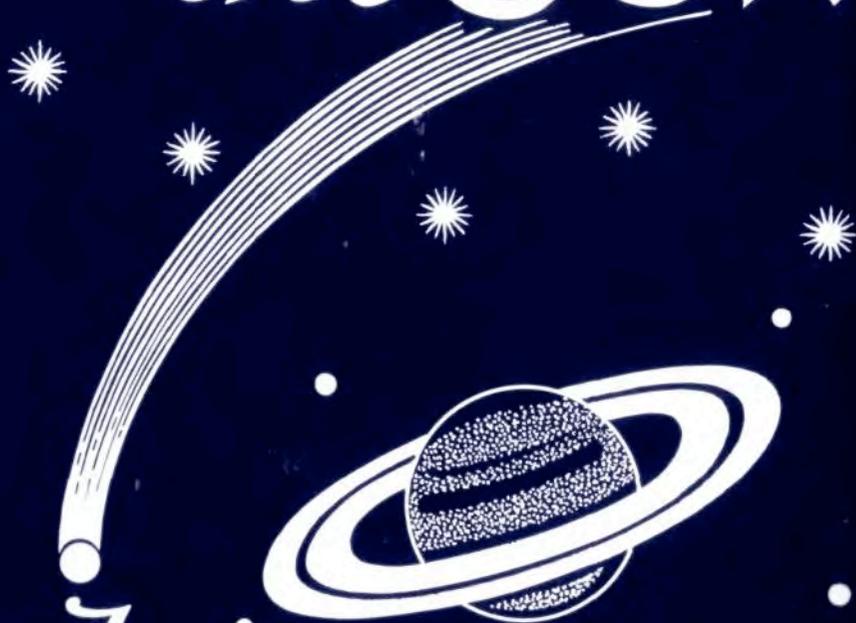
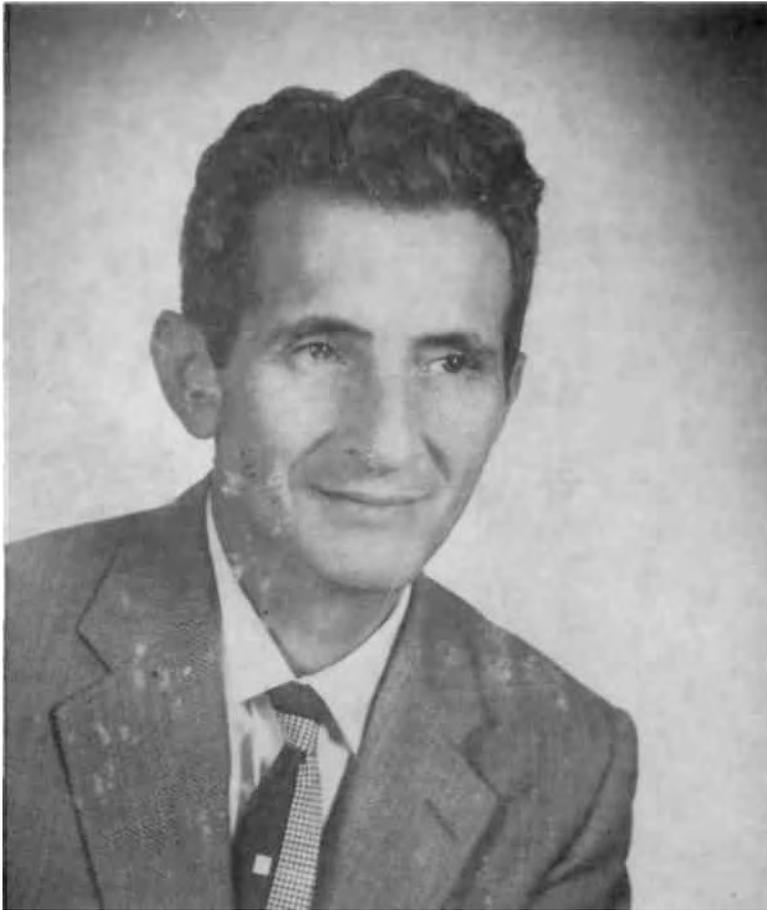


SON *of*
the SUN



by

Orfeo Angelucci



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Orfeo Angelucci was born June 25, 1912, in Trenton, New Jersey.

Science, particularly fundamental physics, has been his greatest interest and most intense study since his early school years.

This preoccupation led Mr. Angelucci into work with General Motors and Lockheed Aircraft during the years of World War II and the Korean conflict.

The author's studies and practical experience in the field of airplane manufacturing have produced his unusual writings about space and its various attributes.

Mr. Angelucci believes his background was the reason for his being given the story he has told in SON OF THE SUN.

D E V O R S S & C o . , P u b l i s h e r s

SON OF THE SUN

by Orfeo
Angelucci

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by Orfeo

Angelucci

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those people with that soul which ever projects a little further than the senses, which perceive only things of the present that come, pass on, and are no more the things we knew. To the marvelous souls who, in the early spring, work to sow what others reap in the late fall.

Such a one was Adam, whose story it is my privilege to pass along in these pages.

Therefore, in dedicating this book to these souls; it follows that it is dedicated also to Adam, the physician from Seattle. Very much so.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special acknowledgment is gratefully made to the following:

First of all, to my beloved wife, Mabel, whose unfailing devotion has been the cornerstone of my life at all times, whether the path was sunny or shaded. This includes, of course, my sons, Ramon and Richard, and my daughter-in-law, Pat.

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To all my wonderful friends and relatives who have graciously kept me in the warmth of their esteem no matter where I have ventured, or what I have seen.

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To Henry George, economist-philosopher, who to me is Thomas Payne, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Arthur Brisbane all embodied in one personality; Henry George, who cared so much for all humanity.

And to the living, boundless Universe.

Orfeo Angelucci

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Chapter 1

ADAM IN THE DESERT

“In the final analysis, Orfeo, there is only one virtue—the love of pure learning.”

For a moment he paused; and he saw that moment, and felt that moment in its depth of meaning. He was looking at me, or rather far beyond me, as he did not look again during the next three days of our close association. He was seeing things in this moment that could not be spoken. As he came slowly back to the reality of our being here together in this little restaurant, he added, with an air of secondary importance:

“And all else is but procrastination and dissipation in the eyes of the One who awaits our evolutionary awakenings.”

Adam and I had talked of many things, and his words had been as silvery threads spun on a scroll of eternal knowledge. But the words just spoken stood out like golden threads among the silver. Even as he spoke them to me he seemed to be living in another world, and looking alone into the universe in one cosmic swoop. I felt sure he was looking into the very core of effects, causes, aberrations, corrections; into the Cause behind all causes.

In those simple words, and his searching, burning, brown eyes, there was such an all-engulfing vision that I was swept into its depth with him in harmonious understanding. I saw what he saw, felt what he felt; a feeling of oneness with all that is. It was the flash of many ages in one swelling burst; yet it was the eternity of the split second. I was so devoid of self-awareness that I felt more like formless thought than a being of flesh and blood.

Material things flashed before me in a comprehension that was almost tangible, and the pulsating quiet of the universe became a rhythmic thunder. It was as if all things had been frozen and were now suddenly melting into a vaporous essence that further confirmed his words.

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I had to agree with Adam; that in the final analysis there is only one virtue—the love of pure learning.

Paradoxically, I could see the reverse of that axiom. The ultimate sin must be sustained ignorance.

Adam did not speak as a man having a complex of any kind. He felt neither inferior nor superior. Yet he had just come through an experience of learning and romance that was not one which mortals of earth usually know. It was one to be compared with cosmic grandeurs, like huge meteors, comets, and supernovae. It included a love that must soon be relegated to a nebulous memory, for its exquisiteness was too ethereal for undeveloped earth people. Of course, Adam had been guided through the experience by experts who would not put any person through it at random just for fun.

According to Adam, these people were not of earth but were visitors from another world. I believed him from the very start, believing him even more after he had told me all there was to tell. In the course of three evenings he narrated his fantastic story to me.

Sitting in the little desert restaurant in the heart of Twenty-nine Palms, Adam told me he had read my book, “The Secret of the Saucers,” but that he had never expected to meet me in person. And as for me, I certainly had never expected to meet one like Adam, for he had *recently* gone into the sun and out again. He did not flinch when he told me this. Indeed, there was a mystical look on his face which as much as said that his trip into the sun was not quite his top experience—that other events more extraordinary had recently occurred. And I believe each one on earth is destined, in time, to have similar experiences.

Adam’s whimsical grin told me of his faith in confiding his story to me. As he related detail by detail, I listened as a jurist might listen to a defendant or a plaintiff, returning him smile for smile and comprehension for comprehension. What man or woman wouldn’t have been totally intrigued by his words, enthralled by the truths of their essence, and completely swept away by his sincerity? If a man hands you the secret of

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the universe so you see the universe respond as if in confirmation, would you ask who his parents were? If the words he speaks are living symbols of light, would you stop to inspect his credentials and thereby miss the essence of the words?

This I know. If one thousand people on earth were to understand what Adam told me in toto we may rest assured that earth's redemption is more than hypothetical; it is certain.

How did I meet Adam? Why was it essential that I meet him? Let us begin at the beginning.

Adam had gone into the sun and had emerged out of it without a burn. Other than normal perspiring, he had suffered nothing physically. I was trying to absorb this whole idea while gazing unrelentingly at his handsome, inscrutable, honest face. At the same time, the idea that he had only seven months to live, as he had told me, needed to be digested. The weight of these two thoughts made me oblivious to everything else around me.

I had come to this desert valley for one reason: to work here, and in time bring my family to reside here permanently. In fact, the day I arrived I found work with a furniture store laying floor tiles. It was November 1, 1954.

It was a wonderful feeling to be in my own line of work and situated in a community that I more than just "liked." Behind me were my recent years of lecturing on "flying saucers" and their impact on our future space age.

These lectures and magazine articles had brought me in contact with many people by mail and in person. Among them was a young man named Earl Brewer, of Seattle, Washington, who had met me through driving a friend to my home. Somewhat frail-looking, of Scandinavian descent, he possessed gleaming, childlike, blue eyes which were completely disarming. Although he had only a casual interest in my space visitor contacts, we liked each other from the start and became fast friends.

In September of 1954, Brewer again came to my home in Los Angeles. This time he came south to stay, as doctors advised a dry climate for his health, and he inquired if I knew

of a place meeting this requirement where it would be possible to make a living. I suggested Twentynine Palms, California, and he decided to locate there.

Thus, when I looked him up several weeks later, informing him I intended to be here for quite some time (having already found work), he was beside himself with joy. He insisted that I share his small place, which though hardly larger than a cabin, had a tiny living room, kitchen and bathroom. It would be good to have a level-headed companion like Earl, so without ado I brought in my scant luggage and this spot became my week-day home for about six months. On week ends I commuted to Los Angeles to be with my family.

The cottage was situated on the road to the Twentynine Palms Marine Base north of the small village, at a point where the road makes an eastward bend and merges with an un-paved road. The intersection is known locally as "Indian Corners." Here only the passing traffic and the occasional barking of a dog break the desert quiet.

The town of Twentynine Palms itself lies near the gateway to the Joshua Tree National Monument. It nestles in the Great Morongo Basin in which are cradled also the communities of Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley, Pioneertown, and Morongo Valley. Earl began to feel better here in the High Desert and he agreed with many others that it is one of the most healthful spots in the country.

Earl was working also, and was fast becoming a desert native. In the middle of December, 1954, however, he decided to take a plane to his native Seattle for a stay of three days.

Those three days were to catapult me into new horizons. They were not only to renew my lagging spirits, with respect to the subject of outer space, but to unfold things which were heretofore completely beyond my credulence. In retrospect, I feel certain that my stay of six months in Twentynine Palms and Earl's unexpected three-day visit to Seattle coincided with a prearranged plan of visitors from space.

When I came home that Friday evening after Earl had embarked for Seattle, I washed, changed clothes, and decided to

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have dinner in town. For some reason I did not feel lonely. Driving the short mile and a half to town seemed more pleasant, somehow, than usual. In fact I began to feel more exuberant by the moment as I drove. I decided the cafe I would select would be the one where Earl and I had dined several times.

“Tiny,” the proprietor, was fond of his monicker, which mocked his weight of over 300 pounds. “Tiny” did things in a big way. He wanted lots of room, and lots to eat, so he felt everyone else wanted the same, and gave his patrons generous portions. His waitresses did not merely bring glasses of water to the tables, but glasses plus a large pitcher for refilling. It was not a big cafe, but “Tiny” made you feel big in it. He and his place embraced one in an atmosphere of “welcome, friend.” The front window filled nearly all of one wall. As you entered, the counter was to the right and a few tables spread here and there to the left.

As I neared town, I felt strongly that “Tiny’s” was just the place for me. Though it was the middle of December, the evening was mild. I parked the car, and as I walked toward “Tiny’s” I felt a strangeness in the air. There is a cosmic spell over the desert most of the time, but tonight the mystery was less distant and intangible; it was close and pulsating. The sand, the streets, the very buildings seemed to have a softness about them, and the stars were gently glowing lights in the warm, velvet heavens. It was a clue, I suppose, to what the evening held in store for me, but I didn’t recognize it. Just beyond that door I would be swept from normal living into a state not of earth, yet not quite of another world. An exciting, new, nameless sensation.

I opened the door, and my eyes fell at once upon a young man sitting alone at a center table. He looked at me, smiling as though he was waiting to see me. We had never met before, for having once seen this face, it was not likely to be forgotten. So strikingly handsome was he that if beheld but once for only a few seconds in a crowd, an indelible impression of his countenance would be imbedded in the memory.

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Instead of walking to the counter, where I normally would eat when alone, I walked to his table, drawn there as if under a spell. His smile did not waver. Our eyes met in an intense gaze as we made a brief appraisal of one another, and an inner communication passed between us, as though we had always known one another. I approached his table and said casually:

“Hello—friend.”

“Hello, Orfeo,” he replied immediately, his smile never wavering.

“You know me?” I asked, as I pulled back a chair and sat down.

“I know you only as well as you now know me. Please, just call me Adam, and do not ask my real name. In seven months I shall be gone, and you have enough wounds of the spirit without adding my memory to your future.”

The way he said it left no doubt that he meant seven months left to live, and I felt a loneliness and sadness at his words. Adam had expected me to feel this way upon first hearing about his short future, but he donned an air of indifference to my reaction, and his spirited demeanor had a steadying effect. He made me feel that we had more important things to talk about than his physical welfare and his length of life.

The waitress came to the table and asked if she could help us. Adam smiled at her and replied, “One of your sizzling steak dinners, please.”

He had ordered it for me, and I nodded in approval. Then I noticed the pitcher of water on the table. There were two glasses besides Adam’s own glass.

“Adam,” I asked. “Are you expecting someone else? Am I intruding on you and whoever you may be waiting for?”

“No, Orfeo. Why do you ask?” He said it with such assurance that I felt I was just seeing things.

“But there is a third glass on the table, Adam. Are you expecting someone besides me?”

He looked at the glass. Then he looked at me with puzzlement.

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“No,” he said thoughtfully. “I must have said two glasses to the waitress, and she may have understood it to mean two more besides my own.”

But Adam doubted his own explanation of it, for he looked several times at the third glass, and I could detect by his expression that he was asking himself if a third guest were to appear, after all. As for myself, I decided to drop the thought for a while. Adam himself was enough of an enigma to me until the third person should arrive, if at all. Then he broke the silence.

“Would you like a bottle of beer, Orfeo?”

I looked at the pitcher of water. His own glass contained a sparkling liquid the color of pale ginger ale, fizzing and bubbling continuously, though he had already drunk half of it. The lively bubbles arose from the remains of a tiny tablet at the bottom of the glass. My answer to his offer was a hurried, “No, Adam. No beer for me. I will take the water,” and I poured some from the pitcher into my glass.

Adam smiled even more broadly as his hand went into his coat pocket. He brought out an oyster-white pellet and held it before me as he remarked:

“O.K., Orfeo. Then how about a very rare champagne?”

Returning his reassuring smile with my own, I took the pellet and dropped it into my glass. Immediately the water bubbled, turning slowly into the clear, pale amber contained in his own glass. I lifted the glass a few inches from the table, looking into it with a feeling that this might be the drink I dared not hope for. The exhilarating aroma rising from it could not be mistaken. I had tasted and smelled the same liquid before. I put my lips to the glass and merely let the liquid touch my lips. That was enough.

“Adam—Adam, I can’t believe it! Please don’t fool me.” My sudden excitement had taken me from earth number one to earth number two. I could feel my whole being swirling into another domain from the mere recognition of the nectar. I could not control my spiral ascent, nor did I want to. Adam’s eyes had continued smiling into my own.

“Yes, Orfeo,” he assured me. “It is nectar. A mild, diluted form, but the real nectar, just the same.”

I wanted to take a few sips, but just then the waitress brought servings of soup and salad to me. Up to this moment, in spite of my sudden exhilaration, everything had appeared normal to me. But I knew that very soon everything would appear differently. So I tried to evaluate the objects about me as they truly were so I would not lose my sense of orientation when the environment took on an enhanced aspect.

Ah, yes. No wonder Adam had expected me. No wonder he seemed so alive and alert. To him all the surroundings were of a different pace and appearance. Before I opened the door, he had already come under the pleasant spell of the nectar.

What was more important, he was in the protective care of others somewhere, perhaps nearby, perhaps far off—unseen, and not of earth, nor of our solar system. Soon I, too, would be engulfed with him.

I thrilled from head to foot as I took the glass, lifted it to my lips, and swallowed twice from it. At that instant I entered, with Adam, into a more exalted state and everything around me took on a different semblance. No longer was I in Tiny’s cafe in Twentynine Palms. It had been transformed into a cozy retreat on some radiant star system. Though everything remained in its same position, added beauty and meaning were given to the things and people present there.

Among the patrons dining that evening were two marines from the nearby base. They were sitting at the front end of the counter. Sometimes they glanced our way as they talked and drank beer following their meal. There was a trace of disdain in their expressions, especially in the younger one’s. This was not directed at us, but rather was part of their general outlook, colored by a grueling military life. Yet now, since taking a little of the nectar, I saw them as two vibrant humans in the pageantry of life—not only my life, but all life. If they could see themselves in the same broad scope, their lives would not seem to them so desolate or remote.

The waitress brought the rest of my order. Adam nodded

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a pleasant thank you to her, then looked at the bubbling nectar in my glass. He glanced at the empty glass, that third glass at the place on the table where no other person was expected to sit. His puzzled look betrayed the fact that he was asking himself constantly why it was there. It did not disturb him, but merely seemed to puzzle him.

I decided to wait awhile before drinking any more of the beverage. I wanted to take in more of the situation before going under its complete influence. It was then that Adam spoke abruptly.

“In the final analysis, Orfeo, there is only one virtue; the love of pure learning.”

In the short pause that followed his words, the whole life cycle of a galaxy must have gone past Adam’s vision. Then he added:

“And all else is procrastination and dissipation in the eyes of the One who but awaits our evolutionary awakenings.”

I was, in spirit, suspended in a tenuous world by now. When he uttered these words I felt it was time to take some of the sparkling drink. The additional nectar made no difference in my feeling. The first two sips had done all that a river of the nectar could do.

Adam had spoken these words as if they were the end of a long conversation between us instead of the beginning. I turned toward the two young marines and noticed that one of them was now smiling. They must have heard Adam. We continued to eat, slowly. Food had never before tasted better to me, for the beverage made me feel splendid. Adam began to speak again, this time in subdued and well controlled tones.

“I am a medical doctor, Orfeo, from Seattle. On my next birthday I shall be 38. A little more than a month ago it became necessary to close out my practice.”

He paused as we took a few more bites of our food. In the same subdued voice he then resumed, maintaining a calm, pleasant poise.

“To me, the profession is steeped in the Hippocratic Oath, as it is with so many others. It was my hope to some day de-

vote my time and means to biological research. I gave much thought and some study to the fundamentals of biochemistry, and even to physics.

“Then this condition came upon me. For a time I was seized by the same fear, despair and sense of futility that, as a doctor, I had seen fall upon so many others. There were the same futile hopes patients had displayed so many times that perhaps some error might be present in the diagnosis. I could not believe it was now my turn, and I looked desperately here and there for some new discovery by science, an announcement that such conditions were now curable. After all, such news could come any day. I called the Mayo Clinic, the Johns-Hopkins Institute, Cornell and others. There was not even a flicker of hope in cases such as mine.

“Under the strain and despair, my capacity to serve as a good doctor ended. Rapidly I became resigned to the inevitable. Somehow, after one becomes resigned there is an inner rebirth, when whole lifetimes seem to be lived within short days.”

I took in every word in silence as we ate. It was hard for me to believe that this gentle, light-brown-haired man who looked so healthy and handsome was not long for this world. There was a quality that gave to his eyes the appearance of changing from light brown to light blue, and back to brown. His mind, alert and quick, was resilient and tolerant about all things. He seemed to be truly happy, not for the present time, but for a glory he could foresee for mankind. I had the feeling I was in the presence of the most civilized person on earth.

I did not say a word, confining myself to listening. Under expanded awareness, produced by the nectar, I needed neither to confirm his words nor submit any opinion, for our minds were in rapport. He continued.

“As soon as I became resigned to the inescapable, there was a sudden surge within me; a light, almost visible, flashed all about me, and I was no longer afraid. There was ethereal music at the same time, and I have not yet ceased to hear it.”

I drank a little of the nectar. Even this had no more effect

to add to that of the first two swallows. My eyes met Adam's, and there was an at-one-ment of mutual understanding, such that a few well-chosen words could tell the history of an entire solar system. I nodded for him to go on—I was eager to hear more of his story.

“Well, Orfeo,” he resumed, “I had only nine months to live, and as I closed my practice, I flailed out, trying to grasp as much life as could be packed into each day. It was a mixture of desperation and rapture within me—fear and courage and ecstasy, all alloyed into one tangled cocktail of livingness.”

He paused a moment, trying to recapture the acute power of that tornado of consciousness. But for the nectar we drank, neither he nor I could have remained so placid at the assault of his words. His aspect rendered him overwhelmingly handsome as he continued to tell his story.

“That is how I came to be interested in even such things as flying saucers, and all pertaining to the universe. Before, I had considered such things as silly and of interest only to simple and peculiar mentalities.

“I went to hear a talk on flying saucers, sponsored by a small group in Seattle. At this gathering I obtained your book, *The Secret Of The Saucers*, among other books and articles.

“In your book I found a kindred spirit. I felt it was trying to say something to humanity, pointing clearly to something which goes mainly unseen. Then, also having read your essay, I found the two wrapping up the whole concept from alpha to omega.

“Well, in a short time I had closed out my practice. I did not even know where I was going, nor to whom I could turn for that final assurance and courage. Suddenly it dawned on me that through all the years of my practice I had missed out on warm friendships such as most people enjoy, and there was not even a woman I could call my beloved. Within me there was one inclination, crying out silently, but ever so strongly. It was the call of the desert.

“In your own writings you had mentioned Twentynine Palms, and this place rang within my consciousness with a tone of

‘must’. So, here I am, Orfeo; or rather, here we are.” It was hard to discern any worry in Adam’s face as he smilingly ended this part of his story.

What was it that was seething up inside me? Why did I like this man more than any other man I had ever met, and yet, felt on guard against him more than against any other man? Was it the utter magnetism of his way and attractiveness? Did my own experience and learning and philosophy not hold up under his challenging presence? Could I not admit within me that he was utterly handsome, and that in his company I stood out as almost nothing? Yet I liked him, and I liked him to such a degree I would give my life in his behalf. He was noble, he was gentle, he was as sincere as a child, and he had an elastic understanding of nearly everything. What was more, I felt within me he had a story to tell that was far beyond even him.

Our glasses were empty, so I poured water into both of them. As if I expected it of him, he responded by taking a pellet from his pocket, breaking it in half, and dropping a piece into each glass. Again he looked at the third glass, trying hard to figure out why it was there, but try as he would, it was just an extra glass. If he could not figure it out, it would certainly be no use for me to try. Soon, it proved to be the most important glass on the table. He took a drink from his fresh glassful, and I followed suit. Then he resumed his story.

“While dining here in Twentynine Palms recently, I got into a conversation with two men who were going back to Los Angeles that same day. I learned that one of them owned a homestead cabin not far from here. Soon I had paid him fifty dollars for the rent of it for two weeks. He gave me one of three keys to it, and told me it was mine for even three weeks if I wanted it.

“Suddenly I felt free. I mean really free. A rustic home in the desert was mine. I had means and a medical man’s knowledge of man and woman, yet I had nothing in the past. Life is short at best, and my knowledge was only theory and protected license. People in general seemed to be living in a

knowledge beyond my knowledge and they took nothing seriously, not even life, not even death. At least, that is the way I felt for a couple of days, and then my entire attitude on everything changed. I started from the very beginning. Now I find myself asking me what, when, how and why? That last is the one beyond approach—Why?

“I entered the labyrinth of questions, and I have found that only the doomed have an answer, only the doomed have been able to fathom the depths. I want so much to leave the wisdom of the dying, which has before this evaporated into the ether. Instead, I find and truly believe I have learned the glorious promise for the living. After all, what can I depend upon to think of or to remember me except the living? Whatever we leave behind us is exactly what we inherit, no matter where or when. So, permit me to tell you everything, and then may you carry on the blazing torch.

At this point he stopped and looked at me inquisitively. Then, almost cautiously, he asked me, “Say—I wonder if that is not, after all, the wisdom of the dying?”

He had caught the meaning in my own smile, though I had not said a word. Quickly and anxiously he shot another question at me.

“How is it you seem to be so easy to tell all this to? Why is it you seem to understand all that I say?”

I paused a moment before answering. This man puzzled me now. My instinct had told me from the moment of our meeting that he knew the answers to all of life, had the wisdom of the cosmos, yet here he was, asking me to tell him something as if he did not already have the answer.

It was not until later I realized Adam had absorbed wisdom and understanding during his experiences, but had not as yet become conscious of his great knowledge. It was to return to his memory gradually, while he told me his story and we discussed the truths.

“Because, Adam,” I finally answered him, “I once felt doomed for long months. It eventually dawned on me that we are all doomed in this short and single existence. Don’t

you think that young marine who finally smiled, and is trying to overhear what we say, feels the same way? Most of us intuitively sense that same logic, regardless of how joyful or how tragic a situation may be. We always know that 'this, too, shall pass'. Only life and eternity do not pass away. A person is either intelligently aware of some infinite purpose, or a person is a mere animated volume of nothing. We are so concerned about eternity, which must be spent somewhere, either on earth or elsewhere. And does not eternity concern the final truth of all things, material or spiritual?"

Adam leaned forward toward me, his brow wrinkling. Something I had said had an impact upon him.

"What," he asked, "do you mean, that life does not pass away?"

I replied with an ease which surprised both him and me.

"Well, I mean that life never passes away. Because of the very prevalence of life you and I are here. It passes from individual bodies, true enough, and it may even vanish from an entire solar system. But there will still be life throughout the universe.

"Oblivion has only one condition, Adam. It is the same state that prevails with absolute zero, and in probing oblivion we find that it does not exist, just as absolute zero does not exist. By the same line of reasoning we find that life also has only one condition, and that is consciousness. In the physical world we find nothing but that which we call matter and motion. Nothing is at absolute rest.

"Absolute zero, Adam, does not exist. Oblivion can neither be felt nor described, and certainly not imagined. Therefore oblivion does not exist, any more than does absolute zero. But consciousness is felt by all creatures in the same frame of description. All life could be whittled down to one entity, or distributed to an infinite number, but there would be no addition or subtraction of consciousness."

Adam smiled. His lips tightened a little as he rolled his eyes upward, straining hard to get the picture clear in his mind.

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Before he should lose whatever grasp he had of what I had just said, I offered another approach.

“Let’s start from the beginning, Adam, as all things start. Let us suppose the Supreme Fatherhead willed to remove all creatures from the Universe. All right, it is now devoid of mortal life.

“Now, then—we suppose the Fatherhead willed just one being to appear, created in life. Every creature that ever existed before would feel he was that life in its consciousness.”

Adam’s smile became radiant. But he had one more question.

“O.K., Orfeo. Now, suppose the Supreme Fatherhead created another being? There would now be two. The one cannot feel the life of the other. They would be experiencing different feelings in the same frame of mind. How do you reconcile that with your concept?”

Of course, he already knew the answer, but he wanted to hear it in words. Truth and fact appear to all of us in the same clear perspective. By the gleam in his eyes I could feel that he and I were again “at one”. I replied at once.

“It would make no difference, Adam. There would be the consciousness that you and I are alive. And it would be as though all the universe were alive. Even now you and I think alike, and feel alike. The nectar caused our faculties to be brought to a certain level, so we feel exactly alike and think exactly alike. You could suddenly feel something that had not touched me, and I would feel exactly the same way as you if the something touched me also.

“I may touch a flame and feel the burning, while you feel nothing. But if the flame touched you in the same place you would feel what I feel. If I stub my toe my nose feels nothing of it. Yet both are part of the same life of me. A drop of ocean water is the very consciousness of the entire seven seas, though they be separated.

“In the deepest coma, in the deepest sleep of anaesthesia, there is yet some consciousness, and that is the reason we feel unconscious. But when we really pass away, and true oblivion would seem to engulf us, there is a sudden transpira-

tion, and in an instant we are alive again, somewhere, in a new life just emerging. Oblivion is just impossible, Adam.”

Adam forgot to keep his voice low. He burst out joyously.

“Now I am sure I am not afraid to die! There is eternity. None of us, not even the amoeba, truly dies. Every living thing is just a continuation of some unit of life, living all over again. The number of souls that can exist is infinite, and even varies. And therein is the beauty of fact. It makes the requirement of the propagation of an individual spirit unnecessary, and even unfounded. More than that, Orfeo; I believe no one truly accepts that a formless consciousness propagates our existence. Yet, no one can deny his present state of being. We occurred once, so why can't we occur again? It is that simple,” he concluded.

Remembering that we had not finished eating, we resumed our meal. Receiving another enlightening flash, Adam added, “And we inherit the very same world we leave. Whatever it is when we leave it, that is what we are born into again. It can be a stage set with the means for working out our atonement if we are aware, or it can remain a perplexing theater of some bizarre existence.”

I added only two words. “Precisely, Adam.”

The effect of the nectar did not wane, and we were both in a delightful mood. We looked again at the empty third glass. At least it had been empty. Now it was nearly half filled, and with the same amber bubbling liquid we were drinking! Adam and I exchanged looks, each thinking the other had poured something from his own glass. This idea we dispelled at once, for within my memory I recalled a similar phenomenon in the past, and something within Adam made him see the light also.

“Do you think what I think?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied, “I believe I do.”

“Then let me be the one to say it, Orfeo. Your book already states that you know of such things. I have a story to tell you, and if I can explain this phenomenon you will find it easier to accept what I relate.”

“Yes,” I agreed. “Tell me how you think the nectar got into that glass.”

With childlike glee, yet with deliberation for the sake of accuracy, he lowered his voice again and carefully gave me his explanation of what had occurred.

“We are directly observed by the Space Visitors. From their ship, wherever it is, they were able to confuse my words, so that without knowing it, I asked the waitress to bring three glasses instead of two. Yet I remember only that I asked for two.”

I nodded in comprehension. “Go ahead; I follow you.”

“They directed water vapor, unseen by anyone here, into the glass, and condensed it back to water. At the same time they directed an invisible, fine stream of the nectar powder to mix with the water. They cannot be too far away.”

“Well spoken, Adam,” I interjected, “but wait. It does not matter where they are. The powder may not have come from their own supply. Count the pellets in your pocket.”

“Good,” said Adam. “I should have four pellets, without doubt.”

His hand went into his coat pocket and came out with only three pellets. Try as he would to find the fourth, he could not. We said no more. We knew that the Space Visitors, by remote control, had sublimated one of his pellets into vapor and directed it into the glass.

Adam looked appraisingly at the pitcher of water. He put his finger on a spot on the outside and turned it around for me to see.

“The water was up to this dark spot, exactly. There is just about half a glass now missing.” He paused pensively a moment, and then spoke a little somberly.

“Yes, Orfeo, I have a story to tell you. I am certainly glad you have seen these things happen here. Now you should have no trouble believing my story.”

“Adam,” I assured him, “you do not need to convince me. One thing alone was enough. When I saw the pellets that

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produced the nectar, what other evidence did I need? No one of earth could have given them to you.”

The waitress came and asked us for our choice of dessert, and only then did we notice that we had finished our meal. We ate our dessert slowly and silently, for we were both in a galaxy of mental reflections. Still under the prolonged influence of the nectar, we were transcended from reality. Even the usual softness of Twentynine Palms would sound loud to our heightened senses, were we to be conscious of the reality around us.

Chapter 2

THE DANCE IN A GLASS

As we lingered over our dessert, Adam persisted in staring at the glass which seemed to have filled itself with the strange liquid. I could feel that his almost mesmerized interest in the glass was fraught with expectancy.

Were my ears deceiving me? Was that music I heard coming from the direction of the glass? It *must* be music. No sound could be so enchanting unless played by some skilled musician. To describe it in words would be disfiguring its mystic flow. The ear had to be highly receptive to hear it, yet every haunting note came through clearly. Indeed, the fluid in the glass was being used as a radio, converting waves beamed at it back into the original broadcast. It was so faint that only ears made sensitive by a substance such as Adam and I had drunk could hear it.

Adam's eyes became moist. He absently ate his dessert, his eyes remaining steadfastly fixed upon the glass. The world around him must have ceased to exist for him. I saw his expression change from its normally deep one to another that became fathomless, taking on the aesthetic demeanor of a mystic god. The music became even more beautiful, until it was impossible to discern whether the mood preceded the music or the music preceded the mood, so perfect was the timing. I was held spellbound, looking upon this face which had become more intensely handsome in Adam's preoccupation. I was, in fact, more intrigued by his countenance for a time than by the glass with its ethereal music.

Then slowly I too looked again at the glass and was held in amazement. A miniature young woman was dancing in the nectar! Her golden-blond beauty was as arresting as the miracle of her projection in the glass. Not only was some intelligence using the liquid as a radio, but it was also being used as a television unit.

Her arms moved in rhythmic motion with the graceful thrusts of her dancing body. Her feet were so light and responsive that the music itself seemed to emanate from them. The expression on her face was that of a maid who had found bliss and eternity among the angels. I had not seen her eyes, for they had not once shifted their gaze from Adam's eyes, all the while she danced. Why, I thought, would she not cast just a passing glance my way?

I heard a sigh come from Adam, from deep within him. As I forced my eyes from the glass to his face, I could see tears pouring down his cheeks. Except for these, his face seemed frozen into a handsome mask. He was not ashamed of his emotion. Indeed, he seemed oblivious to everything around him as he surrendered to the fullness of a bittersweet joy.

The girl danced on in the glass, the fervor of her movements mounting in proportion to Adam's swelling emotions, apparently drawing out all of his passions, all of his tenderness with her dancing. There must have been an experience between Adam and this beauty which she wanted him to remember, and she seemed to be accomplishing her purpose very well, even as a miniature in a glass. His feeling was so apparent even I, a bystander, could decipher it.

So perfect was the projected figure that it seemed to be a flesh-and-blood girl submerged in the nectar. Her graceful rhythm was matched by the soft folds of her white silken robe, which swirled and swung about her as though it had an awareness and a life all its own.

Without a word spoken or sung, the theme of the dance was self-revealing. In all its movements the very soul of universal womankind was being expressed. In the flowing glides and abrupt leaps all the caprices of woman spoke. The figure's hair danced about with a delight all its own, as though full freedom was in each strand, yet each was under perfect control of the sprightly head containing its roots. All things of her, about her and around her reflected the spirit of her dance. Even our table had taken on life from deep inside, although

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it remained motionless. The livingness of everything seemed to be torn asunder by the deep but quiet sobs coming intermittently from Adam.

I was aware that he saw and felt more than I could see or feel, and I did not look at him. The music, the dance and the sheer loveliness of the girl held me captivated.

In the climaxing moment of her dance, one thing remained apparent: The over-all effect was rejuvenating and wholesome. I became one in love with her, with everyone and everything, including motion itself.

While Adam was in the grip of anguished memory, I was experiencing an opposite reaction. I heard the music I most longed to hear, I watched a near-angel dancing to it, I saw a face and form which left nothing to be desired. Seeing her, I saw heaven all around.

Two wet spots on the table were the visible evidence of Adam's soul-purging. Unmindful of my presence, he wept on profusely, yet in a strange rapture.

The music became a crescendo, apparently heedless of the fact that others in the cafe might hear it. The girl's dancing accelerated to a living tornado. Then came a crash of cymbals and drums, a steady roll of musical thunder, and she whirled in my direction, looking for the first time squarely into my eyes as she fell gracefully to her knees.

Hers was a stern, accusing look. I would have wilted under the impact of it, except for her beauty. Anything would be a pleasure, coming from her. She was the personification of the etheric hosts, and she told me by her intense look and her graceful finale that she condemned me, not only on her own behalf, but by the bidding of all life in the cosmos. She was clearly conveying the message that I would yet come down a few notches in my arrogant self-esteem. (I mistakenly thought I had long ago shed false pride and arrogance, but evidently the higher civilizations did not think so.) Because she was so delicately beautiful, so gentle, so incapable of giving harm to body or spirit, I accepted her stern, silent pronouncement at once.

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Then she grew smaller and smaller, until she had disappeared entirely. The bubbles rose steadily in the glass as if nothing had happened. My eyes turned slowly to Adam's, even as his turned searchingly toward mine. Softly, almost wanly, he asked,

“Did you see her?”

I nodded slowly, and I saw he understood that his own feelings were not strange to me.

Soon the liquid in the glass lowered to the halfway point. It was being drained away as mysteriously as it had been brought in. The two young marines were looking toward our table very intently. We could not know whether they had heard the music or had pieced together any comprehensive story from what they must have overheard. We did not care, because they had become to us just what they were—two average, intelligent human beings. True enough, life was all one thing, no matter what the individual experience might be at the time.

We remained silent for a while. In the silence I gathered some insight into the person Adam, this Adam who sat before me. He had had an experience of the heart which seasoned his person and his soul, yet seemed to be gone from his hold forevermore. The greater part of him—his life, his emotions, his motives—all these must have gone with her passing out of his life, whoever she was. In such experiences, the one that hurts the most is usually the most recent. Yet, according to Adam's own story, this must have been his first love, and certainly it would be his last. Again, I reflected, one who has had a hundred love affairs gets no more impact from all of them combined than one who experiences only one. More than that, the one has more impact than the one hundred. Like life itself, love remains one thing. Any coloring of it remains for the disposition of the individuals. Any abuse of it comes from the inferior nature of the individuals. Any miscomprehension of it is due to the ignorance of the individuals.

Adam exuded in his every aspect the fact that he had once hit the zenith in love. He made me feel as if I had not yet come upon its first note. At the same time, it was clear that

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his interest in all fundamental things was of parallel intensity. His preoccupation with the memory of his recent love did not erase his interests in other things. The scope of his love did not detract from the scope of his capacity for all things. It seemed his horizon was equal in all directions, with no dead ends. This, then, was the type of man with whom I had the privilege of communication.

As these thoughts ran through my mind, Adam reached toward the third glass, which was now less than half filled with the nectar, and poured half the contents into my glass and half into his own. It was then we heard a summoning whistle come from the direction where the young marines were sitting at the counter. The younger one was hailing us, and when we looked toward him he waved as his companion and he arose to leave. The other one waved also, and we returned their “goodnights.” Suddenly, the four of us had become friends for no apparent reason. They could have been our sons insofar as age was concerned. Surely in the scope that Adam saw things, we were brothers.

“You see, Orfeo?” he asked. “Why could not the whole world be at one in friendship, in consideration, and in all things? People dream of such a day; religions are built entirely on that objective. There is a constant evolutionary trend toward that one end. The final truth always was—and shall be in the future—that all will be just One. All matter, all spirit, all motion, will be found to be ONE thing. The Great Will knows it, and patiently waits for us to come upon it through our own efforts. Only when we have overcome all the obstacles clouding our eyes and senses shall we see it, and in that moment we shall know Eternity.”

As he finished, we drank the remainder of our nectar.

The cafe was being readied to close for the night. Tiny came to our table. “You’re welcome to stay, gents. We are closing early tonight, but you can watch the place for me,” he smiled from his bulky, warm self. We took the hint, bid him goodnight, and stepped outside.

There we lingered for a while. Adam still had his wallet in

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his hand. Pulling out some bills, he said, "As long as you are with me, I'll pay all the way. I have more money than I can spend in seven months. Now, here's a hundred dollars for you. Take it and don't give me any apologies. That's all you're going to get, anyhow. I could easily give you thirty thousand and have a few thousand left over, but it is going to charity and research, Orfeo. I'm sure that is where it belongs, and you would do the same. I have the money and the experience, yet I cannot write it down. You are not as well off as I am, but when you are even worse off you will write about me."

It was hard to tell whether Adam coldly knew the future for me, or whether he was hard pressed for time and was doing things at a fast pace. He was sure of himself, and I had to admire his methods. But his abundant means accentuated my scant ones and I found myself imploring, "Adam, I don't want thirty thousand dollars. Just give me enough to write the material and get it published on my own. I will start Monday morning. I promise you."

"All right," he agreed, "you will get it. But only after I have told you everything. Then you can remind me of my offer, and ten thousand dollars will be yours."

I was ready now for anything. I felt rich, powerful, warm, and secure. Adam, too, appeared especially exuberant.

"Well, shall we go to your place, Orfeo?" Adam asked.

"Yes," I answered. "We have electric lights, water, gas, two radios, and books. Earl has gone to Seattle, but he would be more than happy for us to use his little domicile."

As I finished speaking, a rap sounded from inside the glass door of the cafe. It was Tiny waving a last goodnight to us. We bid him the same, and we looked into the cafe. We saw something odd was happening. All the tables had been cleared except ours, where the third glass still stood in its place. Now, before our eyes, it grew smaller and smaller, until it disappeared completely. Adam and I faced each other without speaking, and nodded in comprehension. Smiling, Adam spoke, half to me and half to himself.

"The waitress never brought that glass in the first place

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and no one but we two could see it. We were conditioned by the nectar to see a projected mirage. Come on, Orfeo, let's go. I'll meet you at your place. I have a real story to tell you."

"Do you know where my place is?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied. "Indian Corners, about one and one-half miles out Utah Trail in the direction of the Marine Base. It's that little house off the road, on the left side."

Within five minutes, we both arrived at the house and parked our cars side by side. I did not know then how far Adam was to project me into the life of other worlds.

I unlocked the door of the house and turned on the light. When I attempted to apologize for the smallness of the house, Adam said, "Never mind that. Let's turn on some music and feel in contact with the rest of the world." With that remark, he walked over and adjusted the radio's dials until he had found something he liked.

It was 10 o'clock in the evening. I was ready now to hear his story, but to give more hospitality to the atmosphere I put a pot of fresh coffee on the stove to brew.

"Orfeo," Adam began, "you will write all this down some day. But remember, you will not write it until you feel the time has come that the world can see the verity of it all. Also, I would rather you wrote it in the second person than quote me directly. However, I won't hold you to that. Write it the best way you can, write it without holding back anything. You know me only as Adam, and no other name will ever matter. As I live again and again I will feel more that this was part of me than if you mentioned my present identity, for we remember nothing in our separate lifetimes except the beginning of our creation. The rest will be remembered only on that final day of perfection. You know, Orfeo, we all feel as if we were Adam and Eve. What other names in history do any of us feel so close to? You were right, life is but one consciousness. All that counts is the beginning and the end, a man and a woman. In their perfect state that is all the life there is in the infinite universe."

“O. K., Adam, I promise it will be as you say. That is, if I ever do write it.”

We sat down at a small table in a corner. Adam crossed his legs and began to speak. He referred briefly to the two marines in the cafe. In deep reflection, he said that the problem of the younger fellow, whatever it might be, was to that one and to earth itself as ponderous as the problem of world destiny. He smiled as he told me that the lad would evaluate his problems differently after tonight.

“Yes,” I agreed. “Especially after your abandonment to the flood of tears which poured from you.”

“Was I crying, Orfeo? Funny, but I don’t remember it. I felt wonderful, in spite of what I saw.”

“Yes, Adam, you were crying. I would not have disturbed you for anything. Your feeling was beyond any help I could give, anyway. To a certain extent I even shared part of it, knowing neither why nor what. I somehow felt the emotions of an etheric romance, and I breathed in the aroma of its outer aura. No doubt those two marines felt it also, to some extent.”

I paused a second or so. Then I had to say these few words, which poured from me almost involuntarily.

“Adam, that young woman in the glass. She ended her dance by turning suddenly toward me, and fell to her knees, bowing. Yet her eyes remained fixed upon me, as if accusing me of something, as if saying to me, ‘You, too, shall go through trials. And no one but yourself shall feel concern.’ I believe there was profound meaning in her gesture, but I cannot imagine what it is. I would feel anxiety over it, but her beauty and gentleness had a softening effect. I keep seeing her, and to be truthful, I do not want to let her vision leave my mind.”

Adam rested his head in his hands, closed his eyes, and assured me. “She meant no harm, Orfeo. As for hate, she does not know the meaning of the word. You may not know her, but she knows you. You will come to know her through my story.”

“In her world she is one of the hindmost. But she is learning. At times, learning is like bliss, at other times, it is a strain. Learning of things subordinate to man comes easy, but learning about man, about life and the truths, comes hard. Even the initiate finds himself, or, as in her case, herself, always in the midst of a struggle. It is as if one were always on the second rung of the ladder of wisdom, never on the last. The more we know, the lonelier we become, until that last rung is reached. Only then do we lose the sensation of loneliness. What man on earth would not be painfully lonely if he paused long enough to do some truly profound thinking? But in the glory of the final ascension, thinking becomes life itself, and then loneliness becomes an erased fantasy.”

(As I listened to him I realized it was going to be very difficult to relate his story in the second person, as he suggested. In the months that followed I had to decide to tell it as it could be told, to adhere to the facts, and swing from first person to second person when and however required. After all, he did say to disregard anything he advised, if necessary.)

At intervals we could hear the traffic passing by about thirty yards away. The aroma of the brewing coffee was pleasant. Now and then an airplane droned past, going eastward or westward. There was nothing outwardly different about this night, but Adam and I felt different. In a sense, we were different. We were still enhanced by the effect of the nectar.

Then Adam began his long story. The telling of it took up most of three nights.

* * * *

“It may sound strange, Orfeo, but after the first shock of realization of my incurable condition leveled off to a resignation and acceptance of it, all things seemed to change in my perspective. It was as though my whole being did a flip-over, like pulling the cord of a Venetian blind. What had been to me the big things of life became insignificant, and

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the little things took on great significance. I had been seeing life and the world in a distorted way, as a trained seal might see it. But the reality of my condition, and the sudden and urgent awakening within me, brought everything into proper scope. There was now more meaning to everything, even to a spider's web. There was less meaning to the artifices of man-made things; they became mere fads, coming and going.

"In the blindness of the masses, I began to perceive a vaporous thread of essence, a small essence distilled from the gigantic world of turbulence. This essence became the paramount thing in my new-found existence. This thread, I sensed, is interwoven in all that goes on about us. It is what you might call the mass record etched on the ether. At any rate, it is all that matters on this planet and on all worlds, in the ultimate sense. It is all the basic truths distilled by man himself from his own mass follies. On each side of this thread lies a vast wasteland of regrets, willful mistakes, obstinate and vain blindness.

"Almost everything you can perceive going on in earth's affairs at this moment, Orfeo, shall be added to the bulk of that vast wasteland. Only truth is filtered out, perhaps slowly and painfully, but filtered out, nevertheless, to be added to the thread of essence, becoming finally a vast sea of substance which will engulf and purify all the wasteland around it. That will be the day of Oneness, of Redemption, and only then can the vision of perfection and eternity become a reality.

"I can now see more of this essence in the natural smile of a child than in the words of all the sages of history. No, we do not die. We simply are born, wilt, and come back to inherit the jungle of hypocrisy we leave.

"Being a doctor, I tended to regard health as an unnatural state, while sickness was the normal. My patients were of utmost importance, and other people were meaningless entities who would eventually become ill, and thereby gain true stature as human beings. In the perverted values of man at this uncivilized stage on earth, there may be some truth in this view. But I know now that health is the virtue, and sickness the

sin. Learning is life, and ignorance is death. The only oblivion that can be felt is ignorance. The only pain is sickness, be it of the body or of the soul. The only rapture is perfect health, be it also of the body or of the soul.

“Why, then, Orfeo, why, I humbly ask in my ignorance, did I receive the first flicker of a spiritual dawn when I became afflicted and doomed?”

His words, his fervent sincerity, had tapped a small reservoir of wisdom within me which I had not known existed. I got up from the table, turned off the stove and brought cups, spoons and sugar to the table for our coffee. I answered him while doing this.

“Because, Adam, the real value of yourself is that thread of essence within you, like the thread that weaves through all society. The bulk of you, in personality and aspect, was conditioned by society. You accepted things as those around you molded them. You had to make a success of yourself in that society, so you conformed. You forgot your childhood intuitions and instincts, almost giving your very soul to others around you. You even insulated yourself against the call of love from your other half, which can be filled only by a woman. You were capable, so success came easily to you. You are handsome, and except for your present illness, you are very healthy by earth standards in our present stage of civilization. You felt that others might be sick and infirm, but you, never; you felt like one privileged.

“It was as though God had set a special stage to serve you in your string of successes, the end object of which you could neither see nor care about. You felt that God would give you a heaven after you had become totally successful. But you could not see that God does not expend one creature for the mere gratification of another. It is all a brew in the caldron of progress, Adam. You today, me tomorrow. Ignorance of the truth makes it so. We were put here from the beginning in a primitive state of mere survival, and all the elements and substances of attaining to perfection were provided us at the same time. From that nearly impossible condition, and purely

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by our own efforts through learning and intuition, we must attain to perfection. It is either that or its utter opposite, the destruction that ultimate arrogance brings. Now, let's drink some of this nice, fresh coffee."

We sipped a little coffee, pausing a few moments, then I finished my reply to his question.

"You see, Adam, what happened to you happens to a good many. It happened to me, and that is why I understand your plight. The sudden impact of realizing what you had made you shed the blanket of barnacles from the real you. The one important thing now was the fact that there was to be an end to you. Spiritually you came face to face with a great truth. You wondered, how could it all end? After all, you were created. And that is your big perplexity—why must a creation end? Your saving grace, Adam, is the beauty of the real you which you now know. That does not die. It will be added to the weaving threads until they fill all space as far as the eye can see. That is life. That is what never dies. Beauty always is. And you are beautiful, Adam, if you will pardon my inept words. You are beautiful physically and spiritually.

"You are more successful now than ever. Knowing you have not long to remain in your present being, you find a rapture, a rapture that comes from the grand horizon your eyes and your soul see. You do not see death, you see life. You do not see hellions, you see angels. You hear their song swell into all space accompanied by the music of the ether, the flow of the spheres. Yes, I know, your last few days will know agony once more. But your eyes will never show what your physical form feels, for they will show only what your soul knows. So many men and women and children have passed over with that same light in their fading eyes.

"Adam, listen to me. It is not only you who must go. Thousands will have passed on before your seven months are up, and soon after, the rest of us. Yet there will be more people on earth than ever before. You and I will be one of them. We must inherit everything unto the Great Day; remember?"

Before I had finished, Adam held his head between his

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clenched hands and was swaying slightly from side to side as tears squeezed forcefully through his tightly closed eyelids. They were not tears of sadness, but tears of insuperable joy. I could not help but feel that one of the mild sins of this man was that he had never given himself to the joy of a woman's love. I wondered for a moment what the meeting of Adam and a woman his equal would be like.

The radio changed to rock and roll music. Adam jumped up and changed it immediately.

"It's a crime," he said, "to rape the beauty of the night with such demonic noise."

He managed to find a faint station with tolerable music, and then came back to the table. I could feel that his emotional control was being strained, perhaps in anticipation of something he was to tell me in the story. It was only momentary, for he soon became his calm self again and resumed his story.

"I closed out my practice. Books, records, and things that I valued I packed away. The balance I gave to a fellow physician who was younger, and of whom I was fond. I went to see a few of my clients, more to ease the hurt and loneliness that was soon to come over me than to take care of them. I could not have treated them anyhow, as they were all under the care of other physicians now. I never saw my office after it was cleared out. I knew it would be more than I could stand.

"But that is gone into the past. As I said to you this evening, I searched and groped for straws to cling to, for some hope, for some finding of science that might cure my affliction. I found myself reaching through the limits of my familiar medical world into other fields of thought—I was putting myself in touch with a larger universe, which, though it had always beckoned to me, I had felt I did not have the time to explore. All my pursuits and interests had been confined to my own profession.

"In the last few weeks, I have found what so few find. Believe me, my cup does run over."

I interrupted him for a moment.

"Hold it, Adam, just for a moment. I told you that you

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had that fine thread of essence in you, all the time. No matter what your course in life, you were never really coarse or ugly within. You were never insensitive to the sea of higher verities around you. You merely chose to be oblivious to it in an objective degree. Now suddenly you have jumped, or fallen, into it. That's all. Go ahead with your story."

"Orfeo," he began again, "you seem to paint me as pure white. Please know that there are many spots on and around me. But enough of that.

"After I rented the cabin where I am now staying, the entire desert valley around me seemed to become a place of mellow things. There was such a honey-like character about everything that it seemed like the halfway place between our earth and Paradise. Perhaps the people here are like people anywhere else, but you feel that nothing could mar the mystic promise that hovers over this valley perpetually. Even the most blase and indifferent person seems to feel a soft spell of some kind here. I cannot name it. You don't know of anyone who has found a name for such a spell. You feel momentarily the very square yard of sandy ground under your feet can carry you away to the stars—even into the sun."

At the last words he paused, gazed deeply into space and, his voice dropping to a whisper as though reliving a divine moment, he repeated slowly, deliberately, "Yes, indeed. Into the sun . . . and out again."

I poured a little more coffee into our cups, letting him keep to himself whatever he saw or felt. Then, hoping to draw him out more, I interrupted him again.

"Earl and you are likeable fellows, Adam. Odd that you are both from Seattle. You seem to know about him too. You knew where he was staying, for you came here tonight by your own guidance."

Adam looked at me in surprise. He groped mentally for an answer to my question.

"That is strange," he said. "I seem to have known him all the time. Yet I have never seen him. I don't know how or when the fact that this was his place occurred to me."

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He leaned over his cup as he put his fingers to his forehead, narrowed his eyes, and probed deeply into the vault of memory. Then he cautiously suggested, “Maybe . . . and only maybe . . . I might have been given the facts about him and you during the closing part of my recent experiences. But I can’t remember clearly.”

“Fine! Good!” I exclaimed. “I myself think that is how you got it. It strikes an identical note in my own such experiences, where the memory closed on the events of recent things, to re-open on them months later. Somehow, in some way, I am more associated with your experiences than I had thought before now. Go ahead, Adam, tell your story.”

My fervor gave him the spark. Too much spark. He was transfixed on an image in his mind. Though he could not remember how he knew of Earl, he was remembering something that was dear, yet gone. I left the radio on, as he seemed to enjoy the soft music.

“Adam,” I said softly, “what is it that makes you feel so? Could it be she who danced in the glass?”

He smiled gently, took one deep sighing breath, and finally began his story. The stars must have twinkled a little brighter that moment when he started, and as his words were etched in eternal record on the sentient cosmos.

“This cabin where I am staying has no electricity, no water, and no gas. There are several trees scattered here and there. One of them is what I call a desert willow.

“On my third night, I was standing near one of these willows. The very firmament seemed strangely different. I felt as though it were centering its complete attention upon me. There was not a breeze, and the air was very pleasant. The ground seemed to have become conscious, pulsating its harmonic communion with every part of Creation unto infinity. I could hear the crickets and the howl of coyotes, sharply blazoned in this design. Honestly, I could have spoken with them all if they had been close by. That was how I felt.”

We sipped our coffee. I was “all ears.” This was the story

I wanted to hear, especially from one such as Adam. He continued.

“I was sweeping into me all the cosmos, or else it was enfolding me. I don’t know what happens in such awakenings. Perhaps it is both; perhaps it is Creation caressing itself.

“Then there was music. Had my mind created a music to go with all this? Was I capable of creating such an ensemble? Yes, I was sure that only my ears could be hearing it, that it surely must exist only in my imagination.

“Ah, what a relief! At last something was moving. Besides myself, it was the only thing that I could see or feel moving. A star had decided to roam the heavens. It must be a wayward star, I thought at first. Of course I should have known better, but in such instances as this, logic is absent momentarily. Soon, this star was describing a complete circle. When the circle was completed, the light went out, but I kept on looking for it.

“It appeared again at the point where it had just gone out. This time it was much larger. It then described a smaller circle, changing from its previous amber to a yellowish green. The light grew steadily larger. This time, without stopping or disappearing, it continued to circle, getting bigger all the while, and the circle becoming smaller. It was spiraling down, obviously, and this thought startled me for the first time since I had started to watch its maneuvers.

“This was no star. It was no meteor. The circles became very small, while the object was growing larger. Its light pulsated from green to orange-yellow, getting faint, and flickering as though its glow was dying out. I could still hear the faint music.

“Suddenly I realized the music was not imagination, nor was it a creation of my own. And the object! It was a space ship of some sort spiraling down close to earth.

“At that instant the light went out completely. Had I at last seen one of those so-called flying saucers? Were there really such things, I asked myself?”

He paused to sip a little coffee. How wonderful, I thought,

THE DANCE IN A GLASS

that the nectar still had the strength to keep us awake and alert. Adam resumed his story.

“I was thrilled, Orfeo, to put it mildly. There was no doubt in my mind that I had seen a real space ship. I wanted to shout out to the world about it, but only the creatures of the desert would have heard me. Tonight there must be angels all around, I thought, and I could shout it to them, but they knew it better than I. I could not remain suspended like this. Perhaps I should rush back to town, and ask if anyone else saw it.

“Before I could do anything, the music increased in volume. This could not last. In all my rapture there seemed to be a depthless emptiness, almost unendurable. I was in some way being swept emotionally into this emptiness. Then a voice filled it completely, and the emptiness vanished. It was a feminine voice, sweet, musical. It strummed my taut nerves gently back to quiet and comfort.

“The reason,” he interrupted himself, “I have asked you to call me Adam, Orfeo, is because that is what she herself called me.”

He looked at me a little accusingly, and asked, “Orfeo . . . are you believing me? You have a little grin.”

“Well, is it a ‘must’ that I believe you? If I said I did not believe you, would you stop telling me the story?” I asked him.

“No. No, I would go on just the same, so long as you listened.”

“All right, then, Adam. Now I should like to ask you: As far as you know, is it all just as you experienced it? You are making none of it up?”

“As heaven is my witness, it is all true. If anything, I may need to leave out some things which are of little consequence,” he said, with conviction.

“Then what difference does it make, Adam, who believes you or who does not? Naturally, I myself believe you. Do you forget? You are talking to a veteran, not a recruit.”

“That’s right, Orfeo. I forgot for a moment,” he smiled, and eagerly went back to his story.

SON OF THE SUN

“The voice said, ‘Adam, may I speak with you?’

“I did not answer by word, but in amazement just nodded my consent. Almost at the same time, the air a few yards in front of me shimmered into a congealing form. It became a dome-shaped craft, sitting there on the sand. A lovely woman stood near it, facing me. Her smile was enough to tell me that it was this ship I had seen gracefully spiraling to earth. She simply stood there by the ship of ethereal beauty, and she beside it, of living beauty.

“I tell you now, Orfeo, before you ask me. She was not Lyra, of whom you wrote in your book. And it was not the one who danced in the glass this evening.

“The lady asked me, simply and directly, ‘Having nothing to lose and nothing to gain, Adam, would you like a trip into the new estate which to you, until now, has existed only as a dream, or hope?’”

“Even now I did not speak. I could only nod my consent. She thereupon walked straight up to me. She extended her hand toward the softly glistening ship, turned about and we walked together toward it. A sliding door silently provided an opening. What I could see of the inside of the craft glistened more intensely than the exterior. It was indeed identical to the one you described in the little paper containing your story. I could not help but recall your description as I entered. And then we sat. . .”

“Hold it at minute, Adam . . . hold it!” I exclaimed. “I knew something was out of place. The light struck me suddenly when you mentioned the little paper that carried my story. I can understand that. But several times this evening you mentioned my book. It isn’t even published yet. How did you know about the book?”

“I’m sorry, Orfeo, I meant your newspaper story, I guess.”

“Oh, no, Adam. You said you purchased the book at a lecture, and you even know its title, ‘The Secret of the Saucers.’ Also, you know of a few things that are only in its manuscript, nowhere else. Has Earl told you about it?— Still, even he would not know as much of it as you have told me.”

“I don’t remember, really,” he pleaded. “Perhaps it was shown to me in my recent experiences, just as I knew you would meet me tonight, and as I knew about Earl and his house here,” he stated very sincerely.

“Yes, Adam,” I assured him. “That is just it. I am of the opinion that you were shown, or had read to you, a copy of the manuscript by the visitors from space, themselves,”

“That must be the answer,” countered Adam. “Another example is the fact that I recognized you as you walked in the door at the cafe. I even called you by name, so sure was I that it was you, yet I can’t recall how I had come to know you. Let’s let it go at that for the time being; it may all come out later on. As in your own experiences, at the moment I seem to remember clearly only the things I have yet to say, and as I tell them they fall back, lost to me for the time being. So, let me continue to tell my story.

“As I was saying, we sat down on the two seats that were firmly fastened to the floor. She took the seat on the left and I the one on the right. She was not a phantom, but very real, for we were sitting close enough that our arms touched. The door slid closed as we sat down, and I could no longer discern the door area from the rest of the hull.

“The seats were soft, and were of the same tone as the ship itself. The floor was so identical to the hull it was hard to distinguish it as a floor except that it was flat and under foot. The ship became completely opaque, so we could see nothing through it. The glittering colors of its crystal-plastic material faded to more subdued tones, and it became a little darker.

“We sat back comfortably, and soon I could feel a slight push of the seat against my back, legs, and head. We were in motion. Then the interior darkened, and all the diamondlike glitter disappeared. But soon it lighted up again. Yes, Orfeo, I recall having read the same in your account, but you did not know why the ship had darkened, then became radiant again. This I was anxious to know. I thought that it might be the effect of the ionosphere as we traversed it. I

asked her if it was the ionosphere we had just passed through. She answered me readily, and with ease.

“Yes, Adam, it was. Because you have asked and already surmised it, we can tell you. The molecules of our craft were tightened a little so that the ionized layer around earth would not cause a glare inside. We have no need to do this for our safety, but we do it as a hint to you that we are going through what you think is necessary. The knowledge of it is already in your mind, or we would not show you. We cannot give you knowledge, but we can confirm what you already know. Our ship can adjust itself to conditions around it to quite some degree, especially to electrical and magnetic conditions. But you already had a good concept of this fact in your own understanding.

“Every living entity on earth must rise to learning and knowledge through its own initiative. It is pre-ordained. What other purpose, Adam, could there be to existence? It is self-apparent, is it not? Even today your earth is a primitive jungle, in spite of all its progress. Most of its natives feel it is the final zenith of attainment. It is still a jungle of wild primitive-ness. Yet we cannot interfere, because it is ordained by the Heart of Creation that all life attain to perfection by evolutionary processes. You see, Adam, all the progress that your earth has made has been made by its ever-present resources, and by its own people. The glory to come is inherent within its bosom even now. Its people have not fully unfolded, and the materials of earth lie waiting to be known by its inhabitants.’

“Whether she was an angel or woman I could not know at the time, Orfeo, but she was real, and I asked her name. She said merely to call her ‘Vega,’ for it would be easier for me to comprehend than the knowledge of her true name. I asked her to continue speaking. She did so, in a casual manner.

“Your world, Adam, is still motivated by personal successes, so short is the vision of the masses. Yet what are personal successes? All the old ones lie quietly in graves. The present ones are nothing but conflicts and strain, and soon

they, too, will pass forever from the consciousness of those who pursued such ends. Is it not all in vain? Is it not infantile vision? What good is all that mass of humanity? Since the dawn of earth's creation it has not yet served itself. Its greatest violence against itself lies yet in the future. Of what use has it been to any other world? It does not even believe in the existence of other worlds, except in primitive derision. Oh, a few have the vision and the awareness, true. But a few on earth have always had the high and true vision. These ever-present few who, by the dynamic of the love of pure learning, keep the thread of essence alive, justify the hope that earth will come one day into the light of perfection.

“What does earth have today, Adam, except the little fundamental learning that has been given to its history by these few? Yes, you may, say, human life is valuable, but without thinking and learning, human life becomes less valuable than that of a daisy. All humans would perish if left to survive as animals do, by nature and instinct. Without spirit and knowledge, a human being becomes ferocious even beyond the natural limits of animals. A human can devolve to as infinite a savagery as he can evolve to an infinite sphere of splendid beauty.

“That is the one and only purpose, all that is willed to your planet, earth: to one day stand at the decisive point, when it will devolve back to destruction, or evolve unto heaven. It will not be a time of gentle decision, Adam, for that decision must be made in the fire of Armageddon.

“Our own world had to make that same decision ages ago. We entered our new estate from the ashes of our struggle. We have been aspiring ever since to a heaven-like glory. Evil in our world does not exist; only the love of pure learning. Anything short of the zest for learning, any ignorance due to apathy, and any consequences of these shortcomings are in our world what you would call evil in yours.

“Do you not agree, Adam, that evil is willful ignorance?”

“With that she ended her introduction of me to herself and

to her world. I nodded, looking into her eyes with understanding.

“ ‘Yes, I do, Vega. You know I have always felt so, if only vaguely, or you would not have told me what you did. I know that I shall learn much more on your home ground. But for the moment, may I ask you why there are no implements in this ship? Why is it so bare? Am I dreaming, or is this all real?’

“ ‘It is not bare, Adam,’ she assured me, ‘except for the absence of what you call implements and controls. This is one of our crafts which is controlled by a monitor ship, as a guided missile would be in your world. Our monitor is not far off. They see all our movements, hear all our words, and know precisely what to do and when to do it. You have but to wish to be back on earth, and they would respond so well you would feel as though you had originated the move.’

“ ‘Her face became a smile of rapture, and her eyes became gently fixed in distant reflection. Then she added, You see, Adam, our beloved superiors do not make mistakes of which you or I would be aware. They consider your safety and mine above their own welfare.’

“ ‘Vega,’ I spoke in surprise. ‘What do you mean by your beloved superiors? To me you are the very zenith of human ascension. I can’t even comprehend one more lovely, more elegant, or more perfect. I am so overwhelmed that I am giving little thought to this ship or to the trip. It is hard to take an interest in where we are going. For the first time in my life I am sure I am in love, if you will pardon my confession. Yet you speak of your superiors. Are there such?’

“ ‘We will let that question answer itself later, Adam,’ she said. You have other things to see and curiosities to satisfy, which is enough for the present.

“ ‘Do you feel the gentle push of the ship upon your body? That is because we are still gaining speed, or accelerating. Would you believe we are traveling at two million miles per hour at this moment?’ she asked.

“I was startled, but did not reply. I let my look tell her of my amazement, as she continued.

‘Yes, Adam, we are now going even faster. Soon we will be doing ten million miles per hour. But our sensation of the acceleration is unnoticeable. As you know, every atom of the ship and of our bodies is being vectored and impelled at the same moment as the ship, so we are not affected by the laws of momentum or inertia.’ Vega spoke with such effortlessness it seemed as simple as reciting nursery rhymes to a sleepy child, and not like a relating of physical facts as yet remote from the sciences of earth. Then she asked me to tell it to her in my own words, as a teacher would ask a child to do.

‘Vega,’ I complied, ‘this force field which impels our craft is magnetic and gravitational. It is focused upon us by the monitor, or mother ship, which is not far away. This field includes every atom and fraction of atom of whatever lies in the focus of the field, moving each one of these together as a body. I venture to say that we could not even feel the slight push against our bodies by the seats if it were not being done merely for my senses, and for a demonstration. They could easily nullify that effect.’

“No sooner had I said this than the effect ceased. We felt free of pressure altogether, like sitting in an easy chair at home. Vega and I exchanged smiles in confirmation of their response to my words. Then she continued her conversation.

“‘Adam, at this very moment we have attained the velocity of eight million miles per hour. If you will give your seat a twist it will turn until you release the force. Turn it around to the opposite direction, where a view is awaiting you.’

“I complied with her suggestion. At the same time, she turned her seat toward the back also. The entire rear hull of the craft became transparent, as clear as glass. But all was darkness. She put her hand to my eyes so I could not see, and asked me to open my mouth. She put a capsule in my mouth and asked me to swallow it. I did so without a qualm.

“It must have worked fast, for my body relaxed at once and I could feel my whole physical being come to a sensation

of complete exuberance. She saw my face move into a smile, and she removed her hand from my eyes.

“‘You can better endure the sight with that capsule,’ she said. ‘Also, your conscious and subconscious will receive and record it in more detail, and with deeper appreciation.’”

“Even so, Orfeo, I could not suppress a sigh at the sight. Before my eyes was the earth in all its daylight glory, and I could discern the Eastern Hemisphere. It was surrounded by the stars beyond like jewels around the head of a majestic being. Its atmosphere made an auroral halo of rainbow colors around it. Our ship was going away from it at such velocity the earth seemed to fall back, diminishing in size, and the colors gradually were merging into the yellow band.

“The stars remained as if fixed, and they seemed to be absorbing our earth into their own environs. The earth light dazzled a bit, flared, and then flashed. We had reached a point where some of the earth’s reflective mass had resolved the sunlight to a focus, like a reflecting telescope. Then, it became just a huge star, brighter than all the others, larger, and falling back rapidly.

“Suddenly, from the right side, another large orb came in view. Our field was so broad now we were seeing the moon, also. Like the earth, it, too, seemed to recede rapidly.

“I reached out and took Vega’s hand and held it in my own. I could hardly speak, so overwhelming was my emotion. But I managed a few words.

“‘Vega, I can see why they sent you to bring me to them. Never could I have been equal to it, either alone or with someone I could not love, as I do you. This experience demands a sharing, a spiritual merging, and the utmost of moral courage. Oh, Vega, how can I thank you? How can I thank you?’”

“Her hand squeezed mine a little in sympathy and understanding, but her eyes were still gazing at the receding earth and moon with an expression such as a great artist would give to a goddess he was painting.

“The hull was now becoming translucent, now more opaque,

glimmering as before. Vega released my hand and motioned for me to turn around to the front again—if there was such a thing as a front or back to this bubble-like craft. After we faced forward, Vega spoke.

“We are now traveling ten million miles per hour, Adam, yet you feel not the slightest sense of motion. From now on we start to decelerate. In five hours more we shall arrive at our destination.’

“I had a thousand questions to ask her, and began at once.

“Vega, tell me: Are the women of earth like this—I mean, like you?’

“Her face assumed a pleased expression. I could tell she liked the question.

“Well, Adam, I cannot answer that for you. You missed finding out firsthand in your lifetime, but tell me—did any of them attract you as I do?’

“Yes,’ I replied. ‘They did, but there were so many of them, I thought I could wait before becoming attached. The one who could attract me as you do was never a living person, but always just in my mind, and just around the corner.’

“Then,’ she said, ‘have you not met her in me?’

“Indeed, Vega. I could be with you forever.’

“But, Adam, nearly every young man has said things like that to girls, and has felt as you do toward me. Most of them have had their hearts shaken a bit by a few before the right one came along and really gave them a complete quake,’ she said coyly.

“I noticed that for the first time she did not look at me during this line of conversation. But she enjoyed it. Was I just one of those ‘young men’ and she my first amour? She changed the subject somewhat.

“Adam, don’t you have any man’s questions?’ She still did not look at me. I had received my first blow. Gentle, perhaps, but a blow.

“Yes; Vega,’ I countered, thinking I would tax her feminine mind. ‘Can your ships move with the speed of light?’

“We will discuss that later. Meantime, you must take a

nap for half an hour, so the nectar I gave you will have time to be absorbed fully, and it will give you equilibrium.’

“I fell back in my chair obediently, thinking I had given her the Waterloo question—a man’s question. I still felt prankish, and even as I closed my eyes I thought I would give her the coup-de-grace in the form of another ‘man’s’ question.

“‘How is it, Vega, that we have not seen the sun yet? Not even its outline through the hull of the ship? Is that too fearsome a sight to look upon?’

“She burst out giggling. Then she managed to say, between the most beautiful spasms of laughter I had ever heard, ‘That is a real man’s question, Adam! Even that will be answered for you ... by a woman,’ she replied, still shaking in laughter.

“I had opened my eyes, seeing all her utter beauty in her amusement. I laughed in unison with her. Still, there was an enigma in her words, and I felt a new destiny awaiting me. Suddenly, I felt comfortably and pleasantly drowsy. I closed my eyes, but before I dozed I heard her say: ‘Don’t forget to ask me about that speed of light problem when you wake up, Adam.’ Then I fell asleep.”

* * * *

Adam paused a while in his story. We slowly became aware again that we were on earth, in Twentynine Palms, and in this little house. We felt wonderful, still under the balm of the nectar we had drunk a few hours ago. I made fresh coffee and warmed up some buns, and found an all-night radio station playing good music. Soon we would drift off once more, and live again Adam’s experiences. He did not appear visibly moved by the memory of them. Indeed, he was forgetting them as fast as he related them, remembering only the part yet untold. I did not call this phenomenon to his attention, fearing I would disturb the flow of his story.

Chapter 3

THE SPEED OF LIGHT

We ate the warmed buns and drank hot coffee. I did not fill the cups, for we did not particularly need a stimulant. Our condition was holding up wonderfully. We indulged in some small talk for a few minutes, and then I asked Adam if he would continue his story. At this point I could see the reason for his having asked me at the outset to narrate his story in the second person when I wrote it, for it was becoming clear that his reactions and experiences could not be adequately told in the first person.

As he continued to unfold his story, I felt I was an eye witness to the events, hence I am following Adam's original suggestion for the rest of the story, and will relate it in the second person.

* * * *

Adam awoke from his half hour nap on the ship feeling alert, yet calm. He looked into the eyes of lovely Vega and reminded her of his previous question.

"Well, Vega, I ask you, can your ships travel at the speed of light?"

"No," she replied readily. "Nothing we know of can attain the speed of light in physical form. There is talk in our society that our superiors are looking into that possibility. There is not the slightest success as yet in their experiments. The only factors in which we have ascertained and measured the speed of light are magnetic waves, gravitational waves and light itself.

"However," she went on, "we are experimenting with the idea of propelling particles to velocities beyond the speed of light. The process is to focus a radar-like beam out into space, and then shoot particles into the waves of this beam and in the same direction as that of the beam. These particles may

then attain speeds higher than the speed of the beam in which they lie. It can best be imagined by thinking of a surfboard riding the waves, or a canoe going with the stream. If either of these also used propelling force, they would both go faster —the one faster than the waves, the other faster than the stream—even twice as fast. But the ether has properties of its own, and thus far we see it yielding to none of our theories.

“The barrier of the speed of light is caused by the tension of the ether. It cannot be broken through as easily as the sound barrier in air.

“You see, Adam, the sound barrier in air is easily broken through, and speeds beyond that proceed smoothly. However, the sound barrier in water is more difficult to break through, and travel in that water faster than sound travels in it would be considerably difficult. In the case of the ether, this difficulty, which is the barrier of the speed of light, is apparently unsolvable. Nevertheless, our superiors keep at the investigation as if it were to be successful tomorrow morning. The imagination can see twice the speed of light, nay, thrice, and even a thousand times. But we have not yet attained speed equal to that of light in our material progress.” She became silent.

Adam could easily cope with the facts she had just outlined, for he had previously formulated these concepts on earth. Vega had become in his eyes so charming, so deep, so soul-capturing, that he felt he was being drawn into her very bloodstream. He felt that their souls were so intermeshed that one was now but a continuation of the other. Vega stood out like a warm center amid the splendor and beauty of the ship’s interior. What he did not know was that she was the first phase of his accelerated education, sponsored by a higher civilization. What he had missed of the mating bliss of soul and mind in his thirty-eight years, these supreme someones from an ascended world were now pressing into his whole being like a transfusion of life itself.

He did not yet understand such things as why she laughed so hilariously when he had asked why they could not see the

sun, nor did he know that she was only the first of three women who were to put him through the intensified exercise of catching up on the void in his life to date in the love and romance department. He did not know that Vega was wholesome, yes, but placid compared to the two women he must encounter before graduating to the capacity for love in its deeper meaning, a love that could not be confined within the limits of the Milky Way.

Another thing Adam was not yet aware of, but which he awakened to later in his experiences, was that one does not learn the inner secrets of the universe without love accompanying the lesson—indeed, it may even precede it.

Basically good men learn through love. Basically evil men must learn through the hard laws of Nature. Adam had not yet learned that a mysterious force we call destiny had long ago, from the birth of time itself, sown a thread of preordainment, invisible to the physical eye but visible and sensible to the intuition of basically good beings. He did not at the moment know that the love of man for woman could attain the divine heights of man's love for God, that the one was merely one half loving the other half. He was not yet fully aware that every wave which roars onto the beach slips back only into its own sea. Every splash in a pool falls back into the pool . . . crashingly or lovingly.

At this moment, Adam was not conscious of the fact that all things come from themselves, and merge back into themselves in pulsating motions, like the beating of the heart, the flowing of the blood, the generation and regeneration of all the stars. To Vega these were elementary things, long ago resolved. To Adam they were things and thoughts yet to be learned.

Thus, two beings road on in a space ship at ten million miles per hour, worlds apart in evolution's scale, but close together in Creation's intent. One of them, Vega, who was from a world far advanced beyond the other's, continued her discourse on the speed of light, hoping to bring its truth to

Adam's conscious comprehension as their ship sped on, splitting the emptiness or star-studded space like a light ray.

"You see, if you shot a block of wood through another block of wood of the same density, and at the speed of sound in that wood, one would not go through the other but an explosion would result at the point where they met. The same applies to everything known, be it air, water, iron, oil, stone, or the ether. Nothing can travel in a medium of its same composition faster than the speed of sound in that medium, for they merely burst at the same moment and become one. With the all-pervading ether, the speed of light is the equivalent of the sonic barrier in other substances. Is this fact not simple to you?"

"Yes," Adam replied, and then ventured to state the next question in his mind. "Then the theory of relativity is correct in postulating that nothing in corpuscular form can attain to the speed of light and retain its own form?"

"Definitely," replied Vega. "But remember, Adam, the theory of relativity, as all other scientific theories of earth, deals with observed effects, not causes. Therefore, the theory proceeds, knowing not what it is measuring nor why it produces certain effects. Thus the theory of relativity, at its extreme salients, fails as totally as any other theory can fail, its success and verity finally swept away because of that universal negative, ignorance. The ignorance inherent at the perimeter of this theory is as profound as the ignorance of a primitive being in the scale of ultimate knowledge."

Chapter 4

VEGA ALERTS ADAM

Adam smiled. Vega smiled also, but Adam had been “nec-tared” beyond wayward emotions which might overpower him, so he proceeded in thought and conversation to probe into those issues that all thinkers have wrestled with but never fully solved. He saw in reflection the seething activity of earth and earthlings. Brothers were ranting and fuming over such small objectives, all of them in error. He wanted so much to call his brother earthmen to come and listen, but how could he? He could, he believed, set them all on a true and positive course at once, but who would listen and believe? Also, he suddenly remembered he had only seven months to live. Seven months, when seven years would not be sufficient to make even a start!

However, he thought, never mind earthmen. There were more questions to be asked; questions to which he already had the nuclei of answers within his own mind. He continued his queries.

“Vega, do you mind if I ask you why you refer to what you so loyally term ‘superiors?’ I don’t like the sound of the word. To me it denotes a preferred side and a rejected side of life. We on earth have struggled for centuries to bring democracy into fulfillment. We have not succeeded, as yet. But you, and your society—how can evolved ones such as you use those words? If there is a superior side there must be an inferior side. Is that not so? It strikes a discordant note to my senses.”

For the first time, Vega looked at Adam the way he had first longed to see her look at him. Her eyes assumed a soft pensiveness, and her voice mellowed into a romantic subtleness. Cosmic womanhood whispered its echoes in her every aspect. Her beauty reached the zenith of what to an earth-

man would be the limit of his capacity to absorb in a state of sanity.

She answered him simply, "Adam, I'm so glad you asked that. You have released me to tell you why, and I will never again refer to them as superiors. But may I humbly, and rightly so, refer to them as our 'peers'?" she asked.

"That sounds better to me, Vega. I cannot conceive of your having superiors, in my definition of the word. I can't believe that a civilization like yours would tolerate an attitude of subservience."

Adam's faculties were conditioned by the nectar tablet to speak on a plane nearly equal to her normal level. This in turn enabled Vega to speak freely.

"You see, we come from a planet which orbits around the star you know on earth as Alpha Centauri. As your astronomers have told your people, it is not quite four and a half light years distant from your sun. We are centuries advanced compared to earth, just as earth is centuries advanced compared to some other worlds. Thus, we are to your higher ones what they are to your aborigines. There are worlds as much advanced beyond our world as ours is beyond yours; and we know them no better than your world knows ours.

"We have overcome disease in general, and we live in comparative brotherhood. But even in our world there are some who have lagged behind. We are a minority, and we live apart from the peers, with no desire to intermingle. You see, we would not entertain for a moment the possibility of causing any backward slip of the peers in status, whether physical or moral.

"We have full freedom, including marriage to a peer if mutually agreeable, but the peers, knowing it would not be wise, refrain from this practice. A peer could not elevate the backward one by that gesture; in fact, the reverse would occur. He would at once descend and join the society of the backward ones. Only the slow process of evolution could correct the back-slip for himself and his progeny.

"It is easier to fall, Adam, than it is to rise. It is easier

to spend than to earn. Civilizations rise one person at a time, but they can fall all at once. If a whole world rises, yet overlooks one lower being, that being could begin the toppling of the whole, no matter what the number involved or the length of time required.

“One tiny seed could replace a jungle with an orchard. Yet one tiny virus can blight in a week that whole orchard and turn it back to jungle. In life, the good seed is the love of pure learning, and the virus is willful ignorance. All things pass away to those who are involved in the evolution, but learning remains, and learning and love are halves of each other.

“At this moment, and only for a few moments, you love me and I love you. This is merely momentary, an outpost of love, and shall pass behind us as we move on. But we still love, and love is our final destination, no matter where we set our course. In a few hours, we shall have forgotten each other as entities.

“Adam, because of this awakened love you now feel, you will be seeking it forever. I was sent to you merely to light the spark, so do not feel empty, because I promise that for you it will be like swimming out of a pond into a great lake. And after that, Adam, after that, into a shoreless sea. You have not missed out on such love, not for one minute of it, for don't you see? No matter how late in life it comes it is like eternity, spreading both ways, into the past and into the future.”

With those words Vega became silent, as she sat gazing into the emptiness ahead of her, trying to envisage the aurora of woman's love for man in its most highly evolved state, which even to her lay yet in the unreachable horizons ahead. Adam was spellbound by her motionless beauty. Then he managed to speak, just above a whisper.

“Oh, no, Vega. I do not choose to leave you or forget you. No matter what they have prepared for me, I shall need your nearness. Please add your desire to mine and make it the free

will choice of both of us. Would they refuse us that sincere request?”

“No Adam,” Vega replied, without changing her poise. “They would not refuse us our true will. But you are not master of your choice until you know all there is to choose from. You have not met *her* yet.”

“Who is this ‘her’ that you speak of?” Adam asked, with a trace of rejection.

“You will spend a few days with her. You will just call her ‘Launie.’

“To you she will seem superb. Yet she is one of the most retarded ones in our world. She thrives on occasional adventures, but I do not infer what the word ‘adventure’ would mean on your earth. She is not base. She simply resembles a humming bird in her motions. She hovers, tastes, and darts away to the next frivolity. You will find bliss with her, and she an adventure in you. Neither of you will be unduly affected. Both of you will learn much that will broaden your scopes, even after your stay together is but a dim memory.

“We, the retarded ones, will be sharing your rapture—yours and Launie’s—for all of us have been informed of your stay with us. We learn more than you do from all passing events. By probing things we learn and rise. Our next generation will be that much closer to peerdome.”

Although Adam took in every word Vega had spoken, it was difficult for him to realize that such an experience was to be his, not in dream but in reality. He did not know, however, that the pain which goes along with such experiences is just as acute in this reality as in the dream. During his young lifetime he had kept himself free of romantic entanglements on earth. Now he could not escape them, because he did not wish to escape them.

He had yet to meet Launie, and he felt as though the very cosmos held her in waiting for him. This gave birth to a new feeling, the feeling of guilt. For the first time he had said to a woman he wanted no other, and now his whole being was reaching out to touch the thrill of a new love.

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Adam grew impatient. The ship seemed to be motionless, suspended in space. Vega sensed his impatience at once, and knew that her mention of Launie was in part the cause of it. In that moment she lost her sentimental attachment to Adam.

Adam looked toward Vega, and with a note of apology pleaded, "Vega, to be honest with you, I feel myself already in love with her, although I do not even know what she looks like. Never before have I felt this way. Who is Launie? Where is she? I feel that I have so much to say and to ask, but to say and ask only of Launie. Suddenly I feel no repressions, no inhibitions, and you now seem to me like a distant goddess. But Launie—she beckons and nothing matters except finding her. Tell me, is she a spirit or is she flesh-and-blood? Can my hands touch her, or does she just fade away from my reach like a mirage? Yes, I know my thinking and feelings are conditioned by the nectar you gave me, but nevertheless it is my best self speaking.

"I love you Vega, and I love all your people. Yet I know it is Launie through whom all my feelings, my new lessons, and my new awarenesses shall be expressed. So I open my heart, and pray I may be worthy."

Then Adam became more practical. He suddenly realized he was going somewhere, somewhere into Vega's promised "world." It would be best to ask questions that would prepare him for entry into it. So his conversation became more academic.

"Are the peers greater in number than the lesser ones in your society?" he asked.

"Yes, many times greater. On our planet, which is no larger than your earth, the peers number twenty billion. We, the unattained ones, number not quite five hundred million. So there are forty peers to every one of us, the retarded ones. Yet a dozen peers would be sufficient to control all the activities of the five hundred million retarded ones. We not only obey them; we honor and love them. You will learn why very shortly."

Adam knew instinctively that he was not being taken to

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another planet, but to a gigantic space ship. He was recalling what Vega had said, that they would be but hours away from their destination. She had also said she was from Alpha Centauri, our nearest star neighbor, whose light requires nearly four and a half years to reach our solar system. From her words and manner Adam surmised that he was to be master of the situation at all times, because it was his world, his solar system and his sun, regardless of his stature in the scale of evolution.

All these facts his subconscious mind had evidently picked up, recorded, and now released to his intuition in a flash. Thus he not only felt but knew he was being transported to a visiting space ship in which were housed half a million “moronic elegants,” ignorant by their own standards, but to the eyes of earthmen, gods and goddesses, cosmic “morons” held to a course toward ascension by their peers.

Adam was in reverie, and in its depths the entire universe lay bare its secrets before him. He murmured, “Oh, my God, why have you given me so much? My cup runneth over. I have so much of abundance. Like an egg, it is enclosed in a thin shell, breakable, but not vulnerable. Oh, God, wherever Thou art, whatever Thou art, since my cup runneth over in abundance, may You see that it spills over on those who so need even a drop of this . . . this essence of fullness.”

With these thoughts, earth Adam had transformed into cosmic Adam, and he felt a sovereignty within himself that was new and strange to him. He knew in that moment that every one of the half million people awaiting his visit would be subservient to him. His slightest wish would carry more weight than their combined will. At the same time, this awakening also flooded him with the awareness that it would be more fun to be servant than master. Servants may have vague backaches, but masters have acute headaches. He decided to take the middle of the road. It was the course already set for him, though he felt it was his own decision.

These thoughts which seasoned Adam into maturity took

no longer than seconds in his enhanced condition. He roused himself and asked Vega a question.

“Is it permissible to look into space again? This time not behind us, toward the earth, but before us, toward where we are going?”

“Yes,” answered Vega, calmly and indifferently, “but not to the left of us. The sun is in that direction, and you would be blinded. Nor will you see straight ahead, for that is our destination. Look there—to your right—and you will see what you want to see, and should see.”

As if it had heard Vega’s words, a section of the ship’s hull on the right became transparent. Once more there were bright stars suspended in a vault of space; large ones, small ones, lone ones, double ones, and clusters of stars in various colors.

Something strange broke the monotonous evenness of that outer space panorama. A white fuzzy cloud, very faint, was suspended in space near the ship as they traveled. It remained constant and motionless.

“What is that white haze, Vega?” Adam asked.

“That,” she responded, “is gas. It is nearly all hydrogen. Our velocity is so great that were we to smash into it, it would gradually wear down our ship’s hull. We must have a clear path before us, so our monitor ship constantly beams a magnetic vortex ahead of us. This repels all atoms and molecules, casting them to one side, so it is like traveling through a tunnel as we go forward. The white haze you see is sunlight reflected from those gas particles. It seems motionless because our speed is so great.

“Small meteors in our path are deflected in the same manner. The larger meteors are detected by our monitor’s automatic finders, even though the meteors are far distant. At the same time, our mass-ray guns are trained on them and they are disintegrated, that is, atomized. All this takes place faster than you could think.”

She had hardly finished when there was an instantaneous flash of white lightning, its rays piercing the wall of their

ship. The crystal hull reflected the flash into daylight, as if lightning had struck nearby. Adam jumped.

“What was that?” he burst out.

“You just saw a meteor atomized. Our monitor ship is not far away, remember? They detected the small object and vaporized it. It was in our path. This is space travel, Adam. You cannot travel in space without all these facilities. That meteor would not have harmed our strong ship, but it would have left a weak spot, and enough of them would damage our hull in time.”

As she said these words the “window” in the hull became opaque once more and Adam felt secure again, like a frightened child hiding in a closet. More than that, he felt courage because Vega sat next to him. Whatever happened he would not be afraid, because she was not afraid.

Once more he realized why they had sent a woman to escort him on such a trip. Once more he knew that he could not absorb all that was yet to come, whatever it might be, without the buoyancy of spirit that a woman like Vega could inspire. He felt he could no more than perish, and what better way to die than in the vibrant presence of this beautiful creature beside him? Also, he sensed that what he was yet to experience would be beyond his most lavish dreams. Could their meaning be fully conveyed to him alone, alone with his own spirit, alone with his own soul? The experiences would of course contain elements of things familiar to him, but without a loved one to share them, could they mean little more than a hearty meal eaten solo?

He was not alone in his thoughts. Vega was thinking the very same things. There was rapport between them, as though at heart they were one. Vega spoke a few carefully chosen words.

“Adam, it is this way: Knowledge in its highest sense would be but a skeleton without the warmth of love. The skeleton appeals to very few, but the clothing around it appeals to all beings. Love was not only the motivating force at the beginning of the worlds, but it is also the ultimate goal which we

seek. We revere the concept and vision of God, but God seems far away. We, in our world, get no more response through our meditations or supplications to God than do your people. Yet we get much more response from His vital and dynamic universe than your people of earth. Therefore, you can see that in the eyes of the Fatherhead we all stand equal, but His creation, the universe, its heart and motions, respond much more to our advanced knowledge than to the primitive awareness of your earth. Therefore, Adam, as you already suspect, the straightest way to the Fatherhead is by the path of knowledge—knowledge of the truth, which is no more than knowledge of actualities. Not dreams; not fantasies; not traditions, which are nothing but stalemates; not swashbuckling abandonment to new adventures, which often goes in the name of progress, but adds nothing to it; but the love of pure learning. That is the only pathway toward true ascension.

“I feel that you already sense by intuition that Launie will not be the adventure you may secretly desire. But she will be a problem to you, and in coping with the challenges she presents you will have climbed another rung on the ladder of understanding.”

Suddenly, Adam felt the fear of space again. Space, he sensed, was all about him; so vacuous that it seemed to be drawing at the vitals of his being. Only this gallant little craft was between its two occupants and the instantaneous explosive dispersion of their bodies to the hungry vacuum. This little ship; this elegant, strong, protective little ship. So silent, yet so treacherous was the fathomless space around him just outside the little ship. Vega sensed his fear instantaneously, and quickly reassured him.

“Remember, Adam, even a meteor could not harm us. Do not be uneasy. Not once in centuries has any of our ships met with damage or failure, other than those that bore into the core of some star. But you will learn more of that during your visit with us. Let us think of and speak of more interesting things for the time being.”

Her explanation, given in simple words, made him feel

completely at ease once more. She was a perfect guide, it was a perfect trip.

Ah, yes! He must ask one more question.

“Vega, why is it you speak to me in such excellent English? Do you not have a language of your own? I would like to hear a few words of it, just for the sake of hearing it.”

Vega rapidly spoke a few words and looked at Adam. He shrugged his shoulders to show they meant nothing to him.

“You see?” she pointed out. “Hearing our language means nothing to you. You have no time to learn it, and you have many other universally understood things to see with us. That is the best of all languages, understanding and knowledge. However, you did catch some phonetic delight when I spoke it, and earth shall one day have a similar language.

“I repeat it more slowly: ‘un, doz e pez lo.’ It means, ‘No, you have lost weight,’ and was spoken once before to another man of Earth, so I do not harm the code of non-interference with your evolution.

“In the grand and cosmic sense, Adam, there is only one language. Two complete strangers who are high in evolve-ment could carry on a conversation in silence, with a few mere signs and gestures. That is the universal language. Intuition first, and thought second, is the one language of the cosmos.

“In the navigation of infinite space, there are few words, and little deliberate thought. Knowledge comes first, intuition takes care of the problems as they are met, and orderly thought does the rest. The deliberate mind is useless in coping with space and astral rhythms. The dynamic of space is felt, as a bird feels its domains; it is sensed, as a good maestro senses the entire symphony. It is the domain of the stars and all the spheres around them, and the law and order which prevails for these also prevails for us all. Space requires the intuitive mind, the soul mind, for releasing and guiding its momentous yet subtle power tides.

“Our people come and go facilely in space ships. They study, make charts that add to our galaxial maps, tirelessly observe things, the little and the big. Yet, they seldom speak

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aloud, and never are they bored but feel always that they have spoken much whether by a word or in silence. Every second is exquisitely dynamic, but always in harmony with the moment and the place.”

Her explanation was spell binding to Adam. “You are lovely,” he said, in admiration.

“Thank you,” she said. “But may I show you what I mean by quiet and harmony, and how within it you can awaken to much new awareness?”

Without speaking, Adam nodded in assent.

“Good,” she said softly, preparing for moments of silence. “Now you must visualize that we are decelerating, erasing thousands of miles from our speed by the minute. We shall remain quiet for some time.

“The music you will hear emanates from the molecular vibration of our ship’s hull, and is under the direction of our monitor ship nearby. To our right a round window will again be cleared in the hull, and it will move slowly leftward until it stops directly before us.” She sighed softly. “Now, sit back and relax.”

Chapter 5

VENUS, OUR SISTER

Thus a small craft hurtled through space, protectively conveying a man from earth and a woman from Alpha Centauri's system, to a destination not far as measured in astronomical distance.

As they sat comfortably inside, purposefully quiet, the music that Vega had promised Adam pealed through the ship's interior. A round section of the ship's shell became a transparent window, similar to a porthole.

As Adam related it to me that night at our small table, he was again listening to the music in memory. Once more he saw stars suspended in the vault of space. But under the spell of such music as he was hearing they were different to him.

There was a special message, silent yet clearly discernible, being communicated to him from that reachless cosmos. He knew with a conviction translated to his senses as wondrous, soft essences of truth that those spheres, those glaring spheres, were in their cores the embodiment of ultimate or absolute heat. More startling was his sudden awareness that every light ray is a small source or container of ultimate heat, for no body can be hotter than its components. It followed that absolute zero does not exist anywhere in the universe. If it does exist, he thought, it must be cloistered in the very archives of the Creator as the most rare jewel that is. That jewel would be a piece of solid ether.

In the quiet reverie within the ship, Adam's subconscious mind was yielding up to his conscious mind the highlights of his present earth lifetime, his nobler aspirations as well as his baser inclinations, passing like a pageant before him. He felt from deep within that he was being unfolded in preparation for his entry into Vega's society. He felt he was being readied by the minute, for he was so effortlessly grasping an understanding of all things—all, that is, except mathematics,

in which he remained impoverished. Yet he felt that his mathematical poverty was amply compensated for by the wealth of understanding coming to him as a result of these immeasurable thoughts and visions. The music seemed to accent his intuitions.

Vega had spoken in wisdom. Things Adam had once merely assumed now became confirmed knowledge to him; false premises were quickly rejected by his enlarged scope. Yes, in the upheavals which were ushering in this new awareness, mathematics would dissolve even from the consciousness of a genius. Indeed, he knew now that men of earth have not measured anything as yet. It was clear to him now that all the physical concepts of his brother earthmen were erroneous. Atoms were not spinning packets of energy; they were bubbles in the ether. The music itself was emanating from vibrating ether. The universe was one grandiose spectacle of spheres within spheres.

Something strange was taking place. The "window" had reached a position directly in front of Vega and him, but it was also growing steadily larger, like a balloon being inflated. Its clear crystal structure began to turn cloudy. Soon it became soupy thick and the cloud surged and swirled, obliterating all the stars completely. The music stopped momentarily, then began again, this time surely coming from that now enlarged window, as through a swirling, cloudy television screen.

The mood of the music changed to deeply vibrant, inspiring strains with lively tempo. Strain merged into strain. The clear window took on a fresh green hue, and Vega put her hand to her eyes as she ended the period of Adam's silent instruction with, "Adam, that is my people's anthem; the anthem of our own planet. When we land on our home ship you may refer to our social strata as the 'regulars' and the 'peers.' Remember this, the 'regulars' number nearly half a million, and the 'peers' number not more than one thousand. That is all you need bear in mind."

The green of the window now faded to soft yellow, then gradually became orange, then amber. Soon it evolved to the white of brilliant clouds.

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“Vega,” Adam said, in wonderment. “It grows whiter and whiter, cloudier and cloudier. What is the meaning of it?”

“That,” she replied with a smile of contentment, “is the outer atmosphere of Venus. We are approaching home base. It belongs more to you than it does to us, even though you feel as a stranger. You see, it is the closest sister planet earth has in its own solar system. We are visitors, Adam, but you are a son. We shall honor your every mature wish. We visit, but we do not conquer and impose. We observe, but we do not intrude and interfere. We inherit our estate, because we remain meek. We enter gates where so many meet with destruction. Adam, hold your head high always, but always in the fresh air of humility, of understanding. Let your soul cry, but let not your mind be dampened by its tears.”

With those words she removed her hand from her eyes.

By this time the planet Venus filled their entire field of vision. It no longer seemed as though they were going toward it horizontally, but rather as if they were falling down into the clouds. Thus Adam learned that the perspective of going down is only virtual. When an object fills the entire field of vision the sense of going down is experienced instead of the reality of going toward it. Gravity helps to produce the illusion of a downward fall.

Yet the surface of Venus must have been a great distance away, because Vega put her hand to Adam’s eyes, telling him not to look until she removed her hand from his vision. During the next crucial moments she spoke mere nonsense to him, to help the time pass by.

Suddenly there was a steady roar, and the ship vibrated sharply. Adam knew the ship had entered the dense cloudbeds of Venus. For the first time he could sense a slowing down by the grind of the ship against the atmosphere. He was glad he was being spared watching this phase of the landing, and his regard of Vega swelled once more into love. She was so expert in her manifold roles, so spontaneous in her expression of appreciation for the opportunity that had been hers to serve

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a man of earth. Thus it had not really been love either of them had felt, but the exuberance of a new experience.

Romance, love. What were these things, then? She had promised Adam he would be introduced to them in their fullness. Even as his eyes were still occluded by Vega's hand and the ship roared to slower velocity, he could think only of his next great adventure. One name sought to fill his entire consciousness, the name of Launie. The wearer of the name would be touchable flesh-and-blood, he felt sure. But then, suppose it was to be merely an apparition in the mist? Would he be brought to the fountain to drink, and the drink be turned to mere vapor on his lips? No, no; space visitors would not play such earth-like pranks. With that realization he became patience itself, knowing his greatest fulfillment was immutably waiting for him. "Launie," he thought unconsciously hoping there would be no more to experience beyond her. Forever with her would be enough.

Though Launie was to give substance to the purpose of his existence he felt he had longed for her from time immemorial, this she whom he knew not, one thing was certain: Vega had become just another human being in his mind, and he knew he could live with or without her. It was Launie, he felt, who was his other half from the day he was born and would be until the day he should die, though she was a daughter of Alpha Centauri, and he was a son of the sun. Vega's role had been that of escort.

The ship came to a complete halt, paused a silent moment, then continued slowly forward. Vega removed her hands from his eyes, and before him appeared a new world. An ethereal horizon closed down sharply not far ahead.

"This is our home, Adam. We have entered on one side of it, and the horizon you see ahead is ten miles away. Yes, it is one large ship containing a self-composed world ten miles in diameter and housing five hundred thousand people. It is shaped like two saucers facing each other; or like the solar system. It resembles a galaxy, Adam, so how about giving it a name at once?"

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“Good!” Adam exclaimed. “As long as I am involved with it I shall call it ‘Andromeda’, my nearest, or our nearest, sister universe, Hail, Andromeda; hail, wonderful Andromeda!”

Though deep in his story, Adam paused in his telling of it. We glanced at the clock and saw that it was 3:00 in the morning. The deep quiet of the desert was far from our consciousness, and there was no longer time for us. We felt only the life and imperceptible motion of which all things are. I felt that the very walls of the house had absorbed Adam’s story, and remained attentive in their silence. He seemed to be apart from everything around him, including me, speaking his words as if they were meant for unseen people, and perhaps the walls, floor, ceiling, and the ether.

The moment’s pause was broken by the sound of a car passing by, going toward the marine base, a lone sound making a slight dent in the boundless quiet. As if aroused by the sound, Adam resumed his story.

Chapter 6

LANDING ABOARD ANDROMEDA

Placing her hand over Adam's eyes had no special significance. It was merely a whim on Vega's part. She did, however, feel that she wanted him to see the interior of her huge space ship suddenly, not gradually. Thus she had hidden from him the details of the entry from outer space into the safety of Andromeda. He had entered into a strange civilization with only Vega as his identifying requisite. He was not asked for his credentials by anyone.

Their small craft was now gliding at less than twenty miles per hour, gracefully weaving and dipping toward the center of this little artificial world. Adam saw the area below him as they soared in midair over the beautiful city; a city inside a huge space ship.

Vega threw kisses with her hand to the waving throng just below. By the thousands they kissed back, with graceful hands and child-like smiles. Adam was in the fifth estate. It was like looking upon his earth fellows transformed into angels, viewed from his "magic carpet."

Their craft was overtaken by a long ship which went forth as if oblivious to the waving people below.

"That is the ship which monitored us here from earth," Vega announced. "It is going to its hangar."

Their own little craft descended to barely ten feet above the grassy streets, and slowed to a glide. The people cheered by song as they waved, bowed gracefully, or danced about. It was one grand symphony of welcome for Adam, the earthman, and for the historic adventure that was Vega's.

Here indeed was an interstellar floating island containing a beautiful city of half a million population. Full ten miles in diameter, it encapsulated a small, self-sufficient world. The ship was now nearing the center of the city which seemed to be entirely engulfed by a slow, lazy fire as the buildings mar-

velously changed color, billowing and merging beautifully from hue to hue. The walls themselves were active. They appeared to be made of plastic materials and every square inch of the walls could glow with light as required. Adam knew this from the demonstration he was witnessing.

He felt himself flickering rapidly inside, a sense of unworthiness seizing him and then suddenly leaving him to spring into euphoria, alternating back and forth. His reasoning mind told him he did not deserve this sublime experience, but the nectar he had drunk affirmed just as strongly that he did, and this rapid vacillation finally ended when the better decision of feeling worthy permeated his consciousness, and he made an agreement within himself to learn all there was to learn from it.

Finally they reached their destination, the center of Andromeda, the horizon now being five miles in each direction, and the sky ceiling five miles straight above. The perfect symmetry of the interior of the ship formed a wonderful half-sphere, crowned by uniform cloud overcast all around, yet all was clear daylight within Andromeda.

Adam and Vega were preparing for the landing in this center, which was composed of buildings of great size, larger than the ones they had passed over on their approach. These were evidently their governing facilities. A large pool of water nestled like a jewel amidst the verdure of grass, where a few swimmers were enjoying themselves. The grass, trees, and other foliage were of many colors, so that vegetation served as flowers. In the air a few craft were cruising around—ships within a ship.

Outside, at the ceiling of the clouds, there were constant lightning, fireballs, St. Elmo's Fire, and other phenomena produced by electrical discharge. Adam had read of such displays in the book, "The Secret of the Saucers," but the author had made no attempt to fully explain them. He gave the matter no further thought now, because he felt that in due time all would be clarified to him.

They landed slowly amid a cheering but orderly crowd.

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There was nothing physically different from earth's people about them. All appeared to be typical of Vega, healthy and radiant. There were blond-haired, dark-haired and red-haired people. It was like seeing the inhabitants of earth possessed of physical health and mental understanding that were transcendent. So gentle did they seem that Adam felt as one among happy human lambs. He felt himself becoming one of them, from deep inside. But something in him made him also feel like a lion among the lambs, and at intervals he felt like an ape among angels. He was indeed a dual personality, vacillating from the high estate to worthless dust.

Suddenly, from the very center of his life, he yearned for one among these who would be more on his level, yet be from among them. Ah, yes, he felt this person was somewhere in Andromeda. He had not seen her as yet, but his soul's need vouched that he would surely find her. This one would make him feel at ease, at home, secure in the port of his true love's heart.

Adam reflected that his sponsors had of course anticipated that he would feel this way and he need have no fear, someone more on his own level would be provided as his hostess and guide during his stay here. Yes, he concluded, he was already being prepared to expect her, so in eager anticipation he felt ready for all that awaited him.

The little craft came to a halt in an open grassy area, and Adam and Vega stepped out of the opening which had quietly appeared. A man took him warmly by the hand, while another took Vega's hand. The one who greeted her seemed to impart more than just a welcome. Adam saw that it was love claiming its own, and he knew she was now out of his life, leaving him free for the one his heart awaited. The man embraced Vega, and their lips met gently in affection. Then, with a look of approval, he came and put his cheek to Adam's. At the same time, Vega kissed Adam on the forehead. He noticed that at the side of her beloved, Vega's eyes became more beautiful than ever.

As she said goodbye to Adam, she warmly thanked him for

the opportunity that had been hers in picking him up from earth and escorting him to their space ship, Andromeda. The experience, she assured him, had elevated not only him, but had also lifted her another rung on the ladder of learning.

“I am going now to see our entire trip reviewed by recording. A group of our peers waits to review it with me. Among them will be Lyra, Orion, Neptune. Saturn also will be present.”

As she spoke the name “Saturn,” the crowd pealed a melodic song. The mention of his name enraptured these people. Vega walked away with her escort, and as she did so, some girls touched her clothing gently in admiration as she walked by them. Girls will be girls, thought Adam, the universe over. He followed, with his guide holding his hand as they walked, much like happy children.

“You need not name me, Adam,” said his guide. “You will meet too many of us to recall each by name. You are not gifted at recalling names, so do not even try.”

“Saturn is our chief here on the ship Andromeda. His name and the ship’s name, as you know, are so given merely for your benefit. His name suggests the planet of your own solar system. It represents the beautiful symbol of the atom, hydrogen. It is also the symbol of the universal systems after their attainment to perfect symmetry. Our chief is that to us, so the name you give him fits well.”

“On Andromeda, there are one thousand of our peers. The rest of us, nearly five hundred thousand, are what you might call retarded ones, still having much to learn to reach the peers’ status. Just call us the regulars, as you already have been advised. Our peers seek much deeper insight and knowledge than we regulars, but all of us are as yet learning, and we love the motivation of learning. The regulars have much more to learn than the peers, so we seem to evolve at a faster pace to you. However, we are aware that what to us is yet mystery is to our peers elementary knowledge.”

“For instance, a child appears to have a more aggressive initiative to learn than an adult. This is no reflection on the inherent intellect of either. Individual purpose is what matters.”

Without wisdom, without logic, without intuition, there is no attainment of the fruits of Purpose. Each one who rises lifts the rest of civilization—indeed, all of creation—a little higher. Thus our reception of you and of our own Vega.”

As his guide thus spoke, Adam did not notice that the crowd of people had been left behind. Still hand in hand, they walked across a grass-carpeted square and straight toward a large building, its plastic structure glowing with a translucent green color. A large golden dome shone above it.

Since no one had followed Adam and his guide, and no one seemed to be gathered to greet him at this building, he suspected a surprise of some kind.

Apparently there was no door to this building. At least, he could see none. The opening before the two men was wide, and they proceeded through it into the interior. There was no need here for doors, Adam realized now. The temperature inside was the same as that of the outside, and such things as stealing or destructive mischief did not exist here. All weather conditions were uniform within the ship Andromeda, inside and outside its buildings.

All at once, from various entrances to the room in which the two men stood, children came rapidly, singing to joyful music that pealed forth from out of the air. Some brought with them large squares like table tops, from which they drew down folded legs and then stood upright in the floor. Soon the entire area was filled with small tables set neatly in rows. The walls and ceilings were ivory color, but Adam felt that these could change color to suit the occupants. The floor was blue-gray, at least at the moment.

The bee-like activity of the children, still singing as they moved about, produced chairs in place at the tables. When this was accomplished, they did not walk around or stand idly about not knowing what to do next, but continued singing and swaying to the music. It was singing unrehearsed, swaying that was spontaneous, and all was harmonious and melodious.

Flowers were brought in by some of the little ones, and adults began to appear, coming in streams through the door-

ways. Adam saw one long table being set at the front of the large room, with chairs placed at the outer side only, like the speakers' table at a banquet. His guide took him to the center chair of this long table, where the chairs on either side of him were being taken by others in orderly fashion. He was introduced to the gathering, there were brief nods, and all sat down. At each adult's place was a small bouquet, different from its neighbors in color and fragrance.

Now the children were seen busily bringing food in with their small but deft hands, through the entrance ways. Trays, plates, saucers, cups, silverware, and napkins were quickly put in place at the tables without confusion. How marvelous, in such little time, to see a great banquet set up by children-children who had learned to learn. As Adam said, "it was all beyond words."

His guide had not sat down. He had gone elsewhere, but now he returned with a young lady and led her to a platform near Adam. There was instant quiet and attention when she spoke.

"Well done, and very lovely too, young ones," she said, addressing the children. "We greet Adam from earth. He will partake of what to him is breakfast, and we shall join him in what to us is lunch.

"At this time, Adam does not distinguish one from the other, for he has lost the sense of time for awhile. But the eggs, the butter, and so-called coffee you have placed before him begin to orient him even now." True enough, Adam could feel himself beginning to distinguish morning from evening again. The lady went on speaking.

"Please rise, one of you, and say what to Adam would be Grace." The young woman's speaking voice sounded like a song. She was not quite as beautiful as Vega; yet something about her captivated Adam with a relentless pressure that must end sometime, or explode.

Would they never have him meet Launie, who would be more on his plane, and allay his emotions for more important learning? Why must all these people have such a unique

attraction? His thoughts were quieted as a boy arose from a table to volunteer Grace. It was obviously a spontaneous gesture, and everyone bowed in reverence as he spoke these few words:

“For the gift of life we are happy, and for all things that sustain us we give thanks to the Bosom of Creation. We promise to remain aware of the ever blessed love of learning, thereby to be led to the Light of Knowing, and to love our fellow creatures. Bosom of Creation, we thank Thee.”

The young lady on the platform then directed, “Let us sing now for Adam.”

Introduction music played a short time. Then, like a heavenly choir, they sang Stephen Foster’s “Beautiful Dreamer.” Such an arrangement as Adam heard that day has not yet been captured on earth. He looked at the young lady, who was still standing on the platform, and she returned his glance through moistened eyes. Adam did not know whether to thank Stephen Foster or these people. Whatever pertained to Adam in the most minute detail—past, present, or future—was a completely open book to this woman whose glance met his in complete understanding. What passed between them in this brief moment even Launie would be incapable of erasing. Yes, even Launie.

Adam, the novice, thought he was the first ever to feel such sweeping emotions. He was oblivious to the fact that millions of people on his own earth had been either lifted up or devastated by them. He forgot this was part of the briefing on these basic emotions he was being given by his hosts in preparation for embracing grander vistas of learning. Neither did he yet know Launie.

Now the young woman stepped down from the platform, joined the man who had been his guide, and together they walked to a small table that had been set for them. All began eating and engaging in affable conversation. Adam’s eyes, however, were still on the two, and as if reading his thoughts, the man sitting next to him explained.

“They are not wedded mates. They are, however, in love,

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and when they fully decide to become partners they shall wed. They will not vow loyalty lightly such as your people on earth do. One will merely say to the other, 'In the presence of all goodness, seen and unseen, I am yours.' That is our wedding ceremony, be it performed in the presence of witnesses or not. Their announced word of it is sufficient, and it is then recorded. Wedding festivities, if any, are a spontaneous expression from among their close friends.

"Both of them are teachers of our children. Yes, we have schools right here on Andromeda. The pupils are given the semester schedules, which are reviewed by the peers, and from there on the teachers have full sway. Results are what matter, and we find this plan works very well. The latitude of our teachers is equaled by the freedom of the pupils. If a teacher shows signs of slipping back into retrogression, she or he is then retired from public teaching for life. Children who are faster in learning than others are given more to assimilate, within their limits and needs, of course."

They continued dining. After a few moments' pause, Adam asked his neighbor, "What is the secret of such health and physical beauty in your people?"

"That is only in your perspective, Adam. We regard our peers somewhat in the same way as you regard us. You should behold our chief, 'Saturn.' Such stature, such understanding.' He is friend, physician, and patriarch all in one. All mortals must feel a sovereign orientation to some degree. We must be able to look down from where we have climbed, and up to where we are going. Saturn assures us that he also looks up to a stretch of stairway which extends beyond his own vision," he said, noticing that Adam's expression had changed to one of perplexity.

Something just said had caused him to reach back toward memory. A word echoed throbbingly in his mind, the mention of which had catapulted him from this hall.

Physician! Physician! Yes, Saturn was even physician . . . He was breathing heavily, trying hard to think. The word came laboriously from his lips . . . "physician, physician." A

word so dear, yet so futile to him now. He felt a little shaky, with a panic creeping into every reach of his vital self. Every nerve in his body felt some pain, some numbness, fear. He was in the throes of one dying, yet he was living. He needed more than “physician,” more than his former self. He needed another person, his other half, who was heir to the same despair, but who gave that despair a hue of glamour, a note of infinity.

Then a blessed numbness enveloped his body. In it he was more alive and responsive to sights and sounds about him, but unable to move. Haziness was all about him. Was he dying? he asked himself. If he could only see that one person who would give him courage, whose face would render him glad no matter what was to be! He looked wanly toward the table where the young teacher sat with her fiancé.

But she was not there. She was walking toward Adam, deep concern showing in her lovely face. She was approaching him rapidly, walking with a speed that denoted urgency, all the while looking steadily into his eyes, and Adam knew she had assumed the role of nurse. Adam, physician, was now Adam, patient.

With graceful haste, she put a pellet in his glass and filled it with water. As it fizzed and bubbled she put it to his lips. Her eyes remained on him while she both appraised his condition and responded to his need for affection. Both felt drawn toward each other, meeting in spirit at that indiscernible place where tides meet momentarily. Adam, the earth physician, accepted in warm comfort the fact that he was in the hands of a better physician, a unique nurse, average in her world, but resplendent by earth standards. In his moment of distress, this exquisite being had rescued him. There was no doubt in his mind; he knew now the painful sublimity there would be in loving a woman.

In a moment the nectar began to take effect. Adam regained control of himself, while his nurse explained what had happened.

“The first nectar, which Vega gave you, had almost worn

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off. Then your breakfast of regular eggs, bread, butter, and milk activated your digestive processes and your metabolic cycle, and these subdued the slight effect of what was left of the nectar. Your entire system was flickering dynamically between your normal state and your enhanced state. You were not dying physically, but dying from our estate back into your own. You began to sense your true identity again, that of Adam, the physician; the physician of earth.

“As you have guessed, I was entrusted with your welfare, and accordingly felt close to you and your feelings, sensing immediately what you were going through. In helping you I rise also. Now drink the rest of your nectar, and feel again as one of us.”

With that she took her leave, returning to her table. As she sat down, her companion smiled at her in appreciation of what she had just done. She was a source of ecstasy to Adam as he gazed her way in deep admiration. He felt strong again, healthy, and equal to all that might occur around and to him.

A young lad came to Adam, breaking his reverie, and put a newspaper on his lap. A little girl accompanied him, and she laid a magazine on top of the newspaper, saying they were both for him. They were his favorite newspaper and magazine on earth. He was amazed, for they were the latest issues.

“They were not delivered to us,” said the boy, vibrantly. “We have hobbies here, just as your people have. Some of us telemeter photos and news of events on your earth every day. We have reproduced these two copies for you, Adam. We trust you will feel at home because of them. Just tell us if you want anything else reproduced for you.”

Adam put his arm around the boy and asked, “And this is just a children’s hobby here?”

“Yes, it is. We make our own apparatus, such as presses, radio, and radar-telephotographs, also ink and paper such as earth uses. But these are simple things, so do not ponder on them,” the child said, chuckling with inner glee.

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The little girl came close to him and asked if she could whisper in his ear. Adam consented with pleasure. Thereupon she drew herself up and whispered to him.

“Adam, it is time for you to get some sleep. No one will leave this room until you get up to do so first. You are an honored guest.”

He was overwhelmed. They had left such little things as manners up to their growing and learning children on Andromeda. He gazed into the sweet face of the child, who was closing her eyes and turning her head upward to receive a kiss on the forehead. As he held her small head in his hands she clasped a bracelet around his left wrist, and lovingly kept her hands on it for a moment. This was another surprise to Adam, but the little girl had an explanation for her act.

“This,” she said, “is for your identification. Should you become lost in the cosmos, all travelers of space would know where you hail from, and in whose care you are. When you are returned to earth, it will be converted back to vapor, but until then nothing can take it from your person.” Adam was touched by her concern for his welfare, and he noticed that it was the same type bracelet all these people wore, each having a separate identity by numerals, symbols, and size of beads. It was metallic in a sense, yet it was warm and silken to the touch. It would identify one anywhere, should he become stranded among civilizations of equal or superior evolution.

The little girl nodded to Adam, then toward the teacher and her escort at the table where they sat. It was evident the teacher had coached these children, at least to some degree, for their reception of Adam.

Becoming aware of wearing apparel, he noticed for the first time how simply everyone was dressed, although the clothing was appropriate and modest. Colors, motifs, and styles were according to the taste, the nature, and the inclination of the wearer. Every piece was fresh and new looking; every garment enhanced the wearer. Each person seemed so satisfied with his or her apparel that it added further vibrancy to each personality and

to the air about the individual. These people impressed Adam as being perpetually poised for alertness to any new event and eager for any opportunity to serve their fellowmen.

Adam began to feel a pleasant drowsiness. In a voice that only those sitting near him could hear, he said, "I feel I should go to sleep. It is more pleasant here than I can express. But sleep calls me, and I beg leave of you."

All those at his table stood up at his words. The young lady and her escort rose also, and came directly to him. Music sounded again, and everyone in the hall sang softly.

The *young woman* and her escort indicated *to* Adam that they would see him to his cottage, and the three of them left the hall together.

Adam noticed his drowsiness did not increase, but that he took on new zest while walking. Outside, he asked his two escorts what all the lightning and electrical flaring far above them meant. It never ceased. He could even hear the rumble of thunder accompanying the lightning effects. The man answered his question.

"Our ship, *Andromeda*," he said, "is afloat in the atmosphere of Venus. The solar energy causes the electrical turbulence you see above us in the cloudy atmosphere. Our ship is deep enough in the atmosphere to prevent seeing the sun, or its outline. *On* the night side of Venus there is no lightning. No need for more detail to your ready assimilation, is there, Adam?" he asked.

"Wait a moment," said Adam. "How can such a large ship as *Andromeda* remain firm and strong? It is all of ten miles in diameter."

His guide replied without hesitation. "Our ship is built on the principle of the structural arc. It will neither collapse nor burst. The large floor beneath us is thick at the center, and not so thick at the periphery where it joins the shell overhead. This gives our floor the strength of rib and suspension. Besides, we have developed materials so strong you could not comprehend their strength even if you knew the composition. However, the entire body of *Andromeda* is similar to our smaller

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ships, namely, plastic-crystal molecules held together by absolute polymerization. Know that you are safer on Andromeda than on the vulnerable surface of your own earth, Adam. Need I say more?"

"No; oh, no," Adam faltered. "But may I ask you this: Do you not have any questions of your own to ask me, for a change?"

"Yes," smiled the guide. "Tell us, how did you enjoy your trip from earth to Venus with our Vega?"

The young lady at the guide's side walked away from her place as if impelled by an unseen force, coming closer to Adam and looking deeply into his eyes to get the full effect of his answer. Once more he was under the spell of a feminine beauty, who seemed to have forgotten her own betrothed at her side. Adam instinctively used this opportunity to hold her attention. He was learning to use one woman to attract another woman, even on Andromeda. She is jealous, he thought. I shall make sure that she stays jealous. He pursued his momentary advantage, speaking with concealed rapture.

"How can I express it to you?" he asked, glancing from the guide to the beauty whose eyes were gazing into his own. "I asked her about such things as the masterfulness of our little ship, its speed of ten million miles per hour, about my earth and its moon, and about Venus. Her gentle nature and complete beauty gave me the answers. I was so overwhelmed that the incredible nature of all I was experiencing receded beyond my consciousness. In her presence, everything else turned into the usual and ordinary. I was lost in her sublimity."

The guide was deeply attentive, as Adam added, "It was all of this, of course, but what it really was to me is beyond words. How can I tell you? To me it was just incredible," he concluded.

"Do you mean," asked the young lady, "that you could tell of your recent experiences and include Vega as just a part of them, having no special place for her in your memoirs?"

Adam did not speak. He merely smiled and nodded in confirmation to her question. Yes, his intense nod said, but at

the same time his eyes said to her that this would not be the case with her. His hands fidgeted, for they wanted to hold this young woman closer. Her eyes found his depths and bound him into slavery.

Then he spoke, in a voice weakened by his emotion. "Yes," he sighed, "it is one thing to me; categorical record, and nothing more. I will bear up under all that your people can give me in experiences, and I will merely relegate it all to history in written word. Even you; even you, my Waterloo; even you shall be a mere written name in my records. So, I am to learn first the meaning of woman in the consciousness of man. That, I know, is what I am now going through. But I shall forget it. Believe me, I shall forget all of you, reducing you all to mere names and events."

His male guide remained in his place a few feet away, fixed in concern by his strange behavior. He looked like a statue, so much aloofness was he assuming, as he entrusted to his beloved the responsibility of administering unto Adam's fragile emotions. He did not interfere, nor did he speak a word.

"Shall we go on to your lodging, Adam?" the young lady suggested.

"Yes," he replied, "I am not tired or sleepy now, but I feel it is time to be there, so I am ready."

"Well," said the young woman, "walk right in. The cottage before you is yours." They had stepped onto the lawn of his assigned cottage. She turned her eyes from Adam to her escort, then to Adam again, back and forth from one to the other, hardly realizing she had just spoken in such a detached manner. The man who had been Adam's first guide on Andromeda bade him a casual goodbye, inferring he was leaving the situation henceforth in the capable hands of the young woman.

His services seemed to have come to an end.

The little teacher turned to her friend as he turned and walked away. Suddenly she burst out, running toward him, "Leo! Oh, Leo! I know now the folly of follies. Your absence will leave a void of many moments in my life. I would come with you now if you say so. I would, Leo, if you truly say it."

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But Leo merely smiled into her eyes. His emotions were not the emotions of woman, and in his masculine steadiness he seemed to know that she would soon be over her little outburst, for he nodded his head, not in accusation, but in gentle approval and understanding.

So, Adam reflected, this man was to be known to him as Leo. He walked over to where the two stood. Leo looked directly at him, his eyes penetrating deeply into his as he approached. Then Leo spoke.

“I am not your guide, Adam. No one is your guide here. We are all host to you. When I leave she beside me becomes your hostess. Not only you shall gain knowledge, but she will also. Her next sphere of learning can only be reached through a few moments of romance. On earth you denied yourself that phase of experience, but you will soon be matured in this phase. Do not be uneasy at any time. You cannot hurt us, and we would not wish to hurt you. Tomorrow you will meet in truth your Launie, who will give you the finishing touches of what all mortals must have for fullness of living and learning.”

As he paused, Leo was interrupted by Adam.

“But I do not know her name,” he said, looking toward the little teacher.

Wistfully, she answered him herself. “My name, as you know by now, would mean nothing to you. Whatever name you *give* me I shall accept, with pleasure.”

Immediately through Adam’s mind swirled the vision of a misty pond at evening time, with a lone lily gracing its surface.

“May I call you Lily?” he asked. And Lily smiled assent.

Then Leo spoke. “She will make you comfortable, Adam. When you awaken, it will be our evening time, and you will be just as one of us. Keep your aspirations on the better things, and you will do no wrong. Know that the best things to come are only a little beyond the present, and that awareness is your best guide. It lifts you upward, and it insulates you against unwholesome temptation.

“Do not wallow in the present, and crawl not after the past.

See all things in relation to the 'now,' and see them as sliding before you at the speed of light; and before you shall forever stretch the infinity of things. To the enlightened ones, Adam, the past, present, and future are all just 'now.' Motion gives that 'now' life and infinity. Please know that I leave you both with that admonition."

"Leo," Adam commented, "I see why I have been asked to call you by that name. It was assumed beforehand that I would see in you the Lion, yet holding a lamb in his arms. A lion becomes handsome, gentle, and understanding. The lion becomes sublimated into Man, as promised. You don't mind, do you, that I voice my perceptions?"

Leo merely shook his head with a smile for reply and, waving his hand, turned and walked away.

Adam stepped closer to Lily, who was looking at neither Leo nor himself but at the lawn, with mischief dancing in her eyes as though she had just made some kind of conquest. She was now alone with an earthman, to be his nurse and hostess for a short while. This was indeed a new experience to her. Thus Adam thought, and thus she confirmed by her next words to him.

"Adam, you have justified Leo's faith in earth's people. You have made him glad that you and I will be alone for a time. This is one time in your life and mine that Alpha Centaurians, my people, have removed all recording facilities from our two lives. Higher beings from other worlds no doubt record us just the same. It will be my pleasure to bring you into my world for a while, and it is for you to bring me into yours. I believe we shall find them to be essentially one. Do you not feel as I do?"

"I have always felt so, Lily, even if only subconsciously. But I never dreamed so much would be revealed to me. I thought ages must pass before earth's evolution would bring any of us to such heights of realization."

Lily walked rapidly, and almost ran toward the cottage entrance. How swiftly, Adam thought, these people change from

one attitude to the next, and how smoothly, almost as if their actions were timed to music.

He ran to catch up with her at the doorway, and followed her inside. A teacher she was, but she was many other things. She was a youthful girl chasing the butterfly in a meadow. She was a girlish beauty, knowing nothing but rapture in all things. She was the vision that appears in the morning mist on a little hill. She was not a temptation but an exquisite sensation, never consumed, always fresh. She was like an eternal fountain abundantly offering its cool effervescence to all within its radius without stint.

Was this exuberance of Lily's due to knowing that Leo would never be more than five miles away from her, or was it due to the interval of absolute freedom she would spend with Adam? He was suddenly introduced to one of the questions man forever asks, and woman never answers. He was suddenly in love, in love, as the phrase means in its higher sense.

He was sensing the bittersweet, the web which is interlaced with threads of jealousy; the flames that leaped within him damped by the pain of unrequited adoration. In the light of love he saw her body as the gateway to her shining soul. He longed to look at her in leisure so his being could merge with hers.

Instinctively, he called upon all his training as a physician, and all his knowledge as a science student. She was, he reminded himself, merely a mass of molecules brought together in organisms and consciousness. This analysis only aggravated his emotions, however. He loved her that much more. After all, was he not also a mere agglomeration of atoms and molecules? How could these be assembled by Nature so as to feel, to see, to hate, to resent, and ultimately, to ... to love? His heart was tearing at his ribs. His limited earthly learning served only to accentuate his burning emotions, which became a million scorpions stinging every nerve in his body.

So this is what love can do to one, Adam thought, as he stood in the doorway with a semblance of outward calm, while the object of his worship continued her brisk pace to the

kitchen. If she would just stand motionless while he absorbed the essence of her with hungry eyes! Why would she not keep still? “Was she, after all, like earth women? Even earth women were beyond his inexperienced knowing, he remembered. Would Launie finally bring him the love and peace that “passeth understanding?” Launie, Launie, he thought. Why are you so long in appearing to me?

But Lily, delectable, lovable Lily, was delicious to his inner vaults of feeling. He remembered suddenly that he was here alone in the doorway, lost in a kind of limbo. He nearly ran into the kitchen so he could feast his eyes on Lily, who was cosmic livingness itself. She was preparing two glasses of refreshing beverage—water and pellets—those never-ending pellets! She offered him one of the glasses, with its liquid bubbling amber. She took the other and they drank thirstily, Adam rising under its effect, and Lily descending. As they put their glasses down, they looked into each other’s eyes with a deeper understanding than before. Lily saw in Adam the small essence of Leo, and Adam saw in Lily only the promise of Launie. One thing was certain now, and that was that Adam was no longer tired or sleepy, but wide awake and expectant. No, not anticipating Launie, for he must first understand and fathom Lily. He had learned the ways of these people, and he must master each phase of his learning before progressing to the next. Thus ran his thoughts.

Having drunk the nectar, and now meeting on an equal plane, Adam felt his masculine strength assert itself. Through his vocal chords it spoke, almost as a thing apart.

“I do not wish to meet any other woman of your world. I want to be with you. I will learn whatever I must learn, and I do want to learn, but I want no more of your women in my life. Please spare me from any more such pain and pleasure. Really, I cannot stand more. You have been my nurse. You are beautiful beyond words. I long to be near you and with you. That is all I feel at this time. Must I go through more than this? I am only an earthly mortal, and you give me all that I can possibly receive. Won’t your people let me be at

peace within myself, and let me remain only with you?—Lily, aren't you listening to me? Where are you going?"

As if she did not hear Adam, Lily proceeded to make the cottage comfortable, seeing that everything was in good order—She busied herself in the kitchen, putting things in the oven of the small thermionic range, taking them out again. She arranged dishes, cups and saucers in a scurry of motion that left Adam breathless. Her eyes, blue as the lakes of northern America, set off by the Helen-of-Troy features, finally looked into his own, as she paused in her duties.

"Be open, Adam, but be still. What is your own will come to you. You asked for a meeting with another world, and now you are in the fulfillment of that wish. I have not called you. You have called us. But we answer as though we have called you. Ask for whatever you may, Adam, and if it be existent, it shall respond to you. Thus, I am and you are. You call and I hear you. Call upon an angel, and an angel will respond. Call upon something lesser, and it, too, will respond. You have called me, and I am here. Now, if that is clear in your mind, you are on our level and no more special preference will be given to you. Unless you become one of us in spirit you can learn nothing, and nothing shall be added unto you." Thus spoke the elementary teacher to Adam, who loved her.

He drew close to her, and looking into her eyes, said, "I am sorry, ma'am. I have yet to meet Launie. But I do not want to meet her alone. I want you to be present. Whatever she has to add to me will be welcome, but I do not choose to lose what you have already given me. I want your person and your spirit to be at my side at all times. I need you. Even Launie could not overcome that need. Please, may I ask that much in humble sincerity?"

Lily thereupon assumed a formal attitude, and charged him, "Adam, you are letting yourself be carried away by emotion. You are not the only thing on my mind, nor are your little wants all I have to attend to. This is my cottage, and will be your home during your stay on Andromeda. An extra room

has been added as your bedroom. You would hardly know it was not part of the original design, yet it was done by our young boys within hours. In less than twelve hours, our people have given you such an experience of wholesome and idealistic love, and now a sense of home, that you feel you have always had such things. You may be sure we will have company soon, and you have yet to know Launie. This will still be your home after you meet her.

“You see, besides all that is yet to come, you have been subjected to quite intensive living. Now I must be getting ready, for we are going to have some distinguished visitors.”

With this, Lily disappeared like a nymph into her bedroom.

Adam was in no mood to be thwarted in the discussion he had started. He followed her, planting his feet solidly across the doorway of her room as though ready for a long siege. Words filled with emotion poured from his lips like a cloudburst.

“I’m sorry, I do feel that I want to meet Launie, after all. I am not sleepy or drowsy any longer and I feel capable of any new experience that awaits me. But I still wish you would stay with me for the duration of my sojourn among your people. Let’s go meet her, and please stay close to me.”

Lily smiled to herself with a joy somewhat exaggerated for the occasion, as though she knew more and saw more than Adam, but she promised not to leave him as long as he fervently wished it. As she started toward him, something stopped her suddenly and, transfixed, her ears attuned to a sound he could not hear, her eyes tried to see what she heard. Then Adam heard it too. It was music, faint but growing stronger. Lily swept past him and ran into the living room to turn a small dial, and at once a section of the wall became a television unit. Adam followed her.

In three-dimensional view they saw three men and one woman walking side by side. They were moving with a grace like that of a waltz. Lily’s fingers crept to the sides of her temples, her eyes wide with awe.

“I can hardly believe it,” she breathed. “Adam, that is Saturn, Neptune, Orion and Lyra! They are on their way

here to see you. Never have all of them been here together in my lifetime. Your presence brings them to this cottage. Oh, Adam, see how important you are to them, and to all the rest of us? Every hair of your head is counted. A sparrow does not fall but is noticed and recorded. Remember that eternal lesson, Adam? This is what is meant by it. Look whom you bring here—our own Saturn, our chief, and three of the peers with him.” Lily was in ecstasy. In a sweeping move, she left Adam alone before the set.

“Out of the way, Adam! I must prepare for them. I must give my dance of welcome for them.” Then, pausing, she asked him hurriedly, “Oh, yes! it must be for them, but in honor of you, also. What song do you wish me to dance to when they arrive?” Her expression was changing rapidly. Like a chameleon, she was transforming from a young milkmaid into a devastating Salome, her hands already groping into the ether for the touch of rhythmic perfection. Her eyes were focusing even more distantly within their own mists. Turning the small dial, she spoke as if to the wall. Adam heard the name “Antares.” The other words were strange to him, yet sonically delightful. She had spoken to one called “Antares” in her native tongue, and the music ceased. Then a low rumble began to swell from the set before him, filling the entire room.

Lily rushed to her bedroom. Adam was truly perplexed for a moment. Then he saw what he thought was a vision, but it was no vision. It was Lily emerging from her room in time with the crescendo of the familiar earth tune, “Siboney.” He had been unaware that he had requested the song when she asked him to state his choice.

Adam beheld a new Lily. She had changed rapidly, not only in aspect, but in clothes. Her skin had not a flaw. Gleaming synthetic material composed her scant apparel; scant, but artistic and proper.

The rendition of Siboney swirled into its melody, and Lily became a figure inspiring the very notes. Adam stood entranced. She had timed it perfectly, for at that moment Saturn walked in, followed closely by Neptune, Orion, and lovely Lyra.

Trained monarchs never entered anywhere on earth in equal elegance. Every motion was majestic, purposeful, progressive. Their clothing, was simple, fitting perfectly, and looking like silk sprinkled with diamond dust.

“Welcome, Adam, welcome,” Saturn greeted him, with vigorous ease in his voice.

“Welcome, Adam,” the three others joined in. Lily went on dancing, with joy through all her being. Siboney had reached the ultimate in music as her dance gave faithful interpretation to each note. As the number ended, she came gracefully to Saturn, and bowing slightly, kissed his right hand. She repeated this gesture to Neptune, Orion, and Lyra. Lyra took her hand in her own, and kissed her hair.

Thus Adam was ushered fully into another world. Had he known these elegant ones for all that they were, he too would have greeted them in a dance of joy, baring his innermost feelings physically for their benevolent inspection. Lily was simply carrying out one of their customs, namely, that the lesser ones in evolution present themselves to the greater ones in the fullness of their entire beings, such as the dance through which she was now expressing herself. It could be compared to the shaking of hands among men of earth, but the grandeur of the greeting was symbolic of the vast gulf between their civilization and Adam's. He was privileged to taste both phases of their civilization.

Lily stood erect now, once more her former self, and begged leave of Lyra to change clothing. More than merely assenting, Lyra accompanied Lily to her room. Adam was left with the three men. Men, these were! Orion spoke to him.

“Adam,” he said, “we will not stay long, because you need sleep. Trust us not to say or to teach you what is utterly new to you. If it should sound new to your mind, then someone else on earth has already come upon the same knowledge. When you awaken from your sleep you will be ready to learn all that your whole being as a man of near perfection might learn. You are in good care. Be joyful, and feel secure. Tonight shall pass quietly for you. Tomorrow you shall be sub-

merged in grandeur. Everything will be new to you only by confirmation. We give thanks to the Creator for this opportunity to share with you what we have.”

As Orion finished, Lyra and Lily came out of the bedroom and went into the kitchen to prepare refreshments, talking together as women do everywhere.

Saturn went directly to Adam, who sat comfortably in a chair. He looked intently under Adam’s right ear and put his finger there, rubbing the spot gently.

“All gone, isn’t it?” he asked.

It was gone, indeed. The little lump, the herald of doom, was not there. Adam could hardly believe it.

“Yes, it is gone,” Saturn said. “The beverage Launie gave you a little while ago destroyed all the nuclei of the cancer cells. Metastasis has ceased temporarily. The sarcoma has been returned to its root origin. It will evolve again, but a month has been added to your earth days, Adam.”

Adam had forgotten his doom. He had forgotten he was in the presence of the peers, one of whom was a master physician. He had heard the name “Launie.” It had lifted him in spirit to another realm. Was he dreaming. “Launie? I have not yet met Launie. How could she have given me the nectar to drink? I beg of you, Saturn, where is she?”

But Saturn remained silent, evaluating Adam’s health in general.

Neptune now took the opportunity to speak. He came close to Adam, and as Saturn -stood thoughtfully looking on, he said, “Adam, our hostess and yours, whom you have called Lily, is in truth your Launie. She is one of our little fun-makers here; it is just a harmless pastime. She has much to learn, so she is a teacher of some of our children and thereby learns through teaching. You have been with Launie since you first set foot on Andromeda.”

Adam felt rushing relief from his guilty conscience, his feeling of duplicity in having been drawn from one lovely girl to another. Lyra and Launie had suddenly become silent in the kitchen. Now, for some inexpressible reason, Adam felt

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wedded, wedded to a girl he scarcely knew. He looked toward the doorway of the kitchen. Launie was standing there, draped in a white dress, in which she looked like an exotic flower in full bloom. She had won her first little conquest, and she had not only won through a harmless scheme, but so far as the peers were concerned, had won eloquently and regally.

Lyra came out of the kitchen, spoke her native tongue into the wall near the dial, mentioning the name Antares as Launie had done. Presently there was music, subdued for the occasion, so conversation would not be disturbed. Launie had returned to the kitchen.

Adam recognized the music as a familiar one of earth called "La Vien Rose." It fitted the flowing presence of Lyra perfectly, but it was the lesser Launie who held his whole being spellbound in total love, for Launie was on a level he could fathom. After all, Lyra was one of the peers, unreachable to his appreciation and to his less evolved senses. Lyra was almost of a mirage, but Launie was warmly real.

Before long Launie and Lyra were bringing in two trays holding glasses of beverage. Lyra took over most of the duties of serving, noting that Launie was lost in a dream. She was in deep reflection, trying to comprehend the meaning of these present moments. She fumbled a bit but Lyra turned the occasion into perfection. What flustered Launie was the realization that four of her peers, including their chief, Saturn, were guests in her little cottage. Their genuine interest engendered an atmosphere of intimacy and warmth that taxed her equilibrium. In all the five hundred thousand population on the ship Andromeda, at this moment it was she, Launie, who was entertaining the top ones. She was delighted to the point of being overwhelmed by it all. To think that one such as she was given this experience!

Potentially, she was a daughter equal to any and all the daughters aboard Andromeda, and the moment confirmed this feeling within her. Also, she was to sponsor a man of earth in his extraterrestrial experiences. What more could her lovely heart ask? And Adam was the cause of it all. Insignificant,

plain, earth mortal Adam, was able to bring to the house of Launie such peers as Saturn, Neptune, Orion, and Lyra. Thus, if only superficially and for a passing time, she loved Adam, shutting her true love, Leo, deliberately out of her mind.

Adam surrendered himself to the ecstasy of this new-found love, unmindful of Saturn, who had not yet completed his examination and was exploring around his ears for any sign of upsurge in the lymphatic ailment. To Adam, the sight and presence of Launie submerged concern regarding his physical condition, and made him oblivious to others around him.

Saturn and Adam now joined the others and they all sat quietly for a moment, sipping the delicious nectar. Launie sat on the floor next to Adam's chair. He felt unworthy of her nearness, but it was so irresistible he accepted it in silence.

Launie lifted her glass to her lips, and suddenly broke into tears. Lyra gave vent to her own emotions, following with tears of equal volume. The men were at a loss to understand this outburst. Orion looked intensely at Lyra. Saturn and Neptune held their poise, but glanced at each other as if to say silently, "Thus be all learning and true ascension of soul; painful, delightful but progressive; and thus even the lowest rises up, and becomes a glorified one."

Adam, feeling a little of the mood of the others, concurred with Saturn and Neptune in thought. Wisdom was asserting itself in this moment. Why should tears move him any more than they moved Saturn and Neptune? He, a mere earthman, was more poised than some of these Alpha Centaurians. He was equal with Saturn, the chief, and with Neptune, a high peer.

Launie had spent her emotion. With eyes still damp, she turned smilingly toward Adam's own eyes, asking of them their inmost history, their very reason for existence. In that instant Adam the master became Adam the slave. He knew that for her he would forget all else, for her he would nullify a segment of the universe itself. For her he would become selfish desire personified. There was not now, and there never had been, in his present senses, any kind of existence anywhere but

what Launie had not now at last given to it meaning and fullness. The living universe was she. If she could understand atomic function as he now understood it, she was truly his mate and not the mate of Leo. But with this thought Launie seemed to recede from him. She was once more distant, once more strange, once more a ravishing beauty seeking nothing but surface romance.

This time Adam was not hurled into a lonesome limbo. Even though Launie was aloof, Saturn, Neptune, Orion, and Lyra were close in spirit with him. They talked small talk and bigger talk, and no talk. The peers were taking in every detail of what Adam said or heard, and his every reaction was recorded in their minds like photography. He knew this though they had not stated it, but he did not object. Indeed, he was grateful, for in his own way he was also recording them in his mind.

The music from the wall slowly faded, and Saturn announced they would be leaving. When Adam awakened on the morrow Launie would escort him on short sojourns. He had only one question to ask of the group. It surged within him so strongly he felt it proper to ask.

“How is it that I heard Launie and Lyra speak your native tongue into the receiving and sending set? Vega told me I would not hear it during my stay on Andromeda.”

“Because,” Lyra spoke up, “you remembered five words which I had spoken sometime ago to a man of earth, and you quoted them to Vega correctly. Thereby you freed us of needing to take extreme care in order to spare you any undue confusion or feeling of inferiority. You have gained nothing and lost nothing. Every second of your trip here was recorded by our Antares, whom you will meet on the morrow.” Lyra’s loveliness reminded him of Vega. Ah, yes, he had another question.

“I never saw such loveliness before as when Vega laughed heartily, laughed like a warbling youngster when I asked her why it was that we had not seen the sun, nor even its bright outline. Why did she laugh so?”

“Because,” Neptune replied, “you asked it with an air that told Vega you had finally reached a point where she was defeated. You had the pleasant aspect of an intelligent victor. In reality, we have simply not come to the sun on your tour as yet. Do not feel slighted on that account. Your chance to see it will come. For the time being, get on with the present things, Adam, and trust in us.”

* * * *

“With Neptune’s words the remaining half hour was spent in social talk, and getting better acquainted. When Saturn arose to leave, the rest of his party followed suit graciously’, and soon Launie and I were once more alone,” Adam said. “Believe me, Orfeo, I felt in love up to the zenith. It was romantic love, to be sure, but wholesome. She reveled in her own beauty, and was pleased with her success in molding my emotions thus far. At times I felt she was more like a distant relative to me than someone I wanted as my own.”

We looked up to see the early desert dawn beginning to light the open spaces. Adam seemed energetic in spite of his narration throughout the night. I was not feeling tired, either.

“Well,” he suggested, “let’s continue this tonight. Meantime, we should both get some sleep during the day. It is Saturday, and you do not go to work. Are there any questions in your mind before I leave?”

“Yes,” I replied. “You said the lump under your ear was gone after you had taken the drink, when Saturn examined it. Yet I see it there. It is small, but present, nevertheless.”

“I know it is there, all right, but if you feel it you will find that it is no longer hard, but is very soft. The malignancy was decidedly destroyed in the area. The slight swelling left has merely flared up somewhat, that is all. Remember, they would not cure me, though they could have easily. That would be interfering with earth’s own evolution, and they never would risk it.”

“But, Adam,” I rejoined, “they added one month to your lifetime. That is as much interference as if they had taken

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over your entire life. How can that fact ever be reconciled with the 'no interference' policy they so magnanimously practice?"

"Orfeo, are you trying to be a Sherlock Holmes? If so, then don't conclude until all the facts are assembled," Adam neatly remonstrated.

"You see," he continued, "they knew I would eventually submit to surgery at the focal point of the sarcoma, namely, at the neck. This would have given me another month of life, at best. So they merely extended the time of its progress where I would have had surgery anyhow, and diffused the total sarcoma unilaterally. Not one minute has been added to me. How they did it is still a mystery to me, but where is the interference? This phase of it means more to you than to me, but you are already giving the problem study, so again, I'm telling you, it is not interference. Whatever we of earth do is not interference of one world upon another, but merely evolution. Now, are you satisfied, and do I have leave to go for the day?"

He smiled benevolently. A beautiful man he was, doomed in this lifetime, yes. but he had found life, or life had found him. What matter which it was? His minute was another man's year. He got up from his chair, prepared to leave. As he walked out of the door it was like the dawn of nature meeting the dawn of man.

"Oh, Adam," I called out as he got into his car. "Where shall we meet tonight?"

"Same place, Orfeo; Tiny's Cafe, at about the same time as last night."

He started his car and was soon driving away. Suddenly I realized that I did not know where he was going if I should need him. The lonesomeness of the eternal desert gripped me, for most people had not yet awakened and all was still, all but the rising sun and Adam's car now climbing the hill toward town. I looked to see if a lizard would dart from one bush to another, or a jackrabbit rear its head and run off, but there was nothing alive at the moment except the rising sun

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and me. For ages it had never failed to rise, nor to set. Everything else had some flaw, but not the rising and the setting of the sun. How beautifully earth spun on its axis! I thought, as I went back into the cottage.

Yes, mankind slowly and painfully unfolded unto the glories nestled in its bosom, for man alone was the destined heir to all that lay just beyond his primitive vision. For man alone earth turned steadily and danced on in its own orbit, hugging that sun. The wealth of the earth came from the sun, and that of the sun came from the Milky Way, and that of the Milky Way, from . . . from where? Even these space visitors came only from a stone's throw from our sun. They had not yet fathomed the Milky Way. Why, then, should I try to ponder it? A cup of coffee, yes, warm up a cup of coffee. That would be a more practical thing to do. And then sleep.

* * * *

I awoke about 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, refreshed, invigorated and peaceful. A new well-being made the desert sands more meaningful to me than they had ever been before. The life around seemed like the surface activity of a sea with hidden depths. I felt more in communion with the huge life of its silence than with the small life of its surface. I had not known the mystic spell of the desert before, nor of the sea, nor of the river, nor of the mountain, nor of the meadow, nor of the sky. Below all surfaces are quiet but steady messages, having one ultimate thing in common, the sense of eternity.

I went into town about an hour later. There I found the bustle of tourist activity, people coming and going. I saw nothing of Adam, and did not look for him. Rather, I used the late afternoon mingling with friends and tourists. It is easy to start a conversation in Twentynine Palms. A stray marine is glad to speak to anything that moves. A widow in retirement has yet to meet the purpose of living in human form. A hotel or motel keeper greets your hello with the rate of rooms, overnight or weekly. A real estate operator thinks you are a millionaire in pauper's clothing, ready to buy up acres

with a “river view,” which river turns out to be a dry wash. It is dry 364 days of the year, except when the cloudburst comes. Then the river washes clean through miles of desert, surges through the Colorado, and lands in the middle of Nevada. Thus thrived this little community and therein lay its appealing beauty. I loved it, and thousands of others seemed to love it too, for they have braved its every challenge.

Today Adam was among these people somewhere. I was hoping inwardly that he was not out buying up a thousand gopher holes with the ten thousand dollars he had promised me.

By late afternoon the effect of the nectar had almost completely worn off. I began to feel listless yet restless, and to doubt that Adam was real. Time slipped by and the sun went down. I did recall having washed two cups this morning, but it could still have been just a dream of some kind.

I looked at my wrist watch. It was 7:00 o'clock, and Tiny's cafe was just a few blocks away. I drove slowly and parked not far from its door. I could already see a man who resembled Adam sitting at the same table where I had met him the night before. When I walked in the door the same smile, the same man waited for me. This time I could understand how he knew, and why he was here.

He lost no time in preparing a glass of nectar for me. Tonight there were only two glasses, his and my own. There was a loneliness within both of us without the presence of the third glass, but the nectar soon elevated us into the next octave of consciousness. This time Adam ordered two vegetable dinners, which was just what we both seemed to want.

As we were getting ready to enjoy our food I noticed the waitress looking at me, then she asked if there was anything else I wanted. Oh yes, I thought impulsively, and I asked for another glass. Not minding her surprise, I poured water from the pitcher, and occasionally looked into the glass. It remained there with just the water. Nothing happened. Adam smiled to himself, shaking his head a little as he ate.

“Orfeo,” he said, “it was you who taught me that you can-

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not initiate a contact with them. They do the contacting. Why do you even try?"

"Anything, Adam, anything at all," I replied, "to see her dance once more. I see her anyhow, even in the clear water."

We did not linger too long over our meal, and soon drove our cars onto the driveway of Earl's little cottage for the second time. I could hardly wait to hear more of Adam's narrative.

Tonight we would have tea instead of coffee, and I went to the stove to put some water on to heat. As I held up Earl's package of tea bags, Adam grinned his approval.

We sat down, and neither of us said a word for a few minutes. Then Adam asked me not to turn on the radio this night, for he would need to feel as if he was living it all again and I must absorb every word. With that request he began at once, and we were promptly catapulted aboard the space ship Andromeda.

Chapter 7

ADAM MEETS ANTARES

After Saturn and his companions had left them alone, Adam felt a pleasant lethargy, then a desire for sleep.

“Adam,” Launie said, “go to bed whenever you wish, but go before fifteen minutes are up or you will be asleep wherever you are.” She laughed winsomely, as Vega had laughed during their trip together. She came up to him, put her forefinger on his chin coquettishly, and added, “That is so, Adam. Tomorrow I am your guide, tonight your nursemaid. Now goodnight, you handsome, untamed earthman.”

After Adam was in bed he heard Launie singing, and as he drifted off into sleep her voice became a background of smooth velvet. He remembered nothing more until he awoke in the “morning” and heard her singing again. He could smell breakfast being prepared by this dainty miss. Never on earth, Adam thought, had such a lovely woman been so attentive to a man and yet belonged so completely to another man.

He felt fully awake in a short time and called out, “Good morning, Launie. Have you had any sleep?”

“Oh, yes indeed,” she called back. “But not quite as much as you.”

Adam washed, dressed, and presented himself in the kitchen. There she was, the human meaning of morning glory, too innocently lovely to look upon by a crude person like himself, he thought. How could she be one of the “retarded” ones among her people? He was indeed learning to love. The next problem was how to forget. At that instant Launie looked at him with a Mona Lisa expression, as though reading his thoughts and conveying the message that teaching him to forget would also be her task.

He seated Launie at the table and then he sat down. Before them were eggs, bacon, potatoes, toast, and a pitcher of milk. It could not have been more like home anywhere on earth.

They ate with few words spoken. Just before finishing, Adam asked, “Launie, I noticed yesterday that the children and adults in the banquet hall were feasting on delicious steaks. Do your people still eat animals? Most of us on earth do, yes, but your Alpha Centaurians, do they?”

She answered without looking at him.

“Yes, Adam. We eat steaks and all else we desire, with pleasure and with gusto, but we waste nothing. To waste any essential is the same as destroying, the same as killing outright. Such things as waste are so remote from my people that only the most retarded of us ever speaks of them. As for the steaks—have you seen any animals thus far on board Andromeda?” she asked.

“No. No, I haven’t. That is strange, especially since you feed me eggs, milk, meat and other animal products. There is an unreality about it all. It makes me feel I am drifting in a lagoon halfway between a Paradise and limbo.”

Launie replied warmly and reassuringly. “We at home or on our base ships produce everything synthetically, as you would say. Does not what you have eaten taste even better than the natural foods of your earth? Furthermore, Adam, remember that all things are natural. Eventually the people of earth will duplicate much of nature’s own creations. It is merely a result of learning, remember?”

Adam nodded his head almost imperceptibly. No longer did this seem unreal, but all was alive, superb.

“We do have animals on our home planet,” Launie continued, “but very few. Our people number twenty billion, so there is little room for animals. But ages ago, Adam, we also had a moon. Our ancestors finally landed upon it, and in time we gave it an atmosphere and cultivated it. It remains our satellite to this very day. We have made it into a small planet and transferred most of the animal creatures there. There are also a few million of our retarded ones, like myself and the others here on Andromeda, who make their home on that man-dressed planet. Even the animals evolve to final gentleness.

“One thing to remember, Adam, is that for every pound

of weight we brought to our moon we removed a pound of moon matter, to keep its weight original, and to keep the orbits in balance. Indeed, we found we could not shoot too many objects away from our home planet into space if we were to avoid affecting the mass of our own planet. This would have the effect of disturbing the orbits also, if carried to a sufficient extreme.”

In a few minutes they had finished breakfast. But Adam’s thoughts were still on what she had said.

“Launie, do the scientists and engineers of earth consider that fact? That is, to replace a ton of moon matter with a ton of earth matter when removed, and vice versa?” he asked.

“If they don’t,” she replied, “they will eventually. But let’s drop that subject for the time being—and never mind the dishes. The children know I am busy with you, and they will be eager to come in and set everything in order, clean and neat.”

They were soon outside, where Launie took Adam by the hand. On the grassy street was a small platform, about four feet in diameter. It had circular plastic railing around it about three feet high, and a small gate which had been purposely left ajar by someone who had anticipated their use of it. The platform was in effect a small craft, and the two stepped aboard. Launie took her position by a small control box, moved some dials, and they rose up and away. There was not a sound coming from this amazing gondola-like craft.

The sky above Andromeda itself was dark, but the whole interior of Andromeda was as light as day. There were no longer lightning flashes above. Adam asked Launie the reason for this.

“Because, she replied, “we are now on the night side of Venus. That is why you see no lightning and other effects. The center of our ceiling is five miles high. Andromeda is a large half-sphere ship. She can stand anything but the interior of burning stars. Although we are still in the cloudy atmosphere of Venus, as I said, we are opposite the sun, and it is the sun’s intense rays which cause the constant electrical displays on the side facing it. We are going to meet our chief astronomer.”

For your sake, we shall call him Antares, after the great star.”

No sooner had she spoken his name than hundreds of humans soared into the air. Children and adults, like a flock of birds, rose in even ranks, then broke the uniformity into myriads of individual positions, elevations and directions. There were objects under their feet which looked like round skates. The people looped and zoomed up and down, they twirled like toe dancers and some tumbled about with dizzying speed. They were skating in thin air, and then their skating area was filled with waltz-like music, accompanied by angelic singing.

Launie had anticipated his utter surprise and, smiling happily, was ready to explain to Adam, who was too mute to ask.

“You see, Adam, they wear crystal-plastic shoes, which simply ride the magnetic waves. The entire floor of Andromeda functions in the same way, as do our little craft here and our larger space ships, and as do the solar systems, the galaxies and the cosmic spheres-within-spheres. It is really very simple, once you know how, she finished, with her hearty but enchanting laugh.

Very simple. Indeed! thought Adam. Their simplicities were his perplexities. At last he found his voice.

“Launie, don’t laugh that way or I will be tempted to kiss you. I will call you ‘lovely one’ instead of Launie. I . . . I . . . oh, I don’t know what I’ll do,” he managed to say, laughing with her.

“Go ahead, handsome one,” she said, laughing still more beautifully. “Leo would like to hear you say it, too.”

With those words, she regained her composure. Adam was beginning to see the real Launie. What to him was akin to a spiritual unfoldment was adventure for the sake of a little bit of learning to her. He felt he was among angels and so, he reasoned, she must feel as if cavorting with a primitivelike creature, yet he could not have been made to feel more at home, nor more delighted. Soon there were many craft rising up and going to and fro, of various sizes and shapes, weaving among the hundreds of “skaters.”

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“This is more normal,” Launie informed him. “They all stayed grounded until you and I appeared in the air. It was a fine gesture on their parts toward you.”

“Launie, do you not feel somewhat flattered with all this attention you are getting along with me?” Adam wanted to know.

“No, not flattered, Adam. We rarely are flattered. We know joy and communion of spirit in such displays as these. When any one of us receives a privilege or widespread attention, the rest of us are glad, and confirm that one’s singular joy of the moment with some form of rejoicing. Some day your own earth will know this fullness of living.”

Their little car slowed down and soon landed on the flat roof of a large building. Other crafts of various colors were parked there also. Launie opened the little gate and they stepped out. Adam looked at the roof, which was like translucent ivory.

“Hmmm,” he murmured. “No leak through this solid beauty.”

“Leak what, Adam?” asked Launie, smiling. “This roof is fully one inch thick, but never worry. It is stronger than a foot of your strongest steel. This building is our central astro-navigational headquarters. From here we control and keep in contact with all our smaller ships in the sector of Andromeda, including Andromeda herself. There are a few smaller buildings at compass points here, and they are extensions of this. Each houses a particular branch of research. Antares is the chief of the department.”

Launie took his hand in hers and led him down a stairway. After a short walk through door-lined corridors they came to the main office, and walked directly in. Adam got the impression he was in a sort of broadcasting station, and that this office was the very center. There sat Antares at an average, earth-type desk, his demeanor one of calm expectancy. Launie walked to the desk, spoke his name with a slight bow of her head, and gave him a look of gratitude for this opportunity to be with him. Antares returned her sincere greeting. Then,

turning his eyes toward Adam, he merely said, "You are welcome, friend; most welcome, indeed."

"Thank you, Antares," Adam responded, with ease. "I pray that I will prove worthy of being here. Please forgive any shortcomings you find in me. All that I see and learn is appreciated, and I revere it. At this moment it seems I have lost the dividing line between what I once called matter and spirit. I wonder if there ever *was a* dividing line?" Adam turned his head from Antares to Launie. For once, she looked intimately, deeply and exquisitely into his eyes, finding her way into his soul. Adam was learning of the future, while she was learning of the particular awakenings of evolution in this man who was far behind her in cosmic time.

"Adam, do you think you would have appreciated all this if you had not met Vega and Launie?" Antares asked, motioning for them to be seated, one on each side of his desk. Adam sat to his left and Launie to his right. Adam made haste to reply to Antares' question.

"No, I wouldn't. I would have seen everything as merely material knowledge, which would soon curdle my spirit, and my whole being with it. I must admit I love Launie, but she is so elusive! I find myself forever chasing an unreachable promise of ecstatic love. As for all things, material and spiritual, I now feel they are one and the same. I feel the merging of the two must occur before the final attainment of great happiness is possible. For the first time, so-called spiritual things have come to mean even more to me than so-called material things. Am I to know the dazzling finality of this supreme understanding?"

"No, Adam, not in this lifetime," replied Antares. "Even our civilization has not yet found it. It awaits us all on the last rung of the upward ladder. Nevertheless, you will learn enough to give you peace of mind, and the rapture of awakening to some extent. Your material life ended when you closed your office for reasons beyond your control; but because there was the slight spark of the angel in you, you ascended, as it

were, another rung up the ladder of spirituality. Even the one rung is rapture, is it not?"

For a moment Adam was stunned. Then he found words to say, "Antares, are you the chief navigator? I expected to find a brilliant but methodical and cold wizard. Instead I find you, as I have found most of your people, including the peers, unpretentious and warm-hearted, rather than highly learned ones intensely absorbed in their work."

"You will never find us tense and strained in your perspective, Adam, and you see we do get results through our attitudes. Good health offers us good and orderly energy. God is not violent with the understanding ones. The more we find the more is bestowed. It is ignorance and disease that struggle. Comprehension exerts its excess energy in rapture and thrill; not reckless thrill but objective thrill, which evolves into the rapture of the cosmic splendor eventually. Now, let us get on with some things you should see."

At that moment the walls of the room changed slowly to another color. Little wonder they did not need decorative touches. The walls, floors and ceilings were equipped with all enhancements required for any occasion, although for furniture this room had only Antares' desk, a plastic cabinet with dials and switches, and the three swivel chairs in which they sat. The clothing of these people did not vary greatly from earth's apparel, other than being more simple and of finer texture.

Antares rose and rolled the cabinet near to his chair, then sat down again. He pushed a button, stood up again and went toward Launie. She arose as if in response, accepted his arm around her shoulders and his kiss on her cheek with such docility Adam felt a pang of painful jealousy. Antares had sensed Adam's reaction, and reassured him.

"When I pushed that button," he said, "Andromeda could tune in on us by sound and vision. You may be sure that Leo too is tuned in on Launie, not to spy but to look upon her. We do not know such emotions as jealousy, having forgotten them

ages ago. Besides, every person in this building has been alerted that visitors are here. Come, let us look around.”

Nevertheless, Adam had tasted jealousy which refused to ebb away completely from his mind. On all of Andromeda, he was the only being who knew such an emotion, mild as it was becoming. Thus to him the whole universe became flavored with some of the bitter in all its sweet. He had lost the bloom of his youth’s blossoming, and like a ripened fruit would know that bloom no more.

They walked along the corridors, looking into the rooms on either side. The simplicity of everything, of the building itself and the many rooms, of all visible facilities, belied the complex purposes and activities to which everything herein was devoted. The experts seen working appeared to be engaged in light and meaningless play rather than in works that not only would tax the most brilliant people of earth, but would be far beyond their comprehension in most instances. All was being done by the retarded ones, supervised by a few peers such as Antares, which made the tour of inspection that much more awe-inspiring to Adam.

On the way back to the office of Antares, he was informed of the true nature of the building.

“This is the very center of our ship Andromeda,” said Antares. “We have four other control buildings at compass points. Any one can fully function in the event that all the others should fail for some reason. We have had no trouble in any one of them for some centuries.” Launie exclaimed at his words, as if she had not known this fact before.

Finally they were once again in the office of Antares. He asked Launie and Adam to sit in their swivel chairs, as he drew the cabinet with the buttons and dials close to himself.

“Now, Adam,” he began, “you will see something few men of earth—in fact no man in many centuries before—has seen. The import of it is self-evident, and there is no final evaluation. Even we wonder as to the nature of what we have, captured by our instruments, so your surmise in this case will be as good as ours. A child’s would probably be even better,”

he said, with calm but eager voice as he manipulated the buttons on the cabinet. This caused the room to darken except for one section of the wall across from them, which maintained an ethereal glow. It gave a beautiful, three-dimensional effect.

As they watched, the glow took on the darkness of space, visible only because stars merged in motionless suspension at the same instant. This was an actual photograph of space. Antares' fine voice began to narrate the film for Adam's benefit.

"You are looking at one of our televisions, my friend. All our walls and partitions have this same capacity for electronic function. Now, watch carefully as we bring in a close-up of the center section of this scene. One of the stars will enlarge. Our crystal telescopes give details that show only as indistinct light on the best telescopes of earth. See, Adam! Do you notice that star in the center getting larger? Our film has been speeded up so we can bring in this close shot hundreds of times larger than we originally were able to photograph it. This, of course, is merely a fast-motion type of moving picture, and does not mean we have attained velocities exceeding the speed of light."

As Antares spoke, all the stars seemed to move off to the sides, while the center star became larger and larger. Then the focus on the center star revealed the beauty of the planet Saturn, with its concentric rings in bold relief. There, before his eyes, Adam saw one of the most beautiful sights of the universe. Shown in the suspended relief of three-dimensional photography, it would be difficult for one to imagine a more awe-inspiring scene.

"There, Adam," Antares explained, "is your solar planet, Saturn. As you look upon it, know that you are looking upon the exact replica of the atom, hydrogen. Yes, your nine planets are replicas or symbols of some dynamic function of nature that underlies invisibly what we perceive visibly. It is as though the great Creative Intelligence gave to our eyes a macroscopic replica of what goes on in the microscopic realms. Thus, you see now not only Saturn, the planet, but the atom, hydrogen.

"Now, let us go directly to the surface of Jupiter, the largest

of your nine planets. Does it tell you anything? Indeed it does.”

The scene shifted, bringing Jupiter into focus. Even from a distance it bespoke hugeness. Its zonal divisions, clearly defined, gave it a “split personality”, an aura of mysterious strength. There was a small red area on its otherwise mono-form sphere; monoform, that is, except for the zonal belts. Adam wondered if his guess at the nature of the red spot would be confirmed or reversed. Even as he was wondering Antares softly began explaining this strange bright area.

“Now, Adam, let us go directly onto the surface of Jupiter, and right into that red spot. You will hear the sound emanating from this seething sea of red, that you may fully appreciate what you see. Remember, that spot is so huge several earths, strung side by side, would well fit into it.

“Notice it is becoming larger and larger, more red as we approach it,” continued Antares. “The misty vapor you see is that of molten metal. We are now entering its cloud, then it thins out so you see it no more. The red spot has become a huge sea of bright orange color, and you cannot see its shores. It appears to be smooth, but wait until we are closer to it. It is still several thousand miles below us, so the clouds you saw were reflected, not real. Now we are in the true metal vapor clouds, which you see only as a hazy mist.”

When Antares finished speaking these last words there was silence in the office, the scene before them dominating every thought of the three people watching. In the darkness the lifelike televised projection of the planet’s red sea loomed like some fiery ghost. Adam was still feeling the effect of the nectar, and the presence of Launie and Antares gave the moment something akin to his idea of heaven.

The spell was soon broken by a deep, guttural and ominous roar. It was the voice of Jupiter’s red ocean of molten metals.

The surface was no longer smooth, but had become a heaving and billowing mass, bright orange with angry heat. Now the eyes of the watchers were brought to within scant yards of the seething turbulence of metallic geysers and whirlpools.

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There were waves of mountainous proportions, swells like oatmeal boiling in a vast cauldron. The beauty of the scene lay in the merging of brilliant hues, when orange heat cooled to red, then soon heated to orange again. These two were the only colors on the screen, merging into and out of the seething madness that was this red ocean, Jupiter's red "spot". No ship of earth could have withstood this madness, this inferno, for an instant. Adam had suspected its nature, but the actual sight of it was a little too much for him and he waited tensely for Antares to say more. However, his suspense was broken by the sudden appearance of tiny moving objects, three of them, flying over this forbidden, deadly sea like insects over a living volcano.

The objects were brought into full-sized perspective, where they could be clearly seen as three spherical craft with men visible aboard them. They hovered over the vastness of liquid spouts and turbulence, liquid so dense aluminum would float in it, Adam thought inadvertently. Antares, breaking the silence, narrated the facts.

"Those are three of our ships. They are spherical for the purpose of strength, not only in the vacuum of space but for the pressures of submergence in any ocean, or in any medium." Even as Antares spoke, the three craft plunged straight into the blistering metal ocean. It seemed suicidal, and Adam felt a wave of deep compassion sweep over him for those poor souls in the three little ships. But the voice of Antares reassured him.

"That boiling sea is more than ten thousand miles deep, Adam. Those ships you saw plunging beneath its surface actually went to its full depth. Can you imagine diving into a cauldron of molten metals more than ten thousand miles deep? To us this is what you would call routine. The floor of that blistering ocean," he continued, "goes to the very center, or the core of Jupiter. In fact, the whole ocean is born because of the seed-cell area, which is only a few hundred yards in spherical diameter in the very center of old Jupiter. Your earth has the same hot cell in its center, born of the great

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pressure that gravity exerts, and all atoms in that center are smashed to shapeless energy, fuming and seething to regain symmetrical form as atoms. Your sun is so much greater in mass that it smashes a far larger area in its center into formless energy, and it asserts itself throughout the entire sun body, rendering the whole sphere radiant and lighted. Your earth expels this energy by way of volcanoes, hot geysers, hot springs and earthquakes. Jupiter expels its inner core heat by way of its red spot, which you now know as that burning orange sea. The sun shines forth in majestic, life-giving light, radiance and heat. This is the secret of all the bodies of the universe,” Antares concluded.

Adam, excited by the words which verified his own theories, was quick to interject questions and suppositions.

“In short, Antares, the seething sea of Jupiter gives birth to some matter, while the sun gives birth to much matter. Yet,” Adam rushed on, like a student hitting at all the answers, “it takes a great mass of matter to exert pressure on a central core, which in turn gives birth to matter non-existent before. We are now more deeply into the question, then, of ‘which came first, the chicken or the egg?’ It requires the core of massive stars to create matter; yet it requires much matter to bring about the great and massive bodies enveloping such a core. Which, then, came first?”

From out of the dark came the soft voice of Launie.

“Adam,” she asked, “may I answer that one for you, in the best and only way I can? Feel sure that Antares can offer you no better answer to this question than I can, and even my answer will be no more accurate than a child of your own earth could give you. Which came first?” Launie almost sang, like some invisible siren. “When you find the answer to that question you will find the answer to the source of all things. In the meantime, you must be content with observing the results, or the effects, or with just observing things as they are. Then you will notice an orderliness in everything, and after that you will see a purpose. That purpose extends into the infinity of origin, and proceeds on to the infinity of the final

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end. It is the origin, and it came first. No matter how you approach the study of nature, you come upon that intangible, elusive yet vibrant thing called Purpose and Order. It always lies exactly in the middle of the effects we observe and the causes we seek. That intangible middle, Adam, came first. Yet, even that seems to be but the third harmonic of all things. Not only does it respond as an end product of action, but it also appears as the cause of all action observable. It has an infinite intelligence of its own, and remains aloof from any and all decisions, be they from the intuition, or from the calculated.

“For instance, think of the terms ‘Positive and Negative,’ ‘Action and Reaction,’ ‘Cause and Effect.’ What have you in the final analysis? Just the same two essentials. But in between these terms there is always the word, ‘and.’ So, there is the essence. Positive is positive because negative makes it so, and vice versa. Effects exist because of causes. Reaction is because of action. Even if you reverse the words they are just as accurate. It is safe to say that any cause we observe is actually an effect of something else. But you see, Adam, the word ‘and,’ which is always present, in any term, is the eternal essence, the third harmonic, the end product of the mutual exchange, the infinite hairline point where exchange is made between action and reaction. It is always at the center, at the word ‘and,’ that life emerges. It exists first, last and always. It is what our peers are seeking at this very moment. It is what all intelligent life is seeking. What is that middle? What goes on in that word, ‘and,’ which separates all countermotion? Only there will we find the ultimate answer. Only there can we find the Eternal Being of life. Do you understand what I am saying, Adam?” Launie concluded.

“Yes,” Adam answered. “In other words, the real action, the real place where life lives is at the point of exchange, where action becomes reaction, where positive buffets the negative, and so on. That point is consciousness, life, and purpose.”

“You have put it well in few words,” Launie said. “Jupiter stands in space as proof of that dynamic. It is a planet ready

to burst forth as a sun, yet it is a sun gone out of light. If it gained much weight it would become radiant as the sun. If it lost much weight it would become dormant, like any of the smaller planets. Thus is the universe. Mass and weight determine the radiance of any star. As with the sun, it is not action that gives it radiant energy, but pressure upon its core that makes the action and the radiant energy.”

For a moment, Adam felt as though he understood all the basic dynamics of the universe. The quiet following Launie’s words helped his assimilation of their deep meaning.

“Now, Adam,” Antares said, breaking his long silence, “we bring you the return to the surface of the three ships in that hot ocean of metal.”

From the seething turbulence the crafts emerged, not even dripping from their hulls.

“There they are,” said Antares. “They have been near the floor of that ocean, where the heat measures thousands of degrees, and have taken up many kinds of metal in various stages of molecular states. That ocean in its depths produces materials which can duplicate anything we can make artificially. Nature is always ahead of its own creatures, Adam.”

“Incidentally,” Antares continued, “that ship in the center was piloted by Leo, whom you have met here. Now we shall take the roar you hear from Jupiter’s red ocean and convert it to music by our crystal modulators. Listen.”

The horrendous roar became beautiful music. Adam was listening to Jupiter’s sea and all its radio emissions, modulated into a harmonious symphony. Antares spoke again, this time in a reverential tone.

“Now, Adam, we want to show you our prize astrophoto. This you have never seen. In fact, no man of earth has ever seen it.”

His words brought a sudden gasp from Launie. Caught by surprise, she asked, “Oh, Antares, not the Corona?”

“Indeed, Launie,” Antares assured her. “Is that not our prize photo from the cosmos?”

“But I am not prepared spiritually or morally. I may feel

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I am not worthy to look upon it. Adam is innocent in his ignorance, and you are worthy. But I . . . Oh, Corona, it is with humble eyes I will look upon you. With God's grace I will be pure in thought, and deeply pondering as I look upon you. Oh, Heavenly Corona!"

Adam was taken by surprise by Launie's sincere supplication. He felt as though he was to look at something which would move him from the depths of his soul. He could not see Launie in the darkness of the room, though she was close beside him, but he felt close to her, closer than he had ever felt before. It was a warm intimacy, mingling pure affection and inexpressible love. The atmosphere about them took on something of a divine essence so he could hardly wait to see the Corona. Antares sat motionless until he felt Launie had prepared herself, emotionally, then turned on the photo, a photo captured by the best molecular telescopic camera in the possession of the Alpha Centaurians.

To a novice like Adam the sight was indeed breathtaking. There was a central star, emitting light much as earth's sun radiates. A majestic planet appeared some distance away from this radiant star, where two moons, one on each side, came into view. Around these were six great satellites, each one the exact replica of Saturn, each a symbol of the pure element, hydrogen.

The Corona appeared to be a small constellation in itself. Its perfection bespoke a purpose and a function lofty beyond human comprehension. Studded here and there in its environs were golden stars which were set aside from other stars, serving to enhance the cluster.

Antares spoke in a tone that betrayed his humble attitude in the presence of this photo, his voice subdued in rapt humility.

"We have never been able to hold that majestic cluster in view, Adam. When we lose it we do not find it in the same area again, but once in many years we re-locate it in an entirely different section of the Cosmos. It is the only celestial object that behaves so, and we have a theory about it. Perhaps it is only one of a number of such objects, and they go out like

a light turned off at the will of some Intelligence, which causes another to light up as one goes out. However, that is mere conjecture, pure guesswork.

“We find that the Corona differs in many ways from any other spacial entity. One of these differences is that the bodies resembling Saturn are huge crystal lenses, being capable of sending, receiving, emitting and absorbing any dynamic function of the universe. Each object is as large as the planet Saturn.

“By this time you may be ready to ask, could this be part of the very Throne of Creation? We ask the same. Your answer would be as good as ours. Sincerely we ask you, is it? Is it the very Throne system? Could this be God’s Chariot Galaxy? If not, Adam, is it not then the estate of God’s archangels and His legions?”

Adam responded with a silence that was as much an affirmative answer as if he had spoken aloud. His eyes had become adjusted to the darkness of the room, the light from the three-dimensional television scene of the Corona giving whatever illumination relieved the darkness. Something was happening to Adam in this moment of silence.

He felt for the first time like a full equal to Antares and Launie, and to any mortal being in the whole universe. To his chagrin, he even felt flashes of superiority in understanding which, in a sense, were well-founded, for Antares and Launie had known of these things, and were merely reviewing them for the benefit of Adam. He, like a child learning something new, felt his understanding soar so high, that it must surely leave the Centaurians far behind him in knowledge and awareness. Now he could look upon Launie, not as one inferior to her but, alas, perhaps even superior; and with a pang of regret he turned toward her.

In the eerie glow, close beside him, she presented a vision of sublime loveliness. Her calm, detached absorption in the Corona made her unaware of Adam’s feelings. Her eyes were wide open, her lips parted softly. It was exquisite, thought Adam, to watch Launie surrender herself from the very soul.

Strangely, he was her master, for she was reachable, under-

standable. Why, he could supersede Leo in understanding now, and Launie was his by every law of nature, by every human right. Even her smile seemed to be waiting merely for him to decide to make her his.

The Corona shone brightly on the screen, the resolving point of all thoughts, of all desires, the fountain in which all things were cleansed. Launie was being cleansed spiritually, and suddenly Adam was not sure of himself. She could not look so bewitchingly lovely and not be attainable. She must, by any means he could use, be included in his little world, to be forever held in it, protected against any harm, to be loved as she should be loved.

He turned his eyes once more to the Corona, then back to Launie. Why, she had already changed in perspective! In his rapid changing of focus, she now stood out for what she truly was.

In the pure light and glory of the Corona, which again overcame him, Adam could see Launie as an equal and as a woman. She was at once a beautiful creature, free of negative qualities, and a fellow being in the vibrant universe who lent her beauty and her feelings to soften the otherwise grinding friction of mere existence. Her feminine attributes gave warmth and happiness to his masculine appreciation. She took on and nurtured what he merely observed, discarded. His history was given to her to be preserved for posterity. At this moment he was far ahead of her mentally, but it was only for this moment and only because she had agreed to bring him into the present experience.

Adam felt that he would lead her into new and better things, but Launie believed there were no better things than those she had already encountered, and which she absorbed with her entire being. Having become the epitome of womanhood to him, Adam saw in Launie not only a flower which would adorn the barren life of a man, but a delicate flower to be nurtured and cherished unto its fullest bloom. He saw her hidden beauty, saw that sometimes woman was unaware of the role she had to play, just as a man was unaware when

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he was being led on by that which he believed he was leading.

With so many thoughts and emotions racing through him, it was now difficult for Adam to know whether it was the Corona which revealed Launie in her true self or if it was Launie's presence which gave the Corona its divine semblance. Only one thing was he sure of: He could put the Corona into a file for future reference which would always be part of his inmost self, but he could not push Launie into the same memory file. She was not to be put into any cold storage for future reference. She was warmth and beauty; she was livingness and oneness now, not yesterday, not for tomorrow.

Suddenly Adam felt that a sin was laid bare before him. After all, he had a yesterday with Launie which he had nearly forgotten. He had forgotten the Launie of a few minutes ago, and the Launie he dreamed of tomorrow would be only the Launie of yesterday on the next day. But Launie did not fade and reappear with the march of time. She was always the same. She looked upon the Corona with that removed and distant look, far away from any man, yet in reality she would shortly be with some man again. That man, no doubt, would be Leo.

Adam felt lost in an abyss where there was no time. Actually, only seconds had passed during these ponderings. Antares put his hand on one of the buttons of the cabinet and the Corona slowly faded from view. At the same moment the room became fully lighted again, and a man walked in without announcing himself.

It was Orion, one of the peers who served in duties around and with Saturn. Antares excused himself to attend to one of the units of the department. Adam, hardly over his meditation inspired by the Corona, found Orion fitting easily into the peaceful atmosphere. Launie rose from her chair and bowed slightly in greeting, which courtesy Orion returned to her. Adam rose from his own chair and added his greeting in the same manner.

"Adam, how would you like to spend the rest of this day in our elements and physics department?" Orion asked. "To-

morrow you will learn some of our ideals and aspirations, which are a strong part of our religious convictions. We long ago learned that matter and spirit are intercompounded, and we have not yet been able to find a single instance where one is apart from the other. But then, we still have so much to learn. Today you will be prepared in regard to our knowledge of the physical world so tomorrow's interview with Saturn will not be unintelligible to you."

"Indeed!" responded Adam happily. "It will be an experience I will look forward to with eagerness."

The group left the viewing room to stroll along the corridors. The next room they entered was rather large, with glass partitions marking it off into smaller areas throughout. Through the glass Adam could see section after section, in all of which people were busy at their work and study. From everywhere they looked up and smiled, all of them knowing this was Adam, the man from earth. Shortly, a young man came from one of the rooms and warmly welcomed the three of them, asking them to be seated at one of the round tables.

"This man is head teacher and student in the physics section, Adam, so you may call him Mercury. He is all science, and close to your sun in his observations and study. Also notice how handsome and alert this realist is," Orion said, in a spirit of light humor.

"Now, Orion," Mercury quickly retorted, "you know that I preach in our schools periodically. Sometimes I think I am more cut out to be a theologian than a physicist, or a 'realist,' as you call me, just as Adam, here. He knows well what I mean," he said, turning to Adam.

"Yes," Adam replied in a low voice. "Yes, I do understand. How you people surely know me, my actions and my thoughts! How on earth do you manage it?"

"Not on earth, Adam; on Andromeda," Launie quipped.

"Yes, Adam, on Andromeda," Mercury joined in. "We know, for instance, that you have read the treatise called 'The Nature of Infinite Entities'."

"Yes, I did read it. I found it so absorbing I still cannot

take it from my mind when pondering any physical phenomenon,” said Adam. “But, do you find that important in itself?”

“Adam,” Orion offered, “one of the reasons you are here with us is because you did read that treatise and absorbed its meaning so fully. It grasps the truth of nature so well, so fundamentally accurately, that in abstract hypothesis it reaches out even beyond our practical accomplishments. If the science of the earth were to know it and comprehend it, the earth would be on its way to incredible scientific unfoldment. So busy would it become evolving materially that thoughts of conflict would simply cease to exist. Earth scientists would find all matter so awesomely beautiful it would respond to their probings like something conscious. Your being aware of these things makes it obvious they are already known on earth, Adam, and thus you absolve us from interfering in any way with the predestined plan of evolution on earth. Now, nay I ask you if you feel you truly want the audience with Saturn tomorrow?”

“Yes, Orion. It may be the highlight of my entire visit on Andromeda. I feel greatly privileged by the invitation.”

“Then I take my leave, and Saturn will prepare for tomorrow,” Orion said, and he left Adam, Launie and Mercury to continue the discourse.

Chapter 8

NATURE OF INFINITE ENTITIES

“Adam,” Mercury asked, “do you know how the author felt when he came upon the concept of the treatise, Nature of Infinite Entities?”

“No, I do not know how he felt, but I also read the story of his experiences with visitors from space and, putting the two together, I can imagine how he must have felt.”

“No, Adam; you cannot imagine. You have had a similar experience, called the sudden moment of enlightenment, the cosmic consciousness and many other names, but we shall call it the Cosmic Splendor, for it is just that. It comes only once in a lifetime. Many people seek it from the fountains of others and thereby lose any hope of attaining it. You cannot seek it, for in seeking it you lose it, but if you seek the truth and the light which makes a better person of you, you will one day know this moment of splendor. No one on earth can retain its fullness for long. The evolutionary stage of earthlings is too primitive as yet for your mortals to sustain its grandeur.

“Yet, remember this. There was one being on earth who was born with it, grew up in its glow, lived every moment in the fullness of it and lost it not even in the torture of the cross. Yes, read the story of Christ, and you will note this fact to stand out clearly throughout his thirty-three years.”

“Wait a moment, Mercury,” Adam interrupted. “I like this tremendously, but I thought I was in the physics department, and in the presence of a true physicist.”

“Adam, Mercury is a true physicist, as you will see,” Launie said, quick to defend Mercury even though Adam’s words were far from challenging. She continued, “Our physics are somewhat ahead of yours; in fact, they are ahead by many hundreds of years. True physics merges into metaphysics, and true

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metaphysics must come upon physics. Neither is of the highest order unless it comes face to face with the other.”

“All right, Adam,” Mercury resumed. “You have seen our ships and observed their functions in outer space and within Andromeda, which is herself as superb as any of the craft we know. Indeed, you see a little world in Andromeda, self-sufficient, and evolving, though we are nearly four and a half light years distant from our home planet. These accomplishments come from reverence as much as from applied physics. We cherish everything about us, and our peers live with the delight of the Cosmic Splendor pervading their consciousness.

“Now, the physics,” Mercury went on. “Try to recall the Nature of Infinite Entities’ while I bring some of your own type of ginger ale to you. It was in such a bubbling liquid that this concept was first conceived in the author’s mind.”

Mercury left to get the ginger ale and Adam’s eyes sought Launie’s. What he beheld sent a warm thrill through his veins. Launie was looking at him as she had not looked before.

“Oh, Adam,” she said, with a sigh. “Adam, I believe he is going to cut the thin veil that is between you and the Cosmic Splendor. Oh, Adam . . . you will see things that cannot be seen normally. You will hear music you do not hear now.”

“Launie, how can I thank you for all this? Already I feel something of a new splendor. I do hope you have some way here of making me forget. Even a few months back on earth will be unbearable away from you. I will not be able to look upon another star without my heart breaking.”

“You will not forget me, Adam, nor I you, and I promise, you will be more than just normally happy in the days to come,” Launie reassured him, as Mercury returned carrying a tall glass filled with ginger ale, which he set on the table in front of Adam. It was sparkling and bubbling. Already, in anticipation, Adam thought he could feel the atmosphere becoming rarer and himself becoming lighter.

“No, Adam, this is pure ginger ale. There is nothing else to it. Take two sips and bring the glass up close to your eyes

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so you see nothing but the depths of the liquid,” Mercury instructed.

Adam followed his advice. He drank, then looked into the glass, watching the bubbles rise steadily and gracefully to the top, small bubbles, little silver spheres fully enclosed by the sparkling liquid. How beautifully they remained spherical, in spite of their rapid upward ascent! If they would only stop for a moment and remain suspended so he could see them and ponder them. They were beautiful and they were intriguing, but it was much more exciting to look into Launie’s eyes, to see her enticing smile. Certainly, thought Adam, looking at these bubbles would not lavish the Cosmic Splendor upon his soul. Mercury spoke, slowly and encouragingly.

“Soon you will not see mere, gas-filled bubbles. Can you imagine how a man feels when a long search and hard work suddenly result in a new discovery? Can you imagine how one feels when his entire being, in one flashing moment, comes upon the truth that God is? It is not like the thrill of a child in receiving his long-wanted toy or gift, nor is it the same as the flush of love at first sight which is equally requited.

“Now see a man who is consumed with the desire to know the secrets of nature. One by one, the known laws parade before his eyes, only to meet with the dead-end theory that atoms are little systems of spinning packets of energy, and such other erroneous notions as are held by contemporary science in general, including the theory that the sun will one day dim out and become dead, and that the universe is slowly dissipating into a frozen nothingness where all things return to limbo. No, this man felt there was more in the dynamic of nature than such unproductive ideas. Now, Adam, you may set the glass on the table.”

Adam complied. He noticed that Mercury and Launie had taken on heightened expressions of happiness. Their faces were calm, yet fully alive with some inner glow. Whatever their feelings might be, his own were at their very highest point, so, he thought, how much more joy could he hold?

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“One day,” Mercury went on, softly and slowly, “in the late summer of 1946, this man felt a change in everything. The ground seemed to become one with the air, with the sun, and, as the night approached, one with the stars.

“His sensitive nature was under perpetual stress, just in the effort of living. This night, his nerves tightened so he could not sleep. It was a typical summer’s night in New Jersey. About 2:00 o’clock in the morning he was under the strain of a nervous headache, and rose from his bed to go to the kitchen. His wife and children were asleep, so he did not turn on the radio, although music would have helped him. Feeling hungry, he made a sandwich, filled a tall glass with ginger ale, and sat down at the table.

“He took a drink from the glass and munched on the sandwich. Why, he thought suddenly and inadvertently, does nature guard her innermost secrets so well? Why does she reveal them only slowly to man, and only after centuries of complex and exhausting research? At this moment, he was a materialist of the first water. Facts, logic and matter were all that made any sense.

“He had some saving grace, however. He probed wherever observation led him, he felt that the universe as a whole was rather intelligent, orderly and purposeful, and he was ready to admit any error he made, ready to admit another was right the instant he was proved right. These were the qualities which were to reward his confused and haphazard gropings, the qualities which alerted him to something strange in the atmosphere of this early morning.

“Roosters were crowing nearby, and the wind was blowing, yet in all this sound he sensed an unheard whisper. It was not in the air, but within him. He lifted the glass to eye level and stared into the liquid, seeking some relief from the tension in his head. The bubbles rose rapidly from the bottom. ‘Why can’t I know the true nature of the universe?’ he asked, half of himself, half of the glass. ‘After all, there is the Ether. I see the liquid as the Ether. Look at those bubbles going on

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and on, indifferent to my plea for knowledge. Just bubbles in the Ether, yet so hard to really comprehend.'

"He set the glass down on the table and began eating the sandwich. He felt a little better. The wind had died down to a whisper outside. The ache in his head was lessening as he relaxed. The kitchen in which he sat seemed to be receding, becoming surroundings more rare, more unfamiliar than wood and plaster. Once more he lifted up the glass to look into the 'ether' and the bubbles in it. Once more he pleaded, this time to a universe which was becoming more alive around him. 'Why, why can't I know? After all, every atom is only a bubble in the ether'. He had finished his sandwich and was now holding the glass with both hands.

"At that instant it struck him. His entire being fused explosively with a flash of glorious light, as white as the sun but casting no heat. Glory of glories! He had hit on the answer the first time. Yes, bubbles in the ether. Atoms were in reality bubbles in the ether!

"His head ceased to ache. His entire body now felt completely healthy, completely relaxed. There was strange but lovely music he could hear, and looking straight up into the air, he could see dazzling little faces smiling. They were as tiny as the bubbles in the glass, but much more dazzling. The hosts of the universe were acclaiming the fact that he had finally been ushered into a better concept of all Nature. He felt it so completely there was no doubt in his mind that the simple idea was being confirmed by actual Intelligence of some sort."

As Mercury finished, Adam lifted his own glass to his eyes once more, this time with something noble in his manner. Launie was carried away with the feeling that she was about to witness a man enter into the Cosmic Splendor. She thrilled from head to foot. Mercury, careful not to obstruct such a possibility or to force it, went on as if noticing nothing.

"At first, the music he thought he heard was in his own mind, but then we produced some real music for him, barely

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distinguishable from that which he imagined, so he did not know we were observing. Yes, there were faces looking on, smiling and beaming, and there were voices from a million choirs truly singing. We on Andromeda celebrated openly. Nearly five years later our home planet received the news, and by that time we were making open contact with this man. It was Orfeo Angelucci.

Chapter 9

ADAM'S MOMENT OF ILLUMINATION

“His realization was such a simple truth. The complex part was to come. Could a mere bubble concept explain the grandeurs of nature? Not quite. Orfeo was momentarily in a world of his own, yet in communion with everything in the universe. He could see its pulsation, its rhythmic movement.

“He was new to such experiences, and he felt God was blessing his discovery. In the broadest sense it was blessed, but there are hosts in the universe to whom God gives the sublime pleasure of being His intermediaries, and it was these whom Orfeo saw in the ether, floating around with the bubbles.

“We have perfect motion pictures of those minutes. What a transformation came over him! His eyes were transfixed in high rapture and, like a musical record, the cosmos revolved around and around, giving up one secret after another. The simple became complex, then returned to the purely simple state of complete oneness.”

Adam did not hear these last words of Mercury's. Both his hands were holding his glass. He was mesmerized by it. His right hand broke away and waved about as though leading an invisible orchestra, slowly and gracefully. It was not music he was directing, however. He was depicting to himself automatically what his mind was seeing abstractly, as though to capture each unveiling with confirmation of the hand. To him, at this moment, Launie and Mercury did not exist.

Mercury kept silent. The faces which now looked in deep interest from every room within the many glass partitions knew what was going to transpire within Adam. These people lived in Cosmic Splendor. They could sense its dawning in any other being. Launie was the only Alpha Centaurian there who was beside herself with ecstasy. Her face did a dance in expressions that were utterly beautiful, and her ever-fresh spirit gushed like a fountain within her and sprayed its mists

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about her. Everyone around was in love with Launie. She knew it and felt it, but her love was now for Adam. She was his godmother in this moment of his being born again. A new Adam would emerge from the baptism of the Cosmic Splendor. This new Adam would never know the meaning of the words death or oblivion. Indeed, Adam had never known their meaning in a negative way, but he had before thought they existed, and that thought alone was death. The new-born Adam would know the truth of Nature and know that he had always been a segment of it, and always would be. He had a glimpse into the inexhaustible womb of Nature, and had seen that it is ever creating, never dissipating.

Launie and Mercury left their chairs and went to a window. Neither said a word. Their main concern was to leave Adam undisturbed, incubating his new self in the bright light of truth. After a time Launie turned to look, and saw Adam sitting in far-away meditation. Perhaps it was her mother instinct, perhaps it was her mating instinct, but she could not stand this gap between them any longer and hurried to Adam's side. As though it had been planned in advance, so well was the attunement of their minds timed, that a new Adam looked into her eyes as she stood close to him.

"It's all right, Launie. I see the real you now. I see the real Mercury, the real things as they throb in life in all their motionless being. I see with new understanding the greatness behind all those lovely faces looking at me.

"Oh, Launie! Would you believe I saw Eternity? Please sit down, both of you," Adam requested, as Mercury also came back to the table. "Do not tell me any more about physics. Rather, let me tell you. Stop me if I make a mistake, but I must tell it; I cannot hold it. Even though you know these things, I must repeat them. Please bear with me."

Mercury could see that Adam was speaking more to himself and to the universe than to either Launie or him. The people who had been still in rapt attention behind the partitions went back to their work, knowing that Adam had broken through the thin veil.

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“I came face to face with Eternity and Perfection,” Adam said, speaking into infinite space and to no one in particular.

“Perfection took two forms. One was the Ether and the other was the Absence of Ether. The Ether is the only substance that truly exists. If it existed by itself and were not separated evenly and equally, one particle from another, there would be no light, no life, and no motion. Only absolute zero would prevail in the entire universe. No power known to man could convert any part of the ultimate particle of that Ether to anything lesser. It cannot be ground or cut down.

“There was a separation of these particles, though, and the separation was exactly equal in volume to the volume taken up by the solid ether itself. This separation, this moving aside of the particles, caused a space where there was no Ether, no anything, and the Ether tried to fill this space again. As it did so, new areas of the Absence of Ether emerged. Some of these became permanent as little spheres or cavities or bubbles, which were formed by the placement of Ether particles in a curved position, or in the form of the arc. Once formed into spherical shapes, these little vacuums could not be filled again because Ether particles had placed themselves in a spherical and arched position around an area.

“Throughout all space the Ether heaved up and became separated, in exactly one-half. Its action could be likened to a huge block of metal which appears solid. Suddenly something separates all the atoms from one another, leaving a space between them equal to that occupied by the atoms themselves. This block of metal would no longer be solid, but would be fluid, gaseous and in motion. The atoms move around and try to fill up the dividing vacuums, but for some reason cannot. Thus, half the volume would be absence of Atoms, and half would be Atoms, but *motion* of the atoms would be the rule.

“Yet, the atoms themselves are mere bubbles in this Ether. Some of these bubbles are too large because they were formed at the speed of light when the Ether tried, by its own pressure stress, to fill in the vacant space, and the arcs of the bubbles

are wobbly and unstable. Eventually each one collapses, and again at the speed of light is formed into a smaller and more perfect bubble, very stable. Part of the bubble is now squeezed and pushed around in the Ether. It moves the Ether aside as it wiggles about. This elongated, formless cavity is eventually directed toward the perfect bubble, because that perfect bubble causes the Ether to be disturbed. This disturbance is the cause of waves, both gravitational and magnetic.

“Countless trillions of these arrangements all over the infinite reaches of the Ether make all the things that exist. There are only the absolute and solid Ether and the absolute and perfect spaces of the Absence of Ether. The Absences of Ether appear as formed spheres and halos, such as the planet Saturn symbolizes, and the elongated darting forms make what we call light rays. The motion between these two states makes all motion and is even what we call Life.

“In the same instant I realized this truth, I saw Eternity. Eternity is not time, which never was and never shall be, but is Motion. Eternity is that which occurs in the smallest particle of the Ether or the smallest part of any vacuum in the Ether, and occurs at the speed of light. Thus it is always Now at all places, under any circumstance. Absolute energy and motion can be attuned to, anywhere in the universe, and we know this attunement as magnetic dynamic, or gravitational dynamic. There is no other force existent anywhere, any time. The Ether acts, and the vacuum reacts; or the vacuum acts, and the Ether reacts, always at the speed of light. Life is the result, and is the third harmonic product of these motions.

“Because of such perfect balance between Ether and No Ether, and the one condition upheaving with universal force against the other, I see what earth sight identifies as atomic energy, the force of Life, the contact with God, the Intelligence of the universe, and the cause of causes, the effect of cause.

“Ah, indeed, I see it all. If the Ether occupied all space, it would be frozen into motionlessness and absolute zero. By the same token, if nothingness occupied all space, it would

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also be a frozen state of absolute zero. But the two states exist together, therefore there is no absolute zero condition anywhere in the universe, and no man or being can ever make it exist. Yet, and I say 'yet' with my whole soul, the states of absolute heat and light do exist. They exist in every light ray, in every photon, in everything that has motion. The overflow of absolute light results in what we call Life. Life, therefore, is the left-over energy of the entire Cosmos. It is grounded back, like electrical currents, to the source from whence it came, to come forth again like flaring energy captured in symmetrical forms and functions we call man, woman, and angels. It is neither added in the universe, nor is it ever diminished. What we use in one place is not exhausted but is directed back to origin, or converted into another symmetrical form. In atoms it is expenditure. In human beings it is death. Yet the conversion makes for new births, be they of new particles, or of new living entities. Therein is the Eternity of both matter and life. There is no death. There is no such thing as oblivion.

“Even as the zenith of Illumination ebbs back from me into the cosmos, I am as bewildered as before, for I still cannot know the why and wherefore of it all, why man and woman, why the seed must exist before the end product and yet the product produces the seed. I am now further from the answer to which came first, the chicken or the egg, applied to all things, but I have seen where the *egg* is born. I have seen the dynamical force, the essence behind all eggs, behind all entities. This force, though it be the inherent force of the universe, though it be the exact measure of the stress of the ether in its attempt to fill the empty spaces which divide it, also manifests as the gentle force of life, of love, and of intelligence.

“In a flash, I have also seen that the gentle flux of that force which is life and intelligence can arrange it and bring it to a focus for tremendous expression, whereby the atomic bombs explode. Yet there is no destruction, for it takes intelligence to bring together the atomic bombs, and no force is greater than its creator.

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"I see now the potential of love, be it partial love which attracts man and woman, or be it total love which ultimate ascension to knowledge bestows upon a being.

"I see that all matter originates from motion of the Ether, its first manifestation being in the form of a hydrogen atom, and that the additional stress of the Ether gradually forms more complex expressions as other atoms, all being basic molecules of hydrogen-within-hydrogen. Thus, for example, iron is not more than a number of interwoven atoms, and some excess vacuum given off as what earthmen call energy, which forms other atomic particles, and so on with all the elements. I can see that substances made by such atomic interwoven matter can produce materials able to withstand even the universal forces which have welded them together, dissolving only at the dynamic point of equal stresses.

"Even spirits shall not be at-one until these truths are met face to face and understood in pure knowledge. We *must* learn. We must learn every inch of the way. We cannot jump to spiritual perfection and remain indifferent or resentful of material facts, nor can we learn material perfection except through spiritual awareness. Indeed, I beheld in the Illumination that they are one and the same, and in my consciousness they shall remain so.

"From the atom to the solar system, to the galaxies, to the universe and to the beyond-the-beyond, Purpose remains unaltered. In that Purpose, in that Eternal Light, my whole being tells me the Throne of the Creator is. I can never understand it nor describe it, and no one in the whole universe may describe it, be they primitive beings or Archangels. Any descriptions of the Creator written, voiced, or otherwise enunciated, have been distortions of the Truth, as all earth records are. We must aspire and learn, step by step, to know the real truth, and the truth shall make us free only when it fully responds to every call we send forth to it.

"Now I feel I understand the universe as much as any mortal being, and more than many who are still to come upon the Illumination. I could build superb space ships and conquer

disease, but I need the help of millions who would understand my plans and blueprints with keen perception. There would be much work and play for everyone. There would be no room for hate, jealousy, or ignorance. Indeed, one person having such negative characteristics would impede the work of millions. There must be no imperfection in perfection. Even within Andromeda we could be short of such an enterprise. On earth there is not one being who would qualify. Now, with this illumination having pervaded me like an exposure to radiation, where can I go to fulfill one first small step toward this end? The lips which would claim to be worthy are the least worthy, but the lips which will say, 'I wish to learn,' reveal the hunger of the heart, whose need is for the light. Churches fall and crumble by the thousands, but not one school has ever receded into dust.

"Preachers give up in disgust because of their own ignorance, but not once has a scientist fallen to say he has no faith in what he has learned. Empty temples flow and ebb, but schools only grow. God does not want imperfect or ignorant angels among His Hosts. He wants only those who have attained the fullness of understanding through evolution and learning.

"We find that all material is wealth, and all spirit is material understanding. Man thinks that gold is the noble metal, but he will learn that gold is worthless, and that silicon, the most abundant mineral, is also the most priceless, for it will give him not only crystal functions, but plastic strengths. There we see another aspect of Purpose—whereby God has lavished in abundance that which man will need most. Man must learn the true values from the false, yet to this day he knows only the false, for he has pursued only the false."

Adam was coming out of his illuminated moment. Mercury and Launie were transfixed at his words by the light which shone upon his face. As soon as he had regained a more normal composure, he looked at Mercury and Launie and said in conclusion:

"Whoever gave me the name Adam in your society did rightly, for Adam was the name of the symbolic first man

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of earth. I will be dedicated to bringing the light of illumination, much like a rebirth, to my fellow beings on earth, no matter how much longer I am to live upon that sphere. I will fear no evil, for truth is with me." Thus Adam finished speaking of what he learned in his "physics lesson."

"Yes, Adam, indeed, Truth and one make a majority," Mercury added, to affirm and to welcome Adam back to normal perception.

"I encompassed the innermost dynamic of the universe, Mercury, and I saw that there is no such thing as evil as it is generally regarded; at least not on earth, for evil is nothing more than the behavior of ignorance. Even the willfully malicious are nothing more than ignorant ones. Evil in itself does not exist, for it would mean action opposite to action, and such cannot be. What is called evil is nothing more than action resulting from the morbid minds of the ignorant. Thus, physics analyzes the most dynamic or the most subtle behavior of life." Adam was ready to speak again, but Mercury cut him off masterfully.

"Well, Adam, do you wish to visit our physics department and see what we have that might be new to you?" he asked. But Adam was wise. He was in the Light, and could reason and speak on the same level with Mercury. He could see through any subterfuge also.

"I do not believe so, Mercury. This glass has given me all I can absorb in physics. I feel that anything you can now show me would be anticlimax. With humility, I can say that I understand all you have accomplished on Andromeda, and can even foresee, as your peers can foresee, what you are yet to discover from time to time. I have had decades of academic learning here in a few minutes. Unless, of course, you feel there is something that would be very new to me, why should I take up your time?"

"No, Adam, there is nothing that would be new to you. Whatever there is here that would be new to you cannot be shown, for the divine code of no interference with your evolution must be kept. My part with you is ended, although the

fruit of our meeting has just begun. I leave you again with Launie. Thank you so much for spending this irreplaceable moment of your life with me," Mercury said, in farewell.

"And I thank you, Mercury," Adam replied, "for the most wonderful lesson in pure science."

Launie rose from her chair, bowed slightly, and soon Adam and she were atop the roof again and entering their small basket-like craft. Once more she manipulated the small control box which started the craft off, becoming one of the hundreds that went to and fro in this little enclosed world of the ship Andromeda.

Launie was quiet, a smile of satisfaction on her face. Adam looked at her, completely lost in admiration and love.

"I have had a few lessons already, Launie, and I seem to have graduated from them with little effort. It seems to me that my longest lesson is the one you are giving me, and I still can't know what the nature of it is. When do I graduate from your department?"

"Never, Adam," Launie answered. "From some courses and lessons there is no graduating. You just go on and on, like everyone else does. The pupils and teachers may change, but the lesson, never. Everyone is a pupil and everyone is a teacher. Before you leave Andromeda you will see someone else reflected in me, and your lesson shall proceed from there."

Adam could not take his eyes from her. The universe, true enough, was filled with infinite expressions of itself, and she was at this moment one of its masterpieces.

"Where are we going now, Launie?" he asked.

"Directly home. You have had a full day, and you shall spend a few hours reading. Tomorrow we have an audience with Saturn. Here we are over the cottage," Launie said, as she directed the craft to the solid floor of Andromeda.

Inside the cottage, a boy and girl awaited Launie and Adam. They had brought a book and had laid it on the table as they turned to greet the two adults. Both appeared to be about ten years of age.

"We have brought it, Launie," said the boy, picking the

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book up again and handing it to Adam. "We completed it just a short while ago."

Adam looked at its title, "The Secret of the Saucers," and asked, "I have never heard of this. When was it published?"

"It has not been published as yet on earth, but it is soon to go to the press," said Launie, "and this is the finished product as the publisher has decided to print it. It will be released within three months on earth."

Adam got down on one knee, and the children came close to him.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Oh, in your terms, Adam, we would be ten years of age. However, we are a little older than that," the girl replied.

"You are as pretty as Launie, little one. It makes me feel so happy to know that beauty and grace are abundant in this grand universe and that nobleness goes along with it, as the young lad here proves," said Adam, kissing both on the cheek.

"Rise up, Adam," came Launie's somewhat emotional voice. She came up to him and kissed him gently on the lips, saying, "Happy birthday."

Adam was pleasantly surprised. "But it is not my birthday, Launie."

"You have had a new birth in awareness through your unfoldment today, Adam. You have emerged into the grand world of our science, having broken the veil from the Cosmic Splendor. You were not aware of that. You did not even hear all of Mercury's words as he spoke. Oh, indeed, Adam, happy birthday," Launie added. "You can never again fall low in consciousness and awareness."

"You are a fortunate man, Adam," the boy said lightly. "A kiss from Launie is rare. It would behoove you to have an unfoldment daily."

Launie shooed the youngsters out. Laughing, she said to them, "Now, both of you go back to the classroom. I shall be there soon, and we shall discuss Adam's experiences of this day. Tell the others to be ready for the discussion."

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Launie then went into the kitchen and returned with a glass of water, handing it to Adam. As he took it in hand, she dropped a small pellet in, bringing the water to a sparkling fizz.

“Drink it, Adam. It will give you calm vitality for a few hours. You can read the book while I am gone, and you will have finished it by the time I return. It is not very long and is easy to read.”

Adam took a few sips, then sat down in an easy chair. She looked at him enchantingly and asked, “What number do you wish to hear, Adam?” She remained poised for a dance she felt coming upon her.

“Siboney!” he exclaimed, and in two seconds there came a most enchanting rendition from the wall. Launie whirled into her dance. Sheer delight of being alive gave her the impetus and the expression. Her vigor was modulated by the grace of her swaying and pausing, by her foot and arm movements. There was not a flaw in Launie’s dance, though it was unrehearsed. As the music neared the end, she danced toward the door, and soon was gone. Adam drank the rest of the nectar and began to read the book.

He read on, page after page, until the end. Then he turned again to the chapter, “My Awakening on Another Planet,” trying to comprehend some of the symbolism and various points which, even to his reborn awareness, seemed inconsistent with reality. But he decided that he would need the help of one of his hosts, perhaps Saturn, to clarify some questions in his mind.

It was comforting to know that another man of earth had been here before, even if not in physical reality. Certainly this author must have been given the exact description of things here to have written of them. He, Adam, was not only here in fact, but learning much more than this book revealed.

He closed his eyes to meditate, wishing there were music to be heard. As if by magic his desire was granted. Soft music pealed throughout the room. These, he thought, are systems of the highest order. His eyes still closed, he felt a faint

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breeze close to him and looked up. Launie stood smiling before him.

“Well, Adam, my day’s work is done. You look as though you have read the book thoroughly. Tomorrow we visit Saturn. Tonight we dine out, as you would say on earth. This will be better than New York, Paris, or Hollywood. We shall have music and singing and dancing such as

“Wait a moment, Launie!” Adam exclaimed jubilantly. “Say those words again, please, and include Seattle. I had forgotten there were such places. Seattle has beautiful women, too. Yes, it is a beautiful world, no matter what its state of evolution. Shall I dress?”

“You are dressed, Adam. Look at yourself.”

Indeed he was. His clothes were of a different color, soft and silken looking. He went to the mirror in his room. Blue background, with starry dots and gentle rays. How on Andromeda did they do this? He went back to Launie in the living room. Her clothing also had changed in the moment he had left her. She just stood there facing him in her loveliness, smiling like one who had just given her friend a cherished present. He could say nothing in reply but laughed aloud with glee.

“Do I have to tell you how it is done,” she asked, “after the lesson in physics you have had today?”

“No, Launie. I guess I should know as much of your possibilities as any earthling could.”

“Adam, feel at home tonight. Remember that even though my people are not native to the solar system which is yours, we are native to your grand galaxy, the Milky Way. So, celestially speaking, we are one and the same,” Launie said to him.

“I won’t feel strange,” Adam assured her, offering his arm for her to take. “We’re off, Launie. Where to?”

“Oh let us just say to the Cafe Venus,” and arm in arm they went out, to walk along the grassy paths and streets.

Chapter 10

A NIGHT OUT ON VENUS

The Cafe Venus was ready for them. Tables had been bedecked with gay tablecloths. Plates and silverware were familiar to Adam. All was arranged much as a fine restaurant would be in any city of earth. An elegant stage and elaborate scenery adorned the front of the large dining room. The music was soft and soothing. No one made Adam feel conspicuous by undue attention, though all knew he was an honored guest from earth.

They were escorted to a table, and as soon as they were seated one wall became a three-dimensional television screen. Sailing ships on a realistic sea were shown, and Columbus' landing on the eastern shores of the Atlantic—an actual picture four hundred and fifty years old—was viewed, the voices of Columbus and his men plainly heard. Then the Mayflower giving its passengers to America, as well as many other outstanding events of earth's history were shown, all of them actual recordings.

After dinner there was an hour's stage show. Adam knew it would be many centuries before anything like this could be reproduced on earth. Had he not taken the nectar it would have been too much for him to see and hear. Included were a few of the best compositions of earth, arranged in the incredibly beautiful orchestrations of the Alpha Centaurians.

Among the several hundred diners this evening, not one of the peers was there, but all of the diners were elegant in appearance and behavior.

On the way home, Adam noticed nearly no traffic overhead. In the dome-like sky above Andromeda he saw the heavy clouds again, all moving in one direction, with occasional darts of lightning flitting here and there. Strangely, there was no thunder.

They approached the home cottage, which Adam noticed

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was the third one from the corner. He paused awhile and looked at the corner house. Then he looked at the second. His face lighted up as he looked at Launie, who was already smiling at him in advance confirmation.

“Launie!” he exclaimed, pointing to the corner house, and to the second one.

“Yes,” said Launie. “It is. You have really read that book, haven’t you? The corner cottage is Lyra’s, and the next one to it is Orion’s. The third is mine, and for a while yours also. You go to sleep now and rest, Adam. When you awaken we shall go to Saturn. Neptune will be present, as will Orion, Lyra, and myself. Our meeting will be in Lyra’s dwelling.”

Adam looked up to the center of the five miles’ high ceiling of Andromeda. Funny, he thought, that since he had left earth he had not seen the sun, nor the slightest sign of it.

Chapter 11

ADAM LEARNS ETERNITY

Adam paused in his story. We noticed through the window that it was getting brighter outside.

“Well, Adam,” I said. “Speaking of the sun, you are about to see it soon. Here comes the dawn again. We have consumed two entire nights.”

“Yes, Orfeo, and tonight I give the climax of my story to you and, I hope, to the world,” he said. “Shall we have breakfast in town together this morning? We won’t discuss the story to come at all. We’ll talk of other things.”

I was glad to be with him as much as possible, and agreed to breakfast. It was Sunday morning. Little by little the town awoke to life, the people preparing to go to various churches. After breakfast we parted, and I rode around town for awhile, wondering if Adam would be among the churchgoers.

Perhaps earth’s evolutionary stage is young as yet, I thought. Perhaps it is unknowing in comparison to the higher estates, but it felt good and homey to be snuggled in its environs; to know that at least its past had brought it thus far, and the future would most certainly bring it further upward. After two nights with Adam and his story, the normal pace of the good earth seemed restful to me. So I decided to attend a church, any church; it did not matter which one.

I went as far as the door of one but did not enter. I tried another and found myself unable to enter that one, also. Then I thought I would drive over to the Catholic church, my own church. Once more, at the very door, something within me made it impossible to go in. Not far from this church is the Oasis of Maru, where eighteen palm trees still survive out of the original twenty-nine, from which the town of Twentynine Palms derived its name.

For many centuries it was a drinking place for local and wandering Indians. This morning, as I looked toward it, I

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felt an urge to go see it just to find out how high the water at the natural well was.

The water was slightly below the top of the well. I walked through the vegetation and came upon the stone marker of a lone grave which I had seen many times. It was the burial place of a little girl who died there in the 1800's while crossing the desert with her mother and father, pioneers of the West.

My thoughts went back many decades, trying to visualize this family crossing the country, braving its hazards and hardships. A little girl, tired and dying in the desert, far from her own civilization of the time, alone. Alone, that is, except for her communion with her Creator.

Where was God in that lonely moment? Was the Father-head indifferent to the plight of this little girl and her parents as they moved on westward, leaving her small body buried in a lone grave? And the parents, was there anything in life for them that would justify existence itself? Death awaited them also, as it awaits everything that lives. The happiest existence would be grotesque if one stopped to think about it. If God had forsaken that little girl, was His attention with other people? If so, His Infinite Omnipotence surely was limited.

No, she was not forsaken. After all, was it not this very indifference of Nature, which is of God, with which all the patriarchs and prophets had argued? No man is a true believer unless he can stand and argue with Nature, call for some manifestation, call for assistance. God cannot be hurt. A man who is aware of the all-presence of the ultimate Intelligent Power knows that no supplication, no plaintive argument, can faze It. A man of little faith will not argue with God, feeling he is only talking to himself.

As I thought these thoughts the very desert floor, the oasis, the little girl, everything, seemed to be welling up with an answer. An airplane droned overhead, a passenger plane. People were coming out of the nearby church and driving off in shining automobiles. Modern homes were everywhere in the distance. And there were graves of those who had passed on since.

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I had my answer. Nature is not indifferent; it merely waits, having all Eternity to accomplish its Purpose. For untold centuries this desert lay here as if by some accident of Creation. Some years ago a little flower from its own civilization came by and lay her body down in seeming bleakness and loneliness. But in a few years a transformation occurred. As her eyes closed did she perhaps see that day not too far off, when other graves would surround her own? Could she see the desert around her adorned with better and better homes? Could she imagine such chariots as the automobiles, or her own humanity in flying machines zooming over her resting place?

No, no place is so remote that God has not laid out a plan for it. I felt satisfied; my church this morning was the well in the Oasis of Maru.

Was I not directed by some unseen Power? Why was it that I could not enter any of the three churches? To come to the Oasis was the last thing in my mind at the start. Ah, yes. Perhaps these things would come out tonight, when Adam concluded his story.

* * *

That night, knowing he was close to Lyra's cottage and Orion's abode and anticipating the audience with Saturn and the others in Lyra's home, Adam thought he would be long in getting to sleep because of his restlessness. He had not seen any sign of the sun in such a long time, yet was closer to it by millions of miles than he ever had been on earth, and the idea suddenly cast a sleepy mood over him. He went to bed and indeed he did sleep, waking up the next morning fresh and sprightly, ready for anything. He heard Launie moving around in the cottage, but after dressing he found no breakfast ready.

"This morning," she said, "we shall have breakfast with the peers in Lyra's home. Oh, Adam, it is hard for me to realize the pleasures of these times that you have helped me obtain. You may feel the equal of each and all of us today, for the things to be talked of are not better known by one

than by the others. Today, in the presence of such speculations, you and I are equal with our peers. Can you get the full implication of that; can you feel the warmth of Creation which will make itself manifest to us?"

"I do, Launie. I surely do," Adam spoke, fervently. "Even now I have climbed the ivory tower, and have reached you."

"Fine," she replied, looking tenderly and understandingly into his eyes. "But everyone is already at Lyra's and waiting for us to arrive, so we must hurry. Saturn, Neptune, Lyra, and Orion—all waiting for us. Just imagine," she concluded, half dreamily.

Within a few moments they walked into Lyra's house, which was made to resemble one of the fine homes of earth, and Adam felt a glow of comfort and welcome surge through his entire being.

Six teenagers served them — three young lads and three maidens—one for each guest. They went about their business of serving without a flaw, not interfering in any way with the dining or the conversation of the guests. They served the table with delight and enterprise, as though it were a high privilege. At the end of breakfast the guests went into the comfortable living room, while the young ones set everything back in order and left unobtrusively.

All sat down in the living room except Neptune and Saturn. Saturn walked around slowly and majestically. Neptune stood in quiet reflection. As Saturn came toward Adam, he asked, "My son, what do you consider to be the finest piece of written matter pertaining to earth and its life?"

This caught Adam by surprise. He had never given such things any thought, but, being straightforward and honest, he answered in the best way he could.

"The Holy Bible, of course. It is the foundation of my very civilization."

Saturn reached his chair and sat down. Neptune sat in his own chair only after Saturn was fully settled in comfort.

"What would you say, Adam, about the Bible? Is it a detailed history and prognosis, or is it in the main an allegoric

and symbolic scripture of human life on earth?" Saturn continued, after he was seated.

"I would say," replied Adam, still vigorous and alert, "that it is entirely an allegoric scripture, and a very good prognosis of the future of my civilization. If it were a detailed history and an example of the accomplishments of genius, it falls short and is superseded by many other written records, and even by novels. Why, there are Homer and Shakespeare and Scott and Bacon and Dante and so many inspired, accomplished works of literature. But not one is greater in all its fullness than just one page—any page—out of the Bible. For the Bible is allegoric and symbolic to a degree that reaches Infinity."

"Would you say, then, that it is the Word of God?" Saturn asked.

Suddenly Launie stood up, looked tenderly at Adam, and said, "Wait before you answer that, Adam." With that she was off to the kitchen. Quickly she returned with a glass of ginger ale, and handed it to him.

"There is nothing but ginger ale in that glass, Adam. Take two sips and look into it before you answer Saturn."

"You have a good lawyer, Adam," smiled Neptune. "Not that you need her, but she is one of countless millions on your side. So feel free, and feel sure that the universe itself listens to you at this moment."

Even as Neptune spoke, Adam could see the smiles on the faces of Saturn, Orion and Lyra, and the somber, loving depths in the eyes of Launie. Once again she was his nurse. He drank twice, and looked into the glass. The crystal clear liquid was the ether before his eyes, the bubbles were atoms, molecules, or entire galaxies. He was one with all, and all was one with him. He could ask any question, he could answer any question.

"Yes, Saturn," he spoke up. "It is the Word of God. Just as much so as the truth from the mouths of babes is the Word of God. Just as much so as what I am now saying or will ever say is the Word of God. Just as much so as any word, from any source, is the Word of God. Some words are mistaken and some are correct. It is not God which is mistaken, but His

creatures who grope for their way back to Him who make mistakes, hold on to them for awhile, and then cast them aside for the more true things which lead to Him. There is as much room for error on the way back to God as there is for the correct. Like pioneers, we must forge our way back to Him and His Glory. For that the Creative Fatherhead awaits, nothing less, nothing more.”

“Whether you are right, Adam, or whether you are wrong, I frankly admit I do not know, but I agree with your attitude completely,” Saturn said. “Now that you have assumed a position equal to the moment, may I proceed to speak, promising at the same time not to break through any premise or salient that has not already been established somewhere on earth?”

“Indeed, Saturn, speak at will, and I will not disturb you unless I have a question or a challenge,” Adam replied.

All faces turned to Adam, including Launie’s. All seemed to ask in silence, “A challenge? Challenge Saturn?” But all faces melted back to thoughtful truth, a truth which silently said, “Why not?” And Adam looked at the glass of bubbling ginger ale, symbolic of the ether, of all matter and life. After all, he was a son of bubbles in the ether, and Saturn himself was no more than that.

“And then, Adam,” Saturn went on, “there was Genesis and there were Adam and Eve and their sons Cain and Abel, the first beings on earth. Yet Cain went forth eventually to meet the wrath of whole nations. From where did these nations arise so fast, and how did they know that Cain had the sin of slaying his brother on his conscience? Is that not just allegorical? Yet, could any playwright be so brief and so symbolic?”

“Then there was Daniel in the lions’ den. And Elijah went up in a flying and flaming chariot. And Ezekiel saw the wheels. And Noah and his Arc survived the deluge. And Samson alone stood up to nations. And David, the boy, wrote psalms and slew Goliath. And then he became sinful, king, and pure again. And Moses was born into the palace of a Pharaoh, to turn and

lead a slave nation back; back not to freedom, but to wickedness and the wilderness.

“You see, Adam, Moses led a mass of people out of bondage of other people, but not out of evil. The people had to find their own way out of evil. And Joshua did not do better by breaking down the gates of Jericho, or its walls. Remember always that evil in itself is ignorance, and therefore ignorance is evil. Shed light on any darkness and it is no longer dark. Shed knowledge on ignorance and ignorance no longer exists. The love of pure learning is the only true virtue that exists, and apathy and care-not attitudes are the only sins that be. The rankest atheism is nothing more than the manifestation and expression of lazy minds and ignorant souls. Allegories and symbolic expressions are the underlying and steadfast truths of things that were and are yet to be. No building project could be started without the blueprint, just as no blueprint could be produced without the ideal. People gawk at a building but admire it not, for they do not consider the architect, the builder, or the conceiver. And so all things that are not comprehended in the fullest shall crumble, but first shall crumble those who have not comprehended what was lavished upon them, and then the lavished plenty shall topple upon them.

“This is not materialist idealism, for what is made as a result of man’s thinking and ideal is of a high order. Some may frown on the very notion of seeing a material product assembled by man, but these same ones will bow their heads and thank God for bread and fruit, thank Him at every meal. Yet, is not food as material as anything could possibly be? Some thank God for health, but is not the seeking of health, with no effort to learn why it should be, as materialistic as anything could be? Indeed, in my concept, it is far worse. People who seek spiritual healing as something given them by God for nothing and not given others by the same God, are seeking material repairs for a material body. Not in all the history of our Alpha Centaurian home has one plea for healing by merely praying for it or asking for it been an-

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swered by God directly. Neither have we observed it to occur in the history of any other planet.

“In the beginning there was the thought, and the thought became Word and the Word became worlds and life. That still remains as the dynamic, the beginning and the end of everything. From imperfection all things must evolve to perfection, and the order and the wherewithal abound within all things to evolve. Once set in motion, God has spoken to or replied to none of the lesser creation. As the lowly beginnings rose to high perfection, the risen ones were given much dominion. It is these who are intermediaries between man and the Supreme Intelligent Power, for whom the name God so well fits. Of course, ‘God’ is not God’s name, for every language has a different name. No one knows the true name of God. A thought is the best means by which we can approach the truth of Him.”

Saturn spoke calmly and smoothly. None would disturb him before the end of his talk.

“I do believe that neither God nor His Hosts favor a little old lady in fervent prayer over a tyrannical and fierce overlord of people. At times, it does seem as though pleas and prayers are answered, but always there has been a third element entering the situation. A time may have arrived for a given law or condition of nature to turn the events in the other direction, or in other cases some intervention, not interference, was in order by the higher hosts. We are mere mortals, even as you, and we have interceded many times when the situation warranted. Your visit here is such an example.

“Now, Adam, feel free to speak or ask any question you wish,” Saturn concluded.

“I find myself in harmonious agreement with what you say, Saturn, or you would not have interfered with my evolution by telling me so. But for the sake of discussion, and for the record, I do say that the Bible gives many references to man speaking with God. Moses and others have let it be written so, and did not Christ, at the very end, ask the Father to

remove this cup from him if it be His Will? Did he not ask why the Father had forsaken him?" Adam inquired.

"To be sure, Adam, these things are so written. But was the cup removed? No, it was not. Was there an answer to why the Father had forsaken His son? No, the events went on as if only the people of earth existed, and no Higher One at all. There was no answer or interference. As for Moses, remember it is written that he did not see God, but spoke with a 'Spirit.' In other words, he heard a Voice."

"But, Saturn," broke in Adam, "one of the crucial things of the Scriptures is the tablet whereon the Ten Commandments are written. Were these not forged into the stone by God?"

"It is a point well taken, Adam," said Saturn. "But notice the simplicity of the Ten Commandments. They are commandments, and there is not one element of learning contained in them. Even the most primitive human could have originated them. That a mass of people had to be commanded such simple facts by a Supreme Being only shows that the morals of the people must have been base. It would be ridiculous to have to remind a highly civilized person to adhere to such commands, for such a person would not think of behaving in a manner contrary to them anyway."

Launie rose, went into the kitchen and quickly returned with a plastic plate, setting it before Saturn.

Saturn looked at it momentarily, glanced at Launie, then asked Adam:

"As for the fusion of the commandments on the tablet; do you mean like this?"

As the plate lay on the floor Adam saw the Commandments burned into it, and heard plainly a slight purring sound.

That was enough. Adam needed no more. But he had another question, which he asked sincerely and slowly.

"Saturn, was it your people who conversed with Moses?"

"That we cannot answer. No, in no way can we offer you any answer. But there are hosts far above us in stature. Inasmuch as all high orders are learning, learning toward God, everything is in a sense the Word of God.

“There is a purpose to everything; and the purpose is the plan. So it is the Word. Whoever can see the purpose and the plan, even in a small way, he speaks in the essence of the Word. Thus, remember that allegory and symbology live long after history dies. The symbology and allegoric nature of the Scriptures make them of eternal value.

“Many ages ago, our civilization was where yours is today. Our sciences were theoretical and problematical, our creeds and doctrines rested purely on allegory and symbolism. Then, one person brought forth a concept of the nature of nature which served as a point of departure from the bottom up, and answered all questions that could be raised. It not only served us materially but opened up the human vista to such truths that our spiritual essence gradually rose with it.

“Before that we had many differences. There were those who would not eat meat because it meant the slaughter of animals, and on that single premise they warped their own souls, killing not the body but the soul, which is far worse. They could not see that by not eating meat they were killing millions of animals by merely not creating a demand for them. They could not see that in the final analysis everyone kills by merely being born. Parents are killers, for their children must die. People kill many germs and step on many insects, and never know or give it a thought. Also, they must themselves die. Is it not all killing? Since all life must die, creation itself is the greatest killer.”

Saturn continued. “You see, there is a plan and a purpose, and those two are the only eternal life that is, the only things which cannot be killed. Has it not been taught on earth that you must not fear who can kill the body, but fear those who can kill the soul?

“Thus, you can see that whosoever would mislead a child, or anyone, is a killer of the first water. Such a one also holds back evolution and retards the time of perfection.”

As Saturn finished, Adam quickly commented, “Saturn, we all speak and think of perfection. But since all action is learn-

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ing, and we must have positive and negative action, what do we really mean by perfection?”

“Perfection, Adam, already exists in all things. The only imperfection is the ignorance of beings who should but do not see that all things already are, and that any future attainment can be made only by use of the materials on hand, by minds and hands that see the potential.

“In our abject ignorance as primitives, we wallowed for centuries on pure instinct. That goes for your earth, for ours, and for all the countless others. One day someone was struck with an idea, and he and all his kind went that much further forward in progress because of it.

“As long as we needed horses, there were millions of them, but when there is no longer need for them, horses shall disappear.

“For centuries man wanted dogs that were fierce and barking for protection, but today man wants gentle dogs, pet dogs, and so the fierce breed is dying away from the face of the earth, like the horse. One day, when man has so evolved that he is self-sufficient, he will no longer need pets and then even the gentlest of dogs will disappear, as will other pets. Many animals which fit into the chronology of the periodic table of life are extinct, and others are gradually becoming extinct as time goes on.

“At the same time, as animals disappear you will find that the number of humans increases and their intellect increases also. Thus, no life has really disappeared. It has merely sublimated into a more intelligent form. As man moves into the desert, the rattlesnakes disappear, as do the coyotes, jack rabbits and so on. One day these will have no place to exist on earth. Man will have occupied it all.

“Mountains will be cut down so winds will bring more perfect and gentle weather conditions throughout the year. Automobiles and airplanes and rockets will disappear, and everything will become born of silicates or the abundant sands, put there purposely for your people, and moved about by magnetic propulsion such as you see in our ship Andromeda. These

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elements and forces are inexhaustible and they existed before your eyes all the time, but only learning will enable you to utilize them. Glory to the Providence which foresaw all this in the Plan, the Purpose, the Word!"

Saturn stopped to meditate a moment in his rapture. When Adam felt that he had come to the end of his meditation, he took the opportunity to speak.

"Saturn, you always say 'you' though I am the beginning and the end of life on earth. Actually, I am thirty-eight years of age, and have only seven or eight more months of life. What can it mean to me, whatever it is?"

"That is a good question, Adam. Look at it objectively. In all the world's history there have been important people and nondescript people. Whole civilizations have come and gone. Take them all together and at this very moment, in the eyes of God, who is more important, all they who are no more or you who are?" Saturn countered.

"Why, true enough, I am, and so is any one or any thing else that exists at the moment," Adam replied.

"Why, then, do people put forth such efforts to promote their ideas or ideals, giving up their very lives? Even a so-called atheist is interested in the history or origin of earth and its life, and he is concerned about the future of the earth as is the most pious person. He will exert effort and give his life for his own ideal, yet he professes to believe in nothing. You see, there is no such thing as an atheist. Such a person is merely ignorant of facts and blind to truths. But the hypocrisy of the pious one levels him to the same order as the atheist.

"So, we are all really one in essence, and since we are all concerned about the future, we must agree that the concern is a natural instinct. A natural instinct is always unerring. Deep inside our subconscious we all know we do not really die. As long as life exists anywhere, none of us dies, and we feel intuitively that this is so. Some of us see it clearly and plainly, and we call ourselves enlightened. It is nothing more than knowing our own instincts. The moment you die from your body, Adam, you cease to exist as you are, but you can-

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not go to oblivion, because oblivion has no consciousness. Wherever life exists, you will again feel yourself as one unit of it although the entire universe became devoid of all but one mortal. If that one were to disappear, then all life would have sublimated back to God, from whence it always was in the first place.

“Life is everlasting, both your life and mine. What we leave behind when we go out, that is what we shall inherit when we come in, at the very next instant. It becomes plain that, if only for selfish reasons, it pays to learn and to teach. If there should be twenty billion people on earth near perfection and one should be either ill or unlearned, all attention would be focused on that one. He would be the best known individual on earth. He could start that civilization back to retrogression, like a germ in a body.

“By the same token, Adam, if all the billions were primitive and one was endowed with learning and vision, he could eventually bring that whole populace into enlightenment by teaching and by breeding his kind among them. You have been told that our retarded ones are kept among themselves in our world. Andromeda is such a concentration area, and Launie is one of the hindmost. But she is not offended. She wants to be among her own kind, to learn, to generate better and better, and so it is with all the others. We cannot risk falling back. A perfection awaits us all sometime, somewhere.”

“Now,” Saturn offered, “do you wish to say something?”

“I do. It is a question,” said Adam. “If learning is the very basis of human life, which came first on earth, for instance, the school or the church?”

“Both came at the same time, Adam, like the chicken and the egg. There was no division between them at the dawn of time and there really is none now, except the division that ignorance thinks exists.

“You will notice in your history that be they Scriptures or history books, both feature highly the accomplishments of man such as arts, literature, symbols, numbers and upheavals of whole nations.

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“A modern university feels pride in graduating its students. The higher they go in life the more credit to the university or the grammar school. In turn, the graduates give to the university and the school what they find in their forward trailblazing.

“On the other hand, churches have become mere cults, holding in psychic and spiritual bondage those whom they should be helping and enlightening. It is the churches that must become as free as the sciences, or they will disappear. A church should teach its congregation and then graduate it, to try other churches. If they fear to do this, and on earth they all do, then they have no faith in themselves. A modern priest or minister should also be a scientist. If he cannot see God in any manifestation of matter, then he is not fit to minister to the souls of others.”

“But, Saturn,” Adam broke in again, “there are ministers and priests on earth who have pondered on these things called ‘flying saucers,’ and they are truly consulting their consciences as to whether or not they should speak of them from the pulpits. That they are helpless is no fault of theirs. Science has merely stepped ahead of them.”

“Ah, Adam, just what I told you! Why should science have stepped ahead of them? How can they teach of God when they do not even understand God’s lesser doings? The Scriptures of every major religion on earth are filled with such manifestations, and form the basis of religion. But the modern clergyman says these are miracles of the past and occur no more today. Yet they occur more today than in the past. As they know so little of science, so little do they know also of God and His Infinity. The churches swelled in membership soon after the atomic bomb, and they were swelled even more by the advent of the ‘flying saucers,’ as you call them. But it is a false swelling, and it will deflate faster than it swelled. All things swell before they burst. True growth and evolution is slow and solid. They shall all topple into the dust, leaving only the foundations which were built upon the rock, not the sand, and from these small stumps shall rise your new

churches. They shall be Churches of Learning, replacing the cold and equally empty schools of learning. Everything must change, Adam. Everything must give way to discovered truths.”

“Then,” Adam rejoined, “is the religious structure bereft of truths, and has science so far exceeded it that there is no hope for the present theological institutions?”

“No, indeed, Adam. Quite the contrary. Not long ago the materialists rushed to Darwin’s works, hoping to upset all that religion stood for and they found not one iota of support for their dead reasonings. They received a death-blow with finality. A few ignorant ones still seek for some sign that man evolved slowly from the amoeba. Their ignorance grasps the amoeba because science discovered its existence. They do not know that the beginning of the amoeba is the hydrogen atom. Nowhere in all earth can they find one form of life migrating over into another. If they were true scientists obeying only observed facts, they would have long ago observed that all the evidence, not a part but all, is clear proof that no one can understand how the various forms of life occurred. Thus religious concepts are far ahead of materialistic concepts. Please, Adam, never confuse real science with the ignorant few who find more pleasure in a false and negative belief. The true intellects are highly religious, in the positive direction.

“Let the dead bury their dead. That is all these thwarted few are doing. Even that is an expression right from your New Testament, but you have never heard of it. Indeed you haven’t. Too many are busy at it, the dead burying their dead, and so no one likes to give it much voice, either from the pulpit or from the masses. The best and most dynamic parts of Scripture are seldom, if ever, promulgated into the minds of people.” Saturn stopped, waiting now to hear from Adam. “On earth we have our social divisions, these being the state, science, and religion. Are not the three of these working side by side equivalent to your monolithic structure, whereby you have merged all into one magnificent enterprise?” Adam asked.

“With people of high culture and intelligence it should work out well,” replied Saturn. “But even they would soon

see that there would then be no division between any of these elements and they would naturally merge into one anyhow. On earth it is different. One vies against the other, rather than cooperates. Greed, selfishness, and ignorance is the rule, and they cannot merge under those conditions. If they do not merge, eventually the stronger will absorb the weaker of them. There must come a new light unto them. A vision must come to them from the very bosom of Truth.”

“Saturn,” Adam spoke, “is there not some group of people, some institution, some church or some nebulous thought pattern now generating on earth seeds containing the fullness of these vistas?”

“No, Adam, not one. Now and then there seems to be an embryo of something good, but it flares up and dies down. Of course, it is a good sign. There are viruses in formation, and that means there will be a growth. It will be a wonderful dawn when the birth of such an institution takes place. Here on Andromeda we shall rejoice a full seven days in commemoration.”

“Saturn, in regard to Eternity,—do you have a clear and vivid description of it? Is there no way in which some idea of it might be grasped? Does time really exist?”

“One of the prime laws of Nature is that no two substances can occupy the same space at the same time. How big or small do you think the shortest split moment of time is?” Saturn asked him.

“Well, I imagine it is so small and fast that no human mind can conceive of it, no instrument measure it,” replied Adam.

“No, Adam. It is enormous. It is Infinite. That shortest split second fills all space at once, extending from one no-end to the other no-end. And since it fills all space at once, there is no room for any other moment of time to enter therein. Thus, it is always now, everywhere.

“If it were not that time is at rest everywhere, then I could ask you, ‘Which is longer, the past or the future?’ Is there such a fool who would venture to say he knows?”

“The same applies to space. It is Infinite, for if it were

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finite, I ask, 'Which is farther, that way or the opposite way?'

"No, Adam, time is not parceled. It exists as a state of Now, everywhere. Motion is what gives us the impression of time. There are space and motion. It is easier to grasp a thought with your bare hands than to define Time. God is Time, as God is many other essences."

"To be spiritually on the right path, is it essential that man believe in visitors from neighboring space?" asked Adam.

"If the possibility remotely exists, how can man help but have such a conviction? The thought of it alone elevates him in minutes to a degree that would require years otherwise. Many who profess not to believe in space visitors have no compunction in saying that there are angels with wings. Imagine such a grotesque sight as a human form with wings! The believer himself would faint in fear at the sight of such a monster. Also, of what use would wings be out in space? Again allegory and symbolism come in. "Wings were invented for space beings by earth people, the blind leading the blind."

Adam was left without a question in his mind. He passed his hand over his face and across his forehead, trying to determine whether there was anything further he wished to ask Saturn. His hand went across his cheek and to his neck, below his ear. He could feel the lump, now small and soft, but it was there just the same. He was shocked back to the reality of Adam the earthman, Adam the dying. There was something akin to panic surging up within him. Once more Launie looked at him as she had the first time in the dining hall. She was all attentive concern, all tender care. She was beautiful, warm and soothing, as she hurried to the kitchen for some of the bracing elixir. Soon she had placed a glass in Adam's hand. Thirstily he drank of it, and almost at once felt the wonderful effect.

Yes, indeed. He had one more question to ask Saturn, chief of Andromeda, physician par excellent. As he looked toward him, Adam could see that Saturn had already anticipated, not a question but a request.

"Saturn, in all sincerity I ask you: You can cure me of this

thing, I know. Is it at all possible that you would do this for me?"

"Yes, Adam. Possible, yes. But probable? That is another thing. I would need the consent of Neptune, Orion, Lyra, Launie; I would also need the consent of everyone of our people here on Andromeda, and then wait ten years to get word back that assent was given by every one on our home planet. For my curing you would amount to interference with the timetable of evolution of the earth. My act would be the act of my world, and God's detailed plan would have been interfered with. Two worlds would need to start all over again from the very beginning, yours and mine. Simply put, Adam, it means that God would begin all over again from the primitive beginning, like a man playing solitaire and cheating a move. He would just shuffle the deck to start the game anew. That is what the whole universe is to God, an endless shuffling of worlds, each to fit into perfection by its own allotted elements.

"If you were an Alpha Centaurian, twenty billion of us would not rest until you were cured, and on earth, no one shall rest until such blights as disease, war, and ignorance are things of the past. One world cannot interfere with another world which is behind it in evolution. It would be cheating God's plan, and such things are not done with impunity. Would you hazard such calamities if it would mean having you live a few more years, only a few more years anyhow, Adam?"

"No, Saturn. Assuredly, no. I am sorry I brought that up, and you may be sure I will not again," said Adam humbly.

"Well, now that you feel that way, I can add this. Besides disturbing the Plan, there is another thing to be considered. A dying man is very wise. A doomed man is resigned. When either is brought back to a measure of assured longer life, he is not like other human beings. He does not fit any more in life's motion. You would find nothing on earth interesting, for you would know that everything will end to you, no matter how long you might live. The slow and tedious ways of earth would become unbearable. You would welcome the end, mean-

while living languidly in a world no longer to your liking. No one can change that fact, certainly not I. That is in the hand of God only, Adam.

“So, no matter what, you would hate me for curing you. You would hate everybody on earth, including yourself. You could no longer be an excellent physician, for the very thought of just ministering to others, all of whom are sooner or later doomed, would pall on you. It would not be curing you; it would be killing all of what is the real Adam. Though you may not fully comprehend the consequence to the evolutionary plan of the worlds, the second consequence is just as dire, and surely you comprehend that, Dr. Adam.”

Launie came close, caressed his hair and kissed him full on the lips.

“That is for your understanding, Adam, and confirmation that in the end we all meet. Even Saturn must go on,” she said, with a tenderness that was reward in itself.

As she drew her head back Adam saw that Lyra had risen and was standing before him. She bent down and added her kiss, smiling warmly.

“Never let it be said, Adam, that I was not alert and attentive during this fine meeting.”

“Imagine,” Launie said in a low voice. “A peer kissing you after me, and where my own lips had touched you. That is real democracy, is it not?”

“Yes, Launie, it is. It is also the result of true spiritual awareness and of intellectual maturity.”

Lyra suggested it was time for some refreshment and for more casual conversation. Launie and she quickly got the table ready in the dining area, and all were summoned to be seated.

In the course of the conversation, which touched upon various subjects, mostly on the lighter side, Adam raised a question, directing it at Orion.

“Our earth has experienced great earthquakes since our known history. Is it always to have such shuddering and destructive spasms?”

“Your earth, Adam,” Orion replied, “is not fully set in

spherical stability. It is still in the process of formation into a more perfect sphere, being drawn toward its own center by the force of gravity. Since its orbit around your sun is elliptical and not circular, the sun's gravity varies and prolongs the process of earth's attaining spherical stability. However, it is gradually settling into a more compact sphere, becoming rounder, much as a snowball is molded by hand. This settling is what causes some mountains to be pushed upward.

"As the curvature of the earth attains a stronger arc form, there is less pressure exerted on the core, and the inner heat of the earth will cool accordingly. In turn, the cooling causes a thicker crust to form on the inside of the existing crust of the earth. Thus, in the future the earth will be a completely solid sphere. No more hot springs or volcanoes will erupt. No more earthquakes will occur," Orion assured him.

"You begin to see," Lyra added, "that all things adjust themselves in about the same timing? No civilization is given more to struggle against than it can conquer. True, things become more complex, conflicts among men become much greater, and even nature seems to take on new proportions when some of its forces have been understood and conquered. That is all part of evolution." She paused, waiting for a word from Adam. He obliged her promptly.

"Then, Lyra, would it be not wise for man to just sit back and wait for these things to adjust themselves, rather than to fight them?"

"It would be plausible, but not wise," she replied. "Also, there is man's insatiable curiosity to contend with. Many men sit back and let things just go as they will, but many do not. Even this arrangement is part of the original Plan. Furthermore, if man just sat back, he would merely have the first problem all the time, never surmounting that one, and that major one would sooner or later wipe him from the face of the earth. Remember, Adam, that cancer, just for one example, is such a problem. To many people that one problem is more grave than atomic energy in the form of explosives."

"May I add my own affirmation to that," Adam said, "by

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merely indicating my comprehension? In short, then, action is the only rule and, in the final analysis, learning the only true virtue.”

“Not quite, Adam,” Lyra rejoined. “The *love* of learning is the only virtue. Everyone learns something, but not everyone is endowed with the pure love of learning,” she finished, smiling. Launie looked at her peeress, and received these simple words with sheer admiration.

“Since we have time on our hands,” said Adam, “there are a few questions I would like to ask just for the record. I have recently read the book, ‘The Secret of the Saucers,’ and I find my own experiences bearing it out. Some things do not seem to correlate, however.

“For instance, Orfeo says in his book that he had the sense of being on an asteroid. Yet I find myself in a huge space ship in the atmosphere of Venus, and his description defines the same things I am seeing here. How is that?”

“That one is for me,” spoke up Neptune. “It was I who almost entirely arranged and conducted our part of the communication with him, as you noted in the book.

“With that experience, Adam, you will find much actual detail. However, some of the most profound exchanges between Orfeo and myself were allegorical and symbolical, so that their essence could be applied to many situations just as passkeys apply to many locks.

“For instance, an asteroid is a piece of a broken planet. Lucifer, the name given to that former planet, denotes evil, and of course, evil in any degree is but a product of ignorance.

“Thus, Lucifer the planet had once attained material symmetry, but it was gained in a cold, hard way, not in the least graced by the living warmth of spiritual truths. Thus it destroyed itself. This story has been handed down for countless millenia, and will go in the future throughout the cosmos.

“Thus, who are the Luciferians, and who are the non-Luciferians? Only their deeds and results will tell. On earth each one has it within him to be either one, so the analogy or allegory is maintained perfectly. Earth can retrogress by

sluggish ignorance and apathy, or it can destroy itself by arrogant materialism. The only other course is beauty and perfection in total. That day, for either of these ends, is far off as yet, and what will be must come about by the free choice of the people.

“Due to Orfeo’s ignorance at the time, although he saw much that you see now, he was unaware as yet as to where he was or what it all meant. Eventually, it did dawn upon him, and our giving to you the actual experience (in the physical body) still represents no interference with earth’s evolution. He was made to see part of Andromeda on Venus. He was, because of his share of ignorance, half Luciferian and half not. But his pure love of learning has elevated him upward, and that makes him one who does not wish to belong to that long-established hierarchy of Lucifer, so he does not today. Being such a good example of an ‘in-between’ is one of the reasons for his experiences. He was a materialist, true enough, but his love of learning brought him into the Cosmic Splendor, or the Light, and our contact with him was made permissible.

“Many on earth have speculated,” Neptune continued, “as to whether there is such a thing as intelligent life in forms different from the human. Well, if there is we have found no traces of it. Many of your intelligent fellowmen know that it could not be by nearly mathematical ascertainment. For instance, if you plant an apple seed you get an apple. Some will say this is not so, because if you plant a peach stone you do not get an apple and they let it go at that, reasoning no farther. Willfully, they would lead the ignorant to think that they themselves believe so when they are in reality deliberately falsifying, knowing within themselves that the same law holds for both seeds and for all seeds.

“Thus any seed that can produce the brain of a monkey will in turn lose its properties upon gestation, true; but the brain of the monkey follows predestined laws that make it form a monkey. A brain capable of intelligence follows a natural course which makes it produce the implements of intelligence

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such as the thumb, the hand, and so on. The human machine is therefore the most efficient mechanism in the universe, so far as we can calculate. From there, only a higher Intelligence arises. Truly, then, we must surely be created in the image of the Father.”

“Neptune, are the ignorant and the malevolent made also in the image of the Father?” Adam asked him eagerly.

“The Fatherhead is Infinite. It has a Triune Personality, and you are considering only the two of Him; in fact, hardly more than one. Remember, Adam, Positive and Negative, Action and Reaction? These exist even in the Ultimate One. The word ‘and’ is His third aspect, and completes the Triune Being. Whereas mortals know life only at the third manifestation, or as the result of the Positive and Negative, the Father knows all three forms of Life simultaneously. This phenomenon is reserved solely for the Father,” Neptune said, speaking the last words slowly that they might filter to the souls of all those present, as well as to his own. They made such an impression on Adam that it prompted him to ask another question.

“Neptune, do I return to earth? In brief, where do I stand? I feel that you have at last interfered with our evolution, for I am sure no one on earth has thought in the direction of those last statements of yours heretofore.”

“Not so, Adam. Quite a few people on earth have come upon this awareness. You will meet one of them when you return to earth. Did our ship not pick you up from Twenty-nine Palms? Did you not read ‘The Secret of the Saucers’ just recently? The author of that book is one of them, and he has been staying in Twentynine Palms of late. You will meet and speak with him soon after your return, and you will see that he has come upon such an awareness, even before you mention it to him.”

Adam smiled in rapt admiration, then asked, “Since it was under your guidance that Orfeo heard five words of your language and remembered them, is there a language that will

finally be chosen by the people of earth from among its many?"

"Not from any one existing language," replied Neptune. "But they will frame a perfect one from three of them. The English for vastness, the Spanish for phonetic beauty, and the Italian for specific spelling. They who will fuse these three, with their three characteristic elements retained intact, will give the earth its great language. As you have already guessed, it is our language. Of course, you know we augment our word language with that of mathematics, and by means of these two you could converse with any intelligent life in the universe. You see, Adam, we come from these unities in the beginning, and to them we must return."

"I see it so clearly," Adam said, in half reverie. "I think a good name for such a language would be 'Sonado'".

"Wonderful!" erupted Launie with glee. "You get the idea very rapidly, Adam. And remember, an earthman came upon the name by his own efforts; it was not from us. Speak to me fluently in Sonado, and Leo would relinquish his love for me, gladly making you a gift of me."

"I think Leo has an ironbound claim on thee," Adam responded, half in regret and half in jest. "It will be many years, Launie, before any of my people shall speak to yours in Sonado."

Orion sat more erect in his chair, inspired to a beaming smile. Gently he said to Adam, "Bon sonado, but e tem a mas."

Adam looked to Launie for an explanation. She shrugged her shoulders and said she did not know what it meant, but Saturn understood and enlightened Adam.

"What Orion said is simply, 'Well said, but it is time to eat'".

Adam marvelled, not only at Orion's hasty creation, but at the facility with which Saturn quickly interpreted the sentence. He had to admit to himself there was a complete ease in the sentence, there was phonetic pleasantness, and it must be easy to spell, for he found himself remembering it completely. Rising from his chair, he said to the company, "Bon sonado, but e tem a mas."

* * * *

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Thus Adam was permitted to see the innermost philosophy of these people. It was simple, but utterly profound. At first he found it difficult to understand why in the physics section he was given much of what really was religion, and in the religious session he received what might be called higher physics. The difficulty did not clear up, for by now Adam found it impossible to separate one from the other. Now he knew that no one truly probes a thing deeply until that thing becomes nothingness, yet everything. It is so with the hydrogen atom. It is equally so with man himself. When the intellect and the intuition reach the point where no mortal can provide any light or reply, then the light and the reply is provided by hierarchies more enlightened in the Divine Estate.

Indeed, then, man has heard the Word of God; but not from God directly. Man has uttered the Word of God, and utters it eternally; but man is merely the image, the third harmonic of God. In that one-third man has often felt he was the total image, for sometimes the one-third seems to reach into the infinity of matter and thought. Yet the other two-thirds, equally infinite, being the material estates and domains of action and reaction, are totally unknown to man.

Suddenly, almost terrifyingly, Adam hit the ultimate thought, from which he shrank back at once. Was there anything imaginable that God could not do?

The answer came back to him almost in the same instant. Yes, there is. God cannot make an exact and absolute equal to Himself, for in such a case a conflict would result in which the eternity of Creation itself would be at stake, and in this conflict Creation would dissolve, because all Creation is in constant ferment, every minute particle of which registers with God, and has purpose. Adam knew now with absolute finality that he must not be healed by any being except one of his own earth brothers, for it was part of the purpose, and a place and period in that cosmic fermentation, that he be healed only by the efforts of himself or his family of earth.

This, then, is what is commonly known among more enlightened earthmen as the Plan, the Purpose. Every hair on

ADAM LEARNS ETERNITY

our heads is counted; a sparrow does not fall that the Father does not know of it. How long before intelligent man sees this truth?

As they dined in silence, Saturn was in attunement with Adam's every thought. Other than ordering their particular meals, few words had been spoken by anyone in the group. It is a code that when any being is contemplating the Ultimate, no other entity shall commune with or interfere with that being's adoration, for in the eyes of the Ultimate, the last is equal in His love with the foremost. The most vicious creature imaginable required as much birth pain of God as did the highest Archangel, if not more so, though that creature must, within eternity's time, rise to sit in Love with that Angel.

A learned man basks in his reflections. A wise man glories in all that happens before his eyes. An ascended one knows that to gain favor and grace forever in the eyes of the Creator, he must drench himself with the love of pure learning, and the love of pure learning encompasses that which has occurred, that which is yet to occur. The rapture of that high estate cannot be contained within a mono-entity, but must be shared and consummated between that entity divided, as man and woman, and the third essence, the third harmonic, results in further creation, their children. Thus, the allegory of Adam and Eve supersedes all other knowledge. By the same token, an absolute knowledge of the hydrogen atom would open for man the way to the very Highest.

Thus Adam learned, on board Andromeda.

Chapter 12

THE EASE OF FORGETTING

The small group dined in harmonious silence. Other groups sat around at various tables, pleasantly conversing and eating. Adam noticed that it was the same Cafe Venus which Launie had named the night before. It seemed a long time since he had been here, and the glamor must have worn off, because in some way it was less attractive than on the previous occasion. Not even the company of these highest of peers on Andromeda nor the presence of Launie herself appeared able to restore the cosmic glitter of it, which was so recent yet so long ago.

Only Saturn, who was in rapport with Adam in thought and spirit, was able to remove the cold chill that otherwise would have settled about them as they lingered over dessert. Once more, there was music softly beginning to peal from seemingly everywhere. It was an overture which Adam nearly recollected but could not quite recognize. Then it burst into its full melody, an orchestration the equal of which he had never heard on earth. There was no doubt as to what the melody was. It was "La Vien Rose."

So enthralling was the music that the entire establishment thawed from its chill and turned into the most delightful place in which Adam could imagine himself. At that moment *she* came to the table. There was no doubt in Adam's mind that she was one of the peers. Certainly she was far from being one of the retarded ones.

Even the expression of Saturn mellowed as he looked into her eyes and received the message she handed him, fused on a plastic type paper. He looked at the missive, looked back into her eyes, and merely nodded his head. The entire exchange was in silent pantomime, but Adam could feel that something very critical was transpiring. By the looks on the faces of his group he felt sure it all concerned him. Launie looked at the

lovely peeress who had seemingly intruded on the group, but for once she did not smile.

Saturn once more examined the written information, looked up into her eyes, and asked, "And this is your absolute decision, Aleva? In the event you did not return, there would be nothing that you, and you only, felt would have been taken with you and lost to us forever?"

"No, Saturn," she responded. "Nothing would be left behind me that would be so unfinished another could not finish it. I am fully ready for either the beginning or the end."

Launie dropped her head into her arms on the table and sobbed somewhat convulsively. Adam would have rushed to comfort her, but he knew not what was going on and something within him held him back, to listen further and receive perhaps the solution to what was being hinted, or was about to transpire. Also, he felt that Launie had no need of comfort from an amateur such as he, and once more he felt his inferior stature in the presence of these people.

In his dejected state this exquisite woman, Aleva, stood looking into Adam's eyes with such self-sure poise that he could not help but feel he had always known her, if only by some common chord she struck within him. She was warm, understanding, somewhat aggressive, feminine; and so wel-comely overcoming that even Launie gradually faded in Adam's "undying" esteem. Yet he knew in this moment that he could love Launie in a way he could not love this one. Launie could meet Adam on his own level some day, but how could Aleva come down to absorb the manly love, limited though it might be, that Adam was capable of? No, indeed. She was more aloof in that regard than Lyra.

By now Adam looked tired and worn. Launie could see that as she raised her head from her folded arms. She arose and went hurrying off, returning once more with a tall glass of nectar which she proffered to Adam. He took two sips and set the glass back on the table. He grimaced a little, even though it was delicious. Somehow it tasted different from all the other potions of nectar he had drunk. Launie told him

it was a little different. It was more potent, and would calm his system for a much longer period of time than the other mixtures had done in the past. For at least eighty hours it would enhance his whole being and he would have no need of further help physically. And, she assured him, when its effect wore off completely, his memories of these days would be deposited deep into his subconscious, to be recalled only as a dream, far off, half real and half not. Only the essence of his recollections would tell if they were real or not. With that assurance to Adam she bit her lips hard, and wept like a child.

Launie cried so hard Adam joined her by intuitive response. As their eyes were dimmed by bittersweet tears, Adam could see everyone but Launie leave the table and go out of the room.

Only Launie was left with him, but it was not the Launie he had known these few days. She had changed in appearance and in aspect, he noted, as his eyes cleared up from their tears. He had known an unreachable Launie, a devastating Launie. Now, before him and close to him was a more real Launie.

Her apparel had become a sea-blue color fringed with white, so that she became a fleecy cerulean picture. She was like a young maid of earth on a Sunday morn going to church, or floating through a meadow of daisies and sumac, ivy and dandelion and butterflies. Her unbelievable beauty had mellowed to a more real and credible warmth. She was truly flesh and blood. She breathed air and she exhaled perfume. At last she was a woman, and Adam felt like a man. Launie had fallen and Adam had risen. He now loved her more than any word or philosophy could save him from. Not only would he claim her from Leo, but he would challenge the gods if need be, to claim her, and he said so to her, for he held her by the elbows, and said:

“Dora; my Dora. You have waited, and I have wasted so much time. So, I was a doctor, and not a bad one. But I let my greatest patient fall back into limbo. I am yet a doctor, Dora, and better yet, a physician. Love has made me a true physician, and this degree is not written on paper but in the records of the Ether. In my awareness of that, I say to you

and hereby vow that henceforth I will be, so far as I am able to be, all that you ever expected of me. I do all things with you in my mind, and I bitterly regret any slight which I have shown you.

“You, Dora, have been me and I have been you. We both have wandered afar but we have returned to each other, never again to part. The horizon is yours, and it is also mine. The past is you to me, and it is I to you. I now rest for all time, knowing you cannot go so far that you cannot hear my voice. For all voices shall to your ears be but milestones leading you back to me. It must be so, for it is so with me.”

As they sat alone at the table, Launie listened to Adam and her tears flowed steadily. She bit her lips, for indeed, Launie had taken on the appearance of Dora.

“You see, Adam?” she sobbed. “My people chose me to be your host and guide here, because I resembled Dora more than any of the others on Andromeda. A slight change in me, and you see only her.

“Yes, you were a good man and a good physician. But you slighted love, and though you were highly desirable on earth, you remained unreachable to the one who loved you.. She has not been married to any other man. You were attracted to her, but you let your profession come first. She waited day after day and month after month, until she no longer knew why. A face and a voice kept haunting her, and the face and the voice kept saying, ‘Wait for me. I am far from you, but I will come to you.’ So, she still waits.

“Yes, Adam, it is Dora, whom you know from away back. You are now ill and doomed, but she has been ill very long, and she now knows that she is doomed also. Will she know only lonely days and bitter suffering? Will she pass on in that bleak aloneness that is unbearable? She could stand all that, as many women must, but she owes a few debts, and she cannot bear to think she may pass on with those debts over her head. When you go back to earth, Adam, rush to her, lift her up financially and hold her in your arms. She is Launie, Adam, and Launie is Dora, If you will not do for her

what you can, you would not do so for me. I must have your answer, Adam, not by intuition, but by your words.”

“Launie,” Adam managed to whisper. “I saw you as Dora, and for the first time loved you as only love could understand. I cannot wait to return to her. She has been neglected and frustrated, true enough. But it was not intentional on my part, and I have received the reward that such selfishness earns. Somehow, I feel that she also slighted some essence, which if not slighted would have made her mine and I her own long ago. But it does not matter now. What matters is that she wants me more than anything else, and I feel the same way toward her. She is free to claim me, as I am free to claim her. It is all in good order. Where is the power that would keep me from Dora? I ask you, Launie, where is such a power that would dare keep me from her?”

“There is no power that would dare so,” Launie replied, her eyes still wet. “But do you not already forget Launie and what she said to you so recently, yet so long ago? It was recent in time, Adam, but long ago in your memory. Do you not remember asking me how it would be possible for you ever to forget me? And this moment I might ask of you, how will it be possible for you ever to remember me? You are already impatient to see more of Aleva; and hopelessly impatient to see Dora. I ask you, Adam, not how will you forget, but will you sometimes remember Launie?”

Adam looked at his bracelet, which had his name, number, and symbol engraved upon it, and which could not be removed except by severing his hand from his arm.

“No, Adam,” said Launie, anticipating his thought. “Such are not for the souls of the enlightened ones. That bracelet will serve you only should you become stranded in space within the cosmos. It is not a memoir. It will be dissolved from your wrist the moment you have gone back to earth to stay, and so will I dissolve from your memory. Whatever you remember of me will be like a dream that you can thrust aside. So a pupil does with the teacher, but the teacher finds it hard to thrust aside the memories of the pupils. You have been my

teacher and I yours, so we can drop each other in the activities of the future, in activating what we have learned from each other. Thus, Adam, forgetting is easy. Remembering is the difficult part.”

“Well said, Launie,” Adam countered. “I still am enslaved to you. But what is that undertone of music, and why does the room get brighter? I have learned that every new overture is but the dawn of a new event. I would embrace you as my own, but what is this new something that sweeps over everything about us? I feel I must look into it, and you must be with me. Come, let us go out, for it is Andromeda itself that changes.”

So saying, Adam took Launie by hand and hurried to the outside of the Cafe Venus with her.

The world of Andromeda was not the same. Adam looked above him, then to the horizon all around him. There were no longer dark clouds and lightning, but white and fleecy clouds and blue azure. This sky was highlighted by a huge bright spot from which there was heat emanating, like a desert when the sun blazes. He looked askance at Launie.

“Yes, Adam,” she informed him. “Andromeda has surfaced over the main body of clouds which envelop Venus. That bright spot you see is the sun. It is large only because you are closer to the sun than you would be on earth. The heat you feel is that of the sun. We are foreign to it by birth, Adam, but you are the son of the sun. Yet, Alpha Centauri is the same to us as the sun is to you. We may understand it better than you do, but it is still your source and sustenance of life. All earth people are sons of the sun, which is in turn the son of the Father. The very beginning is traced back to the words, ‘Let there be Light; and there was Light.’ That light sustains all that lives under it. It is the beginning and the end. You are truly a son of the sun.

“Do you remember seeing three ships dip into the ocean of Jupiter? You marvelled at that, thinking it was a high accomplishment. It may be to you and your people, but to us it is elementary. All of us would and could go into Jupiter’s

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red ocean. Some of our most daring and inquisitive men have gone right into the sun, and have come out again. It is still hazardous and very much problematical, for the core of the sun is ultimate heat and force and no material can stand up under its horrendous radiation. As for our women, a mere handful have dared it. It is the very source of ultimate heat, and even we blanch at the prospect of approaching the sun.

“Only our finest crafts can make the dip and return, and only our peers have the kind of courage and skill required to do so. The critical moment inside the star is more than most people could bear. The closest I have been to it is at the orbit of Mercury.”

Adam seemed transfixed as he listened to Launie and looked at the bright spot the sun made on Andromeda’s ceiling. He felt within his every fiber that something Launie was trying to say involved him. Even the traffic in the air was at a minimum, as though all of Andromeda awaited in a suspense equal to his own. Adroitly, Launie continued to speak.

“When Aleva came to our table and spoke with Saturn, she brought written data from Antares that all was in order for her trip. Saturn gave his approval. Yes, she has fully decided to go into the sun, but only if it means something to some branch of learning. We would have nothing to learn from her trip which would add to our records. It would not be an exploration for our sake, but it would be for yours.”

She paused, allowing the impact of her suggestion to sink into Adam’s consciousness. It was hardly necessary, for he had absorbed the idea as she spoke. He gave his answer deliberately.

“I accept the offer, Launie, with my gratitude,” he simply replied.

“Oh, no, Adam,” she replied. “You have the haste of the reckless. Your decision while you are still with us would not be valid. The nectar influences you, our environment molds your mind, Aleva is exciting to you. You have not long to live, so what would it matter? None of these reasons are valid with us. You must decide soberly, of sane mind, and

from your home planet. You must remember that you have happy months awaiting you with Dora, and happiness awaits her because of your returning to her with love. You must decide with absolute resolve that the exploration is paramount in your desire," she advised him.

"I understand, Launie," Adam said. "The way I feel at this moment I pray that my decision as Adam, the earthman, will bring me into such an ultimate experience. Meantime, do I have more to see on your good ship Andromeda? I never tire of it."

"None, Adam; none that would add to your knowledge or be more interesting to you than what you have already seen. Whatever else remains is beyond your ken. We would be hurting you to show more without explaining it fully, and explaining would be interference. Let us go back to my house, but first take this capsule and swallow it."

He complied with her request, and soon they were back in Launie's cottage. She took off her lovely jacket, placed it on the back of a chair, then turned to face Adam again. She was once more Launie, the original Launie. Yet she so much resembled Dora!

"Did I not tell you," she said, softly, enchantingly, "that I would be easy to forget? But only in your vision of another, in a vision of where you belong . . . with Dora. Your trip back home will be occluded from you in restful sleep. You have nothing more to see in space for the time being, and you need the rest. Besides, you must forget and regard your recent experience as just a long dream. The capsule I just gave you shall bring sleep to you, Adam."

Adam heard her voice as if it came from far away, and through a hazy mist. He hurried for the divan to sleep. So sleepy was he that her thanks and farewell words did not register with him.

* * *

Adam awoke back in his rented cabin, to the light of the morning sun. The only thing different this morning was that the sun felt closer to him, warmer to his thoughts, intelligent

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in its perpetual being, and hotter than any man had ever conceived it could be. He had, it seemed to him, experienced a dream that was realistic, and the sun was part of that dream; the last part.

While dressing and grooming he could think of nothing but the dream. It was odd how the effect of it seemed to expand his awareness, giving him knowledge of things in a vastness that he had never been conscious of before. Even the sun seemed to submit to his knowledge of it, as if it silently said, "Yes, Adam, what you now feel I am, that I am." It was odd, he mused, how you can spend a lifetime seeking knowledge and learning, and in one instant or in one night feel it suddenly mature into more knowledge than you had ever sought. Oh, well, he reflected, that's life and that's maturing. And what a dream this sudden flowering of awareness brought with it!

He went out to his car, to go into town for breakfast. It was a little more difficult to start than usual. The battery must be getting sluggish. A thin film of dust covered the windshield and all the windows. That was odd, because it was crystal clear just last night. Oh, well, a dash of water would fix that.

The town was really quiet for a "Wednesday morning. It was rather strange. You never can tell about these dreamy desert communities; they behave oddly, doing as they please, when they please. A community could be as psychologically variable as an individual.

Sitting at the counter in a cafe, he remarked to the waitress how strange he felt, how peculiar the town seemed for a Wednesday morning.

"Wednesday?" she asked in astonishment. "Are you kidding? This is Sunday morning. Brother, where were you last night? Well, what will it be, hot cakes and tea?"

"No. No, not this morning. Make it hot cakes and coffee," he replied.

"Oh, coffee this morning, eh? You *were* out, weren't you?"

Say, we haven't seen you for a few days. What's the matter, mad at us?" she kidded.

"I couldn't be mad at anybody, the way I feel. But I am sure mad at myself, and for no reason, except maybe because it's Sunday."

"Shall I put your favorite music on the machine?" she asked, hoping to shake him from his mood.

"Yes; yes, indeed. Here is the money. I insist you use it."

Adam felt strange. Cold electricity seemed to shoot through him, and goose pimples wanted to rise from his skin. He felt good as the waitress selected the number from the music box. Then the goose pimples were no longer undecided; they burst out fully all over. The number "Siboney" burst out from the music box, and the waitress remarked how these machines were always making errors. Adam felt even more concerned about it. He did not remember Siboney being among the records in the machine. They must have brought in some new ones since he last ate here. Why did it haunt him so? Oh, so what! he reflected. He had more important things to muse over than a music record.

He dreamed of Dora. Yes, Dora. It may have been a dream, but he knew Dora and he felt sure she was in the straits his dream had told him of. Anyhow, he would be going back to Seattle in a couple of days, and would rush to her. He wanted so much to see her.

Throughout the rest of the day, which did prove to be Sunday and not Wednesday, Adam wrestled with many new thoughts. Dream or no dream, something about the desert demanded his being here. Yet, he wanted to take off for Seattle to be at Dora's side, if not for her sake then for his own. He now needed her more than she ever needed him; and all because of a long dream.

But that bright sun in the sky. It was not the sun he had known for thirty-eight years, yet it was the very same sun, the same sun Dora saw, that Dora felt through the hazy atmosphere of Seattle. Surely she was more subject to the sun than she was to Adam. She was a product of the sun, as every-

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one else was on earth. Whatever she needed of Adam he could send her. Yes, he could send it. So he made out a check for one thousand dollars and sent it to a close friend who could easily and quickly locate Dora. That would relieve her of any financial worries. He mailed it, and felt wonderful about it. He was now free. Free to do what he pleased and should do. There was some unfinished business to be done here in the desert, but what it was he could not put his finger on. He just felt he must stay a while longer, then he would fly to Dora as fast as his car could go.

All this day, Sunday, a day of rest, Adam was doing things that would seem insane to him any other time. Yet he *was* busy, settling his earthly affairs, for in one way or another he would not be long for this world. As if to prove it to himself, he put his finger on the little lump under his ear. The lump had changed. It was soft and barely discernible to the touch. Was everything going mad, or was it he? Did he have a dream last night, or was it a dream? Why had the car windows gathered dust? Why was it Sunday instead of Wednesday?

He had a dream "last night." It seemed so realistic, insisting on thrusting itself into his wakeful memory. The gist of the dream seemed to ask of him, "Would you go into the sun, Adam, with only a problematical chance of coming out again?" He looked up at the sun, and its bright rays made him sneeze. That was nothing in comparison to what it could really do to him. In his consciousness he could sense that a beautiful and ascended woman would offer her very body and life to the sun, and surely many women would. Why not he? After all, he had only seven more months to live. Instant atomizing by the sun would be far better than the slow torture of his ailment, and if he should come out, oh, if he should come out again, what words he could leave for his fellow-men! Only Dora stood in his way, and he had mailed enough money to relieve her of her earthly worries. Would that not be enough to bring happiness to her heart and reassure her that Adam still reserved a place for her in his deepest thoughts?

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Yes, he thought, that is settled. He would go into the sun, with fervent zest.

But what silly thoughts! Why should he be thinking such immature things? He would stay in Twentynine Palms a few more days, and that was all. Then he could go to Dora. Yes, Dora. Would she look like the woman he had just dreamed about? Then there was another. Yes, she called herself Launie. —But that was all just a dream.

Or was it? Adam kept trying to probe within his mind. All through the long Sunday he reflected, until the day was ended by the setting golden sun, which had set the same way for millions of years. When the stars appeared and it was fully night, Adam felt strange in town. The town merely went about its usual ways, but they were now entirely strange and foreign to him. These were the slow, step-by-step ways of evolution, and Adam felt himself thousands of years ahead of that pace. It would take the whole world, of which Twenty-nine Palms was such a small part, many years to unfold into the knowledge and awareness he now felt. He did not belong here. He belonged back in the comforting solitude of his cabin.

* * *

A lone car made its way on the desert road to an isolated cabin. It carried its driver from the life of the town to the loneliness that only the desert can bestow. A loneliness it is, so absolute there is only one way beyond it, and that is the road back to life. As Paul once said, to be reborn there must first be a separation. Adam was separating himself from all earthly things he knew, but he was hitching his wagon to a star, the star of ultimate finality in the physical world. Though it had been hid behind the earth, the star was his very own, his life. It was his beginning, and it was his end. The star was his own sun.

He stepped out of the cabin and looked up at the canopy of stars which were but radiant suns, by the billions, and by the billions, planets revolved around them to be nourished by their heat, light, and sustenance. Earth was no more and no

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less than one of these, each in a formative stage, some far behind near the beginning, some far ahead near the horizontal end. Earth, he thought, must be somewhere between these two extremes.

None of their populace, he further mused, can call himself accomplished until he can go into the very source of life and emerge again; that is, go into the sun and come out. Then, and then only, could the civilizations say they understood matter and spirit. It would be the ultimate and crowning glory of exploration. If, he reasoned, we could get closer and closer to the sun, we could eventually approach its surface, and then bore deeper and deeper into its body to a point somewhere near the absolute core. Why not?

Man probes his earth, the space which cradles his earth; he probes his own physical self, and his spiritual essence. He gets answers only by small bits at a time, always proportional to the time and effort he gives his probing. True faith is rewarded by intangible answers. Physical investigation is rewarded by physical response. So it is.

Indeed, not only would I venture to go into the sun, he mused, but I would give my life, this one life, this one awareness, to only begin the journey into it.

Chapter 13

INTO THE SUN AND OUT AGAIN

Ah, look at that star far above, he said to himself. It has decided to move and roam about the heavens. It is not a meteorite, nor is it an airplane. It is curving and becoming somewhat larger. Do I not recall seeing something like that not too long ago; in fact, very recently? What is all this confusion in my mind, anyhow? Why is it that the essence of these thoughts remains paramount in my mind, and what should be important has turned to mere slow, plodding motion on earth? That star has really become bigger now. It is not only curving, but spiraling downward, right above me.

Just look. It has gone completely out, like a phantom. Was it real in the first place? Am I trying to comprehend the incomprehensible? Is it my sense of doom that calls forth my intuitive wisdom? But why should the wind begin to blow? Does it know my thoughts and respond to them? The leaves fly away from near that tree. Is it a whirlwind? There is a glow there. Now there is a ghostly sphere. It reminds me of the ship, the ship that “she” mentioned. “She?” I believe in my dream it was “Launie.”

But Adam was not dreaming. The ship emerged into full view, a perfect sphere. A dark area appeared in it, and from this a ramp seemed to extend down to the ground, from which a lovely lady walked, or waltzed.

“Adam, we know you have fully decided of your own free will, but tell me as confirmation to yourself, do you still wish to go into the sun, and probably out again?”

Now he knew her for sure. It was Aleva, the Aleva of his realistic “dream.” At last he was her own, and she was his; but only if he agreed to go into the sun. He must answer her.

“Yes, in all humility, I wish to go into the sun whether I come out again or not; it does not matter to me, nor will it to

anyone else,” Adam replied, walking as though spellbound toward her and to the half-phantom craft.

“Then come,” she said, “and know that you are entering a ship so well constructed it all but breathes and thinks. You have been re-orienting yourself on earth, Adam,” she said, as he entered the craft, “and you have decided freely. It was not a dream you had, but a real experience. It should be no problem for you to remember me, Aleva. I am the third woman in your extraterrestrial experiences. There will be no more. There is no need of more. If we emerge from the sun, you know that the fourth woman, Dora, your true earth love, awaits you and needs you, as you need her. Are you still ready and willing?”

“Yes, Aleva. I am ready, willing and able. My will would fly into the sun. All you do is provide the means,” Adam said, then hastily apologized.

“I am sorry, Aleva. You also provide the support, for I would not go without you.”

“Nor I without you,” she assured him. “Your people have a habit of shortening names! Vega gave you your pseudonym of Adam, so by your own custom, why do you not merely call me, for short, ‘Eve’?”

Adam and Eve. Into the sun, the sustaining light of Creation, God’s candle that was Light when called for. All by his own decision and desire, though arrived at slowly and painfully like pulling a rib from his side, Adam had determined to experience the ultimate in adventures.

Thoughtfully, they entered the craft. They went to their respective seats as the thin ramp was drawn back to its slot, and the door slid shut behind them. On one side of Eve’s seat was a small box with buttons, the only means of control for this superb craft. Otherwise, it was not much more than a round, hollow shell, the only flat part being the floor. Yet the outside appearance of the ship was entirely and perfectly spherical, so the floor had to be thick and solid, and joined to the craft completely.

This little craft was dazzlingly active at its hull. It was far

more perfect than the one Adam now recalled vividly, the one which had taken him to Venus with Vega at the helm. This was one of those perfectly built ships designed to explore the depths of stars.

Eve turned her smiling eyes to Adam and asked him, "Are we all ready?"

"I am ready. Go as though I were not here with you."

She touched a button. There was no response except a slight push by the seat against his body. The soft light within the ship went out altogether, then returned. Eve explained they had in that short time traversed the magnetic ionosphere of the earth. Already they were a thousand miles above, or away from the earth, though only a couple of minutes had passed. Adam felt alert, and asked questions of her as they came to his mind.

"What is our velocity now, Eve?"

"Two hundred thousand miles per hour," she answered casually.

It was incredible, even though Adam had flown before in one of their ships at fantastic speeds. He knew that every atom of the ship and his body were propelled equally in the same direction at the same instant, but it still remained a problem too great for his reasoning powers.

Eve then turned a main dial which lighted up dimly, to show it was turned on. Turning to Adam, who sat close beside her, she said, "We are on full automatic control now. I need do nothing else to guide the ship. I could not anyhow, at the velocity we are going. We are already a few thousand miles from earth, and accelerating hundreds of miles by the second. Now we shall make the entire hull around us transparent, Adam. Look!"

No sooner had she said it than the ship became as transparent as if the hull did not exist. Space was filled with stars as light filled the interior of the craft. They looked behind them to see the magnificent earth falling back, and the sun coming into view as they swerved on a turn in space.

The sun! At last Adam saw the sun from the purity of

space, though it was shaded safely by the ship's now partially opaque hull. Gracefully, the craft veered and assumed a course straighter, straighter, and then directly toward the sun.

Adam jumped a little at the sudden realization that the craft was really headed for the sun. Though it was still more than ninety million miles distant it seemed only hours away, and he instinctively turned to Eve for a word of reassurance. Sensing his feelings, she softly and disarmingly assured him with, "Remember you decided to go, and you would not want it different. The worst that could happen is sudden oblivion, and whatever follows that. Anything else would be much harder on you, so do not think of the negative side, but ponder the positive. You can change your mind at any time before we cross the orbit of Mercury, and after that you will challenge the sun, its glory and its inferno, with every essence of your being, which is equal to the essence of our most enlightened peer."

Adam's concern for his safety melted. Something she said had seized his interest. "Why the orbit of Mercury, Eve? What happens after that?"

"Beyond the orbit of Mercury all radio contact begins to fade away; even the best of apparatus cannot pierce the turbulence of the sun's environment. Likewise, human spirits become entities unto themselves, the lowly reach out to their vital zenith to meet on equal basis the very high ones. The sun melts all matter within itself to a nondescript form, for in its core there is no hydrogen atom and no uranium atom, nor any other atom. All are fused into ultimate heat and light. That is where we are approaching together. If anything happens, we become one in subatomic vapor. But then, do we not become total light?"

Adam listened intently. He became resolved at once, not to be courageous, but to maintain a state in which he would be devoid of any concern for his own survival.

"What is our velocity now?" he asked.

"Ten million miles per hour," she responded.

"Give her the gas. Step her up, Eve. I went this fast before.

It was easy.” Adam laughed, as thrilled as a boy; yet he knew full well he was experiencing the incredible. Eve smiled so broadly it was nearly a laugh. And the stars around them dimmed slowly as the sun became brighter.

The hull gradually became darker, and now the sun looked as it would look through smoked glass. The push against his back by the seat assured Adam that the ship was still accelerating swiftly.

This was the superb little craft, the very best of Alpha Centaurian production. They made none better, big or small. This would be the first time it would dip into the sun. Dip into the sun indeed! thought Adam. It had no name. He turned to Eve and said, “I have not yet named this ship and it has suddenly come to me. Since it dips into the sun, may I name it the Little Dipper?”

“The Little Dipper it shall be,” Eve echoed gaily. “You should know it is made of 30 layers of plastic-crystal material. The first five layers reflect back all light, and most thermal heat. Other layers are positive-charged and negative-charged, and each is insulated from the other by nonconducting sheets. Thus, you see, any radiation is converted into positive or negative energy by the skins after the rays have been rendered unstable by the magnetic field that surrounds our Little Dipper. But you already know of these things, and that the Little Dipper is the finest of ships.”

“What is our speed now?”

“Twenty million miles per hour,” she replied, somewhat somberly. “Notice how they have opaqued the hull to almost darkness?”

“They? Who are they?” he asked.

“The crew in the monitor ship, Adam. They are vectoring us in true course, and taking every precaution for our safety. That ship, though much larger than ours, has also been in the sun, so why not call it the Big Dipper?” she suggested.

“That will be its name if I have anything to say about it,” said Adam. “Look! We can see nothing outside any longer.”

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As though the ship itself had heard him, the interior became dimly lighted by the sparkle of the crystal hull.

Eve explained why this was. "Our monitors are controlling the molecules of the Little Dipper's hull," she said, "merely to test it. It is responding perfectly, otherwise they would halt our progress and cancel the trip.

"As I have said," she continued, "beyond the orbit of Mercury they can no longer help us, leaving the control entirely to its automatic system. They will keep testing up to the orbit of Mercury, and from then on these few dials and buttons alone will tell us how we are doing."

"We have been on our voyage an hour, Eve. What is our velocity now?" he asked her.

"Wait, Adam; wait until you hear music. Then you will know our speed. You can look through a section of the hull and see our monitor ship. They will clear a window to our right," Eve told him.

The window appeared almost at once, and some distance away Adam saw an elegant cigar-shaped craft, the same one he had seen in Andromeda, the one which had escorted him to Venus. Then a huge sphere, bright and massive, slid behind them and out of sight. Adam thrilled to the sight.

"What was that, Eve?"

"That was Venus. Did you see how fast it slipped behind? There, there comes the music. We have attained fifty million miles per hour, Adam. Oh, glory! From this velocity we begin soon to slow down."

Fifty million miles per hour, Adam reflected. He kept very still, thinking he would prevent any disturbance to the Little Dipper. One smallest error, one miscalculation of anything in the system of the little craft, and they would be atomized into thin smoke.

He was not alarmed, however. The music was not only enthralling; it was familiar. He had heard it before. Ah, yes! Not long ago on Venus itself had he not been with someone, a beauty called Launie, whose face now smiled vividly in his memory? What a delightful memory! What an exquisite mo-

ment to see her in his vision, with another lovely woman beside him. Eve seemed to know what he was thinking. Her countenance took on a beauty that enveloped Adam's emotions almost divinely. Such music, such a woman! Such an astronomical velocity: fifty million miles per hour!

Eve halted his racing thoughts with her voice. "Look toward the floor of the ship, Adam. It is now transparent."

He looked and saw tiny darts of lightning like St. Elmo's Fire shoot out from the ship. They became larger and brighter by the moment. Eve explained before he could ask about them.

"Yes, Adam; that is the discharge you read about in Orfeo's story. Our ship is now coasting and uses no energy. We are approaching the sun and its radiation is becoming more intense, so the Little Dipper merely discharges it all back into space. Now look above at our monitor ship. It will slow down by a few million miles per hour."

Almost as she said it the monitor ship went out of sight. My God, Adam thought, now all other life but mine and Eve's is east of the sun.

Adam and Eve in the Little Dipper, actually racing into the sun!

"We are decelerating rapidly, Adam, but we shall still enter the sun at more than a million miles per hour. We will need the inertial force as well as our magnetic propulsion, whatever is available to us in the sun, in order to penetrate deeply into it. Otherwise we would merely be belched back and away from it. When you hear a ping it will indicate we have traversed the orbit of Mercury. The monitor ship will await us when we emerge, *if* we emerge, from the sun. That Big Dipper has been in the sun also, as I told you."

There were a few seconds of silence. Then, amidst the notes of the music, a reverberating "ping" sounded. Adam and Eve looked at each other, nodding a little. They knew that not even the most remote and dead planet was closer to the sun than they were now. The lightning discharge from the ship's bottom was furious, the streaks reaching away from the Little Dipper many yards into space.

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Suddenly the entire hull became opaque and nothing outside could be seen.

“We must be entirely protected now,” Eve said. “In fact, the hull of our craft will become more opaque as we approach the sun. Look, even now the sun makes its outline in front of us. It penetrates the hull. Oh, Adam, this is the moment. I am, after all, only a woman; I must lean on you spiritually. Hold your courage, and know that from now on you have no mortal peer in the cosmos. Know that in God’s plan and in God’s eyes you are my strength. Now,” she said, pushing a button gently, “our seats are on swivel so we may turn in all directions, for in the sun we have no control over the Little Dipper. It may be spun like a top, but we will remain erect.”

As she spoke, catapulting Adam into a new estate, the music became distorted. Suddenly it became a mere jumble, then a constant humming static. The radio waves were a torrent of noise, steady and angry. Adam took all these developments without loss of poise. Adam the primitive now felt himself Adam the master. Yes, now he was aware of the fact that all other mates and partners were east of the sun, and soon he and Eve would be one, fused by its fire into perfect love, into perfect oneness.

Only in the bowels of the sun can man and woman be merged into soulmates, which nothing can rend asunder. West of the sun is all manner of aspiring evolution. West of the sun is the fusion of perfection, known only by the highest beings, swarming majestically around the Fatherhead. Yes, now he knew. He knew not from what he had fallen, but he knew to what he must aspire.

As he thought these things, Adam’s face became the countenance of a god, and sitting beside him, snuggling closer and closer, was truly a goddess. Fear? Apprehension? What were these? He no longer knew such immature emotions.

The interior of the ship began to flicker, like sheet lightning. It grew more rapid. The hum which was once music became mixed with a faint roar. The disc of the sun now engraved itself fully across the entire front of the Little Dipper. Yes,

they were approaching the sun. If he could look at it he would see it fill all the space in front of him: It was no longer a disc, big or small, but an endless, bubbling ocean of seething energy.

The flickering lightning became rapid vibration. Adam knew that the Little Dipper was adjusting itself to the intense energy. The first six layers of its hull were perfect light and heat reflectors, giving all back from whence it came. Other layers took care of kinetic energy and photonic bombardments, converting these into electrical form and discharging them. The discharges around the Little Dipper now reached out more than a mile. Adam was as much in love with this superb ship as he had ever been with anything or anyone. He felt that matter was becoming spirit in the Little Dipper, but somehow all his feeling of this kind of love was sublimated to Eve. He loved her in a vastness far beyond his control. Truly he was fused in oneness with her.

The roar became louder.

“We have just penetrated the sun’s corona, Adam,” Eve told him, her self-control having quieted her emotions somewhat.

As the ship’s molecular structure adjusted to the intensity of the radiation, the flickering inside became so rapid it seemed almost too fast to be seen with the eye. At the same time, the craft was slowing down rapidly. All at once there was no more flickering, and they felt a slight jolt. The roaring became like that heard at the foot of Niagara Falls.

They had penetrated the surface of the sun and already were miles within its mass. The ship hummed in its meeting with the sun’s resistance. The Little Dipper could withstand the enormous friction, but the fire of the sun was another matter. They were swallowed up in an inferno that would make the hottest steel furnace frigid in comparison.

Eve reached down by her side and brought out two pairs of dark glasses, attached to platinum-like wires.

“Put these on, Adam,” she directed, handing him one of the pairs. “Soon the intensity of the sun’s interior will penetrate

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the ship, and our eyes cannot stand it. These will shield you from the light. They are grounded with wires so converted energy will be drained away.”

It was none too soon. The glasses, jet black in color, were put on at the moment the light began to penetrate the Little Dipper. They were now submerged deep into the very body of the sun. Adam forgot there was such a place as earth, or that there were any beings other than Eve and himself. To be here with her was more than an experience. Without her it would be an intolerable inferno, with her it was the taste of Paradise. He was tasting love untarnished, love inviolable.

All around them was something without form, one essence extracted from both, the state of limbo and the state of Paradise. The best and the worst became one mass of light. Eve gave to Adam the precipitated essence of loving life. Now he knew why no man could make such a trip without a mate.

The Little Dipper came to a terrifying, grinding stop. The roar was deafening, the heat almost unbearable. Adam and Eve perspired freely. He looked to her for some explanation, but she was prostrate, her head resting on his shoulder. He was suddenly alone.

Adam could have screamed out for mercy, but the roar would have drowned his voice even to his own ears. Yet something amid all this, perhaps audible or perhaps just his own ultimate energy, seemed to be saying, “Fear not, for I am with you.”

The ship throbbed and crackled as if it would soon be crushed, then he noticed the hull was revolving. Eve had told him it might spin, though true to her assurance, their seats did not. It sounded as if the ship had already been crushed, and he imagined he could feel the heat and the sides closing in upon him.

Oh, why had he ever brought himself here? Who created all this infinite fury? Why doesn't Eve awaken? Why . . . why . . . “Fear not, Adam, for I am with you.”

How could such words be coming intact into this smashing holocaust? Even radio waves no longer existed here. He

wanted out! Eve breathed a sigh, which he felt but did not hear. She was mercifully oblivious to the infinite furnace around them.

Thank God, she was in deep slumber, and the maelstrom was not getting any worse. Adam felt a push on his body. What was it? The force of the sun's core was now pushing the ship away. It could go no deeper and, entirely subject to the force of the sun, was being ejected backward. Backward. Backward, thank God! Adam could hardly wait.

Like an abating storm the surrounding fury repeated its effects, this time in reverse. Another few seconds and the Little Dipper would once more be master of the situation. What a ship! What a majestic product of man, of the Universe, Adam began to reflect. Once more he was a human being, capable of thinking. Yes, he was sure they were on their way out. "They?" He and Eve? Was he conscious again of her presence? Her beautiful head still rested on his shoulder. The fury around him was no longer terrifying, for he was certain that the ship was rapidly being forced outward. Ah, even in this sweltering heat, life was once more indescribably wonderful! Eve would soon awaken, to be enchantingly at his side. The motion backward accelerated almost violently. Minutes went by and the indescribable cascade became understandable turbulence again. Gradually the ship's hull began to stop spinning. There were some grinding, jolting sensations, through which the state of just being was like a rebirth. The automatic controls had begun to assert themselves once more.

Eve moved her head and sighed convulsively. She opened her eyes, and Adam's delight knew no bounds. They were safe. They had made it. Now they had no more than the mere fury of the sun's lesser madness and turbulence to deal with, but the Little Dipper was more than equal to this area. In silence Adam and Eve looked at each other, loving in a oneness that was indivisible. The heat abated, and they no longer perspired. The roar of a million Niagaras remained like a constant challenge to their nervous systems and made conversation impossible, but the worst was definitely over. They had rocketed

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into the sun at a thousand times the speed of a fast bullet, and were now being ejected by a force within the sun which accelerated the Little Dipper to the same dizzy velocity, much like a volcano spews out molten rock and metal.

Adam and Eve kept on looking into each other's eyes, enraptured with the awareness that each was the only living companion the other had in this ultimate of physical experiences. Then, at a velocity almost equal to that of a solar prominence, they were flung out into the coronal halo of Old Sol.

Once more the Little Dipper was operating in the orientation of its own automatic controls, and the maelstrom of sound and fury around them died out like a flash storm in the summer. Conversation was again possible. As they looked searchingly at one another, Adam was the first to speak.

"You knew what such a trip could be like, Eve, and you volunteered to go into it with me? Was it a form of madness, or your desire?" he asked.

"I would do it over and over again, Adam, if it served to teach or to unfold someone, but never just for the adventure of it," Eve answered him.

"I learned the vast distance between you Alpha Centaurians and myself in the scale of cosmic evolution, yet you have shown me that within myself is something that overtakes you as a woman. I could not have known what endurance I had except in that ultimate test within the star, my sun. I ascended because you descended, yet it was not ascension or descension in their literal sense but a bringing out of the man and the woman. Thank you, Eve. Thanks a million times over."

"You have learned, Adam. But I am still a woman, and we are still in the fusing glow of your sun. My emotions, usually calm and oriented, are swirling. Let me ask you," she said, seriously, "if you were given the choice to be with any of the women who have awakened you into that kind of love for the remainder of your life, which would you select? Remember, there is lovely Vega, devastating Launie, and me. Any one of us, to spend the rest of your living days with you."

As she finished saying this, she drew herself up in her chair, removed her glasses and moved about subtly, so all her physical beauty was accentuated and merged hauntingly with her spiritual fineness.

Adam removed his own glasses. He looked at Eve in complete absorption. Her exotic presence lent perfume to the air he breathed. He reached into his soul to garner its message. Then he answered her, thoughtfully, "I would select Dora."

"Why?" she asked, as though seeking a new wisdom.

"Because she also is a woman. I find that I love her, and I have so much to teach her, she has so much to teach me. Also, she needs me and I need her. She is of my own earth, and the matter that composes her also composes me. We are formative spirits on each other's level, physically equal. I would have nothing to say to your women; only to listen. I have much to say to Dora, who will listen and rejoice to my presence and my words. You and yours have the love of pure learning. We have yet to develop that on our earth.

"Eve," he continued, speaking slowly, "I loved you in the sun as I can barely remember now, nor repeat again outside of it. I love you so much at this moment that I could leave you and not miss you, knowing you also have loved me equally. It is strange but true. I have learned."

"Yes, you have learned," she replied, "and I also have learned. I have learned what it is for a peeress of the Alpha Centaurians to feel somewhat inferior to an earthman. It is an experience which I can best describe in one word, 'delicious.' However, our slowest men, any one of them, would have been just a little more than your equal in the sun."

At that moment the nondescript humming of the radio system in the craft became jumbled static. Then the familiar resonant "ping" sounded.

"Adam!" exclaimed Eve. "We have just crossed the orbit of Mercury again. Oh, glory to life and living! Listen, listen. The noise becomes music again. Do you recognize the selection? It is from your own earth."

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Indeed he recognized it, in spite of its splendor of arrangement. Of course he knew it! It was "La Vien Rose."

The Little Dipper was again ruler of her own destiny. She zoomed on, "east of the sun," and the hull became transparent. Off to the left and slightly above, the monitor ship seemed to remain motionless, yet both crafts were darting at millions of miles per hour, speeding homeward. One's home base being the atmosphere of Venus, the other one headed to bring an earthman to his home planet. The music swelled throughout the interior of the Little Dipper.

"Eve," Adam bolted, "how far were we into the sun?"

"Fifty thousand miles," she replied. "We could not go deeper."

"Fine!" Adam shot back. "Now, then, if any light ray is ultimate heat and the core of the sun is merely a mass of light, what is the measure of that heat in Centigrade or Fahrenheit degrees?"

Calmly, Eve answered him. "It is measured in this way. The wave length multiplied by the frequency, multiplied by the mass in photons, multiplied by the speed of light." That was all Eve would say.

Adam comprehended her at once. He had imagined it was that. It was a computation well within the functions of the quantum theory and the theory of relativity combined. Furthermore, it was so basic, so primary, so fundamental, that from that point on any good mathematician could give earth-men what the Centaurians had.

But why go into such things in the splendor of the space around him, the stars suspended like spheres, the Big Dipper escorting the Little Dipper homeward, and Eve beautifully beside him?

She touched a button and a section of the Little Dipper's hull converted into television. The interior of the Big Dipper ship was fully seen in three-dimensional scope. Among the crew was one who looked concerned, yet reverently thankful. His eyes moved from Eve to Adam constantly.

"He is Enados," Eve said to Adam, as she looked at the

image in arrested rapture. “He is my mate, and the leader of the crew of the Big Dipper. But for them, we could not have made the trip we just completed. See how happy they are that we have emerged safely? Are they not like children? Their knowledge makes them appreciative of everything, thus they rise from childhood, and learn and learn. When they have learned enough, as children they become, but with knowledge. A child knows by natural intuition, and learning merely confirms his intuition. Has this not already been taught to your people by the illumined ones and by the scientific ones as well? But your people must learn to put it into practice. It is the only lasting truth. Yes, Adam, that is why you chose Dora. Because through her you once more become the physician you were, physician to her body and physician to her spirit. You will find awaiting you all that is yours.”

The music stopped and there was a momentary silence. Eve looked up toward the Big Dipper ship. Then, turning to Adam, she said, “Watch. They will put on a demonstration for you.”

There was music again and life came into motion all around them, with the thrilling background an abyss of star-studded wonderment.

Adam and Eve laughed. They laughed like children as the Big Dipper veered leftward and began to perform. She weaved from side to side at millions of miles per hour, and rolled over and around, like a colt in the grass. She zoomed up and zoomed back down. She changed colors gracefully to the tune of music. Now flashes of lightning darted from her hull, now she became a mass of flaming glory, color merging into color. Adam felt sure she was burning herself up and would be expended in a burst of light, but she merely expanded her darting streaks of lightning and billowed out the colorful flame which enveloped her. The Big Dipper had become like a living artist, performing her graceful antics in the void of inter-stellar space. It was done as she traveled close to fifty million miles per hour. Every maneuver, every twist and turn, had consumed hundreds of miles, though the occupants of the

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Big Dipper experienced no more than slight sensation of movement.

Jokingly, Adam said to Eve, "Now I can say that I have seen a 'flying saucer.' And won't my own people look askance when I tell them! 'Yes, Adam has finally snapped,' they will say."

"No, Adam," she consoled him. "You will not know that feeling. You have not much time on earth. The one you shall tell it to will wince a little, but he will recognize the validity of what you say. It will be he who will gladly take on the consequent reactions."

She gave Adam a little time to digest what she had said, then she took a small box from the side of her seat and gave it to him.

"Here are some pellets. They make a nectar when put in water. Use them only as needed, and use them wisely. You will get no more of them."

He took them and placed them in his pocket. Then, turning to Eve, he asked her simply, "Tell me, if Enados is the true Centaurian name of your mate, how would we say it on earth?"

"Well, on earth the equivalent would simply be Adam."

He nodded his head in musing comprehension. "Bon sonado, bon sonado," he said.

"Look, Adam! Look! There it is, and there it goes," exclaimed Eve. "That was Venus!"

Tears came into his eyes as the sight and name of Venus recalled vivid memories. He clearly recalled all that had happened there, and he could see *her* so plainly, elusive, captivating, childlike, yet so understanding. Enchanting, yet careful to become relegated to the forgotten. He smiled broadly as the tears streamed down his cheeks. Launie. Was she real? Launie. Did she still think of him? Could he recapture Launie in the person of Dora? Yes, and more than that, he could hold Dora, kiss her, and make her his very own. Could he forget Eve? Surely he could. Dora and he would be Adam and Eve.

Once more he looked up toward the Big Dipper. It had

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assumed its motionless semblance again, escorting the Little Dipper. It was like a cruiser escorting a small launch.

Then, one of the larger spheres suspended there in space became larger and larger. A nearby orb also grew. They were the earth and the moon, being rapidly approached by the Little Dipper.

“Here, Adam,” Eve said, handing him a capsule. “Take this.”

He complied with her request and sat back again in confidence. She had tears in her eyes, for she, a peeress, had found she was not first place in the choice of a primitive earth-man. From her world Adam would still select Launie.

When he had swallowed the capsule she asked him what number he wanted to hear. “I would hear again Siboney,” he said.

Eve looked up toward the mother ship, the Big Dipper, and the strains of Siboney filled the Little Dipper, the magnificent little craft that had challenged the sun.

The capsule took effect at once and Adam was sleepy. Before him in the hull of the ship, the music of Siboney produced a beauty who danced to it. As consciousness slowly left Adam, he watched her move to the familiar rhythms. As lovely as ever, as poignant on film as she was in person, Launie danced on, her exotic face and eyes angelically lulling Adam into blissful sleep.

Chapter 14

ADAM SAYS GOODBYE

Adam woke into just another desert morning, the sun already shining its brilliance upon the earth. He was alone in his little rented cabin. He felt as though he had awakened from a living dream which now insisted on being continued into his conscious state. All through the day it drenched his consciousness, as water drenches cloth.

It was a day named Friday in a month called December, but to Adam it was just part of earth's rotation basking in the face of the sun. There should be order and perfection, like symmetrical and desirable weather conditions, but the presence of high mountains upset this possibility. People should be aware of the grandeur in which they were immersed and which swirled majestically about them. But they were far more aware of the little things that faced them, like making the next hour of time productive of another dollar.

Amid the perfect order of the cosmos, Adam saw the riotous state which ignorance had nurtured. Mountains caused storms, and mountains of ignorance caused havoc between his earth brothers. In the blindness of such ignorance, people even took each other's lives; yes, took lives that required so much of the Creator to put into being. He had to divest himself of such enlightened vistas for all around him the best of earth was as yet a wilderness, and his best of friends could turn at any moment into crucifying maniacs.

* * *

Came the sunset. As it slowly went beneath the horizon, he was left alone once more in the lonely exile of earth's wilderness. He was hungry, but it was not only for food. He wanted something to eat, true enough, but he also longed for company, companionship that would understand him, someone to whom he could pour out his soul before he should depart for Seattle

to claim his own. Gentle Dora, his love, was not as yet prepared to receive the story he had to tell.

Tiny's Cafe, in the heart of Twentynine Palms, seemed to call out to him for this evening's meal. Big and kindly Tiny, moving about in his cafe, would be the best person for Adam to be near this evening.

That is how Adam came to be sitting alone on a Friday evening at a table with three glasses beside him. That is how he knew I would come in, for he had put his hand into his pocket and had found the pellets of solidified nectar. So, he knew he did not *dream*, because the pellets performed like miraculous things.

Thus I learned why Adam and I had met. There was now nothing left of his story. It was nearly dawn again, and this would be Monday morning, but I was surely not going to work. I resigned myself to a day of relaxed comfort, and asked Adam to stay until sunrise. We would talk casually and iron out some things in the story. Adam agreed, and we turned on the radio to receive any relaxation it had to offer in these wee hours of the day. I brewed some fresh coffee.

"Well, Orfeo," Adam sighed, "there you have it as it happened. Now I should make out a check," he added, taking a small check book from his pocket. "Let me see; what was it I said you could have? I think it was ten thousand dollars, wasn't it?"

"Yes," I replied. "But wait until I swallow hard, Adam, and digest that huge number for awhile. I am a poor mathematician and such hard realities as figures stagger me, but the call of that much money is irresistible music, not a problem in addition."

"Don't worry, Orfeo. I have sent Dora what she needs, as you know by now. I can well afford that amount for you and, would never miss it. The main thing now is, do you wish to accept it?"

I walked over to him, leaving the coffee percolating. "No, Adam; I do not wish to accept it under your terms."

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“But I have not stated any hard terms, Orfeo. Just some conditions, such as writing the story I told you, and believing it. Is that too harsh a bargain?” he asked me.

“If I am to carry it out, Adam, it is not harsh, but let us say that it is difficult. If I did not carry it out, my conscience would slowly wilt me inside. Whichever I do, the money would stifle me. But,” I pursued, “let me ask you something. Did you accept Saturn’s offer to cure you when you knew he could, and when he extended the gift of such a cure to you?”

“You are a scholar and a philosopher, Orfeo,” he slowly answered. “No, I did not accept it and I would not now accept it. Nature has a Divine plan whose vastness is far greater than any riches, and far more meaningful than my limited self. Were I to have accepted his offer, I would be alive but not living, and in a few years I would have to face once again the prospect of going, this time in fear. I do not want fear.”

“Well,” I replied, “I feel the same toward your offer. Give your small riches where they belong. I have my riches. These three nights cannot be purchased with money. Your story is in my hands. If I cannot write it, I have lost nothing. If I am ever up to writing it, the satisfaction and comfort it can bring me will far exceed what you offer and it will be with a clear conscience that I get what I get. I must face my wife, my sons, my friends, and the world, Adam, and I want to face them for what I am. You have revealed to me a mine of endless wealth. I do not want to lock the doors to it with a mere ten thousand dollars. I would give that much just to see Launie dance in the glass once more. I really would.”

We drank our coffee in silence. Adam was in wistful memories at the mention of her name but he remained quiet. The dawn was now bright morning, with a full sun in the east.

“Just look at that clear sun, Adam,” I said, breaking the long silence. “I’ll bet Earl saw nothing like that in Seattle. He should be back any minute. He was due back yesterday, in fact.”

Adam looked into space. “Yes, Seattle,” he said. “I must

go back to Seattle. Dora is in cloudy skies. I shall brighten them like the sun for her, and she for me. Ah, yes. You may not believe my story, Orfeo, but you can believe Dora is in Seattle, and that's where I should be. I can hardly wait to go to her. I wonder, do you think she will be as happy as I think she will?"

"No," I answered him. "I believe she will be much happier than you think she will. If not, she will be the loser, not you. One thing you must bear in mind is that no matter how she takes it and no matter how you feel when you see her, no two people on earth have ever experienced any more poignant affection and love than Dora and you will be experiencing in that moment. Take her in your arms, Adam, and let come what may. Stay with her until she cries for joy. Then you will really know what it is to be one instead of two. Did not your hosts tell you of her straits, and how she longs to see you just once more?"

"Yes, indeed, Orfeo. But I am in the process of waking from another world as yet, and I cannot recall at this moment if it was all real or if it was a prolonged dream," he demurred.

"Adam," I said. "Do you not feel relieved in having told me your so-called dream? Was it not weighing upon you until you should tell someone who would understand? Do you not now feel pleasantly divested of a heavy burden? Well, *I* am sure you feel all these things. When the nectar fully wears off and when you feel secure in having deposited this story with me you will come face to face with the reality of it all. With many who have visions and dreams which make their life much more meaningful, we find that the vision or dream is but the conscious embodiment of many facts which had been forgotten until the vision wrested them from the buried storehouse of the subconscious. The vision and the dream then fade, going back into the vault whence they came. It is such a phase that you are in now.

"You can rest assured," I continued, "that I will put your story down in some form, and that I will tell the essentials of it as best I can. But to write it as a story just as you told

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me, Adam, that is a task for one with talent. You see, I am not a professional writer.”

Adam came to life, and in gentle reprimand said, “Don’t ever say that again, Orfeo! You have a complex. Get rid of, it this very instant!” For a moment he looked into my eyes with understanding, but also with stern authority. Then he added:

“We have enough professional writers. They are doing more to retrogress the world than to help it progress. Only a handful can be thanked for constructive and progressive works, and remember your simplicity, your freshness in the field of writing will lend my story more strength and beauty than the professional touch ever could. Truth, remember, from the mouths of babes? Libraries are filled with high-sounding philosophies. What have they accomplished so far? Where does any philosophy lead except back to the pure intuition of childlike souls? If it does not lead back to that, then it is false. It may sound big, but after awhile it curdles the soul and is automatically rejected. Furthermore, who but you would listen to my story at this time, let alone write it?”

“Adam, it will be as you say. I will write it when I feel capable. But tell me,” I added in puzzlement, “why are you so concerned about a world in which you will no longer be? I know you are aware of this, and you are no longer afraid, but why such an intense concern? I should like to write all the facts, including that, if and when I do.”

“I do not know why,” he said, half to himself. “But as a physician I know and have seen quite a few men and women attain a noble stature when they became resigned to fate. They did not seem to look into the end, but rather into a beginning. This was so whether they were church members or atheists. They became more concerned with the destiny of earth than they had ever been before. The wisdom of the doomed is such that it cannot be told or written. Of that I am sure. But you ask me why? I ask you the same. Why?”

“You will find, Orfeo,” he continued, “that man has learned

quite a bit in regard to the questions, What, Where, When, How, but to that one question, 'Why?', there is not yet a glimmer of a reply. Some day, perhaps ages from now, we shall have answered the first four questions. Indeed, they are the only ones man probes. When they have been unveiled, the biggest question of all, 'Why?', will stand before us as broad as infinity.

"No, I am no more doomed than anyone else. We live on and on in birth and rebirth. We must keep spiraling upward or remain in the dark. Nature itself demands our upward climb, and if we cannot attribute intelligence to Nature, then it must be an innate urge guided by a Supreme Intelligent Power. Heaven is inherent within earth. It is hidden behind many veils. We have hardly begun to remove one of them as yet," he said, receding into calm reverie. Then he added slowly, as if speaking to an unseen being, "I wonder how many veils the Alpha Centaurians have removed."

The rising sun lighted up the desert.

For the third time Adam and I beheld the coming dawn as the desert began to glow through our windows. With the reality of rock and sand all around us, Adam found himself not only at the end of his story but at the beginning of his own awakening between two worlds. One was under his feet, in the air all around him, the other sunken like the ended night into the quicksands of elusive memory. Which was more real? Which world was more important? These questions were going to be with him as long as he lived, be it seven months or seven centuries.

The world in which he lived now was a pageantry of evolution never ceasing. The other world was similar, but its form of evolution seemed to be less complex and given to deeper searchings. Yes, the other world was something for earth men to aspire to. Adam, having spent seven short days in a small view of it, was no longer adapted to his normal function on earth. How could he go back to his profession? The glory of the future pervaded his whole being like a Divine essence

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and he wanted to savor of it every moment. He could see the potential for his own earth, but it would take much time and billions of people to bring this spacial globe into alignment with such beauty. But it did not seem impossible. The faith within him had converted Adam the mortal, into Adam the angel.

* * *

Perhaps untold time awaits earth's reaching the perfect state, but what is time to the Eternal One? Only the state of near-perfection will bring man face to face with the greatest and final question, "Why?" with some promise of at last knowing the answer.

It became 9:00 o'clock far sooner than it normally should have, for I was unconscious to the passing of time.

Adam had to say goodbye. I watched him drive off toward town, a mile and a half to the south. The realization that he was leaving for good shocked me into wanting to call him back. Suddenly I had so much more to say to him, or rather to ask of him. There was an emptiness within me that had no bounds as I watched his car go on down the road, climb the hill, then disappear forever down the other side. He had never told me where his cabin was and it would have done little good if he had, because Adam's car was ready for its journey to Seattle. I knew I would never see him again. Even so, I felt alive with a story that not only filled me with a new kind of awareness, but was big enough to be told to the four corners of the world. My life had somehow been doubled in scope.

I kept looking at the top of the hill over which Adam's car had just faded from view, and I could only think to myself these words:

So long, Adam! Happiness to you, Dora! Yes, Dora, happiness to you! Adam and you will find the dawn of happiness at a milestone where so many others find an end to theirs.

I saw a thread of truth in the fabric of existence, a thread

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which weaves quietly but strongly into the entire pattern, where those who turn the page of life pass the thread and the torch into the hands of others. This thread shall eventually become the whole fabric and the torch shall become like the sun.

Indeed, one person alone, with the true vision, could redeem a whole world though only the vision and a few seconds merged together. Because Adam was, the earth shall be; that is, it shall become what it can be, as the attained ones of another world watch and wait.

END