eyes against the valley glare, his face as grim as death. Miles simply turned quickly, his hand darting to the compact little energy weapon at his hip.

The first of the pursuing barbarians came into view suddenly, a straight, tawny-skinned figure running with his head thrown back.

For an instant brief as a dropped heart-beat Miles opened his mind wide to all the impressions of sense. He saw the long, shining spear, quivering and deadly, the running man's straining throat muscles, the wind-stirred foliage behind him.

A rippling sea shelving to shark-infested shoals, horrible, deadly. Structurally the barbarian's face wasn't apelike. But savage cruelty and cold, bestial rage could do strange things to the lineaments of a human face. The eyes of the running man were slit-  
ted on a glaze of hate, and death flashed in the raised spear and danced in the valley shadows. Hate and death—hate and death—

Miles blasted as he would have blasted at a cobra swirling toward him with distended hood, quickly, and without emotion, his gaze riveted on the barbarian's chest.

There was a deafening blast, followed by an incandescent burst of light. For an instant the glare coalesced, hovering like a wind-buffed fireball in the still air a yard from Miles' arm.

Then long, darting filaments of flame swept from it. They pierced the running man, lifted him up, and hurled him backwards down the slope. He screamed once—and was silent.

After a moment Miles became aware that Hendry was blasting too. Through the

flames which danced on the slope a dozen running forms emerged, only to be hurled backwards down the slope. Just before the firing ceased Hoskins joined in, with a terrible, despairing cry.

There was no need for despair, however, for when the last barbarian fell silence returned to the valley. A silence broken only by the faint rustling of leaves in motion, and the harsh breathing of the men from Earth.

Miles was the first to speak. "We've got to go back," he said. "Weaker men than Allison have survived a spear thrust!"

"You're right, lad!" Hendry said, a set look on his face. "We can't leave him here to die so far from Earth. And if he *is* dead—we've got to see he gets a decent, dignified burial!"

"For all his criminal stubbornness, lad!" Hendry added, nodding.

As darkness deepened in the now almost shapeless sky the men from Earth turned back.

They found Allison lying in shadows close to the cave, stirring a little, a dark stain on his shoulder.

Together they lifted him up.

The men from Earth returned to the ship

stumbling a little under their burden, remembering the friendliness, wishing they could have the friendliness back again, but knowing full well that self-preservation was the first law of life.

The ship swept up from the valley like a great, silver gull, its vanes catching the sunlight and throwing a wheeling shadow on the green world below.

The door of Miles' cabin opened and footsteps sounded on the deck.

Miles sat listening to the footsteps draw close. He pressed a blotter to a paper wet with ink, watched black lines seep through, wondered if he had succeeded in smudging his official report.

"Jim!" Barbara Maitland said.

Miles kept his eyes on the blotter, moving his shoulders ever so little, worrying about the ink.

"It's a little hard for me to say this, Jim! But could you forgive a girl for being blind—and a fool?"

Miles was a little slow in getting to his feet. But he wasn't slow in taking Barbara Maitland into his arms and crushing her to him in a tight, unyielding embrace, the throbbing at his temples blending with the steady droning of the ship.

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