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THE UNTELEPORTED MAN

Philip K. Dick

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# the Unteleported Man

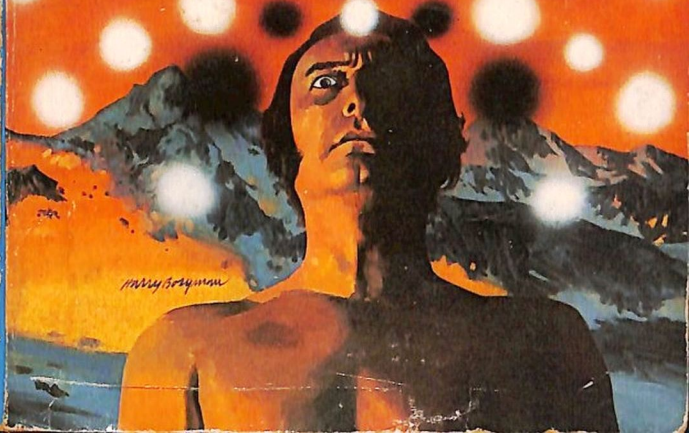
PHILIP K. DICK

FIND THE UNCONFORMING  
EQUATION—OR DIE!

441-15697-095

DR. FUTURITY

Philip K. Dick





## BY THE AUTHOR OF THE CRACK IN SPACE

Nobody would go to the stars the long way when you could travel to your new planetary Utopia the instant-teleportation way. That is, nobody reasonable would want to spend eighteen long years in a spaceship just to be stubborn about electronic transit.

Which is what made Rachmael ben Applebaum such a thorn in the side to the giant industrial combines that had made the Telpor what it was. Because Rachmael was all set to head for Newcolonizedland by his own starship—alone.

But just being eccentric and a doubter would hardly justify the incredible concentration of effort to prevent his trip. *THE UNTELEPORTED MAN* suspected he was on the track of a secret too dangerous to get out—even after an eighteen year journey.

Yet even he did not guess him terrifyingly right he was!

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# **The Unteleported Man**

**by Philip K. Dick**

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THE UNTELEPORTED MAN

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DR. FUTURITY

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## I

OVER Rachmael ben Applebaum's head floated a creditor jet-balloon, and from within its articulation-circuit a flat but handsome, masculine—artificial, however-voice boomed, magnified so that not only Rachmael but everyone else crowding the ped-runnels heard it. The amplification was designed this way; you were singled out and simultaneously exposed; public ridicule, the jeers of the always-present crowds, was brought into play as a force working at you . . . and, Rachmael reflected, for the creditor, free.

"Mr. Applebaum!" The hearty, rich but machine-sponsored voice echoed, rolled and boomed, and a thousand human heads rotated in expectation, glanced up with amused interest, saw the creditor jet-balloon and spied also its target: Rachmael ben Applebaum trying to get from the parking lot where he had left his flapple and into the offices of Lies Incorporated, a distance of only two thousand yards—but enough to make him visible so as to become the creditor balloon's target.

"Okay," Rachmael grated, and strode on, not breaking gait; he made for the fluoron-illuminated entrance of the private police agency and did not look up; he pretended—as if this were possible—to ignore a sight which, in the last three years, he had learned to know fully.

"Mr. Applebaum," the balloon boomed. "As of this Wednesday, November 8, 2014, you owe, as interior of your late father's assets and debts, the sum of four million poscreds to Trails of Hoffman Limited, a major

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backer in your late father's—"

"Okay!" Rachmael said violently, halting, peering up in futile anguish . . . the desire to puncture, deflate and bring down the balloon was overwhelming—yet what could he do? By UN ordinance, a creditor could hire such harassment; this was legal.

And the grinning crowd knew it. Saw in this for them a brief but amusing ent-show: entertainment. However, he did not blame them; it was not their fault because they had over the years been trained this way. All the info and edu media, controlled by the "disinterested" UN public affairs bureaus, had tinkered with this facet of modern man's complex character: his ability to enjoy the suffering of someone else whom he did not even know.

"I cannot," Rachmael said, "pay. And you know it." Above, the jet-balloon heard; it had exceeding marvelous aud-receptors. But it did not believe him or care if what he said was true; its job was to hound him, not to seek the truth. Standing on the runnel as it automatically carried him along, Rachmael said, as reasonably as possible, "At present I have no funds, because continuously up to now, one by one, I've paid off as many of Applebaum Enterprises' creditors as I can."

Tauntingly, the mechanical voice from above boomed. "At three sigs on the poscred. Some settling of accounts."

Rachmael said, "Give me time."

"Plans, Mr. Applebaum?" The voice twisted with scorn.

After a pause he said, "Yes." But he did not specify; it depended in part on what he obtained from the private police agency, Lies Incorporated. If that was anything. But over the vidphone at least—he did think he



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had detected a certain sympathetic resonance from the master proprietor of the police agency, Matson Glazer-Holliday.

Now, in five minutes, in a formal screening-interview with a Lies Incorporated psych-rep, Rachmael would find out—learn just how far the private police agency, which after all had to survive the competition, had to stand up to the UN and the lesser titans of the nine planet system, would go in staking a man who was not merely broke but who owed—owed for the wreckage of an industrial empire which had collapsed, carrying its operator and owner, Maury Applebaum, to his—evidently—voluntary death.

*Evidently.* A good word, and a big one, like any word pertaining to death. As the runnel, despite the lurking, booming creditor balloon above, carried Rachmael toward the sanctuary of the shifting-color doorway he thought, maybe they can help me there, too.

Because it had just never quite seemed reasonable to him that his father, and god knew he was familiar with his father, would laser himself to death due to economic collapse . . . although admittedly, as subsequent events had proved, that collapse was terminal for Applebaum Enterprise.

“You must pay,” the jet-balloon howled. “Trails of Hoffman insists; your petition of bankruptcy was turned down by the UN courts—you, Mr. Rachmael ben Applebaum, are legally liable for the sum of—”

The voice abruptly vanished as Rachmael crossed the threshold of the private inter-planetary police agency, and the thoroughly soundproof rexeroid door slid shut after him.

“Yes, sir,” the robot receptionist, not jeering but

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friendly, said to him; what a contrast with the circus outside.

"Miss Holm," Rachmael said, and heard his voice shake. The creditor balloon had gotten to him; he was trembling and perspiring.

"Syn-cof?" the receptionist asked sympathetically. "Or Martian fnikjuice tea, while you wait?"

Rachmael, getting out a genuine Tampa, Florida Garcia y Vega cigarillo, murmured, "I'll just sit, thanks." He lit the cigar, waited. For Miss Freya Holm, whatever or whoever she was—and looked like.

A soft voice said, almost timidly, "Mr. ben Applebaum? I'm Miss Holm. If you'll come into my office—" She held the door open, and she was perfection; his Garcia y Vega cigarillo dwindled, neglected in the ash-tray as he rose to his feet. She, no more than twenty, chitin-black long hair that hung freely down her shoulders, teeth white as the glossy bond of the expensive UN info mags . . . he stared at her, at the small girl in the gold-spray bodice and shorts and sandals, with the single camellia over her left ear, stared and thought, *And this is my police protection.*

"Sure." Numbly, he passed her, entered her small, contemporarily-furnished office; in one glance he saw artifacts from the extinct cultures of six planets. "But Miss Holm," he said, then, candidly, "maybe your employers didn't explain; there's pressure here. I've got one of the most powerful economic syndromes in the Sol system after me. Trails of Hoffman—"

"THL," Miss Holm said, seating herself at her desk and touching the *on* of her aud-recorder, "is the owner of Dr. Sepp von Einem's teleportation construct and hence monopolistically has made obsolete the hyper-see

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liners and freighters of Applebaum Enterprise." On her desk before her she had a folio, which she consulted. "You see, Mr. Rachmael ben Applebaum—" She glanced up. "I wish to keep you in data-reference distinct from your father, the late Maury Applebaum. So may I call you Rachmael?"

"Y-yes," he said, nettled by her coolness, her small, firm poise—and the folio which lay before her; long before he had consulted Listening Instructional Educational Services—or, as the pop mind called it in UN-egged-on derision, Lies Incorporated—the police agency had gathered, with its many data-monitors, the totality of information pertaining to him and to the collapse from abrupt technological obsolescence of the once formidable Applebaum Enterprise. And—

"Your late father," Freya Holm said, "died evidently at his own instigation. Officially the UN police list it as *Selbstmord* . . . suicide. We however—" She paused, consulted the folio. "Hmm."

Rachmael said, "I'm not satisfied, but I'm resigned." After all, he could not bring back his heavy, red-faced, nearsighted and highly over-taxed father, *Selbstmord*, in the official German of the UN, or not. "Miss Holm," he began, but she cut him off, gently.

"Rachmael, the Telpor electronic entity of Dr. Sepp von Einem, researched and paid for, developed in the several interplan labs of Trails of Hoffman, could do nothing else than bring chaos to the drayage industry; Theodoric Ferry, who is chairman of the board of THL, must have known this when he financed Dr. von Einem at his Schweinfurt labs where the Telpor breakthrough occurred. And yet THL owned—outside of your father's—the largest single holding of the now-defunct Applebaum Enterprise. *Therefore Trails of Hoffman Limited*

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*deliberately ruined a corporation which it had major investments in . . . and this has seemed strange to us. And*—she glanced up alertly, tossed back her mass of black hair—“now they hound you for restitution; correct?”

Rachmael nodded mutely.

Quietly, Miss Holm asked, “How long did it take a passenger liner of your father’s corporation to reach Whale’s Mouth with a load of, say, five hundred colonists, plus their personal effects?”

After a tormented pause he said, “We—never even tried. Years. Even at hyper-see.” The girl, across from him, still waited, wanted to hear him say it. “With our flagship transport,” he said, “eighteen years.”

“And with Dr. von Einem’s teleportation instrument—”

“Fifteen minutes,” he said harshly. And Whale’s Mouth, the number IX planet of the Fomalhaut system, was to date the sole planet discovered either by manned or unmanned observers which was truly habitable—truly a second Terra. Eighteen years . . . and even deep-sleep would not help, for such a prolonged period; aging, although slowed down, although *consciousness* was dimmed, still occurred. Alpha and Prox; that had been all right; that had been short enough. But Fomalhaut, at twenty-four light-years—

“We just couldn’t compete,” he said. “We simply could not carry colonists that far.”

“Would you have tried, without von Einem’s Telpor break-through?”

Rachmael said, “My father—”

“Was thinking about it.” She nodded. “But then he died and it was too late and now you’ve had to sell virtually all your ships to meet note-payment due-dates.

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Now, from us, Rachmael. You wanted . . . ?”

“I still own,” he said, “our fastest, newest, biggest ship, the *Omphalos*; she’s never been sold, no matter how great the pressure THL has put on me, within and outside the UN courts.” He hesitated, then said it. “I want to go to Whale’s Mouth. By ship. Not by Dr. von Einem’s Telpor. And by my own ship, by what we meant to be our—” He broke off. “I want to take her all the way to Fomalhaut, on an eighteen-year voyage—alone. And when I arrive at Whale’s Mouth I’ll prove—”

“Yes?” Freya said. “Prove what, Rachmael?”

“That we could have done it. Had von Einem not come along with that thing, that—” He gestured, with impotent fury.

Freya said, “Telpor is one of the most vital discoveries in human history, Rachmael. Teleportation, from one star-system to another, twenty-four light-years in fifteen minutes. When you reach Whale’s Mouth by the *Omphalos*, I for instance will be—” She calculated. “Forty-three years old.”

He was silent.

“What,” Freya asked in a soft voice, “would you accomplish by your trip?”

He said, honestly, “I—don’t know.”

Presently Freya said, reading from her folio, “You have, for six months now, been thoroughly checking out the *Omphalos* at a concealed—even from us—launch field and maintenance dock on Luna. She is now considered ready for the inter-system flight. Trails of Hoffman has tried, through the courts, to attach her to claim her as their legal property; this you have managed to fight. So far. But now—”

“My lawyers tell me,” Rachmael said, “that three days stand between me and THL seizing the *Omphalos*.”

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"You can't blast off within three days?"

"The deep-sleep equipment. It's a week from being readied." He let out his breath raggedly. "A subsidiary of THL manufactures vital components. They've been—*held up*."

Freya nodded. "And your coming here is to request us," she said, "to pick up the *Omphalos*, with one of our veteran pilots, disappear with her for a week, until she's ready for the flight to Fomalhaut. Correct?"

"That's it," he said, and sat waiting. "I'm not good enough to lose her. They'd find me. But yours—one of your best." He did not look directly at her; it meant too much.

"You can pay our fee of—"

"Nothing. I have absolutely no funds. Later, as I continue to liquidate the assets of the corporation, possibly I—"

Freya said, "There's a note here, Xeroxed, from my employer, Mr. Glazer-Holliday. He observes that you're poscredless. His instructions to us—" She read the note, silently. "However, we're to cooperate with you, despite your financial helplessness." Glancing up at him she said, "We'll dispatch an experienced pilot who will take the *Omphalos* off where THL, where even the UN agents acting for the Secretary General, Herr Horst Bertold, won't find her. This our man can do—while you manage, if you can, to obtain the final components of the deep-sleep equipment." She smiled slightly. "But I doubt if you'll obtain those components, Rachmael; there's an additional memo here to that effect, too. You're right: Theodoric Ferry sits on its board of directors, too, and this is all legal, this monopoly which the firm possesses." Her smile was bitter. "UN sanctioned."

He was silent. Obviously it was hopeless; no matter

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how long the Lies Incorporated professional and ultra-veteran space-pilot kept the huge liner the *Omphalos* lost between planets, the components would be "held up unavoidably," as the invoices, marked back-order, would read.

"I think," Freya said presently, "that your problem is not the mere obtaining of deep-sleep components. That can be handled; there are ways . . . we, for instance, can—although this will cost you a good deal of money eventually—pick them up on the blackmarket. Your problem, Rachmael—"

"I know," he said. His problem was not *how* to get to the Fomalhaut system, to its ninth planet, Whale's Mouth which was Terra's sole thriving colony-world. In fact his problem was not the eighteen-year voyage at all.

His problem was—

Why go at all, when Dr. von Einem's Telpor construct, available at a nominal cost at any of Trails of Hoffman's many retail outlets on Terra, made the trip a mere fifteen minute minor journey, and within financial reach of even the most modest, income-wise speaking, Terran family?

Aloud he said, "Freya, the trip by Telpor to Whale's Mouth—it sounds fine." And forty million Terran citizens had taken advantage of it. And the aud and vid reports returning—via the Telpor construct—all told glowingly of a world not overcrowded, of tall grass, of odd but benign animals, of new and lovely cities built by robot-assists taken across at UN-expense to Whale's Mouth. "But—"

"But," Freya said, "the peculiar fact is that it's a one-way trip."

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Instantly he nodded. "Yes, that's it. *No one can come back.*"

"That's easily explained. The Sol system is located at the axis of the universe; the recession of the extragalactic nebulae demonstrate von Einem's Theorem One that—"

"There must," he said, "out of those forty million people, be a *few* who want to return. But the TV and 'pape reports say they're all ecstatically happy. You've seen the endless TV shows, life at Newcolonizedlands. It's—"

"Too perfect, Rachmael?"

"Statistically, *malcontents must exist*. Why do we never hear of them? And we can't go and take a look." Because, if you went by Telpor to Whale's Mouth and saw, you were there, as they were, *to stay*. So if you did find malcontents—what could you do for them? Because you could not take them back; you could only join them. And he had the intuition that somehow this just wouldn't be of much use. Even the UN left Newcolonizedland alone, the countless UN welfare agencies, the personnel and bureaus newly set up by the present Secretary General Horst Bertold, from New Whole Germany: the largest political entity in Europe—even they stopped at the Telpor gates. Neues Einige Deutschland . . . N.E.D. Far more powerful than the mangy, dwindling French Empire or the U.K.—they were pale remnants of the past.

And New Whole Germany—as the election to UN Secretary General of Horst Bertold showed—was the Wave of the Future . . . as the Germans themselves liked to phrase it.

"So in other words," Freya said, "you'd take an empty passenger liner to the Fomalhaut system, spend eighteen years in transit, you, the sole unteleported man,



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among the seven billion citizens of Terra, with the idea—or should I say, the hope?—that when you arrive finally at Whale's Mouth, in the year 2032, you'll find a passenger complement, five hundred or so unhappy souls who want out? And so you then can resume commercial operations . . . von Einem takes them there in fifteen minutes and then eighteen years later you return them to Terra, back home to the Sol system."

"Yes," he said fiercely.

"Plus another eighteen years—for them—too—for the flight back. For you thirty-six years in all. You'd return to Terra in the year—" She calculated. "2050 A.D. I'd be sixty-one years old; Theodoric Ferry, even Horst Bertold, would be dead; perhaps Trails of Hoffman Limited wouldn't even exist, any more . . . certainly Dr. Sepp von Einem would be dead years ago; let's see: he's in his eighties now. No, he'd never live to see you reach Whale's Mouth, let alone return. So if all this is to make him feel bad—"

"Is it insane?" Rachmael said. "To believe, first, that *some* unhappy persons must be stuck at Whale's Mouth . . . and yet we're not hearing, via THL's monopoly of all info media, all energy, passing back this way. And second—"

"And second," Freya said, "to want to spend eighteen years of your life in getting there to rescue them." Professional, intent, she eyed him. "Is this idealism? Or is this vengeance against Dr. von Einem because of his Telpor construct that made your family's liners and commercial carriers obsolete for inter-system travel? After all, if you do manage to leave in the *Omphalos*, it'll be big news, a novelty; it'll be fully covered on TV and in the 'papes, here on Terra; even the UN won't be able to squelch the story—the first, sole, *manned* vessel

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to go to Fomalhaut, not just one of those old-time instrument packages. Why, you'd be a time capsule; we'd all be waiting for you to arrive first there and then, in 2050, back here."

"A time capsule," he said, "like the one fired off at Whale's Mouth. Which never arrived here on Terra."

She shrugged. "Passed Terra by, was attracted by the sun's gravitational field; was swallowed up unnoticed."

"Unnoticed by *any* tracking station? Out of over six thousand separate monitoring devices in orbit in the Sol system *none* detected the time capsule when it arrived?"

Frowning, Freya said, "What do you mean to imply, Rachmael?"

"The time capsule," Rachmael said, "from Whale's Mouth, the launching of which we watched years ago on TV—it wasn't detected by our tracking stations because it never arrived. And it never arrived, Miss Holm, because despite those crowd scenes *it was never sent.*"

"You mean what we saw on TV—"

"The vid signal, via Telpor," Rachmael said, "which showed the happy masses at Whale's Mouth cheering at the vast public launching ceremony of the time capsule—were fakes. I've run and rerun recordings of them; the crowd noise is spurious." Reaching into his cloak he brought out a seven-inch reel of iron oxide Ampex and tape; he tossed it onto her desk. "Play it back. Carefully. *There were no people cheering.* And for a good reason. Because no time capsule, containing quaint artifacts from the Fomalhaut ancient civilizations, was launched from Whale's Mouth."

"But—" She stared at him in disbelief, then picked up the aud tape, held the reel uncertainly. "*Why?*"

"I don't know," Rachmael said. "But when the Om-

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*phalos* reaches the Fomalhaut system and Whale's Mouth and I see Newcolonizedland, I'll know." And, he thought, I don't think I'll find ten or sixty malcontents out of forty million . . . by that time, of course, it'll be something like a billion colonists. I'll find—

He ended the thought abruptly. He did not know.

But eventually he would know. In the little matter of eighteen years.

## II

IN THE sybritic living room of his villa, on his satellite as it orbited Terra, the owner of Lies Incorporated, Matson Glazer-Holliday, sat in his human-made dressing gown smoking a prize, rare Antonio y Cleopatra cigar and listening to the aud tape of the crowd noises.

And, directly before him he watched the oscilloscope as it transformed the audio signal into a visual one.

To Freya Holm he said, "Yes, there is a cycle. You can see it, even though you can't hear it. This aud-track is continuous, running over and over again. Hence the man's right; it's a fake."

"Could Rachmael ben Applebaum have—"

"No," Matson said. "I've sequestered an aud copy from the UN info archives; it agrees. Rachmael didn't tamper with the tape; it's exactly what he claims it to be." He sat back, pondering.

Strange, he thought, that von Einem's Telpor gadget works only one way, radiating matter out . . . with no return of that matter, at least by teleportation, possible. So, rather conveniently for Trails of Hoffman, all we get via Telpor as a feedback from Whale's Mouth is an electronic signal, energy alone . . . and this one now

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exposed as a fake; as a research agency I should have discovered this long ago—Rachmael, with all his creditors hounding him jet-balloonwise, keeping him awake night and day, hammering at him with countless technological assists, impeding him in the normal course of conducting routine business, has detected this spuriousness, and I—damn it. Matson thought; I missed, here. He felt gloomy.

“Cutty Sark Scotch and water?” Freya asked.

He nodded absently as Freya, who was his mistress, disappeared into the liquor antechamber of the villa to see if the 1985 bottle—worth a fortune—were empty yet.

But, on the credit side, he had been suspicious.

From the start he had bouted the so-called “Theorem One” of Dr. von Einem; it sounded too much like a cover, this one-way transmission by the technicians of THL’s multitude of retail outlets. Write home from Whale’s Mouth, son, when you get there, he thought acidly; tell your old mom how it is on the colony world with its fresh air, sunshine, all those cute little animals, those wondrous buildings THL robots are constructing . . . and the report-back, the letter, *as electronic signal*, had duly arrived. But the beloved son; he could not personally, directly report. Could not return to tell his story, and, as in the ancient story of the lion’s den, all the footprints of guileless creatures led *in* to the den, yet none led *out*. It was the fable all over again—with something even more sinister added. That of what appeared more and more to be a thoroughly phony trail of *outgoing* tracks: the electronic message-units. By someone who is versed in sophisticated hardware, Matson thought; someone is tinkering around, and is there any reason to look beyond the figure of Dr. Sepp von Einem himself, the inventor of the Telpor, plus Neues Einige Deut-

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schland's very efficient technicians who ran Ferry's retail machinery?"

There was something he did not like about those German technicians who manned the Telpors. So business-like. As their ancestors must have been, Matson mused. Back in the twentieth century when those ancestors, with the same affectless calm, fed bodies into ovens or living humans into ersatz shower baths which turned out to be Zyklon B hydrogen cyanide gas chambers. And financed by reputable big Third Reich business, by Herr Krupp u. Sohnen. Just as von Einem is financed by Trails of Hoffman, with its vast central offices in Grosser Berlintadt—the new capital of New Whole Germany, the city in fact from which our distinguished UN Secretary General emanates.

"Get me," Matson said to Freya, "instead of Scotch and water, the file on Horst Bertold."

In the other room Freya rang up the autonomic research equipment wired into the walls of the villa . . . electronic hardware, minned—miniaturized—for the most part, of a data-sorting and receiving nature, plus the file-banks, and—

Certain useful artifacts which did *not* involve data but which involved high-velocity A-warhead darts that, were the satellite to be attacked by any of the UN's repertory of offensive weapons, would take up the fight and abolish the missiles before they reached their target.

At his villa on his Brocard ellipse satellite Matson was safe. And, as a precaution, he conducted as much business as possible from this spot; below, in New New York City, at Lies Incorporated's offices, he always felt naked. Felt, in fact, the nearby presence of the UN and Horst Bertold's legions of "Peace Workers," those armed, gray-faced men and women who, in the name of Pax

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Terrae, roamed the world, even into the pathetic moonies, the sad, failure-but-still-extant early "colony" satellites which had come before von Einem's breakthrough and the discovery by George Hoffman of Fomalhaut IX, now called Whale's Mouth and now *the* colony.

Too bad, Matson thought archly, that George Hoffman didn't discover more planets in more star systems habitable by us, the frail needs of living, sentient, mentating biochemical upright bipeds which we humans are. Hundreds and hundreds of planets, but—

Instead, temperature which melted thermo-fuses. No air. No soil. No water.

One could hardly say of such worlds—Venus had proved a typical example—that the "living was easy." The living, in fact, on such worlds was confined to homeostatic domes with their own at, wa, and self-regu temp.

Housing, per dome, perhaps three hundred somatic souls. Rather a small number, considering that of this year Terra's population stood at seven billion.

"Here," Freya said, sliding down to seat herself, legs tucked under her, on the deep-pile *wool* carpet near Matson. "The file on H.B." She opened it at random; Lies Incorporated field reps had done a thorough job: many data existed here that, via the UN's carefully-watchdogged info media, never had reached the public, even the so-called "critical" analysts and columnists. They could, by law, criticize to their hearts' content, the character, habits, abilities and shaving-customs of Herr Bertold . . . except, however, the basic facts were denied them.

Not so, however, to Lies Incorporated—an ironic sobriquet, in view of the absolutely verified nature of the data now before its owner.

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It was harsh reading. Even for him.

The year of Horst Bertold's birth: 1954. Slightly before the Space Age had begun; like Matson Glazer-Holliday, Horst was a remnant of the old world when all that had been glimpsed in the sky were "flying saucers," a misnomer for a U.S. Air Force antimissile weapon which had, in the brief confrontation of 1982, proved ineffectual. Horst had been born to middleclass Berlin—West Berlin, it had then been called, because, and this was difficult to remember, Germany had in those days been divided—parents: his father had owned a meat market . . . rather fitting, Matson reflected, in that Horst's father had been an S.S. officer and former member of an Einsatzgruppe which had murdered thousands of innocent persons of Slavic and Jewish ancestry . . . although this had not interfered with Johann Bertold's meat market business in the 1950s and '60s. And then, in 1972, at the age of eighteen, young Horst himself had entered the spotlight (needless to say, the statute of limitations had run out on his father, who had never been prosecuted by the West German legal apparatus for his crimes of the '40s, and had, in addition, evaded the commando squads from Israel who, by 1970, had closed up shop, given up the task of tracking down the former mass-murderers). Horst, in 1972, had been a leader in the Reinholt Jugend.

Ernst Reinholt, from Hambrug, had headed a party which had striven to unify Germany once more; the deal would be that as a military and economic power she would be neutral between East and West. It had taken ten more years, but in the fracas of 1982 he had obtained from the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. what he wanted: a united, free Germany, called by its present name, and just chuck full of vim and *Macht*.

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And, under Reinholt, Neues Einige Deutschland had played dirty pool from the start. But no one was really surprised; East and West were busy erecting tents where major popcens—population centers such as Chicago and Moscow—had existed, and hoping to god that the Sino-Cuban wing of the C.P. did not, taking advantage of the situation, move in and entrench. . . .

It had been the secret protocol of Reinholt and his N.W.G. that it would not be neutral after all. On the contrary.

New Whole Germany would take out China.

So this was the unsavory basis on which the Reich had reobtained unity. Its *Waffen* technicians had devised, as instructed, weapons which had, in 1987, dealt a terminal punch to People's China. Matson, examining the folio, very rapidly scanned this part, because the Reich had come up with some show-stoppers, and even the abominable U.S. nerve gas had seemed like a field of daisies in comparison—he did not wish to see any mention of what Krupp u. Solmen had devised as an answer to China's thousands of millions who were spilling as far west as the Volga, and toward the U.S., were crossing from Siberia—taken in 1983—into Alaska. In any case the compact had been agreed on, and even Faust would have blanched at it; now the world had no People's China but a New Whole Germany to contend with.

And what a quid pro quo that had proved to be. Because, correctly and legally, Neues Einige Deutschland had obtained control of the sole planet-wide and hence Sol system-wide governing structure, the UN. They held it now. And the former member of the Reinholt Jugend, Horst Bertold, was its Secretary General. And had faced squarely, as he had promised when campaign-



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ing for election—it had become, by 1985, an elective office—that he would deal with the colonization problem; he would find a Final Solution to the tormented condition that (one) Terra was as overpopulated throughout as Japan had been in 1960 and (two) both the alternate planets of the Sol system and the moonies and the domes et al. had failed wretchedly.

Horst had found, via Dr. von Einem's Telpor teleportation construct, a habitable planet in a star system too far from Sol to be reached by the quondam drayage enterprise of Maury Applebaum. Whale's Mouth, and the Telpor mechanisms at Trails of Hoffman's retail outlets, were *the* answer.

To all appearances it was duck soup, feathers, scut included. But—

"See?" Matson said to Freya. "Here's the written transcript of Horst Bertold's speech before he was elected and before von Einem showed up with the Telpor gadget. *The promise was made before teleportation to the Fomalhaut system was technologically possible*—in fact, before the existence of Fomalhaut was even known to unmanned elderly relay-monitors."

"So?"

Matson said grimly, "So our UN Secretary General had a mandate before he had a solution. And to the German mind that means one thing and one thing only. The cat and rat farm solution." Or, as he now suspected, the dog food factory solution.

It had been suggested, ironically, in imitation of Swift, by a fiction writer of the 1950s, that the "Negro Question" in the U.S. be solved by the building of giant factories which made Negroes into canned dog food. Satire, of course, like Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, that the problem of starvation among the Irish be solved by the

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eating of the children . . . Swift himself lamenting, as a final irony, that he had no children of his own to offer to the market for consumption. Grisly. But—

This all pointed to the seriousness—not merely of the problem of overpopulation and insufficient food production—but to the insane, schizoid solutions seriously being considered. The brief World War Three—never officially called that; called instead, a Pacifying Action, just as the Korean War had been a “Police Action”—had taken care of a few millions of people, but—not quite enough. As a solution it had worked to a partial extent; and was, in many influential quarters, viewed exactly as that: as a partial solution. Not as a catastrophe but as a half-answer.

And Horst Bertold had promised the balance of the answer.

Whale’s Mouth was it.

“So in my opinion,” Matson murmured, to himself mostly, “I’ve always been suspicious of Whale’s Mouth. If I hadn’t read Swift and C. Wright Mills and the Herman Kahn Report for Rand Corporation . . .” He glanced at Freya. “There have,” he said, “always been people who would solve the problem that way.” *And I think*, he thought, as he listened to the aud tape of the crowd noises, a tape which pretended to consist of a transcript from the launching, at Whale’s Mouth, of the ritualistic, celebration-inspired time capsule back through hyper-space—or in some such ultra high velocity fashion—to Terra, *that we have those people and that solution with us again.*

We have, in other words, UN Secretary General Horst Bertold and Trail of Hoffman Limited and its economic multi-pseudopodia empire. And dear Dr. Sepp von

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Einem and his many Telpor outlets, his curiously *one way* teleporting machine.

"That land," Matson murmured, vaguely quoting, lord knew who, what sage of the past, "which all of us must visit one day . . . that land beyond the grave. But no one had returned to report on't. And until they do—"

Freya said perceptively, "Until they do, you're going to stay suspicious. Of the whole Newcolonizedland settlement. Aud and vid signals are not good enough to convince you—because *you* know how easily they can be faked." She gestured at the deck running the tape at this very moment.

"A client," Matson corrected her. "Who on a non-verbal level, what our Reich friends call *thinking with the blood*, suspects that if he takes his one remaining inter-stellar worthy flagship, the—" What was it called? "The *Navel*," he said. "The *Omphalos*; that's what that lofty Greek word means, by the way. Takes the *Navel* direct to Fomalhaut, that after eighteen years of weary deep-sleep which is not quite sleep, more a hypnagogic, restless tossing and turning at low temp, slowed-down metabolism, he will arrive at Whale's Mouth, and oddly it will not be beer and skittles. It will not be happy conapt dwellers, smiling children in autonomic schools, tame, exotic, native life forms. But—"

*But just what would he find?*

If, as he suspected, the aud and vid tracks passing from Whale's Mouth to Terra via von Einem's Telpor mechanisms were covers—what reality lay beneath?

He simply could not guess, not when forty million people were involved. The dog food factory? Are, god forbid, those forty million men, women and children *dead*? Is is a boneyard, with no one there, no one even

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to extract the gold from their teeth—because now we use stainless steel?

He did not know, but—someone knew. Perhaps entire New Whole Germany, which, having cornered the lion's share of power in the UN, hence ruled throughout the nine planets of the Sol system; perhaps as a totality it, on a subrational, instinctive level, knew. As, in the 1940s, it had intuited the existence of the gas chambers beyond the cages of twittering birds and those high walls that kept out all sight and sound . . . and except for that oddly acrid smoke from chimneys all day long—

"They know," Matson said aloud. Horst Bertold knew, and so did Theodoric Ferry the owner of THL, and so did doddering but still crafty old Dr. von Einem. And the one hundred and thirty-five million inhabitants of Neues Einige Deutschland, to some degree; not verbally—you couldn't put an expert psych rep of Lies Incorporated in a small room with a Munich cobbler, run a few routine drug-injections, make the standard quasi-Psionic transcripts, EEGs of his para-psychological reactions, and learn, know, the literal, exact truth.

The whole matter was, damn it, still obscured. And this time it was not cages of twittering birds or shower baths but something else—something, however, equally effective. Trails of Hoffman published 3-D, multi-color, brilliantly artistic, exciting brochures displaying the ecstatic life beyond the Telpor nexus; the TV ran ceaseless, drive-you-mad ads all day and night, of the underpopulated veldt landscape of Whale's Mouth, the balmy climate (via olfactory track), the warm the-answer-is-yes two-moon-filled nights . . . it was a land of romance, freedom, experimentation, kibbutzim without the desert: cooperative living where oranges grew *naturally*, and as large as grapefruits, which themselves re-

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sembled melons or the breasts of the women there. But.

Matson decided carefully, "I am sending a veteran field rep. across, via normal Telpor, posing as an unmarried businessman who hopes to open a watch repair shop at Whale's Mouth. He will have grafted subderm a high-gain transmitter; it will—"

"I know," Freya said patiently; this was evening and she obviously wished for a relaxation of the grim reality of their mutual business. "It will regularly release a signal at ultra-high-frequency on a none-used band, which will ultimately be picked up here. But that'll take *weeks*."

"Okay." He had it now. The Lies Incorporated field rep would send back a letter, via Telpor, in the customary manner encoded. It was that simple. If the letter arrived: fine. If not—

"You will wait," Freya said, "and wait. And no encoded letter will come. And then you will really begin to think that our client, Mr. ben Applebaum, has tripped over something ominous and huge in the long darkness which is our collective life. And *then* what will you do? Go across yourself?"

"Then I'm sending you," Matson said. "As the field rep there."

"No," she said, instantly.

"So Whale's Mouth frightens you. Despite all the glossy, expensive literature available free."

"I know Rachmael is right. I knew it when he walked in the door; I knew it from your memo. I'm not going; that's that." She faced her employer-paramour calmly.

"Then I'll draw at random from the field-personnel pool." He had not been serious; why should he offer his mistress as a pawn in this? But he had proved what he wished to prove: their joint fears were not merely in-

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tellectual. At this point in their thinking neither Freya nor he would risk the crossing via Telpor to Whale's Mouth, as thousands of guileless citizens of Terra, lugging their belongings and with innocent high hopes, did daily.

I hate, he thought, to turn anyone into the goat. But—

"Pete Burnside. Rep. in Detroit. We'll tell him we wish to set up a Lies Incorporated branch at Whale's Mouth under a cover name. Hardware store. Or TV fixit shop. Get his folio; see what talents he has." We'll make one of our own people, Matson thought, the victim—and it hurt, made him sick. And yet it should have been done months ago.

But it had taken bankrupt Rachmael ben Applebaum to goose them into acting, he realized. A man pursued by those monster creditor balloons that bellow all your personal defects and secrets. A man willing to undergo a *thirty-six year trip* to prove that something is foul in the land of milk and protein on the far side of those Telpor gates through which, on receipt of five poscreds, any adult Terran can avail himself for the purpose of—

God knew.

God—and the German hierarchy dominating the UN plus THL; he had no illusions about that: *they* did not need to analyze the crowd-noise track of the time capsule ceremony at Whale's Mouth to know.

As he had. And his job was investigation; he was, he realized with spurting, burgeoning horror, possibly the only individual on Terra *really* in a position to push through and obtain an authentic glimpse of this.

Short of eighteen years of space flight . . . a time-period which would allow infinite millions, even a billion if the extrapolations were correct, to pass by way of

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Telpor constructs on that—to him—terrifying one-way trip to the colony world.

If you are wise, Matson said to himself grimly, you never take one-way trips. Anywhere. Even to Boise, Idaho . . . even across the street. Be certain, when you start, *that you can scramble back.*

### III

AT ONE IN THE MORNING Rachmael ben Applebaum was yanked from his sleep—this was usual, because the assorted creditor-mechanisms had been getting to him on a round-the-clock basis, now. However, this time it was no robot raptor-like creditor mechanism. This was a man. Dark, a Negro; small and shrewd-looking. Standing at Rachmael's door with i.d. papers extended.

"From Listening Instructional Educational Services," the Negro said. He added, "I hold a Class-A inter-plan vehicle pilot-license."

That woke Rachmael. "You're going to take the *Omphalos* off Luna?"

"If I can find her." The dark, small man smiled briefly. "May I come in? I'd like you to accompany me to your maintenance yard on Luna so there's no mistake; I know your employees there are armed; otherwise—" He followed Rachmael into the conapt living room—the sole room, in fact: living-conditions on Terra being what they were. "Otherwise Trails of Hoffman would be ferrying equipment to their domes on Mars with the *Omphalos* as of last month—right?"

"Right," Rachmael said as he blearily dressed.

"My name's Al Dosker. And I did you a small side-favor, Mr. ben Applebaum. I took out a creditor-con-

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struct waiting in the hall." He displayed, then, a side arm. "I suppose, if it got into litigation, it'd be called 'property destruct.' Anyhow, when you and I leave, no THL device is going to monitor our path." He added, half to himself, "That I could detect, anyhow." At his chest he patted a variety of *bug chasers*; minned electronic instruments that recorded the presence of vid and aud receptors in the vicinity.

Shortly the two men were on their way to the roof field, where Dosker had parked his—as Rachmael discovered—taxi-marked flapple. As they entered he noticed how ordinary it looked . . . but as it arced into the night sky he blinked at its velocity and accepted the fact that this was not the usual thrust which now impelled them; they had hit 3.5 Machs within micro-seconds.

"You'll direct me," Dosker said. "Since even we at Lies Incorporated don't know where you've got the *Omphalos*; you did a good job of berthing her, or perhaps we're beginning to slip . . . or both."

"Okay." At the 3-D Lunar map he took hold of the locating trailing-arm, linked the pivot in position, then swept out a route until the terminus of the arm touched the recessed locus where his technicians worked busily at the *Omphalos*—worked, while waiting for parts which would never come.

"We're off course," Dosker said, abruptly. Speaking not to Rachmael but into his console mike. "Phooed."

*Phooed*—a trade term, and Rachmael felt fear, because the word was a condensation of P.U.—picked up. Picked up by a field, and this one was moving Dosker's small flapple out of its trajectory; at once Dosker fired the huge Whetstone-Milton rockets, tried to reassert with their enormous strength homeo-course . . . but



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the field continued to tug, even against the millions of pounds of thrust of the twin engines, as both fired in unison, acting as retro-jets against the field exerting its presence unseen but, on a variety of console instruments, registering.

Rachmael, after an interval of strained, wordless silence, said to Dosker, "Where's it taking us?"

"From a Three to L course," Dosker said laconically.

"Not to Luna, then." They would not, the two of them, reach the *Omphalos*' place of berth; that was now clear. But—where instead?

"We're in T-orb," Dosker said. Orbit around Earth, despite the push of the two W-M engines; Dosker now, reluctantly, cut them. Fuel for them had no doubt dropped to a dangerously low level: if the field let go they would orbit anyhow, orbit without the possibility of being capable of creating a trajectory that would lead to an ultimate landing either on Luna or on Terra. "They've got us," Dosker said, then, half to Rachmael and half into the mike that projected from the ship's console. He recited a series of encoded instructions into the mike, listened, then cursed, said to Rachmael, "We're cut off aud and vid, all signal-contact; I'm not getting through to Matson. So that's it."

"That's what?" Rachmael demanded. "You mean we give up? We just orbit Terra forever and die when we run out of oxygen?" Was this the fight that Lies Incorporated put up when faced by Trails of Hoffman? He, alone, had held out better; now he was disgusted, astonished and completely perplexed, and he watched without comprehension as Dosker inspected his bank of *bug chasers* at his chest. At the moment the Lies Incorporated pilot seemed interested only in whether or not monitors were picking them up—as well as con-

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trolling, externally, the trajectory of their ship.

Dosker said, "No monitors. Look, friend ben Applebaum." He spoke swiftly. "They cut my transmission on aud by micro-relay to Matson's satellite, but of course—" His dark eyes glinted with amusement. "I have on me a dead man's throttle; if a continuous signal from me is interrupted it automatically sets off an alarm at Lies Incorporated, at its main offices in New York and also at Matson's satellite. So by now they know something's happened." He lowered his voice, speaking almost to himself alone. "We'll have to wait to find out if they can get to us before it doesn't matter."

The ship, without power, in orbit, glided silently.

And then, jarringly, something nosed it; Rachmael fell; sliding along the floor to the far wall he saw Dosker tumble, too, and knew that this had been the locking of another ship or similar device against them—knew and then all at once realized that at least it hadn't detonated. At least it had not been a missile. Because if it had—

"They could," Dosker said, as he got unsteadily to his feet, "have taken us out permanently." By that he, too, meant a detonating weapon. He turned toward the tri-stage entrance hatch, used for null-atmosphere penetration.

The hatch, its circular seal-controls spun from impulses emanating outside, swung open.

Three men, two of them riffraff with lasers, with the decayed eyes of those who had been bought, hamstrung, lost long ago, came first. And then a clear-faced elegant man who would never be bought because he was a great buyer in the market of men; he was a dealer, not produce for sale.

It was Theodoric Ferry, chairman of the board of

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Trails of Hoffman Limited. Ahead of him his two employees swung a vacuum-cleaner-like mechanism; it searched, buzzing and nosing, probing until its operators were satisfied; they nodded to Theodoric, who then addressed Rachmael.

"May I seat myself?"

After a startled pause Rachmael said, "Sure."

"Sorry, Mr. Ferry," Dosker said. "The only seat is taken." He sat at the control console in such a way that his small body had expanded at its base to fill both bucket seats; his face was hard and hating.

Shrugging, the large, white-haired man said, "All right." He eyed Dosker. "You're Lies' top pilot, aren't you? Al Dosker . . . yes, I recognize you from the clips we've made of you. On your way to the *Omphalos*. But you don't need Applebaum here to tell you where she is; *we* can tell you." Theodoric Ferry dug into his cloak, brought out a small packet which he tossed to Al Dosker. "The locus of the dry-docks where Applebaum has got her."

"Thanks, Mr. Ferry," Dosker said with sarcasm so great that his voice was almost forged into incomprehensibility.

Theodoric said, "Now look, Dosker; you sit quietly and mind your own business. While I talk to Applebaum. I've never met him personally, but I knew his very-much-missed late father." He extended his hand.

Dosker said, "If you shake with him, Rachmael, he'll deposit a virus contamination that'll produce liver toxicity within your system inside an hour."

Glowering, Theodoric said to the Negro, "I asked you to stay in your place. A pun." He then removed the membrane-like, up-to-now invisible glove of plastic which covered his hand. So Dosker had been right,

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Rachmael realized as he watched Theodoric carefully deposit the glove in the ship's incinerating disposal-chute. "Anyhow," Theodoric said, almost plaintively, "we could have squirted feral airborne bacteria around by now."

"And taken out yourselves," Dosker pointed out.

Theodoric shrugged. Then, speaking carefully to Rachmael, he said, "I respect what you're trying to do. Don't laugh."

"I was not," Rachmael said, "laughing. Just surprised."

"You want to keep functioning, after the economic collapse; you want to keep your legitimate creditors from attaching the few—actually sole—asset that Applebaum Enterprise still possesses—good for you, Rachmael. I'd have done the same. And you impressed Matson; that's why he's supplying you his only decent pilot."

With a mild grin, Dosker reached into his pocket for a pack of cigarillos; at once the two decayed-eyed men accompanying Theodoric caught his arm, expertly manipulated it—the harmless pack of cigarillos fell to the floor of the ship.

One after another, the cigarillos were cut open by Theodoric's men, inspected . . . the fifth one turned out to be hard; it did not yield to the sharp-bladed pocket knife, and, a moment later, a more complex analytical device showed the cigarillo to be a homeostatic cephalotropic dart.

"Whose Alpha-wave pattern?" Theodoric Ferry asked Dosker.

"Yours," Dosker said tonelessly. He watched without affect as the two decayed-eyed but very expert employees of THL crushed the dart under heel, rendering it useless.

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"Then you expected me," Ferry said, looking a little nonplussed.

Dosker said, "Mr. Ferry, I *always* expect you."

Returning once more to Rachmael, Theodoric Ferry said, "I admire you and I want to terminate this conflict between you and THL. We have an inventory of your assets. Here." He extended a sheet toward Rachmael; at that, Rachmael turned toward Dosker for advice.

"Take it," Dosker said.

Accepting the sheet, Rachmael scanned it. The inventory was accurate; these did constitute the slight totality of the remaining assets of Applebaum Enterprise. And—glaringly, as Ferry had said, the only item of any authentic value was the *Omphalos* herself, the great liner plus the repair and maintenance facilities on Luna which now, hive-like, surrounded and checked her as she waited futilely . . . he returned the inventory to Ferry, who, seeing his expression, nodded.

"We agree, then," Theodoric Ferry said. "Okay. Here's what I propose, Applebaum. You can keep the *Omphalos*. I'll instruct my legal staff to withdraw the writ to the UN courts demanding that the *Omphalos* be placed under a state of attachment."

Dosker, startled, grunted; Rachmael stared at Ferry.

"What," Rachmael said, then, "in return?"

"This. That the *Omphalos* never leave the Sol system. You can very readily develop a profitable operation transporting passengers and cargo between the nine planets and to Luna. Despite the fact—"

"Despite the fact," Rachmael said, "that the *Omphalos* was built as an inter-stellar carrier, not inter-plan. It's like using—"

"It's that," Ferry said, "or lose the *Omphalos* to us."

"So Rachmael agrees"—Dosker spoke up—"not to take

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the *Omphalos* to Fomalhaut. The written agreement won't mention any one particular star system, but it's not Prox and not Alpha. Right, Ferry?"

After a pause Theodoric Ferry said, "Take it or leave it."

Rachmael said, "Why, Mr. Ferry? *What's wrong at Whale's Mouth?* This deal—it proves I'm right." That was obvious; he saw it, Dosker saw it—and Ferry must have known that in making it he was ratifying their intimations. Limit the *Omphalos* to the nine planets of the Sol system? And yet—the corporation Applebaum Enterprise, as Ferry said, *would continue*; it would live on as a legal, economic entity. And Ferry would see that the UN turned a certain amount, an acceptable quantity, of commerce its way. Rachmael would wave goodbye to Lies Incorporated, to first this small dark superior space pilot, and then, by extension, to Freya Holm, to Matson Glazer-Holliday, cut in effect himself off from the sole power which had chosen to back him.

"Go ahead," Dosker said. "Accept the idea. After all, the deep-sleep components won't arrive, but it won't matter, because you're not going into 'tween system space anyhow." He looked tired.

Theodoric Ferry said, "Your father, Rachmael; Maury would have done anything to keep the *Omphalos*. You know in two days we'll have her—and once we do, there's no chance you'll ever get her back. Think about it."

"I—know right now," Rachmael said. Lord, if he and Dosker had managed to get the *Omphalos* out tonight, lost her in space where THL couldn't find her . . . and yet that was already over; it had ended when the field had overcome the enormous futile thrust of the twin engines of Dosker's Lies Incorporated ship: Trails of

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Hoffman had stepped in too soon. In time.

All along, Theodoric Ferry had pre-thought them; it was not a moral issue: it was a pragmatic one.

"I have legal forms drawn up," Ferry said. "If you'll come with me." He nodded toward the hatch. "The law requires three witnesses. On the part of THIL, we have those witnesses." He smiled, because it was over and he knew it. Turning, he walked leisurely toward the hatch. The two decayed-eyed employees followed, both men relaxed . . . they passed into the open circularity of the hatch—

And then convulsed throughout, from scalp to foot, internally destroyed; as Rachmael, shocked and terrified, watched, he saw their neurological, musculature systems give out; he saw them, both men penetrated entirely, so that each became, horrifying him, flopping, quivering, malfunctioning—more than malfunctioning: each unit of their bodies fought with all other portions, so that the two heaps on the floor became warring sub-syndromes within themselves, as muscle strained against muscle, visceral apparatus against diaphragmatic strength, auricular and ventricular fibrillation; both men, unable to breathe, deprived even of blood-circulation, staring, fighting writhing their bodies which were no longer true bodies . . .

Rachmael looked away.

"Cholinesterase-destroying gas," Dosker said, behind him, and at that instant Rachmael became aware of the tube pressed to his own neck, a medical artifact which had injected into his blood stream its freight of atropine, the antidote to the vicious nerve gas of the notorious FMC Corporation, the original contractors for this, the most destructive of all anti-personnel weapons of the previous war.

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"Thanks," Rachmael said to Dosker, as he saw, now, the hatch swing shut; the Trails of Hoffman satellite, with its now inert field, was being detached—within it persons who were *not* THL employees pried it loose from Dosker's flapple.

The dead man's throttle signaling device—or rather null-signaling device—had done its job; Lies Incorporated experts had arrived and at this moment were systematically dismantling the THL equipment.

Philosophically, Theodoric Ferry stood with his hands in the pockets of his cloak, saying nothing, not even noticing the spasms of his two employees on the floor near him, as if, by deteriorating in response to the gas, they had somehow proved unworthy.

"It was nice," Rachmael managed to say to Dosker, as the hatch once more swung open, this time admitting several employees of Lies Incorporated, "that your co-workers administered the atropine to Ferry as well as to me." Generally, in this business, no one was spared.

Dosker, studying Ferry, said, "He was given no atropine."

Reaching, he withdrew the empty tube with its injecting needle from his own neck, then the counterpart item from Rachmael's. "How come, Ferry?" Dosker said.

There was, from Ferry, no answer.

"Impossible," Dosker said. "Every living organism is—" Suddenly he grabbed Ferry's arm; grunting, he swung brusquely the arm back, against its normal span—and yanked.

Theodoric Ferry's arm, at the shoulder-joint, came off. Revealing trailing conduits and minned components, those of the shoulder still functioning, those of the arm, deprived of power, now inert.



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"A sim," Dosker said. Seeing that Rachmael did not comprehend he said, "A simulacrum of Ferry that of course has no neurological system. So Ferry was never here." He tossed the arm away. "Naturally; why should a man of his stature risk himself? He's probably sitting in his demesne satellite orbiting Mars, viewing this through the sense-extensors of the sim." To the one-armed Ferry-construct he said harshly, "Are we in genuine contact with you, Ferry, through this? Or is it on homeo? I'm just curious."

The mouth of the Ferry simulacrum opened and it said, "I hear you, Dosker. Would you, as an act of humanitarian kindness, administer atropine to my two THL employees?"

"It's being done," Dosker said. He walked over to Rachmael, then. "Well, our humble ship, on acute examination, seems never to have been graced by the presence of the chairman of the board of THL." He grinned shakily. "I feel cheated."

But the offer made by Ferry via the simulacrum, Rachmael realized. *That* had been genuine.

Dosker said, "Let's go to Luna, now. As your advisor I'm telling you—" He put his hand, gripped harshly, on Rachmael's wrist. "Wake up. Those two gnugs will be all right, once the atropine is administered; they won't be killed and we'll release them in their THL vehicle—minus its field, of course. You and I will go on to Luna, to the *Omphalos*, as if nothing happened. Or if you won't I'll use the map the sim gave me; I'm taking the *Omphalos* out into 'tween space where THL can't tail her, even if you don't want me to."

"But," Rachmael said woodenly, "something did happen. An offer was made."

"That offer," Dosker said, "proves that THL is willing

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to sacrifice a great deal to keep you from your eighteen year trip to Fomalhaut for a look at Whale's Mouth. And—" He eyed Rachmael. "Yet that makes you *less* interested in getting the *Omphalos* out into uncharted space between planets where Ferry's trackers can't—"

I could save the *Omphalos*, Rachmael thought. But the man beside him was correct; this meant of course that he had to go on: Ferry had removed the block, had proved the need of the eighteen year flight.

"But the deep-sleep components," he said.

"Just get me to her," Dosker said quietly, patiently. "Okay, Rachmael ben Applebaum? Will you do that?" The controlled and very professional voice penetrated; Rachmael nodded. "I want the locus from you, not from the chart that sim gave me; I've decided I'm not touching that. I'm waiting for you, Rachmael, for you to decide."

"Yes," Rachmael said, then, and walked stiffly to the ship's 3-D Lunar map with its trailing arm; he seated himself and began to fix the locus for the hard-eyed, dark, Lies Incorporated ultra-experienced pilot.

## IV

AT THE Fox's Lair, the minute French restaurant in downtown San Diego, the maitre d' glanced at the name which Rachmael ben Applebaum had jotted down on the sheet with its fancy, undulating, pseudo-living letter-head and said, "Yes. Mr. Applebaum. It is—" He examined his wrist-watch. "Now eight o'clock." A line of well-cloaked people waited; it was always this way on crowded Terra: any restaurant, even the bad ones, were overfilled each night from five o'clock on, and this was

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hardly a mediocre restaurant, let alone an outright bad one. "Genet," the maitre d' called to a waitress wearing the lace stockings and partial jacket-vest combination now popular: it left one breast, the right, exposed, and its nipple was elegantly capped by a Swiss ornament with many minned parts; the ornament, shaped like a large gold pencil eraser, played semi-classical music and lit up in a series of attractive shifting light-patterns which focused on the floor ahead of her, lighting her way so that she could pass among the closely-placed tiny tables of the restaurant.

"Yes, Gaspar," the girl said, with a toss of her blonde, high-piled hair.

"Escort Mr. Applebaum to table twenty-two," the maitre d' told her, and ignored, with stoic, glacial indifference, the outrage among those customers lined up wearily ahead of Rachmael.

"I don't want to—" Rachmael began, but the maitre d' cut him off.

"All arranged. *She* is waiting at twenty-two," And, in the maitre d's voice, everything was conveyed: full knowledge of an intricate erotic relationship which—alas—did not, at least as yet, exist.

Rachmael followed Genet, with her light-emanating useful Swiss-made nipple-assist, through the darkness, the noise of people eating in jammed proximity, bolting their meals with the weight of guilt hunching them, getting done and aside so that those waiting could be served before the Fox's Lair, at two A.M., closed its kitchens . . . we are really pressed tight to one another, he thought, and then, all at once, Genet halted, turned; the nipple cap now radiated a soft, delightful and warm pale red aura which revealed, seated at table twenty-two, Freya Holm.

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Seating himself opposite her, Rachmael said, "You don't light up."

"I could. And play the *Blue Danube* simultaneously." She smiled; in the darkness—the waitress had gone on, now—the dark-haired girl's eyes glowed. Before her rested a split of Buena Vista chablis, vintage 2002, one of the great, rare treats of the restaurant, and exceeding expensive; Rachmael wondered who would pick up the tab for this twelve-year-old California wine; lord knew he would have liked to, but—he reflexively touched his wallet. Freya noticed.

"Don't worry. Matson Glazer-Holliday owns this restaurant. There will be a tab for a mere six poscreds. For one peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich." She laughed, her dark eyes dancing in the reflected light from barely-illuminated overhead Japanese lanterns. "Does this place intimidate you?" she asked him, then.

"No. I'm just generally tense." For six days now the *Omphalos* had been lost—and even to him. Perhaps even to Matson. It could well be—necessary for security purposes—that only Al Dosker, at the multi-stage console of the ship's controls, knew where she had gone. For Rachmael, however, it had been psychologically devastating to watch the *Omphalos* blast out into the limitless darkness: Ferry had been right—the *Omphalos* had been the sine quo non of Applebaum Enterprise; without her nothing remained.

But at least this way she might return; or more accurately, he eventually might be taken, by Lies Incorporated, by high-velocity flapple to her, allowed to see, board her, again, to begin his eighteen-year trip. And, the other way—

"Don't dwell on Ferry's offer," Freya said softly. She nodded to the waitress, who placed a solidstem but

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chilled wine glass before Rachmael; he automatically, obediently, poured himself a trace of the 2002 Buena Vista white, tasted it, kept himself from taking more; he merely nodded in complement to the wine, tried to make it appear that he was accustomed to such an outrageously, almost divinely penetrating bouquet and flavor. It made absurd everything he had drunk his life long.

"I'm not thinking of it," he said to Freya. Not, he thought, in view of what you have—or are supposed to have—in your purse.

Her large black leather mailpouch-style purse rested on the table beside her, within reach of his fingers.

"The components," Freya said softly, "are in the purse in a simulated gold round container marked *Eternity of Sexual Potency Fragrance #54*, a routine continental scent; anyone going through my purse would expect to find it. There are twelve components, all super-min, of course. Beneath the inner lid. On India paper, on the reverse of the label, is a wiring diagram. I will rise to my feet in a moment and go to the powder room; after a few seconds—you must sit quietly, Rachmael, because it is about a seventy-thirty possibility that THL agents are monitoring us, either directly as patrons or by instrument—you must sit; then, when I don't return immediately, you fidget, you try to attract Genet's attention, to order some dinner for yourself or at least—and this is vital—obtain the menu."

He nodded, listening intently.

"She will notice you and give you a menu; it is quite stiff and large, since it contains the wine list. You will place it on the table so that it covers my purse."

Rachmael said, "And I accidentally knock your purse to the floor, and the contents spill out, and in gathering them up I—"

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"Are you insane?" Quietly she said, "You cover the purse. There is a strip of titanium within the righthand overleaf of the menu. The container of scent has a titanium-tropic ambulation-circuit; it will within two seconds register the presence of the strip and will rotate itself out of my purse, which I've left open; it will travel across the *underside* of the menu. The strip is at the bottom, where your right hand with complete naturalness will be resting as you hold what has been deliberately made up an awkward, stiff menu. When it touches the titanium strip the container will emit a weak charge, about ten volts; you will feel this galvanization and you will then, with your four fingers, take hold of the container, detach it from the titanium strip to which it has tropically adhered, drop it from the underside of the menu onto your lap. And then, with your *other* hand, you will shift the container from your lap into your pocket." She rose. "I'll be back within six minutes. Good-bye. And good luck."

He watched her go.

And then, as he sat there, he realized that he had to rise, too; had to act—the job of transferring the deep-sleep components obtained for him from the blackmarket was difficult and delicate, because Theodoric Ferry, ever since Lies Incorporated had taken out his satellite and its crew, its simulacrum of Ferry himself, had kept total surveillance over everything Rachmael had done; the ultimate in technological and personnel resources of Trails of Hoffman Limited had been brought into play, motivated now by Theodoric's personal animus.

What had been a remote and impersonal conflict had become once more, he reflected, that which it had always been for his father: a deeply human, immediate matter. A struggle which, at last, had brought his fa-

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ther's death and the disintegration of the organization.

Thinking this, Rachmael began dutifully to fidget, then rose, began hunting for the girl with the light-emanating, gay music resounding, Swiss nipple.

"A menu, sir?" Genet stood before him, holding out the great, wonderfully-printed and engraved, in fact embossed, menu; he thanked her, accepted it humbly, returned to his table with the pleasant tunes of Johann Strauss in his ears.

The menu, the size of an old-fashioned antique disc record album, easily covered Freya's purse. He sat holding it open, reading the wine list, and especially the prices. Good god! It cost a fortune even for a split of good wine, here. And for a fifth of a three-year-old generic white—

All the retail establishments such as the Fox's Lair were exploiting Terra's overpopulation; people who had waited three hours to get in here to eat and drink would pay these prices—by then they had, psychologically, no choice.

A weak electric shock, made his right hand quiver; the circular container of miniaturized deep-sleep components had already made physical contact with him and, with his fingers, he pried it, clam-like, loose from its grip, its tropism; he dropped it into his lap, felt its weight.

As directed, he then reached for it with his left hand, to transfer it to his cloak pocket . . .

"Sorry—oops." A busboy, a robot, carrying a loaded, chest-high tray of dishes, had bumped him, making him totter on his chair. People everywhere, those rising, those seating themselves, the robot busboys clearing, the waitresses with their lights and tunes everywhere . . .

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confused, Rachmael reseated himself, reached for the container on his lap.

It was gone.

Fallen to the floor? In disbelief he peered down, saw his shoes, the table legs, a discarded match folder. No round gold-like container.

They had gotten it. It was they who had sent the "bus-boy." And now it, too, with its load of dishes, had vanished in the general confusion.

Defeated, he sat vacantly staring. And then, at last, from the split of wine, he poured himself a second drink, lifted the glass as if in toast: a toast to the success, admitted and accepted, of the invisible extensions of THL around him that had, in the crucial instant, intervened, deprived him of what he needed essentially in order to leave the Sol system with the big *Omphalos*.

It did not matter now whether he made contact with Dosker aboard her; lacking the components it was insanity to leave.

Freya returned, seated herself across from him, smiled "All okay?"

Leadently, he said, "They stopped us. Dead." For now, anyhow, he thought. But it's not finished yet.

He drank, his heart laboring, the delicate, expensive, delicious, and utterly superfluous wine—the wine of at least temporary utter defeat.

On the TV screen, Omar Jones, President of New-colonizedland, highest official in residence at the great modular settlement at Whale's Mouth, said jovially, "Well, you folks back home, all bunched together there in those little boxes you live in—we greet you, wish you luck." The familiar, round, pleasant face beamed its smile of warmth. "And we're just wonderin', folks, when



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you all are going to team up with us and join us here at Newcolonizedland. Eh?" He cupped his ear. As if, Rachmael thought, it were a two-way transmission. But this was illusion. This was a video tape sent across in signal-form by way of von Einem's Telpor nexus at Schweinfurt, New Whole Germany. By, through, the good offices of the UN's network of Earth satellites, relayed to TV sets throughout Terra.

Aloud, Rachmael said, "Sorry, President Omar Jones, of Newcolonizedland, Whale's Mouth." I'll visit you, he thought, but my own way. Not by a von Einem Telpor operating for five poscreds at one of Trails of Hoffman's retail outlets . . . so it'll be a little while; in fact, he thought, I'd guess you, President Jones, will be dead by the time I arrive.

Although after the defeat at the Fox's Lair—

They, the opposition, had in effect severed him from his source of support, from Lies Incorporated. He had sat across from their rep, pretty, dark-haired Freya Holm, drunk vintage wine with her, chatted, laughed. But when it came time to transfer vital components from Lies Incorporated across a five-inch space to him . . .

The vidphone in the miniscule bedroom-cubby of his conapt said *Pwannnnnnnk!* Indicating that someone desired to contact him.

Shutting off the jolly face of President Omar Jones of Newcolonizedland, Whale's Mouth, he went to the vidphone, lifted the receiver.

On its gray, undersized screen there formed the features of Matson Glazer-Holliday. "Mr. ben Applebaum," Matson said.

"What can we do?" Rachmael said, feeling the weight of their loss. "In fact those people are probably monitoring this—"

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"Oh yes; we register a tap on this vidline." Matson nodded, but he did not seem nonplussed. "We know they're not only monitoring this call but recording it, both aud and vid. However, my message to you is brief, and they're welcome to it. Contact the master circuit of your local public Xerox-spool library."

"And then?" Rachmael asked.

"Do research," Matson Glazer-Holliday said carefully. "Into the original discovery of Whale's Mouth. The first unmanned data-receptors, recorders and transmitters which were traveled from the Sol system, years ago, to the Fomalhaut system; in fact, back in the twentieth century."

Rachmael said, "But why—"

"And we'll be in touch," Matson and Briskly. "Good-bye. And glad to have—" He eyed Rachmael. "Don't let that little incident at the restaurant get to you. It's routine. I assure you." He mock-saluted, and then the image on the tiny colorless—the Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem provided minimal service, and, as a public utility licensed by the UN, got away with it—the image died.

Rachmael, bewildered, hung up the aud receiver.

The records of the original unmanned monitors which had been dispatched to the Fomalhaut system years ago were public record; what could exist there that would be of value? Nevertheless he dialed the local branch of the New New York Xerox-spool public library.

"Send to my apt," he said, "the abstract, the comprehensive material available, on the initial scouting of the Fomalhaut system." By those now old-fashioned constructs which George Hoffman had utilized—by which the habitable planet Whale's Mouth had been discovered.

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Presently a robot runner appeared at his door with a variety of spools. Rachmael seated himself at his scanner, inserted the first spool, noting that it was marked *A General Survey of the Fomalhaut Unmanned Inter-system Vehicle Reports, Shorter Version*, by someone named G. S. Purdy.

For two hours he ran the spool. It showed that sun coming nearer and nearer, then the planets, one by one and disappointing, bitterly so, until now number nine bloomed into view; and all at once—

No more barren rocks, unblunted mountains. No airless, germless, hygienic void with methane as gas or crystallized at greater astronomical units from the sun. Suddenly he saw a swaying and undulating, blue-green frieze, and this had caused Dr. von Einem to trot out his Telpor equipment, to set up the direct link between this world and Terra. This plum-ripe landscape had gotten Trails of Hoffman interested commercially—and had written *mene, mene* for Applebaum Enterprise.

The last vid monitor-reading was fifteen years old. Since then direct contact via teleportation gear had made such ancient hardware obsolete. And hence the original unmanned monitors, in orbit around Fomalhaut—

Had what? Been *abandoned*, according to author Purdy. Their batteries turned off by remote instruct; they still, presumably, circled the sun within the orbit of Whale's Mouth.

They were still there.

And their batteries, having been off all these years, had conserved, not expended, energy. And they were of the advanced liquid-helium III type.

Was *this* what Matson had wanted him to know?

Returning to the reference spool he ran it, ran it,

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again and again, until he had the datum at last. The most sophisticated vid monitor belonged to Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem. *They* would know if it, called Prince-Albert B-y, was still in orbit around Fomalhaut.

He started toward his vidphone, then stopped. After all, it was tapped. So instead he left his conapt, left the huge building entirely, joined a pcd-runnel until he spied a public phonebooth.

There, he called the Vidphone Corporation, its central offices in Detroit, open on a twenty-four hour a day basis.

"Give me your archives," he instructed the robot switchboard.

Presently a human, wizened but efficient-looking, gnomelike official in a gray jacket, like a bookkeeper, appeared. "Yeah?"

"I'm inquiring," Rachmael said, "as to the Prince Albert B-y mon-sat put in orb around Fomalhaut seventeen years ago. I'd like you to check as to whether it's still in orb and if it is, how can it be activated so—"

The signal went dead. At the other end the Vidphone Corporation official had hung up. He waited. The Vidphone switchboard did not come onto the wire, nor did the regular, local robot.

I'll be darned, Rachmael thought. Shaken, he left the phonebooth.

He continued on aboard the runnel until at last he reached a second public phonebooth.

Entering he this time dialed Matson Glazer-Holliday's satellite. Presently he had the owner of Lies Incorporated again facing him from the screen.

Carefully, Rachmael said, "Sorry to bother you. But I've been running info spools on the original unmanned monitors of the Fomalhaut system."

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"Learn anything?"

"I asked," Rachmael said, "the Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem if its Prince Albert B-y—"

"And they said?"

Rachmael said, "They immediately cut the con."

"It," Matson said, "is still up. Still in orb."

"And sending out signals?"

"Not for fifteen years. At hyper-see it takes its signals one week to cross the twenty-four light-year gap to the Sol system. Rather shorter than it would require for the *Omphalos* to reach the Fomalhaut system."

"Is there any way to once more activate the satellite?"

"Vidphone Corp could contact it direct, through a Telpor," Matson said. "If they wanted to."

"Do they?"

After a pause Matson said, "Did they cut you off just now?"

Pondering, Rachmael said, "Can someone else give the impulse to the satellite?"

"No. Only the Vidphone Corp knows the sequence which would cause it to respond."

"Is this what you wanted me to find out?" Rachmael asked.

Smiling, Matson Glazer-Holliday said, "Goodbye, Mr. ben Applebaum. And good luck, as you continue your research." He then hung up, and once more Rachmael faced a dead screen.

At his villa, Matson turned away from the vidset to Freya Holm, who perched on the couch, legs tucked under her, wearing a high-fashion transparent spider-silk blue blouse and meter-reader's pants. "He found it," Matson said. "Right away. That about the P.A. B-y sat." Pacing, Matson scowled. "All right." He had decided. "Our rep, under the cover-name Bergen Phillips, will be

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sent to Whale's Mouth six hours from now. By way of the THL outlet at Paris. As soon as he's at Whale's Mouth he'll transmit to us, through the Telpor, an encoded document describing the true conditions." But probably THL's people would have nabbed "Bergen Phillips" by then, and, through techniques well-known in the trade, have learned all that the Lies Incorporated veteran knew; they would then send a faked encoded message, assuring Matson that all was well—and he would never know, on receipt of such a message, whether it truly emanated from "Bergen Phillips" or from THL. However—

Freya saw it, too. "Have this rep, once he's across, give the activating sequence to the P.A. B-y sat. So it'll start transmitting data to the Sol system direct, once again."

"If," Matson said. "If it still will function after fifteen years. And if the Vidphone Corp does not countermand the instruct the moment data starts to flow in." However, he could tap the Vidphone Corp's lines and pick up even that initial meager data. What he might obtain before the flow ceased coming in might be a graphic pan-shot of Whale's Mouth—and then so what if the sat was shut off once more.

As naturally it would be, since THL controlled the Vidphone Corp.

"Just one good vid shot," Matson said. "And we'll know."

"Know what?" She reached to set down her drink glass on the nearby antique genuine glass-topped coffee table.

Matson said, "I'll tell you that, dear, when I see the shot." He went to the comboard, sent out the already implemented request for the field rep who was to cross

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over to Whale's Mouth to be brought to his satellite. These instructs had to be given orally and *not* over lines; to line it was to howl it broadcast.

In fact perhaps he had already communicated too much to Rachmael. But—in such a business one took risks. And he could assume that Rachmael's callback had emanated from a public booth; the man, although an amateur, was at least cautious. And these days such caution was not paranoid; it was practical.

On the TV screen in 3-D color with olfactory track the round, jovial features of President Omar Jones of Newcolonizedland said, "You folks there on good old overcrowded Terra"—and, behind him, faded in a scene of miles of open veldt-like park—"you amaze us. We hear you're going to send a ship here, by hyper-see, and it'll arrive in . . . let's see." He pretended to be contemplating.

Before the set (not quite paid for) Jack McElhatten, a hard-working, easy-going, good-natured guy, said to his wife, "Chrissakes, look at that open land." It reminded him of his sweet, fragile childhood, of years ago and now gone, the Oregon Trail part of Wyoming west of Cheyenne. And the desire, the yearning, grew in him. "We have to emigrate he said to Ruth then. "We owe it to our kids. They can grow up as—"

"Shh," Ruth said.

On the screen President Omar Jones of Newcolonizedland said, "In just about eighteen years, folks, that ship will arrive this way and park down. So here's what we've done; we've set aside November 24, 2032, as Flying Dutchman Day. The day that ship reaches us." He chuckled. "I'll be, um, ninety-four and, sorry to say, probably not here to participate in Flying Dutchman

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Day. But maybe posterity, including some of you young folks—”

“You hear that?” McElhatten said to his wife, incredulous. “Some nut is going to go the old way. Eighteen years in ’tween space! When all you have to do—”

“BE QUIET,” Ruth said, furiously, trying to listen.

“—be here to greet this Mr. Applebaum,” President Omar Jones intoned in clowning solemnity. “Banners, vox-pop streamers . . . we should have a population of between, well, say, one billion, then, but still plenty of land. We can take up to *two* billion, you know, and still leave plenty of room. So come on and join us; cross over and be here to celebrate Flying Dutchman Day, folks.” He waved, and, it seemed to Jack McElhatten, this man at Whale’s Mouth was waving directly to him. And, within him, the yearning grew.

The frontier, he thought. Their neighbors in the tiny cramped conapt with which they shared a bathroom . . . or had, up until last month, at which point the Pattersons had emigrated to Whale’s Mouth. The vid-sig letters from Jerome Patterson; god, they had raved about conditions across on the other side. If anything, the info spots—ads, to be exact—had understated the beauty of the real-sit over there. The beauty—and the opportunity.

“We need *men*,” President Omar Jones was declaring. “Good strong men who can do any kind of work. Are you that man? Able, willing, with get-up-and-go, over eighteen years of age? Willing to start a new life, using your mind and your hands, the skills God gave you? Think about it. What are you doing with those hands, those skills, *right now*?”

Doing quality-control on an autofac line, McElhatten thought to himself bitterly; a job which a pigeon could



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do better; fact was, a pigeon did do so, to check *his* work.

"Can you imagine," he said to his wife, "holding down a job where a pigeon has a better eye than you for mis-tolerances?" And that was exactly his situation; he ejected parts which were not properly aligned, and, when he missed, the pigeon noted the miss, the defective part allowed to pass: it picked out the misaligned part, pecked a reject-button which kicked the part from the moving belt. And, as they quit and emigrated, the quality control men at Krino Associates were, one by one, replaced by pigeons.

He stayed on now, really, only because the union to which he belonged was strong enough to insist that his seniority made it mandatory for Krino to keep him on. But once he quit, once he left—

"Then," he said to Ruth, "the pigeon moves in. Okay, let it; we're going across to Whale's Mouth, and from then on I won't be competing with birds." Competing, he thought, and losing. Offering my employers the poorer showing. "And Krino will be glad," he said, with misery.

"I just wish," Ruth said, "That you had a *particular* job lined up over there at Newcolonizedland. I mean, they talk about 'all the jobs,' but you can't take 'all the jobs.' What one job are you—" She hesitated. "Skilled for?" After all, he had worked for Krino Associates for ten years.

"I'm going to farm."

She stared at him.

"They'll *give* us twenty acres. We'll buy sheep here, those black-faced ones. Suffolk. Take six across, five ewes and a ram, put up fences, build ourselves a house out of prefab sections—" He knew he could do it. Others had, as they had described—not in impersonal ads—but

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in letters vid-signaled back and then transcribed by the Vidphone Corporation and posted on the bulletin board of the conapt building.

"But if we don't like it," Ruth murmured apprehensively, "we won't be able to come back; I mean, that seems so strange. Those teleportation machines . . . working one way only."

"The extra-galactic nebulae," he said patiently. "The recession of matter outward; the universe is exploding, growing; the Telpor relates your molecules as energy configurations in this outflow—"

"I don't understand," Ruth said. "But I do know this," she said, and, from her purse, brought a leaflet.

Studying the leaflet, McElhatten scowled. "Cranks. This is hate literature, Ruth. Don't accept it." He began to crumple it up.

"They don't call themselves by a hating name. 'Friends of a United People.' They're a small group of worried, dedicated people, opposed to—"

"I know what they're opposed to," McElhatten said. Several of them worked at Krino Associates. "They say we Terrans should stay within the Sol system. Stick together. Listen." He crumpled up the leaflet. "The history of man has been one vast migration. This to Whale's Mouth; it's the greatest yet—twenty-four light-years! We ought to be proud." But naturally there'd be a few idiots and cranks opposing history.

Yes, it was history and he wanted to be part of it. First it had been New England, then Australia, Alaska, and then the try—and failure—on Luna, then on Mars and Venus, and now—success. At last. And if he waited too long he would be too old and there would be too many expatriates so free land would no longer be available; the government at Newcolonizedland might with-

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draw its land offer any time, because after all, every day people streamed over. The Telpor offices were swamped.

"You want me to go?" he asked Ruth. "Go first—and send a message back, once I have the land and am ready to begin building? And then you and the kids can come?"

Nervously, she said, "I hate to be parted from you."

"Make up your mind."

"I guess," she said, "we should go together. If we go at all. But these—letters. They're just impulses onto energy lines."

"Like telephone or vidphone or telegraph or TV messages. Has been for one hundred years."

"If only *real letters* came back."

"You have," he said, derisively, "a superstitious fear."

"Maybe so," Ruth admitted. But it was a real fear nonetheless. A deep and abiding fear of a one-way trip from which they could never return, except, she thought, eighteen years from now, when that ship reaches the Fomalhaut system.

She picked up the evening 'pape, examined the article, jeering in tone, about this ship, the *Omphalos*. Capable of transporting five hundred, but this time carrying one sole man: the ship's owner. And, the article said, he was fleeing to escape his creditors; that was his motive.

But, she thought, *he* can come back from Whale's Mouth.

She envied—without understanding why—that man. Rachmael ben Applebaum, the 'pape said. If we could cross over now with you, she thought, if we asked—

Her husband said quietly, "If you won't go, Ruth, *I'm going alone*. I'm not going to sit there day after day at that quality-control station, feeling that pigeon breathing down the back of my neck."

She sighed. And wandered into the common kitchen

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which they shared with their righthand neighbors, the Shorts, to see if there was anything left of their monthly ration of what the bill of lading called cof-bz. Synthetic coffee beans.

There was not. So, instead, she morosely fixed herself a cup of synthetic tea. Meanwhile, the Shorts—who were noisy—came and went, in and out of the kitchen. And, in her living room, her husband sat before the TV set, an enraptured child, listening to, following with devout and absorbed full attention the nightly report from Whale's Mouth. Watching the new, the next, world.

I guess, she thought, he's right.

But something deep and instinctive within her still objected. And she wondered queerly why. And she thought, then, once more of Rachmael ben Applebaum, who, the 'pape said, was attempting the eighteen-year-trip *without* deep-sleep equipment; he had tried and failed to obtain it, the 'pape said gleefully; the guy was so marginal an operator, such a fly-by-nighter, that he had no credit, pos or otherwise. The poor man, she thought. Conscious and alone for eighteen whole years; couldn't the company that makes those deep-sleep units *donate* the equipment he needs?

The TV set in the living room declared, "Remember, folks, it's Old Mother Hubbard there on Terra, and the Old Woman who lived in a shoe; you've got so many children, folks, and just what do you plan to clo?"

Emigrate, Ruth decided, without enthusiasm. Apparently.

And—soon.

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### V

AGAINST Rachmael ben Applebaum's tiny flapple the great hull of his one asset of economic value—and that attached through the courts—bumped in the darkness, and at once automatic mechanisms came into operation. A hatch whined open; inner locks shut and then retired as air passed into vacuum and replaced it, and, on his console, a green light lit. A good one.

He could safely pass from his meager rented flapple into the *Omphalos*, as it hung in powerless orbit around Mars at .003 astronomical units.

Directly he had crossed through the lock-series—without use of a pressure suit or oxygen gear—Al Dosker said to him, eying him and with laser pistol in hand, "I thought it might be a simulacrum, supplied by THL. But the EEG and EKG machines say you're not." He held out his hand; and Rachmael shook. "So you're making the trip anyhow, without the deep-sleep components. And you think, after eighteen years, you'll be sane? I wouldn't be." His dark, sharp-cut face was filled with compassion. "Can't you induce some fray to come along? One other person, and what a difference, especially if she's—"

"And quarrel," Rachmael said, "and wind up with one corpse. I'm taking an enormous edu-tape library; by the time I reach Fomalhaut I'll be speaking Attic Greek, Latin, Russian, Italian—I'll be reading alchemical texts from the Middle Ages and Chinese classics in the original from the sixth century." He smiled, but it was an empty, frozen smile; he was not fooling Dosker, who knew what it was like to try an inter-system run without

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deep-sleep. Because Dosker had made the three-year-trip to Proxima. And, on the journey back, had insisted, from his experience, on deep-sleep.

"What gets me," Rachmael said, "is that THL has gotten to the blackmarket. That they're even able to dry up illegal supplies of minned parts." But—the chance had been missed in the restaurant; the components had been within reach, five thousand poscreds' worth. And—that was that.

"You know," Dosker said slowly, "that one of Lies Incorporated's experienced field reps is crossing, using a regular Telpor terminal, like the average fella. So we may be contacting the *Omphalos* within the next week; you may be able to turn back; we may save you the eighteen years going, and, or have you forgotten, the eighteen years returning?"

"I'm not sure," Rachmael said, "if I make it I'll come back." He was not fooling himself; after the trip to Fomalhaut he might be physically unable to start back—whatever conditions obtained at Whale's Mouth he might stay there because he *had* to. The body had its limits. So did the mind.

Anyhow they now had more to go on. Not only the failure of the old time capsule ever to reach the Sol system—and conveniently forgotten by the media—but the Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem's absolute refusal, under direct, legal request by Matson Glazer-Holliday, to reactivate its Prince Albert B-y satellite orbiting Fomalhaut. This one fact alone, Rachmael reflected, should have frightened the rational citizen. But—

The people did not know. The media had not reported it.

Matson, however, had leaked the info to the small, militant, anti-emigration org, the Friends of a United

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People. Mostly they were old-fashioned, elderly and fearful, whose distrust of emigration by means of Telpor was based on neurotic reasons. But—they did print pamphlets. And Vidphone Corp's refusal had duly been noted immediately in one of their Terra-wide broadsheets.

But how many persons had seen it—that Rachmael did not know. He had the intuition, however, that very few people had. And—emigration continued.

As Matson said, the footprints leading into the predator's lair continued to increase in number. And still none led out.

Dosker said, "All right, I am now officially, formally surrendering the *Omphalos* back to you. She appears to check out through every system, so you should have nothing to fear." His dark eyes glinted. "I tell you what, ben Applebaum. During your eighteen years of null-deep-sleep you can amuse yourself as I've been, during the last week." He reached to a table, picked up a leather-backed book. "You can," he said quietly, "keep a diary."

"Of what?"

"Of a mind," Dosker said, "deteriorating. It'll be of psychiatric interest." Now he did not seem to be joking.

"So even you," Rachmael said, "consider me—"

"Without deep-sleep equipment to drop your metabolism you're making a terrible mistake to go. So maybe the diary won't be a transcript of human deterioration; maybe that's already taken place."

Wordlessly, Rachmael watched the dark, lithe man step through the lock, disappear, out of the *Omphalos* and into the tiny rented flapple.

The lock clanged shut. A red light flicked on above it and he was alone, here in this, his giant passenger liner,

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as he would be for eighteen years and maybe, he thought, maybe Dosker is right.

But still he intended to make the trip.

At three o'clock A.M. Matson Glazer-Holliday was awakened by one of his staff of automatic villa servants. "Your lord, a message from a Mr. Bergen Phillips. From Newcolonizedland. Just received. And you asked—"

"Yes." Matson sat up, spilling the covers from Freya, who slept on; he grabbed his robe, slippers. "Let's have it."

The message, typed out by routine printers of the Vidphone Corp, read:

BOUGHT MY FIRST ORANGE TREE. LOOKS LIKE A BIG  
CROP. COME ON JOIN MOLLY AND ME.

Now Freya stirred, sat up; her spidersilk nightgown, one strap of it, slipped from her bare, pale shoulder. "What is it?" she murmured.

"The first encoded note from B.P.," Matson said; he absently tap-tapped the folded message against his knee, pondering.

She sat up fully, reached for her pack of Bering cigarillos. "What does he report, Mat?"

Matson said, "The message is version six."

"That—things are exactly as depicted." She was wide-awake, now; she sat lighting her cigarillo, watching him intently.

"Yes. But—THL psychologists, waiting on the far side, could have nabbed the field rep. 'Washed his brain, gotten everything and then sent this; so it meant nothing. Only a transmission of one of the odd-numbered codes—indicating in various degrees that conditions at Whale's Mouth were not as depicted—would have been worth anything. Because of course THL psychologists would have no motive to fake *those*."



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"So," Freya said, "you know nothing."

"But maybe he can activate the Prince Albert B-y sat." One week; it would not be long, and the *Omphalos* could easily be contacted by then. And, since its solo pilot did not lie in deep-sleep, he could be informed.

However, if after a week—

"If no data come from the sat," Matson said thoughtfully, "it still proves nothing. Because then Bergen will transmit message *n*, meaning that the sat has proved inoperative. *They* will do all that, too, if they have him. So still nothing!" He paced about the bedroom, then took the burning cigarillo from the girl in the rumpled bed, inhaled from it violently, until it heated up and scorched his fingers. "I," he said, "will not live out eighteen years." I will never live to know the truth about Whale's Mouth, he realized. That time-period; it was just too long to wait.

"You'll be seventy-nine," Freya said practically. "So you'll still be alive. But a *jerry* with artiforgs for natural organs."

But—I'm just not that patient, Matson realized. A newborn baby grows virtually to adulthood in that time!

Freya retrieved the cigarillo, winced at its temperature. "Well, possibly you can send over—"

"I'm going over," Maton said.

Staring at him, after a moment she said, "Oh god. God."

"I won't go alone. I'll have a 'family.' At every outlet of Trails of Hoffman a Lies Incorporated commando team—" He possessed two thousand of them, many veterans of the war; they would pass over at the same moment as he, would link up at Whale's Mouth. And, in their "personal" gear, they would convey enough detection, relay, recording and monitoring equipment

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to reestablish the private police agency. "So you're in charge here on Terra," he told Freya. "Until I get back." Which would be thirty-six years from now, he thought acidly. When I'm ninety-seven years old . . . no, that's right: we can obtain deep-sleep mechanisms at Whale's Mouth because I remember them taking it across; that's one reason why it's so short of supply, here. Originally it was thought that if colonization didn't work they could vacate—*roanoke*, they called it—they could roanoke it—they could roanoke back to the Sol system in deep-sleep by ship . . . from giant liners manufactured at Whale's Mouth from prefab sections passed across by r. von Einem's Telpor teleportation gates.

"A coup," Freya said, then. "In fact—a *coup d'etat*." Startled, he said, "What? God no; I never—"

"If you take two thousand top reps," Freya said, "Lies Incorporated won't exist here; it'll be a shade. But over there—it'll be formidable. And the UN has no army at Whale's Mouth, Matson. You're aware of that, at least on an unconscious level. Who could oppose you? Let's see. The President of Newcolonized land, Omar Jones, is up for reelection in two years; you'd possibly want to wait—"

"At the first call from Whale's Mouth," Matson said harshly, "Omar Jones could have UN troops trotting through every Telpor instrument in the world. And their tactical weapons with them, everything up to cephalotropic missiles." And he hated—and feared—those.

"If a call came from Whale's Mouth. But once you're on the other side, you could handle that. *You could be sure no such emergency announcement was sent out.* Isn't that what we've been discussing all this time? Isn't this really why you bought Rachmael's idea—your knowledge that all communication from the other side can be

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—*managed?*” She waited, smoking, watching him with a feminine vigil of intensity and acuity.

Presently he said tightly, “Yes. We could do that. They may have THL psychologists armed and ready for individuals. But not for two thousand trained police. We’d have control in half an hour—probably. Unless, unknown to us, Horst Bertold has been sending troops across.” And, he pondered, why should he? All they face—up to now—is bewildered citizens, expatriates who want jobs, homes, new roots . . . in a world they can’t leave.

“And remember this, too,” Freya said. She lifted the strap of her nightgown once more, then, covering her faintly freckled shoulder. “The receiving portion of the teleportation rig has to be specially installed; every one of those over there had to be sent originally by interstellar hyper-see ship, and that took years. So you can stop the UN and Bertold just by rendering the receiving stations of the Telpors inoperative—if *they suspect*.”

“And *if* I can move quickly enough.”

“But you,” she said calmly, “can. Taking your best men, with their equipment . . . unless—” She paused, licked her lip, as if puzzling out a purely academic problem.

Maddened, he said, “Unless what, goddam it?”

“They may identify your reps as they cross. And you. They may be ready. I can see it now.” She laughed merrily. “You pay your poscreds, smile at the nice THL baldheaded, gargoyle-like New Whole Germany technicians who run those Telpors, you stand there while they subject your body to the field of the equipment . . . keep standing there innocently, fade away, reappear twenty-four light-years away at Whale’s Mouth . . . and are lasered dead before you’re even fully formed.

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It takes fifteen minutes. For fifteen minutes, Mat, you would be helpless, half materialized both here and there. And all your field reps. And all their gear."

He glared at her.

"Thus," she said, "goes *hubris*."

"What's that?"

"The Greek word for 'pride.' For trying to rise above the station the gods have allocated you. Maybe the gods don't want you to seize control of Whale's Mouth, Matty darling. Maybe the gods don't want you to overreach yourself."

"Hell," he said, "as long as I have to go across anyhow—"

"Sure; then why *not* take control? Push jovial, insipid Omar Jones aside? After all . . ." She stubbed out her cigarillo. "You'd be doomed to stay there anyhow; why live the ordinary life with the ordinary *hoi polloi*? Here, you're strong . . . but Horst Bertold and the UN, with Trails of Hoffman as their economic support, *are stronger*. Over there—" She shrugged, as if made weary, by human aspirations—or human vanity. Over there it was simply a different situation.

No one, he realized, could compete if he managed to move, in one sudden swoop, his entire entourage and weaponry across . . . using, ironically, von Einem's own official retail stations themselves. He grinned at that; it amused him to think that THL would personally see to it that he and his veteran reps reached Newcolonized-land.

"And then in 2032," Freya said, "When Rachmael ben Applebaum, probably an unwashed, bearded, mumbling hebephrenic schizophrenic by then, shows up in his great and good ship the *Omphalos*, he'll discover it's a hell, there, exactly as he anticipated . . . but it'll be *you* who'll

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be running it. And I'll bet *that* will surprise him more than a little."

Nettled, he said, "I can't think about it any more. I'm going back to sleep." He removed his robe and slippers, got wearily into the bed, aware of his years; he felt old. Wasn't he too decrepit for something like this? Not getting into bed; lord, he wasn't too old to clamber in beside Freya Holm, not yet, anyhow. But too old for what Freya had proposed—what she had correctly, possibly even telepathically, ascertained from his unconscious mind. Yes, it was actually true.

He had, from Rachmael's initial vidphone call, at the back levels of his cognition-processes, pondered this, from the very beginning.

And *this* was his reason for assisting—or rather trying to assist—the morose, creditor-balloon-hounded Rachmael ben Applebaum.

He thought, according to published info there is a home army, so-called, at Whale's Mouth, of three hundred volunteer citizens. For use as a sort of national guard in case of a riot. Three hundred! And none of them professionals, with experience. It was a pastoral land, the ads explained. A G. of E. lacking a snake; since there was a super-abundance of everything for everyone, what was an army needed for? What have-not existed to envy what have? And what reason to try, by force, to seize his holdings?

I'll tell you, Matson Glazer-Holliday thought. The havenots are here on this side. Myself and those who work for me; we're gradually, over the years, being ground down and overpowered by the true titans, by the UN and THL and—

The haves are across twenty-four light-years in the Fomalhaut system, at its ninth planet.

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Mr. Ben Applebaum, he thought to himself as he lay supine, drew, from reflex, Freya Holm against him, you will have quite a surprise when you get to Whale's Mouth.

It was a pity that he himself—and he intuited this with certitude—would not be alive at that date.

As to *why* not, however, his near-Psionic intuition told him nothing.

Beside him Freya moaned in her half-sleep, settled close to him, relaxed.

He, however, lay awake, staring into the nothingness. Deep in a new, hard thought. The like of which he had never experienced before.

## VI

THE MONITORING and recording-transmitting satellite, Prince Albert B-y, creaked out its first video signal, a transcript of the first video telescopic records which it had taken of the surface beneath it in over a decade. Portions of the long-inert network of minned parts failed; backup systems, however, took over, and some of these failed, too. But the signal, directed toward the Sol system twenty-four light-years away, was sent out.

And, on the surface of Fomalhaut IX, an eye winked. And from it a ground-to-air missile rose and in a period so slight that only the finest measuring-devices could have detected a lapse-period at all, arrived at its target, the groaning carrot-shaped monitoring satellite which had, inoperative, silently existed—and hence harmlessly. Up to now.

The warhead of the missile detonated. And the Prince Albert B-y ceased to exist, soundlessly, because at its

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altitude there was no atmosphere to transmit the event in the dimension of noise.

And, at the same time on the surface below, a powerful transmitter accepted a tape run at enormous velocity; the signal, amplified by a row of cold, superbly-built surge-gates, reached transmission level and was released; oddly, its frequency coincided with that of the signal just emitted by the now nonexistent satellite.

What would radiate from the two separate transmitters would blend in a cacaphony of meaningless garble. Satisfied, the technicians operating the ground transmitter switched to more customary channels—and tasks.

The deliberately deranged combined signal sped across space toward the Sol system, beamed, in its mad confusion, at a planet which, when it received this, would possess nothing but a catfight of noise.

And the satellite, reduced to its molecular level by the warhead, would emit no more signals; its life was over.

The event, the first transmission by the satellite up unto the final scramble by the far more powerful surface transmitter, had consumed five minutes, including the flight—and demolition—of the missile: the missile and its priceless, elaborate, never-to-be duplicated target.

—A target which, certain circles had long ago agreed in formal session, could be readily sacrificed, were the need to arise.

That need had arisen.

And the satellite was duly gone.

At the site of the missile-launching a helmeted soldier leisurely fitted a second g.-to-a. missile into the barn, attached both its anode and cathode terminals, made sure that the activating board was relocked—by the same key through which he had obtained official entry—and then

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he, too, returned to his customary chores.

Time lapse: perhaps six minutes in all.

And the planet, Fomalhaut IX, revolved on.

Deep in thought as she sat in the comfortable leather, padded seat of the luxury taxi flapple, Freya Holm was startled by the sudden mechanical voice of the vehicle's articulation-circuit. "Sir or madam, I request your pardon, but a deterioration of my meta-battery forces me without choice to land for a quick-charge without delay. Please give me oral permission as an acknowledgment of your willingness otherwise we will glide to destruct."

Looking down she saw the high-rise spires of New New York, the ring of city outside the inner, old kremlin of New York itself. Late for work, she said to herself, damn it. But—the flapple was correct; if its meta-battery, its sole power supply, were failing, to get out of the sky and on the surface at a repair station was mandatory; a long powerless glide would mean death in the form of collision with one of the tall commercial buildings below, "Yes," she agreed, resignedly, and groaned. And today was the day.

"Thank you, sir or madam." With sputtering power the flapple spiraled down until at last, under adequate control, it coasted to a rather rough but at least not dangerous halt at one of New New York's infinite flapple service stations.

A moment later uniformed service station men swarmed over the parked flapple, searching for—as one explained courteously to her—for the short which had depleted the meta-battery, good normally, the attendant told her cheerfully, for twenty years.

Opening the flapple door the attendant said, "May I check under the passenger's console, please? The wiring



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there; those circuits take a lot of hard use—the insulation may be rubbed off.” He, a Negro, seemed to her pleasant and alert and without hesitation she moved to the far side of the cab.

The Negro attendant slid in, closed, then, the flap door. “Moon and cow,” he said, the current—and highly temporary—ident-code phrase of members of the police organization Lies Incorporated.

Taken by surprise Freya murmured, “Jack Horner. Who are you? I never ran into you before.” He did not look like a field rep to her.

“A ’tween space pilot. I’m Al Dosker; I know you—you’re Freya Holm.” He was not smiling now; he was quiet, serious, and, as he sat beside her, perfunctorily running his fingers over the wiring of the passenger’s control console he said, half chanting, “I have no time, Freya, for small talk; I have five minutes at the most; I know where the short is because I sent this particular flap door taxi to pick you up. See?”

“I see,” she said, and, within her mouth, bit on a false tooth; the tooth split and she tasted the bitter outer-layer of a plastic pill: a container of Prussic acid, enough to kill her if this man proved to be from their antagonists. And, at her wrist, she wound her watch—actually winding a low-velocity homeostatic cyanide-tipped dart which she would control by the “watch” controls; it could either take out this man or, if others showed up, herself, in case of a failure of the oral poison. In any case she sat back rigid, waiting.

“You,” the Negro said, “are Matson’s mistress; you have access to him at any time; this I know—this is why I’ve approached you. Tonight, at six P.M. New New York time, Matson Glazer-Holliday will arrive at an outlet of Trails of Hoffman; carrying two heavy suitcases he

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will request permission to emigrate. He will pay his six poscreds, or seven, if his baggage is overweight, and then be teleported to Whale's Mouth. And at the same time, at every Telpor outlet throughout Terra, a total aggregate of roughly two thousand of his toughest veteran field reps will do the same."

She said nothing; she stared straight ahead. Within her purse an aud recorder captured all this, but heaven only knew for what.

The Negro said, "On the far side he, by deploying his veterans and the wep-equipment which they will assemble from components carried in their suitcases as 'personal articles,' will attempt a coup. Will halt emigration, make at once inoperative the Telpors, toss President Omar Jones—"

"So?" she said. "If I know this, why tell me?"

"Because," Dosker said, "I am going to Horst Bertold two hours before six. I believe that is usually considered four o'clock." His voice was icy, harsh. "I am an employee of Lies Incorporated but I did not join the organization to participate in a powerplay like this. On Terra, Matson G.-H. stands about where he ought to be: third in the pecking order. On Whale's Mouth—"

"And you want me," Freya said, "to do exactly what between now and four o'clock? Seven hours."

"Inform Matson that when he and the two thousand LI field reps arrive at the retail outlets of THL they will not be teleported but will be arrested and undoubtedly painlessly murdered. In the German manner."

"This," she said, "is what you want? Matson dead and them, those—" She gestured, gripping, clawing the air. "Bertold and Ferry and von Einem to run the corporate Terran-Whale's Mouth political-economic entity with no one to—"

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"I don't want him to try."

"Listen," Freya said bitingly. "The coup that Matson expects to carry out at Whale's Mouth is based on his assumption that a home army of three hundred ignorant volunteers exists over there. I don't think you have to worry; the problem is that Mat actually *believes* the lies he sees on TV; he's actually incredibly primitive and naive. Do *you* think it's a Promised Land over there, with a tiny volunteer army, waiting for someone to come along with *real* force, aided by modern wep-technology, such as Mat possesses, to harvest for the asking? If this were so, do you honestly believe Bertold and Ferry *would not have done it already?*"

Dosker, disconcerted, eyed her hesitantly.

"I think," she said, "that Mat is making a mistake. Not because it's immoral but because he's going to discover that, once he's over there, he and his two thousand veterans, he'll be facing—" She broke off. "I don't know. But he won't succeed in any *coup d'etat*. Whoever runs Newcolonizedland will handle Mat; that's what terrifies me. Sure, I'd like him to stop; I'd be glad to tell him that one of his top employees who knows all the inside details about the coup is going to, at four P.M., tip off the authorities. I'll do everything in my power, Dosker, to get him to abandon the idea, to face the fact that he's wandering idiotically into a terminal trap. My reasons and yours may not—"

"What do you think," Dosker said, "is over there, Freya?"

"Death."

"For—everybody?" He stared at her. "Forty million? Why?"

"The days," she said, "of Gilbert and Sullivan and Jerome Kern are over. We're on a planet of seven billion.

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Whale's Mouth could do the job, but slowly, and there's a more efficient way, and every one of those in key posts in the UN, put in by Herr Horst Bertold, knows that way."

"No," Dosker said, his face an ugly, putty-colored gray. "That went out in 1945."

"Are you sure? Would *you* want to emigrate?"

He was silent. And then, stunning her, he said, "Yes."

"What? Why?"

Dosker said, "I will emigrate. Tonight at six, New New York time. With laser pistol in my left hand, and I'll kick them in the groin; I want to get at them, if that's what they're doing; I can't wait."

"You won't be able to do a thing. As soon as you emerge—"

"With my bare hands. I'll get *one* of them. Any one will do."

"Start here. Start with Horst Bertold."

He stared at her, then.

"We have the wep-techs," Freya said, and then ceased speaking as the flapple door was opened by another—cheerful—attendant.

"Found the short, Al?" he asked.

"Yes," Al Dosker said. He fooled, fumbled, under the dashboard, his face concealed. "Should be okay now. Recharge the meta-bat, stick it back in, and she can take off."

The other attendant, satisfied, departed. Freya and Al Dosker were alone once more, briefly, with the flapple door hanging open.

"You—may be wrong," Dosker said.

Freya said, "It's got to be something like that. It can't be three hundred assorted-shape volunteer army privates, because Ferry and Bertold or at least *one* of them

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would have moved in, and that's the one fact we know: *we know what they're like*. There just cannot, Dosker, be a power vacuum at Whale's Mouth."

"All ready to go, miss," one of the other attendants called.

The flapple's articulation-circuit asserted, "I feel a million times better; I'm now prepared to depart for your original destination, sir or madam, as soon as the superfluous individual has disemflapped."

Dosker, trembling, said, "I—don't know what to do."

"Don't go to Ferry or Bertold. Begin at that."

He nodded. Evidently she had reached him; that part was over.

"Mat will need all the help he can get," she said, "from six o'clock on. From the moment his first field rep hits Whale's Mouth. Dosker, why don't you go? Even if you're a pilot, not a rep. Maybe you can help him."

The flapple started its motor up irritably. "Please, sir or madam, if you will request—"

"Are you teleporting?" Dosker asked her. "With them?"

Freya said, "I'm scheduled to cross at five. To rent living quarters for Mat and me. I'll be—remember this so you can find us—Mrs. Silvia Trent. And Mat will be Stuart Trent. Okay?"

"Okay," Dosker mumbled, backed out, shut the flapple door.

The flapple began to ascend, at once.

And she relaxed. And spat out the capsule of Prussic acid, dropped it into the disposal chute of the flapple, then reset her "watch."

What she had said to Dosker, god knew, was the truth. She knew it—knew it and could do nothing to dissuade Matson. On the far side professionals would be in wait, and even if they didn't anticipate the coup, even

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if there had been no leak and they saw no connection between the two thousand male individuals scattered all over the world, applying at every Telpor outlet on Terra . . . even so; she knew they would be able to handle Mat. He was just not that big and they *could* handle him.

But *he* did not believe it. Because Mat saw the possibility of power; it was a gaff that had hooked deep in his side and the wound spilled with the blood of yearning. Suppose it was true; suppose only a three-hundred-man army existed. *Suppose*. The hope and possibility enflamed him.

And babies, she thought, as the flapple carried her toward the New New York offices of Lies Incorporated, are discovered under cabbages.

Sure, Mat; you keep on believing.

## VII

TO THE PLEASANT, rather overextensively-bosomed young female receptionist Matson Glazer-Holliday said, "My name is Stuart Trent. My wife was teleported earlier today, so I'm anxious to slip in under the wire; I know you're about to close your office."

She glanced searchingly at him, at this bald-headed man with his prominent ridge-bones above his dark, almost pain-haunted eyes. "You're certain, Mr. Trent, that you desire to—"

"My wife," he repeated harshly. "She's already over—she left at five." He added, "I have two suitcases. A lady is bringing them." And, into the office of Trails of Hoffman, strode the robot-like machine, bearing the two genuine cow-hide bulging suitcases.

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The consummately nubile receptionist said, "Please fill out these forms, Mr. Trent. I'll make certain that the Telpor techs are ready to receive one more, because, as you say, we are about to close." The entrance-gate, in fact, was now locked.

He made out the forms, feeling only a coldness, an empty, mindless—fear. Lord, it really was fear! He actually, at this late moment, when Freya had already been teleported across to Whale's Mouth, felt his autonomic nervous system secrete its hormones of cringing panic; he wanted to back out.

However, he managed to fill out the forms anyhow. Because, higher than the autonomic nervous system, was the frontal lobe's awareness that the moment Freya crossed over, *it was decided*.

In fact, that was his reason for sending her in advance; he knew his own irresolution. He had made her the cat's paw of that irresolution; by having her go he forced himself to complete this. And, he thought, for the best; we must find some way, in life, to overcome ourselves . . . we're our own worst enemies.

"Your shots, Mr. Trent." A THL nurse stood by with needles. "Will you please remove your outer garments?" The nurse pointed to a small and hygienic back chamber; he entered, began removing his clothing.

Presently he had received his shots; his arms ached and he wondered dully if *they* had done it already. Had this been something fatal, administered over the cover of prophylactic shots?

Two elderly German technicians, both as bald as door-knobs—as himself—all at once manifested themselves, wearing the goggles of Telpor operators; the field itself, if viewed too long, caused permanent destruction of the retina. "Mein Herr," the first technician said briskly,

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"kindly, sir, remove the balance of your garb. *Sie sollen ganz unbedeckt sein.* We wish not material, no sort, to impede the *Starkheit* of the field. All objects, including your parcels, will follow you within minutes." Matson finished undressing, and, terrified, followed them down a tiled hall to what suddenly loomed as a mammoth chamber, almost barren; he saw in it no elaborate Dr. Frankenstein hodgepodge of retorts and bubbling caldrons, only the twin perpendicular poles, like the concrete walls of a good tennis court, covered with circular cup-like terminals; between the poles he would stand, a mute ox, and the surge of the field would pass from pole to pole, engulfing him. And he would either die—if they knew who he was—or if not, then he would be gone from Terra for the balance of his life, or at least thirty-six years which for him was the same.

Lord god, he thought. I hope Freya got by all right. Anyhow the short encoded message signifying everything all right had arrived from her.

"Mr. Trent," one of the technicians said, fitting his goggles in place, "*bitte*; please look down so that your eyes do not perceive the field-emanations; *Sie versteh'n* the retinal hazard."

"Okay," he said, nodding, and looked down, then, in almost a gesture of modesty, raised one arm, touched his bare chest with one hand, as if concealing himself—protecting himself against what suddenly became a stunning, blinding ram-head that butted him simultaneously from both sides; the forces, absolutely equal, made him freeze, as if poured as a polyester as he stood; anyone watching would have thought him free to move, but he was ensnared for good by the surge passing from anode to cathode, with himself as—what, the ion ring? His



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body attracted the field; he felt it infuse him as a dissolving agent.

And then the left surge dropped; he staggered, glanced up involuntarily.

The two bald, goggled Reich technicians were gone. He was in a far smaller chamber, and one elderly man sat at a desk, carefully logging from numbered tags a huge mound of suitcases and wrapped, tied parcels.

"Your clothing," the official said, "lies in a metal basket to your right marked 121628. And if you're faint, there's a cot; you may lie down."

"I'm—all right," Matson Glazer-Holliday said, and made his way unsteadily to his clothing; he dressed, then stood uncertainly.

"Here are your two items of luggage," the bureaucrat at the desk said, without looking up. "Numbers 39485 and 39486. Please arrange to remove them from the premises." He then examined his wristwatch. "No, excuse me. No one will be following you from the New New York nexus; take your time."

"Thanks." Matson himself picked up the heavy suitcases, walked toward a large double door. "Is this," he asked, "the right direction?"

"That will take you out on Laughing Willow Tree Avenue," the clerk informed him.

"I want a hotel."

"Any surface vehicle can transport you." The clerk returned to his work, broke contact; he had no more info to offer.

Pushing the door open, Matson stepped out onto the sidewalk.

He saw gray barracks.

Beside him, Freya appeared. The air was cold; she shivered and he, too, quaked, drew against her, stared

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and stared at the barracks; he saw row after row of them, and—charged, twelve-foot high wire fences with four strands of barbed wire at the top. And signs. The posted restrictive notices; he did not even need to read them.

Freya said, "Mat, have you ever heard of a town called Sparta?"

"Sparta," he echoed, standing holding his two suitcases.

"Here." She released his fingers, set the suitcases down. A few people, drably dressed, slunk by, silently, carefully paying no attention to them. "I was wrong," Freya said. "And the message of course to you, the all-clear, was spurious. Mat, I thought—"

"You thought," he said, "it was going to be—ovens."

She said, with quiet calmness, tossing her heavy dark mane of hair back and raising her chin to meet his gaze, look at him face-to-face, "It's work camps. The Soviet, not the Third Reich, model. Forced labor."

"Doing what? Clearing the planet? But the original authentic monitoring satellites reported that—"

"They seem," she said, "to be forming the nucleus of an army. First starting everyone out in labor gangs. To get them accustomed to discipline. The young males go into basic training at once; the rest of us—we'll probably serve in *that*." She pointed and he saw the ramp of a subsurface structure; he saw the descent mechanism and he knew, remembered from his youth, what it meant, this pre-war configuration.

A multi-level autofac. On continuous schedule, hence not entirely homeo. For round-the-clock operations, machines would not do, could not survive. Only shifts, alternating, of humans, could keep the belts moving; they had learned that in '82.

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"Your police vets," Freya said, "are too old for immediate induction; most of them. So they'll be assigned to barracks, as we will be. I have the number they gave you and the one they gave me."

"Different quarters? We're not even *together*?"

Freya said, "I also have the mandatory forms for us to fill out; we list all our skills. So we can be useful."

"I'm old," he said.

"Then," Freya said, "you'll have to die. Unless you can conjure up a skill."

"I have one skill." In the suitcase resting on the pavement beside him he had a transmitter which, small as it was, would send out a signal which, in six months, would reach Terra.

Bending, he brought out the key, turned the lock of the suitcase. All he had to do was open the suitcase, feed an inch of punched data-tape into the orifice of the transmitter's encoder; the rest was automatic. He switched the power on; every electronic item mimicked clothing, especially shoes; it appeared as if he had come to Whale's Mouth to walk his life away, and elegantly at that.

"Why?" he asked Freya as he programmed, with a tiny scholarly construct, the inch of tape. "An army for what?"

"I don't know, Mat. It's all Theodoric Ferry. I think Ferry is going to try to outspit the army on Terra that Horst Bertold commands. In the short time I've been here I've talked to a few people, but—they're so afraid. One man thought there'd been a non-humanoid sentient race found, and we're preparing to strike for its colony-planets; maybe after a while and we've been here—"

Matson peered up and said, "I've encoded the tape to read, *Garrison state. Sound out Bertold*. It'll go to our top pilot, Al Dosker, repeated over and over again, be-

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cause at this distance the noise-factor—”

A laser beam removed the back of his head.

Freya shut her eyes.

A second beam from the laser rifle with the telescopic sight destroyed first one suitcase and then its companion. And then a shiny, spic-and-span young soldier walked up, leisurely, the rifle held loosely; he glanced at her, up and down, carnally but with no particular passion, then looked down at the dead man, at Matson. “We caught your conversation on an audrec.” He pointed, and Freya saw, then, on the overhang of the roof of the Telpor terminal building, a net-like interwoven mesh. “That man”—the soldier kicked—actually physically kicked with his toe—the corpse of Matson Glazer-Holliday—“said something about ‘our top pilot.’ You’re an organization, then. Friends of a United People? That it?”

She said nothing; she was unable to.

“Come along, honey,” the soldier said to her. “For your psych-interrogation. We held it off because you were kind enough—dumb enough—to inform us that your husband was following you. But we never—”

He died, because, by means of her “watch” she had released the low-velocity cephalotropic cyanide dart; it moved slowly, but still he had not been able to evade it; he batted at it, childishly, with his hand, not quite alarmed, not quite wise and frightened enough, and its tip penetrated a vein near his wrist. And death came as swiftly and soundlessly as it had for Matson. The soldier swiveled and unwound and unwound in his descent to the pavement, and Freya, then, turned and ran—

At a corner she went to the right, and, as she ran down a narrow, rubbish-heaped alley, reached into her cloak, touched the aud transmitter which sent out an all-points, planet-wide alarm signal-alert; every Lies In-

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corporated employee here at Whale's Mouth would be picking it up, if this was not already apparent to him: if the alarm signal added anything to his knowledge, that which had probably come, crushingly, within the first five minutes here on this side—this one-way side—of the Telpor apparatuses. Well, anyhow she had done that; she had officially, through technical channels, alerted them, and that was all—*all* she could do.

She had no long-range inter-system transmitter as Matson had had; she could not send out a macrowave signal which would be picked up by Al Dosker at the Sol system six months hence. In fact none of the two thousand police agents of Lies Incorporated did. But they had weapons. She was, she realized with dread and disbelief, automatically now in charge of those of the organization who survived; months ago Matson had set her up legally so that on his death she assumed his chair, and this was not private: this had been circulated, memo-wise, throughout the organization.

What could she tell the police agents who had gotten through—tell them, of course, that Matson was dead, but what would be of use to them? What, she asked herself, *can we do?*

Eighteen years, she thought; do we have to wait for the *Omphalos*, for Rachmael ben Applebaum to arrive and see? Because by then it won't matter. For us, anyhow; nor for this generation.

Two men ran toward her and one bleated, "Moon and cow," shrilly, his face contorted with fear.

"Jack Horner," she said numbly. "I don't know what to do," she said to them. "Matson is dead and his big transmitter is destroyed. They were waiting for him; I led them right to him. I'm sorry." She could not face the two field reps of the organization; she stared rigidly

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past them. "Even if we put our weapons into use," she said, "they can take all of us out."

"But we can do some damage," one of the two police, middle-aged, with that fat sparetire at his middle, a tough old vet of the '82 war, said.

His companion, claspig a valise, said, "Yes, we can try, Miss Holm. Send out that signal; you have it?"

"No," she said, but she was lying and they knew it. "It's hopeless," she said. "Let's try to pass as authentic emigrants. Let them draft us, put us into the barracks."

The seasoned, hard-eyed, paunchy one said, "Miss Holm, when they get into the luggage *they'll know*." To his companion he said, "Bring it out."

Together, as she watched, the two experienced field reps of Lies Incorporated assembled a small intricate weapon of a type she had never seen before; evidently it was from their advanced weapons archives.

To her the younger man said quietly, "Send the signal. For a fight. As soon as our people come through; keep the signal going so they'll pick it up as they emerge. We'll fight at this spot, not later, not when they have us cut down into individuals, one here, one there."

She. Touched. The. Signal-tab.

And then she said, quietly, "I'll try to get a message-unit back to Terra via Telpor. Maybe in the confusion—" Because there was going to be a lot of confusion as the Lies Incorporated men emerged and immediately picked up the fracas-in-progress signal. "—maybe it'll slip by."

"It won't," the hard-eyed old tomcat of a fighter said to her. He glanced at his companion. "But if we focus on a transmission station maybe we can take and keep control long enough to run a vid track through. Pass it back through the Telpor gate. Even if all two thous of us

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were to—" He turned to Freya. "Can you direct the reps to make it to this point?"

"I have no more microwave patterns," she said, this time truthfully. "Just those two."

"Okay, Miss Holm." The vet considered. "Vid transmissions through Telpor are accomplished over there." He pointed and she saw an isolated multi-story structure, windowless, with a guarded entrance; in the gray sun of midday she caught a glint of metal, or armed sentries. "You have the code for back home you can transmit?"

"Yes," she said. "One of fifty. Mat and I both had them; committed to memory. I could transmit it by aud in ten seconds."

"I want," the wary, half-crouching veteran policeman said, "a *vid* track of this." He swung his hand at the landscape. "Something that can be spliced into the central coaxial cable and run on TV. Not just that we know but that they know." *They*. The people back home—the innocents who lay beyond the one-way gate; forever, she thought, because eighteen years is, really, forever.

"What's the code?" the younger field rep asked her.

Freya said, "'Forgot to pack my Irish linen handkerchiefs. Please transmit via Telpor.'" She explained, "We, Mat and I, worked out all logical possibilities. This comes the closest. Sparta."

"Yep," the older vet said. "The warrior state. The troublemaker. Well, it is close geographically to Athens, although not quite close enough." To his companion he said. "Can we get in there and transmit the aud signal?" He picked up the weapon which they had assembled.

"Sure," his younger companion said, nodding.

The older man clicked the weapon on.

Freya saw, then, into the grave and screamed; she ran

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and as she ran, struggled to get away, she knew it for what it was: a refined form of nerve gas that—and then her coherent thoughts ceased and she simply ran.

The armed sentry-soldiers guarding the windowless building ran, too.

And, unaffected, their metabolisms insulated by pre-injective antidotal hormones, the two field reps of Lies Incorporated dogtrotted toward the windowless structure, and, as they trotted, brought out small, long-range laser pistols with telescopic sights.

That was her final view of them; at that point panic and flight swallowed her and it was only darkness. And a darkness into which people of all sorts—she glimpsed, felt, them dimly—ran along side in company with her; she was not alone: the future radiated.

Mat, she thought. You will not have your police state here at Whale's Mouth, and I warned you; I told you. But, she thought, maybe now *they* won't either. If that encoded message can be put through. *If*.

And if, on the Terran side, there is someone smart enough to know what to do with it.

## VIII

IN HIS SHIP near the orbit of Pluto Al Dosker received, routinely, the message transmitted from Freya Holm at Whale's Mouth to the New New York office of Lies Incorporated.

FORGOT TO PACK MY IRISH LINEN HANDKERCHIEFS. PLEASE TRANSMIT VIA TELPOR. FREYA.

He walked to the rear of the ship, leisurely, because at this distance from the sun everything seemed entropic, slowed down; it was as if, out here, there was a



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slower beat of the sidereal clock.

Opening the code box he ran his finger down the Fs. Then found the key. He then took the message and fed it directly into the computer which held the spools that comprised the contents of the box.

Out came a paper ribbon with typed words. He read them.

MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. BARRACKS LIFE ON SPARTAN BASIS. PREPARATION FOR WAR AGAINST UNKNOWN FOE.

Dosker stood for a moment, then, taking the original encoded message, as handled by Vidphone Corporation, ran it through the computer once again. And, once again, he read the message in clear and once again it said what it had to say—could not be denied from saying. And there was no doubt, because Matson Glazer-Holliday himself had programmed the computer-box.

This, Dosker thought. Out of fifty possibilities ranging from the Elysium field to—hell.

Roughly, this lay halfway on the hell side. By a gross count of ten. It ranked about as bad as he had expected.

So, he thought, now we know.

We know . . . *and we can't validate it.*

The scrap of ribbon, the encoded message, was, incredible as it seemed, completely, utterly worthless.

Because, he asked himself, *whom do we take it to?*

Their own organization, Lies Incorporated, had been truncated by Mat's action, by the sending of their best men to Whale's Mouth; all which remained was the staff of bureaucrats in New New York—and himself.

And, of course, Rachmael ben Applebaum out in 'tween space in the *Omphalos*. Busily learning Attic Greek.

Now, from the New New York office, a second message, encoded, arrived; this, too, he fed to the computer,

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more quickly, this time. It came out drearily and he read it with futile shame—shame because he had tried and failed to stop what Matson planned; he felt the moral weight on himself.

### WE CANNOT HOLD OUT. VIVISECTION IN PROGRESS.

Can I help you? he wondered, suffering in his impotent rage. Goddam you, Matson, he thought, you had to do it; you were greedy. And you took two thousand men and Freya Holm with you, to be slaughtered over there where we can't do anything because "we" consist of nothing.

However, he could perform one final act—his effort, not connected with the effort to save the multitude of Terran citizens who, within the following days, weeks, would be fling through Telpor gates to Whale's Mouth, but to save someone who deserved a reprieve from a self-imposed burden: a burden which these two encoded messages via Telpor and the Vidphone Corp had rendered obsolete.

Taking the risk that a UN monitor might pick up his signal, Al Dosker sent out an u.h.f. beamed radio signal to the *Omphalos* and Rachmael ben Applebaum.

When he raised the *Omphalos*, now at hyper-see velocity and beyond the Sol system, Dosker asked brutally, "How's the odes of Pindar coming?"

"Just simple fables so far," Rachmael's voice came, distantly, mixed with the background of static, of inter-system interference as the signal-gathering cone aboard Dosker's ship rotated, tried to gather the weak, far-distant impulse. "But you weren't supposed to contact me," Rachmael said, "unless—"

"Unless," Dosker said, "this happened. We have, at Lies Incorporated, an encoding method that can't be

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broken. Because the data are not in what's transmitted. Listen carefully, Rachmael." And, amplified by his ship's transmitter, his words—he hoped—were reaching the *Omphalos*; a segment of his equipment recorded his words and broadcast them several times: a multiplication of the signal to counter, on a statistical basis, the high background; by utilizing the principle of repetition he expected to get his message through to Rachmael. "You know the joke about the prison inmate," Dosker said, "who stands up and yells, 'Three.' And everyone laughs."

"Yes," Rachmael said alertly. "Because 'three' refers to an entire multi-part joke. Which all the inmates know; they've been confined together so long."

"By that method," Dosker said, "out transmission from Whale's Mouth operated today. We have a binary computer as the decoder. Originally, we started out by flipping a coin for each letter of the alphabet. Tails made it zero or gate-shut; heads means one or gate-open. It's either zero or one; that's the binary computer's *modus operandi*. Then we invented fifty message-units which describe possible conditions on the other side; the messages were constructed in such a way that each consisted of a unique sequence of ones and zeros. I—" His voice came out ragged, hoarse. "I have just now received a message, which when reduced to the elements of the binary system consist of a sequence reading: 11101001100111010101100000100110101001110000100111110100000111. There is nothing intrinsic in this binary sequence that can be decoded, because it simply acts as one of the fifty unique signals known to our box—here on my ship—and it trips one particular tape. But its length—it gives a spurious impression to cryptographers of an *intrinsic* message.

"And your tape—" Rachmael said, "that was tripped—"

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"I'll paraphrase," Dosker said. "The operational word is—Sparta." He was silent then.

"A garrison state?" Rachmael's voice came.

"Yes."

"Against whom?"

"They didn't say. A second message came, but it added relatively little. Except that it came through in clear and it told us that they can't hold out. They're being decimated by the military, over there."

"And you're sure this is authentic data?" Rachmael asked.

"Only Freya Holm, Matson and I," Dosker said, "have the decode boxes into which the messages can be fed as a binary tripping-sequence. It came from Freya, evidently; anyhow she signed the first. He added, "They didn't even try to sign the second one."

"Well," Rachmael said, "then I will turn back. There's no point to my trip, now."

"That's up to you to decide." He waited, wondering what Rachmael ben Applebaum's decision would be; but, he thought, as you say, it really doesn't matter, because the real tragedy is twenty-four light-years away, and not the destruct, the taking-out, of Lies Incorporated's two thousand best people, but—the forty million who've gone before. And the eighty million or more who will follow, since, though we have this knowledge on *this* side of the teleport gates, there's no means by which we can communicate it over the mass info media to the population—

He was thinking that when the UN pursuit ships, three of them like black sliding fish, closed noiselessly in on him, reached a.-to-a. missile range; their missiles fired, and Dosker's Lies Incorporated ship was cut into fragments.

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Stunned, passive, he floated in his self-contained suit with its own air, heat, water, transmitter, waste-disposal deposit box, squeeze-tubes of food . . . he drifted on and on, seemingly for eternity, thinking about vague and even happy things, about a planet of green forests and of women and the tinkling noise of get-togethers, and yet knowing dully that he could live only a short time like this, and wondering, too, if the UN had gotten the *Omphalos* as they had gotten him; obviously their vigilant switchboard of monitors had picked up his radio carrier-wave, but whether they had picked up Rachmael's too, which operated on another band . . . god, he thought, I hope not; I hope it's just me.

He was still hoping when the UN pursuit ship moved up beside him, sent out a robot-like construct which fished at him until it had with great care grappled him without puncturing his suit. Amazed, he thought, Why don't they just dig a little hole in the suit-fabric, let out the air and heat, let me float here and meanwhile die?

It bewildered him. And now a hatch of the UN pursuit ship was opening; he was reeled in, like an enmeshed quarry; the hatch slammed shut and he felt the artificial gravity which prevailed within the expensive, ultra-modern vessel; he lay prone and then, wearily, got to his feet, stood.

Facing him, a uniformed UN senior officer, armed, said, "Take off your suit. Your emergency suit. Understand?" He spoke with a heavy accent; Dosker saw, by his armband, that he was from the Nordic League.

Piece by piece, Dosker shed his emergency suit.

"You Goths," Dosker said, "seem to be running things." At the UN, anyhow. He wondered about Whale's Mouth.

The UN officer, still pointing the laser pistol at him, said, "Sit down. We are returning to Terra. *Nach* Terra;

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*versteh'n?*" Behind him a second UN employee, not armed, sat at the control console; the ship was on a high-velocity course directed toward the third planet and Dosker guessed that only an hour's travel lay ahead. "The Secretary General," the UN officer said, "has asked to speak to you personally. Meanwhile, compose yourself and wait. Would you like a magazine to read? We have *UN Back-peop Assist*. Or an entertain-spool to watch?"

"No," Dosker said, and sat staring straight ahead, blindly.

The UN officer said, "We tracked the *Omphalos* by her carrier-wave transmission, also. As we did your ship."

"Good bit," Dosker said sardonically.

"However, due to the distance involved, it will take several days to reach her."

Dosker said, "But you will, though."

"That is a certainty," the UN officer said, with his heavy Swedish accent, nodding. He had no doubts. Nor did Dosker.

The only issue was the time-factor. As the officer said, some few days; no more.

He stared ahead, sat, waited, as the high-velocity UN pursuit ship hurried toward Terra, New New York and Horst Bertold.

At the UN Headquarters in New New York he was given a thorough physical examination; the doctors and nurses attached one testing apparatus after another, checked their readings, located no grafted-in subdermal devices.

"You survived your ordeal amazingly well," the doctor in charge informed him, at last, as he was given his clothing and allowed once more to dress.

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"And now what?" Dosker asked.

"The Secretary General is ready to see you," the doctor said briefly, marking his chart; he nodded his head toward a door.

Having dressed, Dosker walked step by step to the door, opened it.

"Please hurry it up," Horst Bertold said.

Shutting the door after him Dosker said, "Why?"

Seated at his large antique oak desk, the UN Secretary General glanced up; he was a heavy man, red-haired, with a pinched, elongated nose and almost colorless small lips. His features were small but his shoulders, his arms and his ribcage, bulged, as if from countless steam baths and from handball; his legs, his feet, showed the tonus of great childhood walking trips and miles of bike riding: this was an outdoor man, confined by his job to a desk, but longing for open spaces which did not now exist. A thoroughly healthy man, physically-speaking, Dosker thought. Strange, he thought, and, in spite of himself, received a good impression.

"We picked up your radio communication with the *Omphalos*," Bertold said, his English perfect—in fact overly-perfect; it had a tape-like quality, and probably it had been so learned. The impression here was not so good. "Thereby as you know we located both ships. We also understand that you are now the ranking executive of Lies Incorporated, Miss Holm and Mr. Glazer-Holli-day having crossed via Telpor—under cover names, of course—to Whale's Mouth."

Dosker shrugged, said nothing, imparted no free information; waited.

"However—" Horst Bertold tapped his pen against the top document on his desk, frowned. "This is a transcript, verbatim, of the interchange between you and the fana-

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tic, Rachmael ben Applebaum. You initiated the radio exchange; *you* raised the *Omphalos*." Bertold glanced up and his blue, light eyes were sharp. "We have put our cryptographers on the sequence in code which you transmitted . . . the same which you previously received from the Vidphone Corp. Intrinsically it means nothing. But in the wreckage of your ship we located your decoding computer, the intact box with its fifty tapes. We therefore matched the transmission and recorded binary sequence to the proper tape. And it was as you informed ben Applebaum."

"Did that surprise you?"

"Of course not," Bertold said swiftly. "Why should you deceive your own client? And at the risk—a risk which should not have been taken, as it so turned out—of revealing the location of your own vessel? Anyhow—" Bertold's voice sank to an introspective murmur. "We still were not satisfied. We therefore checked over our monitoring—"

"They're being wiped out, over there," Dosker said. "The two thousand field reps and Mat and Freya." His voice was toneless; he told this because he knew they would get it by a 'wash anyhow—they could get anything that was there, any memory, any motives, plans, projects; after all, his own organization, far smaller than the UN, could do so—had done so, over many years, and to many persons, by means of psychiatrists and their techniques.

Bertold said, "Trails of Hoffman Limited and Theodorick Ferry entirely control Newcolonizedland. The UN has no staff at Whale's Mouth. All we know is what we have received, as a courtesy, in aud and vid form. The info signals through the Telpors, over these years of colonization; our original monitoring satellites have been inop-



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erative ever since THL auspical jurisdiction began."

There was silence and then Dosker said incredulously, "Then this is as much news to you as it is to—"

"We believed the fifteen years of aud and vid tapes; we saw no reason to check for ourselves. THL had volunteered to underwrite the colonization economically; they picked up the tab and we gave them the franchise *because they owned the Telpor patent and equipment*. Dr. von Einem's patents are possessed exclusively by THL; he had the legal right to so arrange that. And this—" Bertold picked up the top document from his desk, showed it to Dosker; it was a typed transcript, in its entirety, of his own conversation by radio with Rachmael. "This," Horst Bertold said, "is the result."

Dosker said, "Tell me what it means." Because, he thought, I don't know. I saw the original messages when they arrived; I understand the literal meaning of the words. But that's all.

The UN Secretary General said "Out of the forty million colonists Ferry has conscripted an army and provided it with modern, sophisticated weapons. There is no 'non-humanoid race' no non-Terran culture to encounter. Had there been our unmanned monitors would have detected them; by now we've touched every star-system in our galaxy." He stared at Dosker. "It's us," he said. "The UN. That's what Theodoric Ferry is proposing to engage. When enough colonists have gone across. Then the up-to-then 'one-way' aspect of the teleportation equipment will suddenly reveal that the so-called Theorem One was false."

"Here?" Dosker said, then. "They'll reenter through their own Telpor outlets?"

"And take us on," Bertold said. "But not now. At this point they're not quite large enough." To himself he

said, "At least so we estimate; we studied samples of groups who had emigrated; he can't have more than one million men actually under arms. But weapons—they may have u.s.h.: ultra sophisticated hardware; after all, they've got von Einem working for them."

Dosker said, "Where is von Einem? At Whale's Mouth?"

"We put a tail on him instantly." Bertold's fingers convulsed, crushed the document. "And proved already—*ganz genug!*—that we were correct. Von Einem has been all these years passing back and forth between Terra and Whale's Mouth; he has always used—they have always—operated the Telpor instruments for two-way travel—*so it's verified*, Dosker. Verified!" He stared at Dosker.

## IX

WHEN Rachmael ben Applebaum made out the dim, shadowy shapes of the UN pursuit ships as they approached to escort the *Omphalos* he knew that, whatever else was a cover, at least this much was true: the UN had traced him, had him and no doubt Dosker as well. So—he clicked on the microwave transmitter and raised, after an interval, the UN pursuit ships' local commanding officer.

"I'll believe you," Rachmael said, "when I hear Al Dosker say it." And when I look him over, he said to himself, for signs of a cephalic 'wash. But—why would they say it if it wasn't true? They had him; he and the *Omphalos*, detected, were now booty captured by the armed inter-system vessels of the great UN structure that spanned from planet to planet. Why make up a

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cover when there was no force to influence, no force able to provide any resistance?

God above, he thought. If it's true, then we can rely on Horst Bertold. We let our prejudices blind us . . . von Einem is German and Horst Bertold is German. But that does not any more prove they are working together, are secret collaborators, than, say, any two Ubangis or any two Jews. Adolf Hitler was not even a German . . . so our own thinking, he realized, has betrayed us. But—maybe now we can believe this. We can see. New Whole Germany has produced Dr. Sepp von Einem and Trails of Hoffman Limited . . . but it may also have produced something else when it created Horst Bertold.

We will see, Rachmael said to himself.

—Will wait until we are in New New York at UN Headquarters; face Horst Bertold and see the evidence of the assertion given by relayed macroradio signal.

The assertion that as of six a.m. New New York time this morning, UN troops had entered all retail outlets of Trails of Hoffman Limited, had seized the Telpor instruments—had, throughout Terra, arbitrarily and without warning of any kind, halted emigration to Whale's Mouth.

Twelve hours later Rachmael was led by a worried, overworked female secretary into the UN Secretary General's office.

"The fanatic," Horst Bertold said, surveying him. "The idealist who sparked the hankering in Matson Glazer-Holliday that caused him to attempt his *coup d'état* at Whale's Mouth." He turned to an aide. "Bring in the Telpor *Apparat*."

Seconds later the familiar bipolar mechanism was noisily carted into the UN leader's office, along with a

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thoroughly-unnerved-looking technician; minus his goggles he looked frightened and—small.

To the Telpor technician, Horst Bertold said, "Does this operate to permit teleportation two ways? Or only one? *Zwei oder ein? Antworte.*"

"Just outward, Mein Herr Sekretar General," the technician quavered. "As Theorem One demonstrates, the recession of matter toward—"

Horst Bertold said to his aide, "Bring in our 'wash psychiatrists. Have them start with their EEG machines."

At that, the Telpor technician said, in a voice that broke with dismayed intimidation, "*Dasz brauchen Sie nicht.*"

"He's saying," Bertold said to Rachmael, "that he will cooperate; we don't need to employ our psychiatrists with him. So ask him." He jerked his head fiercely toward the cowering THL employee, this man in his white smock who had assisted in the emigration of literally millions of innocent human beings. "Ask him whether the Telpors work both ways."

The technician said, virtually inaudibly, "*Beide.* Both ways."

"There never was any 'Theorem One,'" Bertold snapped.

"*Sie haben Recht,*" the technician agreed, nodding.

"Bring in Dosker," Bertold said to his female over-worked secretary.

When Dosker appeared he said to Rachmael at once, "Freya is still alive over there." He indicated the Telpor instrument. "We've been in contact through this. But—" He hesitated.

Horst Bertold said, "Matson Glazer-Holliday is dead. They murdered him immediately. But nearly half of

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Lies Incorporated's field personnel remain alive at various installations at Newcolonizedland, and we're beginning to supply them on a strategic basis. With weapons of types which they instantly need. And presently we will, at tactical spots, try commando teams; we can do a lot, I think, with our commando teams."

"What can I do?" Rachmael said. He felt overwhelming impotence; it was going on—had been going on—without him. While he journeyed—pointlessly—through 'tween, utterly empty, space.

This, the UN Secretary General seemed to read on his face. "You awakened Matson," he pointed out. "Which caused Matson to attempt his aborted coup. And the relayed message from Freya Holm to Dosker and then to the *Omphalos* informed us of the reality hidden under Theodoric Ferry's cover; a cover which we carry the moral stigma for accepting all these fifteen years. Everything based on the one fundamental hoax that teleportation could be achieved in only one direction . . ." He grimaced. "However, Trails of Hoffman Limited made an error as great as their cover when they did not impede your two thousand Lies Incorporated veterans from crossing over." To Dosker he said, "*But even so, that would not have been enough.* However, with our tactical support—"

"It wasn't enough even at the start," Dosker said, "since they took out Matson right away." Half to himself, half to Rachmael, he said, "We never had a chance. Probably Matson never knew; he probably didn't even live that long. Anyhow, maybe you can retrieve Freya. Do you want to?"

Instantly Rachmael said, "Yes." To Horst Bertold he said, "Can I get equipment out of you? Defensive screens, if not offensive hardware? And I'll go alone."

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They would not, in the confusion, notice him, perhaps. Whale's Mouth had become a battlefield, and too many participants were involved; one lone man was a cypher, a mote; he would enter inconspicuously and if he found her at all it would be that way, as an entity too trifling to be considered by the vast warring entities. Within the context of the power-struggle which had already truncated Lies Incorporated; one contender had been abolished at the start, and now only the two monoliths existed in the field to slug it out, THL on one hand, the UN as its wise old antagonist, its roots of victory deep in the last century. The UN, he reflected, had a head-start, that of fifty years.

But Trails of Hoffman Limited had the inventive genius of half-senile but still crafty old Dr. Sepp von Einem. And—the inventor of the Telpor instrument might not have ceased with that construct.

He wondered if Horst Bertold had considered this.

It didn't matter, because if von Einem had produced something else of equal—or of merely significant—value, *it would show up now*.

In the streets of Newcolonizedland, whatever Dr. Sepp von Einem and THL had over the years developed would be at this moment in full use. Because this was, for all participants, the Dies Irae, the Day of Wrath; now they were, like beasts in the field, being tried. And God help, Rachmael thought, the contender who was found wanting. Because out of this only one participant would live; there would be extended to the loser no partial, no half, life. Not in *this* arena.

He himself—he had only one task, as he saw it. That of getting Freya Holm out of Whale's Mouth and back safely to Terra.

The eighteen year journey, the odyssey aboard the

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*Omphalos*, learning Attic Greek so that he could read the *Bachae* in the original—that childlike fantasy had withered at the press of the iron glove of the reality-situation, the struggle going on—not eighteen years from now—but at this instant, at the Whale’s Mouth terminals of six thousand Telpor stations.

“*Sein Herz voll Hasz geladen,*” Horst Bertold said to Rachmael. “You speak Yiddish? You understand?”

“I speak a little Yiddish,” Rachmael said, “but that’s German. ‘His heart heavy with hate.’ What’s that from?”

“From the Civil War in Spain,” Bertold said. “From a song of the International Brigade. Germans, mostly, who had left the Third Reich to fight in Spain against Franco, in the 1930s. They were, I suppose, Communists. But—they were fighting Fascism, and very early; *and they were Germans*. So they were always ‘good’ Germans . . . what that man, Hans Beimler, hated was Nazism and Fascism, in all its stages and states and manifestations.” After a pause he said, “We fought the Nazis, too, we ‘good’ Germans; *verges’ uns nie*.” Forget us never, Bertold had said, quietly, calmly. Because we did not merely join the fight late, in the 1950s or ’60s, but from the start. The first human beings to fight to the death, to kill and be killed by the Nazis, were—

Germans.

“And Terra,” Bertold said to Rachmael, “ought not to forget that. As I hope they will not forget who at this moment is taking out Dr. Sepp von Einem and creatures allied with him. Theodoric Ferry, his boss . . . who, by the way, is an American.” He smiled at Rachmael. “But there are ‘good’ Americans. Despite the A-bomb dropped on those Japanese women and children and elderly.”

Rachmael was silent; he could not answer this.

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"All right," Bertold said, then. "We will put you together with a wep-x, a weapon expert. To see what gear you should have. And then good luck. I hope you bring back Miss Holm." He smiled—fleetingly. And turned at once to other matters.

A minor UN official plucked at Rachmael's sleeve. "I'm to take charge of your problem," he explained. "I will be handling it from now on. Tell me, Mr. ben Applebaum; precisely what contemporary—and I do not mean last month's or last year's—weapons of war you are accustomed to operating, if any? And how recently you have been exposed to the neurological and bacterial—"

"I've had absolutely no military training," Rachmael said. "Or antineuro or -bac modulation."

"We can still assist you," the minor UN official said. "There is certain equipment requiring no prior experience. However—" He made a mark on the sheet attached to his clipboard. "This does make a difference; eighty percent of the hardware available would be useless to you." He smiled encouragingly. "We must not let it get us down, Mr. ben Applebaum."

"I won't," Rachmael said grimly. "So I'll be teleported to Whale's Mouth after all."

"Yes, within a matter of an hour."

"The unteleported man," Rachmael murmured. "Will be teleported." Instead of enduring the eighteen years aboard the *Omphalos*. Ironic.

"Are you capable morally," the UN official inquired, "of employing a nerve gas, or would you prefer to—"

"Anything," Rachmael said, "that'll bring back Freya. Anything except the phosphorus weapons, the jellied petroleum products; I won't use any of those, and also the bone-marrow destroyers—leave those out. But lead slugs, the old-fashioned muzzle-expelled shells; I'll ac-



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cept them, as well as the laser beam artifacts." He wondered what variety of weapon had gotten Matson Glazer-Holliday, the most professional of men in this area.

"We have something new," the UN official said, consulting his clipboard, "and according to the Defense Department people very promising. It's a time-warping construct that sets up a field which coagulates the—"

"Just equip me," Rachmael said. "And get me over there. To her."

"Right away," the UN official promised, and led him rapidly down a side hall to a hi-speed descent ramp. To the UN Advance-weapons Archives.

At the retail outlet of Trails of Hoffman Limited, Jack and Ruth McElhatten and their two children emerged from a flapple taxi; a robot-like organism carted their luggage, all seven overstuffed seedy-borrowed for the most part—suitcases, as they entered the modern, small building which for them was to be the last stopping-point on Terra.

Going up to the counter, Jack McElhatten searched about for a clerk to wait on them. Jeez, he thought; just when you decide to make the Big Move *they* decide to step out for a coffee break.

A smartly uniformed armed UN soldier, with an armband identifying him as a member of the crack UAR division, approached him. "What did you wish?"

Jack McElhatten said, "Hell, we came here to emigrate. I've got the poscreds." He reached for his wallet. "Where are the forms to fill out, and then I know we got to take shots and—"

The UN soldier politely said, "Sir, have you watched your info media during the last forty-eight hours?"

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"We've been packing." Ruth McElhatten spoke up. "Why, what is it? Has something happened?"

And then, through an open rear door, Jack McElhatten saw *it*. The Telpor. And his heart bent with mingled dread and anticipation. What an admirably large move this was, this true migration; seeing the twin wall-like polar surfaces of the Telpor was to see—the frontier itself. In his mind he recalled the years of TV scenes of grasslands, of miles of green, lush—

"Sir," the UN soldier said, "read this notice." He pointed to a square white with words so dark, so unglamorous, that Jack McElhatten, even without reading them, felt the glow, the wonder of what for him was a long-held inner vision, depart.

"Oh good lord," Ruth said, from beside him as she read the notice. "The UN—it's closed down all the Telpor agencies. Emigration has been suspended." She glanced in dismay at her husband. "Jack, it's now illegal for us to emigrate, it says."

The UN soldier said, "Later on, madam. Emigration will resume. When the situation is resolved." He turned away, then, to halt a second couple, who, with four children, had entered the Trails of Hoffman office.

Through the still-open rear door, McElhatten saw, to his dumb disbelief, four work-garbed laborers; they were busily, sweatily, efficiently torch-cutting into sections the Telpor equipment.

He then forced himself to read the notice.

After he had read it the UN soldier tapped him—not unkindly—on the shoulder, pointed out a nearby TV set, which, turned on, was being watched by the second couple and their four children. "These are Newcolonizedland," the UN soldier said. "You see?" His English was not too good, but he was attempting to explain; he

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wanted the McElhattens to understand *why*.

Approaching the TV set, Jack McElhatten saw gray, barracks-like structures with tiny, slotted windows like raptor eyes. And—high fences. He stared, uncomprehendingly . . . and yet, underneath, comprehending completely; he did not even have to listen to the aud track, to the UN announcer.

Ruth whispered, "My god. It's a—concentration camp."

A puff of smoke and the top floors of the gray cement building disappeared; dwarfed dark shapes scampered, and rapid-fire weapons clattered in the background of the announcer's British-type voice; the calm, reasonable commentary explained what did not need to be explained.

At least not after this sight.

"Is that," Ruth said to her husband, "how we would have lived over there?"

Presently he said, to her and their two children, "Come on. Let's go home." He signaled the robot-organism to pick their luggage up once more.

"But," Ruth protested, "couldn't the UN have helped us? They have all those welfare agencies—

Jack McElhatten said, "The UN is protecting us now. And not with welfare agencies." He indicated the work-garbed laborers busy dismantling the Telpor unit.

"But so late—"

"Not," he said, "too late." He signaled the robot-thing to carry their seven bulging suitcases back outside onto the sidewalk; avoiding the many passing people, the dense, always dense, sidewalk traffic, he searched for a flapple taxi to take himself and his family home again to their miserably cramped, hated conapt.

A man, distributing leaflets, approached him, held

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out a broadsheet; McElhatten reflexively accepted it. The Friends of a United People outfit, he saw. Glaring banner:

### UN VERIFIES COLONY TYRANNY

He said, aloud, "They were right. The cranks. The lunatics, like that guy who wanted to make the eighteen-year-trip by interstellar ship." He carefully folded the broadsheet, put it into his pocket to read later; right now he felt too numbed. "I hope," he said aloud, "that my boss will take me back."

"They're *fighting*," Ruth said. "You could see on the TV screen; they showed UN soldiers and then others in funny uniforms I never saw before in all my—"

"You think," Jack McElhatten asked his wife, "you could sit in the taxi with the kids while I find a bar and get one good stiff drink?"

She said, "Yes. I could." Now a flapple taxi was swooping down, attracted; it headed for the curb, and the four of them and their mound of fat enticing luggage its tropism.

"Because," Jack McElhatten said, "I can use for instance a bourbon and water. A double." And then, he said to himself, I'm heading for UN recruiting headquarters and volunteer.

He did not know for what—not yet. But they would tell him.

His help was needed; he felt it in his blood. A war had to be won, and then, years from now but not eighteen as it had been for that nut written up in the 'papes, they could do it, could emigrate. But before that—the fighting. The winning of Whale's Mouth all over again. Actually, for the first time.

But even before that: the two drinks.

As soon as the luggage was loaded he got with his

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family into the flapple taxi and gave it the name of the bar where he often stopped after work. Obliging the taxi spouted up into the overcrowded, me-first, nose-to-nose density of supra-surface Terran unending traffic.

And as the taxi rose Jack McElhatten dreamed again of tall, windtouched grasses and froglike creatures and open plains meandered over by quaint animals that were not afraid because no one intended to hurt them. But his awareness of the reality remained and ran parallel to the dream; he saw both at once and he put his arm around his wife and hugged her and was silent.

The taxi, expertly maneuvering among all the other vehicles, directed itself toward the bar on the east side of town; it knew its way, too. It, also, knew its task.

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