

TO OUR READERS This magazine has been **STREAM-LINED** for your convenience. It contains the *same number of pages and words as before*, but you will find it easier to read and handle on thinner paper. We would like to hear from you, telling us whether you agree or disagree with this change, so won't you please drop us a card? Thank you. *The Editors.*

**SCIENCE
FICTION
QUARTERLY**

35c

**132
Pages**

**ALL
STORIES
NEW**

Volume 5

February, 1958

Number 4

NOVEL

- WE, THE MARAUDERS** Robert Silverberg 8
A monstrous fraud was being prepared, to dupe Earth's peoples into destroying helpless and innocent aliens on far-off Ganymede . . .

NOVELET

- CHIP ON THE SHOULDER** Charles L. Fontenay 94
Allerdice had to be convinced that Earth was peaceful. Only the Allerdicians seemed to be squabbling and brawling all the time!

SHORT STORIES

- MATING CALL** Joseph Farrell 71
The creature didn't want to harm these bipeds, but . . .
- THE LOW AND THE MIGHTY (illustrated on cover)** Randall Garrett 76
Ban Banmyr liked working with machinery—but dealing with these arrogant, stupid Earthmen was more than he could take . . .
- KANGEROO COURT** Walter Maneikis 86
Private Carroll had to be taught the facts of military life . . .

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

- KEY QUESTION (editorial)** Robert A. W. Lowndes 5
- IT SAYS HERE (Letters and Editor's comments on them)** The Readers 108
- READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON** 116

Cover by Emsb

Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, February, 1958, published February, May, August and November, by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copy 35c; yearly subscription \$1.40. Entire contents copyright 1957 by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self addressed envelopes to insure return if not accepted, and while reasonable care will be extended in handling them, it is understood that they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in U. S. A.

WE, THE MARAUDERS

Novel of Invaders From Earth

by Robert Silverberg

illustrated by EMSH

The beings that dwelt on Ganymede didn't use metals, but they didn't want to deal with Earthmen, either; and Earth needed those metals. The Ganymedeans were harmless primitives, but that wouldn't do; pacifying such aliens, and grabbing their metal, wouldn't go with the public. So Ted Kennedy, of the Steward & Dinoli agency, found himself assigned to produce the biggest sell in history — convince the public that the Ganymedeans were not pathetic, somewhat cute, aliens, but vicious monsters that had to be subdued!

TED KENNEDY dreamed that guns blazed, innocent people died, and fire spread over the land as looming thermonuclear mushrooms hung in the skies.

He stirred fitfully, sighed, nearly woke, and sank back into sleep. But when morning came he felt pale and weary; he ended the insistent buzz of the alarm with an impatient wrist-snap and dangled his legs over the edge of the bed, rubbing his eyes. The sound of splashing water told him that his wife was already awake and in the shower.

He had never awakened easily. Still groggy, he shambled across the bed-

room to the cedar chest, groped for his robe, and headed for the kitchen. He punched buttons on the autocook, setting up breakfast.

Marge was out of the shower and drying herself when he returned to the bedroom to dress. "Breakfast up?" she asked.

Kennedy nodded and fumbled in the closet for his best suit—the dark green one with red lace trim. He wanted to look good today; the conference on Floor Nine was bound to be important, whatever it was.

"You must have had a bad dream last night," Marge said suddenly. "I can tell. You're still brooding."

The dream lingered on in Kennedy's waking mind...



"I know; did I wake you up?"

"No. But I can see the dream's still with you. Tell me about it—and hurry up—or you'll miss the car pool."

"I dreamed we were at war," he said.

"But that's impossible, darling! There's been peace for years. There aren't going to be any more wars on Earth, Ted."

"Maybe not on Earth."

He tried to laugh it off. By the time he had finished breakfast some of the irrational fear-tide had begun to recede. It was nearly 6 A.M. when Marge dumped the dishes into the washer; the sun was rising over the low Connecticut hills. Kennedy finished dressing and gave his epaulets a light dusting of powdered gold.

At 6:20, Alf Haugen's shiny yellow 2044 Chevrolet-Cadillac drew up outside. Haugen was a stocky, meat-faced man with bright, sharp eyes; he worked at the desk behind Kennedy's in the Steward & Dinoli office, and this was his week to drive the car-pool auto.

Kennedy half-trotted down the walk to Haugen's car. He slid into the back; Lloyd Presslie and Mike Cameron moved over to make room for him. Haugen nudged the start-button and the car moved smoothly off toward the city.

DAVE SPALDING had been in the middle of a joke when they had stopped to pick up Kennedy, it seemed. He reached the punchline now, and everyone in the car but Kennedy laughed.

Kennedy had never liked Spalding. There was something about the slim, deeply-intense, unmarried young fourth-level man that annoyed him.

"Any of you know what the big deal brewing today is?" Mike Cameron asked suddenly.

"Did you get invited to Floor Nine too?" Kennedy asked.

"We all were; even Spalding. I guess Dinoli sent that memo to the whole third and fourth level yesterday."

"Maybe the agency's dissolving," Lloyd Presslie suggested sourly. "Or maybe Dinoli hired a bunch of top-level men away from Crawford & Burstein, and we're all being bounced down three notches."

Haugen shook his head. "It's some big new account the old man landed; I heard Lucille talking about it near closing time. When in doubt, ask Dinoli's secretary."

The car swung into the main Thruway artery. Kennedy said little; the thunderburst of H-bombs still echoed in his ears. . .

Some big new account. . . Well, even so, that shouldn't affect him. Kennedy had started handling public relations for Federated Bauxite Mines, Inc., only last week—a long-range project whose ultimate aim was to convince the people of a large Nebraska district that their economy would not be upset, and their water supply polluted, by the aluminum-seekers who had newly invaded their area. He had just begun; they wouldn't yank him off the account so soon. Or would they?

There was no predicting what Dinoli might do. Public relations was a tricky and fast-moving field; its province of operations was expanding constantly.

Ted Kennedy felt strangely tense, and for once the smooth purr of the throbbing turbo-electric generators beneath him failed to ease his nerves.

At 6:52, Haugen's car rolled off the Thruway and rode down the long slanting ramp that led into upper Manhattan. Two minutes later, they were at the corner of 123rd and Lenox, in the heart of the business district. Precisely at 7 A.M. Kennedy and his five car-pool companions were at their desks.

Kennedy's desk was neatly arranged,

as he had left it the afternoon before. The memo from Dinoli lay pigeonholed in the catchall; he unspindled it and read it through again.

Floor Nine, 2:13 P.M.

Dear Ted: Would you be good enough to come down to my office tomorrow morning at 9:00 or thereabouts? A matter of some urgency has come up and you'll be needed.

Kennedy dropped the note into his ready file. The casual "or thereabouts" in the note was to be ignored, he knew; either he arrived at Floor Nine at 9:00 sharp, or he bounced back to fifth-level in a hurry.

The morning moved along slowly. At five to nine, Kennedy and Alf Haugen left the third-level area, meeting Spalding in the outer offices where the fourth-level men worked, and rode downstairs to Floor Nine.

STEWARD & DINOLI occupied four floors. Dinoli's office (Steward had long since been eased out of any connection with the firm) sprawled over the bottom-most floor, Nine. Ten was the Agency's library and storage vault; the second, third and fourth level men worked on Eleven, the rest on Twelve.

Dinoli's office door was a thick plank of rich-grained oak, in which a tiny gold plaque reading *L. D. Dinoli* was deeply inset. The door swung open as they drew near.

Dinoli's private office was a room five times as long as it was broad. Dinoli himself sat at the head of a long, burnished table. He was a small, piercing-eyed man of 66, his face lean and fleshless and surmounted by a massive hook of a nose. Wrinkles spread almost concentrically from that mighty nose outward, like elevation-lines on a geological contour-map. Dinoli radiated energy.

"Ah, Gentlemen, won't you come in

and be seated." Statements, not questions. His voice was a deep black-sounding one, half croak and half boom.

Immediately at Dinoli's right and left hands sat the Agency's four second-level men. Dinoli, of course, occupied the lofty eminence of first-level alone. After the second-level boys came those of the third: Presslie, Cameron, and four others. Ted Kennedy took a seat near Cameron, and Haugen slipped in across the table facing him. Spalding sat to Kennedy's right. He was the only jarring figure in the otherwise neat pyramid, which began with Dinoli, sloped to the four second-level men, and was based on the eight third-level executives.

"We're all here, then," Dinoli said calmly. The clock over his head, just above the upper rim of the picture-window, read 9:00:00. "Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet our new clients, if you will." His clawlike forefinger nudged a button on the elaborate control-panel near his hand.

A rear door opened, and three elegant figures in crisp green full-dress executives' uniforms entered, stiffly erect, conscious of their rank and bearing. They were cold-eyed, hard-looking men.

"Our newest clients," Dinoli announced. "These gentlemen are from the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation, Ganymede Division."

Despite himself, Ted Kennedy shuddered. The image of crashing cities flickered once again before his eyes...

2

DINOLI was marvelously proud of himself. His beady eyes darted here and there through the room, as he prepared to deliver

himself of the details of his latest coup.

Ted Kennedy couldn't suppress a sharp twinge of admiration for the old battler. Dinoli had clawed himself to first rank in public relations by sheer exertion, coupled with judicious backstabbing.

"Executive Second Level Hubbel of Public Liaison. Executive Second Level Partridge of Public Liaison. Executive Second Level Brewster of the Corporation's Space Expeditionary Command." Dinoli indicated each of the men with a quick birdlike hand gesture.

Kennedy studied them. Hubbel and Partridge were obviously desk men, fifty-ish, well built and on the stout side, both of them deeply and probably artificially tanned. They looked formidably competent.

Brewster was a different item, though. Short and compact, he was a dark-faced little man who stood ramrod-straight, hard cold eyes peering out of a lean, angular face.

Of course! Kennedy thought; *the space explorer!*

"As members of my staff," Dinoli said, "you all know well that anything you may be told in the confines of this room is absolutely confidential. I trust that's understood, gentlemen. Otherwise get out."

Thirteen heads went up-down affirmatively.

"Good. May I say by way of preface that this is perhaps the biggest and most important job Steward & Dinoli has ever handled, perhaps the biggest S & D will ever handle. I needn't add that successful handling of this new account will result in substantial upward alterations in the individual status increments of those men working on it."

DINOLI paused a long moment. "To fill you in on the background, first: Executive Brewster has recently re-

turned from a space journey sponsored by his Corporation. The Major was connected with the Mars expedition, of course, and with the less successful Venus mission that preceded it. Executive Brewster's third, and most recent Corporation-sponsored mission, was to Ganymede—which is, of course, the largest of the moons of our great planetary neighbor Jupiter."

The old man said smoothly, "The existence of this third interplanetary mission is still secret. The poor publicity aroused by the Venus mission was a factor influencing the Corporation to suppress information on the Ganymede trip until its successful conclusion."

A motion-picture screen unreeled itself in the back of the great room. "Executive Brewster has brought us a film of his activities on Ganymede. I'd like all of us to see that film before we go any further in this meeting."

Dinoli signalled and the lights were extinguished. Kennedy turned in his seat to see the screen.

The projector hummed.

A PRODUCTION OF THE EX-
TRATERRESTRIAL DEVEL-
OPMENT AND EXPLORA-
TION CORPORATION, GANY-
MEDE DIVISION

said the opening title, against a pulsing background of red, white, and blue. Credit-lines followed. And then, quite suddenly, Ted Kennedy found himself staring at an alien landscape, oddly quiet, oddly disturbing.

Bleak whiteness confronted him—the whiteness of an almost-endless snowfield, beneath a pale blue sky. Jagged mountain-ranges, rock-bare and snow-topped, loomed in the distance. Clouds of gray-green gas swirled past the eye of the camera.

"This is the surface of Ganymede," came the dark, attractively-resonant voice of Brewster. "As you can see, frozen ammonia-methane snow covers

the ground in most areas. Ganymede, of course, is virtually planetary in size—its diameter is 3200 miles, which is slightly more than that of Mercury. We found the gravitation to be fairly close to that of Earth, incidentally. Ganymede's a heavy-core planet, probably torn out of Jupiter's heart at the time the system was formed."

AS BREWSTER spoke, the camera's eye moved on, and Kennedy's with it: on to examine the fine striations in an outcropping of rock, on to peer down at a tiny determined lichen clinging to the side of an upthrust tongue of basalt.

Suddenly the camera whirled dizzyingly upward, for a look at the sky. Kennedy was jolted. Jupiter filled a vast segment of the sky, a great heavy ball hanging like a brooding giant just above.

"Ganymede was about 650,000 miles distant from Jupiter at the time of this film's making," Brewster said dryly. "Jupiter takes up quite a chunk of the heavens."

Kennedy stared uneasily at the monstrous, cloud-wrapped planet; its velvety, pearl-gray surface gave hint of unimaginable turbulence deep beneath the outer band of atmosphere. To his relief, the camera finally left the huge world and returned to the Ganymedean landscape.

For perhaps five minutes more the film drifted on, over the lonely, bleak land. Then eight spacesuited figures appeared, their faces nearly hidden behind breathing-masks, their bodies shrouded by the metal-impregnated suits.

"The members of the expedition," Brewster commented.

The camera panned to a spaceship, standing slim and tall on a bare patch of rock. The ship bore dark green numerals on its shining silver flank.

"The expeditionary ship," Brewster said.

After a survey of the outer skin of the ship from various angles, and a few more glimpses of the spacesuit-clad crewmen, the camera shifted to pick up a strangely cold-looking pool of a greasy liquid.

"One of the Ganymedean paraffin lakes," said Brewster.

The camera skirted the pool's edge, doubled back through a snowfield, and centered suddenly on four weird figures—four creatures vaguely man-shaped, their faces noseless, their eyes hooded by folds of flesh. They were pale white in color, hairless, virtually naked except for some sort of woven cloth girdle round their middles.

"Natives of Ganymede," Brewster remarked blandly.

Brewster had certainly underplayed it. It took three or four seconds for the effect of his quiet words to make itself known; then Ted Kennedy felt as if he'd been bashed in the stomach by a battering-ram. He had been watching the film intently enough, but superficially; now, suddenly, to have alien life sprung on him...

THE VENUS expedition had been a failure, mechanical difficulties making it nearly impossible for the explorers to cope with the formaldehyde soup that was Venus' atmosphere. But in their short stay, they had definitely verified the fact that there was no animal life on the second planet.

Mars, too, had proved barren. A few lichens, a few podded weeds, but nothing else. Humanity, and Ted Kennedy, had begun to decide that man was alone in the Solar System, and possibly in the universe.

And now, suddenly...

"The Ganymedeans are a primitive people, living in sprawling villages of a few thousand inhabitants each," Brewster said, in a standard travelog

manner. "They cover the entire land mass of Ganymede, which is distributed over three continents. We estimated their numbers at twenty-five million."

Moistening his lips, Kennedy stared at the four alien beings against the alien backdrop of methane snow, and wondered what possible tie-in Dinoli had with all this.

"During our stay," Brewster went on, "we learned the rudiments of their language. It's a fairly simple agglutinating tongue, and our linguists are at work on it now. We discovered that the Ganymedeans have a working clan system, with sharp tribal rivalries, and also that they show neither any particular fear or any liking for us. The expeditionary geologist's report shows that Ganymede is exceptionally rich in radioactive minerals. Thank you."

The film came abruptly to its end with the last word of Brewster's sentence. The light went on, dazzling Kennedy's eyes, and the screen vanished into its recess in the ceiling.

Dinoli leaned forward, his eyes glittering brightly. "I think you begin to see the magnitude of what's unfolding before us, men."

Kennedy squirmed uneasily in his contoured chair as he saw some of the implications. . . *The expeditionary geologist's report shows that Ganymede is exceptionally rich in radioactive minerals.*

The way he had said it, as a non-sequitur, made the fact seem almost irrelevant. Kennedy had a good ear for seeming irrelevancies; they often turned out to be of critical importance.

DINOLI glanced at the taller and fatter of the two liaison men and said, "Now, Executive Hubbel, will you fill my men in on some of the implications to be drawn from this situation on Ganymede?"

Hubbel coughed ostentatiously. "You've seen alien life on this planet-

sized moon. You've seen also that Ganymede holds exceptional mineral wealth, which our Corporation proposes to mine in the name of the public good, by virtue of our U.N. charter agreement. Well. We've gone to considerable expense developing and outfitting ships to explore space. We're counting on recouping our expenditures on Ganymede, naturally. Partridge?"

The other blinked like a sleepy cougar and said smoothly, "We feel there may be certain difficulties in obtaining mining rights from the Ganymedeans."

Suddenly Kennedy began to understand.

Dinoli grinned triumphantly. "Here's where *we* come in, boys. There might be conflict with the obstinate Ganymedeans. Some people might call that a war of aggression. Actually, of course, it's sheer *necessity*. We need what Ganymede has; the Corporation has sunk billions into opening up space for humanity. You understand this. You're all intelligent and clever men."

Partridge said, "Naturally, the public might not sympathize with our plea of necessity; people might think we were imperialistic."

"This impression would naturally have to be counteracted by careful public relations management," Hubbel added thoughtfully, putting a cap on the whole thing.

"And we've been chosen to handle it," finished Dinoli.

That was it. That was all there was to it.

Kennedy kept his face blank of emotional reaction—the Agency Mask, Marge called it privately.

"We plan an intensive, world-wide blanketing," Dinoli said. "These gentlemen will be working closely with us at all times. Specific target dates have already been set up. There's a date on which first knowledge of the existence of life on Ganymede will be

The natives were primitive...



given to the public—fairly close, I can tell you—and there's a terminal date on which the occupation force will have to be put down to assist the Corporation. Between those dates, it'll be our responsibility to handle the campaign."

Dinoli leaned back, grinning expansively. "Our constitution provides that no more than four men may be second-level at any one time in our organization. However, we're a flexible group. For the duration of this campaign, those of you who are third-level will draw second-level salaries, without formal advancement in rank. You second-level boys will get salary boosts as well. As for you, Dave Spalding: you'll draw third-level pay, while officially remaining a fourth-level man. Whether these boosts become permanent depends largely on the success of the campaign." The old man's eyes traveled down the rows. "Is everything perfectly clear?"

THERE WERE thirteen affirmative nods.

"Well, then. You four"—he indicated the second-level men—"will serve as general coordinators for the project. The actual intensive work will be carried out by the third-level people, plus you, Spalding."

Dinoli smiled glacially. "This contract takes precedence over any others we may have signed. Your second-level supervisors will discuss with you the advisability of turning your current projects over to a fourth-level man."

Dinoli rose. "We'll work as a tight little unit on this. And we'll prove to the Corporation that they haven't made a mistake in choosing S & D. Won't we, men?"

Thirteen nods.

"Well." The single word was a clear-cut dismissal.

They filed out slowly. Ted Kennedy left quietly, deep in concentration that allowed him to avoid consid-

ering the matter of ethics. There would be time for that later.

What will Marge say, he wondered. He thought of the simple blankfaced creatures from the film, and of Marge's boundless sympathy for the unfortunates of the world.

3

THE WARM, cheerful, expensive odor of real food filtered through the Kennedy household. Marge bustled about the kitchen, setting the table, while the autochef prepared the meal. They were having shoulder steak, mashed potatoes, garden peas. Nothing on the menu was synthetic.

"Supper's almost ready," Marge called.

Kennedy drained the remainder of his pre-dinner cocktail, scratched the cat behind his ears, and flipped a switch on the master control panel of the sound system, cutting out the three living-room speakers and switching the output to the dining-room. The playful recorders of Bach's Second Brandenburg came piping out of the other room, accompanied by Marge's lilting, somewhat off-pitch humming.

Kennedy entered the bathroom and jammed his hands into the handkleen socket. The day's grime peeled away. He caught a glimpse of his face—pale, too thin, wrinkles already beginning to form around the eyes, even at thirty-two.

The handkleen's gentle purr died away. He shook his hands in the automatic drying gesture, pointless but habitual, and crossed over into the kitchen-cum-dining-room.

"It's Spalding I don't understand," Kennedy said, abruptly re-opening a conversation of an hour before. "Here he is, a fourth-level man jerked up to third just to work on this project, and he's sour as hell on it."

"Maybe Dave isn't interested in the project."

"Maybe—*huh?* What does *that* have to do with it? Any p-r man worth his pay can damn well *get* interested in any sort of project. You think I cared about the good folk of Nebraska when I took on that Bauxite deal?"

"No."

"Exactly. And yet within two weeks," Kennedy said, "I was so wrapped up in that project, so identified with it, that it actually *hurt* to be pulled off it and put into this. Can you understand that?"

MARGE SMILED sweetly. "I think I can grasp the general picture. But you say Dave's not anxious to work on the new contract? There must be some good reason for that."

"It's the same reason that keeps him down in fourth-level, when he should be in third." Kennedy attacked his meat fiercely, and after a moment went on. "He doesn't have the right spirit. Talent, yes—but that intangible *extra*, no. And don't think Dinoli doesn't know that. I wouldn't be surprised if Dave was put on this thing just as a test—either he delivers the goods now, with third-level responsibilities, or out he goes."

"I've always thought Dave was too sensitive for p-r work," Marge said.

"Implying I'm not a sensitive man?"

She shrugged. "Your potatoes are getting cold, darling. Of course you're sensitive—but in a different way. You know?"

"No. But drop the subject." Kennedy couldn't see his wife's fondness for Spalding, and regularly tried to avoid the necessity of inviting Dave to their house.

"I suppose Alf Haugen's wild with enthusiasm over the new contract," Marge said.

"Alf's a company-first man. If they gave him the job of selling humanity

on turning cannibal, he'd take it on—if they boosted his salary. Naturally he's enthusiastic; he'll do anything Dinoli tells him to do."

"You haven't told me what this contract's about yet, you know," Marge said quietly.

Kennedy paused in mid-chew. "It's top confidential."

She pouted. "You've done classified work before. Have I ever let it spill?"

"This is different," he said slowly. "This absolutely *must not* leak. I can't, Marge."

"All right," Marge said. "*Don't* tell me. Laurie Haugen will. That blabbermouth can't keep quiet for. . ."

"Laurie won't know. Alf won't tell her." Even as he said it, he knew how foolish the words sounded. He shook his head bitterly. "Marge, can't you take a straight *no*?"

"If I have to," she said, sighing. She began to clear away the dishes. Kennedy could tell from the sudden angularity of her motions that she was angry.

HE SHUT his eyes for a moment, thinking, looking for the strength to tell her. They had been married eight years—were married on the evening of his college graduation, in 2036. He held a Bachelor of Communications from Northwestern, and finishing first in his graduating class, had eagerly accepted the bid to come East and work for Steward & Dinoli as a fifth-level man.

Eight years, and he had worked up to third-level, with second perhaps just a few years away. He had tried to be perfectly frank with Marge on all matters, and she loved and respected him for it. But now. . .

He was damned either way. There'd be a wedge between them if he refused to tell her, and perhaps a wider gulf if he did. He began to sweat.

"Come here, Marge," he said in a

hoarse voice. "Sit down. I'll tell you about this new contract."

She sat opposite him. "Well?"

"There's been a space expedition to Ganymede; that's one of the moons of Jupiter, you know. It's almost big enough to be a planet itself. Well, they've found people on Ganymede—intelligent people."

"How wonderful! What are they like? Have you seen pictures yet? Are they . . ."

"Wait a second," Kennedy said, his voice dull. "They also found radioactive ores there; the place is literally packed with minerals Earth needs desperately. Only the natives refuse to permit any mining operations whatsoever; some tribal nonsense, I guess. So the Corporation may have some trouble. If there's armed resistance, they may have to ask the U. N. Army to intervene in their behalf."

"It's a matter of the public good; the natives are not using their minerals, and Earth's entire economy is based on them. So S & D was called in to handle a publicity campaign. On the surface, you see, it might look pretty nasty—that the Corporation was greedily aggressing, attacking primitive creatures, and so forth. Naturally we can't have that kind of publicity. So here's where we come in—to smooth everything over, make it clear that this is a matter of simple need, and . . ."

He stopped suddenly, catching the expression that flew momentarily across Marge's face.

"You dreamed about this last night," she said in a soft, barely audible voice. "About war. Funny; I didn't believe in things like this. Until now."

"Marge!"

"You said it would be a terrible war. Innocent people slaughtered. Remember?"

"It won't be a war, Marge; they'll just occupy the place. Peacefully. We can't let all those valuable ores just rot away there, you know."

SHE LOOKED at him strangely. "Suppose the natives object to this occupation. What then?"

"Why—why, how can they? They're just primitive alien beings. I don't even think they even have explosives, let alone atomics."

"None of you have any consciences, do you?" Marge asked. "Except Dave Spalding; he's the only one that seems to be upset by this. None of the rest of you are. You just see bonuses and status increments." Her voice was sharp now. "Alf Haugen's probably planning to trade in his car for a custom model; that's all he thinks of. And you, Ted—do you think at all?"

She rose from the table, broke away from him suddenly, and ran off into the darkened livingroom.

He tiptoed after her. In the darkness, he made out a dim form lying on the couch that converted each night into their bed. Marge was sobbing quietly.

"Marge," he whispered. "Don't carry on this way. It's just a job; that's all—just a job. I'm not going to be killing Ganymedeans. I won't be carrying a gun. No matter what I say or think or do, it's still going to happen. Why take it out on me? Why hurt *us*?"

The sobbing stopped; and he knew she was staring sightlessly at the darkness, battling within herself. Finally she sat up. "All right, darling. I'm taking this whole thing much too seriously, I guess." She tried to smile.

IT WAS PRETTY much of a lame evening. They had had tentative plans to visit neighbors down the road, but Marge was puffy-eyed from tears, and Kennedy had fallen into a brooding mood. He phoned and begged off, claiming work that *had* to be done this very evening.

There were some awkward moments while he helped her put away the dinner dishes; twice, his eyes met hers and he flinched. He felt very tired.

Ted Kennedy had long been proud

of a wife with a mind of her own. Marge's independent thinking was one of the things he loved her for. But it could also get somewhat burdensome. *Perhaps if we'd had children*, he speculated. *Maybe she wouldn't be so touchy about Causes and Movements*. But they had never had children, and probably never would.

They listened to music a while—Kennedy only half-listening to the Boccherini quintet Marge loved so, and the Schubert octet. She was very fond of chamber music, and ordinarily, Kennedy was too—but tonight it all seemed foolish.

At five to eight he suggested, "Let's watch video, eh, Marge? We haven't done that in ages."

"Anything you like, dear," she said mechanically.

He dimmed the lights and switched the set on. It was a new set—a forty-eight inch job installed in the wall opposite the couch—a social necessity. They hardly ever used it.

A vortex of colored light swirled dizzily for an instant, and then the screen cleared. They had tuned in at the tail end of a program, and a gay, sprightly commercial was on. Kennedy found the dancing stick-figures offensive.

The program ended. The time-bleep bleeped and a deep voice said, "Eight P. M., Eastern Standard Time. From coast to coast. Levree Radionic Watches keep you on time, *all* the time. No gears, no springs."

Again the screen showed the color vortex. Another voice said, "The program normally scheduled for this hour has been cancelled to bring you a special Government information program."

"Let me change the station," Kennedy said. "This'll just be dull junk; we need something funny tonight."

She grasped his arm tightly. "No. Let's see what this is, first. It may be important."

AN ANNOUNCER appeared, white-toothed, neatly tanned, his mus-

tache stained red and meticulously clipped. "Good evening," he said. "This is Nat Howell from your network newsroom, bringing to you a special program covering the big news story of the day, the year, and the century—the discovery of living intelligent beings on another world of this solar system."

Kennedy stiffened. *Already? They're releasing it so soon?*

"We must have missed the news bulletins," Marge said.

"... was revealed by the President at 4:45 this afternoon, at a special press conference. The news electrified a world long fascinated by the possible existence of life on other planets. Details of the expedition are still coming in. However, it's our privilege to present the first public showing of a special film taken by members of the Ganymede expedition!"

The film was the same one Kennedy had seen in Dinoli's office. This time, though, a slick professional commentary had been dubbed in.

When the film reached the point at which the Ganymedeans appeared, he heard Marge utter a little gasp. "Why, they're like children!" she said. "Defenseless, naked, creatures! And these are the beings we're going to make war on?"

"We're just going to occupy their territory," Kennedy said stubbornly. "And probably administer it for them. In the long run they'll be a lot better off for it."

"Unless they don't *want* to be better off," she said.

Kennedy shook his head. The public knew, now; come tomorrow, the behind-the-scenes campaign would begin in the offices of S & D. What shall it profit a man, he wondered bleakly, if he getteth promoted to second-level, and loseth his own wife in the process?

He pulled her tight against him, and after a few moments of hesitation she turned from the screen to him, with

what he hoped was unstimulated warmth.

4

THE NEXT day was the fourth of May, 2044, and the first day of intensive work on the Ganymede Contract.

The dramatic newsbreak of the night before had been the universal topic of discussion. It seemed; every telefax sheet, every news commentator, every cab-driver, had his own opinions on the revelation. Kennedy thought of this time as a kind of primordial formless era, before the shrewd minds of Steward & Dinoli went to work shaping a clearcut public opinion from the present chaos.

They met in the office of Ernie Watsinski, second-level public-relations man, and, incidentally, Dinoli's son-in-law. Watsinski was a tall stoop-shouldered man of thirty-eight, weak-eyed with a dome-like skull covered sparsely with sandy hair. Physically, he was easy to overlook; but he had a razor-keen mind and an astonishing capacity for quick decisions. He had made second-level at the age of thirty-one, marrying Dinoli's daughter the following year.

He affected twentieth-century functional by way of office furniture, and as a result his private room looked severely ascetic. He perched on the back of a lemon-colored desk chair and glanced around the room. All eight of the third-level men were present, plus Dave Spalding.

"How many of you saw the big newsbreak last night?" he asked. "All of you? Fine. That's what we like to see here. I worked that program up myself, you know. With aid from Hubbel and Partridge."

He slouched back in the chair, crossing his long spidery legs. "Your colleagues of the sixth and seventh level have been running gallups all morning. Seems almost everyone saw that

spot last night, and the early gallups show tremendous interest focussed on this Ganymede thing. Okay. The interest exists; it's our job to channel it. That clear and pellucid?"

Without waiting for response, he continued. "You've all been relieved of your present assignments. You'll be working directly under me; the other three second-level men will be operating peripherally in the same general area, but the key work on this contract is going to come out of this office. Any questions? Good. Now: let's toss this around for half an hour or so. I want a suggestion for a broad approach. Kennedy?"

"I have an idea or two on our general slant, if that hasn't already been determined."

"It hasn't. That's what we're here to do. Go on."

"Well," Ted Kennedy said carefully, "My wife and I saw the program last night. Her reaction to the sight of the Ganymedeans was *pity*. They aroused her maternal protective instincts. I'd suggest we play to this. Ernie. The poor childlike innocent Ganymedeans who have to be taken over by our occupation forces for their own good."

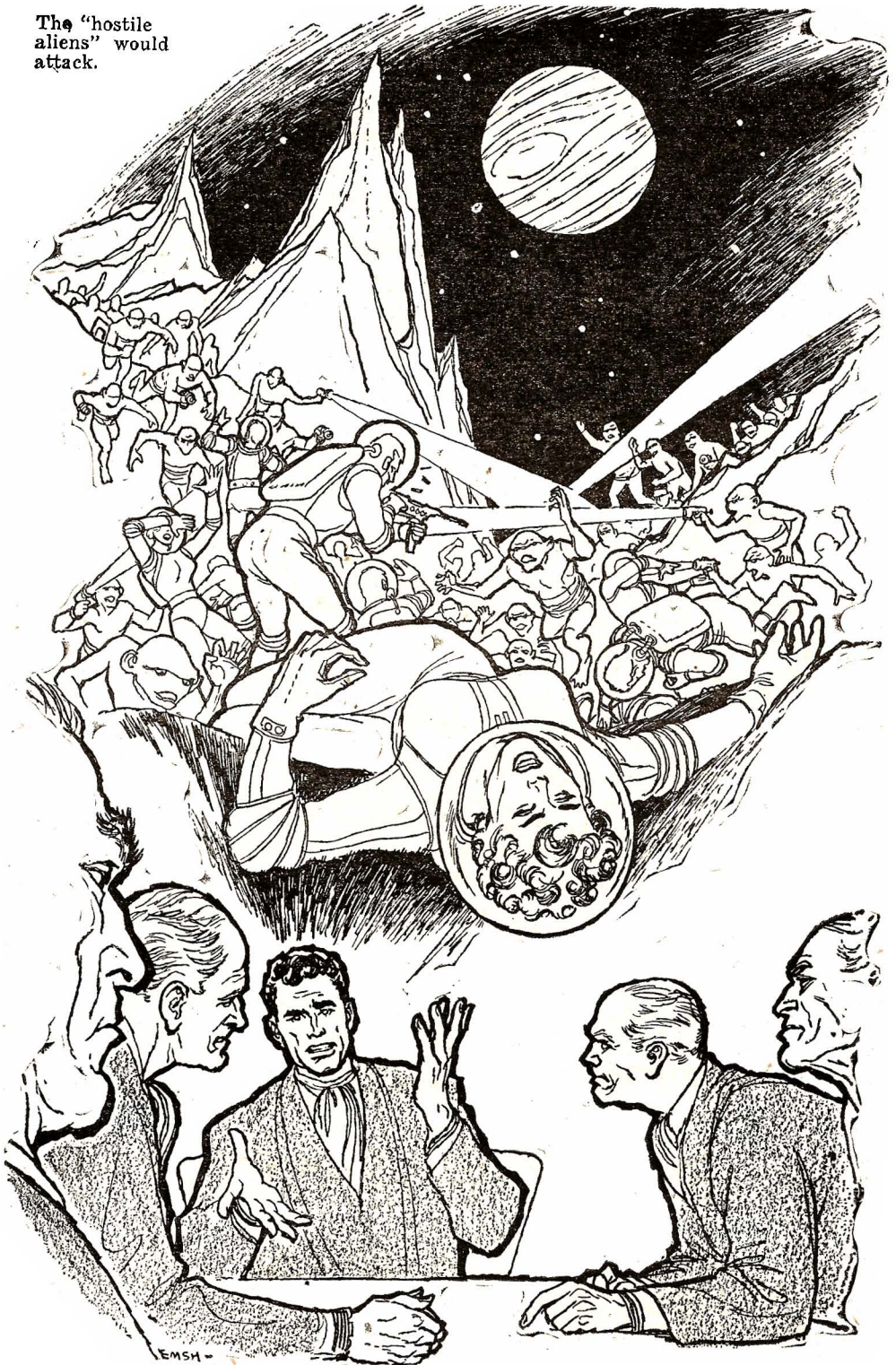
"Shrewd point, Kennedy. Let's kick that around a little. Haugen?"

"I'M DEAD opposed." Alf Haugen said thickly. He twined his fleshy fingers together. "My wife reacted pretty much the same way Kennedy's did. She even thought they were *cute*. The gallups will probably tell you that was a universal reaction. Okay. We follow Kennedy's plan and build the Ganymedeans up as babes in the woods. What happens if they decide to fight back? Suppose there's a massacre bloodier than all get-out when we try to occupy Ganymede?"

"Amplify," Watsinski said.

"What I'm getting at is this: it may be necessary to gun those creatures down by droves. We can't hide that completely from the public, Ernie; and

The "hostile
aliens" would
attack.



the outcry will be fantastic. We may even have a revolution on our hands. The government's certainly going to be in trouble."

Watsinski narrowed his eyes until they were mere tiny slits, and stroked the side of his long curved nose. At length he said, "Kennedy, you see the flaw in your proposition?"

Shamefaced, Ted Kennedy nodded. Haugen had deflated his idea quickly and sensibly. They would have to prepare the public for the worst.

Watsinski glanced around the table. "Before we move on, is there anyone else who wants to argue to Kennedy's point?"

Slowly Dave Spalding raised his hand. "I do. I think it's wrongheaded to go into this expecting a bloody massacre. The occupation ought to be as peaceful as possible; and if we build up a publicity blanket of love for the Ganymedeans then it damn well *better* be peaceful."

There was an instant of silence. Watsinski said, "Spalding, you're only a fourth-level man, and we can make allowances. But we try to shape public opinion here. We *don't* try to shape the doings of the corporation to fit the kind of atmosphere we've created. *They* happen to employ *us*. This kind of thing has hurt you before, Spalding, and it's likely to hurt you again if you don't get your thinking clarified."

The young fourth-level man went very pale at the rebuke. His nostrils flickered in momentary anger, but said nothing.

Watsinski said, "Well. We can go ahead, then. Kick it around some more, fellows. I'm listening."

Lloyd Presslie got the floor. "We could take the opposite track. Paint the Ganymedeans as monsters, alien demons from an ice-bound planet. Wipe this damn mother-love out of the picture, just in case we have to come down on them hard."

Watsinski was smiling, showing yellowish, uneven teeth. "I like," he said

gently. "I like. Let's kick it around some more, shall we?"

KENNEDY ate lunch that day, as he had every day of his eight-year employment at Steward & Dinoli, in the Agency's cafeteria on Floor Ten. He twitched his yellow status-card from the protective folder in his wallet, slapped it against the translucent plastic plate in the dispensary wall, and waited for it to be scanned.

A moment later, the standard Thursday third-level lunch issued from a slot further down in the dispensary. Algae steak, synthetic vegmix, a cup of pale, but undeniably real coffee. Dinoli had never been very liberal with his lunches.

Just as he started to head for the third-level table in the front of the cafeteria, someone nudged his elbow, nearly spilling his tray. He turned, annoyed.

Dave Spalding stood behind him, smiling apologetically.

Kennedy glanced at the tray Spalding held. The fourth-level menu was something he had already thankfully forgotten, and he was not happy to see it again. Weak soup, chlorella patties, protein sauce. Synthetic caffeine drink.

"What is it, Dave? You want to talk to me?"

Spalding nodded. "Unless you've already made plans for lunch. We can take one of the tables at the side."

Shrugging, Ted Kennedy agreed. Perhaps Spalding wanted to ask his advice. As a third-level man, it was his responsibility to help any lower-rated man who sought him out.

There were a few small tables arranged at the far side of the cafeteria for meetings such as this. Ordinarily one ate with one's own level, but tables were provided to care for inter-level lunches as well.

Kennedy felt ill at ease. Spalding, at twenty-eight, was Marge's age—four years his junior. When Zack Harris had left the Agency for independent

press-agenting work a year ago, Spalding should have entered third level, instead, Lloyd Presslie had been jumped over him into third. "What's on your mind?" Kennedy asked.

"The Ganymede Contract. I want to know how you feel about it."

"A job," Kennedy said. "Possibly a quite challenging one."

"Just a job? A challenge?"

"Should it be anything else?"

"It's the biggest sell since the days of Judas, and you know it as—as *pellucidly* as I do," Spalding said quietly, acidly mocking Ernie Watsinski's favorite word. "The whole thing is simply a naked grab of strategic territory."

"**D**OES IT matter," Kennedy asked, "which particular commodity we're selling? If you want to start drawing ethical boundaries, you'd have to ring the whole Agency. I've had plenty of jobs just as—well, shady—as this one. So have you. That Federated Bauxite thing I was on, just to take one example..."

"So you had to convince some people in Nebraska that their water supply wasn't being polluted. I suppose that's small enough so you can swallow it down. But Ganymede's too big. We're selling two worlds—ours and theirs. Ted, I want out."

"Out of the Contract?"

"Out of the Agency," Spalding said.

Kennedy chewed silently for a moment. "Why are you telling me all this?" he asked after a while.

"I have to tell someone, Ted; and I feel I can trust you. I think you're basically on my side. I know Marge is. She can convince you."

"Keep Marge out of this discussion," Kennedy said, forcing back his anger. Spalding was only a wild-eyed kid, despite his twenty-eight years. Some of them never grew up, never learned that life was essentially a bunch of compromises within compromises. And you had to do the best you can. "You'd

really leave the Agency over this Contract?"

"I've been building up to it a long time. We've been handed one sell after another, but this one's too big. It's lousy, Ted. I tried to play along with the others; but they had to go and yank me out of fourth level to work on this one. Why?"

"Maybe they wanted to see how you'd react."

"Well, they're going to see," Spalding snapped. "I tried to put in my pitch when we met with Watsinski this morning. It was your point I was defending, too, even if you gave up. But you see how I got slapped down. Policy was set a long time ago, on this, Ted."

"Listen, Dave, stay here a while—a week, two, maybe a month. Don't rush into anything." Kennedy wondered why he was going to all this trouble persuading Spalding to stay in a place he obviously hated and was ill-qualified for. "Think about this move for a while. Once you quit Dinoli, you're sunk for good."

Spalding's eyelids drooped broodingly. After a long silence he said, "Maybe you have something there. I'll stick for two weeks more. Just to see if I can bend this Contract into a better direction, though. If nothing works out, I'm leaving."

"That's a sensible attitude."

SPALDING grinned. "And you're an Agency man for life. I suppose? Solidly sold on the virtues of Lou Dinoli?"

"He's no saint," Kennedy said. "Neither am I. It doesn't pay to aim for sainthood these days. But I'll keep my job; and I'll be able to live with my conscience afterward."

"I wonder about that," Spalding murmured.

"What's that?"

"Nothing," Spalding said quickly. "Just shooting my mouth off again. It's an old habit of mine."

The gong sounded, ending l u n c h

hour. Spalding touched Kennedy's arm in a gesture of gratitude and scampered away dumping his empty tray in the big hopper.

More slowly, Kennedy followed him, and abstractedly let the plastic tray slide down into the washer's maw. *I have no illusions*, he told himself firmly. *I'm not a fanatic Agency man like Haugen.*

I think some of the things we do are rotten. I think this Contract's rotten. But there just isn't any percentage in standing up and saying so. The guy who stands up only gets slapped down twice as hard and twice as fast.

He felt a sudden deep surge of pity for Dave Spalding. This was no world for a man with a conscience. Kennedy headed back toward his desk to begin sketching out the Ganymede campaign.

5

MAY MOVED along, and the Steward & Dinoli organization made the transition from its previous batch of contracts to the one all-encompassing job they were now committed to. A fourth-level kid named Furman relieved Ted Kennedy of the Federated Bauxite Portfolio; from that moment on, he was a full-time member of the Ganymede Project.

Watsinski was his immediate superior—the idea-coordinator of the project. Each of the other three second-level men had his own special responsibility in the affair—Kauderer handling space purchasing; McDermott governmental liaison and United Nations lobbying; Poggioli opinion-sampling and trend-testing. But these were essentially subsidiary enterprises; the central ideological flow from channelled through Watsinski.

Watsinski's team consisted of nine: Kennedy, Haugen, Spalding, Presslie, Cameron, Richardson, Fleischman, Lund, and Whitman. These were the

men who would sell Ganymede to the people of Earth.

No one, not even Watsinski, seemed in any great hurry to get the project rolling. They spent the first few days just doodling ideas and filing them, without even bringing them up for discussion.

There were several target dates to be kept in mind. Kennedy scribbled them all carefully in his personal notebook as soon as they filtered down from above.

MAY 21, 2044—first big publicity push

JULY 8—beginning of transition in public feeling; prepare for unsympathetic depiction of Ganymedeans

SEPTEMBER 17—intensification of program; building toward climax of operation

SEPTEMBER 22—Corporation will begin to ask U. N. to consider giving it aid in case necessary; underscore through S & D

OCTOBER 11—Climactic incident will send Corporation before U. N. with a plea for help

OCTOBER 17—(optimum desired time) United Nations decision to occupy Ganymede to safeguard the rights of Corporation

Kennedy refrained from letting Marge see the time-table; he knew what her immediate reaction would be.

It would be pretty much like that of Dave Spalding, the day the memorandum had been sent around. Spalding's desk had been moved out of the fourth-level quarters, and now he worked near Haugen and Kennedy. He looked up when the sealed envelope was deposited on the corner of his desk, ripped it open, skimmed through it.

"Well, here it is. The blueprint for conquest."

Alf Haugen dropped his memorandum to the shining surface of his desk and glanced at Spalding, a troubled look on his heavy face.

"What the hell you mean by that?"

TROUBLE bristled a moment in the office; smoothly Kennedy said, "Always the cynic, eh, Dave? You'd think the Ganymedeans were going to get trampled into the dust."

"Well, we..."

"You have to hand it to Dinoli," Kennedy kept going unstopably. "He can work out a timetable six-seven months in advance and judge every trend so well we don't need to amend the schedule as much as twenty-four hours."

"It's a trick of the trade," Haugen said. "Dinoli's a shark. A real shark. Lord, I respect that man!"

Kennedy efficiently folded the memorandum and tucked it away. He left his desk and crossed the floor to Spalding's. Leaning down with both hands on the other's desk, he put his face close to Spalding's and said, "Dave, do you have a free minute? I'm going to Library Deck for a pickup, and I need a hand carrying the stuff."

"Why don't you ring for a porter?"

The tip of Spalding's shoe protruded from under his desk. Kennedy found it with his own foot and pressed down hard. "I don't trust those boys; I'd like you to help me out."

Spalding looked puzzled, but he shrugged and nodded. When they were out of the third-level area and in the corridor, Kennedy gripped him tightly by the arm and said in a low voice, "That 'blueprint for conquest' gag was a little out of place, Dave. It wasn't called for."

"Wasn't it?"

"That's neither here nor there. You're not expected to make un-Agency cracks in the third-level area. If Haugen had reported you; he'd have been within his rights."

A cold smile crossed Spalding's face. "Is it against the law to speak out against a nasty business deal?"

"Yes," Kennedy said. "Either you stick with it, and keep your mouth shut, or you get out. One or the other.

What happened to your talk of quitting?"

"I'm sticking here because I need the money. I'm drawing third-level pay now, and that's good cabbage. A few more months of Papa Dinoli's shekels, and I'll have enough of a nest-egg to quit and do what I want to do. What I *really* want to do." Spalding's eyes glittered. "Fight cynicism with cynicism. It's the only way."

Kennedy blinked. He said nothing.

"Now," Spalding went on. "That library pickup. Is it legit, or did you just cook it up so you could give me a word of advice?"

"I just cooked it up," Kennedy admitted.

"I thought so. Mind if I get back to work, then?"

Spalding smiled and ducked past him. "You louse," Kennedy said quietly to himself, at Spalding's retreating back.

HALF AN hour later he was at his place around the table in Ernie Watsinski's office. Watsinski sat perfectly quietly, a lanky uncouth figure draped over a chair, waiting for the group to assemble.

"Today, gentlemen, is the eleventh of May," he began, in his thin voice. "It's precisely one week since we last met in this room. It's also—I take it you've all seen the timesheet that was circulated this morning; if you haven't, please raise hands—ah, good. As I say, it's also precisely ten days till the beginning of the public phase of our campaign."

"Now I've given you this week to think things out, to look at the big picture and fit yourself into it. You know that we at S&D regard public relations work as artistic creation. You're shaping an esthetic whole. The beauty of a fully-developed opinion pattern is like the beauty of the Mona Lisa or a Rembrandt or a Beethoven symphony. If any of you men don't *feel* this Ganymede thing with all

you've got, I appreciate it if you'd let me know right here and now, or else later in privacy. This has to be real. It has to be *sincere*, gentlemen."

Watsinski seemed to have worked up genuine passion over his rhapsody. His eyes were glossy with the beginnings of tears.

"Okay, gentlemen, let's get to work," Watsinski said suddenly, in an entirely different tone of voice. "At our last meeting we decided on our general pattern of approach—that we take into account the distinct possibility of strong action on Ganymede and therefore build the Ganymedeans up as unsympathetic types. I guess you've all been thinking about ways and means of doing this. Richardson, start talking."

Richardson ran his hands through his thinning hair and said, "I've been thinking of three or four separate multilevel approaches to this thing, Ernie, but I won't throw them all out on the floor right now. The basic handle is a kiddie-approach. Kiddies and women. Men don't form their own opinions, anyway. I propose that we assault this thing by filtering anti-Ganymede stuff into the kiddie shows and the afternoon women-slanted videocasts. I've drawn up a brief on how to go about it, listing fifteen selected shows and the angle of leverage on each one. You want me to go through the brief now, or file it for afterwards?"

WATSINSKI stirred restlessly. "Better save it for now, Claude. We're still searching for the broad patterns. Detailed implementation comes later."

They went around the table. Alf Haugen had developed a slippery idea for feeding pro-Ganymedeans into overseas video shows and newspapers, carefully picking the countries, selecting the ones least in favor in the United States at the moment. Then, via a sim-

ple contrast-switch, local opinion could be pyramided on the basic proposition, *If they're for it, we're gonna be agin it!*

Watsinski liked that. Fleischman then offered his ideas—a typically Fleischmanoid product, many-layered and obscure—for grabbing public opinion simultaneously at the college and kindergarten level and letting babes and late adolescents serve as propagandists. Watsinski went for that, too.

Then it was Ted Kennedy's turn. He tugged nervously at his collar and put his briefcase before him on the table.

"I've sketched out a plan that substantially dovetails with the ones we've just heard, Ernie; it can be used alongside any or all of them."

"Let's have it."

"In brief, it's this: we need a strawman, a dummy to set up and kick over. Something to engage local sympathies firmly and finally."

Watsinski was nodding. Kennedy moistened his lips. He said, "At the moment the only human beings on Ganymede are a couple of dozen Corporation spacemen and scientists. I don't think there's a woman or a child on the place. Where's the human interest? Where's the pathos when we highlight them against the Ganymedeans? Who gives much of a damn about a bunch of Corporation scientists?"

"No," Kennedy went on. "Here's my suggestion: we start disseminating word of a colony of Earthmen on Ganymede. Volunteers; a couple of hundred chosen people, brave self-sacrificing men, women, and children. Naturally there isn't any colony there; the Corporation wouldn't send noncombatants into a militarily unsettled area like Ganymede. But the public doesn't have to know that. If we make the doings of the colony consistent, if we start believing in it ourselves—then the public will believe in it too. And once we've got a firm fishhold on their

sympathies, we can do anything with them!"

KENNEDY had hardly finished speaking when half a dozen hands were in the air.

Presslie got the floor and said, "It's a natural! Why, then we can follow through by having the Ganymedeans *wipe out* this colony. It's a sure bet for engaging sympathy in any sort of necessary police action! Innocent women and children perishing, flames, blood—why, this is just the handle we need! Of course I can suggest some modifications, but those can come later."

Watsinski nodded. "Kennedy seems to have hit on a sharp idea. I'm going to suggest it to Dinoli as our basic line of approach, and build all the other plans around it. Good work, Kennedy. Lund, let's hear from you, now. I want to kick this all the way round the table."

6

LATER THAT day, Kennedy was working at his desk when the phone chimed. He snatched it up and heard Watsinski's dry voice say, "Kennedy? Ernie here. Can you come over to my place for a few minutes?"

Watsinski was waiting for him when he came in. The second-level man wore a severely funereal business-suit and a glistening red wig.

"I took your suggestion up with Dinoli," he said. "The old man loved it. He thinks it's great. So did Kauderer, McDermott, and Poggioli."

"I'm glad to hear it went over, Ernie."

Watsinski nodded. "It went over. Dinoli spent half of lunch talking to Bullard—he's Mr. Big over at the Corporation, you know. They were lining out the strategy. Dinoli is using your plan as the core of the whole thing."

Watsinski leaned back and permitted some warmth to enter his face. "I've always liked you, Ted. I think you've got the stuff for second-level. You know what it takes? It takes dogged persistence plus off-beat ingenuity. That isn't an everyday combination of traits; we've got guys who come up with off-beat ideas—Lund, for instance, and that kid Spalding—but they don't have the push to implement their notions. And then we get the kind like Haugen—the solid pluggers who never make mistakes, but who never come up with anything new or fresh either. Well, we need both types down on third-level. But second-level takes something else. I think you have it too, Ted."

"It's good to hear you say that, Ernie. I know you don't go soaping people up."

Watsinski inclined his domed head forward. "This is strictly off the record, Ted. But Frank Poggioli is talking about pulling out of S&D and taking a big network job in video. If Poggioli goes, someone'll have to be kicked up to second-level to fill the vacancy. Dinoli took that up with me this morning, too. It's between Haugen and Presslie and you. I'm putting my support back of you; that business this morning helped me make up my mind."

"Thanks, Ernie. Thanks." Kennedy wondered why Watsinski was bothering to tell him all this.

WATSINSKI let his eyes droop quietly closed, and when he opened them again they seemed to be veiled. "Okay. Enough if-talk, Ted; I just wanted you to know where you stand in the Agency. I hate to see a man feel insecure when he's in a good position."

Watsinski frowned. "You know, there are guys in this Agency who don't have the right spirit, and I wish we could root them the hell out of here."

Guys who aren't loyal. Guys who don't have the right ideas. Guys whose minds are full of cockeyed garbage served up by antisocial creeps who fight anything that's good and clean and pure. You know these guys better than I do; you see them through clearer focus. As a prospective second-level man you ought to start thinking about these guys and how we can weed them out. You ought to let me know if you spot any thinking of a negative type. Okay, Ted?"

Kennedy felt a sudden chill. *So that's what he wants*, he thought. *He wants me to spy for him and finger the Spaldings who have qualms about the Contract.*

"I see what you mean, Ernie. I'll think about it."

"Sure. Don't rush it or you'll crush it. But I know definitely there are some antisocial elements in our team, and I want to clean them out. So does Dinoli."

The office phone chimed. Watsinski picked it up, listened for a long moment, finally said, "He's here right now, Lou. I'm filling him in. Okay, Chief."

He hung up.

"That was Dinoli. Well, let me get to the main pitch, Ted: we're using the plan you threw out this morning. We're going to invent a colony on Ganymede; in October we're going to have the Ganymedeans launch a savage attack on that colony, and then the Corporation will ask the U. N. to step in and save them. Dinoli wants you to be in charge of developing material on this colony. You'll have sole charge; in essence you'll be doing second-level type work. You can name your own staff; pick out anybody you like from third or fourth level as your assistant."

"Right now?"

"It would help," Watsinski said.

Kennedy was silent a moment. He pulled a cigaret from an ignitopak,

waited for it to glow into life, and with calm deliberation sucked smoke into his lungs.

They were setting him up in a big way. On the surface, it was a heart-warming vote of confidence in his abilities—but Kennedy knew enough about the workings of Steward & Dinoli to realize that the upper levels never operated merely on the surface alone. They always played a deep game.

They were putting him into a big post in exchange for something—information, no doubt. They knew the Ganymede Contract was a hot item, and they wanted to avoid any leaks by weeding out possible defectors like Spalding. Possibly they had their eye on Spalding already and were simply waiting for Kennedy to confirm their suspicions.

Well, Ted Kennedy thought, *I won't play their game.*

Kennedy stared bluntly at Watsinski's thin shrewd face. "Okay. I've picked my man. Dave Spalding."

For just a fraction of a second Watsinski looked as if Kennedy had kicked him in the teeth. Then control reasserted itself and Watsinski said, in a mellow even tone, "Okay, Ted, I'll see what I can do to expedite your request. That'll be all for now. Keep up the good work."

THAT NIGHT, when Marge asked him how things had gone during the day, Kennedy said shortly, "Pretty fair. Watsinski called me in and said I have a good shot at second-level. They gave me some special work to do."

She dropped a pale white onion into the cocktail, kissed him, and handed him the drink. He took it and said, "Dave Spalding's going to be working directly with me. And we're actually going to be handling the core of the whole project."

"I hope you and Dave will get along

better now. It would be too bad if you couldn't cooperate on your work."

Kennedy smiled. "I think we will. I picked him as my assistant myself."

He felt relaxed and untense. This was the way life ought to be: a good job, a good drink, good music playing, your good wife fixing a good supper inside. And after supper some good company, an evening of relaxation, and then a good night in bed. He closed his eyes, listening to the jubilant trumpets of the Purcell Ode on the phonograph, and stroked the cat gently with his free hand.

Spalding had taken the news pretty well, he thought. Kennedy had met with him at 2 o'clock, shortly after confirmation of the new arrangement had come through from Watsinski, and Spalding had seemed interested and almost enthusiastic about the fictional Ganymede colony they were about to create. There had been no coldness between them, no raising of knotty moral issues, for which Kennedy was thankful.

Instead, Spalding had immediately begun producing a wealth of ideas, characters, incidents, jumping at the idea with boyish vigor.

Kennedy himself felt a sudden welling of enthusiastic interest. He knew what Watsinski had been talking about, when he referred to the esthetic nature of public-relations work. It could be a work of art; he and Spalding would give life to a colony of people, endow them with talents and hopes and strivings, interest the people of the world in their hardships and privations and courage.

The music swelled to a climax. Kennedy thought of old Purcell, back there in seventeenth-century England, painstakingly jotting fish-hooks onto a sheet of grimy paper. There it was, he thought: an artistic creation. Something that hadn't existed the morning before Purcell inked in his first clef, and something that now belonged to the world.

It was almost the same way with this Ganymede colony he and Spalding would design. Men and women would be able to enter into the life of that colony just as he entered into the life of the musical composition being played. It was almost in a mood of exaltation that Kennedy entered the dining-room at Marge's call.

SHE SMILED at him. "I must have made that cocktail too strong."

"Three-and-a-half to one, or I'm no judge of proportions."

"I thought so—but you look so different! Warm and relaxed, Ted."

"And therefore I must be drunk. Because I couldn't possibly be happy and relaxed when I'm sober. Well, I hate to disappoint you, Marge I *am* sober. And happy."

"Of course you are, darling. I. . ."

"And the reason I'm happy," Ted Kennedy continued, "is only partly because Watsinski said I stood a good chance of making second-level when Poggioli pulls out. That's a minor thing. I'm happy because I have a chance to participate in something real and vital and exciting, and Dave along with me. You know what I'll be doing?"

She smiled. "I didn't want to ask. You're usually so touchy about your work when I ask things."

"Well, I'll tell you. Dave and I are going to invent a colony on Ganymede, with people and everything."

He went on to explain in detail what the colony would be like; how he had come to think of the idea; how Watsinski and the others had reacted when he put it forth. He concluded by letting her in on what was really classified material: he told her of Presslie's concluding suggestion, that the colony would be "destroyed" to serve as provocation for the intended United Nations occupation.

"There," he finished. "Isn't that neat? Complete, well-rounded, carefully built up. It. . ."

He stopped. The glow of happiness winked out in an instant. Marge was staring at him with an expression that he could only interpret as one of horror.

"You're serious about this, aren't you?" she asked.

"Of course I am. What's wrong?"

"This whole terrible charade—this fake slush—being used to grab the sympathies of the world. What a gigantic grisly hoax! And you're *proud* of it!"

"JUST TAKE IT on its own terms," he said tightly, "as a creative effort; don't drag moral confusions into it. You always have to cobweb things up by dragging in preachery."

"You *can't* take anything on its own terms, Ted: that's your mistake. You have to look at it in context, and in context I can only say that this thing stinks from top to bottom and from inside to out."

He slammed his fork to the table. "*Marge!*"

She stared steadily at him. "I guess I spoke out of line, Ted. I'm sorry, darling. I didn't mean to preach." The muscles of her jaws were tightening in convulsive little clumps, and Kennedy saw she was fighting hard to keep back another big emotional outburst. He reached out and gripped her hand.

"Don't get worked up over this thing," he told her. "From now on, let me leave my job at 2:30 and forget it until the next morning. Otherwise we'll be at each other's throats all the time."

"You're right, dear. We'd better do that."

He turned his attention back to his meal. But the food seemed dead and tasteless now, and he was totally unable to recapture the euphoric mood of just a few moments before.

A gulf was opening between himself and his wife, and it was getting wider day by day. He thought back over that

glow of contentment and wondered how he could ever have attained it. What he and Spalding would be doing was a pretty soulless enterprise, he admitted to himself. There was nothing nice about it. And yet he had worked himself up into a fine Beethovenesque esthetic frenzy about it, until Marge's few harsh words had opened his eyes.

And I was proud of it, he thought. My God, don't I ever *think* at all?

7

JUNE 31, 2044—Leap-Year World Holiday, by the Permanent Calendar. The extra day, intercalated in the otherwise-changeless calendar every four years to take up the slack of the six hours and some minutes the Permanent Calendar was forced to ignore.

A day of revelry, Kennedy thought; a day between the days—a day that was neither Monday nor Tuesday, nor Wednesday nor Thursday, not Friday or Saturday, or even Sunday. A timeless day on which no one worked except for holiday double-pay, on which even the rules of civilization went into the discard-heap for twenty-four hours. It fell between Saturday June 30 and Sunday July 1; and since this was a leap-year there would be two nameless days instead of the one at the end of the year.

The Kennedys chose to spend their day at Joyland Amusement Park on the Floating Island in Long Island Sound. Privately Ted Kennedy detested the bustle of the World Holidays; but they were family customs, deeply embedded in his way of life, and he never dared to speak out against them.

The road was crowded. Bumper to bumper, deflector plate to deflector plate, the little enamelled beetles clung together on the Thruway. Kennedy sweated behind the wheel. The air-conditioners labored mightily. At his

side Marge looked fresh and gay in her light summer dress, red halter and light blue briefs. Her legs glistened; she wore the newest aluminum spray-ons.

Up ahead, a car stalled in the furious heat and the radar eye of Kennedy's automatic brake picked up the impulse and throttled the turbos; he and Marge rocked slightly forward as the car slowed to thirty.

The congestion cleared ahead and he whisked the car on. The inside-outside thermometer read 69 inside the car, 97 outside. The compass told him they were heading westward along the Thruway toward the Sound.

They reached another snag in the traffic pattern. Kennedy let go of the wheel and let his hand rest lightly on his wife's cool knee.

"Let's try to have a good time together today. Relaxed. Calm. Just having fun." Marge said.

"Sure, Marge. Today's World Holiday. No ulcers today." He flopped back against the cushion as the car started moving violently. "Damm! These holiday drivers!"

IT HAD BEEN a rough month. Rough, but exciting. He and Spalding had thrown themselves full-force into the pseudo-colony on Ganymede. Endless reams of paper covered with biographical sketches of people who never were; thick dossiers on Ganymede weather and the rigors of life in a dome, and a million other things. It was like writing a story of space adventure, Kennedy thought, with one minor wrinkle: this wasn't for the magazines. It was going out over the newstapes and the fax sheets and people were gobbling it up.

It went like this:

Ganymede, 23 May 2044— Another day passed in relative comfort for the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation's experimental volunteer station on the tiny

world of Ganymede, after the heavy snowfall of yesterday. Lester Brookman, Colony Director, commented, "Except for the usual hazards of life on an alien world, we're doing fine."

The colony's one invalid was reported in good health— Mrs. Helene Davenant, 31, wife of an atmospheric engineer, who suffered an appendicitis attack early yesterday morning. Colony Surgeon David Hornsfall operated immediately. Dr. Hornsfall said after the operation, "Mrs. Davenant is in good shape and there is no danger of complications. The low gravity will aid in her quick recovery and I hope to have her back at work in the hydroponics shed in a few days." The news eased fears of millions on Earth who were thrown into alarm by a premature report of peritonitis.

And so it went, Kennedy thought. Emotional involvement; soap-opera on a cosmic scale. It was now a little over a month since the Kennedy-Spalding pseudo-colony had received its official unveiling; and in that month, life with Marge had grown increasingly difficult.

It was nothing overt, of course; she never spoke of Kennedy's work. But there were the silences in the evening where once there was enthusiastic chatter, the slight stiffness of the jaws and lips, the faint aloofness.

Well, he thought, maybe she'd get over it. Dinoli and Watsinski and the others were excited about the things he was doing with the project; he was making big strides upward in the Agency. And perhaps today he could effect some sort of rapprochement between Marge and himself. He banked the car sharply and sent it rocketing up the arching ramp that took it to the Joyland Bridge.

JOYLAND covered forty sprawling acres on the Floating Island in the Sound—built at the turn of the century for the Peace Fair of 2000-2001. The Island did not float now, of

course; it was solidly anchored to the floor of the Sound. Once it had floated, at the time of the Fair, and the only way to get there was to take a ferry that would chase the island around the Sound on its peregrinations. But the upkeep of the giant engines that powered the island had been too great; thirty years ago they had been ripped out and the island anchored a mile off shore, but the old name still clung.

The bridge to the island was a shimmering thread painfully bright in the noonday sun. Ted Kennedy paused at the toll-bridge, dropped his dollar in the tollkeep's hands, and spurred the car ahead, onto the bridge.

Crossing took fifteen minutes; parking the car, another fifteen. Finally he was free of routine, with a parking check in his pocket and a fun-hat on his head. Marge wore one too: a huge orange thing with a myriad quivering paper snakes that gave her a Medusa-like appearance. His was more somber, a black and gray mortician's topper. Elsewhere he saw Roman helmets and horned Viking domes.

A girl in her twenties wandered by, hatless, dishevelled, wearing only a pair of briefs; she clutched her halter in one hand, a drinkflask in the other. Marge pointed to her and Kennedy nodded. She started to reel forward; a moment later she would have fallen and perhaps been trampled underfoot, but a smiling guard in Joyland's green uniform appeared from nowhere to catch her and gently drag her away into the shade. *This is World Holiday*, Kennedy thought. *When we step outside ourselves and leave our ulcers home.*

"Where do we begin?" Marge asked. A sign advertised the next firing of the rocket; there was a barren area on the west shore of the island where passenger rockets were fired. The rockets traveled sixty or seventy miles up, gave the passengers a good squint at

the spinning orb of Earth, and plunged back down to make a neat landing on the field. There hadn't been a major accident since 2039, when a hundred people died through a slight miscalculation and cast a shadow over a gay Sunday afternoon. Price ten dollars a head, but Kennedy had no desire to ride the rocket.

Elsewhere there were rollercoasters, drink parlors, fun houses, sideshows, a swimming pool, a waxworks.

They bought tickets for the rollercoaster and strapped themselves in tight. The car was jet-powered; it took off with a lurching thrust and kept going down the track, up and around, nightmarishly twisting and plunging.

At the end of the ride, dizzy, exhausted, they clung to each other and laughed. Arm in arm they staggered across to a drink parlor and ordered double scotches at the outside window. In the dimness within, Kennedy saw a man plunging wildly around in an alcoholic dance; he leaped up in a final frenzy, started to fall toward the floor, and an ever-present Joyland guard appeared and scooped him up in mid-fall. Kennedy sipped his drink and smiled at Marge. She smiled back with what seemed like sincere warmth. He wondered.

THEY HEADED down the main concourse, past the cheap booths that in other years they always ignored. But this time Marge stopped and tugged at his arm. "Look at that one!"

"Come on, Marge—you know these things are all rigged. I want to go to the funhouse."

"No—hold it, Ted. Look."

He looked. There was a new booth, one that he had never seen before. The flashy sign winked at them: *Send A Letter To Ganymede.*

A toothy, bare-chested carnie man leaned forward over the counter, smiling jovially and inviting trade. Next to

him a woman in yellow briefs and bandeau frowned in concentration as she filled out what seemed to be a telegram form.

"Come on, friends! Send your best wishes to the brave folks on Ganymede! Only one dollar for a ten-word message! Let them know how you feel about their valiant work!"

"Let's go over. I want to find out a few things," Kennedy said.

The carnie man grinned at them. "Care to send a letter to Ganymede, friends? Only a dollar." He shoved a yellow blank and a pencil at them.

The woman finished her message and handed it back. Kennedy caught only the heading at the top. It was addressed to Mrs. Helene Davenant, the appendicitis victim.

Quietly he said, "This is a new booth, isn't it?"

"The newest in the place. Just put it up last week."

"Whose idea was it? Do you know a Mr. Watsinski? Or Poggioli?"

"What are you, a detective? Come on, there are people waiting. Step right up, friends! Don't go away, lady—the brave pioneers on Ganymede want to hear from you!"

At Kennedy's left, a fat middleaged woman was writing a letter that began, *Dear Dr. Hornsfall...*

"Let's go Ted," Marge said suddenly.

"No. Just a second." He yanked a dollar out of his wallet, slapped it down, and picked up a pencil. With quick sloppy strokes he wrote: *Dear Director Brookman, Hope all is well with colony. Too bad you're just a publicity man's soap bubble.* Signed, *Jasper Greeblefizz.*

He handed over the filled-in sheet and said, "Here, make sure this gets delivered. Come on away from here, Marge."

He grasped Marge tightly by the hand and walked on at a rapid clip.

"You think my letter will get

there?" he asked tightly. "You think Director Brookman will answer it?"

She looked at him strangely. "I don't know why you're so upset, Ted. It's all part of the general picture, isn't it? This is a very clever gimmick."

"Yeah," he said. He looked back and saw a line of people waiting to send letters to the brave pioneers on Ganymede. A very clever gimmick. Very clever.

KENNEDY smiled crookedly. World Holiday. Step outside yourself and leave your ulcers behind. Girls who were, the epitome of prudishness thought nothing of whipping off their halters and letting the breeze cool their breasts until the park police intervened. Sober second-level men could ease their tensions in a frenzied alcoholic jig.

But World Holiday was no holiday for Ted Kennedy. There was no escaping Ganymede even out here.

Somehow he pretended gaiety. They had another drink, and another. They looped the loop and rode the caterpillars and goggled at the sweating freaks in the sideshow, and had more drinks.

Sometime later, they bought tickets for the swimming pool, the one place in Joyland where nudity went unquestioned, and spent an hour bobbing in the warm chlorinated water. Toward evening they watched the fireworks and wandered down to the rocket-field to see the big missile come in for a landing.

Kennedy felt dizzy. They wearily retraced their steps to the exit. The *Send A Letter To Ganymede* booth was doing land-office business.

At the parking lot, the attendant was dispensing sobertabs for all drivers; you couldn't get your car until you took one. Kennedy swallowed the tasteless little pellet and felt his mind clearing. His stomach began to knot again. He paused by his car, watching the purple and aureate brilliance of the

fireworks in the dusk-hung sky, listening to the big *swosh* of the departing rocket.

The fun would go on all night, but he felt no more desire for amusement; Kennedy drove home slowly and cautiously, with his hand grimly gripping the wheel. Marge was exhausted; she curled up into a fetal ball on the back seat and slept.

Happy World Holiday to me, he thought tiredly.

8

SUNDAY was a gloom-shrouded botch of a day. Kennedy slept late and woke with his mind still clouded by bitterness and his head aching. He spent an awkward, uncomfortable day in and around the house with Marge. The 'fax-sheet gave the rundown on the World Holiday's damage: a thousand lives lost in the Appalachia district alone, much carnage, property destruction, theft. A good day's fun.

It was his turn to operate the car-pool, come Monday, the second of July, as 2044 swung into its second half. When he reached the office he found a crisp little note waiting for him on his desk, asking him to come down to Dinoli's office.

There was quite a turnout. Dinoli himself faced the door, keen-eyes and wide awake, hunched over with his gnarled hands locked. Standing around Dinoli were four men: Watsinski, looking bored; McDermott, the second-level man who was handling governmental liaison on the Ganymede Contract; Executive Hubbel of the Corporation. There was also a fourth man, thick-necked and coarse-featured, with a broad genial smile and a delicate network of broken capillaries spread out over his face.

Dinoli said, "Mr. Bullard, I'd like you to meet Theodore Kennedy, Exec-

utive Third-Level of Steward & Dinoli."

Bullard swung forward. He was a bull of a man, six four or more in height, with the biggest hands Kennedy had ever seen. He proffered one, mangled Kennedy's hand momentarily in greeting, and boomed, "Very pleased to meet you, Mr. Kennedy. I've heard wonderful things about your work."

"Thank you, sir."

"Did you enjoy your holiday?" Dinoli asked, in his dark vast voice.

"Yes, sir. It was very good, sir."

"Glad to hear it. You know, of course, that Mr. Bullard here is head of the Corporation?"

Kennedy nodded. Smiling, Bullard said, "I understand you're the man who's responsible for development of the—ah—colony on Ganymede. I want to tell you that it's a brilliant concept. Brilliant. The whole nation—the whole world—is enraptured by the struggles of the unfortunate few hundreds of souls you've invented. And that's why I've come over here this morning to make this offer to you."

"Offer, sir?"

"A very fine one. You've succeeded in capturing the feel of the Ganymede terrain beautifully, considering the second-hand nature of your data. But Mr. Dinoli and I believe that you'd do an even finer job if you had a little actual experience of living conditions on Ganymede. It would give your project that extra touch of reality that would insure the success of the campaign."

Kennedy blinked. He wondered what Bullard was leading up to. Dinoli was beaming.

BULLARD said, "There's a supply ship leaving shortly for the Ganymede Outpost. There is room for one passenger aboard that ship. I've spoken to Mr. Dinoli and we've agreed to offer you a chance to be aboard that ship. You can spend three weeks on

Ganymede at Corporation expense. How would you like that?"

Kennedy felt steamrollered. "Sir, I..."

"You want time to think about it. I understand how it is. You're in the midst of a difficult work program; you have certain personal commitments. Well, the ship departs on Thursday. If you care to be on it, all you need to do say the word."

Kennedy looked at Dinoli, at Watkinski, at McDermott. Their faces gave no hint of feeling; they wanted him to go. They wanted him to drop everything, race off to a cold little iceball in space, and live there for three weeks in utter privation so the campaign could be more realistic.

It was impossible to come right out and say no, right here. He would have to stall. "I'll—have to take the matter up with my wife, of course. This is—so sudden. This great opportunity..."

"Of course," Bullard said.

Signed, sealed and delivered, Kennedy thought. "Yes, sir," he said hoarsely. "Thank you, sir." To Dinoli he said: "Is there anything else, Mr. Dinoli?"

"No, Ted. That'll be all. Just wanted to let you know the good news, son."

A secretary showed him out; he returned numbly to his office on Eleven, the office he now shared with Dave Spalding. *Trip to Ganymede*, he thought. *I'll tell them that Marge won't let me go. That we're expecting a baby. Anything.*

It wouldn't look good, his refusing, but he was damned if he was going to spend three weeks living under the conditions he'd been writing about.

"You look like you've been guillotined," Spalding said, as Kennedy came in. "They didn't fire you!"

"No such luck. I've got a great opportunity. The Corporation's offering me a three-week trip to Ganymede to get the feel of things."

He pulled down one of the big loose-leaf volumes they had made up. They

had written biographies of each of the three hundred and thirteen colonists they had peopled Ganymede with, and each morning they picked a different one to feature in the newsbreaks.

"I think it's time to get Mary Walls pregnant," Kennedy said. "We haven't had a pregnancy on Ganymede yet. You have the medical background Rollins dug up?"

SPALDING produced a slim portfolio bound in black leather—a doctor's report on possible medical problems in the colony. Childbirth under low gravity, pressure diseases, things like that.

Spalding typed out a press release about the first pregnancy on Ganymede, with quotes from the happy mother-to-be, the stunned prospective father ("Gosh, this is great news! I know my Ma back in Texas will jump up and clack her heels when she finds out about Mary") and, of course, from the ever-talkative Colony Director, Brookman.

While he worked, Kennedy checked the photo file for a snapshot of Mary Walls—Agency technicians had prepared a phony compositograph of every member of the colony—and readied it for release with Spalding's newsbreak. He added the day's news to the Colony Chronicle he was writing—excerpts were being printed daily in the tabloids—and wrote a note to himself to remember that a maternity outfit would need to be ordered before Thursday for Mrs. Walls, to be shipped up on the next supply ship.

It had gotten to the point where he *believed* in his colony up there. He could picture slabjawed Director Brookman, an outwardly fierce, inwardly sentimental man, could picture rosy-cheeked Mary Walls being told by mustachioed Dr. Hornsfall that she was going to be blessed with issue...

And it was all phony. The Outpost on Ganymede consisted of a couple of

dozen foul-smelling, bearded spacemen, period. He didn't want to go there.

They phoned in the pregnancy store before noon, and got busy sketching out the next day's work. Spalding was writing Director Brookman's autobiography, to be serialized in a big weekly, while Kennedy blocked in succeeding events in Mary Walls' pregnancy. He toyed momentarily with the idea of having her suffer a miscarriage in two months' time, but rejected it; it would be good for a moment's pathos, but quickly forgotten. Having her stay pregnant would be more effective.

Near closing-time the reaction hit him, as it did every day toward the finish. He sat back and stared at his trembling hands.

My God, he thought, this is the biggest hoax humanity has ever known. And I originated it.

He estimated that perhaps fifty people were in on the hoax now. That was too many; what if one of them cracked up and spilled it all? Would they all be lynched?

They would not, he answered himself. The thing was too firmly embedded in reality by now; he had done his job too well. If someone—anyone—stood up and yelled that this was all a fake, that there was no colony on Ganymede, it would be a simple matter to laugh the accusation down as crackpottery and go ahead manufacturing the next day's set of press releases.

But still the enormity of it chilled Kennedy. He looked at Spalding, busily clacking out copy, and shuddered. By now, the afternoon telefax sheets were spewing forth the joyous news that Mary Walls—petite little Mary Walls, 25, redhaired, a colony dietician, married two years to lanky Mike Walls, 29, of Houston, Texas—was about to bear young.

He clenched his fists. Where did it stop? Was anything real?

THEY LOCKED away their books and the car-pool people assembled.

Kennedy dropped each off at their destinations, and swung his car finally into his own garage.

Marge had his afternoon cocktail ready for him. He told her about Bullard's visit, about Dinoli's offer. "So they want to send me to Ganymede for three weeks, and I'd be leaving Thursday? How d'ye like that!"

She smiled. "I think it's wonderful! I'll miss you, of course, but..."

His mouth sagged open. "You think I'm going to accept that crazy deal?"

"Aren't you?"

"But I thought..." He closed his eyes a moment. "You *want* me to go, Marge?"

"It's a grand opportunity for you, dear. You may never get another chance to see space. And it's safe, isn't it? They say space travel is safer than riding a car." She laughed; it was a brittle laugh that told Kennedy a great many things he did not want to know.

She wants me to go, he thought. She wants to get rid of me for three weeks.

He took a deep, calm sip. "As a matter of fact, I have until Wednesday to make up my mind," he said. "I told them I'd have to discuss the matter with you before I could agree to anything. But I guess it's okay with you."

Her voice cracked a little as she said, "I certainly wouldn't object. Have I ever stood in the way of your advancement, Ted?"

9

THE SHIP left at 1100 sharp on Thursday, July 5, 2044. Departure went smoothly and on schedule. The ship was nameless, bearing only the number *GC-1073*; the captain was a gruff man named Hills who did not seem pleased at the prospect of ferrying a groundlubber along with him to Ganymede. Blastoff was from Spacefield Seven, a wide jet-blasted area in the flatlands of New Jersey.

A small group of friends and well-wishers rode out with Kennedy in the jetcab to see him off. Marge came, and Dave Spalding, and Mike Cameron, and Ernie Watsinski. Kennedy sat moodily in the corner of the cab, staring downward at the smoke-stained sky of industrialized New Jersey, saying nothing, thinking dark thoughts.

He was not looking forward to the trip at all.

The ship was a thin, too-thin needle standing on its tail, in the middle of the vast grassless field. Little trucks had rolled up around it; one was feeding fuel into the reaction-mass hold, one was laden down with supplies for the men of the outpost, another carried mail—*real* mail, not the carnival-inspired fakery Kennedy had seen on World Holiday—for the men up there.

The ship would carry a crew of six, plus cargo. The invoices listed Ted Kennedy as part of the cargo.

He stood nervously at the edge of the field, watching the ship being loaded and half-listening to the chatter of his farewell committee. A tall gaunt-looking man in a baggy gray uniform came up to them and without waiting for silence said, "Which one of you is Kennedy?"

"I am." It was almost a croak.

"Glad to know you. I'm Charley Sizer, ship's medic; come on with me."

Kennedy looked at his watch. "But it's an hour till blastoff time."

Sizer grinned. "Indeed it is. I want to get you loaded up with gravanol, so acceleration doesn't catch you by surprise. When that big fist comes down you won't like it. Let's go, now—you're holding up the works."

Kennedy glanced around at the suddenly solemn little group and said, "Well, I guess this is it. See you all three weeks from now. Ernie, make sure my paychecks get sent home on time." He waited a couple of seconds more. "Marge?" he said finally. "Can I get a kiss goodbye?"

"I'm sorry, Ted." She pecked at his lips and stepped back. He grinned lopsidedly and let Sizer lead him away.

HE CLAMBERED up the catwalk into the ship. It was hardly an appealing interior. The ship was poorly lit and narrow; the companionways were strictly utilitarian. This was no shiny passenger-ship. Racks of space-suits hung to one side; far to the front he saw two men peering at a vastly complex control panel.

"Here's where you'll stay," Sizer said, indicating a sort of hammock swung between two pillars. "Suppose you climb in now and I'll give you the gravanol shot."

Kennedy climbed in. There was a viewplate just to the left of his head; he glanced out, and saw Marge and Watsinski and the others standing far away, at the edge of the field, watching the ship. Sizer bustled around him, strapping a safety-webbing over him. The gaunt medic vanished and returned a few minutes later with a formidable hypodermic.

"This stuff will take all the fret out of blastoff," Sizer explained. "We could hit as high as 10gs, and you wouldn't even know it. You'll sleep like a babe." He swabbed Kennedy's arm with alcohol and jabbed the needle in. Kennedy felt no internal changes that would make him resistant to gravity.

"You'll doze off soon. Next thing you know, we'll be past the Moon and Ganymede-bound."

Kennedy started to protest that he wasn't sleepy, that he was much too tense to be able to fall asleep. But even as he started to protest, he felt a wave of fatigue sweep over him. He yawned.

Grinning, Sizer said, "Don't worry, now. See you later, friend."

Kennedy lay back. He was securely webbed down in the acceleration hammock; he could hardly move. Drowsiness was getting him now.

Sleep blurred his vision as the time crawled on toward 1100. He wanted to

be awake at the moment of blastoff, to feel the impact. But he was getting tired. *I'll just close my eyes a second*, he thought. *Just catch forty winks or so before we lift.*

He let his eyelids drop.

A FEW MINUTES later, he heard the sound of chuckling. Someone touched his arm. He blinked his eyes open and saw Medic Sizer and Captain Hills standing next to his hammock.

"There something wrong?" he asked in alarm.

"We just wanted to find out how you were doing," Hills said. "Everything okay?"

"Couldn't be better; I'm loose and relaxed. But isn't it almost time for blastoff?"

Hills laughed shortly. "Yeah. That's a good one. Look out that port, Mr. Kennedy."

Numbly Ted Kennedy swivelled to the left and looked out. He saw darkness, broken by bright hard little dots of painful light. At the bottom of the viewplate, just barely visible, hung a small green ball with the outlines of Europe and Asia visible. It looked like a geographical globe. At some distance away hung a smaller pockmarked ball.

Everything seemed frozen and terribly silent, like a Christmas-card scene.

In a hushed voice Kennedy said, "Are we in space?"

"We sure are. You slept through the whole works—blastoff and null-g and everything. We're a half-day out from Earth. From here till Ganymede, it's all a placid downhill coast."

"Is it safe to get out of this cradle?" he asked.

Hills shrugged. "Why not?"

"I won't float, or anything?"

"Three hours ago we imparted spin along the longitudinal axis, Mr. Kennedy. The gravity in here is precisely one *g*—Earth-norm. If you're hungry, food's on in the galley."

He ate. Ship food, packaged synthetics, nourishing and healthfully balanced—and about as tasty as straw briquettes. He ate silently and alone, serving himself; the rest of the men had already had their midday meal.

Four of them were playing cards in the fore cubicle that looked out onto the stars. Kennedy was shocked and amused all at once when he stepped through the unlocked door and saw the four of them, grimy and bearded in their filthy fatigue uniforms, squatting around an empty full-drum playing poker with savage intensity, while five feet away from them all the splendor of the skies lay unveiled.

He had no desire to break into the game, and they ignored him so thoroughly that it was clear he was not invited, so he turned away, smiling. No doubt after you made enough trips, he thought, the naked wonder of space turned dull on you, and poker remained eternally fascinating. The sight of an infinity of blazing suns was finite in its appeal, Kennedy decided. But he himself stared long and eye-strainingly at the sharp blackness outside, broken by the stream of stars and by the distant redness of what he supposed was Mars.

MARS RECEDED. Kennedy thought he caught sight of ringed Saturn later in the day. Hours passed. He had brought a book with him, "*The Brothers Karamazov*".

Two days went by, maybe three. He read several hundred pages of Dostievski. He let his beard grow, until stubbly shoots began to itch fiercely; then he shaved it off. Once he started to write a letter to Marge, but didn't finish it.

Finally, he grew tired of the splendor of the skies. The stars were glorious, but sheer glory palled, at length. He could meditate only so long on the magnitude of space, on the mutiplicity of suns, on the strange races that might circle red Antares or bright Capella.

Finally great Jupiter blotted out the sky, and Sizer came by to tell him that the icy crescent sliyer he saw faintly against the mighty planet's bulk was their destination, Ganymede.

Again he strapped into the cradle. A second time Sizer jabbed his arm, and a second time he slept. When he woke, some time later, there was whiteness outside the port—the endless eye-numbing whiteness of the snowfields of Ganymede.

It was day—"day" being a ghostly sort of half-dusk. Ted Kennedy knew enough about the mechanics of Ganymede to be aware that Ganymede day lasted slightly more than seven Earth days, the length of time it took Ganymede to revolve once about Jupiter—for Ganymede, like Earth's Moon, kept the same face toward its primary at all times, its day equalling its month.

Jupiter now was a gibbous splinter from dayside, a vast chip of a planet that seemed to be falling toward Ganymede's bleak surface like a celestial spear. Visible against the big planet's bulk was the lesser splinter of one of the other Galilean moons—Io, most likely, Kennedy thought.

From his port, nothing was visible but the ugly teeth of broken mountains, bare, tufted with layers of frozen ammonia, misted by swirling methane clouds.

THE SHIP'S audio system barked. "All hands in suits! Mr. Kennedy, come forward, on the double. We've arrived on Ganymede."

Sizer and one of the crewmen came toward him, swinging the hollow bulk of a spacesuit between them like an eviscerated corpse.

They helped him into it, clamped down the helmet, and switched on his breathing unit and his audio.

Sizer said, "You won't be in this thing long. Don't touch any of the gadgets, and try not to sneeze. If you feel your breathing supply going bad, yell and yell *fast*. Everything clear?"

"Yes," Kennedy said. He felt warm and humid in the suit; they hadn't bothered to switch on his air conditioners, or perhaps there weren't any. He saw men starting down the catwalk in their suits, and he advanced toward the yawning airlock, moving in a stiff, awkward robot-shuffle until he discovered the suit was flexible enough to allow him to walk normally.

He lowered himself through the lock and, with great care, descended the catwalk. He saw a sprawling low dome to his right, housing several slipshod prefabricated buildings. A truck had popped through an airlock in the side of the dome and was heading toward them.

A sharp wind whistled about him; paradoxically, he was sweating stickily inside his suit, but he also sensed the numbing cold that was just a fraction of an inch away from his skin. In the wan daylight, he could see the cold outlines of stars bridging the blue-black sky.

It was a hard, bitter place where the wind mumbled obscenities in your spacesuit's audio pickup, and the stars glimmered in the daylight. He looked into the distance, wondering if any of the natives were on hand to witness the new arrival, but as far as he could see the landscape was barren and empty.

The truck arrived. Within its sealed, pressurized cab rode a redbearded man who signalled for them to climb into the back.

The truck turned and headed toward the opening airlock of the Ganymede dome.

10

HE FELT penned in, in the dome. He met the sixteen men who lived there ever since Corporation money and Corporation skill and Corporation spaceships had

let man reach Ganymede. He shifted uneasily from foot to foot, breathing the sharp, faintly-acrid synthetic atmosphere of the dome, feeling mildly queasy-stomached at the lessened pull of gravity. Ganymede exerted only 81% of Earth's pull on him; he weighed just about 142 pounds here.

He half-expected to see the big figure of Colony Director Lester Brookman come striding out of the dimness to shake his hand and welcome him to Ganymede, but Brookman was just a myth he had invented one rainy May afternoon. The real head of the Ganymede Outpost was a stubby little man with a bushy gray-flecked beard. His name was Gunther.

Gunther^{*}eyed Ted Kennedy stolidly after Kennedy had disencumbered himself of the spacesuit—a small, beady-eyed man with blue shouting-veins standing out on his neck.

He said, "You're Kennedy?"

"That's right."

"Papers say you'll be here until the ship returns to Earth. That's three Gannydays from now, a little over three weeks. You'll be living in Barracks B on the second level; one of the men will show you where your bunk is. There's to be no smoking anywhere in the dome, at any time. If you have any questions concerning operations here, you're to ask me. If you're told by any member of this base that a given area is restricted, you're not to enter it under any circumstance. Clear?"

"Clear," Kennedy said. He resented the brusqueness of Gunther's manner, but perhaps that was what six months or a year of life on a frozen waste of a world did to a man.

"Do you know how to use a spacesuit?"

"No."

"As expected. You'll receive instruction starting at 0900 tomorrow. You'll undergo a daily drill in spacesuit technique, until you've mastered its func-

tions. We never know when the dome's going to crack."

He said it flatly and quietly, as if he might be saying, *We never know when it may start to rain.* Kennedy nodded without commenting.

"You'll be taken on a tour of the area, as soon as you request it, provided there's a man free to accompany you. Under no circumstances are you to leave the dome alone."

"When will I get a chance to meet some of the aliens?"

Gunther seemed to look away. "You'll be allowed to meet the Gannys at such time as we see fit, Mr. Kennedy. Are there any further questions?"

There were, but Kennedy didn't feel like asking them. He shook his head instead, and Gunther signalled to another member of the Outpost to show him to his room.

It had a hard cot covered with a single sheet, a washstand, a baggage rack. It looked like nothing so much as a cheap hotel room in a rundown section of an old city. It was very Earthlike; there was nothing alien about it; except the view that could be had by peering around the facing barracks-building at the bleak snowfields.

The three Outpost buildings had been prefabricated, of course. A central ventilator system kept the dome and all the rooms within it reasonably fresh. A central power system supplied light and heat; the plumbing in the dome was crude but effective.

A SPACEMAN named Jaeckel drilled him in the use of a spacesuit, showed him how to manipulate the controls that blew his nose and wiped his forehead and ventilated the suit.

Once Ted Kennedy had mastered the suit, they let him go outside the dome, always in the company of an off-duty Outpost man. The snow was thick and firmly packed into ice; bare patches of

rock thrust snouts up here and there. A paraffin lake was located half a mile west of the dome—a broad, dull-looking dark body of liquid. Kennedy stood at its shore and peered downward.

“Does anything live in it?”

“Snails and toads and things; the Ganymedean equivalent, of course. Methane-breathers, you know. We see them come hopping up on shore during the big storms.”

“How about fish-equivalents?” Kennedy asked.

“We don’t know. We don’t have any boats and we don’t have any fishing-tackle. Radar says there’s a few shapes moving down at the bottom, but we haven’t had time to find them yet.”

He was taken out to see the vegetation, too: the “forests” of scraggly little waxen bushes, geared to the ammonia-methane respiratory cycle. They were inches high, with thick rigid leaves spread flat to catch as much of the sunlight as they could; even the strongest winds failed to disturb them where they grew along a snow-banked hillside.

After he had seen the compact turbines that powered the outpost, after he had inspected the kitchen and the game room and the little library, there was not much else for Kennedy to see. On the third day he asked Gunther when he’d be allowed to meet the inhabitants of Ganymede; Gunther said irritably, “Soon!”

He spoke with an angular faded-looking man named Engel, a linguist in Corporation employ. Engel was working on the Ganymedean language.

“It’s fairly simple,” he told Kennedy. “The Gannys haven’t developed a written culture, and a language limited to oral transmission doesn’t usually get to be very complex. It starts off as a series of agreed-upon grunts and it generally stays that way. The Gannys we’ve met have a vocabulary of perhaps a thousand active words and

a residual vocabulary no bigger than three or four thousand. The language agglutinates—that is, the words pile up. There’s one word for *man*; but instead of having a separate word, like *warrior*, for the concept *man-with-spear*; their word for warrior is simply *mamwithspear*. And the grammar’s ridiculously simple, too—no inflections or declensions, no variation in terms of gender or case. The Gannys are lucky; they aren’t saddled with the confused remnants of the old Indo-Aryan protolanguage the way we are. It’s a terribly simple language.”

“Meaning that they’re terribly simple people?”

ENGEL LAUGHED. “It’s not quite a one-to-one correlation. Matter of fact, they’re damned quick thinkers, and they get along pretty well despite the handicap of such a limited language. It’s a limited world. You don’t *need* many words on a planet where there’s hardly any seasonal change, and where living conditions remain uniform century in and century out. Uniformly miserable, I mean.”

Kennedy nodded. Engel showed him a mimeographed pamphlet he had prepared, labelled “*Notes Toward A Ganymede Etymology and Philology.*”

“Mind if I look this over?” Kennedy asked.

Engel shrugged and said, “I guess it’s all right; it can’t do any harm to let you read it.”

Kennedy studied the pamphlet alone in his room that “night,” for lack of any better recreation. He fell asleep with the light on and the book still open, mumbling disjointed Ganny phrases which he hoped followed Engel’s phonetic system; he didn’t even notice it when the room-light cut off, as it did every night at 0100 camp-time.

On the fourth day, a tremendous storm swept in and engulfed the **area.**

Kennedy stood in the yard near the arching curve of the dome, staring out in awe at the fierce torrent of precipitated ammonia that poured down on the plain, giving way finally to feathery clouds of ammonia-crystal snow and then, at last, to silence. The plain was covered with a fresh fall, now, and after it came the irascible wind, sculpturing the new fall into fantastic spires and eddies. In the distance he saw the spaceship still upright, its landing vanes concealed by fresh snow, its dark prow tipped with mounds of white.

And on the fifth day he was again alone in his room when a tattoo of knocks sounded. He slipped Engel's linguistics-pamphlet under his soggy pillow and opened the door.

Jaeckel stood there. "Gunther sent me to get you. Some aliens are here. They're waiting outside the dome."

FOUR OF them went through the lock—Gunther, Engel, Kennedy, and a spaceman named Palmer. Kennedy felt a strange tingle of excitement. These were the beings the Steward & Dinoli agency was training mankind to hate; these were the beings Alf Haugen was gradually building up as enemies of humanity, and he was going to meet them now.

There were three of them, standing in a little group ten feet from the airlock entrance. Naked except for their cloth girdle, noseless, eyes hooded, they looked to Kennedy like aborigines of some bizarre South Sea Island as seen through the eyes of a dream. Their skin, pale white, had a waxy sheen to it. Their mouths were glum sagging semicircles, lipless. At first, Ted Kennedy was surprised that they could bear the murderous cold, standing in calm nudity with no sign of discomfort.

But why the hell shouldn't they, he thought. This is their world. They

breathe its foul, corrosive air and they brush their teeth—if they have teeth—with the high-octane stuff that flows in their lakes and rivers. They probably can't understand how we can possibly survive in the blazing heat of Earth, and drink that poisonous hydrogen-and-oxygen compound we're so fond of.

"These three are from the closest tribe," Gunther said. "They live eleven miles to the east, and come here every seventh Earth-day to talk to us."

And indeed they were talking; one of them began speaking in a low monotone, addressing his words to Gunther.

Ted Kennedy could only pick out a word here and there; his few hours spent with Engel's booklet had not made him a master of the language. But the words he picked out interested him greatly.

For the alien seemed to be saying: "...once again...leave us...hatecaryingbeings...interfere...when...you go...soon..."

Gunther replied with a rapid-fire string of syllables, spoken with such machine-gun intensity that Kennedy could scarcely catch the meaning of a single word. He did pick up one, though; it was the Ganny word for total negation, absolute refusal.

The alien replied: "sadness...pain...until go...sacrilege..." (forceful but untranslatable verb)

"Mind if I ask what the conversation's all about?" Kennedy asked.

Engel blinked. Gunther tightened his lips, then said, "We're arranging for transportation of supplies to the alien village in exchange for a bit of negotiation for mining rights with the village chief. He's telling us when the best time of day to make the delivery is."

Kennedy tried to hide his surprise. Either Gunther had just reeled off a flat lie, or else Kennedy had been completely wrong in his translation of the

conversation. It had seemed to him that the aliens had been demanding an Earth evacuation, and that Gunther had been refusing. But perhaps he had been wrong; not even the simplest of languages could be learned in a matter of days.

THE ALIENS were stirring restlessly. The spokesman repeated his original statement twice, then tipped his head back in a kind of ceremonial gesture, leaned forward, and exhaled a white cloud. Ammonia crystals formed briefly on the face-plate of Gunther's breathing-helmet. The Corporation man replied with a sentence too terse for Kennedy to be able to translate.

Then the aliens nodded their heads and uttered the short disyllable that meant "Farewell"; Kennedy caught it clearly. Automatically the response-word floated up from his memory, and he said it: "Ah-*yah*." The other three Earthmen spoke the word at the same time. The aliens turned and gravely stalked away into the whirling wind.

A moment later Gunther whirled and seized Kennedy's arm tightly with his spacegloved hand. He glared at Kennedy.

"What did you say?" he demanded. "Did I just hear you say a word to that Ganny in his own language? *Where did you learn it? Who authorized you to learn Ganny?* I could have you shot for this, Kennedy—Agency pull or no Agency pull!"

II

FOR A MOMENT, Ted Kennedy stood frozen, listening to the fierce wind swirl around him, not knowing what to say. By revealing his knowledge of Ganymede he had committed a major blunder.

"Well?" Gunther demanded. "How come you speak Ganny?"

Engel came to his rescue.

"That's the only word he knows," the tall linguist said. "Couple of days ago he was visiting me and when he left I said goodbye to him in Ganny. He wanted to know what I had just said, and I told him. There's no harm in that, Gunther."

Uncertainly the outpost chief released his grip on Kennedy's arm. Kennedy realized Engel was saving his own skin as well as his by the lie; evidently it was out of bounds for him to speak the native tongue.

But he saw his advantage. "Look here, Gunther—I'm not a Corporation man, and I'm only technically under your command. Where do you come off threatening to shoot me for saying goodbye to a Ganny in his own language? I could let Bullard know and he'd bounce you down to tenth level for a stunt like that."

In a short sharp sentence, Gunther expressed his opinion of Corporation Executive Bullard. Then he said: "Let's go back into the dome. This is no place to stand around having a chat."

Without waiting for further discussion he signalled inside to open the lock. Kennedy was more than happy to turn his back on the bleakness of the open Ganymede field.

They stripped off their spacesuits in silence, and racked them. Gunther said, "Suppose we go to my quarters, Kennedy. We can talk about things there."

"Should I come too?" Engel asked.

"No, you get about your business. And watch out how much classified info you teach to visitors next time, Mr. Engel."

Gunther's quarters proved to be considerably more auspicious than the other barracksrooms under the dome. He opened a closet and took out a half-empty bottle.

"Care for a drink?"

Kennedy did not, but he nodded deliberately. "Sure."

Gunther fixed the drink with a most un-hostly lack of grace, handed it to Kennedy, and said, "I'm sorry I blew up over such a little thing out there. You have to understand what life's like here, Kennedy. It's not easy on the nerves; not at all. I try to maintain discipline over myself as well as the others, but there are times when my nerves just pop. I'm sorry it had to happen to you, that's all."

KENNEDY smiled. "You practically ordered me off to the firing-squad because I knew a word of Ganny. How come the language's so top-secret?"

It was a telling question. Gunther shifted uneasily and said, "It isn't, really. It's merely that we want to make sure all Earth-Ganymede negotiations take place through the Corporation. We wouldn't want another outfit to set up shop here and try to cut in."

"Meaning, presumably, that you suspect I'm going to learn the language, compile a dictionary of Ganny when I get back to Earth, and sell it for a fabulous sum to some as-yet-non-existent competitor of the Corporation? I assure you I've got no such sinister intentions."

"I haven't accused you of *anything*, Kennedy; but we have to take certain security precautions."

"I understand that."

"Good. In case you're filing a report, I'd greatly appreciate it if you'd omit any mention of this incident. As a favor to me."

He left Gunther soon after, feeling greatly perplexed. The Outpost chief's real motivation seemed utterly transparent. Gunther was not fearing the advent of a rival corporation; it took years of legal work and billions in capital to build an organization the size of ED&E. No wildcat operation was going to send a ship to Ganymede to whisk mining rights out from under

Gunther's sharp nose, making use of a Ganny dictionary prepared for them by Kennedy.

No, there could be only one possible reason why Gunther had reacted so violently when Kennedy had displayed a seeming understanding of Ganny. Gunther was afraid that Kennedy would overhear something the Corporation was trying to keep secret.

And that something, Kennedy suspected, was the fact that the Ganymedeans were hostile to the idea of having Earthmen settle on their world, and—far from being willing to negotiate for mining rights—were demanding that Gunther and his men get off.

And if that was the case, he thought, then the only way the Corporation was going to get what it wanted on Ganymede would be by a virtual extermination of the Gannys. No mere United Nations "police action," as Kennedy and the other Agency men had been led to believe, but a full-scale bitter war of subjugation.

Sure, they would rationalize it. The Gannys were a non-technological people who owned a vast horde of valuable radioactive ores and had no intentions of using them; for the public good of the solar system, then, these ores should be taken from them.

IT WAS A nasty business, and Ted Kennedy had been drawn into it deeper than he had suspected. Oh, he had never thought it was a lily-white enterprise; but despite Marge's quiet opposition, and Spalding's bitter outbursts, he had gone along with the Agency unthinkingly. The Agency Mask had been his defense: the unthinking reservation of judgement that allowed him to enter into a contract with little concern for the questions of values tangential to it.

Well, now he was seeing it clearly and first-hand. He returned to his room, planning to study the Ganny

dictionary more intently. Next week, when the aliens returned, he *had* to know more of the true position of things.

But his door was ajar when he reached his room, and the light was on. There were no locks on the doors, but he had hardly expected someone just to walk in. He pushed open the door.

Engel was sitting on the edge of his bed waiting for him.

Kennedy waved cheerily to him. "I guess I owe you thanks. That could have been a nasty business with Gunther out there if you hadn't said what you did."

"Yes. Look here, Kennedy—I have to have that booklet back. Immediately. Where is it?"

"Back? Why?"

"Gunther would have me flayed if he knew I gave it to you. It was really unpardonable on my part—but you seemed so interested, and I was so anxious to have you see my work and be impressed by it."

Kennedy circled behind Engel and drew the dogeared pamphlet out from under the pillow. Engel reached for it, but Kennedy snatched it quickly away.

"Give that to me! Kennedy, don't you understand that Gunther absolutely would execute me if he knew you had that? It's classified!"

"Why?"

"That doesn't matter. Give it to me."

Kennedy tucked it under his arm. "I don't intend to; I want to study it some more. It's a very ingenious work, Engel. I *am* impressed."

"If you don't give that to me," Engel said slowly, "I'll tell Gunther that you entered my quarters when I wasn't there and *stole* it from me. I know how many copies there are supposed to be. But I don't want to have to do that; hand it over, will you?" The linguist nibbled at his lip and

flicked a globe of sweat from his forehead.

THE ROOM was very quiet a moment. Kennedy tightened his grip on the booklet under his arm. Staring levelly at Engel, he said, "You don't want to do that. I'll make a deal with you: you let me keep the dictionary, and I'll make sure Gunther never has occasion to find out you gave it to me. And I'll return it when I leave Ganymede. Otherwise, if you try to tell Gunther I stole the dictionary and I'll tell him you gave it to me of your own free will, and then lied to him outside the dome just now to keep your own nose 'clean. It'll be my word against yours, but you'll be in a tough way trying to explain just why you took my part out there."

Engel knotted his hands nervously together. "It won't wash. Gunther trusts me..."

"Like hell he does. Gunther doesn't even trust himself. Let me keep the dictionary, or I'll go to Gunther right now and tell him the whole story."

Scowling, Engel said, "Okay. The dictionary's yours—but keep your mouth shut the next time you're around any Gannys. If you stop to ask a local chief the time of day, Gunther'll roast us both."

Three days slipped by, in Kennedy's second week on Ganymede. He spent much of his time studying Engel's little handbook of the Ganny language, and repeated phrases and sentences to himself each night in a muttered whisper.

He went on jeeptrips over the Ganymedean terrain; it was night-time on Ganymede now, and would be for four more Earth-days; Jupiter hung broodingly massive in the sky, blotting out the stars.

Moons danced in the sky, swimming in and out of sight with dizzy unpredictability; now Io, now Europa, now

far-off Callisto came whirling by, and their orbits were a computer-man's nightmare. Kennedy was impressed.

The terrain was monotonous, though—endless bluish icefields unbroken by sign of life. Once Kennedy asked Gunther if he could visit a Ganny village for a change, instead of merely rolling on over icy wastes.

Gunther scowled. "I'm afraid not. The Ganny villages are restricted areas for visitors to the Outpost."

"Why?"

"You don't ask *why* around here, Kennedy. You've been very co-operative up to now. Don't spoil it."

With a brusque gesture Gunther dismissed him. Kennedy turned away, his mind full of unaskable questions.

HE STUDIED his handbook. He waited impatiently for the Gannys to pay their next visit to the outpost; he wanted to find out exactly what the relationship between Earthman and alien was.

If the natives were bluntly opposed to Terran operations on Ganymede, then the whole Agency-nurtured maneuver was nothing more or less than a naked power grab on the part of the Corporation, a set-up maneuver that would drag the U. N. in to conquer Ganymede—at no expense to the Corporation—and then hand the little world over to Bullard & Co. on a chrome-plated platter.

But Kennedy knew he had to have more proof. He had to speak to the natives first-hand, without any of Gunther's men around.

The day before the expected visit of the Gannys, Kennedy happened to mention to Gunther that he was looking forward to seeing the aliens again.

"Oh? You haven't heard? The visit's been called off. It's some sort of holy season in the village, and they've decided not to see any Earthmen till it's over."

"And when will it be over?"

"Five Ganny days from now. A little more than a month, Earthtime."

That meant he would have no further opportunity at all for seeing the Gannys. And this "some sort of holy season" sounded too slick, too patently contrived, to be convincing.

No. Gunther simply did not want him to penetrate Corporation activities on Ganymede any deeper.

There was only a week left to his stay now. He knew he would have to move quickly and efficiently in his remaining time, if he were to discover the underlying facts of the Ganymede operation.

Ted Kennedy disliked blackmail, but in this case there was no help for it; he went to see Engel.

12

THE LINGUIST was not happy to see his visitor. Engel greeted him unsmilingly and said, "What do you want, Kennedy?"

With elaborate care Kennedy shut the door and took a seat facing Engel. "The first thing I want is absolute silence on your part. If a word of what I tell you now gets back to Gunther or anyone else, I'll kill you."

Engel said, "Go ahead. Talk."

"I want you to do me a favor. I want you to get me one of those jeeps and fix things so I can go out alone during sleeptime tonight."

"Kennedy, this is preposterous. I..."

"You nothing. Either I get the jeep or I tell Gunther you're a subversive who deliberately gave me the Ganny dictionary, and who tipped me off on a few of the lesser-known gambits the Corporation's engaging in. I can lie damn persuasively, Engel; it's my business."

Engel said nothing. Kennedy no-

ticed that the man's fingernails had been bitten ragged. He felt sorry for the unfortunate linguist, but this was no time for pity.

"Do I get the jeep?"

Engel remained silent. After a long, continued silence he pulled in his breath in a sort of sobbing sigh and said, "Yes, damn you."

Kennedy rose. "Thanks, Engel. And listen: I *don't* want you to get hurt in this business. I'm doing what I'm doing because I have to; and I'm stepping on your neck because it's the only neck I can step on—but I'm sorry about the whole filthy thing. If everything goes well, Gunther'll never find out about the dictionary or the jeep."

"Save the apologies," Engel said. "When do you want the jeep?"

Kennedy left after dark-out time that night; the dome was shrouded in night. The faint illumination afforded by Io, and the larger radiation that was Jovelight, only served to cast conflicting and obscuring shadows over the outpost. Engel let him through the lock.

"Remember now," he radioed back. "I'm going to be back here at 0600. Be damn sure you're here to let me in, and that you're alone."

"I'll be here," Engel said. "Alone, I hope."

THE GANNY village was eleven miles to the east of the outpost. Kennedy knew that the aliens had a thirty-two hour sleep-wake cycle, and he hoped that his visit would find them awake; otherwise he might not have another opportunity to speak to them.

No more than twenty minutes after he had left the Terran outpost, he saw what could only be the alien village, nestling between two fangs of rock. It was located, logically enough, along one shore of a broad river of fast-flowing hydrocarbons; the houses were clusters of small dome-shaped ig-

loos put together out of bluish ice-blocks, and there were aliens moving to and fro in the settlement as he drew near.

He cut the jeep's engines a hundred yards from the edge of the river, activated his spacesuit, strapped on his gun and pocketed the dictionary, and stepped outside. He walked toward the river, where half a dozen aliens were casting nets or dangling lines.

As he approached, he saw one man yank forth his line with a catch—a thick-bodied fish-like creature with fierce red eyes and short fleshy fins.

"I am a friend," Kennedy said slowly and clearly, in the Ganny tongue.

They gathered hesitantly about him, those who were not too busy with their nets and their lines. He looked from one noseless grotesque face from the next.

One said, "You are a new one."

"I am. I come to talk with you."

"Talk," the alien said. "And then go. It is the food-gathering time and we are busy."

"You must speak not-fast. Your language is still new to me." Kennedy paused. "I am not a friend of the other men who come to you."

"They will kill you then. They kill those who are not friends."

"Have they killed any of you?"

"No. But they say they will if we do not give them welcome here. We ask them to leave. To go back to the sky. But they say they will bring others of their kind here soon. We do not want them."

"Why not?"

"This is our land. Our tribe chose this as its dying-ground hundreds of days ago. We ask them to go. We ask them to move to another clan-ground. But they will not go. They say they will stay, and bring many hands of hands more of their numbers from the sky."

KENNEDY looked sharply at the ring of aliens. They were stocky beings, not quite his height, lumpy-bodied, with thick six-fingered hands and practically no necks. They were not human. It was strange to stand here in below-zero temperature on a world whose air was poison to his lungs and talk of exploitation with non-human creatures. Nightmarish.

"What will you do if the Earthmen remain on your world?"

"We will fight them."

"Do you have" . . . Kennedy fumbled for the word, finally resorted to Engel's dictionary . . . "weapons?"

The alien who was spokesman held forth his gnarled hands. "We have these. We have spears and throwing-sticks. And we have . . ." It was an untranslatable word meaning *courage, determination, stubbornness, foolhardiness*.

"That won't be enough," Kennedy said. "Not against napalm and thorium grenades."

"What are these words?"

"You'll find out what they mean soon enough," Kennedy said. "Look here—how long will it be before you attack and try to drive the Earthmen away?"

"Why should we tell you?"

"I'm a friend of yours! I want to help you!" The words slipped out suddenly and unexpectedly. "I can bring you weapons of the Earthmen and show you how to use them. I don't want them to trample you down. Do you believe me?"

"You are an Earthman." Stubbornly.

"But I'm not like the others! I'm . . . I'm . . ." He stopped. "Look," he said, "When is your next sleep-time?"

"When the silvery moon has set."

The silvery moon meant high-albedo Europa. Kennedy tried to remember the schedule; Europa would set toward "morning," some six or seven

hours from now. Good. He could return the following night at this time, the aliens would be awake.

"I'll come back when you are awake again," he promised. "With Earthman weapons. But this must be kept silent. Do you expect to visit the Earthman-place soon?"

"We would have come when we awoke, but we were told not to come there for five days."

That figured, he thought; that was Gunther's work. Gunther wanted to keep the aliens out of sight until Kennedy was safely on his way back to Earth.

"Say nothing to the other Earthmen of my visits," Kennedy said. "Or else you and I, all of us, will die." He looked at the chronometer in the wrist of his spacesuit. The time was only 0230; he had three hours yet before it was time to return to the outpost.

He asked permission to stay in the village and observe their way of life for a few hours. After a certain amount of whispered discussion, none of which Kennedy was able to understand, they reluctantly agreed.

AT ABOUT 0530, he began driving back westward toward the outpost. In the quiet alien night, the snowfields sparkled and glittered with the reflected light of half a dozen moons; it was a lovely sight, and, inside the warm pressurized cab of the jeep Ted Kennedy felt none of the brutality of the conditions outside—only the silent beauty.

But there was nothing beautiful about the Corporation scheme, he thought. He wondered if he could ever purge himself of the taint of the last two months' work.

The Corporation was using the U. N. as its catspaw. Ganymede was likely territory for exploitation—the Earth had no more simple races left, no more backward areas, thanks to a century

of intensive development; but there still were other worlds for fast-working promoters to conquer.

Kennedy felt clear-headed and tranquil about the part he was going to play in the coming weeks. He would help the Gannys all he could, as partial atonement for all he had done. Perhaps he would remain on Ganymede after the supply ship departed; someday he could tell Marge of what he had done, and she would understand.

He felt good about it. *It isn't everyone, he thought, who has the chance to repair damage he's helped create. If I help the Gannys to defend themselves, aid them, bring them weapons...*

This is their world. They know its pitfalls and its hazards.

A war between armed Gannys and Earthmen clad in cumbersome space-suits would not necessarily be a one-sided slaughter. Not at all.

And perhaps he could go back to Earth and stop the slaughter before it began. That would be harder. The Corporation was powerful and respected; after all, hadn't its private capital given men the key to space—when none of the nations of the world had found it within their domestic budgets to develop space travel? One man fighting a vast impersonal organization was predoomed to quick failure.

ENGEL WAS waiting inside the airlock as Kennedy brought the jeep up, at 0559 hours. Right on time. The linguist looked pale and tense.

The airlock slid open, and Kennedy guided the jeep through. "Everything's clear," Engel whispered.

Kennedy looked around. "No one knows I've been gone? No one missed me?"

"They've all been sleeping like babes," Engel said. "All except me. I've been sitting in my room staring

at the walls all night. Where the devil did you go—and why?"

"That's hardly public concern, as they say."

Engel assisted Kennedy as he climbed out of the protective suit. Kennedy turned to the linguist and stared quietly at him for a long moment.

"I did something good tonight," he said. "Maybe for the first time in my life. Let's go somewhere where we can't wake people up and I'll tell you all about it."

"I don't want to be a party to your crazy schemes, Kennedy."

"You can decide that after I explain things to you. But I'm going to need your help. And for once in *your* life you can do something worthwhile. More worthwhile than making lists of intrasitive verbs, anyway."

13

TWO DAYS that were not days, two nights that were not nights, while the greater darkness of the Ganymede night cloaked the outpost twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four of the arbitrarily designed "day." And in that time Ted Kennedy became a sneak thief and a traitor to mankind.

Traitor to mankind. He thought about that phrase in the middle of the "night," as the outpost unsuspectingly slept, and he loaded the contents of Weapons Shack Two onto a jetsled, strapped down the guns and flamethrowers and grenades that he was ferrying across the icefields to the village of the Gannys.

He told Engel, "You arrange with Gunther that you get assigned to take me out on my daily tour of the snowdunes and local lakes. Only instead of rubbernecking around, we'll go to the village and show them how to use the stuff we're bringing them."

Engel was unwilling; he scowled

and grimaced and tried to think of reasons why the idea was dangerous; but in the end he agreed, because he was a weak man and both he and Kennedy knew it. Kennedy had long since mastered the art of manipulating *People en masse*; now he was manipulating one single man, and succeeding at it.

He had five days left on Ganymede. He knew he had to make the most of them.

During the following day, Engel came to him and told him to get ready for his daily drive. They skirted the hills and the big lake west of the camp, then swerved 180 degrees and tracked straight for the Ganny village. They spent two hours there, instructing the aliens in the art of using Earthman weapons.

They taught the pale creatures how to dig in behind snowdrifts and fire at men crossing the plain, how to hurl grenades (they practiced with snowballs; the aliens had unerring aim), how to blister the snow with goutts of flame.

THE ALIENS learned fast. They smiled brightly and said, "Earthmen come we shoot?" and Kennedy nodded and said, "But make sure it's *those* Earthmen and not us."

He wondered what Gunther would say when he found out that the visiting public-relations man had stolen enough spare outpost supplies to equip an entire Ganymedean village. The little man would have an apoplectic fit, certainly.

Third night, Engel had discovered a cache of grenades in an auxiliary storeroom. Gently he carried them out to the sled. Kennedy helped him strap them down. He looked at the time—0330. The outpost slept. No one would be awake until 0700 at the earliest.

"Set the airlock to automatic open-close and let's get out of here," Kennedy called.

The airlock started to slide open.

Kennedy made room on the sled for Engel and rested his hand lightly on the firing switch.

Floodlights suddenly burst out blindingly all over the airlock area. Gunther stood there, looking bleak and bitter in the hard light. Behind him were three other men—Jaekkel, Palmer, Latimer.

"So you're the culprits," Gunther said slowly. "The shortages in the storeroom—the jeeptracks in the snow in the morning. Engel, Kennedy. What the hell do you think you're up to, you two?"

Engel started to say something, something shapeless that was half a moan. Kennedy nudged him viciously.

"Hold on tight! I'm going to get the sled started!"

"Come on, you two, get out of there. I want some explanations!"

"Explanations coming right up," Kennedy said. Calmly he shoved the firing switch to *full* and the thrust-control wide open.

The jetsled bucked and crashed forward in a sudden plunging motion, tossing a spume of flame behind it. Kennedy heard Gunther's angry yell as the sled passed through the open airlock.

THERE WAS the quick harsh chatter of gunfire coming from behind them. Kennedy did not look back; he crouched down low on the sled—praying that none of the shots would touch off the crated grenades lashed to the sled—and guided the little flat sled into the Ganymedean darkness.

His course was already figured. He would circle wide to the west, far enough out to mislead any possible pursuers, and then head for the Ganymedean village.

He forced himself not to think of what would happen to him four days hence, when the supply ship blasted off on its return trip to Earth, and when his own cached supplies in the

Ganny village were exhausted. He had cut loose all bonds with Earth in one sudden frightful moment, and he tried not to think about it.

"I was wondering how long it would take for Gunther to get wise to what we were doing," he said after they had gone more than five miles with no sign of pursuit. "It was bound to happen eventually. But we had to do what we did, Engel. *Someone* had to do it. And it just happened that I came along and dragged you into it."

Engel did not reply. Kennedy wondered about the bitter thoughts the linguist must be thinking. They fled on into the night. When he thought it was safe he changed the sled's course and headed straight for the village.

"None of it would have started if you had kept your dictionary hidden away," Kennedy said. "But you showed it to me, and I borrowed it. I learned a couple of words of Ganny—and on a slim thread like that, you're washed up with the Corporation and I'm finished with the Agency. But I'm not sorry at all. Not even if they catch us, take us back to Earth, and draw and quarter us in Times Square. At least we stood on our hind legs and did something we thought was *right*."

He stopped to consider something. "You *did* think it was right, didn't you? I mean, you didn't help me in this thing just because I was twisting your arm? I hope you did it out of ethical reasons; it's lousy enough to throw away your career in a single week, without having done it just because some other guy with ethics came along and made you do it."

Engel still was silent. His silence began to irritate Kennedy.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Scared speechless? Did Gunther throw you into such a blue funk you can't talk?"

Still no answer. A cold worm of panic raced once around the interior of

Kennedy's stomach, and he swivelled his neck to see if . . .

He was right.

One of Gunther's final desperate shots had ripped a neat hole in Engel's breathing-helmet.

ENGEL'S air supply must have rushed out in one moist foaming burst. Blood had dribbled from his mouth and ears as the internal suit-pressure dropped from the 14.7 psi of the suit to the much lower external pressure. Engel's face was blotchy, puffed, swollen, eyes bulging, thin lips drawn back in a contorted grotesque smile.

He had died in a hurry—so fast that he had not even had time to grunt an anguished last cry into his open suit-microphone.

Kennedy compressed his lips into a thin bitter scowl. Engel had been so proud of his dictionary, so anxious to show it off to the visitor from Earth. And a couple of weeks later that dictionary had worked his death, as surely as if it had been the bullet that sent his air-supply wailing out into the desolate night of Ganymede.

He stopped by a wide-stretching lake whose "waters" glittered in the light of three whirling moons. Kennedy gently lifted Engel's oddly-light body from the sled and carried it to where the dark liquid lapped the edge of the ragged shore.

He waded out a foot or two in the lake and laid Engel face-down on the surface of the water. He drifted; Kennedy touched one gauntlet to the dead man's boot and shoved, imparting enough force to send Engel floating slowly but inexorably out toward the middle of the lake.

To Kennedy's horror the body remained afloat for some minutes, spinning in a lazy circle as the currents of the lake played games with it. But finally the methane came bubbling in through the holes in his breathing-helmet, the spacesuit lost its buoyancy

and grew heavy, filling with liquid until Engel slowly and gravely vanished beneath the surface.

Ted Kennedy remounted the sled and continued on.

HE WAS STILL a mile from the Ganny-village when he saw the brightness in the sky. Those flares of light streaking the dark sky could only be flames.

He approached the village, coming down on it laterally out of the row of razorbacked ridges that bordered it on the south. When he was close enough, he could see clearly what was taking place.

The big truck from the outpost had drawn up perhaps fifty or a hundred yards from the first houses of the village, and for dark spacesuited figures crouched around it, two behind the rear wheels, one on each side in front. They held guns and they were firing repeatedly into the village.

But the villagers were answering back.

Kennedy saw, lying not far from the truck, the shattered blurred figure of what had been a man in a spacesuit, sprawled in a dark greasy puddle. As he watched, a runnel of flame came spitting forth from a snowdune diagonally north of the truck, and one of the Earthmen whirled and fired six times sharply in the direction of the alien flamethrower.

Kennedy caught his breath. Gunther had come directly to the village in search of them—and the villagers, thinking this was the long-awaited attack, had opened fire. The Earthmen now were concentrating on defense. A pyre burned skyward in the heart of the village where his ammunition dump had been—a lucky shot, perhaps.

He smiled at the bravery of the troops, his Ganymedeian Irregulars. But Gunther was angry, and would wipe out the lot of them before long.

A grenade came spiralling out of the village and crashed to the ground near the right front wheel of the outpost truck. Kennedy saw an Earthman dodge to avoid the explosion, and get out of the way just in time.

He thought momentarily of making use of his sledload of grenades in the aliens' defense, but decided against it. Their defeat was inevitable; they might take some Terran lives, but Gunther would show no mercy, and the outcome would not be in doubt. The villagers were brave creatures, but a week's instruction in the arts of war would be of little help over a long-run siege.

Instead Kennedy nudged with his chin the control of his suit-microphone and said, "Gunther?"

"Who's that?"

"Kennedy. Hold your fire."

"Where are you, Kennedy?"

On the hill overlooking you. I could kill you all with three grenades. But don't fire; I don't want to cause any more deaths."

"Damn you, have you gone crazy? Do you know that Latimer's dead and half the village is destroyed on account of you? We came here looking for you and Engel, and they opened fire on us."

Kennedy frowned. "I don't want to cause any more deaths. I'm surrendering. Got that? Surrendering. I'll come down out of the hills with my hands up. Don't fire at the villagers any more. They aren't to blame."

He rose from the shed and slowly made his way down the side of the hill, a dark figure against the whiteness. He was no more than halfway down when Gunther's voice said sharply, "Wait a minute! You're alone. Where's Engel? If this is some sort of trick..."

"Engel's dead. You killed him back at the airlock when we escaped, and I gave him burial in a lake half an hour back beyond the hills. I'm coming down alone."

14

THE CORPORATION space-ship had not been intended as a prison ship, and so they had no facilities for confining Kennedy. He ate alone, and spoke to the other men aboard the ship only when absolutely necessary. On their part, they spoke to him not at all.

The last few days before the departure of the supply ship had been rough ones. Gunther had ordered Kennedy confined to his bare little room, with a guard posted outside the door twenty-four hours a "day," and meals brought in.

Gunther had questioned him. "You gave weapons to the aliens, Kennedy?"

"I decline to answer."

"The hell with that. Did you?"

"Your guess is as good as anybody's, Gunther."

"Who are you? What's behind you, Kennedy? Tell me why you gave guns to the Gannys!"

"I never admitted I did."

"Damn you, don't you realize that two Earthmen died in that little sortie, and half a Ganny village was burned to flinders? Not to mention Engel. That makes three dead Earthmen on your account."

Kennedy shrugged. After a while, Gunther gave up.

They treated him fairly enough, he had to admit; a lesser man might have killed him on the spot, but Gunther was not petty. He was sending Kennedy back to Earth to let the Corporation and the Agency be his judges.

Sizer gave him a gravanol injection on the way out, which surprised him a little; it was reasonable to assume that they'd leave a traitor to cope with the agonies of blast-off acceleration as best he could.

The day of Earthfall came. Word passed rapidly through the ship, and Sizer, grim-faced now, with none of the

cheerful affability of the earlier journey, came aft to offer him the needle. But Ted Kennedy shook his head.

"I'll skip that stuff on the way down. I want to find out what it really feels like to make a planetfall. This may be my last chance to find out."

Sizer shrugged. "It's your body, your bones, and your nerves. Suit yourself."

SO THEY let him ride down into the atmospheric blanket fully conscious. The ship's jets thundered, stabilizing her, decelerating her. Kennedy felt as if two broad hands were squeezing him together, jamming his neck against his spine, flattening his face, distorting his mouth. He could hear the currents of blood in his body. He gasped for breath like a hooked fish. It seemed that there was a mighty knuckle pressing against his chest, expelling the air from his lungs, keeping him from drawing breath.

He drew a breath. And another.

He swung in the cradle. Waves of pain shivered through him.

He started to black out. He fought it, clinging tightly to consciousness.

And he stayed awake.

The ship was trembling now, shuddering in the last moments of landing. He did not look out the port, but he knew the ground must be visible now, pitching wildly beneath the ship. He could picture the sleek ship standing perched on a tongue of fire.

They dropped down. Kennedy wiped a trickle of blood from his upper lip. He became aware abruptly of a roaring silence, and realized that the bellow of the jets had at last ceased.

They had landed. And he had not blanked out.

Now he rolled over and looked through the port. He saw people out there. He looked for Marge or Watsinski or Spalding, but saw no one he recognized, no familiar face.

A voice said quietly inside him, *If you run fast enough they can't touch*

you. It's no crime to give guns to the Gannys. The Corporation hasn't started making the law. Not yet.

The big hatch in the wall of the ship was opening; a catwalk was extruding itself automatically so the men in the ship could reach the ground twenty feet below. Very carefully, Kennedy unlaced the webbing that held him in the deceleration cradle. He dropped one foot over the side of the hammock, then the other, and went yawing forward suddenly as the wall of the ship came sweeping up to meet him.

He thrust out his hands desperately, slapped them against the wall, steadied himself. He waited a moment until his head stopped pounding and his feet were less rubbery.

Kennedy smiled. He was under no indictment; perhaps the people at the port still knew nothing of the happenings on Ganymede. Quite calmly he made his way forward to the hatch and lowered himself down the catwalk to the ground. The sun was warm and bright; he had forgotten the day, but he knew it would have to be somewhere near the end of July. The sickly heat of midsummer hung over the flat grounds of the landing-field.

HE HEARD a shout come from behind him, in the ship, and began to run. There was only one direction to go—toward the waiting people. A galaxy of flashbulbs went nova as he approached. People, dozens of them, probably Corporation men, Agency men...

"You're Kennedy, aren't you? Could I have a brief statement on..."

"Would you say a word for the video audience..."

Kennedy shouldered past them. "Please. I'm very tired. I can't stay here and talk to you."

He felt dazed by the heat after the chill of Ganymede. A taxi lingered beyond, he saw, and he trotted toward it. A shout went up from behind him,

"Stop that man! Don't let him get away! Stop him!"

He opened the taxi and slipped into the passenger's seat "Let's get out of here fast." He glanced out the window and saw men racing toward him—Hills, Sizer.

The cab rolled away. Smiling, Kennedy looked back at his pursuers, wondering if he would be followed. It had been so simple to slip away, in the confusion of landing; they had never really had a chance.

Like a dream, he thought, where the figures reach out to clutch you—but you slip through them like a red-hot blade through butter.

They would hunt him, of course; escape could never be this simple. But, at least, he would have a few minutes or a few days of freedom, and perhaps he could accomplish some of the things he had returned to Earth to do.

Where can I go? he wondered.

HOME WAS the most obvious place. So obvious, in fact that the pursuers might never suspect he would go there. He gave the cabby his home address.

The house looked the same as ever, he thought, as the cab pulled into the Connecticut township where he and Marge had lived so long. *Odd she wasn't out there to welcome me back,* he thought. *Everyone else seemed to know this was the day the Ganymede ship was supposed to get back.*

Maybe Gunther radioed ahead. Maybe they had intentionally let him slip away at the spaceport, knowing that they could always pick him up at home. He gave the driver much too big a bill and without waiting for change headed up the drive into his garden.

The house looked quiet. He found his key in his trouser pocket, pressed it into the slot, and held his right thumb against the upper thumbplate until the front door slid back. He stepped inside.

"Marge?"

No answer. He half expected an answering rattle of gunfire, or the sudden appearance of the Corporation gendarmerie, but the house remained silent. Only the steady purr of the electronic dust-eater was audible. He went on into the living room, hoping at least to find the cat sleeping in the big armchair, but there was no cat. Everything was tidy and in its place. The windows opaqued.

The windows were opaqued! Kennedy felt a twinge of shock. They never opaqued the windows except when they expected to be away for long periods of time, on vacations, long shopping, tours. Marge would never have left the windows opaqued in the middle of the day like that. . .

Suspicion began to form. He saw a piece of paper sitting on the coffee-table in the living room. He picked it up.

It was a note, in Marge's handwriting, but more shaky than usual. All it said was, "*Ted, there's a tape on the recorder. Please listen to it. Marge.*"

His hands trembled slightly as he switched on the sound system and activated the tape recorder.

"Ted, this is Marge speaking to you—for what's going to be the last time. I was going to put this in the form of a note, but I thought using the recorder would let me make things a little clearer.

"Ted, I'm leaving. It's not a hasty step. I thought about it a long time, and when this Ganymede business came up everything seemed to crystallize. We just shouldn't be living together. Oh, it was nice at times—don't get me wrong. But there's such a fundamental difference in our outlooks toward things that a break had to be made—now, before it was too late to make it."

"You worked on the Ganymede thing casually, lightheartedly—and

didn't realize that I was bitterly opposed to it. Things like that. I'm not leaving you because of a difference in politics, or anything else. Let's just say that the Ganymede job was a symptom, not a cause, of the trouble in our marriage. I hated the Contract and what it stood for. You didn't even bother to examine the meaning of it. So today—the day you left for space, Ted—I'm leaving.

"I'm going away with Dave Spalding. Don't jump to conclusions, though—I wasn't cheating on you with Dave ever. I have my code and I live by it. But we did discuss the idea of going away together, and your leaving for Ganymede has made it possible. That's why I wanted you to go. Please don't be hurt by all this—please don't smash things up and curse. Play the tape a couple of times, and think about things. I don't want anything that's in the house; I took what I wanted to keep, and the rest is yours. After you've had time to get used to everything I'll get in touch with you about the divorce.

"So that's it, Ted. It was grand while it lasted, but I knew it couldn't stay grand much longer, and to spare both of us fifty or sixty years of bitterness I've pulled out. Dave has left the Agency, but we have a little money that we've both saved. Again, Ted, I'm sorry—sorry for both of us.

"I left the cat with the Camerons, and you can get him back from them when you get back from Ganymede. Nobody but you and Dave and me knows what's happened. Take care of yourself, Ted. And so long."

He let the tape run down to the end when it was finished, and shut it off. Then he stood numbly in the middle of the room for a long while, and after that he played the tape over once again from beginning to end.

"I didn't expect that, Marge," he said quietly. His throat felt very dry. His eyes ached; but he did not cry at all.

15

HE Poured himself a drink, and even that was not without its painful contingent memories, because Marge had always poured his drinks for him. Then he took off his shoes and listened to the tape a third time.

This time around he was able to stop hearing Marge's words and listened to the way she was saying them: straightforwardly, with little hesitation or emotional quaver. These were words she had stored within her a long time, he realized, and she seemed almost happy to relieve herself of them.

Some minutes passed, and the first rough shock ebbed away. He looked at it almost philosophically now. It *had* been inevitable. She had acted with great strength and wisdom, and he respected her for it.

But he felt bitter over one thing: that he had not returned from Ganymede a changed man—a man who had not only shifted his stand but who had taken positive action in his new allegiance—and Marge was not here to commend him for seeing her point at last. His conversion had come too late for that. There was no point chasing after her, finding her, saying, "Look, Marge, I've repudiated the Corporation finally and the Agency—won't you come back now?"

No. It was too late to wave his newfound allegiance and expect Marge to forgive all his old blunders.

It hurt, but he forced himself to forget her.

He rose, crossing the room, and snapped on the video. He searched for a newscast and finally found one on Channel 72, the Bridgeport UHF channel. He listened patiently through the usual guff about the miserable late-July weather, hot and humid despite the best efforts of the Bureau of Weather Adjustment, and to an analy-

sis of the new cabinet crisis in Yugoslavia.

Then the newscaster paused and said, "Spacefield Seven in New Jersey was the scene several hours ago of the arrival from Ganymede of Captain Louis Hills' space ferry, which had made its last trip to Ganymede three weeks ago laden with supplies for the colony there. Captain Hills reported all well on the tiny world. In an afternoon baseball game, the Red Sox defeated the..."

Kennedy shut the set off. So they had decided to keep all news of him hushed up. He started to form plans. Today was July 30. On October 11, the Corporation would go before the U.N. to ask for armed intervention. He had until then to puncture the fabric of lies he had helped erect.

But he would have to move warily. The Corporation would be looking for him, anxious to shut him up before he could damage the project. And probably the U.N. Security Police would be on the alert for him. The Greater New York area was going to be unsafe for a while.

There was one place he could go. His earlier home; Wisconsin. He could hide there.

HHE PACKED a single suitcase, taking just one change of clothes and a few toilet articles. He left everything else untouched—the bar, the kitchen, the whole house.

He waited just a moment, gathering his strength, and took a last quick look at the house he and Marge had picked together eight years before, and which he might never see again.

He was leaving the past behind. Marge, the cat, his books, his records—all the things he had treasured. The solid, secure life for which he had long been smugly thankful, gone.

There was a gun in his night-table drawer, a snubnosed .38. He never used it. Fully loaded, it had rested in

the drawer; now he slipped it into the shoulder-holster and donned it. The time was 16:32, Monday, July 30 2044.

It was not safe to call the airline from his house; they might be monitoring his phone. He locked the front door, looked around carefully, and stowed his luggage in the car.

Ten minutes later, he was in town. He parked his car outside Schiller's, the township pharmacy, and went in.

He put a quarter on the counter. "Two phone tokens, Max."

"Sure. Oh, hello, Mr. Kennedy." Schiller wiped his hands on his stained white smock and said, "Couple of men were in here just a minute ago asking for you. Wanted to know how to get out to your place. I had my boy show them."

"I'm not expecting anyone," Kennedy said. He took the tokens from the counter.

"Hey, there they are!" Schiller exclaimed, pointing.

Through the plate-glass front window Kennedy saw two men in dark brown business suits and austere violet traveling-cloaks, coming out of the bank. They were cold-looking and efficient men; Corporation men, Kennedy thought. He started to walk quickly toward the telephone booths.

"Hey, Mr. Kennedy," Schiller called. "You better go out there and see those fellers before they get into their car and go chasin' all the way out to your place."

"I don't have time to see them; I've got to get into the city on some important business."

Kennedy dialed the ticket-deck at Roosevelt Airport and reserved a single seat on a flight for Milwaukee leaving at 1951 that evening. He gave his name as Victor Engel.

As he left the booth, Schiller said, "Those friends of yours drove off toward your place while you were on the phone."

Kennedy grinned. "I just didn't have

time to see them. I have to get down to the city in a hurry; my boat leaves at 19:00."

"Boat?"

"I'm going to Europe on company business. Don't tell a soul; I really don't want it getting around or all my friends will expect me to bring back souvenirs."

AS HE DROVE rapidly down the Thruway toward New York, he thought about the two bleak-faced Corporation men. They were certain to come back to town, once they found his house empty; perhaps they would stop in Schiller's again, and in that case they were certain to get drawn into conversation with Max.

He hoped they had a nice time looking for him on the departing boats to Europe.

He took the artery that led out along the south shore of Long Island Sound and reached the airport at 17:47. He left his car in the parking area, made his way toward the shining plastic building that housed the central ticket offices, and claimed his ticket. Departure time was 19:51.

He ate in an automatic restaurant—a light meal, protoid sandwich and mild, for he was far from hungry just now—and bought an evening 'fax-sheet at a vending stand. He found a squib on the return of the Ganymede ship, but no mention of the public-relations man who had fled the space-field. He crumpled the 'fax sheet and threw it away.

The heat of day died down and departure time drew near. At 1925 the announcement came, "Universal Airlines plane for Milwaukee, Flight 165, now loading at Gate 17."

The ship was not the newest model—an FB-9, seating ninety, a fairly low-ceiling liner.

After spaceflight, airplane flying seemed odd to Kennedy—oddly clumsy and oddly unsafe. The plane took off on schedule, roaring down the runway

and veering sharply upward into the sky; he looked down to the darkening streets of Brooklyn and saw tiny dots that were autos passing below, and then Brooklyn passed out of sight as the ship stabilized at its flight altitude of 20,000 feet.

At that height they were well above the clouds, which formed a solid gray-white floor stretching to the horizon, billowing up here and there in puffs that looked like ice-floes on a frozen sea.

Sooner than he expected, they were in Milwaukee; his watch read 22:13, but he jabbed the setting stud to put the hands back an hour, to conform with local time.

The Milwaukee airport probably had been a local wonder a century before; now, it merely looked cheap and shabby, a weathered old edifice of green glass and plastic. Kennedy treated himself to a cup of synthetic caffeine drink in one of the airport restaurants, and considered his next several steps.

It was an hour's drive from Milwaukee to Brockhurst, where he had been born and where his older brother still lived. But it was late, and he felt hesitant about barging in on them unannounced when he knew he could not get out there much before midnight.

Instead of going out there, Ted Kennedy took a cab to town and rented a room in the first hotel he found. In the morning he dialed his brother's number as soon as he was up, at 08:00.

A GRUFF, deep voice said, "Kennedy speaking. Who's this?"

"Kennedy, this is Kennedy. Of the Connecticut Kennedys, you know."

A moment of silence. Then: "Ted?"

"None other."

"Where are you?"

"In the Hotel Avon in good old Milwaukee. I got in late last night too late to call."

"So the first time in five years you decide to visit your poor relations, and

you don't even give us a word of warning, huh? You bring Marge?"

"No. I came alone, and in something of a hurry. Look, Steve, I'd like to stay with you for a while. And I can't explain over the phone."

"You come right on out here, then. I'll take the day off for you. And we'll have the extra room fixed up for you when you get here. Hurry it up, now."

Kennedy caught the next bus.

Steve was eleven years his senior, and, since their father had died when Ted was seven, had fairly well served as his guide through boyhood. Steve was the salt-of-the-earth type, hearty big-bodied and smiling, with a fondness for beer and fishing excursions. He was a faithful churchgoer. He had quarrelled endlessly with his brother, until Ted, more nervous by temperament, introverted and intellectual, had left home after high school, gone to Chicago, enrolled in Northwestern.

The brothers had met just once since Kennedy's marriage to Marge—in 2039, when a vacation trip of Steve's had brought him eastward. Since that time, Kennedy had exchanged letters with his brother sporadically, but as the years passed they had had less and less to say to each other. It was nearly ten months since he had last written to Steve.

He reached Brockhurst a little after 10:00 that morning.

Steve was on the porch of his home waiting for him when he crossed off Main onto Willoughby. Betty was at his side—at least Kennedy assumed that the cheerful bovine woman in the thin print dress was Betty; he had quite forgotten her face—and two boys of about nine and thirteen were having catch in the front yard.

Steve had grown gray, Kennedy noticed, but he still looked impressive—a big-muscled thick-bodied man with deep sad eyes that belied the essentially untroubled mind behind them. He took the suitcase with his left hand and

squeezed Kennedy's right hand mercifully with his other.

THEY GAVE him a room overlooking the field behind the house—a small room, homey, with a crucifix and a knitted motto on the wall. When he had unpacked his few belongings he returned downstairs and called them in off the porch.

Inside, in the living-room, he leaned forward in the old overstuffed chair and said quietly, "I guess I owe you all some explanations."

"Heck, Ted, you damn well know you can drop in on us any time you..."

"No. Listen to me, and if you don't want me to stay here say so. I'm in a little trouble back East. Marge isn't with me any more, though that's only part of it. You know something of the sort of work I do—public relations? Well, I happened to uncover a sort of a swindle that was being put over on the public, that my company was helping out in."

He carefully toned his vocabulary down to make everything perfectly clear to them. "I stumbled over the evidence, and like an idiot popped off at the wrong time. So there are some big people in New York anxious to get hold of me and shut me up. They think I ran off to Europe; they have no idea—I hope—where I really am. I came out here traveling under a fake name. But here's the main point: at the end of September I'm going to take what I know up before the United Nations—yes, it's that big—and expose the whole filthy mess. But I need a place to hide until then. Not really, hide, but just a place to stay and live without attracting much attention, preferably far from New York.

"In two months I'm going to go back East and expose the works, or die trying. Now, you've got a nice home and five swell kids, and I know you don't want anything to happen to them or you. I'll put it to you bluntly: there's always a chance they might find out

where I am, and come and get me. In that case there may be trouble. Okay. I'd like to stay here. But be honest with me, because I can always go somewhere else if you don't want to run the risk of having me."

It had been a long speech; his lips were dry when he finished. He looked from his brother to Betty, and back. They exchanged glances.

Finally Steve scratched one ear and said slowly, "I was always afraid you'd get mixed up in something bad, Ted. I tried to teach you to do your day's work and leave well enough alone, but I guess it never really took; or else the people down East taught you different. You really seem to be pokin' round hornet's nests now."

Kennedy nodded. "I am. But tell me..."

"I'm tellin' you. For ten years now I kept thinking you were too fancy-pants to call on me when you might need me. But I guess you just didn't need me till now. And this would be a lousy time to kick you in the teeth in return, eh, Ted? Sure, you can stay. Stay as long as you need to. What's the good of having brothers if a man doesn't take a risk for them once in a while?"

16

THE SUMMER days slipped by, July giving way to a blistering August when heat hung heavy over the flat Wisconsin farmlands. Ted Kennedy lived quietly, reading a great deal, thinking, occasionally accompanying Steve on his salesman's rounds, playing with the five Kennedy children. He was accepted by all as a member of the household. He kept a close watch on all the communications media.

The news-sheets and telefaxes were chiefly concerned with local news, the heat wave, the prospects for the fall. But there were hints here and there.

Every newspaper carried a daily box telling the latest news from the Ganymede colony (Kennedy wondered who was carrying the hoax on—Watsinski, most likely)—and the character of the news had taken on a distinct new coloration.

Now there was word of sinister alien armies marching beyond the hills, of bomb detonations and the dry sound of target practice. "The aliens are becoming very resentful of our presence," wrote Colony Director Lester Brookman in the column that appeared August 11. "Although we have little contact with them, they object to our presence on their world and have several times made ugly threats. During the present crisis, we do not permit members of the colony to leave the dome in groups of less than three."

It was proceeding according to plan, Kennedy thought. The hostile aliens were on the warpath; soon they would be hunting for scalps; then would come the massacre. After that, troops would be called in to wipe out the belligerent savages. It was an old, old pattern of colonial expansion.

He knew the schedule. By September 17, the world would know that the colony of Earthmen was in imminent danger of being wiped out by the aliens. On September 22, the Corporation would make preliminary overtures toward the United Nations, asking for a police force to be sent to Ganymede to guard Terran interests. It would not be too strong a plea, for the public needed more manipulating. From September 22 through October 10, the world would pray for the endangered Earthmen; on October 11, the aliens would sweep down from the hills and virtually wipe out the colony.

And, by October 17, United Nations troops would be on their way to Ganymede to quell the disturbance and police the world to make it safe for the Corporation.

The summer rolled on. If there were a hunt in progress for him, it was an extraordinarily secret one. He had never spent two less troubled months.

HE WAS AT home Sunday afternoon, September 17, when the news came forth from every medium: *GANYMEDE COLONY ATTACKED!*

"A surprise alien attack shortly before dawn Ganymede time left the Earth colony on Jupiter's moon in grave peril today. An estimated five thousand aliens, armed with clubs and native weapons, swept down on the dome that houses the colony. Colony Director Lester Brookman radioed later in the day that the assault had been beaten back, with the loss of three Earth lives and considerable damage to the colony."

Betty Kennedy was pale and distraught as the newsbreak ended. "That's *horrible!* Those poor people—fighting against those savages!"

"Couple of fellows were talking today about how maybe the U. N.'s going to send troops up, there to keep everything peaceful," Steve said. "But they better hurry if they're going to do it, or there'll be an old-fashioned massacre."

Ted Kennedy frowned tightly and said nothing. He wanted to tell his brother and sister-in-law that their fears were for nothing, that there was no colony up there, that this whole alien attack had been created on a public-relations agency's drawing-boards months before, and neatly calculated to be sprung this day. But he could not tell them that.

Instead he said. "I'll be going back to the city on Tuesday, Steve."

They argued with him, tried to make him stay longer, but he stonily insisted that the time had come for him to return. It had been a splendid visit, he

told them with sincerity, but he was needed elsewhere. After a protracted farewell scene, he put the town of Brockhurst, Wisconsin behind him a second time. Steve drove him to Milwaukee early Tuesday morning, and "Victor Engel" took an 11:21 plane to New York.

IT WAS EARLY afternoon when he arrived. He had grown a mustache in Brockhurst, and his long Agency haircut had given way to a midwestern trim that left the back of his neck and his ears bare. Anyone looking for him would try to identify him by the thick mane he had worn in the spring, and that was gone. He had also picked up a heavy tan in Wisconsin. None of these things would serve as an absolute disguise, but they would all help him to avoid being recognized during the next two weeks.

He rented a room in Manhattan, in a dreary old slum of a hotel in the mid-sixties overlooking the East River. The name he gave was Victor Engel of Brockhurst, Wisconsin.

Thursday passed. On Friday the 22nd, on schedule, the representatives of the Corporation appeared before the newly-convened session of the General Assembly to lay the groundwork for a possible request for United Nations intervention on Ganymede. The plot was ripening; the climax drew near.

Kennedy read the text in Saturday's papers. They were following Dinoli's original timetable perfectly. The next two weeks were slated to be ones of increasing peril for the little colony, culminating in the final massacre of October 11.

That evening, Saturday, September 23, Kennedy set out from his mid-Manhattan hotel room, planning to add burglary to the list of crimes he had already committed.

It was a warm, muggy night, but he wore his jacket anyway, to conceal the

.38 strapped under his arm. He took the up-town bus along the Second Avenue Skyway, getting off at East 122nd Street. The business district, on a Saturday evening, was utterly deserted.

HE TURNED up East 123rd to Lenox, and the office building that housed Steward & Dinoli was before him. He passed through the open front door and was met immediately by an inner barrier. He had a key to it, but the key would work only if his thumbprint were registered in the building's central file, down in the basement computer banks. It was a long chance—but removing a print from the computer banks was a troublesome business, and perhaps they had neglected to do it.

He inserted his key and touched his thumb to the plate. The lock clicked; he pushed against the door and it swung back into its niche. They had not bothered to remove his thumbprint from the file after all.

He moved silently through the ghostly building, taking the stairs rather than the elevator. There was a concealed camera in the elevator that photographed all weekend users; he preferred not to have them get a record of his altered appearance.) Eight, nine, ten. . . eleven.

He used his key and his thumbprint again and let himself into the office. The lights were off, the windows opaqued. Quietly, he made his way past the outer desks to his old cubicle. He clicked on the pocket flash he had brought and quickly gathered together the materials he wanted:

Dinoli's bulletin quoting the timetable for the unfolding of the project.

The volume of characterizations of colonists he and Spalding had compiled.

Half a dozen damning interoffice memoranda.

His own master chart for developing crises in the day-to-day life of the Ganymede colonists.

It made a heavy little bundle. He shuffled it all together, found a big envelope and shoved them all in, and looked around. He had enough material here to explode the Ganymede hoax from top to bottom. The whole thing was here in all its cynical completeness.

Kennedy smiled. It would not be hard for them to discover who it was who had entered the building Saturday night, once they learned of the theft: all they had to do was run a check of the computer banks and they could learn that the thumbprint of Third-Level Executive Theodore Kennedy had been used to open the doors. But by then it would no longer matter.

He shuffled away, softly, out of the office and down the stairs, and back to his hotel-room with his precious documents. He would need photostats, but he knew where he could get a quick job, even on Sunday.

17

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, was a dark, rain-shadowed day that began poorly and grew worse; the dawn drizzle developed into a full-sized autumn squall by 09:00. Kennedy reflected that the Bureau of Weather Adjustment had always been better at making rain than in heading it off.

By 09:00, though, he was safely out of the reach of the storm. He was in the lobby of the eighty-six story United Nations Secretariat Building on 43rd Street, clutching a thick parcel wrapped in protective plastic under one arm. He was waiting for Harrison M. Flaherty, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative to the United Nations from the United States of America, to arrive at his office. Flaherty's private

secretary had said the delegate normally reached the U.N. by 0915.

At 09:17, Kennedy made his way across the shining floor of the lobby to the great communicator panel of the Secretariat Building. He rang Flaherty's office again. "Has Mr. Flaherty arrived yet? This is Mr. Kennedy."

"Yes, the Ambassador got here just a few minutes ago. Would you come up, please, Mr. Kennedy?"

Kennedy had given his real name in hopes of getting an immediate hearing. "I'll be right up."

He took the elevator to the forty-second floor, got off, and found himself in the offices of the American delegation.

A receptionist, busy with switchboard plugs, glanced up at him. "Mr. Kennedy?"

"That's right."

He felt strong arms grip him, turned halfway, saw three men in the drab uniform of the United Nations Security Police behind him. One held a drawn gun. A second was efficiently frisking him, while a third held his arms immobile.

"You're Kennedy of S&D, aren't you? Wanted for treason, unlawful escape, breaking and entering, and half a dozen other things. Take that package from him, Mike."

"Hold on! I came up here to see the Ambassador! You can't just grab me like this!"

KENNEDY began to sweat. He reached out as if to recapture the package they had taken from him, and felt his arm being jerked sharply upward. They were just blockheaded enough to drag him off to jail right now, he thought, without giving him even the chance to speak to Flaherty.

"I have to see the Ambassador, you idiots! Why do you think I gave my own name? There are easier ways of getting myself arrested!"

"You'll have to come with us," the Security man insisted.

"Just one minute," said a calm, deep voice. "What's happening here?"

Looking up, Kennedy saw the bulky, impressive, gray-maned figure of Harrison Flaherty standing at the door to an inner office. He wore a bright governmental cape with flaring shoulder-crests, and he looked angry.

Advancing toward him from the opposite direction came a thinner, younger man. Kennedy recognized him as Flaherty's private secretary.

"This man called from below and said he was Theodore Kennedy of the Steward & Dinoli agency, and wanted to see you. I made a routine call to S&D and a second-level man told me that yes, there had been a Kennedy working there, but he'd been a fugitive since July and was wanted for treason and half a dozen other things, and would we make sure he didn't get away this time. So I alerted three Security men to catch him when he came in."

Flaherty frowned puzzledly. Quickly Kennedy said, "I admit everything. I'm the Kennedy they want. But I have to see you, Mr. Flaherty. Or at least, to have you look through the papers in the package that goon is holding."

"Why are these papers so important, Mr. Kennedy?"

"Because they'll explain why I've been in hiding since July. They'll explain the hoax that's being put over on the world. You ought to read them before the U.N. votes on sending troops to Ganymede, which is something that's going to happen on October 17."

Flaherty smiled; it was a just-another-crackpot-take-him-away smile. But then he seemed to have an afterthought—or perhaps he detected something believable behind the superficial, wild-eyed appearance that Ted Kennedy knew he must be making.

In a quiet voice he said, "Perhaps I should examine this matter before dismissing it. Officer, give me that

package and escort Mr. Kennedy into my chambers."

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the United Nations Organization in plenary session was an impressive sight. The flags of the ninety-seven member nations decked the hall, and above them all rose the United Nations flag—the World Flag.

The matter of Ganymede was the topic of the agenda, and Juan Hermanos of Chile was presiding. After the gavel fell, opening the session at 13:00, Delegate Flaherty of the United States rose solemnly and asked for the floor.

"The topic most frequently discussed before this organization in recent months is that of Ganymede, the moon of Jupiter, on which a colony of Earthborn men and women has been planted. This colony has been planted by the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation, whose Mr. Bullard I see in the group before me. The work of the Corporation is well known. Applying private capital where public financing was impossible, the Corporation gave mankind the key to the stars. From its laboratories came the ships that first reached the moon, our sister planets Mars and Venus, and lately Ganymede. From its training-schools came the men who piloted these ships. From among its ranks was chosen the few hundred who comprise the colony on Ganymede, the colony whose privations and dangers we all have followed with such keen interest since public announcement of its existence was made last spring.

"In short the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation has, in the past fifty years, become virtually a supranational state, with lands of its own, police of its own, now a spacefleet of its own. This sort of private enterprise is considered commendable by current standards, since we all know the officers of the Corpo-

ration have long worked in the best interests of humanity.

"But this morning, as I prepared myself for the day's work a visitor came to me, a young man who has been active in the task of disseminating news of the Corporation's recent programs. He brought some rather startling papers with him. I have looked through them, and I can attest they are genuine.

"I believe it now becomes necessary to re-evaluate our entire set of beliefs, not only in the matter of Ganymede but in the matter of Corporation activity in general. I would like to yield place, if it be so resolved by this body, to Mr. Theodore Kennedy, Executive Third Level of the public-relations firm of Steward & Dinoli of this city."

The formality took a moment; Kennedy was given the floor. He rose in his place at Flaherty's left, nudging the chair back clumsily. His throat felt dry.

The delegates were staring at him, some with curiosity, some in boredom. In the glare of the lights he managed to pick out the thick, coarse face of Bullard, the Corporation's First Level man. Bullard was leaning forward; his eyes seemed to have attained demonic intensity.

KENNEDY said, "These papers I hold here give documentary proof of the most wide-scale hoax perpetrated in modern history. But before I distribute photostatic copies to you, and let you judge for yourselves, let me briefly state my qualifications for the task I now undertake, and a summary of the charges I intend to make against the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation.

"I have been on Ganymede—from July 5 to 30 of this year. I have seen the planet with my own eyes. I have also helped in the fabrication of this hoax.

"Point One: The Corporation is will-

fully deceiving the people of the world.

"Point Two: There is not, and never has been, a colony of men and women on Ganymede. There is a Corporation outpost, which consisted of sixteen men in Corporation employ at the time I was there.

"Point Three: The natives of Ganymede are actively opposed to the exploitation of their world by the Corporation or by any other Earth people, and have declared this repeatedly to the members of the Outpost there.

"Point Four: The Corporation, realizing that the natives of Ganymede do not wish their continued occupation of the planet to endure, have come to the decision that nothing less than a full-scale war against the intransigent Ganymedeans will be necessary in order to subdue the planet and place it fully in their control. Not even the vast resources of the Corporation are equal to the task of waging this war; nor do they want to dissipate their capital, and tie up men, in what quite possibly would be a guerrilla campaign of great intensity.

"Point Five: Knowing these things, the Corporation engaged the Agency for which I formerly worked, charging them with the task of so manipulating and controlling the sources of news that the true nature of events on Ganymede would be concealed, and that the United Nations could ultimately be induced to carry out an armed intervention in the Corporation's behalf on Ganymede. This campaign has been highly successful. I regret to confess that it was I who originated the central concept of a fictitious colony on Ganymede which would engage the sympathies of the people of Earth—a colony which is scheduled for a fraudulent annihilation on October 11, to serve as provocation for a Corporation request for intervention by United Nations forces."

KENNEDY paused. He had spoken carefully and clearly; and as he

looked around he saw a triple ring of shocked and unbelieving faces. They were starting to mutter; a moment more and there might even be jeers. But he was a master of his trade, and he had timed his speech carefully.

"Perhaps you feel that these charges of mine are the nightmares of a paranoid, despite the fact that Ambassador Flaherty has given me his seal of approval. But I have had prepared photostatic copies of documents which demonstrate amply the shrewd and calculating way in which the Corporation and my Agency—and I, myself—went about the business of hoodwinking an entire world. Members of the American delegation will now pass among you distributing them."

He had waited just a moment too long. A fierce-looking delegate in bright velvet robes stood up and shouted in crisp British tones, "This is an outrage, and I protest! How can such arrant nonsense be tolerated in this hall? How can..."

Kennedy ignored him. He was staring, instead, at Bullard—Bullard whose face had grown increasingly more contorted during his speech; Bullard who had listened in anger to the destruction of the Corporations's plans, Bullard who sat quivering with rage, shaking with the impact of each of Kennedy's statements...

Bullard who was rising now, gun grasped tight in one massive paw...

It was too late for Kennedy to duck. He could only stand and wait as he felt the bullet crash into his shoulder and heard an instant later the strange little 'pop' of Bullard's weapon; then the force of the shot knocked him backward, and as he fell he saw Security men swarming down over the struggling Bullard and heard the loud bewildered shouts of the delegates—delegates who, in the moment, had had all reality snatched from them, who now confronted the naked core of lies that had been cloaked so long.

18

DIZZILY; TED KENNEDY attempted to rise.

He lay sprawled behind his chair, ignored for a moment in the general confusion. His shoulder seemed to be burning.

He put one hand on the edge of the table and hoisted himself up. Delegates milled about confusedly; Hermandos was pounding the gavel and roaring for order. A flock of Security Policemen surrounded Bullard and were dragging the Corporation man away; Bullard was white-faced with rage. Probably rage at having missed, Kennedy thought.

A quiet voice said, "Are you all right?" The voice belonged to Ambassador Flaherty.

"I think so," Kennedy said. His shoulder throbbed painfully, but he did not seem to be bleeding.

But suddenly he felt weak. His wobbly legs gave way and he groped for the nearest seat and sank into it. He saw the delegation aides moving down the aisles, distributing his photostats. A hum of light conversation replaced the previous agitated buzz of talk.

Flaherty was speaking again.

"In view of the sudden attack upon Mr. Kennedy by the Corporation executive present among us, I think we must not hesitate to take action today. The shot fired at Mr. Kennedy was a tacit admission of guilt.

"I call, therefore, for a full investigation of the relationship between the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation and the Steward & Dinoli Agencies; I ask furthermore that the charter of the Corporation be temporarily suspended, pending full investigation—and that we consider possible ways and means of establishing direct United Nations control over space travel and interplanetary colonization."

Kennedy smiled despite the pain. What did a bullet in the shoulder matter, more or less, as the price for what he had done?

He turned to Flaherty and started to say something. Before he could get the first word out, though, a wave of pain rippled up and over him, and he struggled unsuccessfully to hold on to consciousness.

For the next few moments he heard dim voices speaking somewhere above him; he was aware someone was lifting him; then...

WHEN HE WOKE, Kennedy was on a plump leatheroid couch in the inner office of Ambassador Flaherty. His jacket and his bloodstained shirt lay on a nearby chair.

"Ah. He is awake." A pale man in medical uniform bent over him, nodding. "I am Dr. Marquis of the United Nations Medical Staff. The bullet has been removed, Mr. Kennedy. It caused trifling damage. A few days' rest until the soreness leaves, and you'll be all right again."

"Glad to hear it."

He craned his neck until he saw Flaherty. "Well? What did I miss?"

"Plenty. Things have been popping all day. The Security Police paid a visit to Agency headquarters and impounded enough evidence to send your former boss and his friends to the psych-squad. Bullard's in custody here for the attempt on your life. Security forces have taken positions around all Corporation buildings now, to head off the riots."

"Riots?"

"We broke the story to the papers right after you passed out. It caused quite a stir."

Kennedy smiled. "I'll bet it did. Let me see."

They brought him an afternoon edition of a newspaper, and he skimmed quickly through the story.

A New York public-relations executive today blew the lid off the biggest and best-kept hoax in modern history. Testifying before the U. N. General Assembly, Theodore Kennedy, 32, of Steward & Dinoli, revealed to an astonished gathering that the colony supposedly planted on Ganymede was nothing but a public-relations hoax fabricated by his agency. Kennedy charged that the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration had hired Steward & Dinoli last April to handle the project for them.

As a dramatic climax to the expose, W. Richardson Bullard, 53, an Executive First Level of the Corporation, rose from his seat in the Assembly gallery and fired point-blank at Kennedy, wounding him in the shoulder. Bullard was taken into police custody.

Also rounded up were Louis Dinoli, 66, Executive First Level of the public-relations firm, and the four second level men of the firm, as well as ranking Corporation officials. Further investigation...

Kennedy scanned the rest of the paper. There was a marvelous shot of Dinoli, eyes blazing satanically, being led from the S&D offices by Security men.

THERE WAS much more: pages and pages of it. Pictures of Kennedy, and an amazingly accurate biography of him; a transcript of the entire U. N. session that day; photographs of the Corporation leaders. A long article covered the background of the Ganymede affair from the very first public release back in May, quoting significant passages from the pseudo-accounts of the pseudo-colony. An angry editorial for prompt punishment of the offenders and more effective monitoring of the sources of news in the future to prevent repetitions of this flagrant deception...

"Dinoli never did things in a small

way," Kennedy said, looking up. "His model was the twentieth-century German dictator Hitler. Hitler always said it's harder to fool the people on the small things than on the big ones. You could get them to believe that the continents on the other side of the world had been swallowed up by the ocean a lot easier than you could convince them that the price of meat was going to drop next week. So Dinoli set out to tell the world all about Ganyমেদে. He nearly made it, too."

He handed back the newspapers. He felt very tired, too tired to think, too tired to evaluate what he had done. All he knew was that it was over, now, and he wanted to rest and plan his next move.

"Take me home," he said.

HE WENT home. Flaherty saw to it that there were people on hand to take care of him; he was still too weak to cook for himself and clean up.

He sent one of the U. N. people down the road to the Camerons to fetch the cat. He asked another to help him across the room to the sound system; he wanted to hear music.

He wondered briefly about the consequences of what he had done. Certainly he had finished Steward & Dinoli; a lot of men who were drawing fancy pay would be out looking for jobs tomorrow, if the psych-squads didn't get them.

Haugen, Cameron, Presslie. Probably they would get off easily, pleading that they were only employees and did not set Agency policy. They might draw minor sentences. After that, though, their careers in public relations were just as dead as...

As Ted Kennedy's.

What do I do now?

His name would fade from the front pages in a few days; he knew too much about communications media to believe that his current notoriety would last.

And then...

Few jobs would be open to him. Men who perform public services are rarely remembered for the value of their actions but for the manner of them. Suppose he drifted on to some other agency? They would know he had turned against Dinoli, had broken into the Agency offices late at night to obtain damning evidence. No, Ted Kennedy would not be a safe man to employ.

And one other factor.

He had been through three months of torture, since being assigned to the Gandymede Contract. He had had his eyes opened. He had learned to *think*. He had developed a conscience. A man with a conscience was useless in his line of work. But he was trained for no other profession, and at thirty-two it was too late to start over.

THE PHONE rang suddenly.

The U. N. man answered it. He returned a moment later and said, "It's your wife, Mr. Kennedy. Long distance call. From St. Louis."

"Help me over to the phone," Kennedy said. "No—devil take it, I'll get there on my own steam."

He tottered across the room and into the alcove where the downstairs phone was kept. He looked at the receiver a moment before picking it up.

"Hello—Marge?"

"Hello, Ted. We've just heard the news. We think it's splendid."

"We?"

"Dave and I." She sounded as if she were fighting to keep back tears; her voice was constricted. "I—didn't think you would do it, Ted. Or *could* do it. I—guess I was wrong."

"No. The *me* you knew couldn't have done it. It wasn't till I went to Ganyমেদে that I..." He realized his own voice was quivering. "You're in St. Louis?" he asked.

"Yes. We've been here ever since..."

"Oh. I wondered where you were. Do you ever think of me?"

"A little. Ted..."

"Yes?"

"I just called to let you know how thrilled I was that you did what you did. Dave, too; he says he wouldn't have had courage to do that."

"He has someone he loves," Kennedy said. "I don't blame him for not speaking up."

"But, Ted— I didn't want this call to seem— I mean I..." She hesitated. "Ted, everything I said in that tape still goes. I don't have any regrets. We weren't meant for each other. I don't want any reconciliation."

"Okay," he said. "I wasn't going to ask for one. Send me the divorce papers tonight and I'll sign them as soon as they get here. Okay?"

"Thanks, Ted."

He shrugged, and winced at the pain in his shoulder. He realized that Marge meant very little to him, now; she was part of his past, a past rapidly dwindling into faded shadows. She was nothing to his future.

"So long, Marge."

"So long, Ted. And I'm glad you found it in you to do what you did."

HE HUNG up and turned away from the phone. He felt very relaxed, now. He walked back into the living room.

The U. N. man he had sent down the road to the Camerons for the cat had returned now. He looked apologetic as he said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Kennedy. The Camerons just weren't home, and the neighbors said they wouldn't be home for a long time. I couldn't find the cat. The man in the next house says he thinks it ran away last week."

"That's all right," Kennedy said. Thanks."

He sat down heavily. Poor old cat, he thought; after nearly a decade of civilized life, he had to go back to the jungle. He probably had forgotten how to catch mice in all these years.

But it was just as well. The cat was

part of the past, too—and the past was dropping away, sloughing off and vanishing down the river of time.

No wife, no cat, no job; no past. And fame was fast fleeting. Today he was The Man Who Exposed The Corporation; tomorrow he'd be just another jobless has-been, trying to coast through life on his old press-clippings.

"You know," said the UN man, breaking into Kennedy's thoughts, "what beats me is that they never found where you were hiding out. That firm could have hired the best snoopers in the business, had an army of them tracking you down. You weren't dodging around."

"I took a chance," he admitted, "but not as long a one as you might think. You see, I know how minds work in that business. They knew I was dangerous but they figured I'd either hide away and keep quiet, or start blabbing in such a way that they could shut me up easily."

The UN man nodded. "Figured that if you were honest or idealistic, you must be stupid, huh?"

"That's it. That's the way I would have figured it a year ago, if someone else had tried the same sort of thing. Oh... you can be sure that I wouldn't have been forgotten completely; they'd have arranged something unpleasant for me after the Ganymede intervention was under way. Most likely cook up something to make me out a traitor after the war was on... Who'd believe my story then?"

His mind drifted back two months, to his short stay on Ganymede. Ganymede had served as the catalyst, as it were, for his change in thinking. On Ganymede...

He frowned thoughtfully. There was, perhaps, one thing he could do; one useful task for him to perform. One job for which he could volunteer.

One job he could do better than any other man on Earth.

He turned to one of the waiting

U. N. men. "Get on the phone," he said. "Call up Ambassador Flaherty. I want to talk to him. Fast."

19

IT HAD BEEN a fine scene, a memorable scene, Kennedy thought, as he relived it in his mind once again. Saturday, the thirtieth of December, 2044—the final day of the year, and Ted Kennedy's final day on Earth.

Spacefield Seven in New Jersey was bright with snow—the soft fluffy sparkling snow of Earth, not the bleak blue-flecked forbidding snow of Ganymede. There had been a heavy fall on Christmas Eve, and most of it still remained in the rural areas.

The spaceship stood tall and proud in the center of the field. Once it had been a Corporation ship; now it belonged to the United Nations. The crew was a Corporation-trained crew, but they had a new loyalty now. The November trails had finished off the Corporation. Space travel was no longer a private monopoly.

In his mind's eye, Kennedy recreated the moment. Flaherty was there, and Secretary-General Isaacs, and most of the other United Nations delegates, plus representatives from every news medium.

Kennedy stood between Flaherty and Isaacs. The Secretary-General was saying, "Your work will be terribly important to us all, Mr. Kennedy. And the peoples of the world may believe this—every word that comes to us from you will go out to humanity exactly as it is received."

The pilots had signalled. The ship was ready. Kennedy made a neat little farewell speech and walked across the snowbright field toward the waiting ship.

Now he thought back over those last minutes of his on Earth. They had waved to him, and he had waved back,

and he had climbed aboard the ship. The crewmen showed him to his hammock with deference.

He declined the gravalol injection. He had lived through one blastoff, and he did not fear another.

Tomorrow on Earth would be a day without a name, a day without a date—the Year-End World Holiday, a day of wild and frenzied joy. His mind went back six months to the midyear World Holiday—that day of black despair, half-forgotten now.

The day after tomorrow would see a new year on Earth. And for him, a new life.

Resident Administrator of the United Nations Trusteeship on Ganymede. It was a big title, and an even bigger responsibility.

In his hands would be the task of convincing the Ganymedeans that the people of Earth wanted to treat them as brothers; that the Corporation was not representative of all Earth.

HE WOULD have to win the respect and admiration of the Gannys. They remembered him as the man who helped them once; he hoped they would continue to trust him. He had asked for and received the job of teaching the Ganymedeans to forget their first bitter experience with the invaders from Earth.

He would help them in their struggle against their bleak environment. He would do what he could to cement relations between the Gannys and Earth.

Perhaps in a few years it would be possible to establish a permanent colony of Earthmen on Ganymede—later, when the two worlds fully understood each other's motives and ways of thinking. Using Engel's few words, Kennedy would work toward that goal.

He glanced through the spaceship port at the majestic immensity of Jupiter below. Other moons spun round the great planet.

There were other worlds in space; perhaps some day man would meet a

second intelligent race, and a third. The Ganymede experience would guide them in their future encounters.

On Earth, now, they were celebrating the coming of the new year, -the birth of 2045 from the dead husk of 2044. It was something of a rebirth for him too, Kennedy thought; out of the Executive Third Level of six months before, out of the mad world of public relations, had come a different man, one who had a real and valuable job to do and who was going to do it.

Earth was just a hazy memory behind him now. Ahead lay Ganymede where work had to be done.

The ship's medic appeared and broke into Kennedy's reverie. "Sir?"

"Eh... oh. What is it, Johnson?"

"We'll be entering deceleration orbit in twelve minutes, sir. Would you care for a gravalol injection this time down?"

Kennedy shook his head. "No, Johnson. Thanks, but I want to see the whole thing."

He strapped himself in, leaned back, and peered out the port at the whiteness of Ganymede growing nearer outside. The ship began to plunge toward its destination. Ted Kennedy smiled calmly to himself and waited for the landing.