



# WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION

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All Stories New and Complete

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# When Day is Done

By ARNOLD CASTLE

*If there is a bit of the jungle*

*in every man—why not put*

*every man into a bit of the jungle?*

**I**T WAS three in the afternoon and quitting time at Utopian Appliances, Inc. Bert-ram J. Bernard, the firm's stocky, thick-jawed president, waited discreetly at his desk for a few minutes, then closed the file he had been studying, bid his secretary a pleasant evening, and strode calmly out of the office.

He did not want to appear eager, and succeeded superbly in that. Joining several junior

executives, he conversed genially with them as they descended to the rapid-transit floor. Three of the bright, confident young men decided to stop for a quick one at the building's plush saloon. Well, that was okay—Bernard had been a late-runner in his youth. But now, well into middle age, he had learned that life had other demands and pleasures.

"Have a good run, B. B.," said Watkins, the treasurer, at

the rap-tran gate. "Gloria's coming in on the three-thirty and we're going to dinner and then some musical or other she's been dying to see."

So Bernard entered the rap-tran alone, though surrounded by scores of pushing, jabbering strangers. Finding a seat on the aisle, next to a electronics company vice-president whom he knew slightly, he engaged in trade conversation during the five minutes it took the monorail to reach his stop. He and the electronics executive got off, as did about half of the rap-trans passengers, mostly middle-aged men like himself. Early-runners.

The escalator from the monorail stop descended directly into the Jungle Station beneath. In the large lobby the crowd dispersed and Bernard was again alone when he reached the dressing rooms. This was not surprising, he reflected; not many members of his Jungle Station could afford the elaborate private locker unique to this wing of the building. He pressed his thumbprint to the lock and the door slid back.

Inside, he undressed completely, noting with critical satisfaction the strength and color of his body in the full-length mirror at one end of the locker. He quickly packed his clothes, shoes, and briefcase into a small suitcase, with delivery instructions on the top. Then he climbed into

his jungle suit—knee-length shorts, sweat shirt, rubber-soled shoes, and hip holster.

He checked the frequency setting on the sonic pistol, adjusting it to the panthers who were reported in ascendancy. As a last thought, merely a whim, he glanced down at the station emblem on his sweat shirt, just to enjoy the sense of pride he derived from the large red "U-F" above it.

Of course there were getting to be more and more ulcer-frees these days, but that did not make it any less a matter for pride. And anyway several factions were pressing determinedly for a neurosis-free insignia. Though there were complications there. Oh, well, the important thing's the run, he remembered.

In the lobby again he deposited his suitcase at the delivery window. Then he stopped at the bulletin board to read the ascendancy ratings for the day. These were official, therefore several days outdated, but one could extrapolate. Panthers were dropping into third position, behind polar bears, with giraffes at the top by a good margin.

Outside the building he ran into a tipster and decided he had best buy a dope sheet. He gave the seedy little man a dollar bill and looked over the page.

"Keep it right where you got it, Mac," the man whispered hoarsely, nodding to-

ward the pistol at Bernard's side. "I got it straight, dem pant'ers is all over de place. Watch out at de water hole, specially."

**G**LANCING swiftly over the page, Bernard saw that fifty panthers had entered this sector of the jungle overnight, with a herd of fifteen giraffes headed well toward the south. But he also noted that there had been three deaths from polar bears in the past week in his sector alone. Fortunately, the frequency readjustment from panthers to polar bears was an easy one, three clicks clockwise with the thumb. He would have to remember about the water hole, though it was either that or going above the rapids. The sharks below the rapids were pretty thick during the summer.

"Thanks, bud," he told the tipster. Then he strode, still calm, to the wall. Expertly he clambered up its handholds, till he reached the top, thirty feet from the ground. On the other side lay the jungle, its lush tropical growth hiding from his alert eyes the danger that lurked within. He popped a Verve pill into his mouth and chewed on it thoughtfully.

Far in the distance, some five miles at the narrowest point, rose the outer wall. Between the two prowled a variety of ambivalent robot beasts, now ready to dismember him, but on weekends ad-

justed to take small boys and girls for short rides or simply to stalk about picturesquely.

Drawing his pistol and placing it between his teeth, Bernard leaped to the ground between the wall and a large low palm. At once the pistol was again in his hand. But nothing moved. Now he could see clearly the path he must take.

Bending low, he trotted along through the undergrowth. It soon began to clear, and still no danger in sight. He holstered the pistol and advanced, half-walking, half-running, till he could hear the hiss of the rapids. Enough noise to mask the sounds of a dozen panthers, he thought. But it covered his own footsteps, too, and panthers were more phonotropic than polar bears, the latter having a preference for radar spotting.

Coyotes were the worst, of course, with their damned infrared thermo-sensors. They could spot a runner even when he was in cover. Fortunately they were scarce and getting more so. Bernard had only encountered a coyote twice, deactivating it both times. But he had been lucky. He recalled the story about that city councilman. . . .

An hour later he arrived at the river, a half-mile above the rapids and well away from the water hole. He had seen only one beast in the first three miles of his trek, a gi-

raffe hobbling along in olfactory pursuit of another runner far to the right. Giraffes were mainly a nuisance, though they could kick and trample a man. Bernard had heard of such a thing happening, but it was a rarity. They were too easy to elude.

He crossed the river on a log raft he found, which had evidently been rigged to dump him in about halfway across. At least he had got that far on it, he told himself, as he struck out for the shore. For one horrible moment he thought he detected a shark upstream, but it was merely the shadow of a large palm leaf. He had a strong and sensible fear of sharks.

A mile farther found him crawling over the rocky ground as the growls of panthers reached his acute ears from behind a ridge of brush. If they heard him, they ignored him, perhaps more interested in other quarry. His knees and arms were scraped but not bleeding, and at last he was able to get to his feet to make better time.

It was then that he heard the girl's scream.

**N**O REGULATION in the rule book discriminated against women becoming runners, but only a few of the millions who worked at offices and plants in the city did so. Also there was nothing in the code about helping other run-

ners. Each was entirely on his own, free to help or be helped, or not helped, if he chose.

Bernard would never have called for help for himself. But the sound of the woman's cry appealed to another side of his nature. He changed his direction, but moved with great caution now. Soon he saw her, and froze.

She was clad as he, different sector emblem, but the same proudly borne "U-F" on her sweater. Her face and body were young and attractive, but her long dark hair was tangled and wet, and her limbs mud-spattered. She had screamed only once, and now her small lipsticked mouth hung open with terror.

Backed against a tree, she gaped in horror, waiting, as three panthers approached from as many directions. Her sonic lay on the ground outside the circle. It was obvious that she was finished if Bernard did not assist her.

Raising his hand till the pistol sight was where he wanted it, he modified the angle adjustment till all of the animals were within its range. Then he depressed the trigger several times. Two fell and the third animal leaped at the girl. But she twisted around the tree and Bernard picked off the panther as it readied itself for a second spring. At once the girl dived for her pistol. Proper response, Bernard thought approvingly. Then she

ran toward him and threw herself against him, breathing deeply in that position for several moments.

Bernard felt strongly the strength and zest of youth as he held the girl in his arms. Then they turned and walked together to the outer wall, which was less than half a mile away. There was no danger from the deactivated panthers, which would remain out of commission for half an hour. So they had no reason to hurry.

Bernard helped her climb the wall, though she seemed quite adept at it herself. On the other side they emerged upon the street. Across the street lay the acres and acres of homes which were the city's eastern suburbia.

"Oh, it was just horrible!" the girl finally cried. "All at once they sprang. From nowhere. I tripped and my sonic fell out of the holster. I'd be *dead* if it weren't for you!"

"Very true," Bernard agreed. "You'll be more careful in the future, I hope."

"If only I could thank you in some way. I owe you so much. My apartment is just up the next street. Only a few blocks. Wouldn't you like to stop in for a drink? I'm sure you're as tired as I."

But Bernard declined. He walked her home, then continued on, unaware of the envious glances of young children as he passed. Unaware of

other runners, early-runners, middle-aged men like himself, also walking the streets, wearily but not stooping, not frowning.

How good a warm shower would be, thought Bernard, as he entered the last mile. His wife would probably want a drink, so there would be that too. And dinner. He was *hungry*.

Ulcer-free and happy, he walked the last mile in contentment. The office was something that had happened long ago, would happen again tomorrow, but could never invade his thoughts that night. And he knew exactly how his wife would greet him at the door.

"**H**ELLO, darling. How was the run?" she asked, kissing him as he came into the house. "You only made fair time this evening. Something happen?"

"No, pretty routine. Panthers are on the increase. I came across three of them attacking a girl runner. Works as a copy writer in the city. She claims that the jungle cured her ulcers completely. Really remarkable."

"Mmm-hmm," said Virginia, taking his holster. "Attractive, no doubt. I suppose she tried to seduce you. I've heard stories about those jungle women."

"Nothing of the sort. Just suggested I drop in for a

drink. After all, she was grateful."

What nonsense, he told himself as he showered, Virginia suggesting that the girl had intended to seduce him. Oh, well, what difference did it make?

Man, that hot water felt good! Even on his scratched legs and arms.

How many years had he been making the run now? Twenty-three, almost. In a

way he could consider himself a sort of a pioneer. And to think that the only reason he had started jungle running in the first place was to please a supervisor! Those days everyone did it.

As he dried himself off, hearing the tinkle of cocktails in the living room, he wondered if the panthers would move south, away from the water hole, before tomorrow's run.

**END**