



WORLDS of SCIENCE FICTION

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All Stories New and Complete

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by Ed Valigursky

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It was the dawn of a golden age of transportation. Terran Development was ready to market a fourth dimension "vehicle" which afforded almost instantaneous travel. For instance, Henry Ellis commuted 160 miles to work in five steps and a few seconds. Then, one morning, he met some people on the way . . .

Prominent Author

By Philip K. Dick

Illustrated by Paul Orban

"MY HUSBAND," said Mary Ellis, "although he is a very prompt man, and hasn't been late to work in twenty-five years, is actually still someplace around the house." She sipped at her faintly-scented hormone and carbohydrate drink. "As a matter of fact, he won't be leaving for another ten minutes."

"Incredible," said Dorothy Lawrence, who had finished *her* drink, and now basked in the dermal-mist spray that descended over her virtually unclad body from an automatic jet above the couch. "What they won't think of next!"

Mrs. Ellis beamed proudly, as if she personally were an employee of

Terran Development. "Yes, it is incredible. According to somebody down at the office, the whole history of civilization can be explained in terms of transportation techniques. Of course, I don't know anything about history. That's for Government research people. But from what this man told Henry—"

"Where's my briefcase?" came a fussy voice from the bedroom. "Good Lord, Mary. I know I left it on the clothes-cleaner last night."

"You left it upstairs," Mary replied, raising her voice slightly. "Look in the closet."

"Why would it be in the closet?" Sounds of angry stirring-arounds. "You'd think a man's own briefcase

would be safe." Henry Ellis stuck his head into the living room briefly. "I found it. Hello, Mrs. Lawrence."

"Good morning," Dorothy Lawrence replied. "Mary was explaining that you're still here."

"Yes, I'm still here." Ellis straightened his tie, as the mirror revolved slowly around him. "Anything you want me to pick up downtown, honey?"

"No," Mary replied. "Nothing I can think of. I'll vid you at the office, if I remember something."

"Is it true," Mrs. Lawrence asked, "that *as soon as you step into it* you're all the way downtown?"

"Well, almost all the way."

"A hundred and sixty miles! It's beyond belief. Why, it takes my husband two and a half hours to get his monojet through the commercial lanes and down at the parking lot and then walk all the way up to his office."

"I know," Elli smuttered, grabbing his hat and coat. "Used to take me about that long. But no more." He kissed his wife goodbye. "So long. See you tonight. Nice to have seen you again, Mrs. Lawrence."

"Can I—watch?" Mrs. Lawrence asked hopefully.

"Watch? Of course, of course." Ellis hurried through the house, out the back door and down the steps into the yard. "Come along!" he shouted impatiently. "I don't want to be late. It's nine fifty-nine and I have to be at my desk by ten."

Mrs. Lawrence hurried eagerly after Ellis. In the back yard stood

a big circular hoop that gleamed brightly in the mid-morning sun. Ellis turned some controls at the base. The hoop changed color, from silver to a shimmering red.

"Here I go!" Ellis shouted. He stepped briskly into the hoop. The hoop fluttered about him. There was a faint *pop*. The glow died.

"Good Heavens!" Mrs. Lawrence gasped. "He's gone!"

"He's in downtown N'York," Mary Ellis corrected.

"I wish *my* husband had a Jiffiscuttler. When they show up on the market commercially maybe I can afford to get him one."

"Oh, they're very handy," Mary Ellis agreed. "He's probably saying hello to the boys right this minute."

HENRY ELLIS was in a sort of tunnel. All around him a gray, formless tube stretched out in both directions, a sort of hazy sewerpipe.

Framed in the opening behind him, he could see the faint outline of his own house. His backporch and yard, Mary standing on the steps in her red bra and slacks. Mrs. Lawrence beside her in green-checked shorts. The cedar tree and rows of petunias. A hill. The neat little houses of Cedar Groves, Pennsylvania. And in front of him—

New York City. A wavering glimpse of the busy streetcorner in front of his office. The great building itself, a section of concrete and glass and steel. People moving. Skyscrapers. Monojets landing in swarms. Aerial signs. Endless white-collar workers hurrying every-



where, rushing to their offices.

Ellis moved leisurely toward the New York end. He had taken the Jiffi-scuttler often enough to know just exactly how many steps it was. Five steps. Five steps along the wavery gray tunnel and he had gone a hundred and sixty miles. He halted, glancing back. So far he had gone three steps. Ninety six miles. More than half way.

The fourth dimension was a wonderful thing.

Ellis lit his pipe, leaning his briefcase against his trouserleg and groping in his coat pocket for his tobacco. He still had thirty seconds to get to work. Plenty of time. The pipelighter flared and he sucked in expertly. He snapped the lighter shut and restored it to his pocket.

A wonderful thing, all right. The Jiffi-scuttler had already revolutionized society. It was now possible to go anywhere in the world *instantly*, with no time lapse. And without wading through endless lanes of other monojets, also going places. The transportation problem had been a major headache since the middle of the twentieth century. Every year it took longer to get to work. Every year more families moved from the cities out into the country, adding numbers to the already swollen swarms that choked the roads and jetlanes.

But it was all solved, now. An *infinite* number of Jiffi-scuttlers could be set up; there was no interference between them. The Jiffi-scuttler bridged distances nonspacially, through another dimension of some kind (they hadn't explained that part too clearly to him). For a flat thousand credits

any Terran family could have Jiffi-scuttler hoops set up, one in the backyard—the other in Berlin, or Bermuda, or San Francisco, or Port Said. Anywhere in the world. Of course, there was one drawback. The hoop had to be anchored in one specific spot. You picked your destination and that was that.

But for an office worker, it was perfect. Step in one end, step out the other. Five steps—a hundred and sixty miles. A hundred and sixty miles that had been a two hour nightmare of grinding gears and sudden jolts, monojets cutting in and out, speeders, reckless flyers, alert cops waiting to pounce, ulcers and bad tempers. It was all over now. All over for him, at least, as an employee of Terran Development, the manufacturer of the Jiffi-scuttler. And soon for everybody, when they were commercially on the market.

Ellis sighed. Time for work. He could see Ed Hall racing up the steps of the TD building two at a time. Tony Franklin hurrying after him. Time to get moving. He bent down and reached for his briefcase—

It was then he saw them.

THE WAVERY gray haze was thin, there. A sort of thin spot where the shimmer wasn't so strong. Just a bit beyond his foot and past the corner of his briefcase.

Beyond the thin spot were three tiny figures. Just beyond the gray waver. Incredibly small men, no larger than insects. Watching him with incredulous astonishment.

Ellis gazed down intently, his briefcase forgotten. The three tiny men were equally dumbfounded. None of them stirred, the three tiny figures, rigid with awe, Henry Ellis bent over, his mouth open, eyes wide.

A fourth little figure joined the others. They all stood rooted to the spot, eyes bulging. They had on some kind of robes. Brown robes and sandals. Strange, unTerran costumes. Everything about them was unTerran. Their size, their oddly-colored dark faces, their clothing—and their voices.

Suddenly the tiny figures were shouting shrilly at each other, squeaking a strange gibberish. They had broken out of their freeze and now ran about in queer, frantic circles. They raced with incredible speed, scampering like ants on a hot griddle. They raced jerkily, their arms and legs pumping wildly. And all the time they squeaked in their shrill high-pitched voices.

Ellis found his briefcase. He picked it up slowly. The figures watched in mixed wonder and terror as the huge bag rose, only a short distance from them. An idea drifted through Ellis' brain. Good Lord—could they come into the Jiffi-scuttler, through the gray haze?

But he had no time to find out. He was already late, as it was. He pulled away and hurried toward the New York end of the tunnel. A second later he stepped out in the blinding sunlight, abruptly finding himself on the busy street-corner in front of his office.

"Hey, there, Hank!" Donald Potter shouted, as he raced through

the doors into the TD building. "Get with it!"

"Sure, sure." Ellis followed after him automatically. Behind, the entrance to the Jiffi-scuttler was a vague circle above the pavement, like the ghost of a soapbubble.

He hurried up the steps and inside the offices of Terran Development, his mind already on the hard day ahead.

As they were locking up the office and getting ready to go home, Ellis stopped Coordinator Patrick Miller in his office. "Say, Mr. Miller. You're also in charge of the research end, aren't you?"

"Yeah. So?"

"Let me ask you something. Just where does the Jiffi-scuttler go? It must go somewhere."

"It goes out of this continuum completely." Miller was impatient to get home. "Into another dimension."

"I know that. But—*where*?"

Miller unfolded his breast-pocket handkerchief rapidly and spread it out on his desk. "Maybe I can explain it to you this way. Suppose you're a two-dimensional creature and this handkerchief represents your—"

"I've seen that a million times," Ellis said, dissatisfied. "That's merely an analogy, and I'm not interested in an analogy. I want a factual answer. Where does my Jiffi-scuttler go, between here and Cedar Groves?"

Miller laughed. "What the hell do you care?"

Ellis became abruptly guarded. He shrugged indifferently. "Just

curious. It certainly must go *someplace*."

Miller put his hand on Ellis' shoulder in a friendly big-brother fashion. "Henry, old man, you just leave that up to us. Okay? We're the designers, you're the consumer. Your job is to use the 'scuttler, try it out for us, report any defects or failures so when we put it on the market next year we'll be sure there's nothing wrong with it."

"As a matter of fact—" Ellis began.

"What is it?"

Ellis clamped his sentence off. "Nothing." He picked up his briefcase. "Nothing at all. I'll see you tomorrow. Thanks, Mr. Miller. Goodnight."

He hurried downstairs and out of the TD building. The faint outline of his Jiffi-scuttler was visible in the fading late-afternoon sunlight. The sky was already full of monojets taking off. Weary workers beginning their long trip back to their homes in the country. The endless commute. Ellis made his way to the hoop and stepped into it. Abruptly the bright sunlight dimmed and faded.

A GAIN he was in the wavery gray tunnel. At the far end flashed a circle of green and white. Rolling green hills and his own house. His backyard. The cedar tree and flower beds. The town of Cedar Groves.

Two steps down the tunnel. Ellis halted, bending over. He studied the floor of the tunnel intently. He studied the misty gray wall, where it rose and flickered—and the thin

place. The place he had noticed.

They were still there. *Still?* It was a different bunch. This time ten or eleven of them. Men and women and children. Standing together, gazing up at him with awe and wonder. No more than a half inch high, each. Tiny distorted figures, shifting and changing shape oddly. Altering colors and hues.

Ellis hurried on. The tiny figures watched him go. A brief glimpse of their microscopic astonishment—and then he was stepping out into his back yard.

He clicked off the Jiffi-scuttler and mounted the back steps. He entered his house, deep in thought.

"Hi," Mary cried, from the kitchen. She rustled toward him in her hip-length mesh shirt, her arms out. "How was work today?"

"Fine."

"Is anything wrong? You look—strange."

"No. No, nothing's wrong." Ellis kissed his wife absently on the forehead. "What's for dinner?"

"Something choice. Sirisian mole steak. One of your favorites. Is that all right?"

"Sure." Ellis tossed his hat and coat down on the chair. The chair folded them up and put them away. His thoughtful, preoccupied look still remained. "Fine, honey."

"Are you *sure* there's nothing wrong? You didn't get into another argument with Pete Taylor, did you?"

"No. Of course not." Ellis shook his head in annoyance. "Everything's all right, honey. Stop needling me."

"Well, I *hope* so," Mary said, with a sigh.

THE NEXT morning they were waiting for him.

He saw them the first step into the Jiffi-scuttler. A small group waiting within the wavering gray, like bugs caught in a block of jello. They moved jerkily, rapidly, arms and legs pumping in a blur of motion. Trying to attract his attention. Piping wildly in their pathetically faint voices.

Ellis stopped and squatted down. They were putting something through the wall of the tunnel, through the thin place in the gray. It was small, so incredibly small he could scarcely see it. A square of white at the end of a microscopic pole. They were watching him eagerly, faces alive with fear and hope. Desperate, pleading hope.

Ellis took the tiny square. It came loose like some fragile rose petal from its stalk. Clumsily, he let it drop and had to hunt all around for it. The little figures watched in an agony of dismay as his huge hands moved blindly around the floor of the tunnel. At last he found it and gingerly lifted it up.

It was too small to make out. *Writing?* Some tiny lines—but he couldn't read them. Much too small to read. He got out his wallet and carefully placed the square between two cards. He restored his wallet to his pocket.

"I'll look at it later," he said.

His voice boomed and echoed up and down the tunnel. At the sound the tiny creatures scattered. They all fled, shrieking in their shrill, piping voices, away from the gray shimmer, into the dimness beyond. In a flash they were gone. Like startled mice. He was alone.

Ellis knelt down and put his eye against the gray shimmer, where it was thin. Where they had stood waiting. He could see something dim and distorted, lost in a vague haze. A landscape of some sort. Indistinct. Hard to make out.

Hills. Trees and crops. But so tiny. And dim. . .

He glanced at his watch. God, it was ten! Hastily he scrambled to his feet and hurried out of the tunnel, onto the blazing N'York sidewalk.

Late. He raced up the stairs of the Terran Development building and down the long corridor to his office.

At lunchtime he stopped in at the Research Labs. "Hey," he called, as Jim Andrews brushed past, loaded down with reports and equipment. "Got a second?"

"What do you want, Henry?"

"I'd like to borrow something. A magnifying glass." He considered. "Maybe a small photon-microscope would be better. One or two hundred power."

"Kids' stuff." Jim found him a small microscope. "Slides?"

"Yeah, a couple of blank slides."

He carried the microscope back to his office. He set it up on his desk, clearing away his papers. As a precaution he sent Miss Nelson, his secretary, out of the room and off to lunch. Then carefully, cautiously, he got the tiny wisp from his wallet and slipped it between two slides.

It was writing, all right. But nothing he could read. Utterly unfamiliar. Complex, interlaced little characters.

For a time he sat thinking. Then he dialed his inter-department vid-phone. "Give me the Linguistics Department."

After a moment Earl Peterson's good-natured face appeared. "Hi, there, Ellis. What can I do for you?"

Ellis hesitated. He had to do this right. "Say, Earl, old man. Got a little favor to ask you."

"Like what? Anything to oblige an old pal."

"You, uh—you have that Machine down there, don't you? That translating business you use for working over documents from non-Terran cultures?"

"Sure. So?"

"Think I could use it?" He talked fast. "It's a screwy sort of a deal, Earl. I got this pal living on—uh—Centaurus VI, and he writes me in—uh—you know, the Centauran native semantic system, and I—"

"You want the Machine to translate a letter? Sure, I think we could manage it. This once, at least. Bring it down."

He brought it down. He got Earl to show him how the intake feed worked, and as soon as Earl had turned his back he fed in the the tiny square of material. The Linguistics Machine clicked and whirled. Ellis prayed silently that the paper wasn't too small. Wouldn't fall out between the relay-probes of the Machine.

But sure enough, after a couple of seconds, a tape unreeled from the output slot. The tape cut itself off and dropped into a basket. The Linguistics Machine turned promptly to other stuff, more vital

material from TD's various export branches.

With trembling figures Ellis spread out the tape. The words danced before his eyes.

Questions. They were asking him questions. God, it was getting complicated. He read the questions intently, his lips moving. What was he getting himself into? They were expecting answers. He had taken their paper, gone off with it. Probably they would be waiting for him, on his way home.

He returned to his office and dialed his vidphone. "Give me outside," he ordered.

The regular vid monitor appeared. "Yes sir?"

"I want the Federal Library of Information," Ellis said. "Cultural Research Division."

THAT NIGHT they were waiting, all right. But not the same ones. It was odd—each time a different group. Their clothing was slightly different, too. A new hue. And in the background the landscape had also altered slightly. The trees he had seen were gone. The hills were still there, but a different shade. A hazy gray-white. Snow?

He squatted down. He had worked it out with care. The answers from the Federal Library of Information had gone back to the Linguistics Machine for re-translation. The answers were now in the original tongue of the questions—but on a trifle larger piece of paper.

Ellis made like a marble game and flicked the wad of paper through the gray shimmer. It

bowled over six or seven of the watching figures and rolled down the side of the hill on which they were standing. After a moment of terrified immobility the figures scampered frantically after it. They disappeared into the vague and invisible depths of their world and Ellis got stiffly to his feet again.

"Well," he muttered to himself, "that's that."

But it wasn't. The next morning there was a new group—and a new list of questions. The tiny figures pushed their microscopic square of paper through the thin spot in the wall of the tunnel and stood waiting and trembling as Ellis bent over and felt around for it.

He found it—finally. He put it in his wallet and continued on his way, stepping out at New York, frowning. This was getting serious. Was this going to be a full time job?

But then he grinned. It was the damn oddest thing he had ever heard of. The little rascals were cute, in their own way. Tiny intent faces, screwed up with serious concern. And terror. They were scared of him, really scared. And why not? Compared to them he was a giant.

He conjectured about their world. What kind of a planet was theirs? Odd to be so small. But size was a relative matter. Small, though, compared to him. Small and reverent. He could read fear and a yearning, gnawing hope, as they pushed up their papers. They were depending on him. Praying he'd give them answers.

Ellis grinned. "Damn unusual job," he said to himself.

"What's this?" Peterson said,

when he showed up in the Linguistics Lab at noontime.

"Well, you see, I got another letter from my friend on Centaurus VI."

"Yeah?" A certain suspicion flickered across Peterson's face. "You're not ribbing me, are you, Henry? This Machine has a lot to do, you know. Stuff's coming in all the time. We can't afford to waste any time with—"

"This is really serious stuff, Earl." Ellis patted his wallet. "Very important business. Not just gossip."

"Okay. If you say so." Peterson gave the nod to the team operating the Machine. "Let this guy use the Translator, Tommie."

"Thanks," Ellis murmured.

He went through the routine, getting a translation and then carrying the questions up to his vid-phone and passing them over to the Library research staff. By nightfall the answers were back in the original tongue and with them carefully in his wallet, Ellis headed out of the Terran Development building and into his Jiffi-scuttler.

As usual, a new group was waiting.

"Here you are, boys," Ellis boomed, flicking the wad through the thin place in the shimmer. The wad rolled down the microscopic countryside, bouncing from hill to hill, the little people tumbling jerkily after it in their funny stiff-legged fashion. Ellis watched them go, grinning with interest—and pride.

They really hurried; no doubt about that. He could make them out only vaguely, now. They had raced wildly off away from the shimmer. Only a small portion of

their world was tangent to the Jiffi-scuttler, apparently. Only the one spot, where the shimmer was thin. He peered intently through.

They were getting the wad open, now. Three or four of them, unprying the paper and examining the answers.

Ellis swelled with pride as he continued along the tunnel and out into his own back yard. He couldn't read their questions—and when translated, he couldn't answer them. The Linguistics Department did the first part, the Library research staff the rest. Nevertheless, Ellis felt pride. A deep, glowing spot of warmth far down inside him. The expression on their faces. The look they gave him when they saw the answer-wad in his hand. When they realized he was going to answer their questions. And the way they scampered after it. It was sort of—satisfying. It made him feel damn good.

"Not bad," he murmured, opening the back door and entering his house. "Not bad at all."

"What's not bad, dear?" Mary asked, looking quickly up from the table. She laid down her magazine and got to her feet. "Why, you look so *happy*! What is it?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all!" He kissed her warmly on the mouth. "You're looking pretty good to-night yourself, kid."

"Oh, Henry!" Much of Mary blushed prettily. "How sweet."

He surveyed his wife in her two-piece wraparound of clear plastic with appreciation. "Nice looking fragments you have on."

"Why Henry! What's come over you? You seem so—so *spirited*!"

Ellis grinned. "Oh, I guess I enjoy my job. You know, there's nothing like taking pride in your work. A job well done, as they say. Work you can be proud of."

"I thought you always said you were nothing but a cog in a great impersonal machine. Just a sort of cypher."

"Things are different," Ellis said firmly. "I'm doing a—uh—a new project. A new assignment."

"A new assignment?"

"Gathering information. A sort of—creative business. So to speak."

BY THE END of the week he had turned over quite a body of information to them.

He began starting for work about nine-thirty. That gave him a whole thirty minutes to spend squatting down on his hands and knees, peering through the thin place in the shimmer. He got so he was pretty good at seeing them and what they were doing in their microscopic world.

Their civilization was somewhat primitive. No doubt of that. By Terran standards it was scarcely a civilization at all. As near as he could tell, they were virtually without scientific techniques; a kind of agrarian culture, rural communism, a monolithic tribal-based organization apparently without too many members.

At least, not at one time. That was the part he didn't understand. Every time he came past there was a different group of them. No familiar faces. And their world changed, too. The trees, the crops, fauna. The weather, apparently.

Was their time rate different? They moved rapidly, jerkily. Like a vidtape speeded up. And their shrill voices. Maybe that was it. A totally different universe in which the whole time structure was radically different.

As to their attitude toward him, there was no mistaking it. After the first couple of times they began assembling offerings, unbelievably small bits of smoking food, prepared in ovens and on open brick hearths. If he got down with his nose against the gray shimmer he could get a faint whiff of the food. It smelled good. Strong and pungent. Highly spiced. Meat, probably.

On Friday he brought a magnifying glass along and watched them through it. It was meat, all right. They were bringing ant-sized animals to be killed and cooked, leading them up to the ovens. With the magnifying glass he could see more of their faces. They had strange faces. Strong and dark, with a peculiar firm look.

Of course, there was only one look *he* got from them. A combination of fear, reverence, and hope. The look made him feel good. It was a look for him, only. Between themselves they shouted and argued—and sometimes stabbed and fought each other furiously, rolling in their brown robes in a wild tangle. They were a passionate and strong species. He got so he admired them.

Which was good—because it made him feel better. To have the reverent awe of such a proud, sturdy race was really something. There was nothing craven about them.

About the fifth time he came

there was a rather attractive structure built. Some kind of temple. A place of religious worship.

To him! They were developing a real religion about him. No doubt of it. He began going to work at nine o'clock, to give himself a full hour with them. They had, by the middle of the second week, a full-sized ritual evolved. Processions, lighted tapers, what seemed to be songs or chants. Priests in long robes. And the spiced offerings.

No idols, though. Apparently he was so big they couldn't make out his appearance. He tried to imagine what it looked like to be on their side of the shimmer. An immense shape looming up above them, beyond a wall of gray haze. An indistinct being, something like themselves, yet not like them at all. A different kind of being, obviously. Larger—but different in other ways. And when he spoke—booming echoes up and down the Jiffiscuttler. Which still sent them fleeing in panic.

An evolving religion. He was changing them. Through his actual presence and through his answers, the precise, correct responses he obtained from the Federal Library of Information and had the Linguistics Machine translate into their language. Of course, by *their* time-rate they had to wait generations for the answers. But they had become accustomed to it, by now. They waited. They expected. They passed up questions and after a couple centuries he passed down answers, answers which they no doubt put to good use.

"What in the world?" Mary demanded, as he got home from work

an hour late, one night. "Where have you been?"

"Working," Ellis said carelessly, removing his hat and coat. He threw himself down on the couch. "I'm tired. Really tired." He sighed with relief and motioned for the couch-arm to bring him a whisky sour.

Mary came over by the couch. "Henry, I'm a little worried."

"Worried?"

"You shouldn't work so hard. You ought to take it easy, more. How long since you've had a real vacation? A trip off Terra. Out of the System. You know, I'd just like to call that fellow Miller and ask him why it's necessary a man your age put in so much—"

"A man my age!" Ellis bristled indignantly. "I'm not so old."

"Of course not." Mary sat down beside him and put her arms around him affectionately. "But you shouldn't have to do so much. You deserve a rest. Don't you think?"

"This is different. You don't understand. This isn't the same old stuff. Reports and statistics and the damn filing. This is—"

"What is it?"

"This is *different*. I'm not a cog. This gives me something. I can't explain it to you, I guess. But it's something I have to do."

"If you could tell me more about it—"

"I can't tell you any more about it," Ellis said. "But there's nothing in the world like it. I've worked twenty-five years for Terran Development. Twenty-five years at the same desk. Classifying the same reports, again and again. Twenty-five years—and I never felt this way."

OH, YEAH?" Miller roared. "Don't give me that! Come clean, Ellis!"

Ellis opened and closed his mouth. "What are you talking about?" Horror rolled through him. "What's happened?"

"Don't try to give *me* the run-around." On the vidscreen Miller's face was purple. "Come into my office."

The screen went dead.

Ellis sat stunned at his desk. Gradually, he collected himself and got shakily to his feet. "Good Lord." Weakly, he wiped cold sweat from his forehead. All at once. Everything in ruins. He was dazed with the shock.

"Anything wrong?" Miss Nelson asked sympathetically.

"No." Ellis moved numbly toward the door. He was shattered. What had Miller found out? Good God! Was it possible he had—

"Mr. Miller looked angry."

"Yeah." Ellis moved blindly down the hall, his mind reeling. Miller looked angry, all right. Somehow, he had found out. But why was he mad? Why did he care? A cold chill settled over Ellis. It looked bad. Miller was his superior—with hiring and firing powers. Maybe he'd done something wrong. Maybe he had somehow broken a law. Committed a crime. But what?

What did Miller care about *them*? What concern was it of Terran Development?

He opened the door to Miller's office. "Here I am, Mr. Miller," he muttered. "What's the trouble?"

Miller glowered at him in rage. "All this goofy stuff about your

cousin on Proxima."

"It's—uh—you mean a business friend on Centaurus VI."

"You—you swindler!" Miller leaped up. "And after all the Company's done for you."

"I don't understand," Ellis muttered. "What have—"

"Why do you think we gave you the Jiffi-scuttler in the first place?"

"Why?"

"To test! To try out, you wall-eyed Venusian stink-cricket! The Company magnanimously consented to allow you to operate a Jiffi-scuttler in advance of market presentation, and what do you do? Why, you—"

Ellis started to get indignant. After all, he had been with TD twenty-five years. "You don't have to be so offensive. I plunked down my thousand gold credits for it."

"Well, you can just mosey down to the accountant's office and get your money back. I've already sent out a directive for a construction team to crate up your Jiffi-scuttler and bring it back to receiving."

Ellis was dumbfounded. "But why?"

"Why indeed! Because it's defective. Because it doesn't work. That's why." Miller's eyes blazed with technological outrage. "The inspection crew found a leak a mile wide in it." His lip curled. "As if you didn't know."

Ellis' heart sank. "Leak?" he croaked apprehensively.

"Leak. It's a damn good thing I authorized a periodic inspection. If we depended on people like you to—"

"Are you sure? It seemed all right to me. That is, it got me here

without any trouble." Ellis floundered. "Certainly no complaints from my end."

"No. No complaints from your end. That's exactly why you're not getting another one. That's why you're taking the monojet transport back home tonight. Because you didn't report the leak! And if you ever try to put something over on this office again—"

"How do you know I was aware of the—defect?"

Miller sank down in his chair, overcome with fury. "Because," he said carefully, "of your daily pilgrimage to the Linguistics Machine. With your alleged letter from your grandmother on Betelgeuse II. Which wasn't any such thing. Which was an utter fraud. Which you got through the leak in the Jiffi-scuttler!"

"How do you know?" Ellis squeaked boldly, driven to the wall. "So maybe there was a defect. But you can't prove there's any connection between your badly constructed Jiffi-scuttler and my—"

"Your missive," Miller stated, "which you foisted on our Linguistics Machine, was not a non-Terran script. It was not from Centaurus VI. It was not from any non-Terran system. It was ancient Hebrew. And there's only one place you could have got it, Ellis. So don't try to kid me."

"Hebrew!" Ellis exclaimed, startled. He turned white as a sheet. "Good Lord. The other continuum—The fourth dimension. Time, of course." He trembled. "And the expanding universe. That would explain their size. And it explains why a new group, a new generation—"

"We're taking enough of a chance as it is, with these Jiffi-scuttlers. Warping a tunnel through other space-time continua." Miller shook his head wearily. "You meddler! You *knew* you were supposed to report any defect."

"I don't think I did any harm, did I?" Ellis was suddenly terribly nervous. "They seemed pleased, even grateful. Gosh, I'm sure I didn't cause any trouble."

Miller shrieked in insane rage. For a time he danced around the room. Finally he threw something down on his desk, directly in front of Ellis. "No trouble. No, none. Look at this. I got this from the Ancient Artifacts Archives."

"What is it?"

"Look at it! I compared one of your question sheets to this. The same. *Exactly* the same. All your sheets, questions and answers, every one of them's in here. You multi-legged Ganymedian mange beetle!"

Ellis picked up the book and opened it. As he read the pages a strange look came slowly over his face. "Good Heavens. So they kept a record of what I gave them. They put it all together in a book. Every word of it. And some commentaries, too. It's all here— Every single word. It *did* have an effect, then. They passed it on. Wrote all of it down."

"Go back to your office. I'm through looking at you for today. I'm through looking at you forever. Your severance check will come though regular channels."

In a trance, his face flushed with a strange excitement, Ellis gripped the book and moved dazedly toward the door. "Say, Mr. Miller.

Can I have this? Can I take it along?"

"Sure," Miller said wearily. "Sure, you can take it. You can read it on your way home tonight. On the public monojet transport."

HENRY has something to show you," Mary Ellis whispered excitedly, gripping Mrs. Lawrence's arm. "Make sure you say the right thing."

"The right thing?" Mrs. Lawrence faltered nervously, a trifle uneasy. "What is it? Nothing alive, I hope."

"No, no." Mary pushed her toward the study door. "Just smile." She raised her voice. "Henry, Dorothy Lawrence is here."

Henry Ellis appeared at the door of his study. He bowed slightly, a dignified figure in silk dressing gown, pipe in his mouth, fountain pen in one hand. "Good evening, Dorothy," he said in a low, well-modulated voice. "Care to step into my study a moment?"

"Study?" Mrs. Lawrence came hesitantly in. "What do you study? I mean, Mary says you've been doing something very interesting recently, now that you're not with— I mean, now that you're home more. She didn't give me any idea what it was, though."

Mrs. Lawrence's eyes roved curiously around the study. The study was full of reference volumes, charts, a huge mahogany desk, an atlas globe, leather chairs, an unbelievably ancient electric typewriter.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "How odd. All these old things."

Ellis lifted something carefully from the book case and held it out to her casually. "By the way—you might glance at this."

"What is it? A book?" Mrs. Lawrence took the book and examined it eagerly. "My goodness. Heavy, isn't it?" She read the back, her lips moving. "What does it mean? It looks old. What strange letters! I've never seen anything like it. *Holy Bible*." She glanced up brightly. "What is this?"

Ellis smiled faintly. "Well—"

A light dawned. Mrs. Lawrence gasped in revelation. "Good Heavens! You didn't *write* this, did you?"

Ellis' smile broadened into a depreciating blush. A dignified hue of modesty. "Just a little thing I threw together," he murmured indifferently. "My first, as a matter of fact." Thoughtfully, he fingered his fountain pen. "And now, if you'll excuse me, I really should be getting back to my work . . ."

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