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SCIENCE FICTION *Quarterly*

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ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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The sabre-tooth tiger had broken loose and was on them.

when in doubt mutate!

Oscar didn't have any choice about becoming a human being, but he didn't have to like it. And, perhaps, he didn't have to stay human, either!



EVERY DAY, Oscar went with his tutors to the laboratory, where Dr. Hubert Cromer and his assistant, Eric Logan, rechecked Oscar's cephalic index. They photographed him, full face and profile; they made various measurements, particularly of his arms and legs. When all this was done, Oscar would step into the heavily-shielded radiation cabinet. There, in a comfortable chair, he opened his textbook, though he never learned much during the processing period. The whirr and hum of the apparatus put him to sleep.

Since Oscar had none of the standards of comparison which the ordinary human gets from discussing thoughts, memories, and imaginings with other humans, the state of his own mind and fancies did not strike him as unusual. Nevertheless, Oscar was rapidly developing a form of introspection, though Cromer and Logan allowed him little time for day-dreaming.

They were intent on coaching him for college-entrance exams; in this, they were more ambitious than Oscar.

The hum of laminations, the acidity of the ozone-charged air, the pulsation of the forces concentrated upon him disturbed Oscar. He began to think that these—rather than trigonometry, or the attempt to keep awake—caused that peculiar sense of strain, and pressure between the ears.

Oscar's inference was correct. The hyper-gamma radiation, which Cromer's apparatus generated, was of an intensity far higher than its nearest counterpart, the cosmic ray. Lenses

focused it on the subject. The lenses of course were not of glass, but of a composition which would refract waves measured in small fractions of a Siegbahn unit.

This radiation accelerated Oscar's evolution at a rate measurable in days, rather than in millions of years. Cromer's theory was that orthogenesis, while originating from within a creature and not because of environment, could nonetheless be stimulated by external forces. In this exception, he differed from Eimer, who had promulgated the basic doctrine.

In addition to altered appearance, Oscar had experienced significant inner changes. There had been a marked increase in his awareness of individuality. Although his memory still went back to the time when his sense of identity was largely merged with the group-identity of his kind, these images were fading rapidly. They revived only when he was in that zone between wakefulness and sleep. It was then that he had vivid recollections, and—regrets.

The arboreal life had been ever so much less strenuous and lonesome. There had been companionship, good fellowship with other chimpanzees, as well as that comfortable realization of being part of an integrated entirety. Artificial evolution had individualized Oscar to the point of isolating him.

Cromer and Logan, preoccupied with their experiment, did not share their personal thoughts with him. They were too intent on probing, analyzing, and evaluating Oscar's thoughts.

When the automatic cutoff broke the power circuits, Oscar stepped from the cabinet. Blinking away the lethargy which the vibration induced, he faced his mentors.

CROMER WAS round-faced and bald, with a hedge of crinkly, iron-gray hair at ear-level. Bushy brows shaded eyes of almost caustic intensity; brows and mouth had an ironic quirk. The chunky doctor's bitter realism was leavened by kindness and good humor, which he gave free play—as long as he could afford to.

Logan, years younger, was tall, sandy-haired, and long of face: a good-looking chap who took himself too seriously. His expression gave evidence of intellect unredeemed by humor. There was good fellowship, all right, yet it was inhibited.

"How about a bit of handball, or a jog around the track," Cromer demanded, jovially. "You've been dodging your workout schedule, haven't you?"

Oscar's brow puckered, exaggerating the supra-orbital ridge. He had a squarish face, rugged yet pleasant. The nose was not quite as dominant as it should have been to have matched the strength of the other features. The eyes were bright, alert, and the entire expression, keen and amiable.

"This business of keeping fit," Oscar answered, candidly, "is nonsense; I don't see any use of moving except for fun, or for a good reason."

Logan and Cromer exchanged a quick glance. "Oh, very well," the latter agreed. "Then we'll get at our study conference."

"That is something else I've given a lot of thought," Oscar went on. "Suppose I concentrate on chemistry, physics, and mathematics. And skip economics and aesthetic appreciation."

Cromer eyed the typed curriculum sheet. "Well, now, we have been crowding you," he conceded. "Though I think you should continue manual training, and folk dancing."

"I don't mind a bit, as long as it won't interfere with my tending to the animals."

"How about it, Eric?"

"A schedule should be flexible,"

Logan said, a bit ponderously. Then, "Oscar, how are you doing with your history assignment?"

"I remember every bit of it—even the names and dates. But the reasons people had for doing the things they did are obscure. For instance, the war of 1980 confuses me; so do the twenty or thirty years preceding it. They gave rewards for raising big crops of potatoes, then they threw the potatoes away. And all the while, only the very wealthy could afford to buy potatoes. I think I should drop history, and economics, too; both leave me utterly perplexed."

So saying, Oscar headed for the woodwork shop.

Logan shook his head. "I fear there is an inadequate personality-development. There is no denying that he has reasoning powers, but his logic is that of an ape."

Cromer shrugged. "You expect too much, Eric, all at once. His intellect is actually higher than the collegiate average. Legs are lengthening. Posture virtually human. Amazing, too, how that nose is developing. Remember, he was full-grown when we started. Meanwhile, it is high time we revealed our findings in some form that the public can accept."

Logan drew a deep breath, and exhaled slowly. "They'd never believe *anything* pertaining to Oscar. Not even the movies, and the wire recordings of his progress toward speech." He eyed his chief. "You knew from the very beginning that any such demonstration of the evolutionary ray would be unacceptable. Otherwise, you'd not have gone to such trouble to import those kiwis."

Cromer nodded. "Even if a board of scientists had watched Oscar from the start, there would be emotional revolt. Theological opposition, you know. Our experiment would be considered blasphemous—all the more so for being effective. Nothing is as infuriating as a truth that upsets emotionally-nurtured nonsense.

"So, the *apteryx australis* seemed to



"Oscar, we shouldn't have come here," she said. "Let's go now."

be the solution. Nothing offensive to the public ego. Also, we'll give them a double-pronged jab."

"Double?"

Cromer chuckled. The sardonic twists were beginning to show in his face and voice. "You've been wondering why I dumped so many responsibilities on you. It's time at last to let you know I have been devising a procedure to work the cosmic-evolutionary ray treatment *in reverse*.

"We shall subject one *apteryx australis* to the same processing Oscar got. The vestigial wings will evolve sufficiently to sustain flight; at the same time, another specimen will back-track."

Logan jerked to his feet. "You'll make that one revert to the *archeopteryx*? My good Lord, doctor!"

"Better than that, my boy; we'll carry him back to the previous stage. Back to the *pterodactyl*. Specifically, the little *rhamporhynchus*. When they

see the first saw-toothed *archeopteryx*, and then the flying reptile, they'll believe. *Res ipse loquitur*—the thing speaks for itself, and no theological roadblocks!"

IT TOOK Logan a moment to digest all the implications. Cromer pencilled a few equations, all with reference to the basic process. He went to the electronic computer, punched out the data, and set the "brain" in motion. Then, as the gears whined and the pilot lights blinked on and off, Cromer explained. "It hinges on the evolution constant, *kappa*. But *kappa* to the square root of minus-one power."

After an open-mouthed moment, Logan readjusted his face. "I might have anticipated as much—that monograph of yours, just before the bombing. Meanwhile, how far will we go with Oscar? Entering him in college will be expensive. With taxes

spiralling, sponsors are as scarce as bird's teeth."

"*Archeopteryx* teeth," Cromer retorted, "will not be scarce. We'll get sponsors." Pouncing to a filing-cabinet, he got a clipping from a nationally-circulated magazine. "Hundreds of sponsors, Eric! Yes, thousands of sponsors! Anonymous and unwitting—but, sponsors.

"Oscar will enter college. You and I will embark on research that will make our present success seem pallid and pedestrian."

"I am not so sure of that," Logan muttered, abstractedly, as he regarded the clipping, though without actually seeing it. "Ever since the 1980 A-bomb proved to be so inefficient, science has been discredited—see *here, doctor!* What has this clipping to do with sponsors? You've handed me an item on the black market that is being encouraged by the rigid social inspection of couples proposing to adopt an infant.

"Fixers get a thousand—two thousand dollars for short-circuiting legitimate agencies and supply bootlegged infants, without the usual survey of the prospective foster parents."

"Eric, you are as cloistered and naive as...well, as Oscar. We'll apply the evolutionary ray to infant chimpanzees. Wholesale them to the black-market baby farms. The operators will doubtless wonder at our corner on the supply, our apparent corner on the supply of unwed mothers—damn it, these will be mothers thoroughly unwedded, if you must be literal-minded! But let 'em wonder."

Logan regarded his chief with something akin to reverence. "Doctor, I have seen a number of infants that parents trot so proudly from maternity wards. I have often been baffled by the infrequency of infanticide. No foster-parent could ever tell the difference between our product and the genuine one."

"Genuine one? Damn it, Eric, *these will be real*. Better, however. More

truly human than the normally-produced infant, because more highly evolved than today's standard. But not sufficiently so," he hastened to add, "that the foster parents would feel maladjusted. You see now why Oscar should enter college?"

"As a control check on our process?"

"Right! Frankly, I think we have over-processed Oscar. His comments on history are...well, antisocial. I can't picture him playing football, being a cheer-leader, or putting up with initiation into a fraternity."

Logan objected, "I don't think it is a matter of his being too highly evolved. In my opinion, it is a question of environment. You, for instance, are an unorthodox personality. Now, when we begin having droves of visiting biologists and palaeontologists, Oscar will become conditioned to the norm. By the way, we'll need facilities for our suspicious visitors."

"I've planned all that," Cromer answered. "Indeed, I've been running ads for a receptionist; you might go over the applications with me."

"We need a receptionist?"

"Of course. A girl of pleasing personality—one to butter the sceptics the moment they arrive. She must have an appropriate educational background, so she can participate in our research. That would undermine resistance. Since they'll approve of the girl at first sight, they can hardly reject her activities. And so, they will be inclined to accept her associates."

Logan stroked his chin thoughtfully. "If we found someone really trustworthy, she would be valuable when we give the infant chimpanzees the evolutionary processing. As they become humanized, they will become a trial. The feminine and maternal touch will be essential; frankly, that hadn't occurred to me."

THE PHONE rang. Logan reached for the instrument. He listened for a moment or two, then said, "I

will let you speak to Dr. Cromer himself." Then, to his associate, "She is one of the applicants; she is driving through Fort Slade; she wonders whether she might not detour for an interview, since she is so near, rather than rely upon the formal application."

"Must be pretty bright, tracing a blind ad. How does she sound?"

"Hear for yourself, doctor. You'll know why I didn't tell her to wait for your written reply; her name is Diane Malin."

Cromer listen to Miss Malin, and lost little time in telling her to come to the installation at once. When he hung up, he said, "Eric, you will not under any circumstance whatsoever give Miss Malin any information as to Oscar's origin. Any such statement—or even a hint—would make her doubt our sanity, or our integrity. She has to see for herself, become accustomed to the idea, bit by bit. Oscar, as far as she is concerned, will be a relative of mine—a poor but deserving young fellow whose education has been neglected until recently."

"You've not given her the position, as yet."

"The picture and the application had put her at the head of the list," Cromer answered. "And this bit of initiative does it! Now you might run along and get ready to receive the young lady, and I'll be briefing Oscar."

Once Logan had left, Cromer leaned back in his chair, and put his feet on the desk. He nipped the tip from a cigar, struck light to it, and took a long draw. "It would put Oscar at a decided disadvantage, and give Eric an undeserved lead with Miss Malin," he said to the smoke cloud, "if she knew too much about Oscar's ancestry. Happily, Eric has sufficient congenital smugness to keep him from ever suspecting that an ex-chimpanzee could offer him any competition."

Having delivered this judgment on some of the less fortunate consequences of the higher education, Dr. Cromer settled back to enjoy the anticipation of some of the finer nuances of his experiment. Being dumpy and bald-headed, he had no cause at all to wonder whether a maroon sport-shirt would catch Diane Malin's eye more quickly than would a green one.



THE FIRST sight of Diane was enough to make Oscar very happy when Cromer directed, "Oscar, show Miss Malin around the installation. The grounds, I mean. Never mind the laboratory and office."

The newcomer was compactly put together, solid of shoulder and hip, and well-rounded. Substantial, no doubt of it, yet the first impression and the final one was that of grace and daintiness. She had small feet, elegant ankles, and carried herself with the poise of a dancer. The dark eyes were the friendliest that Oscar could imagine. And Diane's smile gave light and loveliness to features which were sufficiently off symmetry to be piquant—there was none of that regularity to suggest that she was the duplicate of anyone else's pattern.

If Cromer had said, "She'd like to see you step into the Sumatra tiger's cage and pet him," Oscar would have been very happy to oblige.

He had never found Logan disagreeable. He had always liked Cromer, and had rather enjoyed doing such things as pleased his mentor. But this was something new in Oscar's life: here was someone he would be delighted to please. This experience made him forget himself so completely that he was not in the least self-conscious as he took charge.

Since Cromer wanted freedom from



municipal and county zoning ordinances, his estate was isolated. The high-tension power line and the bank of transformers which fed the cosmic ray apparatus sufficed to give the installation an industrial aspect. Finally, the powerful fields set up would interfere with radio and T.V. reception, were there any residences in the vicinity.

A high fence, guarded by a triple row of barbed wire, surrounded the entire tract. This piece of Florida was home to Oscar. Every tree, every tropical plant and trailing vine of the estate in which he had been acclimated submerged what remained of native jungle memories. Then, as his artificially-induced humanity took charge, there came an ever-increasing intensity of experiencing, so that even his acclimatization-period among Cromer's palms and broad-leaved banana plants receded toward the vanishing point of his new perspective.

And now, Diane—

The girl in herself was sufficiently important in Oscar's life: but her arrival signalled a change of routine. He met the learned and critical visitors who came to Cromer's installation. He associated with them at mealtime, and at cocktail hour conferences. They went under his guidance to the aviary when he fed the kiwis, the archeopteryx, and the rhamphoryncus.

Sometimes, Cromer went along, to answer objections.

THE VISITORS felt somewhat less sceptical when they saw that the bird with thirteen upper teeth in its beak actually ate. They had difficulty, however, in accepting the bird-like reptile which, unlike the archeopteryx, had no feathers at all. Its twenty-five inch wing span was of membrane comparable to that of a bat. There was muttering about fantastic surgery...

"They eat, gentlemen, they eat," Cromer would say, as the visitors eyed the exhibits, and then each other. "They are not robots; they are not birds in masquerade. Look closely, and as long as you wish. Each is a fully-integrated creature, moving under its own power."

"That is self-evident," the long-nosed palaeontologist, Winthrop, admitted. "But frankness compels me to insist that this is a hoax. You have found, somewhere or other, some prehistoric survivals. That in itself would be little short of fantastic, but claiming that you have artificially reversed the course of evolution, so that the kiwi has reverted to its ancestral pattern—you are going quite too far, doctor! Gilding the lily, as it were. Even the entertainment value is dubious. Pardon me for being so outspoken, but integrity compels me."

Winthrop's restrained denunciation gave the others their opening. Each echoed the palaeontologist's doubts.

"Oscar, show these gentlemen the flying kiwi."

They followed Oscar to another cage. In it was a chunky fowl, brown, with stringy feathers, and a long, slender beak. In proportion to the body, the beak was comparable to that of a crane, though it curved like a sailmaker's needle. At Cromer's nod, Oscar stepped into the inclosure, and tossed a pebble at the bird. It took a dozen steps, all the while flapping its wings. Then it was in flight, a sustained flight of twenty yards, carrying it to the branch of a dead tree set up as a perch.

"Not the futile, three-inch wing stumps of the *apteryx australis*, gentlemen," Cromer said. "Perhaps Doctor Winthrop, you have found fossil remains of a creature like this one." Getting no answer to his challenge, he resumed, "I thought not! —Because this is a new mutation. The *kiwi australis* is an example of atrophy of wings. It makes no difference whether the kiwi's wings atrophied because he kept to the ground, or whether he kept to the ground because his wings had atrophied.

"In any event, there are no fossil remains of any flying kiwi. So, I could not have found, very handily, in some heretofore unknown preserve of prehistoric creatures, any such kiwi!"

"What is your theory, Doctor Cromer?" the inquisitor resumed.

"Anything for a theory! That's the trouble with scientists, the moment they turn from the purely operational-mechanical. A fact is ignored, or else it is twisted to accord with a theory. A process of reasoning *from* a conclusion, instead of *toward* one. Remember Gaetke, in Heligoland, observing migratory fowl?"

"He *concluded* that their migratory flight was substantially completed in the course of a single night. And *therefore*, according to him, to cover such a distance in such a time, the plover had to fly at the rate of two hundred miles an hour! Two hundred and forty miles, rather. Many years passed before it occurred to anyone to ask *whether* the migratory flight was completed in the course of a single night. Years passed before anyone bothered to use clock and theodolite to ascertain the plover's actual velocity on the wing!

"Then there is the Pyramid of Cuicuilco, in the Valley of Mexico. Baron Humboldt and others had theories as to its age. Lava surrounds its base. Manifestly, the conical pyramid was there before Ajusco erupted. According to one theory, the pyramid is 4000

years old. According to another, it is at least 10,000 years old. A spread of 150% in determining a comparatively-modern period.

"And now you want a theory before you can cease insisting that these creatures are a hoax. I said that in things purely mechanical, science has done nicely—though that improved bomb of 1980 was a sad let-down. Ours failed to annihilate the enemy; his failed to annihilate us—despite the theories which made annihilation inevitable."

THERE WAS a fidgeting, a shifting of feet, a gulping and a blinking. There was wrath in the faces of some, whereas others showed conflict between the urge to accept Cromer's experiments, and the urge to stick to what the books and authorities set forth.

"Well, now, Doctor Cromer," young Handley, the geologist, said in his diffident way, "isn't it natural to be interested in the theory which was used in developing these things?"

Cromer snorted. "That's merely a left-handed way of setting your intellectual processes up as a criterion of that which is, and that which is not possible. What you actually mean is that if I will only offer an acceptable theory, you will believe. But if my theory is not acceptable, you will reject a fact. Stick your finger into the cage of the pterodactyl and see if you need an hypothesis to account for what will happen! Oscar, let Mr. Handley see your right index finger!"

But Winthrop intervened. "You're making a personal issue of this. Perhaps we should not blame you; I am aware that my remarks made your attitude inevitable. Let me apologize."

"I'm not griped," Cromer said, cheerily; "you folks are. Anyway, I began from considering Eimer's term, orthogenesis. My understanding of his entire concept was this—that variations from the normal form of an animal species do not arise by chance.

That the *cause* of the variations, however, is uncertain. But that the cause is within the animal, and not in the environment; and that the change need not have any positive adaptive significance, though it may in fact have such significance.

"With that start, I turned to the hypothesis that the cosmic ray was one of the causes of variation. That unusual intensities set into operation glandular, neural, metabolistic, and other changes, the results of which are a variant. So, rather than publish a theory, I devised a generator, as you have seen, to produce the equivalent of the cosmic ray. A vibration of far higher frequency than any recorded by Millikan. And now I'll meet your challenge."

"Pardon me, Doctor, but you mistake our motive," young Handley cut in, pleasantly. "Now that you have elucidated, at least, outlined your theory, it seems very reasonable."

"What I have spoken," Cromer retorted, good-humoredly, "is, as far as any of you are concerned, nothing but pure gibberish. Words—words of the sort that people have an itch for worshipping, in the way they revere a definition. A definition consists of words which create a purely subjective illusion of understanding, but cast no light at all upon the real nature of that which they purport to define.

"Go into the kiwi's cage. Search it; inspect the kiwi. Set up a tent, if you wish, and have a committee-man on duty, day and night. When the kiwi lays a clutch of eggs, mark them and put them into the incubator.

"I shall apply the evolutionary ray, either direct or reverse, as you elect. We will hatch either a kiwi chick with wing-spread, or we will hatch an archeopteryx—yes, or a rhamphoryncus, if you wish.

"Call my hand—or, call it a day, and let Oscar help you with your luggage. Gentlemen, name it and take it!"

Handley observed, "There are two eggs in the cage, now. We can certainly assume that they were laid by that kiwi hen. We will mark each egg with our specification." He turned to his seniors. "Gentlemen, wouldn't that be sufficient to protect us against subsequent charges of having been hoaxed by the substitution of archeopteryx or pterodactyl eggs for those of a kiwi?"

They agreed to this and marked the eggs. Carefully bedding them in handkerchiefs put in the crown of a hat, the delegation made for the house. The walk skirted the front of a number of cages. Handley exclaimed, "What a magnificent specimen of cloudy tiger—Sumatra tiger, isn't it?"

Oscar answered. "Quite right. The most primitive of the *Jelis tigris*. Confidentially, Doctor Cromer intends to reverse his evolution."

"To what?"

"To the *machaerodus*—the sabretoothed tiger. One of the smaller of the species. Probably the size of the *machaerodontinae* of the La Brea asphalt pools."

"That is something I should like to see."

Oscar shrugged. "I'm afraid you'd not believe it when you did see."

He felt very much better about everything. He had dreaded the thought of college, largely from the lurking fear that his simian origin would somehow be exposed. He had had this fear despite his having for a long time had only occasional memories of simian days. But now the fear was gone.



DIANE'S presence not only stepped up Oscar's social evolution, but also jarred Logan out of the rapt contemplation of his

own talents and powers. Logan began boning for his doctor's thesis, the one direction in which he was sure that no ex-chimpanzee could outpoint him.

The social aspects of the triangle fascinated Cromer; so did the biological potentialities. Cromer reasoned, "If she went off the deep end for Eric, no one would learn anything—least of all, Eric. It would be repetitious. It's been going on for (n plus 1) years now. The results are always essentially the same.

"But if she takes a fancy to Oscar . . . man, man!"

Cromer devised a road-block to hamper Logan, who was taking plenty of notice of Diane. "Eric, I am working on something that requires your specialized touch, and background," the doctor led off, one day. "The biochemical approach. A synthetic hormone to coordinate with the hypergamma ray. A super-hormone. It will be a product whose application will be widespread, and entirely orthodox. So, there will be enormous publicity, and cash profit, too."

Logan was thrilled. Having his man baited, Cromer went on, "We'll do the preliminary work together. Once success is assured, you will announce the discovery in your own name—perhaps from a laboratory of your own. Then it will not be tainted by association with me. Bluntly—let's not evade the issue—I've become a pariah, after that demonstration for our panel of scientists."

"But how could I . . . ah, live it down?"

"Simple, my boy, simple! You and I will quarrel; you will denounce me as a fraud. You will show how you were deceived. Your readiness to endure humiliation will establish you as right-minded, willing to go to the uttermost in the interests of science.

"From then on, if you announced a method for squaring circles by purely Euclidean geometry, it would be accepted. But I must warn you that the difficulties will be terrific; you

will be a galley slave for weeks, perhaps months."

Face aglow with gratitude and dedication, Logan fairly stuttered his acceptance. Then a practical aspect occurred to him. "Who will finance the laboratory I'll need when the time for exposure comes, and I have denounced you, and left here?"

"Synthetic infants for adoption. Humanized baby chimps are doing very well. We have not increased the output—Diane is overworked in the nursery already, particularly with her coaching Oscar for his examinations.

"But I have doubled the price, and the black market offers hardly any sales resistance. I venture to say I can double it again. Queer people, queer world! Abortion mills on one hand; adoption mills on the other; and at the doors of each, patrons are trampling each other in the rush."



Once Logan's research program had got a start, Cromer was able to figure to within a day or so of the time when Logan would have a breathing-spell. It did not take either a scientist or a soothsayer to predict that a date with Diane would be uppermost in his mind. Oscar, meanwhile, had not developed sufficient self assurance to make good use of his advantage. Cromer accordingly began setting the stage, and pulling strings.



As though working according to plan, Logan barged into the office where Diane was busy with the installation's paper work. She turned from her typewriter, to say with pleasure and surprise, "Eric, how on earth

did you contrive to get loose? How are things going?"

"Under control. Still a lot to do, but I'm unshackled for a little while, tonight. Let's get out of this concentration camp and do the town. Dinner and stuff. We'll dance, or take a boat out on the bay—no, we'll dance. That was a formal you had hung out to air, along with the silver pumps on your window sill. Psychic, anticipating the situation."

"Oh, Eric, I'm awfully sorry! The humidity does get into things, and I was taking the tarnish from the sandals—but look! Look what's stacked up. Coaching Oscar, of course, and then a deadline to make. One of those everlasting bulletins to go to the printer; I simply can't get away."

Logan's face lengthened. "That slave-driver would have to think of something of the sort, right now! Well, I'll go back to the galleys, and maybe I can win a headstart. To have time out when you're free."

"Sit down and tell me how the project's been going? We hardly see you any more—even at meal times!"

"It's promising enough. How are the infant chimps?"

"Not as trying as a nursery of human infants."

After chatting a moment, Logan went his way.

THAT EVENING, Cromer broke in on the evening study conference, which had been postponed because of the clerical work Diane had been doing. He said, "Diane, my night vision is getting worse and worse. Mind driving me into town? Len Hardwick's just arrived."

"You mean *the* Hardwick? Marine biology? Yacht and all?"

"Yacht and all. Oscar, you can well afford to miss some study. Hardwick's secretary, Clifford Burr, is a graduate of Waterford U. Be good for you to talk to him. Get oriented, you know."

"Is Eric going with us?"

"He couldn't be bothered," Cromer said, as he hustled them to the door. "He can't stand Hardwick; each is a frightful egotist."

Whether the *Thetis*, Hardwick's sea-going laboratory, was cruising solely in the interests of marine biology, or whether her real purpose was to chart wind and water currents, in the interests of national defense, was something which Hardwick had always kept strictly to himself.

The *Thetis* was anything but glamorous, being dumpy and durable. The term "yacht" was a misnomer from the start, applied somewhat as a convenience, and somewhat out of wry whimsy.

Cromer phoned from the shore station. When he stepped from the booth, he said, "Well, now! Hardwick's secretary stayed in Havana. You'd find it awfully dull, auditing me and Hardwick. Why don't you and Diane go to a movie? Kill time somehow or other. Phone me every once in a while, to give me an excuse to break away. Some of Hardwick's moods make it deadly to stay more than just so long. Again, he's positively sparkling!"

Diane said, "Oh, I'll tell you what! Oscar and I will loll around the beach; we can phone you from the Palmetto Lodge. It's right handy. Your rescue party will be waiting for you on the dot!"

Cromer considered this a grand idea. Already, a launch was putting out from the *Thetis*.

Moonlight silvered the white sands of the beach. Tall palms and the masts of boats made a black pattern against the brightening sky. When they were halfway to the neon lights of the Palmetto, Oscar seated himself on the coquina breakwater.

"I'm glad you could get away," he said, as Diane joined him; "you've been getting an overdose of all this study. Sometimes I'm on the verge of telling the old man that I am not cut out for it."

"Oh, but you're doing marvelously, Oscar, really, you are. You mustn't be discouraged."

"Probably I shouldn't. And I do owe him a lot. Giving me this chance to get an education. Only—"

He lapsed into a moody silence. "Only, your heart isn't in it," Diane prompted, "and yet you hate to seem ungrateful?"

He looked up, nodding. "I can't make a religion of it. Not the way others do."

"But we don't! Not really. All you need is a change of pace." She came to her feet, all in one delightfully graceful motion, and caught his hand. "Let's go to the Lodge and dance."

He regarded her with dismay. "Good Lord, I don't know how! Watching the television is hardly enough. Nor is folk-dancing."

"Come on, I'll show you. That's as important as anything you've been frowning over. More so, really, when you enter college; you've been caged up in that jute mill quite too long."

THE PALMETTO LODGE was cozy enough for a juke joint, and friendly. The fat, swarthy proprietor smiled to outdo the moon. There were vacant tables, and unoccupied booths as well. Turning to one of the latter, Diane remarked, "Things are just right, tonight. Not crowded enough to hamper you, and still enough people to keep you from feeling conspicuous on the floor."

Oscar ordered beer. He watched the dancers, looked up at the Spanish moss that festooned the ceiling beams. He watched the reflections in the back-bar mirrors, and appraised the lighting. Relaxed and smiling to herself, Diane regarded him fondly, and

let him make up his mind, pick his moment.

When he frowned, he was a little beetle-browed, but that didn't matter, she told herself. She preferred his somber intentness to Logan's glib self assurance. Eric was nice, though, in his way. She felt guilty for enjoying the situation, even though she had not planned it.

Oscar, nerving himself, edged from the booth.

Lightly, eagerly, Diane was with him. "Nobody's watching you but me," she murmured, as they stepped off; "and I'm not watching your feet."

He did not do as well as she led him to believe; he did not do as badly as he thought he did. By the time the music cut off, it was easy for Diane to say, "Why, you're marvelous! Next one, just forget you are learning, and there you are."

Finally, they remembered to phone the *Thetis*.

Cromer was not yet ready to be rescued. He asked, "Is that music I hear?"

"We're at the Palmetto, having a grand time," Diane answered. "Stay as long as you like."

They danced some more. At last Oscar called the yacht. "Don't worry about me," Cromer assured him. "Have a good time. Write it down as cultural activities. I'll find you when I'm ready to leave—don't wander too far from the Lodge."

By now Oscar had no need of Cromer's urging.

"I think," he said to Diane, "that I won't mind college, or meeting people, nearly as much as I thought I would. But one thing I know I won't like."

"What's that?"

"Being so far away from you. Now that I look at that side of it, I don't see much future in education."

"Oh, but it *is* important. It's more than training your mind; it's a mat-

ter of meeting people, making contacts."

"You're more important than anyone I could possibly meet anywhere else. This is the first time I've really seen you. Until now, all I saw was the outer layer of advantages, education and the like. But the only meaning they have comes from you, yourself."

Her eyes went wide and misty. "That's a beautiful way of putting it, Oscar. But your future—"

"Would school or the lack of it make a big difference between you and me?" He got up, catching her hand. "Let's get away from noise and people, so we can talk."

The amiable proprietor, thinking they were going to dance, came up. "Someone is asking for you—"

"Thanks."

Diane took Oscar's arm. "Been lots of fun, hasn't it?"

JUST OUTSIDE, they saw the man who was looking for them. Not Cromer, but Eric Logan. His mood was not sweetened by the glow which Diane and Oscar radiated, each to the other, and both to the moonlight and the muttering sea.

"I'm sure you've as good as passed your examination," Logan said, sarcastically, addressing Oscar, but intending the jab for Diane.

Diane flared up, "Doctor Cromer called us from our work!"

"He would!" Logan retorted, bitterly. "If you get such a glow from dancing with the first of Cromer's reconverted apes, you're very welcome!"

"Eric—what do you mean?"

"This—" Logan gestured. "Is the master model. Take a good look and

see how the infant chimpanzees will be when they grow up."

Oscar shed all his social training; he socked Logan with micrometer precision and sledge hammer force. The first punch froze Logan on his feet; the second, connecting before he could collapse, flung him half a dozen feet. The one-time athletic director landed like a bundle of rags. Oscar, functioning with the finest of coordination, was following through, to make a job of it, when Cromer came racing up.

This was no time for dialectic; Cromer snatched a good-sized chunk of coral and clouted Oscar on the head. The blow knocked Oscar to his knees, but did not lay him out. Blinking, he hitched about.

Cromer said, "Break it up, Oscar. I heard what he said. At least, you are custom built; the rest of us, including Diane, are helter-skelter mutations." He spoke whimsically, with amiable irony. "Now, give me a lift with Eric. Nothing to worry about—take it easy, Diane—he'll recover—"

"That's not—not—what I'm crying about," she sobbed. "Is he—he—"

Cromer chuckled with fine amusement. "Oh, *that* nonsense! Can't your feminine instinct tell the difference between a man and an ape? Well well! But most women can't; never could."

Cromer's manner was convincing. He went on, "You two lovebirds run along," he said, cheerily. "I'll take care of Eric. The poor chap's overworked. Frightfully ambitious, you know. Under a terrific strain. And he's the type that—" He lowered his voice, confidentially, and made a tapping gesture against his own head. "Well, susceptible to hallucinations, let's put it. Under pressure, you know."

"Hallucinations?" Oscar echoed, and brightened, hopefully.

"Oh, the poor fellow!" Diane exclaimed, catching Oscar's arm. "You



shouldn't have hit him so hard!" Then, "Doctor Cromer, we could get a cab and leave the car for you."

"Run along, run along, now! I'll manage in my own way."

AFTER WATCHING them take off, Cromer went into the Palmetto to get a half-pint of brandy. In a few minutes, Logan was sitting up. When the man was reasonably coherent, Cromer gave him another sip. That did the trick.

"Eric," the scientist began, and hefted the chunk of coral with which he had tapped Oscar. "Do you see this?"

"Er—yes. Is that what he hit me with?"

"No, Eric. That is what I hit *him* with, to keep him from vivisectioning you by hand. And this, or something larger, heavier, and harder, is what I'll hit you with, if ever again you make any quips about Oscar's simian origin. You damned fool, he is bound to have a few residual memories; you could completely nullify a revolutionary experiment. The psychical development of the subject is not as spectacular as the physical, but it is equally important."

"If you'd been in my place, doctor—"

"If an ex-chimpanzee beat my time, Eric, I should regard it with scientific objectivity—and, look to my own evolution. But the truth of the matter is, Diane was entirely innocent. I thought it would be constructive having Oscar meet Hardwick's assistant, Waterford U. graduate. The man wasn't aboard, so I left Diane and Oscar ashore; you made rather an ape of yourself, spying."

Eric confessed, "Well, I did suspect a trick."

"Are you really serious about Diane?"

"Yes. And to have my time beaten by an ape!"

"It's not quite what you take it to be, my boy. We over-evolved Oscar. Granted, he is crude, naive, and in

many ways on a par with the cartoon-strip mountain-boys. But you're a trained athlete and didn't have a chance."

"He took me by surprise."

"Because his coordination is finer. He is a closer approach to the man of the future than either you or I. No reference at all to acquired skills and talents. I am pointing solely at the intrinsic substance."

"Are you suggesting," Logan challenged, "that I advance my own evolution?"

Cromer shrugged. "If the work to which I've assigned you suggests such a possibility, I'd not object. How's your head?"

"Clearing up, but aching."

Cromer offered the bottle. "Another nip?"

"Ummm... thanks, no."

Cromer emptied the flask with a long gurgle, and flipped it seaward. "Walking will do us good. You're a true scientist, proposing to experiment on yourself." And as they tramped along, Cromer summed up, "Metabolism, reaction time, these are easy to test. So is intelligence, at least in a purely empirical sense. The essence of it all—since we are to have an accurately controlled and truly revealing experiment—is the matter of viewpoint. *Weltanschauung* to use the archaic phrase. I prefer cosmic outlook, myself. We must determine criteria for evaluating it; once we have defined the term with sufficient exactness."

"You handle the defining, Doctor. I'll do the rest. No damned ape is going to beat my time."



RUMORS of war, and then, the inevitability of war, gave Logan added incentive for stepping up his evolution. As a scientist, he had a good chance of draft-exemption. He could not, however, demand

exemption since Oscar had no such advantage; the attempt would hurt his chances with Diane.

Outwardly, there was entire cordiality at the installation. Cromer was happy about the romance. He liked to see Diane setting out to help Oscar feed the animals. Oscar reciprocated by assisting Diane with the infant chimpanzees. Oscar and Diane were too happy about each other, and with each other, to brood about war.

Meanwhile, Logan had reasons for gratification.

Between the radiation-treatments he was taking, and the super-hormones, the man was changing. His presence had become stately. He no longer resented Oscar; instead, he had the enlightened view that if Diane responded to his, Logan's, advancement, rather than to his advances, there would be no problem at all. If on the other hand she were really too primitive to appreciate him, his loss would not be great.

Finally, he could get her interested in evolving herself; this would leave Oscar in the dust! Cromer, satisfied with Oscar's development, was letting well enough alone. "I have a large investment in that boy," he would tell Logan. "There is the law of diminishing returns. We have a sound product."

"How is that, Doctor?"

"The war is quite too near at hand for us to use our present abilities and techniques. The one after this one, however, will be the test."

"Doubtless it will. They said the previous one was—would be, rather. Just as they are now saying that this one will destroy civilization. I am sure it will not. The next one, though—"

"Pardon me, Eric, but I did not refer to the testing of the prophets. I contemplated the testing of our product. Thousands of Oscars hundreds of thousands of them—a solution to the manpower problem. Every original human will be draft-exempt. With highly evolved chimpanzees to do the

fighting, humans will not be required. Obviously, the chimpanzees must not be overly-advanced, or they would be unsuitable as soldiers."

Logan frowned. "Indeed, Doctor! The ideal soldier is a man of superior development."

Cromer made an impatient gesture. "Solely because men of superior caliber are so painfully scarce today. Imagine an entire army of superior men. There would be mutiny—anarchy—raging individualism, if each man were a Malborough, a Genghis Khan, a MacArthur—all leaders, no followers. You'd not have an army all."

"I hadn't thought of that," the quasi-superman muttered. "I am quite too close to my work to have the perspective."

"Really, now?"

"Yes. With my stepped-up evolution, I'd be foolish to claim a scientist's or technician's exemption. It would not only put me in wrong with Diane—it would deprive me of the chance of enlightening her. Entering the ranks as a private, I would in a very short while become a general. The superior man, as you aptly observed, a moment ago, is a rare specimen."

Cromer slapped him on the shoulder. "Splendid! When you return with three, four—or even with two stars, I doubt that Oscar will be a competitor. Now, shall we have our routine check of your development?"

"Any time you are ready."

"What is the integral, between the limits of zero and infinity, of the square root of X times e to the minus ax power, differential x ?"

Logan closed his eyes for a moment. He opened them. "One over two- a times the square root of p divided by a ."

Cromer eyed him. "On the level, Eric, was that one you memorized, or did you really solve it?"

"I solved it, this very moment. Give me a difficult one."

Cromer turned to his desk. He found a paper. "Here is one that I fed the electronic calculator; it blew a fuse. See what you can do with it."

Logan frowned at the paper. He got up and paced the floor. He sat down. He hunched over, squinting at the sheet. Of a sudden, he relaxed, jumped to his feet—and recited the answer!

"Wait a minute! Good Lord, Eric! I forgot to take note of it. Let me have it again, and slowly."

He got it. Then he asked, "But how do I know it's correct?"

Logan grinned triumphantly. "Take my word for it. Or calculate it yourself to check up. Any other tests?"

"In the laboratory, yes. Reaction-time and other routine." And then, as he followed Logan, Cromer added, "I think that adding another bank of tubes to the calculator will enable it to handle that problem I gave you. I am going to check your answer; don't think I am not. If you did get the correct result, mentally, I am going to issue invitations to a demonstration."

"With mathematicians to witness it. They will bring their pet problems for you to solve; thus there can be no talk of collusion."

Logan wagged his head. "I'd enjoy meeting those stuffed shirts and their problems!"

As though in answer to Logan's challenge to the world, its forces, and its intelligences came a cry of terror: high, but cut short as though the shock of entire realization had paralyzed the throat. It sounded from the tropical gardens. A low, mumbling snarl followed, not of wrath, but a promise of destruction.

Cromer's color changed. Understanding came to Logan.

while a good deal more attention to each other than to their task. Once it was done, seductive moonlight lured them to each other's arms.

Moonlight, reaching through palm fronds, made a dappled pattern; light and shadow camouflaged the two. Eye tricking, enveloping, screening patterns: and, lip to lip, the two made a small world, a heaven and earth of their own creation, a small eternity measured in kisses.

It might have been sound that shattered their universe. Again there may have been direct perception of the force radiated by the creature which flowed out from its cage, scenting prey and moving to stalk it.

One of those impossible things had happened; the cloudy tiger had escaped. The animal was well on its way, in reversed evolution, to the *macherodus*, the sabre-toothed slayer who had vanished millenia ago.

Oscar, chilled by sudden awareness, thrust Diane aside as she screamed needless warning. Rustling leaves screened her. Whatever else might have happened, the tiger responded to the note of panic.

Oscar snatched the empty pail he had set down by the bench, and straight-armed it, catching the tiger squarely between the eyes.

"Get going!" he yelled, as he vaulted the flimsy barricade.

He was too busy moving to have any thought for the futility either of flight or fight. The beast gathered itself for the lunge; long fangs gleamed like lanceheads; the eyes were phosphorescent, then red, from the changing play of moonlight. Oscar's tree lore had been submerged by evolution. There was no tree near enough, even had he had time to get Diane to any such vantage point.

Seize the bench as a weapon a little better than empty hands—or, use it as a barricade!

He did neither.

The man who pounced into the full moonlight came as though to intervene.

●

OUT IN THE gardens, where foliage masked the stark fronts of steel cages, Oscar and Diane had been making their rounds. They had tended to the animals, paying all the

The tiger's lashing tail became motionless; the head shifted. The animal sensed danger.

Eric Logan had speed and coordination to match his over-evolved mind. He had a hatchet; he leaped and struck. Tawny fur mirrored moonlight. Logan was clear, untouched, perfectly balanced. He chopped again. The tiger lay kicking and twitching. The first stroke had severed the spinal column.

This was done as Doctor Cromer hove into view.

Oscar dropped the bench. White-faced, moving like a zombi, Diane came from cover. Logan said, "Doctor, I think we may as well dispense with the coordination checkup you proposed."

He retraced his steps. To wait for words from the others would have spoiled the scene.

For a long time after Cromer left them, Oscar sat with Diane in the garden. He sat apart from her, looking at the moon-drenched ground, the spilled blood, the splendid carcass. His posture was somewhat of a crouch. Finally Diane came near enough to lay a tentative hand on his arm. Her touch was diffident; she knew that she was intruding.

HE TOOK her hand, laid his other hand over it, caging it. He got up. "Help me pack my things. Not that I need help, or need to take anything with me."

"Pack?" she echoed, bewilderedly.

"I am not going to college; I am going to enlist at once."

"Oh, darling, but why?"

"I fumbled, somehow, or that cage could not have come open."

"Good Lord, you can't think that I blame you! You don't know; no one will ever know who or what caused it."

"Honey, it isn't that. I am living on borrowed time. The tiger would not have got you; I was nearest. The only way I can get my life out of hock is to gamble it intentionally—and win it back."

Comprehension widened her eyes. She regarded Oscar now with wonder, instead of merely affection. "You're too proud to owe your life to Eric?"

"It would not be worth it."

She could not say. "Eric made that move for me," however much she knew that to be the truth. All she could say was, "Must you, really?"

"There is no way out of it. I cannot kill the man, and I cannot owe him my life. Simple, isn't it?"

Eyes brimming with tears, she looked up. "Too terribly simple. And right now, after—after we finally found each other."

"I'll be back," he declared, confidently. "There'll be the bombing and the usual show. Maybe this time, not enough of *them* will survive to try again. Some of us will. And all debts will be paid. The tiger got out of his cage, and I am getting out of mine." And then, later, when she went to the gate with him, "Tell Doctor Cromer why I left; he'll understand."

With a ground-eating stride, Oscar set out. He had Diane's small suitcase, lacking one of his own. He did not look back until he came to the angle of the road. He caught the whiteness of her arm as she waved in answer. He saw her turn against the gateway, face buried in the crook of her arm. He paused, then resolutely resumed his stride.

"One thing the superman cannot do," he said, aloud, as he tramped toward the bus stop. "He cannot trade on having saved *her* life; he saved mine, whether he wanted to or not." Oscar grinned contentedly. "The gigantic mind slipped; he should have waited another second."



O SCAR DID not have to wait long for action; he got it before his political, social, and cultur-

al indoctrination courses were completed. And as the bombs dropped, he reasoned, with simian logic, that it would have been better had he and his comrades been taught how to fight, instead of being briefed on why they would be fighting, and what for. The first contact with the enemy paratroopers gave every soldier an urgent reason for fighting, but the occasion was instructive only to the survivors.

When the newly-developed force-projector was finally issued to the ragged remains of Oscar's company, he proved himself handy enough. It was a neat weapon, and came in two models. One was for precision-sniping, with a compact, built-in base line and radar, for night work. The other was for fire-volume, rather than accuracy. The bullets of either weapon functioned by causing a limited molecular fission at the point of impact. Personnel within a radius of a yard or so were blasted by the explosion and fried by the heat radiation. The neat thing about it was that there were no dangerous by-products to harm the troops as they closed in on their target.

All that Oscar knew about the big stuff, the self-steering bombs, was that they reduced a city to a deep crater, rimmed with twisted junk, and lined with a hard glaze: the fusion of earth and of certain building materials. Most of the cities north of latitude forty existed only as map coordinates. This destruction did not end the war; it was merely the signal for the real business: men afoot, smoking out the invading paratroopers. The war did not start until, according to long established theory, it had been wholly lost.

The first weeks had been tough, going in and getting them with old fashioned carbines, flame-throwers, and grenades. The new force-projector had not been issued until the advancing invaders had gone as far south as latitude 35 N. 40, on a line reaching from coast to coast.

Until Oscar's company got the new

weapon, he had been quite too busy retreating to be lonesome. But after the first successful counterattack, in which they took an objective littered with smoking morsels—prisoners were no problem at all—Oscar counted noses. Of a company that had numbered two hundred originally, only fifty-two had gone into action that morning. Now, with its first victory chalked up, there were still fifty: and after what had been virtually a massacre of the enemy.

The sergeant, the only sergeant—there had been no officers for weeks—was nearly as broad as he was tall. His leathery face was as elegantly-shaped as his body. A bull bitch or a female gorilla would have fainted had any of her offspring resembled Sergeant Quaddy. He did not even have a pleasing voice; the only good thing about it was that it carried, and that his enunciation was clear, as his thinking. Though his I.Q. was not high, his mind was singularly logical, and untainted by ideals.

ONCE THE mopping-up was over, and the fragrance of self heating rations masked the savor of scorched enemies Oscar said, "Sergeant, we could have murdered those slobs to the last man, weeks back, if we'd had these guns then. Most of my buddies would be here and ready for another whack at it, tomorrow." He blinked, wiped his eyes with the back of his grimy hand. He coughed, and avoided Quaddy's grim gaze. "Look at the model-date on this projector; it'd been invented and perfected long before the invasion. Why didn't we get them in time?"

"Don't talk like a damned ape!" Quaddy growled. "With strikes, and a five-hour week, how could they be turned out fast enough? Quit beefing; you're here, and we are winning. The enemy has no place to go; he's got no home left. He was let down worse than we were. Now shut up— I'm recommending you for a decoration.

"Everyone that did work overtime was printing indoctrination booklets. You big clown, you know why you're fighting, don't you?"

Automatically, Oscar recited that which no amount of battle could dislodge. "We are fighting to protect the Bureaucratic way of living. We are Crusaders to spread the Light of Bureaucracy among—"

Quaddy thrust a pack of cigarettes at him. "Stuff one of these in your face and quit beefing. I said you'd get a decoration!"

There was a strong humanitarian movement down in the undevastated areas. The proposal was to drop propaganda leaflets to induce the invaders to surrender. Good food, good quarters, good indoctrination in Bureaucracy: social security, and an abundant life. This was squelched only when it was conclusively shown that to feed the invaders, rehabilitate them and their blasted homeland, would impose upon the entire nation an eight-hour week—and for generations to come. Actually, the few realists—civilian and military—knew that extermination was the only way to prevent another war; the enemy could not be rehabilitated except through musketry—but they dared not express themselves in any such repugnant terms. So, they terrorized the public into the necessity of exterminating the fanatic invaders.

Despite efficient weapons, and the enemy's insufficiency of supplies—they had enormous caches dropped during their days of victory, and many more that had been awaiting their arrival, having been planted by sympathizers—mopping-up was slow work. It became all the slower, and somewhat more costly, because idealists smuggled some of the new weapons to the harrassed enemy. Several idealists, nabbed by Federal police, made promortem statements which boiled down to this: "It would make us a nation of barbarians, shooting them down

like animals. They deserve a fighting

chance." And, "It really is not their fault. Their philosophy is splendid. It was merely perverted by their leaders. We could, if we tried, come to an understanding with them."

Eventually, Oscar got an acre of decorations, and a number of superficial wounds. His outfit was finally taken out of the "hunt and kill" area, and sent to the rear to recuperate, and receive replacements. Including Sergeant Quaddy, there were thirty-nine survivors of the original two hundred.

"We're all going to get a leave, as soon as we have another parade, face the public-relations officers and the cameramen, and get some more decorations."

Oscar said something obscene about decorations; in specific terms, he suggested a use for which decorations had never been intended. "And they can do the same with the cameras!"

"Got a girl on the brain, huh?" Quaddy demanded. "Well, keep your shirt on. Our papers'll come through, any day. And, back pay."

Back pay did pour down, finally. However, the orders for leave were snarled up. "Take it easy, take it easy, men," Quaddy told his outfit. "It'll be just a few more days. Then we'll be screened for loyalty; that won't take long."

OSCAR WAS too sceptical to wait; he went over the hill. After months in the face of the enemy, MPs were no problem. Nothing was a problem. Nothing was important but seeing Diane, to tell her that his life was his own, as far as Logan was concerned. Then, he was worried.

Logan must, by now, be a high-ranking general, and Diane was only human. That Oscar had not heard once from Diane—not even an acknowledgement of the receipt of her suitcase—was not as ominous as it might have been. Hardly anyone ever received mail, except someone else's; censorship and snarlups did it. Oscar

had received announcements of the birth of eleven sons, and nine daughters, and summonses in five divorce suits; he wondered who had been getting the letters Diane had written him.

While the MPs were no problem, the civilian population was; Oscar griped when he had to pay \$3 for a pack of cigarettes.

"Mister, don't you know there's a war?" the man had asked.

Instead of indicating his conspicuous three pounds of medals, Oscar knocked the man cold with a bone-cracking punch, and moved on. The second time someone wondered if he had heard about the war, Oscar bought himself civilian clothes, stuffed his uniform into a garbage can, and continued his way south.

He found Diane at the installation. All jobs had been frozen; no one had paid any attention when she pointed out that her work had no defense value, whereas she was qualified for service as a nurse. "Meanwhile," she said to Oscar, pointing to a heap of papers, "there were full-page ads, crying for volunteers. It seems that my being tagged as 'laboratory worker' jinxed everything, by making this job essential-seeming."

"Where's Doctor Cromer?" he demanded, when the first impact of reunion had tapered off, and it was once more natural to realize that Diane was a woman, and not merely an idea.

She sighed. "He was arrested."

"Those damned loyalty tests!"

"Oh, no, darling! Someone exposed the infant adoption ring. That settled Doctor Cromer; not even his purpose to evolve adult chimpanzees, on a production-line basis to fight the war, did any good. He'd actually stepped up the evolution machine so that change could be made in a few hours.

"The synthetic infants were really more highly developed than their foster parents, but that didn't help a bit. It created a frightful problem. What to do with them."

"Do?"

She shuddered. "They weren't considered human in fact; a sort of abominator. There was a proposal to have them all gassed. Just suppose, they said, they'd grow up, looking and acting exactly like humans."

"That would have been bad," Oscar said, with a double meaning that seemed to have eluded Diane entirely. "Were they gassed?"

"No, The S.P.C.A. intervened. They got an injunction; now the other side is pleading that the injunction is illegal."

"Speaking of evolution," Oscar resumed, "what happened to Eric? I was worried about him, and his chance of beating the draft—being here with you, playing up the rescue somehow or other."

Diane laughed happily. "Oh, darling, I'd forgotten! Of course you don't know; you didn't get my letters. Well, he went to enlist, the very day I told him and Doctor Cromer what you had done."

"The devil he did!"

"He said that you had been diabolically cunning in volunteering. That you had put him into the position of staying here with me, to play up his heroism. It was the cleverest thing, even though you didn't realize it at the time. Oh, you're marvelous!"

"Bet he became high brass overnight."

She shook her head and with genuine pity. "You know, I liked Eric, in spite of his being such a conceited ass."

"Spill it, honey, spill it! What did his I.Q. get him?"

"Got him locked in a psychopathic ward. He told them how to win the war. Proved that he and a thousand more like him could do the job. Or, given command of a division, he could do it himself."

"I think he could have. Nothing I've been through ever scared me the way the sight of that tiger did; no human ever came within a mile of Eric's headwork and coordination. Locking

him up is just about proof that he must have been right."



They walked about the grounds. Oscar looked at each animal and reptile. Because of meat-rationing, the carnivora had been gassed—this despite the availability of sea food, which the civilian population refused to eat as a staple. They were going to have a bite to eat in the kitchen when Oscar said, "Let's go to the Palmetto, and dance, and watch the moonlight on the water. Lord, Lord, that's been a long time ago."

"Oh, that'd be fun!" Then her glow faded, and a shadow darkened her eyes. "I wonder if we really should. Oh, let's stay home."

"Why?"

"I don't know, Oscar; maybe I'm just dopey from letdown from all the excitement."

"Come on, it'll be fun."

So they went.



THEY DANCED at the Palmetto. They lolled on the beach. They spoke fondly of Cromer: and with kisses to sweeten every thought, it was easy for them to think well of Eric Logan. "Funny," Oscar mused, "now that I've bought my life back, I'd even like to take a couple of beers with Eric; we owe him a lot. You know, when they let him out of the booby hatch, he ought to take the reverse evolving process, and get back to normal."

Diane sighed. "I'm afraid he couldn't stand it."

"The hoarders and chisellers I met along the way home," Oscar resumed, "made me think how the chimpanzees were a lot more human. Even a parrot

that's learned to say, *Don't You Know There's A War* is likely to think of a new one, or an old one, once in awhile."

It was all amusing now; the papers furnished comic relief. The press correspondents, it seemed, met only the primadonnas of the front, and never a Sergeant Quaddy.

Oscar was thinking, the following morning, that since he was AWOL, he might as well make a job of it. "We'll get married," he said to Diane, "and we'll be honeymooning until the show is over, and they've pardoned all the draft-dodgers. I had a lot of back pay. And on my way home, I got into a few games and won more."

"That'll be wonderful, darling. All the more so, after last night; we'll turn the animals loose, and move on."

But Oscar and Diane had not yet done the breakfast dishes when there were visitors: a pair of MPs.

"Oh, good Lord," she said, in a voice small and tight and with dismay. "Why didn't we leave last night!"

Oscar shrugged as he watched the pair make for the door. "I shouldn't have taken you to the Palmetto. Either I talked too loud, or someone recognized me—the owner, it couldn't have been anyone else—and saw a chance to collect the reward for turning a deserter. Don't worry too much honey, they look like good Joes."

He knew very well they were not; there was no chance of bluffing the MPs, or talking them out of it. They had him nailed, AWOL, and not in uniform. It was likely that they counted on getting a kickback from the reward, which only a civilian could collect.

Oscar brought this point up, casually and pleasantly. He added, "You can collect a whole hell of a lot more from me, if you are smart, and play it right. You can always tell the fellow at the Palmetto that he loused it up—and slug the spots out of him if he beefs. Or, give him a cut from what

you get from me. Don't be a jerk and spoil a good thing. What are you dopes getting out of your job except pay, and a bit of graft that's strictly chlkcken?"

This was civilian talk—the kind they really understood from rear area service. The corporal and the private exchanged glances. One, eager; one, wary. "How about the provost marshal?" the former asked his buddy.

That exchange of questions was what Oscar had played for. He used the commando training, belatedly given, for missions in which modern arms could not be employed, because of danger to fellow users. He knocked the two heads together, and then, without pity and without anger, reduced the two to a state of coma from which they would not recover for several hours.

"I wish," he said, wistfully, as he eyed his prisoners, "that I had the owner of the Palmetto here. He'd look nice, this way. And he was such a friendly chap, remember? That first time. The sort of man who seems to love the whole world and all humanity. War seems to do something to people."

He tied and gagged his unconscious opponents. "Honey, you be packing up," he said, "while I turn the animals loose."

THOSE that had not come within the orders for destruction of all carnivora were freaks, yet not a menace to anyone who might find them, and fancy that they would make unique pets. The loss of even a finger would enlighten the curious. Meanwhile, these creatures would find all the isolation they needed, and a congenial climate, in the Florida swamp lands. There would never be a bomb to disturb them; the country was not worth bombing. Remembering what he had seen up north, Oscar's appraisal meant that this was truly the Lord's country... except for civilians...

When he had done, he went to find Diane.

"You are sure you really want to go through with it? It won't be easy, honey; we'll be on the dodge. Somehow, being a deserter is considered far worse than being an idealist who favors the enemy, or a conscientious objector, or a fellow who blocks the production line. You'll be in for something."

His mood sobered her. However, the gravity of her face enhanced the glow in her eyes as she said, "To the finish, my dear. I've had my fill, too. We'll pull through—though I'd go anyway, regardless. We'd be foolish, waiting for the fine new world someone else is going to make for us, when we can make our own, now."

Her voice thrilled him to a new peak. "You wait a second," he said. "We're going to drink to that; right now. I remember a bottle Doctor Cromer kept in the lab. He liked his little nip."

Oscar took quite awhile. He was solemn when he returned with the bottle and glasses, and a small bottle labelled, "Bitters."

"Still mean it?" he asked, and at her nod, he turned slightly, saying, "Get a twist of lemon, will you? This'll be like the old man used to toss off."

He put "bitters" only in one of the glasses.

"To the finish, darling," Diane proposed. "I died too many times, all those months, with never a letter, never a report, never anything, after my suitcase came back."

"So did I," Oscar said. "But somehow, I believed. In you. Oh, I worried, too, but still, I believed. And now we won't come back. I've got it all figured. It'll be tough, but we'll always be together."

"Together, darling," she said, and they drank.

He caught her as her eyes went out of focus, and her head wobbled. She would be out for hours; he bundled her in his arms, and carried her to the laboratory.

The thought which now had charge of Oscar was one which, unrecognized, had lurked for a long time under the surface.

Without fully understanding the theory of the evolutionary control, he nonetheless knew more than enough about the mechanics of it and the practice. He set the switches, and turned on the power. He got the bottles of synthetic hormones. The enormously accelerated process which Cromer had perfected would now serve the needs of the occasion.

It was not difficult to get the unconscious girl to swallow a sufficient quantity of the compound. He set the automatic timer.

"We know better than Eric," he said to himself and his companion, as he carried her into the radiation cabinet in which he had evolved to collegiate standards, and to something higher: combat infantryman, first class—the insignium of which he valued far more than any of the decorations.

The MPs could liberate themselves before they perished. If they could not get loose, the provost marshal would come looking for them, in due course. Embarrassing for the poor devils...Oscar grinned contentedly, though the hum of laminations, and the biting of the rays made him drowsy, so that the grin sagged at the corners. His final perception was the softness of Diane's hair, and the roundness of her body....

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WHEN THE MPs regained consciousness, they faced a struggle. They had been expertly tied. For hours, they alternated in praying for the arrival of a search party, and being grateful that none had come to seek them. During their rest periods, they cursed each other, and themselves. Again, they planned the yarn that would account for their absence, or account reasonably for Oscar's escape; the marks he had left on them would make explanations difficult.

Late that night, they got loose. They drank from the garden hose, then collapsed from exhaustion. Dawn awakened them. Aching and stiff, they could barely crawl. Finally, having regained control of their limbs, they drew their guns and went into the house.

They were still too muddled to realize that if Oscar had intended remaining, he would have taken their weapons—

They found food; they found liquor; found a suitcase packed with a woman's garments. For the rest, they found only vacancy, and heard only the echo of their own footfalls. There was no lamination hum...no whirling...no ticking as of a metronome....

"Car's here," the corporal grumbled; "these are the keys for it. Some things cockeyed."

They searched the jungle garden. Enough tracks might sustain a yarn of having been ambushed by the lurking deserter. Once prints were established, the corporal put on the man's shoes he found in the laboratory, and made tracks to substantiate the imaginary drama he and his buddy were going to enter into their report.

The job was done when one exclaimed, "Well, can you tie that!" "What?"

"Up in the tree, dope! Two monkeys, and one of 'em wearing a bra and a girdle. Well, I'm a son! Putting on lipstick!"

The other chimpanzee was eating mangoes, and offering some to his mate; she brushed his hand aside, and opened a silver compact.

The corporal cursed. He drew his pistol and fired a couple of shots. He did not intend to hit the animals, and he did not. It made him feel better to see them leap for cover, and find it, in the thick foliage.

"Oh, to hell with it! Let's go and face it out. You'd never thought that dumb ape had it in him, cold-caulking the two of us, that way."