



THE ANTARKTOS CYCLE

**At the Mountains of Madness
and Other Chilling Tales**

Horror and Wonder at the Ends of the Earth

Introduction and Prefaces by Robert M. Price, Series Editor

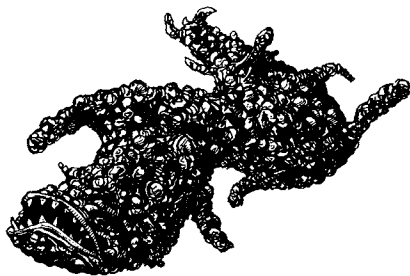
CALL OF CTHULHU® FICTION



A CHAOSIUM BOOK

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Horror and Wonder
at the Ends of the Earth



Call of Cthulhu® Fiction

The Antarktos Cycle

Horror and Wonder
at the Ends of the Earth

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Dedicated to the Memory of
James Turner

Introduction

Lovecraft's Cosmic History

In his "Notes on the Writing of Weird Fiction", Lovecraft counsels writers to begin by constructing a synopsis of the events of a story in order of their actual occurrence, and only then to devise the order in which they will be related. The second ordering may not match the first, as the narration may employ flashbacks, anticipations, and later revelations. But if the story is to do any of these things soundly, the writer must first have a coherent picture of the events. Lovecraft's friend and colleague Robert E. Howard had devised just such a scenario, not for a single tale, but for a whole group of them. To give his prehistoric tales of Conan and King Kull a sense of historical verisimilitude, Howard wrote his historical sketch, "The Hyborian Age." In doing so, Howard seems to have thought one step beyond Lovecraft, who also wrote many stories against a common backdrop of cosmic history. But Lovecraft made up and changed the events of that history, as well as their sequence, as he went along. I will briefly examine the development of Lovecraft's cosmic history, demonstrating in the process, I think, that it cannot be harmonized.

The earliest story with which we have to be concerned is "The Call of Cthulhu" (Summer 1926). In it we hear of one prehistoric extraterrestrial race, the Old Ones, of whom Great Cthulhu is the high priest. Cthulhu is described as a member of the Old Ones, "but none might say whether or not the others were precisely like him" (*DH*, 144).* The "Great Old Ones . . . lived ages before there were any men, and . . . came to the young world out of the there sky" (*DH*, 143). They had already entered their deathlike sleep before human beings appeared, but they communicated telepathically with the first people, instructing them to form the Cthulhu cult. Some of the torpid Old Ones rest "inside the earth", while some are "under the sea" (*DH*, 143, 144).

Between December of 1929 and early 1930 Lovecraft wrote "The Mound", where Cthulhu is mentioned again, and already there is an important alteration in the history. Cthulhu is again said to have arrived on Earth in its formative stages, while the crust was just cooling, and he brought the Old Ones with him, but this time these "Old Ones" are the first human beings, *i.e.*, the progenitors of the human race on Earth. Yet what else "The Call of Cthulhu" says of the Old Ones is repeated of the dwellers in K'n-yan here. They fled the surface world, retreating underground sometime long after Cthulhu's city of "Relex" had disappeared beneath the sea (a "primordially earlier sinking" than the deluge that drove the Old Ones underground), apparently sunk by an attack of unnamed "space-devils" (*HM*, 340). So here, too, Cthulhu and the Old Ones wait below the ground and under the sea. New elements are introduced here that will loom large in future Lovecraft stories, namely the hints of war with another extraterrestrial race and the mention that the human Old Ones had "had some remarkable surface civilizations, especially one at the South Pole near the mountain Kadath" (*HM*, 340). This was "between glacial ages", but no more specific dates are given.

Very soon after completing "The Mound", Lovecraft began "The Whisperer in Darkness" (written between February and September 1930), in which he took up the threads of his history and carried them further. This time we hear of a new interstellar race, the "Outer Ones" who visit the Earth from an outpost on Pluto ("Yuggoth"), where they have occupied the abandoned home of a far earlier indigenous race. The Outer Ones, or "Mi-Go", have visited K'n-yan and "were here long before the fabulous epoch of Cthulhu was over, and remember all about sunken R'lyeh when it was above the waters" (*DH*, 260). Were they then perhaps the "space-devils" of "The Mound?" That is, did HPL develop the earlier reference into the conception of the Outer Ones in "Whisperer?" Perhaps so. but if so, the conception would have changed yet again, since here there is no suggestion that the Outer Ones caused the sinking of R'lyeh. Instead it is implied that they coexisted with R'lyeh for a good portion of an "epoch" and have simply outlasted R'lyeh. We are still given no definite dates, either for the R'lyeh epoch or for the advent of the Outer Ones on Earth.

Not long after the completion of "Whisperer", Lovecraft carried on this saga with the novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (written in February and March 1931). Elements from the various earlier stories reappear here, though altered. Of course there is much new data as well. The story concerns the star-headed "Old Ones", or "crinoids", or "Elder Ones." They arrive on Earth from outer space and first colonize Antarctica. Like the human Old Ones of K'n-yan, they build a great civilization at the South Pole, though it is also hinted that some other frightful entities live beyond Kadath. Perhaps these last are the "Other Gods" from HPL's "Dunsanian" story of that title (as suggested by William Fulwiler). It is tempting to wonder if perhaps they are the human Old Ones from "The Mound" who are said to have their civilization there, but it cannot easily be the latter, since according to *At the Mountains of Madness* human beings were first developed in the course of the crinoids' genetic engineering experiments. The crinoid Old Ones, like the Old Ones of "The Call of Cthulhu", had arrived on Earth long before the days of humanity. For the first time, a date is given. The oldest fossils of the crinoid Old Ones date back to one billion years ago.

At some unspecified point the crinoids were invaded by a competing race, "a land race of beings shaped like octopi and probably corresponding to (the) fabulous prehuman spawn of Cthulhu" (*MM*, 61–62). Cthulhu himself is not actually said to have arrived with them, but this is probably to be inferred. Note that he has "spawn" accompanying him as in "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Mound", but we have returned to the conception in "The Call of Cthulhu", whereby Cthulhu's flock are not humans. Again as in the earlier tale, Cthulhu and his kin seem to arrive long before the first humans appear, as the first ancestors of humanity are represented only on the latest, most decadent wall carvings of the crinoids, while the Cthulhu-spawn are said to have arrived at a much earlier period.

At any rate, there is protracted war between the star-headed Old Ones and the Cthulhu-spawn, reminiscent of that between the human Old Ones and the space-devils in "The Mound." It cannot be that warfare, since, again, here neither race is human. Also, R'lyeh sinks simply because of seismic instability: All "the lands of the Pacific" sink, taking all the Cthulhu-spawn with them (*MM*, 62). No space-dev-

ils or crinoids are said to have caused it, though the latter breathe more easily because of it.

Later (how much?), during the Jurassic Age, the Mi-Go invade and drive the star-headed Old Ones into the sea. No sooner do the fungoid crustaceans from "The Whisperer in Darkness" appear in *At the Mountains of Madness* than they contradict the earlier story. In "Whisperer", they were on Earth during the epoch of Cthulhu, when R'lyeh was still on the surface. Here they arrive only after the Cthulhu-spawn and R'lyeh are long gone. Believers in Lovecraft's inerrancy (I sometimes suspect there are some) might venture to suggest that the Mi-Go may have been on Earth for a long time, but only invaded the crinoids after the destruction of R'lyeh. This will not work, since Lovecraft explicitly says they invaded "from outer space" (*MM*, 63).

In "Out of the Eons" (1933) we have yet another problem. We read that "unknown entities", "the alien spawn of the dark planet Yuggoth ... had colonized the earth before the birth of terrestrial life" (*HM*, 139). They are later called the "Elder Ones from Yuggoth" (*HM*, 141) and are said to have perished "eons before" the first human beings appeared on the lost continent of Mu. Are these beings to be identified with the Mi-Go? If so, the scenario clashes with "Whisperer", since according to that story the Mi-Go survive to the present day.

William Fulwiler has suggested that the "Elder Ones from Yuggoth" in "Out of the Eons" are to be identified not with the Mi-Go, but with the long-dead Plutonian race mentioned in "Whisperer", whose planet the Mi-Go later occupied. This identification is quite possible, but it seems to me unlikely for these reasons. First, the Mi-Go, according to "Whisperer" and *Mountains*, were already here millions of years before humanity, having come from Yuggoth from whence the pre-Mi-Go race had long vanished ("extinct and forgotten before the beings came to Yuggoth from the ultimate voids" (*DH*, 2601). This would seem to make the Yuggoth-spawn from "Out of the Eons" too recent to be identified with that "elder race." Second, the elder race of "Whisperer" is not said to have visited Earth, whereas the Yuggoth-spawn of "Out of the Eons", like the Mi-Go of all the stories, did. Third, in "Out of the Eons" the Yuggoth-spawn are said to be miners, as the Mi-Go are in "Whisperer." There is even mention made in both stories of some metals being unique to some worlds. In "Out of the Eons" T'yog has a cylinder made of some unearthly metal brought here by the Yuggoth-spawn, while in "Whisperer" the Mi-Go are seeking metals on Earth they cannot find any place else.

Besides *At the Mountains of Madness*, the story in which Lovecraft's cosmic history figures most importantly is, of course, "The Shadow Out of Time" (written from November 1934 to March 1935). This story was written in conscious dependence on *Mountains*. Several references are made to the earlier work, and one of the characters from that story is even included. Lovecraft introduces two more groups of aliens, the Great Race of Yith and the unnamed "blind beings." Can we set any chronology for the arrival of these races? First, the Great Race is said to be a group of minds now inhabiting the cone-shaped rubbery bodies of a strange Earth-bred race. This intelligent race (or so it is implied—*DH*, 389–390) flourished on Earth one billion years ago, about the time of the advent of the star-headed Old Ones in *Mountains*. Then the blind beings arrived from space about six hundred million years ago, followed by

the voyaging minds from Yith sometime afterward. The newly bodied Yithian race drove the blind beings underground soon after the former arrived from Yith. This may have been just under one hundred fifty million years ago, the era in which Peaslee's mind exchange occurred, since Peaslee says that during the "last few millennia" warfare had been "largely civil", implying that beforehand it had been directed against another race, presumably the blind beings.

But during those "few millennia" one hundred fifty million years ago, the Great Race had begun to fight "against the winged, star-headed Old Ones who centered in the Antarctic" (*DH*, 399). They had also managed to capture one of the crinoids' minds, undoubtedly a helpful form of espionage in wartime. The Great Race is not mentioned in *Mountains* (obviously, since Lovecraft had not thought of them yet!), but there is no time conflict. Both races were active at this time, and according to *Mountains* this was about the time the crinoids were fighting their rebellious shoggoth slaves (*MM*, 63).

This seems to have been quite an active period of intergalactic conflict. According to "The Challenge from Beyond" (August 1935), this was the very time that a space probe from the extragalactic centipede race reached the Earth, to be discovered by the cone-shaped race, who waged a war against the centipedes by remote control.

Though written only three months later than "The Shadow Out of Time", "The Challenge from Beyond" contradicts it in two important respects. Both stories do agree on the date of the conical race's mental escape into the future: "Shadow" says the cone-shaped creatures "lived till only fifty million years before the advent of man" (*DH*, 386), while "Challenge" has them astrally projecting "fifty million years ago" (emphasis mine), a bit later (*BWS*, 324). But the real differences are these. First, in "Challenge", it is clearly implied that the scientific genius of the cone-shaped race, including their power of astral projection, is "home grown" on Earth. There is no hint of the cone race being merely host bodies for the minds of Yith, nor is the race ever called the Great Race of Yith. Lovecraft simply calls them "the ruling terrestrial species ... a huge, cone-shaped race surpassing all others before or since in mentality or achievements. This race was so advanced that it had actually sent minds abroad in space and time to explore the cosmos" (*BWS*, 323). Their home is Earth, not Yith. The reason for this change is obvious. Though he had called the cone creatures "the Great Race" (though not "of Yith") in his notes for the story (available in *Lovecraft Studies* 9, pp. 72-73), he must have decided to omit any explicit or detailed reference to the earlier story so as not to confuse readers who had not seen it. It would have gone beyond the scope of "The Challenge from Beyond" to have hauled in the business about Yith.

The second major change is that in "Challenge" the cone-shaped race is not said to inhabit Australia (though neither are they said not to), but rather they are spoken of as maintaining a shrine in "a great polar city" (*BWS*, 324). Clearly the star-headed Old Ones do not exist in the universe of "The Challenge from Beyond." Again, it is certainly because Lovecraft wanted to make "Challenge" stand on its own that he felt free to disregard the earlier novella. But the contradiction is real.

Some Lovecraftian fundamentalist may want to suggest that the cone race had a city at the North Pole, so as not to conflict with *Mountains*. Let me remind him

that, according to Lovecraft, the North Pole was the territory first of the star-headed race (presumably the same as the “Elder Ones” who handed down the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* to the men of that “early human civilization the north pole” (*SL* 111.73, May 12, 1931), which once existed around then of the Mi-Go who captured the “northern lands” from the crinoids according to *Mountains* (*MM*, 631). (Thus, they may be the “Elder Ones” responsible for the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* since they, as I have argued, are called “Elder Ones” in “Out of the Eons.”)

Finally, we come to “The Haunter of the Dark” (November 1935), where once again we meet the denizens of both Yuggoth and Antarctica. The Shining Trapezohedron “was fashioned on Yuggoth, before ever the Old Ones brought it to earth. It was treasured and placed in its curious box by the crinoid things of Antarctica . . .” (*DH*, 112). This time it is the Yuggoth beings, the Mi-Go, who are dubbed the “Old Ones”, not the star-headed beings. How did the Trapezohedron pass from the hands (so to speak) of the Mi-Go to those (so to speak) of the crinoids, when the two were deadly foes? In this story, perhaps they were not. It does not matter; Lovecraft has nothing in mind beyond associating the Trapezohedron with two of his enigmatic ancient races in order to highlight the prehuman antiquity of the thing. One element of continuity with the earlier stories, however, is that the Trapezohedron which summons Nyarlathotep was kept in the open by the Mi-Go who, according to “Whisperer”, both worshipped Nyarlathotep and lived on a lightless planet, and so would have needed no box to shelter the gem from the banishing light. According to *Mountains*, some of the crinoids did hold Kadath and its residents in religious awe, and if Fulwiler is correct in identifying the mysterious Kadath beings with the Other Gods, one of whom we know to be Nyarlathotep (*cf. The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*), everything fits together. To avoid Nyarlathotep, the crinoids must needs have sheltered the Trapezohedron from the months-long polar daylight, so it was they who first shut it away in a metal box.

We have seen how Lovecraft constantly used his fundamental theme of eons of cosmic history dwarfing humanity, but he did not bother to work out the details of this history in advance. Instead, he tinkered with it as he went, as this or that modification would best suit the plot or the atmosphere of a given story. Lovecraft surely accomplished his aim: The bits of the history within each story are quite effective. But if for the sake of idle speculation one attempts a synoptic comparison of the stories as I have done, he finds an irreconcilable shambles, wherein the Earth is the incessant target of a huge crowd of competing races who have journeyed through countless light years of space to fight over it.

Robert M. Price

*References are to these Arkham House volumes:

DH = *The Dunwich Horror*
HM = *The Horror at the Museum*
MM = *At the Mountains of Madness*
BWS = *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*
SL = *Selected Letters*

About “Antarktos”

This sonnet, number XV of *The Fungi from Yuggoth*, may anticipate *At the Mountains of Madness* not only in its setting in Antarctica, but also in its Poesque coloring. We wonder if the oracular bird is perhaps the same one who visited the narrator of “The Raven”, especially when we notice the word “drearly”, recalling the line “Once upon a midnight dreary.” But I venture to propose that the principal inspiration for this sonnet is instead none other than Edgar Rice Burroughs, specifically a scene from *The Gods of Mars*. In that adventure, John Carter is fighting for all he’s worth against the fiendish pirates of Omean, an underground realm entered through a hollow mountain at Mars’ south pole. “I discerned over our starboard bow what appeared to be a black mountain rising from the desolate waste of ice. It was not high and seemed to have a flat top.” Later Carter describes “its conelike summit.” Here is a black cone amid a south polar waste opening onto an unsuspected underground world. Given that we know young HPL read Burroughs with enthusiasm, I think the similarity no coincidence.

By the way, I imagine that Lovecraft’s occasional references to “the Black Cone of Nith” correspond to the cone mentioned here in “Antarktos.”



Antarktos

by H. P. Lovecraft

Deep in my dream the great bird whispered queerly
Of the black cone amid the polar waste;
Pushing above the ice-sheet lone and drearily,
By storm-crazed aeons battered and defaced.
Hither no living earth-shapes take their courses,
And only pale auroras and faint suns
Glow on that pitted rock, whose primal sources
Are guessed at dimly by the Elder Ones.

If men should glimpse it, they would merely wonder
What tricky mound of Nature's build they spied;
But the bird told of vaster parts, that under
The mile-deep ice-shroud crouch and brood and hide.
God help the dreamer whose mad visions show
Those dead eyes set in crystal gulfs below!

About *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*

Where are Pym and his companions heading at the tumultuous conclusion? Apparently, they are being pitched over the rim into the hollow Earth! Poe presupposes the Hollow Earth theory of John Cleves Symmes (1780-1829), a veteran of the French and Indian Wars. In a circular mailed to every learned society in Europe and the United States, Symmes sought financial backing for an expedition to vindicate his theory: "I declare the earth is hollow and habitable within; containing a number of solid concentric spheres, one within the other, and that it is open at the poles twelve or sixteen degrees." He attracted no takers, so the only expedition he ever mounted was a fictive one, writing a novel called *Symzonia: A Voyage of Discovery* (1820 as by Captain Adam Seaborn). Poe has narrowed the 6,000-mile opening posited by Symmes to a tighter 500 miles, but he has retained the entirely white interior of Symzonia. Harold Beaver has made the attractive suggestion that Poe derived the name "Pym" for his hero by combining his own name with that Symmes!

The Pellucidar novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs make explicit use of a simplified version of the Hollow Earth theory, and the excellent "Black as the Pit, from Pole to Pole" by Howard Waldrop and Steven Utley (available in James Turner, ed., *The Eternal Lovecraft*, Golden Gryphon Press, 1998) uses the more complex version in dazzling ways. Lovecraft, too, used the idea of subterranean worlds within worlds, or at least worlds below worlds, in "The Mound", but his is a series of caverns in the Earth's crust, not concentric spheres.



THE NARRATIVE
OF
ARTHUR GORDON PYM
OF NANTUCKET.

COMPRISING THE DETAILS OF A MUTINY AND ATROCIOUS BUTCHERY
ON BOARD THE AMERICAN BRIG GRAMPUS, ON HER WAY TO
THE SOUTH SEAS, IN THE MONTH OF JUNE, 1827

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE RECAPTURE OF THE VESSEL BY THE
SURVIVORS; THEIR SHIPWRECK AND SUBSEQUENT HORRIBLE
SUFFERINGS FROM FAMINE; THEIR DELIVERANCE BY
MEANS OF THE BRITISH SCHOONER JANE GUY; THE
BRIEF CRUISE OF THIS LATTER VESSEL IN THE
ANTARCTIC OCEAN; HER CAPTURE, AND THE
MASSACRE OF HER CREW AMONG A
GROUP OF ISLANDS IN THE

EIGHTY-FOURTH PARALLEL OF SOUTHERN LATITUDE;

TOGETHER WITH THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES AND
DISCOVERIES

STILL FARTHER SOUTH

TO WHICH THAT DISTRESSING CALAMITY GAVE RISE.

NEW-YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-ST.

1838.

Preface

U pon my return to the United States a few months ago, after the extraordinary series of adventure in the South Seas and elsewhere, of which an account is given in the following pages, accident threw me into the society of several gentlemen in Richmond, Va., who felt deep interest in all matters relating to the regions I had visited, and who were constantly urging it upon me as a duty to give my narrative to the public. I had several reasons, however, for declining to do so, some of which were of a nature altogether private, and concern no person but myself, others not so much so. One consideration which deterred me was that, having kept no journal during a greater portion of the time in which I was absent, I feared I should not be able to write, from mere memory, a statement so minute and connected as to have the *appearance* of that truth it would really possess, barring only the natural and unavoidable exaggeration to which all of us are prone when detailing events which have had powerful influence in exciting the imaginative faculties. Another reason was that the incidents to be narrated were of a nature so positively marvellous that, unsupported as my assertions must necessarily be (except by the evidence of a single individual, and he a half-breed Indian), I could only hope for belief among my family and those of my friends who have had reason, through life, to put faith in my veracity—the probability being that the public at large would regard what I should put forth as merely an impudent and ingenious fiction. A distrust in my own abilities as a writer was, nevertheless, one of the principal causes which prevented me from complying with the suggestions of my advisers.

Among those gentlemen in Virginia who expressed the greatest interest in my statement, more particularly in regard to that portion of it which related to the Antarctic Ocean, was Mr. Poe, lately editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a monthly magazine, published by Mr. Thomas W. White, in the city of Richmond. He strongly advised me, among others, to prepare at once a full account of what I had seen and undergone, and trust to the shrewdness and common sense of the public—insisting, with great plausibility, that however roughly, as regards mere authorship, my book should be got up, its very uncouthness, if there were any, would give it all the better chance of being received as truth.

Notwithstanding this representation, I did not make up my mind to do as he suggested. He afterward proposed (finding that I would not stir in the matter) that I should allow him to draw up, in his own words, a narrative of the earlier portion of my adventures, from facts afforded by myself, publishing it in the *Southern Messenger under the garb of fiction*. To this, perceiving no objection, I consented, stipulating only that my real name should be retained. Two numbers of the pretended fiction appeared, consequently, in

the *Messenger* for January and February (1837), and, in order that it might certainly be regarded as fiction, the name of Mr. Poe was affixed to the articles in the table of contents of the magazine.

The manner in which this *ruse* was received has induced me at length to undertake a regular compilation and publication of the adventures in question; for I found that, in spite of the air of fable which had been so ingeniously thrown around that portion of my statement which appeared in the *Messenger* (without altering or distorting a single fact), the public were still not at all disposed to receive it as fable, and several letters were sent to Mr. P.'s address distinctly expressing a conviction to the contrary. I thence concluded that the facts of my narrative would prove of such a nature as to carry with them sufficient evidence of their own authenticity, and that I had consequently little to fear on the score of popular incredulity.

This *exposé* being made, it will be seen at once how much of what follows I claim to be my own writing; and it will also be understood that no fact is misrepresented in the first few pages which were written by Mr. Poe. Even to those readers who have not seen the *Messenger*, it will be unnecessary to point out where his portion ends and my own commences; the difference in point of style will be readily perceived

A. G. Pym.

New-York, July, 1838.

Chapter I

My name is Arthur Gordon Pym. My father was a respectable trader in sea-stores at Nantucket, where I was born. My maternal grandfather was an attorney in good practice. He was fortunate in everything, and had speculated very successfully in stocks of the Edgarton New Bank, as it was formerly called. By these and other means he had managed to lay by a tolerable sum of money. He was more attached to myself, I believe, than to any other person in the world, and I expected to inherit the most of his property at his death. He sent me, at six years of age, to the school of old Mr. Ricketts, a gentleman with only one arm, and of eccentric manners—he is well known to almost every person who has visited New Bedford. I staved at his school until I was sixteen, when I left him for Mr. E. Ronald's academy on the hill. Here I became intimate with the son of Mr. Barnard, a sea captain, who generally sailed in the employ of Lloyd and Vredenburg—Mr. Barnard is also very well known in New Bedford, and has many relations, I am certain, in Edgarton. His son was named Augustus, and he was nearly two years older than myself. He had been on a whaling voyage with his father in the *John Donaldson*, and was always talking to me of his adventures in the South Pacific Ocean. I used frequently to go home with him, and remain all day, and sometimes all night. We occupied the same bed, and he would be sure to keep me awake until almost light, telling me stories of the natives of the island of Tinian, and other places he had visited in his travels. At last I could not help being interested in what he said, and by degrees I felt the greatest desire to go to sea. I owned a sailboat called the *Ariel*, and worth about seventy-five dollars. She had a half-deck or cuddy, and was rigged sloop-fashion—I forget her tonnage, but she would hold ten persons without much crowding. In this boat we were in the habit of going on some of the maddest freaks in the world; and, when I now think of them, it appears to me a thousand wonders that I am alive to-day.

I will relate one of these adventures by way of introduction to a longer and more momentous narrative. One night there was a party at Mr. Barnard's, and both Augustus and myself were not a little intoxicated towards the close of it. As usual, in such cases, I took part of his bed in preference to going home. He went to sleep, as I thought, very quietly (it being near one when the party broke up), and without saying a word on his favourite topic. It might have been half an hour from the time of our getting in bed, and I was just about falling into a doze, when he suddenly started up, and swore with a terrible oath that he would not go to sleep for any Arthur Pym in Christendom, when there was so glorious a breeze from the southwest. I never was so astonished in my life, not knowing what he intended, and thinking that the wines and liquors he had drunk had set him

entirely beside himself. He proceeded to talk very coolly, however, saying he knew that I supposed him intoxicated, but that he was never more sober in his life. He was only tired, he added, of lying in bed on such a fine night like a dog, and was determined to get up and dress, and go out on a frolic with the boat. I can hardly tell what possessed me, but the words were no sooner out of his mouth than I felt a thrill of the greatest excitement and pleasure, and thought his mad idea one of the most delightful and most reasonable things in the world. It was blowing almost a gale, and the weather was very cold, it being late in October. I sprang out of bed, nevertheless, in a kind of ecstasy, and told him I was quite as brave as himself, and quite as tired as he was of lying in bed like a dog, and quite as ready for any fun or frolic as any Augustus Barnard in Nantucket.

We lost no time in getting on our clothes and hurrying down to the boat. She was lying at the old decayed wharf by the lumber-yard of Pankey & Co., and almost thumping her sides out against the rough logs. Augustus got into her and bailed her, for she was nearly half full of water. This being done, we hoisted jib and mainsail, kept full, and started boldly out to sea.

The wind, as I before said, blew freshly from the southwest. The night was very clear and cold. Augustus had taken the helm, and I stationed myself by the mast, on the deck of the cuddy. We flew along at a great rate, neither of us having said a word since casting loose from the wharf. I now asked my companion what course he intended to steer, and what time he thought it probable we should get back. He whistled for a few minutes, and then said crustily, "I am going to sea. You may go home if you think proper." Turning my eyes upon him, I perceived at once that, in spite of his assumed *nonchalance*, he was greatly agitated. I could see him distinctly by the light of the moon—his face was paler than any marble, and his hand shook so excessively that he could scarcely retain hold of the tiller. I found that something had gone wrong, and became seriously alarmed. At this period I knew little about the management of a boat, and was now depending entirely upon the nautical skill of my friend. The wind, too, had suddenly increased, as we were fast getting out of the lee of the land—still I was ashamed to betray any trepidation, and for almost half an hour maintained a resolute silence. I could stand it no longer, however, and spoke to Augustus about the propriety of turning back. As before, it was nearly a minute before he made answer, or took any notice of my suggestion. "By-and-by," said he at length, "time enough home by-and-by." I had expected a similar reply, but there was something in the tone of these words which filled me with an indescribable feeling of dread. I again looked at the speaker attentively. His lips were perfectly livid and his knees shook so violently together that he seemed scarcely able to stand. "For God's sake, Augustus,"

I screamed, now heartily frightened, "what ails you?—what is the matter?—what *are* you going to do?"

"Matter!" he stammered, in the greatest apparent surprise, letting go the tiller at the same moment, and falling forward into the bottom of the boat. "Matter!—why, nothing is the—matter—going home—d-d-don't you see?" The whole truth now flashed upon me. I flew to him and raised him up. He was drunk—beastly drunk—he could no longer either stand, speak, or see. His eyes were perfectly glazed; and as I let him go in the extremity of my despair, he rolled like a mere log into the bilge-water from which I had lifted him. It was evident that, during the evening, he had drunk far more than I suspected, and that his conduct in bed had been the result of a highly-concentrated state of intoxication—a state which, like madness, frequently, enables the victim to imitate the outward demeanour of one in perfect possession of his senses. The coolness of the night air, however, had had its usual effect—the mental energy began to yield before its influence—and the confused perception which he no doubt then had of his perilous situation had assisted in hastening the catastrophe. He was now thoroughly insensible, and there was no probability that he would be otherwise for many hours.

It is hardly possible to conceive the extremity of my terror. The fumes of the wine lately taken had evaporated, leaving me doubly timid and irresolute. I knew that I was altogether incapable of managing the boat, and that a fierce wind and strong ebb tide were hurrying us to destruction. A storm was evidently gathering behind us, we had neither compass nor provisions; and it was clear that, if we held our present course, we should be out of sight of land before daybreak. These thoughts, with a crowd of others equally fearful, flashed through my mind with a bewildering rapidity—and for some moments paralyzed me beyond the possibility of making any exertion. The boat was going through the water at a terrible rate—full before the wind—no reef in either jib or mainsail—running her bows completely under the foam. It was a thousand wonders she did not broach to—Augustus having let go the tiller, as I said before, and I being too much agitated to think of taking it myself. By good luck, however, she kept steady and gradually I recovered some degree of presence of mind. Still the wind was increasing fearfully; and whenever we rose from a plunge forward, the sea behind fell combing over our counter, and deluged us with water. I was so utterly benumbed, too, in every limb, as to be nearly unconscious of sensation. At length I summoned up the resolution of despair, and rushing to the mainsail, let it go by the run. As might have been expected, it flew over the bows, and, getting drenched with water, carried away the mast short off by the board. This latter accident alone saved me from instant destruction. Under the jib only I now boomed along before the wind, shipping heavy

seas occasionally over the counter, but relieved from the terror of immediate death. I took the helm, and breathed with greater freedom as I found that there yet remained to us a chance of ultimate escape. Augustus still lay senseless in the bottom of the boat; and as there was imminent danger of his drowning (the water being nearly a foot deep just where he fell), I contrived to raise him partially up, and keep him in a sitting position, by passing a rope round his waist and lashing it to a ringbolt in the deck of the cuddy. Having thus arranged everything as well as I could in my chilled and agitated condition, I recommended myself to God, and made up my mind to bear whatever might happen with all the fortitude in my power.

Hardly had I come to this resolution, when, suddenly, a loud and long scream or yell, as if from the throats of a thousand demons, seemed to pervade the whole atmosphere around and above the boat. Never while I live shall I forget the intense agony of terror I experienced at that moment. My hair stood erect on my head—I felt the blood congealing in my veins—my heart ceased utterly to beat, and without having once raised my eyes to learn the source of my alarm, I tumbled headlong and insensible upon the body of my fallen companion.

I found myself upon reviving in the cabin of a large whaling-ship (the *Penguin*) bound to Nantucket. Several persons were standing over me, and Augustus, paler than death, was busily occupied in chafing my hands. Upon seeing me open my eyes his exclamations of gratitude and joy excited alternate laughter and tears from the rough-looking personages who were present. The mystery of our being in existence was now soon explained. We had been run down by the whaling-ship, which was close-hauled, beating up to Nantucket with every sail she could venture to set, and consequently running almost at right angles to our own course. Several men were on the look-out forward, but did not perceive our boat until it was an impossibility to avoid coming in contact—their shouts of warning upon seeing us were what so terribly alarmed me. The huge ship, I was told, rode immediately over us with as much case as our own little vessel would have passed over a feather, and without the least perceptible impediment to her progress. Not a scream arose from the deck of the victim—there was a slight grating sound to be heard mingling with the roar of wind and water, as the frail bark which was swallowed up rubbed for a moment along the keel of her destroyer—but this was all. Thinking our boat (which it will be remembered was dismasted) some mere shell cut adrift as useless, the captain (Captain E. T. V. Block of New London) was for proceeding on his course without troubling himself further about the matter. Luckily there were two of the look-outs who swore positively to having seen some person at our helm, and represented the possibility of yet saving him. A discussion ensued, when Block grew angry, and, after a while, said that “it was no business of

his to be eternally watching for egg-shells; that the ship should not put about for any such nonsense; and if there was a man run down, it was nobody's fault but his own—he might drown and be d—d,” or some language to that effect. Henderson, the first mate, now took the matter up, being justly indignant, as well as the whole ship's crew, at a speech evincing so base a degree of heartless atrocity. He spoke plainly, seeing himself upheld by the men, told the captain he considered him a fit subject for the gallows, and that he would disobey his orders if he were hanged for it the moment he set his foot on shore. He strode aft, jostling Block (who turned very pale and made no answer) on one side, and seizing the helm, gave the word, in a firm voice, “Hard-a-lee!” The men flew to their posts, and the ship went cleverly about. All this had occupied nearly five minutes, and it was supposed to be hardly within the bounds of possibility that an individual could be saved—allowing any to have been on board the boat. Yet, as the reader has seen, both Augustus and myself were rescued; and our deliverance seemed to have been brought about by two of those almost inconceivable pieces of good fortune which are attributed by the wise and pious to the special interference of Providence.

While the ship was yet in stays, the mate lowered the jolly-boat and jumped into her with the very two men, I believe, who spoke up as having seen me at the helm. They had just left the lee of the vessel (the moon still shining brightly) when she made a long and heavy roll to windward, and Henderson, at the same moment, starting up in his seat, bawled out to his crew to “back water.” He would say nothing else—repeating his cry impatiently, “Back water! Back water!” The men put back as speedily as possible; but by this time the ship had gone round, and gotten fully under headway, although all hands on board were making great exertions to take in sail. In despite of the danger of the attempt, the mate clung to the main-chains as soon as they came within his reach. Another huge lurch now brought the starboard side of the vessel out of water nearly as far as her keel, when the cause of his anxiety was tendered obvious enough. The body of a man was seen to be affixed in the most singular manner to the smooth and shining bottom (the *Penguin* was coppered and copper-fastened), and beating violently against it with every movement of the hull. After several ineffectual efforts, made during the lurches of the ship, and at the imminent risk of swamping the boat, I was finally disengaged from my perilous situation and taken on board—for the body proved to be my own. It appeared that one of the timber-bolts having started and broken a passage through the copper, it had arrested my progress as I passed under the ship, and fastened me in so extraordinary a manner to her bottom. The head of the bolt had made its way through the collar of the green baize jacket I had on, and through the back part of my neck, forcing itself out by two sinews and just below

the right ear. I was immediately put to bed—although life seemed to be totally extinct. There was no surgeon on board. The captain, however, treated me with every attention—to make amends, I presume, in the eyes of his crew, for his atrocious behaviour in the previous portion of the adventure.

In the meantime, Henderson had again put off from the ship, although the wind was now blowing almost a hurricane. He had not been gone many minutes when he fell in with some fragments of our boat, and shortly afterward one of the men with him asserted that he could distinguish a cry for help at intervals amid the roaring of the tempest. This induced the hardy seamen to persevere in their search for more than half an hour, although repeated signals to return were made them by Captain Block, and although every moment on the water in so frail a boat was fraught to them with the most imminent and deadly peril. Indeed, it is nearly impossible to conceive how the small jolly they were in could have escaped destruction for a single instant. She was built, however, for the whaling service, and was fitted, as I have since had reason to believe, with air-boxes, in the manner of some lifeboats used on the coast of Wales.

After searching in vain for about the period of time just mentioned, it was determined to get back to the ship. They had scarcely made this resolve when a feeble cry arose from a dark object which floated rapidly by. They pursued and soon overtook it. It proved to be deck of the *Ariel's* cuddy; Augustus was struggling apparently in the last agonies. Upon getting hold of him it was found that he was attached by a rope to the floating timber. This rope, it will be remembered, I had myself tied round his waist, and made fast to a ringbolt, for the purpose of keeping him in an upright position, and my so doing, it appeared, had been ultimately the means of preserving his life. The *Ariel* was slightly put together, and in going down her frame naturally went to pieces; the deck of the cuddy, as might be expected, was lifted, by the force of the water rushing in, entirely from the main timbers, and floated (with other fragments, no doubt) to the surface—Augustus was buoyed up with it, and thus escaped a terrible death.

It was more than an hour after being taken on board the *Penguin* before he could give any account of himself, or be made to comprehend the nature of the accident which had befallen our boat. At length he became thoroughly aroused, and spoke much of his sensations while in the water. Upon his first attaining any degree of consciousness, he found himself beneath the surface, whirling round and round with inconceivable rapidity, and with a rope wrapped in three or four folds tightly about his neck. In an instant afterward he felt himself going rapidly upward, when, his head striking violently against a hard substance, he again relapsed into insensibility. Upon once more reviving he was in fuller possession of his reason—this was still, however, in the greatest degree clouded and confused. He now knew that

some accident had occurred, and that he was in the water, although his mouth was above the surface, and he could breathe with some freedom. Possibly, at this period, the deck was drifting rapidly before the wind, and drawing him after it, as he floated upon his back. Of course, as long as he could have retained this position, it would have been nearly impossible that he should be drowned. Presently, a surge threw him directly athwart the deck; and this post he endeavoured to maintain, screaming at intervals for help. Just before he was discovered by Mr. Henderson, he had been obliged to relax his hold through exhaustion, and, falling into the sea, had given himself up for lost. During the whole period of his struggles he had not the faintest recollection of the *Ariel*, nor of any matters in connection with the source of his disaster. A vague feeling of terror and despair had taken entire possession of his faculties. When he was finally picked up, every power of his mind had failed him, and, as before said, it was nearly an hour after getting on board the *Penguin* before he became fully aware of his condition. In regard to myself—I was resuscitated from a state bordering very nearly upon death (and after every other means had been tried in vain for three hours and a half) by vigorous friction with flannels bathed in hot oil—a proceeding suggested by Augustus. The wound in my neck, although of an ugly appearance, proved of little real consequence, and I soon recovered from its effects.

The *Penguin* got into port about nine o'clock in the morning, after encountering one of the severest gales ever experienced off Nantucket. Both Augustus and myself managed to appear at Mr. Barnard's in time for breakfast—which, luckily, was somewhat late, owing to the party overnight. I suppose all at the table were too much fatigued themselves to notice our jaded appearance—of course, it would not have borne a very rigid scrutiny. Schoolboys, however, can accomplish wonders in the way of deception, and I verily believe not one of our friends in Nantucket had the slightest suspicion that the terrible story, told by some sailors in town of their having run down a vessel at sea and drowned some thirty, or forty, poor devils, had reference either to the *Ariel*, my companion, or myself. We two have since very frequently talked the matter over—but never without a shudder. In one of our conversations Augustus frankly confessed to me, that in his whole life he had at no time experienced so excruciating a sense of dismay, as when on board our little boat he first discovered the extent of his intoxication, and felt himself sinking beneath its influence.

Chapter II

In no affairs of mere prejudice, pro or con, do we deduce inferences with entire certainty even from the most simple data. It might be supposed that a catastrophe such as I have just related would have effectually cooled incipient passion for the sea. On the contrary, I never experienced a more ardent longing for the wild adventures of the life of a navigator than within a week after our miraculous deliverance. This short period proved amply long enough to erase from my memory the shadows, and I brought out in vivid light all the pleasurable exciting points of colour, all the picturesqueness of the late perilous accident. My conversations with Augustus grew daily more frequent and more intensely full of interest. He had a manner of relating his stories of the ocean (more than one half of which I now suspect to have been sheer fabrications) well adapted to have weight with one of my enthusiastic temperament, and somewhat gloomy, although glowing imagination. It is strange, too, that he most strongly enlisted my feelings in behalf of the life of a seaman, when he depicted his more terrible moments of suffering and despair. For the bright side of the painting I had a limited sympathy. My visions were of shipwreck and famine; of death or captivity among barbarian hordes; of a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears, upon some gray and desolate rock, in an ocean unapproachable and unknown. Such visions or desires—for they amounted to desires—are common, I have since been assured, to the whole numerous race of the melancholy among men—at the time of which I speak I regarded them only as prophetic glimpses of a destiny which I felt myself in a measure bound to fulfil. Augustus thoroughly entered into my state of mind. It is probable, indeed, that our intimate communion had resulted in a partial interchange of character.

About eighteen months after the period of the *Ariel's* disaster, the firm of Lloyd and Vredenburgh (a house connected in some manner with the Messieurs Enderby, I believe, of Liverpool) were engaged in repairing and fitting out the brig *Grampus* for a whaling voyage. She was an old hulk, and scarcely seaworthy when all was done to her that could be done. I hardly know why she was chosen in preference to other good vessels belonging to the same owners—but so it was. Mr. Barnard was appointed to command her, and Augustus was going with him. While the brig was getting ready, he frequently urged upon me the excellency of the opportunity now offered for indulging my desire of travel. He found me by no means an unwilling listener—yet the matter could not be so easily arranged. My father made no direct opposition, but my mother went into hysterics at the bare mention of the design; and, more than all, my grandfather, from whom I expected much, vowed to cut me off with a shilling if I should ever broach the subject to him again. These difficulties, however, so far from abating my desire,

only added fuel to the flame. I determined to go at all hazards; and, having made known my intention to Augustus, we set about arranging a plan by which it might be accomplished. In the meantime I forbore speaking to any of my relations in regard to the voyage, and, as I busied myself ostensibly with my usual studies, it was supposed that I had abandoned the design. I have since frequently examined my conduct on this occasion with sentiments of displeasure as well as of surprise. The intense hypocrisy I made use of for the furtherance of my project—an hypocrisy pervading every word and action of my life for so long a period of time—could only have been rendered tolerable to myself by the wild and burning expectation with which I looked forward to the fulfilment of my long-cherished visions of travel.

In pursuance of my scheme of deception, I was necessarily obliged to leave much to the management of Augustus, who was employed for the greater part of every day on board the *Grampus*, attending to some arrangements for his father in the cabin and cabin hold. At night, however, we were sure to have a conference, and talk over our hopes. After nearly a month passed in this manner, without our hitting upon any plan we thought likely to succeed, he told me at last that he had determined upon everything necessary. I had a relation living in New Bedford, a Mr. Ross, at whose house I was in the habit of spending occasionally two or three weeks at a time. The brig was to sail about the middle of June (June, 1827), and it was agreed that, a day or two before her putting to sea, my father was to receive a note, as usual, from Mr. Ross, asking me to come over and spend a fortnight with Robert and Emmet (his sons). Augustus charged himself with the editing of this note and getting it delivered. Having set out, as supposed, for New Bedford, I was then to report myself to my companion, who would contrive a hiding-place for me in the *Grampus*. This hiding-place, he assured me, would be rendered sufficiently comfortable for a residence of many days, during which I was not to make my appearance. When the brig had proceeded so far on her course as to make any turning back a matter out of question, I should then, he said, be formally installed in all the comforts of the cabin; and as to his father, he would only laugh heartily at the joke. Vessels enough would be met with by which a letter might be sent home explaining the adventure to my parents.

The middle of June at length arrived, and everything had been matured. The note was written and delivered, and on a Monday morning I left the house for the New Bedford packet, as supposed. I went, however, straight to Augustus, who was waiting for me at the corner of a street. It had been our original plan that I should keep out of the way until dark, and then slip on board the brig; but, as there was now a thick fog in our favour, it was agreed to lose no time in secreting me. Augustus led the way to the wharf, and I followed at a little distance, enveloped in a thick seaman's

cloak, which he had brought with him, so that my person might not be easily recognised. Just as we turned the second corner, after passing Mr. Edmund's well, who should appear, standing right in front of me, and looking me full in the face, but old Mr. Peterson, my grandfather. "Why, bless my soul, Gordon," said he, after a long pause, "why, why—*whose* dirty cloak is that you have on?"

"Sir!" I replied, assuming, as well as I could, in the exigency of the moment, an air of offended surprise, and talking in the gruffest of all imaginable tones—"sir! you are a sum'mat mistaken—my name, in the first place, bee'nt nothing at all like Goddin, and I'd want you for to know better, you blackguard, than to call my new obercoat a darty one!"

For my life I could hardly refrain from screaming with laughter at the odd manner in which the old gentleman received this handsome rebuke. He started back two or three steps, turned first pale and then excessively red, threw up his spectacles, then, putting them down, ran full tilt at me, with his umbrella uplifted. He stopped short, however, in his career, as if struck with a sudden recollection; and presently, turning round, hobbled off down the street, shaking all the while with rage, and muttering between his teeth, "Won't do—new glasses—thought it was Gordon—d—d good-for-nothing salt water Long Tom."

After this narrow escape we proceeded with greater caution, and arrived at our point of destination in safety. There were only one or two of the hands on board, and these were busy forward, doing something to the forecabin combings. Captain Barnard, we knew very well, was engaged at Lloyd and Vredenburg's, and would remain there until late in the evening, so we had little to apprehend on his account. Augustus went first up the vessel's side, and in a short while I followed him, without being noticed by the men at work. We proceeded at once into the cabin, and found no person there. It was fitted up in the most comfortable style—a thing somewhat unusual in a whaling-vessel. There were four very excellent staterooms, with wide and convenient berths. There was also a large stove, I took notice, and a remarkably thick and valuable carpet covering the floor of both the cabin and staterooms. The ceiling was full seven feet high, and, in short, everything appeared of a more roomy and agreeable nature than I had anticipated. Augustus, however, would allow me but little time for observation, insisting upon the necessity of my concealing myself as soon as possible. He led the way into his own stateroom, which was on the starboard side of the brig, and next to the bulkheads. Upon entering, he closed the door and bolted it. I thought I had never seen a nicer little room than the one in which I now found myself. It was about ten feet long, and had only one berth, which, as I said before, was wide and convenient. In that portion of the closet nearest the bulkheads there was a space of four feet square, con-

taining a table, a chair, and a set of hanging shelves full of books, chiefly books of voyages and travels. There were many other little comforts in the room, among which I ought not to forget a kind of safe or refrigerator, in which Augustus pointed out to me a host of delicacies, both in the eating and drinking department.

He now pressed with his knuckles upon a certain spot of the carpet in one corner of the space just mentioned, letting me know that a portion of the flooring, about sixteen inches square, had been neatly cut out and again adjusted. As he pressed, this portion rose up at one end sufficiently to allow the passage of his finger beneath. In this manner he raised the mouth of the trap (to which the carpet was still fastened by tacks), and I found that it led into the afterhold. He next lit a small taper by means of a phosphorus match, and, placing the light in a dark lantern, descended with it through the opening, bidding me follow. I did so, and he then pulled the cover upon the hole, by means of a nail driven into the under side—the carpet, of course, resuming its original position on the floor of the stateroom, and all traces of the aperture being concealed.

The taper gave out so feeble a ray, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could grope my way through the confused mass of lumber among which I now found myself. By degrees, however, my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and I proceeded with less trouble, holding on to the skirts of my friend's coat. He brought me, at length, after creeping and winding through innumerable narrow passages, to an iron-bound box, such as is used sometimes for packing fine earthenware. It was nearly four feet high, and full six long, but very narrow. Two large empty oil-casks lay on the top of it, and above these, again, a vast quantity of straw matting, piled up as high as the floor of the cabin. In every other direction around was wedged as closely as possible, even up to the ceiling, a complete chaos of almost every species of ship furniture, together with a heterogeneous medley of crates, hampers, barrels, and bales, so that it seemed a matter no less than miraculous that we had discovered any passage at all to the box. I afterward found that Augustus had purposely arranged the stowage in this hold with a view to affording me a thorough concealment, having had only one assistant in the labour, a man not going out in the brig.

My companion now showed me that one of the ends of the box could be removed at pleasure. He slipped it aside and displayed the interior, at which I was excessively amused. A mattress from one of the cabin berths covered the whole of its bottom, and it contained almost every article of mere comfort which could be crowded into so small a space, allowing me, at the same time, sufficient room for my accommodation, either in a sitting position or lying at full length. Among other things, there were some books, pen, ink, and paper, three blankets, a large jug full of water, a keg of sea-

biscuit, three or four immense Bologna sausages, an enormous ham, a cold leg of roast mutton, and half a dozen bottles of cordials and liqueurs. I proceeded immediately to take possession of my little apartment, and this with feelings of higher satisfaction I am sure, than any monarch ever experienced upon entering a new palace. Augustus now pointed out to me the method of fastening the open end of the box, and then, holding the taper close to the deck, showed me a piece of dark whipcord lying along it. This, he said, extended from my hiding-place throughout all the necessary windings among the lumber, to a nail which was driven into the deck of the hold, immediately beneath the trapdoor leading into his stateroom. By means of this cord I should be enabled readily to trace my way out without his guidance, provided any unlooked-for accident should render such a step necessary. He now took his departure, leaving with me the lantern, together with a copious supply of tapers and phosphorus, and promising to pay me a visit as often as he could contrive to do so without observation. This was on the seventeenth of June.

I remained three days and nights (as nearly as I could guess) in my hiding-place without getting out of it at all, except twice for the purpose of stretching my limbs by standing erect between two crates just opposite the opening. During the whole period I saw nothing of Augustus; but this occasioned me little uneasiness, as I knew the brig was expected to put to sea any hour, and in the bustle he would not easily find opportunities of coming down to me. At length I heard the trap open and shut, and presently he called in a low voice, asking if all was well, and if there was anything I wanted. "Nothing," I replied; "I am as comfortable as can be; when will the brig sail?"

"She will be underway in less than half an hour," he answered. "I came to let you know, and for fear you should be uneasy at my absence. I shall not have a chance of coming down again for some time—perhaps for three or four days more. All is going on right aboveboard. After I go up and close the trap, do you creep along by the whipcord to where the nail is driven in. You will find my watch there—it may be useful to you, as you have no daylight to keep time by. I suppose you can't tell how long you have been buried—only three days—this is the twentieth. I would bring the watch to your box, but am afraid of being missed." With this he went up.

In about an hour after he had gone I distinctly felt the brig in motion, and congratulated myself upon having at length fairly commenced a voyage. Satisfied with this idea, I determined to make my mind as easy as possible, and await the course of events until I should be permitted to exchange the box for the more roomy, although hardly more comfortable, accommodations of the cabin. My first care was to get the watch. Leaving the taper burning, I groped along in the dark, following the cord through windings

innumerable, in some of which I discovered that, after toiling a long distance, I was brought back within a foot or two of a former position. At length I reached the nail, and, securing the object of my journey, returned with it in safety. I now looked over the books which had been so thoughtfully provided, and selected the expedition of Lewis and Clarke to the mouth of the Columbia. With this I amused myself for some time, when, growing sleepy, I extinguished the light with great care, and soon fell into a sound slumber.

Upon awaking I felt strangely confused in mind, and some time elapsed before I could bring to recollection all the various circumstances of my situation. By degrees, however, I remembered all. Striking a light, I looked at the watch; but it was run down, and there were, consequently, no means of determining how long I had slept. My limbs were greatly cramped, and I was forced to relieve them by standing between the crates. Presently, feeling an almost ravenous appetite, I bethought myself of the cold mutton, some of which I had eaten just before going to sleep, and found excellent. What was my astonishment at discovering it to be in a state of absolute putrefaction! This circumstance occasioned me great disquietude; for, connecting it with the disorder of mind I experienced upon awaking, I began to suppose that I must have slept for an inordinately long period of time. The close atmosphere of the hold might have had something to do with this, and might, in the end, be productive of the most serious results. My head ached excessively; I fancied that I drew every breath with difficulty; and, in short, I was oppressed with a multitude of gloomy feelings. Still I could not venture to make any disturbance by opening the trap or otherwise, and, having wound up the watch, contented myself as well as possible.

Throughout the whole of the next tedious twenty-four hours no person came to my relief, and I could not help accusing Augustus of the grossest inattention. What alarmed me chiefly was that the water in my jug was reduced to about half a pint, and I was suffering much from thirst, having eaten freely of the Bologna sausages after the loss of my mutton. I became very uneasy, and could no longer take any interest in my books. I was overpowered, too, with a desire to sleep, yet trembled at the thought of indulging it, lest there might exist some pernicious influence, like that of burning charcoal, in the confined air of the hold. In the meantime the roll of the brig told me that we were far in the main ocean, and a dull humming sound, which reached my ears as if from an immense distance, convinced me no ordinary gale was blowing. I could not imagine a reason for the absence of Augustus. We were surely far enough advanced on our voyage to allow of my going up. Some accident might have happened to him—but I could think of none which would account for his suffering me to remain so long a prisoner, except, indeed, his having suddenly died or fallen overboard, and upon this idea I could not dwell with any degree of patience. It was possi-

ble that we had been baffled by head winds, and were still in the near vicinity of Nantucket. This notion, however, I was forced to abandon; for, such being the case, the brig must have frequently gone about; and I was entirely satisfied, from her continual inclination to the larboard, that she had been sailing all along with a steady breeze on her starboard quarter. Besides, granting that we were still in the neighbourhood of the island, why should not Augustus have visited me and informed me of the circumstance? Pondering in this manner upon the difficulties of my solitary and cheerless condition, I resolved to wait yet another twenty-four hours, when, if no relief were obtained, I would make my way to the trap, and endeavour either to hold a parley with my friend, or get at least a little fresh air through the opening, and a further supply of water from his stateroom. While occupied with this thought, however, I fell, in spite of every exertion to the contrary, into a state of profound sleep, or rather stupor. My dreams were of the most terrific description. Every species of calamity and horror befell me. Among other miseries, I was smothered to death between huge pillows, by demons of the most ghastly and ferocious aspect. Immense serpents held me in their embrace, and looked earnestly in my face with their fearfully shining eyes. Then deserts, limitless, and of the most forlorn and awe-inspiring character, spread themselves out before me. Immensely tall trunks of trees, gray and leafless, rose up in endless succession as far as the eye could reach. Their roots were concealed in wide-spreading morasses, whose dreary water lay intensely black, still, and altogether terrible, beneath. And the strange trees seemed endowed with a human vitality, and, waving to and fro their skeleton arms, were crying to the silent waters for mercy, in the shrill and piercing accents of the most acute agony and despair. The scene changed; and I stood, naked and alone, amid the burning sand-plains of Zahara. At my feet lay crouched a fierce lion of the tropics. Suddenly his wild eyes opened and fell upon me. With a convulsive bound he sprang to his feet, and laid bare his horrible teeth. In another instant there burst from his red throat a roar like the thunder of the firmament, and I fell impetuously to the earth. Stifling in a paroxysm of terror, I at last found myself partially awake. My dream, then, was not all a dream. Now, at least, I was in possession of my senses. The paws of some huge and real monster were pressing heavily upon my bosom—his hot breath was in my ear—and his white and ghastly fangs were gleaming upon me through the gloom.

Had a thousand lives hung upon the movement of a limb or the utterance of a syllable, I could have neither stirred nor spoken. The beast, whatever it was, retained his position without attempting any immediate violence, while I lay in an utterly helpless, and, I fancied, a dying condition beneath him. I felt that my powers of body and mind were fast leaving me—in a word, that I was perishing, and perishing of sheer fright. My brain

swam—I grew deadly sick—my vision failed—even the glaring eyeballs above me grew dim. Making a last strong effort, I at length breathed a faint ejaculation to God, and resigned myself to die. The sound of my voice seemed to arouse all the latent fury of the animal. He precipitated himself at full length upon my body; but what was my astonishment, when, with a long and low whine, he commenced licking my face and hands with the greatest eagerness, and with the most extravagant demonstrations of affection and joy! I was bewildered, utterly lost in amazement—but I could not forget the peculiar whine of my Newfoundland dog Tiger, and the odd manner of his caresses I well knew. It was he. I experienced a sudden rush of blood to my temples—a giddy and overpowering sense of deliverance and reanimation. I rose hurriedly from the mattress upon which I had been lying, and, throwing myself upon the neck of my faithful follower and friend, relieved the long oppression of my bosom in a flood of the most passionate tears.

As upon a former occasion, my conceptions were in a state of the greatest indistinctness and confusion after leaving the mattress. For a long time I found it nearly impossible to connect any ideas—but, by very slow degrees, my thinking faculties returned, and I again called to memory the several incidents of my condition. For the presence of Tiger I tried in vain to account; and after busying myself with a thousand different conjectures respecting him, was forced to content myself with rejoicing that he was with me to share my dreary solitude, and render me comfort by his caresses. Most people love their dogs—but for Tiger I had an affection far more ardent than common; and never, certainly, did any creature more truly deserve it. For seven years he had been my inseparable companion, and in a multitude of instances had given evidence of all the noble qualities for which we value the animal. I had rescued him, when a puppy, from the clutches of a malignant little villain in Nantucket, who was leading him, with a rope around his neck, to the water; and the grown dog repaid the obligation, about three years afterward, by saving me from the bludgeon of a street-robber.

Getting now hold of the watch, I found, upon applying it to my ear, that it had again run down; but at this I was not at all surprised, being convinced, from the peculiar state of my feelings, that I had slept, as before, for a very long period of time; how long, it was of course impossible to say. I was burning up with fever, and my thirst was almost intolerable. I felt about the box for my little remaining supply of water; for I had no light, the taper having burnt to the socket of the lantern, and the phosphorus-box not coming readily to hand. Upon finding the jug, however, I discovered it to be empty—Tiger, no doubt, having been tempted to drink it, as well as to devour the remnant of mutton, the bone of which lay, well picked, by the opening of the box. The spoiled meat I could well spare, but my heart sank

as I thought of the water. I was feeble in the extreme—so much so that I shook all over, as with an ague, at the slightest movement or exertion. To add to my troubles, the brig was pitching and rolling with great violence, and the oil-casks which lay upon my box were in momentary danger of falling down, so as to block up the only way of ingress or egress. I felt, also, terrible sufferings from sea-sickness. These considerations determined me to make my way, at all hazards, to the trap, and obtain immediate relief, before I should be incapacitated from doing so altogether. Having come to this resolve, I again felt about for the phosphorus-box and tapers. The former I found after some little trouble; but, not discovering the tapers as soon as I had expected (for I remembered very nearly the spot in which I had placed them), I gave up the search for the present, and bidding Tiger lie quiet, began at once my journey towards the trap.

In this attempt my great feebleness became more than ever apparent. It was with the utmost difficulty I could crawl along at all, and very frequently my limbs sank suddenly from beneath me; when, falling prostrate on my face, I would remain for some minutes in a state bordering on insensibility. Still I struggled forward by slow degrees, dreading every moment that I should swoon amid the narrow and intricate windings of the lumber, in which event I had nothing but death to expect as the result. At length, upon making a push forward with all the energy I could command, I struck my forehead violently against the sharp corner of an iron-bound crate. The accident only stunned me for a few moments; but I found, to my inexpressible grief, that the quick and violent roll of the vessel had thrown the crate entirely across my path, so as effectually to block up the passage. With my utmost exertions I could not move it a single inch from its position, it being closely wedged in among the surrounding boxes and ship furniture. It became necessary, therefore, enfeebled as I was, either to leave the guidance of the whipcord and seek out a new passage, or to climb over the obstacle, and resume the path on the other side. The former alternative presented too many difficulties and dangers to be thought of without a shudder. In my present weak state of both mind and body, I should infallibly lose my way if I attempted it, and perish miserably amid the dismal and disgusting labyrinths of the hold. I proceeded, therefore, without hesitation, to summon up all my remaining strength and fortitude, and endeavour, as I best might, to clamber over the crate.

Upon standing erect, with this end in view, I found the undertaking even a more serious task than my fears had led me to imagine. On each side of the narrow passage arose a complete wall of various heavy lumber, which the least blunder on my part might be the means of bringing down upon my head; or, if this accident did not occur, the path might be effectually blocked up against my return by the descending mass, as it was in front by

the obstacle there. The crate itself was a long and unwieldy box, upon which no foothold could be obtained. In vain I attempted, by every means in my power, to reach the top, with the hope of being thus enabled to draw myself up. Had I succeeded in reaching it, it is certain that my strength would have proved utterly inadequate to the task of getting over, and it was better in every respect that I failed. At length, in a desperate effort to force the crate from its ground, I felt a strong vibration in the side next me. I thrust my hand eagerly to the edge of the planks, and found that a very large one was loose. With my pocket-knife, which luckily I had with me, I succeeded, after great labour, in prying it entirely off; and, getting through the aperture, discovered, to my exceeding joy, that there were no boards on the opposite side—in other words, that the top was wanting, it being the bottom through which I had forced my way. I now met with no important difficulty in proceeding along the line until I finally reached the nail. With a beating heart I stood erect, and with a gentle touch pressed against the cover of the trap. It did not rise as soon as I had expected, and I pressed it with somewhat more determination, still dreading lest some other person than Augustus might be in his stateroom. The door, however, to my astonishment, remained steady, and I became somewhat uneasy, for I knew that it had formerly required little or no effort to remove it. I pushed it strongly—it was nevertheless firm: with all my strength—it still did not give way: with rage, with fury, with despair—it set at defiance my utmost efforts; and it was evident, from the unyielding nature of the resistance, that the hole had either been discovered and effectually nailed up, or that some immense weight had been placed upon it, which it was useless to think of removing.

My sensations were those of extreme horror and dismay. In vain I attempted to reason on the probable cause of my being thus entombed. I could summon up no connected chain of reflection, and, sinking on the floor, gave way, unresistingly, to the most gloomy imaginings, in which the dreadful deaths of thirst, famine, suffocation, and premature interment crowded upon me as the prominent disasters to be encountered. At length there returned to me some portion of presence of mind. I arose, and felt with my fingers for the seams or cracks of the aperture. Having found them, I examined them closely to ascertain if they emitted any light from the stateroom; but none was visible. I then forced the penblade of my knife through them, until I met with some hard obstacle. Scraping against it, I discovered it to be a solid mass of iron, which, from its peculiar wavy feel as I passed the blade along it, I concluded to be a chain-cable. The only course now left me was to retrace my way to the box, and there either yield to my sad fate, or try so to tranquillize my mind as to admit of my arranging some plan of escape. I immediately set about the attempt, and succeeded, after innumerable difficulties, in getting back. As I sank, utterly exhausted, upon the

mattress, Tiger threw himself at full length by my side, and seemed as if desirous, by his caresses, of consoling me in my troubles, and urging me to bear them with fortitude.

The singularity of his behaviour at length forcibly arrested my attention. After licking my face and hands for some minutes, he would suddenly cease doing so, and utter a low whine. Upon reaching out my hand towards him, I then invariably found him lying on his back, with his paws uplifted. This conduct, so frequently repeated, appeared strange, and I could in no manner account for it. As the dog seemed distressed, I concluded that he had received some injury; and, taking his paws in my hands, I examined them one by one, but found no sign of any hurt. I then supposed him hungry, and gave him a large piece of ham, which he devoured with avidity—afterward, however, resuming his extraordinary manoeuvres. I now imagined that he was suffering, like myself, the torments of thirst, and was about adopting this conclusion as the true one, when the idea occurred to me that I had as yet only examined his paws, and that there might possibly be a wound upon some portion of his body or head. The latter I felt carefully over, but found nothing. On passing my hand, however, along his back, I perceived a slight erection of the hair extending completely across it. Probing this with my finger, I discovered a string, and, tracing it up, found that it encircled the whole body. Upon a closer scrutiny, I came across a small slip of what had the feeling of letter paper, through which the string had been fastened in such a manner as to bring it immediately beneath the left shoulder of the animal.

Chapter III

The thought instantly occurred to me that the paper was a note from Augustus, and that some unaccountable accident having happened to prevent his relieving me from my dungeon, he had devised this method of acquainting me with the true state of affairs. Trembling with eagerness, I now commenced another search for my phosphorus matches and tapers. I had a confused recollection of having put them carefully away just before falling asleep; and, indeed, previously to my last journey to the trap, I had been able to remember the exact spot where I had deposited them. But now I endeavoured in vain to call it to mind, and busied myself for a full hour in a fruitless and vexatious search for the missing articles; never, surely, was there a more tantalizing state of anxiety and suspense. At length, while groping about, with my head close to the ballast, near the opening of the box, and outside of it, I perceived a faint glimmering of light in the direction of the steerage. Greatly surprised, I endeavoured to make my way

towards it, as it appeared to be but a few feet from my position. Scarcely had I moved with this intention, when I lost sight of the glimmer entirely, and, before I could bring it into view again, was obliged to feel along by the box until I had exactly resumed my original situation. Now, moving my head with caution to and fro, I found that, by proceeding slowly, with great care, in an opposite direction to that in which I had at first started, I was enabled to draw near the light, still keeping it in view. Presently I came directly upon it (having squeezed my way through innumerable narrow windings), and found that it proceeded from some fragments of my matches lying in an empty barrel turned upon its side. I was wondering how they came in such a place, when my hand fell upon two or three pieces of taper-wax, which had been evidently tumbled by the dog. I concluded at once that he had devoured the whole of my supply of candles, and I felt hopeless of being ever able to read the note of Augustus. The small remnants of the wax were so mashed up among other rubbish in the barrel, that I despaired of deriving any service from them, and left them as they were. The phosphorus, of which there was only a speck or two, I gathered up as well as I could, and returned with it, after much difficulty, to my box, where Tiger had all the while remained.

What to do next I could not tell. The hold was so intensely dark that I could not see my hand, however close I would hold it to my face. The white slip of paper could barely be discerned, and not even that when I looked at it directly; by turning the exterior portions of the retina towards it, that is to say, by surveying it slightly askance, I found that it became in some measure perceptible. Thus the gloom of my prison may be imagined, and the note of my friend, if indeed it were a note from him, seemed only likely to throw me into further trouble, by disquieting to no purpose my already enfeebled and agitated mind. In vain I revolved in my brain a multitude of absurd expedients for procuring light—such expedients precisely as a man in the perturbed sleep occasioned by opium would be apt to fall upon for a similar purpose—each and all of which appear by turns to the dreamer the most reasonable and the most preposterous of conceptions, just as the reasoning or imaginative faculties flicker, alternately, one above the other. At last an idea occurred to me which seemed rational, and which gave me cause to wonder, very justly, that I had not entertained it before. I placed the slip of paper on the back of a book, and, collecting the fragments of the phosphorus matches which I had brought from the barrel, laid them together upon the paper. I then, with the palm of my hand, rubbed the whole over quickly yet steadily. A clear light diffused itself immediately throughout the whole surface; and had there been any writing upon it, I should not have experienced the least difficulty, I am sure, in reading it. Not a syllable was there, however—nothing but a dreary and unsatisfactory

blank; the illumination died away in a few seconds, and my heart died away within me as it went.

I have before stated more than once that my intellect, for some period prior to this, had been in a condition nearly bordering on idiocy. There were, to be sure, momentary intervals of perfect sanity, and, now and then, even of energy; but these were few. It must be remembered that I had been, for many days certainly, inhaling the almost pestilential atmosphere of a close hold in a whaling vessel, and a long portion of that time but scantily supplied with water. For the last fourteen or fifteen hours I had had none—nor had I slept during that time. Salt provisions of the most exciting kind had been my chief, and, indeed, since the loss of the mutton, my only supply of food, with the exception of the sea-biscuit; and these latter were utterly useless to me, as they were too dry and hard to be swallowed in the swollen and parched condition of my throat. I was now in a high state of fever, and in every respect exceedingly ill. This will account for the fact that many miserable hours of despondency elapsed after my last adventure with the phosphorus, before the thought suggested itself that I had examined only one side of the paper. I shall not attempt to describe my feelings of rage (for I believe I was more angry than anything else) when the egregious oversight I had committed flashed suddenly upon my perception. The blunder itself would have been unimportant, had not my own folly and impetuosity rendered it otherwise—in my disappointment at not finding some words upon the slip, I had childishly torn it in pieces and thrown it away, it was impossible to say where.

From the worst part of this dilemma I was relieved by the sagacity of Tiger. Having got, after a long search, a small piece of the note, I put it to the dog's nose, and endeavoured to make him understand that he must bring me the rest of it. To my astonishment (for I had taught him none of the usual tricks for which his breed are famous), he seemed to enter at once into my meaning, and, rummaging about for a few moments, soon found another considerable portion. Bringing me this, he paused a while, and, rubbing his nose against my hand, appeared to be waiting for my approval of what he had done. I patted him on the head, when he immediately made off again. It was now some minutes before he came back but when he did come, he brought with him a large slip, which proved to be all the paper missing, it having been torn, it seems, only into three pieces. Luckily, I had no trouble in finding what few fragments of the phosphorus were left, being guided by the indistinct glow one or two of the particles still emitted. My difficulties had taught me the necessity of caution, and I now took time to reflect upon what I was about to do. It was very probable, I considered, that some words were written upon that side of the paper which had not been examined—but which side was that? Fitting the pieces together gave me no

clew in this respect, although it assured me that the words (if there were any) would be found all on one side, and connected in a proper manner, as written. There was the greater necessity of ascertaining the point in question beyond a doubt, as the phosphorus remaining would be altogether insufficient for a third attempt, should I fail in the one I was now about to make. I placed the paper on a book as before, and sat for some minutes thoughtfully revolving the matter over in my mind. At last I thought it barely possible that the written side might have some unevenness on its surface, which a delicate sense of feeling might enable me to detect. I determined to make the experiment, and passed my finger very carefully over the side which first presented itself—nothing, however, was perceptible, and I turned the paper, adjusting it on the book. I now again carried my forefinger cautiously along, when I was aware of an exceedingly slight, but still discernible, glow, which followed as it proceeded. This, I knew, must arise from some very minute remaining particles of the phosphorus with which I had covered the paper in my previous attempt. The other, or under side, then, was that on which lay the writing, if writing there should finally prove to be. Again I turned the note, and went to work as I had previously done. Having rubbed in the phosphorus, a brilliancy ensued as before—but this time several lines of MS. in a large hand, and apparently in red ink, became distinctly visible. The glimmer, although sufficiently bright, was but momentary. Still, had I not been too greatly excited, there would have been ample time enough for me to peruse the whole three sentences before me, for I saw there were three. In my anxiety, however, to read all at once, I succeeded only in reading the seven concluding words, which thus appeared: “blood—your life depends upon lying close.”

Had I been able to ascertain the entire contents of the note—the full meaning of the admonition which my friend had thus attempted to convey, that admonition, even although it should have revealed a story of disaster the most unspeakable, could not, I am firmly convinced, have imbued my mind with one tithe of the harrowing and yet indefinable horror with which I was inspired by the fragmentary warning thus received. And “blood” too, that word of all words—so rife at all times with mystery, and suffering, and terror—how trebly full of import did it now appear—how chillingly and heavily (disjointed, as it thus was, from any foregoing words to qualify or render it distinct) did its vague syllables fall, amid the deep gloom of my prison, into the innermost recesses of my soul!

Augustus had, undoubtedly, good reasons for wishing me to remain concealed, and I formed a thousand surmises as to what they could be—but I could think of nothing affording a satisfactory solution of the mystery. Just after returning from my last journey to the trap, and before my attention had been otherwise directed by the singular conduct of Tiger, I had come to

the resolution of making myself heard at all events by those on board, or, if I could not succeed in this directly, of trying to cut my way through the deck above. The half certainty which I felt of being able to accomplish one of these two purposes in the last emergency, had given me courage (which I should not otherwise have had) to endure the evils of my situation. The few words I had been able to read, however, had cut me off from these final resources, and I now, for the first time, felt all the misery of my fate. In a paroxysm of despair I threw myself again upon the mattress, where, for about the period of a day and night, I lay in a kind of stupor, relieved only by momentary intervals of reason and recollection.

At length I once more arose, and busied myself in reflection upon the horrors which encompassed me. For another twenty-four hours it was barely possible that I might exist without water—for a longer time I could not do so. During the first portion of my imprisonment I had made free use of the cordials with which Augustus had supplied me, but they only served to excite fever, without in the least degree assuaging my thirst. I had now only about a gill left, and this was of a species of strong peach liqueur at which my stomach revolted. The sausages were entirely consumed; of the ham nothing remained but a small piece of the skin; and all the biscuit, except a few fragments of one, had been eaten by Tiger. To add to my troubles, I found that my headache was increasing momentarily, and with it the species of delirium which had distressed me more or less since my first falling asleep. For some hours past it had been with the greatest difficulty I could breathe at all, and now each attempt at so doing was attended with the most distressing spasmodic action of the chest. But there was still another and very different source of disquietude, and one, indeed, whose harassing terrors had been the chief means of arousing me to exertion from my stupor on the mattress. It arose from the demeanour of the dog.

I first observed an alteration in his conduct while rubbing in the phosphorus on the paper in my last attempt. As I rubbed, he ran his nose against my hand with a slight snarl; but I was too greatly excited at the time to pay much attention to the circumstance. Soon afterward, it will be remembered, I threw myself on the mattress, and fell into a species of lethargy. Presently I became aware of a singular hissing sound close at my ears, and discovered it to proceed from Tiger, who was panting and wheezing in a state of the greatest apparent excitement, his eyeballs flashing fiercely through the gloom. I spoke to him, when he replied with a low growl, and then remained quiet. Presently I relapsed into my stupor, from which I was again awakened in a similar manner. This was repeated three or four times, until finally his behaviour inspired me with so great a degree of fear that I became fully aroused. He was now lying close by the door of the box, snarling fearfully, although in a kind of undertone, and grinding his teeth as if strongly

convulsed. I had no doubt whatever that the want of water or the confined atmosphere of the hold had driven him mad, and I was at a loss what course to pursue. I could not endure the thought of killing him, yet it seemed absolutely necessary for my own safety. I could distinctly perceive his eyes fastened upon me with an expression of the most deadly animosity, and I expected every instant that he would attack me. At last I could endure my terrible situation no longer, and determined to make my way from the box at all hazards, and despatch him, if his opposition should render it necessary for me to do so. To get out, I had to pass directly over his body, and he already seemed to anticipate my design—raising himself upon his forelegs (as I perceived by the altered position of his eyes), and displaying the whole of his white fangs, which were easily discernible. I took the remains of the ham-skin, and the bottle containing the liqueur, and secured them about my person, together with a large carving-knife which Augustus had left me—then, folding my cloak as closely around me as possible, I made a movement towards the mouth of the box. No sooner did I do this than the dog sprang with a loud growl towards my throat. The whole weight of his body struck me on the right shoulder, and I fell violently to the left, while the enraged animal passed entirely over me. I had fallen upon my knees, with my head buried among the blankets, and these protected me from a second furious assault, during which I felt the sharp teeth pressing vigorously upon the woollen which enveloped my neck—yet, luckily, without being able to penetrate the folds. I was now beneath the dog, and a few moments would place me completely in his power. Despair gave me strength, and I rose bodily up, shaking him from me by main force, and dragging with me the blankets from the mattress. These I now threw over him, and before he could extricate himself I had got through the door and closed it effectually against his pursuit. In this struggle, however, I had been forced to drop the morsel of ham-skin, and I now found my whole stock of provisions reduced to a single gill of liqueur. As this reflection crossed my mind, I felt myself actuated by one of those fits of perverseness which might be supposed to influence a spoiled child in similar circumstances, and, raising the bottle to my lips, I drained it to the last drop, and dashed it furiously upon the floor.

Scarcely had the echo of the crash died away, when I heard my name pronounced in an eager but subdued voice, issuing from the direction of the steerage. So unexpected was anything of the kind, and so intense was the emotion excited within me by the sound, that I endeavoured in vain to reply. My powers of speech totally failed, and, in an agony of terror lest my friend should conclude me dead, and return without attempting to reach me, I stood up between the crates near the door of the box, trembling convulsively and gasping and struggling for utterance. Had a thousand worlds depended

upon a syllable, I could not have spoken it. There was a slight movement now audible among the lumber somewhere forward of my station. The sound presently grew less distinct, then again less so, and still less. Shall I ever forget my feelings at this moment? He was going—my friend—my companion, from whom I had a right to expect so much—he was going—he would abandon me—he was gone! He would leave me to perish miserably, to expire in the most horrible and loathsome of dungeons—and one word—one little syllable would save me—yet that single syllable I could not utter! I felt, I am sure, more than ten thousand times the agonies of death itself. My brain reeled, and I fell, deadly sick, against the end of the box.

As I fell, the carving-knife was shaken out from the waistband of my pantaloons, and dropped with a rattling sound to the floor. Never did any strain of the richest melody come so sweetly to my ears! With the intensest anxiety I listened to ascertain the effect of the noise upon Augustus, for I knew that the person who called my name could be no one but himself. All was silent for some moments. At length I again heard the word “Arthur!” repeated in a low tone, and one full of hesitation. Reviving hope loosened at once my powers of speech, and I now screamed, at the top of my voice, “Augustus, oh Augustus!”

“Hush—for God’s sake be silent!” he replied, in a voice trembling with agitation; “I will be with you immediately—as soon as I can make my way through the hold.” For a long time I heard him moving among the lumber, and every moment seemed to me an age. At length I felt his hand upon my shoulder, and he placed at the same moment a bottle of water to my lips. Those only who have been suddenly redeemed from the jaws of the tomb, or who have known the insufferable torments of thirst under circumstances as aggravated as those which encompassed me in my dreary prison, can form any idea of the unutterable transports which that one long draught of the richest of all physical luxuries afforded.

When I had in some degree satisfied my thirst, Augustus produced from his pocket three or four cold boiled potatoes, which I devoured with the greatest avidity. He had brought with him a light in a dark lantern, and the grateful rays afforded me scarcely less comfort than the food and drink. But I was impatient to learn the cause of his protracted absence, and he proceeded to recount what had happened on board during my incarceration.

Chapter IV

The brig put to sea, as I had supposed, in about an hour after he had left the watch. This was on the twentieth of June. It will be remembered that I had then been in the hold for three days; and, during this period,

there was so constant a bustle on board, and so much running to and fro, especially in the cabin and staterooms, that he had had no chance of visiting me without the risk of having the secret of the trap discovered. When at length he did come, I had assured him that I was doing as well as possible; and, therefore, for the two next days he felt but little uneasiness on my account—still, however, watching an opportunity of going down. It was not *until the fourth day* that he found one. Several times during this interval he had made up his mind to let his father know of the adventure, and have me come up at once; but we were still within reaching distance of Nantucket, and it was doubtful, from some expressions which had escaped Captain Barnard, whether he would not immediately put back if he discovered me to be on board. Besides, upon thinking the matter over, Augustus, so he told me, could not imagine that I was in immediate want, or that I would hesitate, in such case, to make myself heard at the trap. When, therefore, he considered everything, he concluded to let me stay until he could meet with an opportunity of visiting me unobserved. This, as I said before, did not occur until the fourth day after his bringing me the watch, and the seventh since I had first entered the hold. He then went down without taking with him any water or provisions, intending in the first place merely to call my attention, and get me to come from the box to the trap, when he would go up to the stateroom and thence hand me down a supply. When he descended for this purpose he found that I was asleep, for it seems that I was snoring very loudly. From all the calculations I can make on the subject, this must have been the slumber into which I fell just after my return from the trap with the watch, and which, consequently, must have lasted *for more than three entire days and nights* at the very least. Latterly, I have had reason, both from my own experience and the assurance of others, to be acquainted with the strong soporific effects of the stench arising from old fish-oil when closely confined; and when I think of the condition of the hold in which I was imprisoned, and the long period during which the brig had been used as a whaling vessel, I am more inclined to wonder that I awoke at all, after once falling asleep, than that I should have slept uninterruptedly for the period specified above.

Augustus called to me at first in a low voice and without closing the trap—but I made him no reply. He then shut the trap, and spoke to me in a louder, and finally in a very loud tone—still I continued to snore. He was now at a loss what to do. It would take him some time to make his way through the lumber to my box, and in the meanwhile his absence would be noticed by Captain Barnard, who had occasion for his services every minute, in arranging and copying papers connected with the business of the voyage. He determined, therefore, upon reflection, to ascend, and await another opportunity of visiting me. He was the more easily induced to this resolve,

as my slumber appeared to be of the most tranquil nature, and he could not suppose that I had undergone any inconvenience from my incarceration. He had just made up his mind on these points when his attention was arrested by an unusual bustle, the sound of which proceeded apparently from the cabin. He sprang through the trap as quickly as possible, closed it, and threw open the door of his stateroom. No sooner had he put his foot over the threshold than a pistol flashed in his face, and he was knocked down, at the same moment, by a blow from a handspike.

A strong hand held him on the cabin floor, with a tight grasp upon his throat—still he was able to see what was going on around him. His father was tied hand and foot, and lying along the steps of the companion-way with his head down, and a deep wound in the forehead, from which the blood was flowing in a continued stream. He spoke not a word, and was apparently dying. Over him stood the first mate, eyeing him with an expression of fiendish derision, and deliberately searching his pockets, from which he presently drew forth a large wallet and a chronometer. Seven of the crew (among whom was the cook, a negro) were rummaging the staterooms on the larboard for arms, where they soon equipped themselves with muskets and ammunition. Besides Augustus and Captain Barnard, there were nine men altogether in the cabin, and these among the most ruffianly of the brig's company. The villains now went upon deck, taking my friend with them, after having secured his arms behind his back. They proceeded straight to the forecabin, which was fastened down—two of the mutineers standing by it with axes—two also at the main hatch. The mate called out in a loud voice, "Do you hear there below? Tumble up with you one by one, now, mark that—and no grumbling." It was some minutes before any one appeared: at last an Englishman, who had shipped as a raw hand, came up, weeping piteously, and entreating the mate in the most humble manner to spare his life. The only reply was a blow on the forehead from an axe. The poor fellow fell to the deck without a groan, and the black cook lifted him up in his arms as he would a child, and tossed him deliberately into the sea. Hearing the blow and the plunge of the body, the men below could now be induced to venture on deck neither by threats nor promises, until a proposition was made to smoke them out. A general rush then ensued, and for a moment it seemed possible that the brig might be retaken. The mutineers, however, succeeded at last in closing the forecabin effectually before more than six of their opponents could get up. These six, finding themselves so greatly outnumbered and without arms, submitted after a brief struggle. The mate gave them fair words—no doubt with a view of inducing those below to yield, for they had no difficulty in hearing all that was said on deck. The result proved his sagacity, no less than his diabolical villainy. All in the forecabin presently signified their intention of submitting, and, ascending

one by one, were pinioned and thrown on their backs together with the first six—there being in all, of the crew who were not concerned in the mutiny, twenty-seven.

A scene of the most horrible butchery ensued. The bound seamen were dragged to the gangway. Here the cook stood with an axe, striking each victim on the head as he was forced over the side of the vessel by the other mutineers. In this manner twenty-two perished, and Augustus had given himself up for lost, expecting every moment his own turn to come next. But it seemed that the villains were now either weary, or in some measure disgusted with their bloody labour; for the four remaining prisoners, together with my friend, who had been thrown on the deck with the rest, were respited while the mate sent below for rum, and the whole murderous party held a drunken carouse, which lasted until sunset. They now fell to disputing in regard to the fate of the survivors, who lay not more than four paces off, and could distinguish every word said. Upon some of the mutineers the liquor appeared to have a softening effect, for several voices were heard in favour of releasing the captives altogether, on condition of joining the mutiny and sharing the profits. The black cook, however (who in all respects was a perfect demon, and who seemed to exert as much influence, if not more, than the mate himself), would listen to no proposition of the kind, and rose repeatedly for the purpose of resuming his work at the gangway. Fortunately, he was so far overcome by intoxication as to be easily restrained by the less blood-thirsty of the party, among whom was a line-manager, who went by the name of Dirk Peters. This man was the son of an Indian squaw of the tribe of Upsarokas, who live among the fastnesses of the Black Hills near the source of the Missouri. His father was a fur-trader, I believe, or at least connected in some manner with the Indian trading-posts on Lewis River. Peters himself was one of the most purely ferocious-looking men I ever beheld. He was short in stature—not more than four feet eight inches high—but his limbs were of the most Herculean mould. His hands especially were so enormously thick and broad as hardly to retain a human shape. His arms, as well as legs, were *bowed* in the most singular manner, and appeared to possess no flexibility whatever. His head was equally deformed, being of immense size, with an indentation on the crown (like that on the head of most negroes), and entirely bald. To conceal this latter deficiency, which did not proceed from old age, he usually wore a wig formed of any hair-like material which presented itself—occasionally the skin of a Spanish dog or American grizzly bear. At the time spoken of he had on a portion of one of these bearskins; and it added no little to the natural ferocity of his countenance, which betook of the Upsaroka character. The mouth extended nearly from ear to ear, the lips were thin, and seemed, like some other portions of his frame, to be devoid of natural pliancy, so that the

ruling expression never varied under the influence of any emotion whatever. This ruling expression may be conceived when it is considered that the teeth were exceedingly long and protruding, and never even partially covered, in any instance, by the lips. To pass this man with a casual glance, one might imagine him to be convulsed with laughter, but a second look would induce a shuddering acknowledgment, that if such an expression were indicative of merriment, the merriment must be that of a demon. Of this singular being many anecdotes were prevalent among the seafaring men of Nantucket. These anecdotes went to prove his prodigious strength when under excitement, and some of them had given rise to a doubt of his sanity. But on board the *Grampus*, it seems, he was regarded at the time of the mutiny with feelings more of derision than of anything else. I have been thus particular in speaking of Dirk Peters, because, ferocious as he appeared, he proved the main instrument in preserving the life of Augustus, and because I shall have frequent occasion to mention him hereafter in the course of my narrative—a narrative, let me here say, which, in its latter portions, will be found to include incidents of a nature so entirely out of the range of human experience, and for this reason so far beyond the limits of human credulity, that I proceed in utter hopelessness of obtaining credence for all that I shall tell, yet confidently trusting in time and progressing science to verify some of the most important and most improbable of my statements.

After much indecision and two or three violent quarrels, it was determined at last that all the prisoners (with the exception of Augustus, whom Peters insisted in a jocular manner upon keeping as his clerk) should be set adrift in one of the smallest whaleboats. The mate went down into the cabin to see if Captain Barnard was still living—for, it will be remembered, he was left below when the mutineers came up. Presently the two made their appearance, the captain pale as death, but somewhat recovered from the effects of his wound. He spoke to the men in a voice hardly articulate, entreated them not to set him adrift, but to return to their duty, and promising to land them wherever they chose, and to take no steps for bringing them to justice. He might as well have spoken to the winds. Two of the ruffians seized him by the arms and hurled him over the brig's side into the boat, which had been lowered while the mate went below. The four men who were lying on the deck were then untied and ordered to follow, which they did without attempting any resistance—Augustus being still left in his painful position, although he struggled and prayed only for the poor satisfaction of being permitted to bid his father farewell. A handful of sea-biscuit and a jug of water were now handed down; but neither mast, sail, oar, nor compass. The boat was towed astern for a few minutes, during which the mutineers held another consultation—it was then finally cut adrift. By this time night had come on—there were neither moon nor stars visible—

and a short and ugly sea was running, although there was no great deal of wind. The boat was instantly out of sight, and little hope could be entertained for the unfortunate sufferers who were in it. This event happened, however, in latitude $35^{\circ} 30'$ north, longitude $61^{\circ} 20'$ west, and consequently at no very great distance from the Bermuda Islands. Augustus therefore endeavoured to console himself with the idea that the boat might either succeed in reaching the land, or come sufficiently near to be fallen in with by vessels off the coast.

All sail was now put upon the brig, and she continued her original course to the southwest, the mutineers being bent upon some piratical expedition, in which, from all that could be understood, a ship was to be intercepted on her way from the Cape Verd Islands to Porto Rico. No attention was paid to Augustus, who was untied and suffered to go about anywhere forward of the cabin companion-way. Dirk Peters treated him with some degree of kindness, and on one occasion saved him from the brutality of the cook. His situation was still one of the most precarious, as the men were continually intoxicated, and there was no relying upon their continued good-humour or carelessness in regard to himself. His anxiety on my account he represented, however, as the most distressing result of his condition; and, indeed, I had never reason to doubt the sincerity of his friendship. More than once he had resolved to acquaint the mutineers with the secret of my being on board, but was restrained from so doing, partly through recollection of the atrocities he had already beheld, and partly through a hope of being able soon to bring me relief. For the latter purpose he was constantly on the watch; but, in spite of the most constant vigilance, three days elapsed after the boat was cut adrift before any chance occurred. At length, on the night of the third day, there came on a heavy blow from the eastward, and all hands were called up to take in sail. During the confusion which ensued, he made his way below unobserved, and into the stateroom. What was his grief and horror in discovering that the latter had been rendered a place of deposit for a variety of sea-stores and ship-furniture, and that several fathoms of chain-cable, which had been stowed away beneath the companion-ladder, had been dragged thence to make room for a chest, and were now lying immediately upon the trap! To remove it without discovery was impossible, and he returned on deck as quickly as he could. As he came up the mate seized him by the throat, and demanding what he had been doing in the cabin, was about flinging him over the larboard bulwark, when his life was again preserved through the interference of Dirk Peters. August was now put in handcuffs (of which there were several pairs on board), and his feet lashed tightly together. He was then taken into the steerage, and thrown into a lower berth next to the fore-castle bulkheads, with the assurance that he should never put his foot on deck again "until the brig was no

longer a brig." This was the expression of the cook, who threw him into the berth—it is hardly possible to say what precise meaning was intended by the phrase. The whole affair, however, proved the ultimate means of my relief, as will presently appear.

Chapter V

For some minutes after the cook had left the forecabin, Augustus abandoned himself to despair, never hoping to leave the berth alive. He now came to the resolution of acquainting the first of the men who should come down with my situation, thinking it better to let me take my chance with the mutineers than perish of thirst in the hold—for it had been ten days since I was first imprisoned, and my jug of water was not a plentiful supply even for four. As he was thinking on this subject, the idea came all at once into his head that it might be possible to communicate with me by the way of the main hold. In any other circumstance, the difficulty and hazard of the undertaking would have prevented him from attempting it; but now he had, at all events, little prospect of life, and consequently little to lose—he bent his whole mind, therefore, upon the task.

His handcuffs were the first consideration. At first he saw no method of removing them, and feared that he should thus be baffled in the very outset; but, upon a closer scrutiny, he discovered that the irons could be slipped off and on at pleasure with very little effort or inconvenience, merely by squeezing his hands through them—this species of manacle being altogether ineffectual in confining young persons, in whom the smaller bones readily yield to pressure. He now untied his feet, and, leaving the cord in such a manner that it could easily be readjusted in the event of any person's coming down, proceeded to examine the bulkhead where it joined the berth. The partition here was of soft pine board, an inch thick, and he saw that he should have little trouble in cutting his way through. A voice was now heard at the forecabin companion-way, and he had just time to put his right hand into its handcuff (the left had not been removed), and to draw the rope in a slipknot around his ankle, when Dirk Peters came below, followed by Tiger, who immediately leaped into the berth and lay down. The dog had been brought on board by Augustus, who knew my attachment to the animal, and thought it would give me pleasure to have him with me during the voyage. He went up to our house for him immediately after first taking me into the hold, but did not think of mentioning the circumstance upon his bringing the watch. Since the mutiny, Augustus had not seen him before his appearance with Dirk Peters, and had given him up for lost, supposing him to have been thrown overboard by some of the malignant villains belonging

to the mate's gang. It appeared afterward that he had crawled into a hole beneath a whaleboat, from which, not having room to turn round, he could not extricate himself. Peters at last let him out, and with a species of good feeling which my friend knew well how to appreciate, had now brought him to him in the forecabin as a companion, leaving at the same time some salt junk and potatoes, with a can of water; he then went on deck, promising to come down with something more to eat on the next day.

When he had gone, Augustus freed both hands from the manacles and unfastened his feet. He then turned down the head of the mattress on which he had been lying, and with his penknife (for the ruffians had not thought it worthwhile to search him) commenced cutting vigorously across one of the partition planks, as closely as possible to the floor of the berth. He chose to cut here because, if suddenly interrupted, he would be able to conceal what had been done by letting the head of the mattress fall into its proper position. For the remainder of the day, however, no disturbance occurred, and by night he had completely divided the plank. It should here be observed, that none of the crew occupied the forecabin as a sleeping-place, living altogether in the cabin since the mutiny, drinking the wines, and feasting on the sea-stores of Captain Barnard, and giving no more heed than was absolutely necessary to the navigation of the brig. These circumstances proved fortunate both for myself and Augustus; for, had matters been otherwise, he would have found it impossible to reach me. As it was, he proceeded with confidence in his design. It was near daybreak, however, before he completed the second division of the board (which was about a foot above the first cut), thus making an aperture quite large enough to admit his passage through with facility to the main orlop deck. Having got here, he made his way with but little trouble to the lower main hatch, although in so doing he had to scramble over tiers of oil-casks piled nearly as high as the upper deck, there being barely room enough left for his body. Upon reaching the hatch, he found that Tiger had followed him below, squeezing between two rows of the casks. It was now too late, however, to attempt getting to me before dawn, as the chief difficulty lay in passing through the close stowage in the lower hold. He therefore resolved to return, and wait till the next night. With this design he proceeded to loosen the hatch, so that he might have as little detention as possible when he should come again. No sooner had he loosened it than Tiger sprang eagerly to the small opening produced, snuffed for a moment, and then uttered a long whine, scratching at the same time, as if anxious to remove the covering with his paws. There could be no doubt, from his behaviour, that he was aware of my being in the hold, and Augustus thought it possible that he would be able to get to me if he put him down. He now hit upon the expedient of sending the note, as it was especially desirable that I should make no attempt at forcing my way out,

at least under existing circumstances, and there could be no certainty of his getting to me himself on the morrow as he intended. After events proved how fortunate it was that the idea occurred to him as it did: for, had it not been for the receipt of the note, I should undoubtedly have fallen upon some plan, however desperate, of alarming the crew, and both our lives would most probably have been sacrificed in consequence.

Having concluded to write, the difficulty was now to procure the materials for so doing. An old toothpick was soon made into a pen; and this by means of feeling altogether, for the between-decks were as dark as pitch. Paper enough was obtained from the back of a letter—a duplicate of the forged letter from Mr. Ross. This had been the original draught; but the handwriting not being sufficiently well imitated, Augustus had written another, thrusting the first, by good fortune, into his coat-pocket, where it was now most opportunely discovered. Ink alone was thus wanting, and a substitute was immediately found for this by means of a slight incision with the penknife on the back of a finger just above the nail—a copious flow of blood ensuing, as usual from wounds in that vicinity. The note was now written, as well as it could be in the dark and under the circumstances. It briefly explained that a mutiny had taken place; that Captain Barnard was set adrift; and that I might expect immediate relief as far as provisions were concerned, but must not venture upon making any disturbance. It concluded with these words: “I have scrawled this with blood—your life depends upon lying close.”

The slip of paper being tied upon the dog, he was now put down the hatchway, and Augustus made the best of his way back to the fore-castle, where he found no reason to believe that any of the crew had been in his absence. To conceal the hole in the partition, he drove his knife in just above it, and hung up a pea-jacket which he found in the berth. His handcuffs were then replaced, and also the rope around his ankles.

These arrangements were scarcely completed when Dirk Peters came below, very drunk, but in excellent humour, and bringing with him my friend's allowance of provision for the day. This consisted of a dozen large Irish potatoes roasted, and a pitcher of water. He sat for some time on a chest by the berth, and talked freely about the mate, and the general concerns of the brig. His demeanour was exceedingly capricious and even grotesque. At one time Augustus was much alarmed by his odd conduct. At last, however, he went on deck, muttering a promise to bring his prisoner a good dinner on the morrow. During the day two of the crew (harpooners) came down, accompanied by the cook, all three in nearly the last stage of intoxication. Like Peters, they made no scruple of talking unreservedly about their plans. It appeared that they were much divided among themselves as to their ultimate course, agreeing on no point except the attack on

the ship from the Cape Verd Islands, with which they were in hourly expectation of meeting. As far as could be ascertained, the mutiny had not been brought about altogether for the sake of booty; a private pique of the chief mate's against Captain Barnard having been the main instigation. There now seemed to be two principal factions among the crew—one headed by the mate, the other by the cook. The former party were for seizing the first suitable vessel which should present itself, and equipping it at some of the West India Islands for a piratical cruise. The latter division, however, which was the stronger, and included Dirk Peters among its partisans, were bent upon pursuing the course originally laid out for the brig into the South Pacific; there either to take whale, or act otherwise, as circumstances should suggest. The representations of Peters, who had frequently visited these regions, had great weight, apparently, with the mutineers, wavering as they were between half-engendered notions of profit and pleasure. He dwelt on the world of novelty and amusement to be found among the innumerable islands of the Pacific, on the perfect security and freedom from all restraint to be enjoyed, but, more particularly, on the deliciousness of the climate, on the abundant means of good living, and on the voluptuous beauty of the women. As yet, nothing had been absolutely determined upon; but the pictures of the hybrid line-manager were taking strong hold upon the ardent imaginations of the seamen, and there was every probability that his intentions would be finally carried into effect.

The three men went away in about an hour, and no one else entered the fore-castle all day. Augustus lay quiet until nearly night. He then freed himself from the rope and irons, and prepared for his attempt. A bottle was found in one of the berths, and this he filled with water from the pitcher left by Peters, storing his pockets at the same time with cold potatoes. To his great joy he also came across a lantern, with a small piece of tallow candle in it. This he could light at any moment, as he had in his possession a box of phosphorus matches. When it was quite dark, he got through the hole in the bulkhead, having taken the precaution to arrange the bedclothes in the berth so as to convey the idea of a person covered up. When through, he hung up the pea-jacket on his knife, as before, to conceal the aperture—this manoeuvre being easily effected, as he did not readjust the piece of plank taken out until afterward. He was now on the main orlop deck, and proceeded to make his way, as before, between the upper deck and the oil-casks to the main hatchway. Having reached this, he lit the piece of candle and descended, groping with extreme difficulty among the compact stowage of the hold. In a few moments he became alarmed at the insufferable stench and the closeness of the atmosphere. He could not think it possible that I had survived my confinement for so long a period breathing so oppressive an air. He called my name repeatedly, but I made him no reply, and his

apprehension seemed thus to be confirmed. The brig was rolling violently, and there was so much noise in consequence, that it was useless to listen for any weak sound, such as those of my breathing or snoring. He threw open the lantern, and held it as high as possible, whenever an opportunity occurred, in order that, by observing the light, I might, if alive, be aware that succour was approaching. Still nothing was heard from me, and the supposition of my death began to assume the character of certainty. He determined, nevertheless, to force a passage, if possible, to the box, and at least ascertain beyond a doubt the truth of his surmises. He pushed on for some time in a most pitiable state of anxiety, until, at length, he found the pathway utterly blocked up, and that there was no possibility of making any farther way by the course in which he had set out. Overcome now by his feelings, he threw himself among the lumber in despair, and wept like a child. It was at this period that he heard the crash occasioned by the bottle which I had thrown down. Fortunate, indeed, was it that the incident occurred—for upon this incident, trivial as it appears, the thread of my destiny depended. Many years elapsed, however, before I was aware of this fact. A natural shame and regret for his weakness and indecision prevented Augustus from confiding to me at once what a more intimate and unreserved communion afterward induced him to reveal. Upon finding his further progress in the hold impeded by obstacles which he could not overcome, he had resolved to abandon his attempt at reaching me, and return at once to the fore-castle. Before condemning him entirely on this head, the harassing circumstances which embarrassed him should be taken into consideration. The night was fast wearing away, and his absence from the fore-castle might be discovered; and, indeed, would necessarily be so, if he should fail to get back to the berth by daybreak. His candle was expiring in the socket, and there would be the greatest difficulty in retracing his way to the hatchway in the dark. It must be allowed, too, that he had every good reason to believe me dead; in which event no benefit could result to me from his reaching the box, and a world of danger would be encountered to no purpose by himself. He had repeatedly called, and I had made him no answer. I had been now eleven days and nights with no more water than that contained in the jug which he had left with me, a supply which it was not at all probable I had hoarded in the beginning of my confinement, as I had had every cause to expect a speedy release. The atmosphere of the hold, too, must have appeared to him, coming from the comparatively open air of the steerage, of a nature absolutely poisonous, and by far more intolerable than it had seemed to me upon my first taking up my quarters in the box—the hatchways at that time having been constantly open for many months previous. Add to these considerations that of the scene of bloodshed and terror so lately witnessed by my friend; his confinement, privations, and nar-

row escapes from death; together with the frail and equivocal tenure by which he still existed—circumstances all so well calculated to prostrate every energy of mind—and the reader will be easily brought, as I have been, to regard his apparent falling off in friendship and in faith with sentiments rather of sorrow than of anger.

The crash of the bottle was distinctly heard, yet Augustus was not sure that it proceeded from the hold. The doubt, however, was sufficient inducement to persevere. He clambered up nearly to the orlop deck by means of the stowage, and then watching for a lull in the pitchings of the vessel, he called out to me in as loud a tone as he could command—regardless, for the moment, of the danger of being overheard by the crew. It will be remembered that on this occasion the voice reached me, but I was so entirely overcome by violent agitation as to be incapable of reply. Confident, now, that his worst apprehensions were well founded, he descended, with a view of getting back to the forecabin without loss of time. In his haste some small boxes were thrown down, the noise occasioned by which I heard, as will be recollected. He had made considerable progress on his return when the fall of the knife again caused him to hesitate. He retraced his steps immediately, and, clambering up the stowage a second time, called out my name, loudly as before, having watched for a lull. This time I found voice to answer. Overjoyed at discovering me to be still alive, he now resolved to brave every difficulty and danger in reaching me. Having extricated himself as quickly as possible from the labyrinth of lumber by which he was hemmed in, he at length struck into an opening which promised better, and finally, after a series of struggles, arrived at the box in a state of utter exhaustion.

Chapter VI

The leading particulars of this narration were all that Augustus communicated to me while we remained near the box. It was not until afterward that he entered fully into all the details. He was apprehensive of being missed, and I was

wild with impatience to leave my detested place of confinement. We resolved to make our way at once to the hole in the bulkhead, near which I was to remain for the present, while he went through to reconnoitre. To leave Tiger in the box was what neither of us could endure to think of; yet, how to act otherwise was the question. He now seemed to be perfectly quiet, and we could not even distinguish the sound of his breathing upon applying our ears closely to the box. I was convinced that he was dead, and determined to open the door. We found him lying at full length, apparently in a deep stupor, yet still alive. No time was to be lost, yet I could not

bring myself to abandon an animal who had now been twice instrumental in saving my life, without some attempt at preserving him. We therefore dragged him along with us as well as we could, although with the greatest difficulty and fatigue; Augustus, during part of the time, being forced to clamber over the impediments in our way with the huge dog in his arms—a feat to which the feebleness of my frame rendered me totally inadequate. At length we succeeded in reaching the hole, when Augustus got through, and Tiger was pushed in afterward. All was found to be safe, and we did not fail to return sincere thanks to God for our deliverance from the imminent danger we had escaped. For the present it was agreed that I should remain near the opening, through which my companion could readily supply me with a part of his daily provision, and where I could have the advantages of breathing an atmosphere comparatively pure.

In explanation of some portions of this narrative wherein I have spoken of the stowage of the brig, and which may appear ambiguous to some of my readers who may have seen a proper or regular stowage, I must here state that the manner in which this most important duty had been performed on board the *Grampus* was a most shameful piece of neglect on the part of Captain Barnard, who was by no means as careful or as experienced a seaman as the hazardous nature of the service on which he was employed would seem necessarily to demand. A proper stowage cannot be accomplished in a careless manner, and many most disastrous accidents, even within the limits of my own experience, have arisen from neglect or ignorance in this particular. Coasting vessels, in the frequent hurry and bustle attendant upon taking in or discharging cargo, are the most liable to mishap from the want of a proper attention to stowage. The great point is to allow no possibility of the cargo or ballast's shifting position even in the most violent rollings of the vessel. With this end, great attention must be paid, not only to the bulk taken in, but to the nature of the bulk, and whether there be a full or only a partial cargo. In most kinds of freight the stowage is accomplished by means of a screw. Thus, in a load of tobacco or flour, the whole is screwed so tightly into the hold of the vessel that the barrels or hogsheads upon discharging are found to be completely flattened, and take some time to regain their original shape. This screwing, however, is resorted to principally with a view of obtaining more room in the hold; for in a *full* load of any such commodities as flour or tobacco, there can be no danger of any shifting whatever, at least none from which inconvenience can result. There have been instances, indeed, where this method of screwing has resulted in the most lamentable consequences, arising from a cause altogether distinct from the danger attendant upon a shifting of cargo. A load of cotton, for example, tightly screwed while in certain conditions, has been known, through the expansion of its bulk, to rend a vessel asunder at sea. There can be no doubt,

either, that the same result would ensue in the case of tobacco, while undergoing its usual course of fermentation, were it not for the interstices consequent upon the rotundity of the hogsheds.

It is when a partial cargo is received that danger is chiefly to be apprehended from shifting, and that precautions should be always taken to guard against such misfortune. Only those who have encountered a violent gale of wind, or, rather, who have experienced the rolling of a vessel in a sudden calm after the gale, can form an idea of the tremendous force of the plunges, and of the consequent terrible impetus given to all loose articles in the vessel. It is then that the necessity of a cautious stowage, when there is a partial cargo, becomes obvious. When lying to (especially with a small head sail), a vessel which is not properly modelled in the bows is frequently thrown upon her beam-ends; this occurring even every fifteen or twenty minutes upon an average, yet without any serious consequences resulting, *provided there be a proper stowage*. If this, however, has not been strictly attended to, in the first of these heavy lurches the whole of the cargo tumbles over to the side of the vessel which lies upon the water, and, being thus prevented from regaining her equilibrium, as she would otherwise necessarily do, she is certain to fill in a few seconds and go down. It is not too much to say that at least one half of the instances in which vessels have foundered in heavy gales at sea may be attributed to a shifting of cargo or of ballast.

When a partial cargo of any kind is taken on board, the whole, after being first stowed as compactly as may be, should be covered with a layer of stout shifting-boards, extending completely across the vessel. Upon these boards strong temporary stanchions should be erected, reaching to the timbers above, and thus securing everything in its place. In cargoes consisting of grain, or any similar matter, additional precautions are requisite. A hold filled entirely with grain upon leaving port will be found not more than three fourths full upon reaching its destination—this, too, although the freight, when measured bushel by bushel by the consignee, will overrun by a vast deal (on account of the swelling of the grain) the quantity consigned. This result is occasioned by settling during the voyage, and is the more perceptible in proportion to the roughness of the weather experienced. If grain loosely thrown in a vessel, then, is ever so well secured by shifting-boards and stanchions, it will be liable to shift in a long passage so greatly as to bring about the most distressing calamities. To prevent these, every method should be employed before leaving port to *settle* the cargo as much as possible; and for this there are many contrivances, among which may be mentioned the driving of wedges into the grain. Even after all this is done, and unusual pains taken to secure the shifting-boards, no seaman who knows what he is about will feel altogether secure in a gale of any violence with a cargo of grain on board, and, least of all, with a partial cargo. Yet there are

hundreds of our coasting vessels, and, it is likely, many more from the ports of Europe, which sail daily with partial cargoes even of the most dangerous species, and without any precautions whatever. The wonder is that no more accidents occur than do actually happen. A lamentable instance of this heedlessness occurred to my knowledge in the case of Captain Joel Rice of the schooner *Firefly*, which sailed from Richmond, Virginia, to Madeira, with a cargo of corn, in the year 1825. The captain had gone many voyages without serious accident, although he was in the habit of paying no attention whatever to his stowage, more than to secure it in the ordinary manner. He had never before sailed with a cargo of grain, and on this occasion had the corn thrown on board loosely, when it did not much more than half fill the vessel. For the first portion of the voyage he met with nothing more than light breezes; but when within a day's sail of Madeira there came on a strong gale from the N.N.E. which forced him to lie to. He brought the schooner to the wind under a double-reefed foresail alone, when she rode as well as any vessel could be expected to do, and shipped not a drop of water. Towards night the gale somewhat abated, and she rolled with more unsteadiness than before, but still did very well, until a heavy lurch threw her upon her beam-ends to starboard. The corn was then heard to shift bodily, the force of the movement bursting open the main hatchway. The vessel went down like a shot. This happened within hail of a small sloop from Madeira, which picked up one of the crew (the only person saved), and which rode out the gale in perfect security, as indeed a jollyboat might have done under proper management.

The stowage on board the *Grampus* was most clumsily done, if stowage that could be called which was little better than a promiscuous huddling together of oil-casks* and ship-furniture. I have already spoken of the condition of articles in the hold. On the orlop deck there was space enough for my body (as I have stated) between the oil-casks and the upper deck; a space was left open around the main hatchway; and several other large spaces were left in the stowage. Near the hole cut through the bulkhead by Augustus there was room enough for an entire cask, and in this space I found myself comfortably situated for the present.

By the time my friend had got safely into the berth, and readjusted his handcuffs and the rope, it was broad daylight. We had made a narrow escape indeed; for scarcely had he arranged all matters, when the mate came below, with Dirk Peters and the cook. They talked for some time about the vessel from the Cape Verds, and seemed to be excessively anxious for her appearance. At length the cook came to the berth in which Augustus was lying and seated himself in it near the head. I could see and hear everything

*Whaling vessels are usually fitted with iron oil-tanks—why the *Grampus* was not I have never been able to ascertain.

from my hiding-place, for the piece cut out had not been put back, and I was in momentary expectation that the negro would fall against the pea-jacket, which was hung up to conceal the aperture, in which case all would have been discovered, and our lives would, no doubt, have been instantly sacrificed. Our good fortune prevailed, however; and although he frequently touched it as the vessel rolled, he never pressed against it sufficiently to bring about a discovery. The bottom of the jacket had been carefully fastened to the bulkhead, so that the hole might not be seen by its swinging to one side. All this time Tiger was lying in the foot of the berth, and appeared to have recovered in some measure his faculties, for I could see him occasionally open his eyes and draw a long breath.

After a few minutes the mate and cook went above, leaving Dirk Peters behind, who, as soon as they were gone, came and sat himself down in the place just occupied by the mate. He began to talk very sociably with Augustus, and we could now see that the greater part of his apparent intoxication, while the two others were with him, was a feint. He answered all my companion's questions with perfect freedom; told him that he had no doubt of his father's having been picked up, as there were no less than five sails in sight just before sundown on the day he was cut adrift; and used other language of a consolatory nature, which occasioned me no less surprise than pleasure. Indeed, I began to entertain hopes, that through the instrumentality of Peters we might be finally enabled to regain possession of the brig, and this idea I mentioned to Augustus as soon as I found an opportunity. He thought the matter possible, but urged the necessity of the greatest caution in making the attempt, as the conduct of the hybrid appeared to be instigated by the most arbitrary caprice alone; and, indeed, it was difficult to say if he was at any moment of sound mind. Peters went upon deck in about an hour, and did not return again until noon, when he brought Augustus a plentiful supply of junk beef and pudding. Of this, when we were left alone, I partook heartily, without returning through the hole. No one else came down into the fore-castle during the day, and at night I got into Augustus's berth, where I slept soundly and sweetly until nearly day-break, when he awakened me upon hearing a stir upon deck, and I regained my hiding-place as quickly as possible. When the day was fully broke, we found that Tiger had recovered his strength almost entirely, and gave no indications of hydrophobia, drinking a little water that was offered him with great apparent eagerness. During the day he regained all his former vigour and appetite. His strange conduct had been brought on, no doubt, by the deleterious quality of the air of the hold, and had no connexion with canine madness. I could not sufficiently rejoice that I had persisted in bringing him with me from the box. This day was the thirtieth of June, and the thirteenth since the *Grampus* made sail from Nantucket.

On the second of July the mate came below, drunk as usual, and in an excessively good-humour. He came to Augustus's berth, and, giving him a slap on the back, asked him if he thought he could behave himself if he let him loose, and whether he would promise not to be going into the cabin again. To this, of course, my friend answered in the affirmative when the ruffian set him at liberty, after making him drink from a flask of rum which he drew from his coatpocket. Both now went on deck, and I did not see Augustus for about three hours. He then came below with the good news that he had obtained permission to go about the brig as he pleased anywhere forward of the mainmast, and that he had been ordered to sleep, as usual, in the forecabin. He brought me, too, a good dinner, and a plentiful supply of water. The brig was still cruising for the vessel from the Cape Verds, and a sail was now in sight which was thought to be the one in question. As the events of the ensuing eight days were of little importance, and had no direct bearing upon the main incidents of my narrative, I will here throw them into the form of a journal, as I do not wish to omit them altogether.

July 3. Augustus furnished me with three blankets, with which I contrived a comfortable bed in my hiding-place. No one came below, except my companion, during the day. Tiger took his station in the berth just by the aperture, and slept heavily, as if not yet entirely recovered from the effects of his sickness. Towards night a flow of wind struck the brig before sail could be taken in, and very nearly capsized her. The puff died away immediately, however, and no damage was done beyond the splitting of the foretopsail. Dirk Peters treated Augustus all this day with great kindness, and entered into a long conversation with him respecting the Pacific Ocean, and the islands he had visited in that region. He asked him whether he would not like to go with the mutineers on a kind of exploring and pleasure voyage in those quarters, and said that the men were gradually coming over to the mate's views. To this Augustus thought it best to reply that he would be glad to go on such an adventure, since nothing better could be done, and that anything was preferable to a piratical life.

July 4th. The vessel in sight proved to be a small brig from Liverpool, and was allowed to pass unmolested. Augustus spent most of his time on deck, with a view of obtaining all the information in his power respecting the intentions of the mutineers. They had frequent and violent quarrels among themselves, in one of which a harpooner, Jim Bonner, was thrown overboard. The party of the mate was gaining ground. Jim Bonner belonged to the cook's gang, of which Peters was a partisan.

July 5th. About daybreak there came on a stiff breeze from the west, which at noon freshened into a gale, so that the brig could carry nothing more than her trysail and foresail. In taking in the foretopsail, Simms, one of the common hands, and belonging also to the cook's gang, fell overboard,

being very much in liquor, and was drowned, no attempt being made to save him. The whole number of persons on board was now thirteen, to wit: Dirk Peters; Seymour, the black cook; — Jones; — Greely; Hartman Rogers; and William Allen, of the cook's party; the mate, whose name I never learned; Absalom Hicks; — Wilson; John Hunt; and Richard Parker, of the mate's party—besides Augustus and myself.

July 6th. The gale lasted all this day, blowing in heavy squalls, accompanied with rain. The brig took in a good deal of water through her seams, and one of the pumps was kept continually going, Augustus being forced to take his turn. Just at twilight a large ship passed close by us, without having been discovered until within hail. This ship was supposed to be the one for which the mutineers were on the look-out. The mate hailed her, but the reply was drowned in the roaring of the gale. At eleven, a sea was shipped amidships, which tore away a great portion of the larboard bulwarks, and did some other slight damage. Towards morning the weather moderated, and at sunrise there was very little wind.

July 7th. There was a heavy swell running all this day, during which the brig, being tight, rolled excessively, and many articles broke loose in the hold, as I could hear distinctly from my hiding-place. I suffered a great deal from sea-sickness. Peters had a long conversation this day with Augustus, and told him that two of his gang, Greely and Allen, had gone over to the mate, and were resolved to turn pirates. He put several questions to Augustus which he did not then exactly understand. During a part of this evening the leak gained upon the vessel; and little could be done to remedy it, as it was occasioned by the brig's straining, and taking in the water through her seams. A sail was thrummed, and got under the bows, which aided us in some measure, so that we began to gain upon the leak.

July 8th. A light breeze sprung up at sunrise from the eastward, when the mate headed the brig to the southwest, with the intention of making some of the West India islands, in pursuance of his piratical designs. No opposition was made by Peters or the cook; at least none in the hearing of Augustus. All idea of taking the vessel from the Cape Verds was abandoned. The leak was now easily kept under by one pump going every three quarters of an hour. The sail was drawn from beneath the bows. Spoke two small schooners during the day.

July 9th. Fine weather. All hands employed in repairing bulwarks. Peters had again a long conversation with Augustus, and spoke more plainly than he had done heretofore. He said nothing should induce him to come into the mate's views, and even hinted his intention of taking the brig out of his hands. He asked my friend if he could depend upon his aid in such case, to which Augustus said, "Yes" without hesitation. Peters then said he would sound the others of his party upon the subject, and went away.

During the remainder of the day Augustus had no opportunity of speaking with him privately.

Chapter VII

July 10. Spoke a brig from Rio, bound to Norfolk. Weather hazy, with a light baffling wind from the eastward. To-day Hartman Rogers died, having been attacked on the eighth with spasms after drinking a glass of grog. This man was of the cook's party, and one upon whom Peters placed his main reliance. He told Augustus that he believed the mate had poisoned him, and that he expected, if he did not be on the look-out, his own turn would come shortly. There were now only himself, Jones, and the cook belonging to his own gang—on the other side there were five. He had spoken to Jones about taking the command from the mate; but the project having been coolly received, he had been deterred from pressing the matter any further, or from saying anything to the cook. It was well, as it happened, that he was so prudent, for in the afternoon the cook expressed his determination of siding with the mate, and went over formally to that party; while Jones took an opportunity of quarrelling with Peters, and hinted that he would let the mate know of the plan in agitation. There was now, evidently, no time to be lost, and Peters expressed his determination of attempting to take the vessel at all hazards, provided Augustus would lend him his aid. My friend at once assured him of his willingness to enter into any plan for that purpose, and, thinking the opportunity a favourable one, made known the fact of my being on board. At this the hybrid was not more astonished than delighted, as he had no reliance whatever upon Jones, whom he already considered as belonging to the party of the mate. They went below immediately, when Augustus called to me by name, and Peters and myself were soon made acquainted. It was agreed that we should attempt to retake the vessel upon the first good opportunity, leaving Jones altogether out of our councils. In the event of success we were to run the brig into the first port that offered, and deliver her up. The desertion of his party had frustrated Peters's design of going into the Pacific—an adventure which could not be accomplished without a crew, and he depended upon either getting acquitted upon trial on the score of insanity (which he solemnly averred had actuated him in lending his aid to the mutiny), or upon obtaining a pardon, if found guilty, through the representations of Augustus and myself. Our deliberations were interrupted for the present by the cry of "All hands take in sail," and Peters and Augustus ran up on deck.

As usual, the crew were nearly all drunk; and, before sail could be properly taken in, a violent squall laid the brig on her beam-ends. By keeping

her away, however, she righted, having shipped a good deal of water. Scarcely was everything secure, when another squall took the vessel, and immediately afterward another—no damage being done. There was every appearance of a gale of wind, which, indeed, shortly came on, with great fury, from the northward and westward. All was made as snug as possible, and we laid to, as usual, under a close-reefed foresail. As night drew on, the wind increased in violence, with a remarkably heavy sea. Peters now came into the forecabin with Augustus, and we resumed our deliberations.

We agreed that no opportunity could be more favourable than the present for carrying our design into effect, as an attempt at such a moment would never be anticipated. As the brig was snugly laid to, there would be no necessity of manoeuvring her until good weather, when, if we succeeded in our attempt, we might liberate one, or perhaps two of the men, to aid us in taking her into port. The main difficulty was the great disproportion in our forces. There were only three of us, and in the cabin there were nine. All the arms on board, too, were in their possession, with the exception of a pair of small pistols which Peters had concealed about his person, and the large seaman's knife which he always wore in the waistband of his pantaloons. From certain indications, too, such, for example, as there being no such thing as an axe or a handspike lying in their customary places, we began to fear that the mate had his suspicions, at least in regard to Peters, and that he would let slip no opportunity of getting rid of him. It was clear, indeed, that what we should determine to do could not be done too soon. Still the odds were too much against us to allow of our proceeding without the greatest caution.

Peters proposed that he should go up on deck, and enter into conversation with the watch (Allen), when he would be able to throw him into the sea without trouble, and without making any disturbance, by seizing a good opportunity; that Augustus and myself should then come up, and endeavour to provide ourselves with some kind of weapons from the deck; and that we should then make a rush together, and secure the companion-way before any opposition could be offered. I objected to this, because I could not believe that the mate (who was a cunning fellow in all matters which did not affect his superstitious prejudices) would suffer himself to be so easily entrapped. The very fact of there being a watch on deck at all was sufficient proof that he was upon the alert—it not being usual, except in vessels where discipline is most rigidly enforced, to station a watch on deck when a vessel is lying to in a gale of wind. As I address myself principally, if not altogether, to persons who have never been to sea, it may be as well to state the exact condition of a vessel under such circumstances. Lying to, or, in sea-parlance "laying to," is a measure resorted to for various purposes, and effected in various manners. In moderate weather, it is frequently done with a view of

merely bringing the vessel to a stand-still, to wait for another vessel, or any similar object. If the vessel which lies to is under full sail, the manoeuvre is usually accomplished by throwing round some portion of her sails so as to let the wind take them aback, when she becomes stationary. But we are now speaking of lying to in a gale of wind. This is done when the wind is ahead, and too violent to admit of carrying sail without danger of capsizing; and sometimes even when the wind is fair, but the sea too heavy for the vessel to be put before it. If a vessel be suffered to scud before the wind in a very heavy sea, much damage is usually done her by the shipping of water over her stem, and sometimes by the violent plunges she makes forward. This manoeuvre, then, is seldom resorted to in such case, unless through necessity. When the vessel is in a leaky condition, she is often put before the wind even in the heaviest seas; for, when lying to, her seams are sure to be greatly opened by her violent straining, and it is not so much the case when scudding. Often, too, it becomes necessary to scud a vessel, either when the blast is so exceedingly furious as to tear in pieces the sail which is employed with a view of bringing her head to the wind, or when, through the false modelling of the frame or other causes, this main object cannot be effected.

Vessels in a gale of wind are laid to in different manners, according to their peculiar construction. Some lie to best under a foresail, and this, I believe, is the sail most usually employed. Large square-rigged vessels have sails for the express purpose, called storm-staysails. But the jib is occasionally employed by itself—sometimes the jib and foresail, or a double-reefed foresail, and not unfrequently the after-sails, are made use of. Foretopsails are very often found to answer the purpose better than any other species of sail. The *Grampus* was generally laid to under a close-reefed foresail.

When a vessel is to be laid to, her head is brought up to the wind just so nearly as to fill the sail under which she lies when hauled flat aft, that is, when brought diagonally across the vessel. This being done, the bows point within a few degrees of the direction from which the wind issues, and the windward bow of course receives the shock of the waves. In this situation a good vessel will ride out a very heavy gale of wind without shipping a drop of water, and without any further attention being requisite on the part of the crew. The helm is usually lashed down, but this is altogether unnecessary (except on account of the noise it makes when loose), for the rudder has no effect upon the vessel when lying to. Indeed, the helm had far better be left loose than lashed very fast, for the rudder is apt to be torn off by heavy seas if there be no room for the helm to play. As long as the sail holds, a well-modelled vessel will maintain her situation, and ride every sea, as if instinct with life and reason. If the violence of the wind, however, should tear the sail into pieces (a feat which it requires a perfect hurricane to accomplish under ordinary circumstances), there is then imminent danger. The vessel

falls off from the wind, and, coming broadside to the sea, is completely at its mercy; the only resource in this case is to put her quickly before the wind, letting her scud until some other sail can be set. Some vessels will lie to under no sail whatever, but such are not to be trusted at sea.

But to return from this digression. It had never been customary with the mate to have any watch on deck when lying to in a gale of wind, and the fact that he had now one, coupled with the circumstance of the missing axes and handspikes, fully convinced us that the crew were too well on the watch to be taken by surprise in the manner Peters had suggested. Something, however, was to be done, and that with as little delay as practicable, for there could be no doubt that a suspicion having been once entertained against Peters, he would be sacrificed upon the earliest occasion, and one would certainly be either found or made upon the breaking of the gale.

Augustus now suggested that if Peters could contrive to remove, under any pretext, the piece of chain-cable which lay over the trap in the state-room, we might possibly be able to come upon them unawares by means of the hold; but a little reflection convinced us that the vessel rolled and pitched too violently for any attempt of that nature.

By good fortune I at length hit upon the idea of working upon the superstitious terrors and guilty conscience of the mate. It will be remembered that one of the crew, Hartman Rogers, had died during the morning, having been attacked two days before with spasms after drinking some spirits and water. Peters had expressed to us his opinion that this man had been poisoned by the mate, and for this belief he had reasons, so he said, which were incontrovertible, but which he could not be prevailed upon to explain to us—this wayward refusal being only in keeping with other points of his singular character. But whether or not he had any better grounds for suspecting the mate than we had ourselves, we were easily led to fall in with his suspicion, and determined to act accordingly.

Rogers had died about eleven in the forenoon, in violent convulsions; and the corpse presented in a few minutes after death one of the most horrid and loathsome spectacles I ever remember to have seen. The stomach was swollen immensely like that of a man who has been drowned and lain under water for many weeks. The hands were in the same condition, while the face was shrunken, shrivelled, and of a chalky whiteness, except where relieved by two or three glaring red splotches, like those occasioned by the erysipelas: one of these splotches extended diagonally across the face, completely covering up an eye as if with a band of red velvet. In this disgusting condition the body had been brought up from the cabin at noon to be thrown overboard, when the mate getting a glimpse of it (for he now saw it for the first time), and being either touched with remorse for his crime or struck with terror at so horrible a sight, ordered the men to sew the body

up in its hammock, and allow it the usual rites of sea-burial. Having given these directions he went below, as if to avoid any further sight of his victim. While preparations were making to obey his orders, the gale came on with great fury, and the design was abandoned for the present. The corpse, left to itself, was washed into the larboard scuppers, where it still lay at the time of which I speak, floundering about with the furious lurches of the brig.

Having arranged our plan, we set about putting it in execution as speedily as possible. Peters went upon deck, and, as he had anticipated, was immediately accosted by Allen, who appeared to be stationed more as a watch upon the fore-castle than for any other purpose. The fate of this villain, however, was speedily and silently decided; for Peters, approaching him in a careless manner, as if about to address him, seized him by the throat, and, before he could utter a single cry, tossed him over the bulwarks. He then called to us, and we came up. Our first precaution was to look about for something with which to arm ourselves, and in doing this we had to proceed with great care, for it was impossible to stand on deck an instant without holding fast, and violent seas broke over the vessel at every plunge forward. It was indispensable, too, that we should be quick in our operations, for every minute we expected the mate to be up to set the pumps going, as it was evident the brig must be taking in water very fast. After searching about for some time, we could find nothing more fit for our purpose than the two pump-handles, one of which Augustus took, and I the other. Having secured these, we stripped off the shirt of the corpse and dropped the body overboard. Peters and myself then went below, leaving Augustus to watch upon deck, where he took his station just where Allen had been placed, and with his back to the cabin companion-way, so that, if any one of the mate's gang should come up, he might suppose it was the watch.

As soon as I got below I commenced disguising myself so as to represent the corpse of Rogers. The shirt which we had taken from the body aided us very much, for it was of a singular form and character, and easily recognisable—a kind of smock, which the deceased wore over his other clothing. It was a blue stockinett, with large white stripes running across. Having put this on, I proceeded to equip myself with a false stomach, in imitation of the horrible deformity of the swollen corpse. This was soon effected by means of stuffing with some bedclothes. I then gave the same appearance to my hands by drawing on a pair of white woollen mittens, and filling them in with any kind of rags that offered themselves. Peters then arranged my face, first rubbing it well over with white chalk, and afterward splotching it with blood, which he took from a cut in his finger. The streak across the eye was not forgotten, and presented a most shocking appearance.

Chapter VIII

As I viewed myself in a fragment of looking-glass which hung up in the cabin, and by the dim light of a kind of battle-lantern, I was so impressed with a sense of vague awe at my appearance, and at the recollection of the terrific reality which I was thus representing, that I was seized with a violent tremour, and could scarcely summon resolution to go on with my part. It was necessary, however, to act with decision, and Peters and myself went upon deck.

We there found everything safe, and, keeping close to the bulwarks, the three of us crept to the cabin companion-way. It was only partially closed, precautions having been taken to prevent its being suddenly pushed to from without, by means of placing billets of wood on the upper step so as to interfere with the shutting. We found no difficulty in getting a full view of the interior of the cabin through the cracks where the hinges were placed. It now proved to have been very fortunate for us that we had not attempted to take them by surprise, for they were evidently on the alert. Only one was asleep, and he lying just at the foot of the companion-ladder, with a musket by his side. The rest were seated on several mattresses, which had been taken from the berths and thrown on the floor. They were engaged in earnest conversation; and although they had been carousing, as appeared from two empty jugs, with some tin tumblers which lay about, they were not as much intoxicated as usual. All had knives, one or two of them pistols, and a great many muskets were lying in a berth close at hand.

We listened to their conversation for some time before we could make up our minds how to act, having as yet resolved on nothing determinate, except that we would attempt to paralyze their exertions, when we should attack them, by means of the apparition of Rogers. They were discussing their piratical plans, in which all we could hear distinctly was that they would unite with the crew of a schooner *Hornet*, and, if possible, get the schooner herself into their possession preparatory to some attempt on a large scale, the particulars of which could not be made out by either of us.

One of the men spoke of Peters, when the mate replied to him in a low voice which could not be distinguished, and afterward added more loudly, that "he could not understand his being so much forward with the captain's brat in the fore-castle, and he thought the sooner both of them were over-board the better." To this no answer was made, but we could easily perceive that the hint was well received by the whole party, and more particularly by Jones. At this period I was excessively agitated, the more so as I could see that neither Augustus nor Peters could determine how to act. I made up my mind, however, to sell my life as dearly as possible, and not to suffer myself to be overcome by any feelings of trepidation.

The tremendous noise made by the roaring of the wind in the rigging and the washing of the sea over the deck prevented us from hearing what was said except during momentary lulls. In one of these we all distinctly heard the mate tell one of the men to "go forward, and order the d—d lubbers to come into the cabin, where he could have an eye upon them, for he wanted no such secret doings on board the brig." It was well for us that the pitching of the vessel at this moment was so violent as to prevent this order from being carried into instant execution. The cook got up from his mattress to go for us, when a tremendous lurch, which I thought would carry away the masts, threw him headlong against one of the larboard stateroom doors, bursting it open, and creating a good deal of other confusion. Luckily, neither of our party was thrown from his position, and we had time to make a precipitate retreat to the fore-castle, and arrange a hurried plan of action before the messenger made his appearance, or rather before he put his head out of the companion-hatch, for he did not come on deck. From this station he could not notice the absence of Allen, and he accordingly bawled out as if to him, repeating the orders of the mate. Peters cried out, "Ay, ay," in a disguised voice, and the cook immediately went below, without entertaining a suspicion that all was not right.

My two companions now proceeded boldly aft and down into the cabin, Peters closing the door after him in the same manner he had found it. The mate received them with feigned cordiality, and told Augustus that, since he had behaved himself so well of late, he might take up his quarters in the cabin, and be one of them for the future. He then poured him out a tumbler half full of rum, and made him drink it. All this I saw and heard, for I followed my friends to the cabin as soon as the door was shut, and took up my old point of observation. I had brought with me the two pump-handles, one of which I secured near the companion-way, to be ready for use when required.

I now steadied myself as well as possible so as to have a good view of all that was passing within, and endeavoured to nerve myself to the task of descending among the mutineers when Peters should make a signal to me as agreed upon. Presently he contrived to turn the conversation upon the bloody deeds of the mutiny, and, by degrees, led the men to talk of the thousand superstitions which are so universally current among seamen. I could not make out all that was said, but I could plainly see the effects of the conversation in the countenances of those present. The mate was evidently much agitated, and presently, when someone mentioned the terrific appearance of Rogers's corpse, I thought he was upon the point of swooning. Peters now asked him if he did not think it would be better to have the body thrown overboard at once, as it was too horrible a sight to see it floundering about in the scuppers. At this the villain absolutely gasped for

breath, and turned his head slowly round upon his companions, as if imploring someone to go up and perform the task. No one, however, stirred, and it was quite evident that the whole party were wound up to the highest pitch of nervous excitement. Peters now made me the signal. I immediately threw open the door of the companion-way, and, descending without uttering a syllable, stood erect in the midst of the party.

The intense effect produced by this sudden apparition is not at all to be wondered at when the various circumstances are taken into consideration. Usually, in cases of a similar nature, there is left in the mind of the spectator some glimmering of doubt as to the reality of the vision before his eyes; a degree of hope, however feeble, that he is the victim of chicanery, and that the apparition is not actually a visitant from the world of shadows. It is not too much to say that such remnants of doubt have been at the bottom of almost every such visitation, and that the appalling horror which has sometimes been brought about is to be attributed, even in the cases most in point, and where most suffering has been experienced, more to a kind of anticipative horror, lest the apparition *might possibly be* real, than to an unwavering belief in its reality. But, in the present instance, it will be seen immediately that in the minds of the mutineers there was not even the shadow of a basis upon which to rest a doubt that the apparition of Rogers was indeed a revivification of his disgusting corpse, or at least its spiritual image. The isolated situation of the brig, with its entire inaccessibility on account of the gate, confined the apparently possible means of deception within such narrow and definite limits, that they must have thought themselves enabled to survey them all at a glance. They had now been at sea twenty-four days, without holding more than a speaking communication with any vessel whatever. The whole of the crew, too, at least all whom they had the most remote reason for suspecting to be on board, were assembled in the cabin, with the exception of Allen, the watch; and his gigantic stature (he was six feet six inches high) was too familiar in their eyes to permit the notion that he was the apparition before them to enter their minds even for an instant. Add to these considerations the awe-inspiring nature of the tempest, and that of the conversation brought about by Peters; the deep impression which the loathsomeness of the actual corpse had made in the morning upon the imaginations of the men; the excellence of the imitation in my person; and the uncertain and wavering light in which they beheld me, as the glare of the cabin lantern, swinging violently to and fro, fell dubiously and fitfully upon my figure, and there will be no reason to wonder that the deception had even more than the entire effect which we had anticipated. The mate sprang up from the mattress on which he was lying, and, without uttering a syllable, fell back, stone dead, upon the cabin floor, and was hurled to the leeward like a log by a heavy roll of the brig. Of the remaining seven there

were but three who had at first any degree of presence of mind. The four others sat for some time rooted apparently to the floor, the most pitiable objects of horror and utter despair my eyes ever encountered. The only opposition we experienced at all was from the cook, John Hunt, and Richard Parker; but they made but a feeble and irresolute defence. The two former were shot instantly by Peters, and I felled Parker with a blow on the head from the pump-handle which I had brought with me. In the mean time Augustus seized one of the muskets lying on the floor, and shot another mutineer (—— Wilson) through the breast. There were now but three remaining; but by this time they had become aroused from their lethargy, and perhaps began to see that a deception had been practised upon them, for they fought with great resolution and fury, and, but for the immense muscular strength of Peters, might have ultimately got the better of us. These three men were —— Jones, —— Greely and Absalom Hicks. Jones had thrown Augustus on the floor, stabbed him in several places along the right arm, and would no doubt have soon despatched him (as neither Peters nor myself could immediately get rid of our own antagonists), had it not been for the timely aid of a friend upon whose assistance we surely had never depended. This friend was no other than Tiger. With a low growl he bounded into the cabin, at a most critical moment for Augustus, and throwing himself upon Jones, pinned him to the floor in an instant. My friend, however, was now too much injured to render us any aid whatever, and I was so encumbered with my disguise that I could do but little. The dog would not leave his hold upon the throat of Jones—Peters, nevertheless, was far more than a match for the two men who remained, and would, no doubt, have despatched them sooner, had it not been for the narrow space in which he had to act, and the tremendous lurches of the vessel. Presently he was enabled to get hold of a heavy stool, several of which lay about the floor. With this he beat out the brains of Greely as he was in the act of discharging a musket at me, and immediately afterward a roll of the brig throwing him in contact with Hicks, he seized him by the throat, and, by dint of sheer strength, strangled him instantaneously. Thus, in far less time than I have taken to tell it, we found ourselves masters of the brig.

The only person of our opponents who was left alive was Richard Parker. This man, it will be remembered, I had knocked down with a blow from the pump-handle at the commencement of the attack. He now lay motionless by the door of the shattered stateroom; but, upon Peters touching him with his foot, he spoke, and entreated for mercy. His head was only slightly cut, and otherwise he had received no injury, having been merely stunned by the blow. He now got up, and, for the present, we secured his hands behind his back. The dog was still growling over Jones; but, upon examination, we found him completely dead, the blood issuing in a stream

from a deep wound in the throat, inflicted, no doubt, by the sharp teeth of the animal.

It was now about one o'clock in the morning, and the wind was still blowing tremendously. The brig evidently laboured much more than usual, and it became absolutely necessary that something should be done with a view of easing her in some measure. At almost every roll to leeward she shipped a sea, several of which came partially down into the cabin during our scuffle, the hatchway having been left open by myself when I descended. The entire range of bulwarks to larboard had been swept away, as well as the caboose, together with the jollyboat from the counter. The creaking and working of the mainmast, too, gave indication that it was nearly sprung. To make room for more stowage in the after hold, the heel of this mast had been stepped between decks (a very reprehensible practice, occasionally resorted to by ignorant shipbuilders), so that it was in imminent danger of working from its step. But, to crown all our difficulties, we plummed the well, and found no less than seven feet water.

Leaving the bodies of the crew lying in the cabin, we got to work immediately at the pumps—Parker, of course, being set at liberty to assist us in the labour. Augustus's arm was bound up as well as we could effect it, and he did what he could, but that was not much. However, we found that we could just manage to keep the leak from gaining upon us by having one pump constantly going. As there were only four of us, this was severe labour; but we endeavoured to keep up our spirits, and looked anxiously for daybreak, when we hoped to lighten the brig by cutting away the mainmast.

In this manner we passed a night of terrible anxiety and fatigue, and, when the day at length broke, the gale had neither abated in the least, nor were there any signs of its abating. We now dragged the bodies on deck and threw them overboard. Our next care was to get rid of the mainmast. The necessary preparations having been made, Peters cut away at the mast (having found axes in the cabin), while the rest of us stood by the stays and lanyards. As the brig gave a tremendous lee-lurch, the word was given to cut away the weather-lanyards, which being done, the whole mass of wood and rigging plunged into the sea, clear of the brig, and without doing any material injury. We now found that the vessel did not labour quite as much as before, but our situation was still exceedingly precarious, and, in spite of the utmost exertions, we could not gain upon the leak without the aid of both pumps. The little assistance which Augustus could render us was not really of any importance. To add to our distress, a heavy sea, striking the brig to windward, threw her off several points from the wind, and, before she could regain her position, another broke completely over her, and hurled her full upon her beam-ends. The ballast now shifted in a mass to leeward (the stowage had been knocking about perfectly at random for some time), and

for a few moments we thought nothing could save us from capsizing. Presently, however, we partially righted; but the ballast still retaining its place to larboard, we lay so much along that it was useless to think of working the pumps, which indeed we could not have done much longer in any case, as our hands were entirely raw with the excessive labour we had undergone, and were bleeding in the most horrible manner.

Contrary to Parker's advice, we now proceeded to cut away the foremast, and at length accomplished it after much difficulty, owing to the position in which we lay. In going overboard the wreck took with it the bowsprit, and left us a complete hulk.

So far we had had reason to rejoice in the escape of our longboat, which had received no damage from any of the huge seas which had come on board. But we had not long to congratulate ourselves; for the foremast having gone, and, of course, the foresail with it, by which the brig had been steadied, every sea now made a complete breach over us, and in five minutes our deck was swept from stem to stern, the longboat and starboard bulwarks torn off, and even the windlass shattered into fragments. It was, indeed, hardly possible for us to be in a more pitiable condition.

At noon there seemed to be some slight appearance of the gale's abating, but in this we were sadly disappointed, for it only lulled for a few minutes to blow with redoubled fury. About four in the afternoon it was utterly impossible to stand up against the violence of the blast; and, as the night closed in upon us, I had not a shadow of hope that the vessel would hold together until morning.

By midnight we had settled very deep in the water, which was now up to the orlop deck. The rudder went soon afterward, the sea which tore it away lifting the after portion of the brig entirely from the water, against which she thumped in her descent with such a concussion as would be occasioned by going ashore. We had all calculated that the rudder would hold its own to the last, as it was unusually strong, being rigged as I have never seen one rigged either before or since. Down its main timber there ran a succession of stout iron hooks, and others in the same manner down the stem-post. Through these hooks there extended a very thick wrought-iron rod, the rudder being thus held to the stern-post, and swinging freely on the rod. The tremendous force of the sea which tore it off may be estimated by the fact that the hooks in the stern-post, which ran entirely through it, being clinched on the inside, were drawn every one of them completely out of the solid wood.

We had scarcely time to draw breath after the violence of this shock, when one of the most tremendous waves I had then ever known broke right on board of us, sweeping the companion-way clear off, bursting in the hatchways, and filling every inch of the vessel with water.

Chapter IX

Luckily, just before night, all four of us had lashed ourselves firmly to the fragments of the windlass, lying in this manner as flat upon the deck as possible. This precaution alone saved us from destruction. As it was, we were all more or less stunned by the immense weight of water which tumbled upon us, and which did not roll from above us until we were nearly exhausted. As soon as I could recover breath, I called aloud to my companions. Augustus alone replied, saying, "It is all over with us, and may God have mercy upon our souls." By-and-by both the others were enabled to speak, when they exhorted us to take courage, as there was still hope; it being impossible, from the nature of the cargo, that the brig could go down, and there being every chance that the gale would blow over by the morning. These words inspired me with new life; for, strange as it may seem, although it was obvious that a vessel with a cargo of empty oil-casks would not sink, I had been hitherto so confused in mind as to have overlooked this consideration altogether; and the danger which I had for some time regarded as the most imminent was that of foundering. As hope revived within me, I made use of every opportunity to strengthen the lashings which held me to the remains of the windlass, and in this occupation I soon discovered that my companions were also busy. The night was as dark as it could possibly be, and the horrible shrieking din and confusion which surrounded us it is useless to attempt describing. Our deck lay level with the sea, or rather we were encircled with a towering ridge of foam, a portion of which swept over us every instant. It is not too much to say that our heads were not fairly out of water more than one second in three. Although we lay close together, no one of us could see the other, or, indeed, any portion of the brig itself, upon which we were so tempestuously hurled about. At intervals we called one to the other, thus endeavouring to keep alive hope, and render consolation and encouragement to such of us as stood most in need of it. The feeble condition of Augustus made him an object of solicitude with us all; and as, from the lacerated condition of his right arm, it must have been impossible for him to secure his lashings with any degree of firmness, we were in momentary expectation of finding that he had gone overboard—yet to render him aid was a thing altogether out of the question. Fortunately, his station was more secure than that of any of the rest of us; for the upper part of his body lying just beneath a portion of the shattered windlass, the seas, as they tumbled in upon him, were greatly broken in their violence. In any other situation than this (into which he had been accidentally thrown after having lashed himself in a very exposed spot) he must inevitably have perished before morning. Owing to the brig's lying so much along, we were all less liable to be washed off than otherwise would have been the case. The

heel, as I have before stated, was to larboard, about one half of the deck being constantly under water. The seas, therefore, which struck us to starboard were much broken by the vessel's side, only reaching us in fragments as we lay flat on our faces; while those which came from larboard, being what are called back-water seas, and obtaining little hold upon us on account of our posture, had not sufficient force to drag us from our fastenings.

In this frightful situation we lay until the day broke so as to show us more fully the horrors which surrounded us. The brig was a mere log, rolling about at the mercy of every wave; the gale was upon the increase, if anything, blowing indeed a complete hurricane, and there appeared to us no earthly prospect of deliverance. For several hours we held on in silence, expecting every moment that our lashings would either give way, that the remains of the windlass would go by the board, or that some of the huge seas, which roared in every direction around us and above us, would drive the hulk so far beneath the water that we should be drowned before it could regain the surface. By the mercy of God, however, we were preserved from these imminent dangers, and about midday were cheered by the light of the blessed sun. Shortly afterward we could perceive a sensible diminution in the force of the wind, when, now for the first time since the latter part of the evening before, Augustus spoke, asking Peters, who lay closest to him, if he thought there was any possibility of our being saved. As no reply was at first made to this question, we all concluded that the hybrid had been drowned where he lay; but presently, to our great joy, he spoke, although very feebly, saying that he was in great pain, being so cut by the tightness of his lashings across the stomach, that he must either find means of loosening them or perish, as it was impossible that he could endure his misery much longer. This occasioned us great distress, as it was altogether useless to think of aiding him in any manner while the sea continued washing over us as it did. We exhorted him to bear his sufferings with fortitude, and promised to seize the first opportunity which should offer itself to relieve him. He replied that it would soon be too late; that it would be all over with him before we could help him; and then, after moaning for some minutes, lay silent, when we concluded that he had perished.

As the evening drew on, the sea had fallen so much that scarcely more than one wave broke over the hulk from windward in the course of five minutes, and the wind had abated a great deal, although still blowing a severe gale. I had not heard any of my companions speak for hours, and now called to Augustus. He replied, although very feebly, so that I could not distinguish what he said. I then spoke to Peters and to Parker, neither of whom returned any answer.

Shortly after this period I fell into a state of partial insensibility, during which the most pleasing images floated in my imagination; such as green

trees, waving meadows of ripe grain, processions of dancing girls, troops of cavalry, and other phantasies. I now remember that, in all which passed before my mind's eye, *motion* was a predominant idea. Thus, I never fancied any stationary object, such as a house, a mountain, or anything of that kind; but windmills, ships, large birds, balloons, people on horseback, carriages driving furiously, and similar moving objects presented themselves in endless succession. When I recovered from this state, the sun was, as near as I could guess, an hour high. I had the greatest difficulty in bringing to recollection the various circumstances connected with my situation, and for some time remained firmly convinced that I was still in the hold of the brig, near the box, and that the body of Parker was that of Tiger.

When I at length completely came to my senses, I found that the wind blew no more than a moderate breeze, and that the sea was comparatively calm; so much so that it only washed over the brig amidships. My left arm had broken loose from its lashings, and was much cut about the elbow; my right was entirely benumbed, and the hand and wrist swollen prodigiously by the pressure of the rope, which had worked from the shoulder downward. I was also in great pain from another rope which went about my waist, and had been drawn to an insufferable degree of tightness. Looking round upon my companions, I saw that Peters still lived, although a thick line was pulled so forcibly around his loins as to give him the appearance of being cut nearly in two; as I stirred, he made a feeble motion to me with his hand, pointing to the rope. Augustus gave no indication of life whatever, and was bent nearly double across a splinter of the windlass. Parker spoke to me when he saw me moving, and asked me if I had not sufficient strength to release him from his situation; saying that if I would summon up what spirits I could, and contrive to untie him, we might yet save our lives; but that otherwise we must all perish. I told him to take courage, and I would endeavour to free him. Feeling in my pantaloons' pocket, I got hold of my penknife, and, after several ineffectual attempts, at length succeeded in opening it. I then, with my left hand, managed to free my right from its fastenings, and afterward cut the other ropes which held me. Upon attempting, however, to move from my position, I found that my legs failed me altogether, and that I could not get up; neither could I move my right arm in any direction. Upon mentioning this to Parker, he advised me to lie quiet for a few minutes, holding on to the windlass with my left hand, so as to allow time for the blood to circulate. Doing this, the numbness presently began to die away, so that I could move first one of my legs, and then the other; and, shortly afterward, I regained the partial use of my right arm. I now crawled with great caution towards Parker, without getting on my legs, and soon cut loose all the lashings about him, when, after a short delay, he also recovered the partial use of his limbs. We now lost no time in getting loose the rope

from Peters. It had cut a deep gash through the waistband of his woollen pantaloons, and through two shirts, and made its way into his groin, from which the blood flowed out copiously as we removed the cordage. No sooner had we removed it, however, than he spoke, and seemed to experience instant relief—being able to move with much greater ease than either Parker or myself—this was no doubt owing to the discharge of blood.

We had little hope that Augustus would recover, as he evinced no signs of life; but, upon getting to him, we discovered that he had merely swooned from loss of blood, the bandages we had placed around his wounded arm having been torn off by the water; none of the ropes which held him to the windlass were drawn sufficiently tight to occasion his death. Having relieved him from the fastenings, and got him clear of the broken wood about the windlass, we secured him in a dry place to windward, with his head somewhat lower than his body, and all three of us busied ourselves in chafing his limbs. In about half an hour he came to himself, although it was not until the next morning that he gave signs of recognizing any of us, or had sufficient strength to speak. By the time we had thus got clear of our lashings it was quite dark, and it began to cloud up, so that we were again in the greatest agony lest it should come on to blow hard, in which event nothing could have saved us from perishing, exhausted as we were. By good fortune it continued very moderate during the night, the sea subsiding every minute, which gave us great hopes of ultimate preservation. A gentle breeze still blew from the N.W., but the weather was not at all cold. Augustus was lashed carefully to windward in such a manner as to prevent him from slipping overboard with the rolls of the vessel, as he was still too weak to hold on at all. For ourselves there was no such necessity. We sat close together, supporting each other with the aid of the broken ropes about the windlass, and devising methods of escape from our frightful situation. We derived much comfort from taking off our clothes and wringing the water from them. When we put them on after this, they felt remarkably warm and pleasant, and served to invigorate us in no little degree. We helped Augustus off with his, and wrung them for him, when he experienced the same comfort.

Our chief sufferings were now those of hunger and thirst, and, when we looked forward to the means of relief in this respect, our hearts sunk within us, and we were induced to regret that we had escaped the less dreadful perils of the sea. We endeavoured, however, to console ourselves with the hope of being speedily picked up by some vessel, and encouraged each other to bear with fortitude the evils that might happen.

The morning of the fourteenth at length dawned, and the weather still continued clear and pleasant, with a steady but very light breeze from the N.W. The sea was now quite smooth, and, as from some cause which we

could not determine, the brig did not heave so much along as she had done before, the deck was comparatively dry, and we could move about with freedom. We had now been better than three entire days and nights without either food or drink, and it became absolutely necessary that we should make an attempt to get up something from below. As the brig was completely full of water, we went to this work despondingly, and with but little expectation of being able to obtain anything. We made a kind of drag by driving some nails which we broke out from the remains of the companion-hatch into two pieces of wood. Tying these across each other, and fastening them to the end of a rope, we threw them into the cabin, and dragged them to and fro, in the faint hope of being thus able to entangle some article which might be of use to us for food, or which might at least render us assistance in getting it. We spent the greater part of the morning in this labour without effect, fishing up nothing more than a few bedclothes, which were readily caught by the nails. Indeed, our contrivance was so very clumsy, that any greater success was hardly to be anticipated.

We now tried the fore-castle, but equally in vain, and were upon the brink of despair, when Peters proposed that we should fasten a rope to his body, and let him make an attempt to get up something by diving into the cabin. This proposition we hailed with all the delight which reviving hope could inspire. He proceeded immediately to strip off his clothes with the exception of his pantaloons; and a strong rope was then carefully fastened around his middle, being brought up over his shoulders in such a manner that there was no possibility of its slipping. The undertaking was one of great difficulty and danger; for, as we could hardly expect to find much, if any provision in the cabin itself, it was necessary that the diver, after letting himself down, should make a turn to the right, and proceed under water a distance of ten or twelve feet, in a narrow passage, to the storeroom, and return, without drawing breath.

Everything being ready, Peters now descended into the cabin, going down the companion-ladder until the water reached his chin. He then plunged in, head first, turning to the right as he plunged, and endeavouring to make his way to the storeroom. In this first attempt, however, he was altogether unsuccessful. In less than half a minute after his going down we felt the rope jerked violently (the signal we had agreed upon when he desired to be drawn up). We accordingly drew him up instantly, but so incautiously as to bruise him badly against the ladder. He had brought nothing with him, and had been unable to penetrate more than a very little way into the passage, owing to the constant exertions he found it necessary to make in order to keep himself from floating up against the deck. Upon getting out he was very much exhausted, and had to rest full fifteen minutes before he could again venture to descend.

The second attempt met with even worse success; for he remained so long under water without giving the signal, that, becoming alarmed for his safety, we drew him out without it, and found that he was almost at the last gasp, having, as he said, repeatedly jerked at the rope without our feeling it. This was probably owing to a portion of it having become entangled in the balustrade at the foot of the ladder. This balustrade was, indeed, so much in the way, that we determined to remove it, if possible, before proceeding with our design. As we had no means of getting it away except by main force, we all descended into the water as far as we could on the ladder, and, giving a pull against it with our united strength, succeeded in breaking it down.

The third attempt was equally unsuccessful with the two first, and it now became evident that nothing could be done in this manner without the aid of some weight with which the diver might steady himself, and keep to the floor of the cabin while making his search. For a long time we looked about in vain for something which might answer this purpose; but at length, to our great joy, we discovered one of the weather-forechains so loose that we had not the least difficulty in wrenching it off. Having fastened this securely to one of his ankles, Peters now made his fourth descent into the cabin, and this time succeeded in making his way to the door of the steward's room. To his inexpressible grief, however, he found it locked, and was obliged to return without effecting an entrance, as, with the greatest exertion, he could remain under water not more, at the utmost extent, than a single minute. Our affairs now looked gloomy indeed, and neither Augustus nor myself could refrain from bursting into tears, as we thought of the host of difficulties which encompassed us, and the slight probability which existed of our finally making an escape. But this weakness was not of long duration. Throwing ourselves on our knees to God, we implored his aid in the many dangers which beset us; and arose with renewed hope and vigour to think what could yet be done by mortal means towards accomplishing our deliverance.

Chapter X

Shortly afterward an incident occurred which I am inclined to look upon as more intensely productive of emotion, as far more replete with the extremes first of delight and then of horror, than even any of the thousand chances which afterward befell me in nine long years, crowded with events of the most startling, and, in many cases, of the most unconceived and unconceivable character. We were lying on the deck near the companion-way, and debating the possibility of yet making our way into the storeroom, when, looking towards Augustus, who lay fronting myself, I perceived that

he had become all at once deadly pale, and that his lips were quivering in the most singular and unaccountable manner. Greatly alarmed, I spoke to him, but he made me no reply, and I was beginning to think that he was suddenly taken ill, when I took notice of his eyes, which were glaring apparently at some object behind me. I turned my head, and shall never forget the ecstatic joy which thrilled through every particle of my frame, when I perceived a large brig bearing down upon us, and not more than a couple of miles off. I sprung to my feet as if a musket bullet had suddenly struck me to the heart; and, stretching out my arms in the direction of the vessel, stood in this manner, motionless, and unable to articulate a syllable. Peters and Parker were equally affected, although in different ways. The former danced about the deck like a madman, uttering the most extravagant rhodomontades, intermingled with howls and imprecations, while the latter burst into tears, and continued for many minutes weeping like a child.

The vessel in sight was a large hermaphrodite brig, of a Dutch build, and painted black, with a tawdry gilt figurehead. She had evidently seen a good deal of rough weather, and, we supposed, had suffered much in the gale which had proved so disastrous to ourselves; for her foretopmast was gone, and some of her starboard bulwarks. When we first saw her, she was, as I have already said, about two miles off and to windward, bearing down upon us. The breeze was very gentle, and what astonished us chiefly was that she had no other sails set than her foresail and mainsail, with a flying jib—of course she came down but slowly, and our impatience amounted nearly to phrensy. The awkward manner in which she steered, too, was remarked by all of us, even excited as we were. She yawed about so considerably, that once or twice we thought it impossible she could see us, or imagined that, having seen us, and discovered no person on board, she was about to tack and make off in another direction. Upon each of these occasions we screamed and shouted at the top of our voices, when the stranger would appear to change for a moment her intention, and again hold on towards us—this singular conduct being repeated two or three times, so that at last we could think of no other manner of accounting for it than by supposing the helmsman to be in liquor.

No person was seen upon her decks until she arrived within about a quarter of a mile of us. We then saw three seamen, whom by their dress we took to be Hollanders. Two of these were lying on some old sails near the forecastle, and the third, who appeared to be looking at us with great curiosity, was leaning over the starboard bow near the bowsprit. This last was a stout and tall man, with a very dark skin. He seemed by his manner to be encouraging us to have patience, nodding to us in a cheerful although rather odd way, and smiling constantly so as to display a set of the most brilliantly white teeth. As his vessel drew nearer, we saw a red flannel cap which he

had on fall from his head into the water; but of this he took little or no notice, continuing his odd smiles and gesticulations. I relate these things and circumstances minutely, and I relate them, it must be understood, precisely as they *appeared* to us.

The brig came on slowly, and now more steadily than before, and—I cannot speak calmly of this event—our hearts leaped up wildly within us, and we poured out our whole souls in shouts and thanksgiving to God for the complete, unexpected, and glorious deliverance that was so palpably at hand. Of a sudden, and all at once, there came wafted over the ocean from the strange vessel (which was now close upon us) a smell, a stench, such as the whole world has no name for—no conception of—hellish—utterly suffocating—insufferable, inconceivable. I gasped for breath and, turning to my companions, perceived that they were paler than marble. But we had now no time left for question or surmise—the brig was within fifty feet of us, and it seemed to be her intention to run under our counter, that we might board her without her putting out a boat. We rushed aft, when, suddenly, a wide yaw threw her off full five or six points from the course she had been running, and, as she passed under our stern at the distance of about twenty feet, we had a full view of her decks. Shall I ever forget the triple horror of that spectacle? Twenty-five or thirty human bodies, among whom were several females, lay scattered about between the counter and the galley, in the last and most loathsome state of putrefaction! We plainly saw that not a soul lived in that fated vessel! Yet we could not help shouting to the dead for help! Yes, long and loudly did we beg, in the agony of the moment, that those silent and disgusting images would stay for us, would not abandon us to become like them, would receive us among their goodly company! We were raving with horror and despair—thoroughly mad through the anguish of our grievous disappointment.

As our first loud yell of terror broke forth, it was replied to by something, from near the bowsprit of the stranger, so closely resembling the scream of a human voice that the nicest ear might have been startled and deceived. At this instant another sudden yaw brought the region of the fore-castle for a moment into view, and we beheld at once the origin of the sound. We saw the tall stout figure still leaning on the bulwark, and still nodding his head to and fro, but his face was now turned from us so that we could not behold it. His arms were extended over the rail, and the palms of his hands fell outward. His knees were lodged upon a stout rope, tightly stretched, and reaching from the heel of the bowsprit to a cathead. On his back, from which a portion of the shirt had been torn, leaving it bare, there sat a huge seagull, busily gorging itself with the horrible flesh, its bill and talons deep buried, and its white plumage spattered all over with blood. As the brig moved further round so as to bring us close in view, the bird, with

much apparent difficulty, drew out its crimsoned head, and, after eyeing us for a moment as if stupefied, arose lazily from the body upon which it had been feasting, and, flying directly above our deck, hovered there a while with a portion of clotted and liver-like substance in its beak. The horrid morsel dropped at length with a sullen splash immediately at the feet of Parker. May God forgive me, but now, for the first time, there flashed through my mind a thought, a thought which I will not mention, and I felt myself making a step towards the ensanguined spot. I looked upward, and the eyes of Augustus met my own with a degree of intense and eager meaning which immediately brought me to my senses. I sprang forward quickly and, with a deep shudder, threw the frightful thing into the sea.

The body from which it had been taken, resting as it did upon the rope, had been easily swayed to and fro by the exertions of the carnivorous bird, and it was this motion which had at first impressed us with the belief of its being alive. As the gull relieved it of its weight, it swung round and fell partially over, so that the face was fully discovered. Never, surely, was any object so terribly full of awe! The eyes were gone, and the whole flesh around the mouth, leaving the teeth utterly naked. This, then, was the smile which had cheered us on to hope! this the—but I forbear. The brig, as I have already told, passed under our stem, and made its way slowly but steadily to leeward. With her and with her terrible crew went all our gay visions of deliverance and joy. Deliberately as she went by, we might possibly have found means of boarding her, had not our sudden disappointment, and the appalling nature of the discovery which accompanied it, laid entirely prostrate every active faculty of mind and body. We had seen and felt, but we could neither think nor act, until, alas, too late. How much our intellects had been weakened by this incident may be estimated by the fact that, when the vessel had proceeded so far that we could perceive no more than the half of her hull, the proposition was seriously entertained of attempting to overtake her by swimming!

I have, since this period, vainly endeavoured to obtain some clew to the hideous uncertainty which enveloped the fate of the stranger. Her build and general appearance, as I have before stated, led us to the belief that she was a Dutch trader, and the dresses of the crew also sustained this opinion. We might have easily seen the name upon her stern, and, indeed, taken other observations which would have guided us in making out her character; but the intense excitement of the moment blinded us to everything of that nature. From the saffron-like hue of such of the corpses as were not entirely decayed, we concluded that the whole of her company had perished by the yellow fever, or some other virulent disease of the same fearful kind. If such were the case (and I know not what else to imagine), death, to judge from the positions of the bodies, must have come upon them in a manner

awfully sudden and overwhelming, in a way totally distinct from that which generally characterizes even the most deadly pestilences with which mankind are acquainted. It is possible, indeed, that poison, accidentally introduced into some of their sea-stores, may have brought about the disaster; or that the eating of some unknown venomous species of fish, or other marine animal, or oceanic bird, might have induced it—but it is utterly useless to form conjectures where all is involved, and will, no doubt, remain forever involved, in the most appalling and unfathomable mystery.

Chapter XI

We spent the remainder of the day in a condition of stupid lethargy, gazing after the retreating vessel until the darkness, hiding her from our sight, recalled us in some measure to our senses. The pangs of hunger and thirst then returned, absorbing all other cares and considerations. Nothing, however, could be done until the morning, and, securing ourselves as well as possible, we endeavoured to snatch a little repose. In this I succeeded beyond my expectation, sleeping until my companions, who had not been so fortunate, aroused me at daybreak to renew our attempts at getting up provision from the hull.

It was now a dead calm, with the sea as smooth as I have ever known it—the weather warm and pleasant. The brig was out of sight. We commenced our operations by wrenching off, with some trouble, another of the forechains; and having fastened both to Peters's feet, he again made an endeavour to reach the door of the storeroom, thinking it possible that he might be able to force it open, provided he could get at it in sufficient time; and this he hoped to do, as the hulk lay much more steadily than before.

He succeeded very quickly in reaching the door, when, loosening one of the chains from his ankle, he made every exertion to force a passage with it, but in vain, the framework of the room being far stronger than was anticipated. He was quite exhausted with his long stay under water, and it became absolutely necessary that some other one of us should take his place. For this service Parker immediately volunteered; but, after making three ineffectual efforts, found that he could never even succeed in getting near the door. The condition of Augustus's wounded arm rendered it useless for him to attempt going down, as he would be unable to force the room open should he reach it, and it accordingly now devolved upon me to exert myself for our common deliverance.

Peters had left one of the chains in the passage, and I found, upon plunging in, that I had not sufficient ballast to keep me firmly down. I determined, therefore, to attempt no more, in my first effort, than merely

to recover the other chain. In groping along the floor of the passage for this I felt a hard substance, which I immediately grasped, not having time to ascertain what it was, but returning and ascending instantly to the surface. The prize proved to be a bottle, and our joy may be conceived when I say that it was found to be full of Port wine. Giving thanks to God for this timely and cheering assistance, we immediately drew the cork with my penknife, and, each taking a moderate sup, felt the most indescribable comfort from the warmth, strength, and spirits with which it inspired us. We then carefully recorked the bottle, and, by means of a handkerchief, swung it in such a manner that there was no possibility of its getting broken.

Having rested a while after this fortunate discovery, I again descended, and now recovered the chain, with which I instantly came up. I then fastened it on and went down for the third time, when I became fully satisfied that no exertions whatever, in that situation, would enable me to force open the door of the storeroom. I therefore returned in despair.

There seemed now to be no longer any room for hope, and I could perceive in the countenances of my companions that they had made up their minds to perish. The wine had evidently produced in them a species of delirium, which, perhaps, I had been prevented from feeling by the immersion I had undergone since drinking it. They talked incoherently, and about matters unconnected with our condition, Peters repeatedly asking me questions about Nantucket. Augustus, too, I remember, approached me with a serious air, and requested me to lend him a pocket-comb, as his hair was full of fish scales, and he wished to get them out before going on shore. Parker appeared somewhat less affected, and urged me to dive at random into the cabin, and bring up any article which might come to hand. To this I consented, and, in the first attempt, after staying under a full minute, brought up a small leather trunk belonging to Captain Barnard. This was immediately opened in the faint hope that it might contain something to eat or drink. We found nothing, however, except a box of razors and two linen shirts. I now went down again, and returned without any success. As my head came above water I heard a crash on deck, and, upon getting up, saw that my companions had ungratefully taken advantage of my absence to drink the remainder of the wine, having let the bottle fall in the endeavour to replace it before I saw them. I remonstrated with them on the heartlessness of their conduct, when Augustus burst into tears. The other two endeavoured to laugh the matter off as a joke, but I hope never again to behold laughter of such a species: the distortion of countenance was absolutely frightful. Indeed, it was apparent that the stimulus, in the empty state of their stomachs, had taken instant and violent effect, and that they were all exceedingly intoxicated. With great difficulty I prevailed upon

them to lie down, when they fell very soon into a heavy slumber, accompanied with loud stertorous breathing.

I now found myself, as it were, alone in the brig, and my reflections, to be sure, were of the most fearful and gloomy nature. No prospect offered itself to my view but a lingering death by famine, or, at the best, by being overwhelmed in the first gale which should spring up, for in our present exhausted condition we could have no hope of living through another.

The gnawing hunger which I now experienced was nearly insupportable, and I felt myself capable of going to any lengths in order to appease it. With my knife I cut off a small portion of the leather trunk, and endeavoured to eat it, but found it utterly impossible to swallow a single morsel, although I fancied that some little alleviation of my suffering was obtained by chewing small pieces of it and spitting them out. Towards night my companions awoke, one by one, each in an indescribable state of weakness and horror, brought on by the wine, whose fumes had now evaporated. They shook as if with a violent ague, and uttered the most lamentable cries for water. Their condition affected me in the most lively degree, at the same time causing me to rejoice in the fortunate train of circumstances which had prevented me from indulging in the wine, and consequently from sharing their melancholy and most distressing sensations. Their conduct, however, gave me great uneasiness and alarm; for it was evident that, unless some favourable change took place, they could afford me no assistance in providing for our common safety. I had not yet abandoned all idea of being able to get up something from below; but the attempt could not possibly be resumed until some one of them was sufficiently master of himself to aid me by holding the end of the rope while I went down. Parker appeared to be somewhat more in possession of his senses than the others, and I endeavoured, by every means in my power, to arouse him. Thinking that a plunge in the seawater might have a beneficial effect, I contrived to fasten the end of a rope around his body, and then, leading him to the companion-way (he remaining quite passive all the while), pushed him in, and immediately drew him out. I had good reason to congratulate myself upon having made this experiment; for he appeared much revived and invigorated, and, upon getting out, asked me, in a rational manner, why I had so served him. Having explained my object, he expressed himself indebted to me, and said that he felt greatly better from the immersion, afterward conversing sensibly upon our situation. We then resolved to treat Augustus and Peters in the same way, which we immediately did, when they both experienced much benefit from the shock. This idea of sudden immersion had been suggested to me by reading in some medical work the good effect of the shower-bath in a case where the patient was suffering from *mania a potu*.

Finding that I could now trust my companions to hold the end of the rope, I again made three or four plunges into the cabin, although it was now quite dark, and a gentle but long swell from the northward rendered the hulk somewhat unsteady. In the course of these attempts I succeeded in bringing up two case-knives, a three-gallon jug, empty, and a blanket, but nothing which could serve us for food. I continued my efforts, after getting these articles, until I was completely exhausted, but brought up nothing else. During the night Parker and Peters occupied themselves by turns in the same manner; but nothing coming to hand, we now gave up this attempt in despair, concluding that we were exhausting ourselves in vain.

We passed the remainder of this night in a state of the most intense mental and bodily anguish that can possibly be imagined. The morning of the sixteenth at length dawned, and we looked eagerly around the horizon for relief, but to no purpose. The sea was still smooth, with only a long swell from the northward, as on yesterday. This was the sixth day since we had tasted either food or drink, with the exception of the bottle of Port wine, and it was clear that we could hold out but a very little while longer unless something could be obtained. I never saw before, nor wish to see again, human beings so utterly emaciated as Peters and Augustus. Had I met them on shore in their present condition I should not have had the slightest suspicion that I had ever beheld them. Their countenances were totally changed in character, so that I could not bring myself to believe them really the same individuals with whom I had been in company but a few days before. Parker, although sadly reduced, and so feeble that he could not raise his head from his bosom, was not so far gone as the other two. He suffered with great patience, making no complaint, and endeavouring to inspire us with hope in every manner he could devise. For myself, although at the commencement of the voyage I had been in bad health, and was at all times of a delicate constitution, I suffered less than any of us, being much less reduced in frame, and retaining my powers of mind in a surprising degree, while the rest were completely prostrated in intellect, and seemed to be brought to a species of second childhood, generally simpering in their expressions, with idiotic smiles, and uttering the most absurd platitudes. At intervals, however, they would appear to revive suddenly, as if inspired all at once with a consciousness of their condition, when they would spring upon their feet in a momentary flash of vigour, and speak, for a short period, of their prospects, in a manner altogether rational, although full of the most intense despair. It is possible, however, that my companions may have entertained the same opinion of their own condition as I did of mine, and that I may have unwittingly been guilty of the same extravagances and imbecilities as themselves—this is a matter which cannot be determined.

About noon Parker declared that he saw land off the larboard quarter, and it was with the utmost difficulty I could restrain him from plunging into the sea with the view of swimming towards it. Peters and Augustus took little notice of what he said, being apparently wrapped up in moody contemplation. Upon looking in the direction pointed out I could not perceive the faintest appearance of the shore—indeed, I was too well aware that we were far from any land to indulge in a hope of that nature. It was a long time, nevertheless, before I could convince Parker of his mistake. He then burst into a flood of tears, weeping like a child, with loud cries and sobs, for two or three hours, when, becoming exhausted, he fell asleep.

Peters and Augustus now made several ineffectual efforts to swallow portions of the leather. I advised them to chew it and spit it out; but they were too excessively debilitated to be able to follow my advice. I continued to chew pieces of it at intervals and found some relief from so doing; my chief distress was for water, and I was only prevented from taking a draught from the sea by remembering the horrible consequences which thus have resulted to others who were similarly situated with ourselves.

The day wore on in this manner, when I suddenly discovered a sail to the eastward, and on our larboard bow. She appeared to be a large ship, and was coming nearly athwart us, being probably twelve or fifteen miles distant. None of my companions had as yet discovered her, and I forbore to tell them of her for the present, lest we might again be disappointed of relief. At length, upon her getting nearer, I saw distinctly that she was heading immediately for us, with her light sails filled. I could now contain myself no longer, and pointed her out to my fellow-sufferers. They immediately sprang to their feet, again indulging in the most extravagant demonstrations of joy, weeping, laughing in an idiotic manner, jumping, stamping upon the deck, tearing their hair, and praying and cursing by turns. I was so affected by their conduct, as well as by what I now considered a sure prospect of deliverance, that I could not refrain from joining in with their madness, and gave way to the impulses of my gratitude and ecstasy by lying and rolling on the deck, clapping my hands, shouting, and other similar acts, until I was suddenly called to my recollection, and once more to the extreme of human misery and despair, by perceiving the ship all at once with her stem fully presented towards us, and steering in a direction nearly opposite to that in which I had at first perceived her.

It was some time before I could induce my poor companions to believe that this sad reverse in our prospects had actually taken place. They replied to all my assertions with a stare and a gesture implying that they were not to be deceived by such misrepresentations. The conduct of Augustus most sensibly affected me. In spite of all I could say or do to the contrary, he persisted in saying that the ship was rapidly nearing us, and in making prepa-

rations to go on board of her. Some seaweed floating by the brig, he maintained that it was the ship's boat, and endeavoured to throw himself upon it, howling and shrieking in the most heartrending manner, when I forcibly restrained him from thus casting himself into the sea.

Having become in some degree pacified, we continued to watch the ship until we finally lost sight of her, the weather becoming hazy, with a light breeze springing up. As soon as she was entirely gone, Parker turned suddenly towards me with an expression of countenance which made me shudder. There was about him an air of self-possession which I had not noticed in him until now, and before he opened his lips my heart told me what he would say. He proposed, in a few words, that one of us should die to preserve the existence of the others.

Chapter XII

I had, for some time past, dwelt upon the prospect of our being reduced to this last horrible extremity, and had secretly made up my mind to suffer death in any shape or under any circumstances rather than resort to such a course. Nor was this resolution in any degree weakened by the present intensity of hunger under which I laboured. The proposition had not been heard by either Peters or Augustus. I therefore took Parker aside; and mentally praying to God for power to dissuade him from the horrible purpose he entertained, I expostulated with him for a long time and in the most supplicating manner, begging him in the name of everything which he held sacred, and urging him by every species of argument which the extremity of the case suggested, to abandon the idea, and not to mention it to either of the other two.

He heard all I said without attempting to controvert any of my arguments, and I had begun to hope that he would be prevailed upon to do as I desired. But when I had ceased speaking, he said that he knew very well all I had said was true, and that to resort to such a course was the most horrible alternative which could enter into the mind of man; but that he had now held out as long as human nature could be sustained; that it was unnecessary for all to perish, when, by the death of one, it was possible, and even probable, that the rest might be finally preserved; adding that I might save myself the trouble of trying to run him from his purpose, his mind having been thoroughly made up on the subject even before the appearance of the ship, and that only her heaving in sight had prevented him from mentioning his intention at an earlier period.

I now begged him, if he would not be prevailed upon to abandon his design, at least to defer it for another day, when some vessel might come to

our relief; again reiterating every argument I could devise, and which I thought likely to have influence with one of his rough nature. He said, in reply, that he had not spoken until the very last possible moment; that he could exist no longer without sustenance of some kind; and that therefore in another day his suggestion would be too late, as regarded himself at least.

Finding that he was not to be moved by anything I could say in a mild tone, I now assumed a different demeanour, and told him that he must be aware I had suffered less than any of us from our calamities; that my health and strength, consequently, were at that moment far better than his own, or than that either of Peters or Augustus; in short, that I was in a condition to have my own way by force if I found it necessary; and that, if he attempted in any manner to acquaint the others with his bloody and cannibal designs, I would not hesitate to throw him into the sea. Upon this he immediately seized me by the throat, and drawing a knife, made several ineffectual efforts to stab me in the stomach, an atrocity which his excessive debility alone prevented him from accomplishing. In the mean time, being roused to a high pitch of anger, I forced him to the vessel's side, with the full intention of throwing him overboard. He was saved from this fate, however, by the interference of Peters, who now approached and separated us, asking the cause of the disturbance. This Parker told before I could find means in any manner to prevent him.

The effect of his words was even more terrible than what I had anticipated. Both Augustus and Peters, who, it seems, had long secretly entertained the same fearful idea which Parker had been merely the first to broach, joined with him in his design, and insisted upon its being immediately carried into effect. I had calculated that one at least of the two former would be found still possessed of sufficient strength of mind to side with myself in resisting any attempt to execute so dreadful a purpose; and, with the aid of either one of them, I had no fear of being able to prevent its accomplishment. Being disappointed in this expectation, it became absolutely necessary that I should attend to my own safety, as a further resistance on my part might possibly be considered by men in their frightful condition a sufficient excuse for refusing me fair play in the tragedy that I knew would speedily be enacted.

I now told them I was willing to submit to the proposal, merely requesting a delay of about one hour, in order that the fog which had gathered around us might have an opportunity of lifting, when it was possible that the ship we had seen might be again in sight. After great difficulty I obtained from them a promise to wait thus long; and, as I had anticipated (a breeze rapidly coming in), the fog lifted before the hour had expired, when, no vessel appearing in sight, we prepared to draw lots.

It is with extreme reluctance that I dwell upon the appalling scene which ensued; a scene which, with its minutest details, no after events have been able to efface in the slightest degree from my memory, and whose stern recollection will embitter every future moment of my existence. Let me run over this portion of my narrative with as much haste as the nature of the events to be spoken of will permit. The only method we could devise for the terrific lottery, in which we were to take each a chance, was that of drawing straws. Small splinters of wood were made to answer our purpose, and it was agreed that I should be the holder. I retired to one end of the hulk, while my poor companions silently took up their station in the other with their backs turned towards me. The bitterest anxiety which I endured at any period of this fearful drama was while I occupied myself in the arrangement of the lots. There are few conditions into which man can possibly fall where he will not feel a deep interest in the preservation of his existence; an interest momentarily increasing with the frailness of the tenure by which that existence may be held. But now that the silent, definite, and stern nature of the business in which I was engaged (so different from the tumultuous dangers of the storm or the gradually approaching horrors of famine) allowed me to reflect on the few chances I had of escaping the most appalling of deaths—a death for the most appalling of purposes—every particle of that energy which had so long buoyed me up departed like feathers before the wind, leaving me a helpless prey to the most abject and pitiable terror. I could not, at first, even summon up sufficient strength to tear and fit together the small splinters of wood, my fingers absolutely refusing their office, and my knees knocking violently against each other. My mind ran over rapidly a thousand absurd projects by which to avoid becoming a partner in the awful speculation. I thought of falling on my knees to my companions, and entreating them to let me escape this necessity; of suddenly rushing upon them, and, by putting one of them to death, of rendering the decision by lot useless—in short, of everything but of going through with the matter I had in hand. At last, after wasting a long time in this imbecile conduct, I was recalled to my senses by the voice of Parker, who urged me to relieve them at once from the terrible anxiety they were enduring. Even then I could not bring myself to arrange the splinters upon the spot, but thought over every species of finesse by which I could trick some one of my fellow-sufferers to draw the short straw, as it had been agreed that whoever drew the shortest of four splinters from my hand was to die for the preservation of the rest. Before any one condemn me for this apparent heartlessness, let him be placed in a situation precisely similar to my own.

At length delay was no longer possible, and, with a heart almost bursting from my bosom, I advanced to the region of the fore-castle, where my companions were awaiting me. I held out my hand with the splinters, and

Peters immediately drew. He was free—*his*, at least, was not the shortest; and there was now another chance against my escape. I summoned up all my strength, and passed the lots to Augustus. He also drew immediately, and he also was free; and now, whether I should live or die, the chances were no more than precisely even. At this moment all the fierceness of the tiger possessed my bosom, and I felt towards my poor fellow creature, Parker, the most intense, the most diabolical hatred. But the feeling did not last; and, at length, with a convulsive shudder and closed eyes, I held out the two remaining splinters towards him. It was full five minutes before he could summon resolution to draw, during which period of heartrending suspense I never once opened my eyes. Presently one of the two lots was quickly drawn from my hand. The decision was then over, yet I knew not whether it was for me or against me. No one spoke, and still I dared not satisfy myself by looking at the splinter I held. Peters at length took me by the hand, and I forced myself to look up, when I immediately saw by the countenance of Parker that I was safe, and that he it was who had been doomed to suffer. Gasping for breath, I fell senseless to the deck.

I recovered from my swoon in time to behold the consummation of the tragedy in the death of him who had been chiefly instrumental in bringing it about. He made no resistance whatever, and was stabbed in the back by Peters, when he fell instantly dead. I must not dwell upon the fearful repast which immediately ensued. Such things may be imagined, but words have no power to impress the mind with the exquisite horror of their reality. Let it suffice to say that, having in some measure appeased the raging thirst which consumed us by the blood of the victim, and having by common consent taken off the hands, feet, and head, throwing them, together with the entrails, into the sea, we devoured the rest of the body, piecemeal, during the four ever memorable days of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth of the month.

On the nineteenth, there coming on a smart shower which lasted fifteen or twenty minutes, we contrived to catch some water by means of a sheet which had been fished up from the cabin by our drag just after the gale. The quantity we took in all did not amount to more than half a gallon; but even this scanty allowance supplied us with comparative strength and hope.

On the twenty-first we were again reduced to the last necessity. The weather still remained warm and pleasant, with occasional fogs and light breezes, most usually from N. to W.

On the twenty-second, as we were sitting close huddled together, gloomily revolving over our lamentable condition, there flashed through my mind all at once an idea which inspired me with a bright gleam of hope. I remembered that, when the foremast had been cut away, Peters, being in

the windward chains, passed one of the axes into my hand, requesting me to put it, if possible, in a place of security, and that a few minutes before the last heavy sea struck the brig and filled her I had taken this axe into the fore-castle, and laid it in one of the larboard berths. I now thought it possible that, by getting at this axe, we might cut through the deck over the store-room, and thus readily supply ourselves with provisions.

When I communicated this project to my companions, they uttered a feeble shout of joy, and we all proceeded forthwith to the fore-castle. The difficulty of descending here was greater than that of going down in the cabin, the opening being much smaller, for it will be remembered that the whole framework about the cabin companion-hatch had been carried away, whereas the fore-castle-way, being a simple hatch of only about three feet square, had remained uninjured. I did not hesitate, however, to attempt the descent; and, a rope being fastened round my body as before, I plunged boldly in, feet foremost, made my way quickly to the berth, and, at the very first attempt, brought up the axe. It was hailed with the most ecstatic joy and triumph, and the ease with which it had been obtained was regarded as an omen of our ultimate preservation.

We now commenced cutting at the deck with all the energy-rekindled hope, Peters and myself taking the axe by turns, Augustus's wounded arm not permitting him to aid us in any degree. As we were still so feeble as to be scarcely able to stand unsupported, and could consequently work but a minute or two without resting, it soon became evident that many long hours would be requisite to accomplish our task—that is, to cut an opening sufficiently large to admit of a free access to the storeroom. This consideration, however, did not discourage us; and, working all night by the light of the moon, we succeeded in effecting our purpose by daybreak on the morning of the twenty-third.

Peters now volunteered to go down; and, having made all arrangements as before, he descended, and soon returned, bringing up with him a small jar, which, to our great joy, proved to be full of olives. Having shared these among us, and devoured them with the greatest avidity, we proceeded to let him down again. This time he succeeded beyond our utmost expectations, returning instantly with a large ham and a bottle of Madeira wine. Of the latter we each took a moderate sup, having learned by experience the pernicious consequences of indulging too freely. The ham, except about two pounds near the bone, was not in a condition to be eaten, having been entirely spoiled by the salt water. The sound part was divided among us. Peters and Augustus, not being able to restrain their appetite, swallowed theirs upon the instant; but I was more cautious, and ate but a small portion of mine, dreading the thirst which I knew would ensue. We now rested a while from our labours, which had been intolerably severe.

By noon, feeling somewhat strengthened and refreshed, we again renewed our attempt at getting up provision, Peters and myself going down alternately, and always with more or less success, until sundown. During this interval we had the good fortune to bring up, altogether, four more small jars of olives, another ham, a carboy containing nearly three gallons of excellent Cape Madeira wine, and, what gave us still more delight, a small tortoise of the Gallipago breed, several of which had been taken on board by Captain Barnard, as the *Grampus* was leaving port, from the schooner *Mary Pitts*, just returned from a sealing voyage in the Pacific.

In a subsequent portion of this narrative I shall have frequent occasion to mention this species of tortoise. It is found principally, as most of my readers may know, in the group of islands called the Gallipagos, which, indeed, derive their name from the animal—the Spanish word *gallipago* meaning a fresh-water terrapin. From the peculiarity of their shape and action they have been sometimes called the elephant tortoise. They are frequently found of an enormous size. I have myself seen several which would weigh from twelve to fifteen hundred pounds, although I do not remember that any navigator speaks of having seen them weighing more than either hundred. Their appearance is singular, and even disgusting. Their steps are very slow, measured, and heavy, their bodies being carried about a foot from the ground. Their neck is long, and exceedingly slender; from eighteen inches to two feet is a very common length, and I killed one, where the distance from the shoulder to the extremity of the head was no less than three feet ten inches. The head has a striking resemblance to that of a serpent. They can exist without food for an almost incredible length of time, instances having been known where they have been thrown into the hold of a vessel and lain two years without nourishment of any kind—being as fat, and in every respect in as good order at the expiration of the time as when they were first put in. In one particular these extraordinary animals bear a resemblance to the dromedary, or camel of the desert. In a bag at the root of the neck they carry with them a constant supply of water. In some instances, upon killing them after a full year's deprivation of all nourishment, as much as three gallons of perfectly sweet and fresh water have been found in their bags. Their food is chiefly wild parsley and celery, with purslain, sea-kelp, and prickly pears, upon which latter vegetable they thrive wonderfully, a great quantity of it being usually found on the hillsides near the shore wherever the animal itself is discovered. They are excellent and highly nutritious food, and have, no doubt, been the means of preserving the lives of thousands of seamen employed in the whale-fishery and other pursuits in the Pacific.

The one which we had the good fortune to bring up from the storeroom was not of a large size, weighing probably sixty-five or seventy pounds. It

was a female, and in excellent condition, being exceedingly fat, and having more than a quart of limpid and sweet water in its bag. This was indeed a treasure; and, falling on our knees with one accord, we returned fervent thanks to God for so seasonable a relief.

We had great difficulty in getting the animal up through the opening, as its struggles were fierce and its strength prodigious. It was upon the point of making its escape from Peters's grasp, and slipping back into the water, when Augustus, throwing a rope with a slip-knot around its throat, held it up in this manner until I jumped into the hole by the side of Peters, and assisted him in lifting it out.

The water we drew carefully from the bag into the jug, which, it will be remembered, had been brought up before from the cabin. Having done this, we broke off the neck of a bottle so as to form, with the cork, a kind of glass, holding not quite half a gill. We then each drank one of these measures full, and resolved to limit ourselves to this quantity per day as long as it should hold out.

During the last two or three days, the weather having been dry and pleasant, the bedding we had obtained from the cabin, as well as our clothing, had become thoroughly dry, so that we passed this night (that of the twenty-third) in comparative comfort, enjoying a tranquil repose, after having supped plentifully on olives and ham, with a small allowance of the wine. Being afraid of losing some of our stores overboard during the night, in the event of a breeze springing up, we secured them as well as possible with cordage to the fragments of the windlass. Our tortoise, which we were anxious to preserve alive as long as we could, we threw on her back, and otherwise carefully fastened.

Chapter XIII

July 24. This morning saw us wonderfully recruited in spirits and strength. Notwithstanding the perilous situation in which we were still placed, ignorant of our position, although certainly at a great distance from land, without more food than would last us for a fortnight even with great care, almost entirely without water, and floating about at the mercy of every wind and wave, on the merest wreck in the world, still the infinitely more terrible distresses and dangers from which we had so lately and so providentially been delivered caused us to regard what we now endured as but little more than an ordinary evil—so strictly comparative is either good or ill.

At sunrise we were preparing to renew our attempts at getting up something from the storeroom, when, a smart shower coming on, with some lightning, we turned our attention to the catching of water by means of the

sheet we had used before for this purpose. We had no other means of collecting the rain than by holding the sheet spread out with one of the forechain-plates in the middle of it. The water, thus conducted to the centre, was drained through into our jug. We had nearly filled it in this manner, when a heavy squall coming on from the northward obliged us to desist, as the hulk began once more to roll so violently that we could no longer keep our feet. We now went forward, and, lashing ourselves securely to the remnant of the windlass as before, awaited the event with far more calmness than could have been anticipated, or would have been imagined possible under the circumstances. At noon the wind had freshened into a two-reef breeze, and by night into a stiff gale, accompanied with a tremendously heavy swell. Experience having taught us, however, the best method of arranging our lashings, we weathered this dreary night in tolerable security, although thoroughly drenched at almost every instant by the sea, and in momentary dread of being washed off. Fortunately, the weather was so warm as to render the water rather grateful than otherwise.

July 25. This morning the gale had diminished to a mere ten-knot breeze, and the sea had gone down with it so considerably that we were able to keep ourselves dry upon the deck. To our great grief, however, we found that two jars of our olives, as well as the whole of our ham, had been washed overboard, in spite of the careful manner in which they had been fastened. We determined not to kill the tortoise as yet, and contented ourselves for the present with a breakfast on a few of the olives, and a measure of water each, which latter we mixed, half and half, with wine, finding great relief and strength from the mixture, without the distressing intoxication which had ensued upon drinking the Port. The sea was still far too rough for the renewal of our efforts at getting up provision from the storeroom. Several articles, of no importance to us in our present situation, floated up through the opening during the day, and were immediately washed overboard. We also now observed that the hulk lay more along than ever, so that we could not stand an instant without lashing ourselves. On this account we passed a gloomy and uncomfortable day. At noon the sun appeared to be nearly vertical, and we had no doubt that we had been driven down by the long succession of northward and northwesterly winds into the near vicinity of the equator. Towards evening we saw several sharks, and were somewhat alarmed by the audacious manner in which an enormously large one approached us. At one time, a lurch throwing the deck very far beneath the water, the monster actually swam in upon us, floundering for some moments just over the companion-hatch, and striking Peters violently with his tail. A heavy sea at length hurled him overboard, much to our relief. In moderate weather we might have easily captured him.

July 26. This morning, the wind having greatly abated, and the sea not being very rough, we determined to renew our exertions in the storeroom. After a great deal of hard labour during the whole day, we found that nothing further was to be expected from this quarter, the partitions of the room having been stove during the night, and its contents swept into the hold. This discovery, as may be supposed, filled us with despair.

July 27. The sea nearly smooth, with a light wind, and still from the northward and westward. The sun coming out hotly in the afternoon, we occupied ourselves in drying our clothes. Found great relief from thirst, and much comfort otherwise, by bathing in the sea; in this, however, we were forced to use great caution, being afraid of sharks, several of which were seen swimming around the brig during the day.

July 28. Good weather still. The brig now began to lie along so alarmingly that we feared she would eventually roll bottom up. Prepared ourselves as well as we could for this emergency, lashing our tortoise, water-jug, and two remaining jars of olives as far as possible over to the windward, placing them outside the hull, below the main-chains. The sea very smooth all day, with little or no wind.

July 29. A continuance of the same weather. Augustus's wounded arm began to evince symptoms of mortification. He complained of drowsiness and excessive thirst, but no acute pain. Nothing could be done for his relief beyond rubbing his wounds with a little of the vinegar from the olives, and from this no benefit seemed to be experienced. We did everything in our power for his comfort, and trebled his allowance of water.

July 30. An excessively hot day, with no wind. An enormous shark kept close by the hulk during the whole of the forenoon. We made several unsuccessful attempts to capture him by means of a noose. Augustus much worse, and evidently sinking as much from want of proper nourishment as from the effect of his wounds. He constantly prayed to be released from his sufferings, wishing for nothing but death. This evening we ate the last of our olives, and found the water in our jug so putrid that we could not swallow it at all without the addition of wine. Determined to kill our tortoise in the morning.

July 31. After a night of excessive anxiety and fatigue, owing to the position of the hulk, we set about killing and cutting up our tortoise. She proved to be much smaller than we had supposed, although in good condition—the whole meat about her not amounting to more than ten pounds. With a view of preserving a portion of this as long as possible, we cut it into fine pieces, and filled with them our three remaining olive-jars and the wine-bottle (all of which had been kept), pouring in afterward the vinegar from the olives. In this manner we put away about three pounds of the tortoise, intending not to touch it until we had consumed the rest. We concluded to restrict ourselves to about four ounces of the meat per day; the whole would

thus last us thirteen days. A brisk shower, with severe thunder and lightning, came on about dusk, but lasted so short a time that we only succeeded in catching about half a pint of water. The whole of this, by common consent, was given to Augustus, who now appeared to be in the last extremity. He drank the water from the sheet as we caught it (we holding it above him as he lay so as to let it run into his mouth), for we had now nothing left capable of holding water, unless we had chosen to empty out our wine from the carboy, or the stale water from the jug. Either of these expedients would have been resorted to had the shower lasted.

The sufferer seemed to derive but little benefit from the draught. His arm was completely black from the wrist to the shoulder, and his feet were like ice. We expected every moment to see him breathe his last. He was frightfully emaciated; so much so that, although he weighed a hundred and twenty-seven pounds upon his leaving Nantucket, he now did not weigh more than forty or fifty *at the farthest*. His eyes were sunk far in his head, being scarcely perceptible, and the skin of his cheeks hung so loosely as to prevent his masticating any food, or even swallowing any liquid, without great difficulty.

August 1. A continuance of the same calm weather, with an oppressively hot sun. Suffered exceedingly from thirst, the water in the jug being absolutely putrid and swarming with vermin. We contrived, nevertheless, to swallow a portion of it by mixing it with wine—our thirst, however, was but little abated. We found more relief by bathing in the sea, but could not avail ourselves of this expedient except at long intervals, on account of the continual presence of sharks. We now saw clearly that Augustus could not be saved; that he was evidently dying. We could do nothing to relieve his sufferings, which appeared to be great. About twelve o'clock he expired in strong convulsions, and without having spoken for several hours. His death filled us with the most gloomy forebodings, and had so great an effect upon our spirits that we sat motionless by the corpse during the whole day, and never addressed each other except in a whisper. It was not until some time after dark that we took courage to get up and throw the body overboard. It was then loathsome beyond expression, and so far decayed that, as Peters attempted to lift it, an entire leg came off in his grasp. As the mass of putrefaction slipped over the vessel's side into the water, the glare of phosphoric light with which it was surrounded plainly discovered to us seven or eight large sharks, the clashing of whose horrible teeth, as their prey was torn to pieces among them, might have been heard at the distance of a mile. We shrank within ourselves in the extremity of horror at the sound.

August 2. The same fearfully calm and hot weather. The dawn found us in a state of pitiably dejection as well as bodily exhaustion. The water in the jug was now absolutely useless, being a thick gelatinous mass; nothing

but frightful-looking worms mingled with slime. We threw it out, and washed the jug well in the sea, afterward pouring a little vinegar in it from our bottles of pickled tortoise. Our thirst could now scarcely be endured, and we tried in vain to relieve it by wine, which seemed only to add fuel to the flame, and excited us to a high degree of intoxication. We afterward endeavoured to relieve our sufferings by mixing the wine with seawater; but this instantly brought about the most violent retchings, so that we never again attempted it. During the whole day we anxiously sought an opportunity of bathing, but to no purpose; for the hulk was now entirely besieged on all sides with sharks—no doubt the identical monsters who had devoured our poor companion on the evening before, and who were in momentary expectation of another similar feast. This circumstance occasioned us the most bitter regret, and filled us with the most depressing and melancholy forebodings. We had experienced indescribable relief in bathing, and to have this resource cut off in so frightful a manner was more than we could bear. Nor, indeed, were we altogether free from the apprehension of immediate danger, for the least slip or false movement would have thrown us at once within reach of these voracious fish, who frequently thrust themselves directly upon us, swimming up to leeward. No shouts or exertions on our part seemed to alarm them. Even when one of the largest was struck with an axe by Peters, and much wounded, he persisted in his attempts to push in where we were. A cloud came up at dusk, but, to our extreme anguish, passed over without discharging itself. It is quite impossible to conceive our sufferings from thirst at this period. We passed a sleepless night, both on this account and through dread of the sharks.

August 3. No prospect of relief, and the brig lying still more and more along, so that now we could not maintain a footing upon deck at all. Busied ourselves in securing our wine and tortoise-meat, so that we might not lose them in the event of our rolling over. Got out two stout spikes from the forechains, and, by means of the axe, drove them into the hull to windward within a couple of feet of the water; this not being very far from the keel, as we were nearly upon our beam-ends. To these spikes we now lashed our provisions, as being more secure than their former position beneath the chains. Suffered great agony from thirst during the whole day—no chance of bathing on account of the sharks, which never left us for a moment. Found it impossible to sleep.

August 4. A little before daybreak we perceived that the hulk was heeling over, and aroused ourselves to prevent being thrown off by the movement. At first the roll was slow and gradual, and we contrived to clamber over to windward very well, having taken the precaution to leave ropes hanging from the spikes we had driven in for the provision. But we had not calculated sufficiently upon the acceleration of the impetus; for presently

the heel became too violent to allow of our keeping pace with it; and, before either of us knew what was to happen, we found ourselves hurled furiously into the sea, and struggling several fathoms beneath the surface, with the huge hull immediately above us.

In going under the water I had been obliged to let go my hold upon the rope; and finding that I was completely beneath the vessel, and my strength utterly exhausted, I scarcely made a struggle for life, and resigned myself, in a few seconds, to die. But here again I was deceived, not having taken into consideration the natural rebound of the hull to windward. The whirl of the water upward, which the vessel occasioned in rolling partially back, brought me to the surface still more violently than I had been plunged beneath. Upon coming up, I found myself about twenty yards from the hulk, as near as I could judge. She was lying keel up, rocking furiously from side to side, and the sea in all directions around was much agitated, and full of strong whirlpools. I could see nothing of Peters. An oil-cask was floating within a few feet of me, and various other articles from the brig were scattered about.

My principal terror was now on account of the sharks, which I knew to be in my vicinity. In order to deter these, if possible, from approaching me, I splashed the water vigorously with both hands and feet as I swam towards the hulk, creating a body of foam. I have no doubt that to this expedient, simple as it was, I was indebted for my preservation; for the sea all around the brig, just before her rolling over, was so crowded with these monsters, that I must have been, and really was, in actual contact with some of them during my progress. By great good fortune, however, I reached the side of the vessel in safety, although so utterly weakened by the violent exertion I had used that I should never have been able to get upon it but for the timely assistance of Peters, who now, to my great joy, made his appearance (having scrambled up to the keel from the opposite side of the hull), and threw me the end of a rope—one of those which had been attached to the spikes.

Having barely escaped this danger, our attention was now directed to the dreadful imminency of another; that of absolute starvation. Our whole stock of provision had been swept overboard in spite of all our care in securing it; and seeing no longer the remotest possibility of obtaining more, we gave way both of us to despair, weeping aloud like children, and neither of us attempting to offer consolation to the other. Such weakness can scarcely be conceived, and to those who have never been similarly situated will, no doubt, appear unnatural; but it must be remembered that our intellects were so entirely disordered by the long course of privation and terror to which we had been subjected, that we could not justly be considered, at that period, in the light of rational beings. In subsequent perils, nearly as great, if not greater, I bore up with fortitude against all the evils of my situation,

and Peters, it will be seen, evinced a stoical philosophy nearly as incredible as his present childlike supineness and imbecility—the mental condition made the difference.

The overturning of the brig, even with the consequent loss of the wine and turtle, would not, in fact, have rendered our situation more deplorable than before, except for the disappearance of the bedclothes by which we had been hitherto enabled to catch rainwater, and of the jug in which we had kept it when caught; for we found the whole bottom, from within two or three feet of the bends as far as the keel, together with the keel itself, *thickly covered with large barnacles, which proved to be excellent and highly nutritious food*. Thus, in two important respects, the accident we had so greatly dreaded proved a benefit rather than an injury; it had opened to us a supply of provisions, which we could not have exhausted, using it moderately, in a month; and it had greatly contributed to our comfort as regards position, we being much more at our ease, and in infinitely less danger, than before.

The difficulty, however, of now obtaining water blinded us to all the benefits of the change in our condition. That we might be ready to avail ourselves, as far as possible, of any shower which might fall, we took off our shirts, to make use of them as we had of the sheets—not hoping, of course, to get more in this way, even under the most favourable circumstances, than half a gill at a time. No signs of a cloud appeared during the day, and the agonies of our thirst were nearly intolerable. At night Peters obtained about an hour's disturbed sleep, but my intense sufferings would not permit me to close my eyes for a single moment.

August 5. To-day, a gentle breeze springing up carried us through a vast quantity of seaweed, among which we were so fortunate as to find eleven small crabs, which afforded us several delicious meals. Their shells being quite soft, we ate them entire, and found that they irritated our thirst far less than the barnacles. Seeing no trace of sharks among the seaweed, we also ventured to bathe, and remained in the water for four or five hours, during which we experienced a very sensible diminution of our thirst. Were greatly refreshed, and spent the night somewhat more comfortably than before, both of us snatching a tittle sleep.

August 6. This day we were blessed by a brisk and continual rain, lasting from about noon until after dark. Bitterly did we now regret the loss of our jug and carboy; for, in spite of the little means we had of catching the water, we might have filled one, if not both of them. As it was, we contrived to satisfy the cravings of thirst by suffering the shirts to become saturated, and then wringing them so as to let the grateful fluid trickle into our mouths. In this occupation we passed the entire day.

August 7. Just at daybreak we both at the same instant descried a sail to the eastward, and *evidently coming towards us!* We hailed the glorious sight

with a long, although feeble shout of rapture; and began instantly to make every signal in our power, by flaring the shirts in the air, leaping as high as our weak condition would permit, and even by hallooing with all the strength of our lungs, although the vessel could not have been less than fifteen miles distant. However, she still continued to near our hulk, and we felt that, if she but held her present course, she must eventually come so close as to perceive us. In about an hour after we first discovered her we could clearly see the people on her decks. She was a long, low, and rakish-looking topsail schooner, with a black ball in her foretopsail, and had, apparently, a full crew. We now became alarmed, for we could hardly imagine it possible that she did not observe us, and were apprehensive that she meant to leave us to perish as we were—an act of fiendish barbarity, which, however incredible it may appear, has been repeatedly perpetrated at sea, under circumstances very nearly similar, and by beings who were regarded as belonging to the human species.* In this instance, however, by the mercy of God, we were destined to be most happily deceived; for presently we were aware of a sudden commotion on the deck of the stranger, who immediately afterward run up a British flag, and, hauling her wind, bore up directly upon us. In half an hour more we found ourselves in her cabin. She proved to be the *Jane Guy*, of Liverpool, Captain Guy, bound on a sealing and trading voyage to the South Seas and Pacific.

*The case of the brig *Polly*, of Boston, is one so much in point, and her fate, in many respects, so remarkably similar to our own, that I cannot forbear alluding to it here. This vessel, of one hundred and thirty tons burden, sailed from Boston, with a cargo of lumber and provisions, for Santa Croix, on the twelfth of December, 1811, under the command of Captain Casneau. There were eight souls on board besides the captain—the mate, four seamen, and the cook, together with a Mr. Hunt, and a negro girl belonging to him. On the fifteenth, having cleared the shoal of Georges, she sprung a leak in a gale of wind from the southeast, and was finally capsized; but, the mast going by the board, she afterward righted. They remained in this situation, without fire, and with very little provision, for the period of *one hundred and ninety-one days* (from December the fifteenth to June the twentieth) when Captain Casneau and Samuel Badger, the only survivors, were taken off the wreck by the *Fame*, of Hull, Captain Featherstone, bound home from Rio Janeiro. When picked up they were in latitude 28 N., longitude 13 W., having drifted above two thousand miles. On the ninth of July the *Fame* fell in with the brig *Dromeo*, Captain Perkins, who landed the two sufferers in Kennebeck. The narrative from which we gather these details ends in the following words.

“It is natural to inquire how they could float such a vast distance, upon the most frequented part of the Atlantic, and not be discovered all this time. *They were passed by more than a dozen sail, one of which came so nigh them that they could distinctly see the people on deck and on the rigging looking at them; but, to the inexpressible disappointment of the starving and freezing men, they stifled the dictates of compassion, hoisted sail, and cruelly abandoned them to their fate.*”

Chapter XIV

The *Jane Guy* was a fine-looking topsail schooner of a hundred and eighty tons burden. She was unusually sharp in the bows, and on a wind, in moderate weather, the fastest sailer I have ever seen. Her qualities, however, as a rough sea-boat, were not so good, and her draught of water was by far too great for the trade to which she was destined. For this peculiar service a larger vessel, and one of a light proportionate draught, is desirable—say a vessel of from three to three hundred and fifty tons. She should be barque-rigged, and in other respects of a different construction from the usual South Sea ships. It is absolutely necessary that she should be well armed. She should have, say, ten or twelve twelve-pound carronades, and two or three long twelves, with brass blunderbusses, and water-tight arm-chests for each top. Her anchors and cables should be of far greater strength than is required for any other species of trade, and, above all, her crew should be numerous and efficient—not less, for such a vessel as I have described, than fifty or sixty able-bodied men. The *Jane Guy* had a crew of thirty-five, all able seamen, besides the captain and mate, but she was not altogether as well armed or otherwise equipped as a navigator acquainted with the difficulties and dangers of the trade could have desired.

Captain Guy was a gentleman of great urbanity of manner, and of considerable experience in the southern traffic, to which he had devoted a great portion of his life. He was deficient, however, in energy, and, consequently, in that spirit of enterprise which is here so absolutely requisite. He was part owner of the vessel in which he sailed, and was invested with discretionary powers to cruise in the South Seas for any cargo which might come most readily to hand. He had on board, as usual in such voyages, beads, looking-glasses, tinderworks, axes, hatchets, saws, adzes, planes, chisels, gouges, gimlets, files, spokeshaves, rasps, hammers, nails, knives, scissors, razors, needles, thread, crockery-ware, calico, trinkets, and other similar articles.

The schooner sailed from Liverpool on the tenth of July, crossed the Tropic of Cancer on the twenty-fifth, in longitude twenty degrees west, and reached Sal, one of the Cape Verd Islands, on the twenty-ninth, where she took in salt and other necessaries for the voyage. On the third of August she left the Cape Verds and steered southwest, stretching over towards the coast of Brazil so as to cross the equator between the meridians of twenty-eight and thirty degrees west longitude. This is the course usually taken by vessels bound from Europe to the Cape of Good Hope, or by that route to the East Indies. By proceeding thus they avoid the calms and strong contrary currents which continually prevail on the coast of Guinea, while, in the end, it is found to be the shortest track, as westerly winds are never wanting afterward by which to reach the Cape. It was Captain Guy's intention to

make his first stoppage at Kerguelen's Land—I hardly know for what reason. On the day we were picked up the schooner was off Cape St. Roque, in longitude 31 W; so that, when found, we had drifted probably, from north to south, *not less than five-and-twenty degrees*.

On board the *Jane Guy* we were treated with all the kindness our distressed situation demanded. In about a fortnight, during which time we continued steering to the southeast, with gentle breezes and fine weather, both Peters and myself recovered entirely from the effects of our late privation and dreadful suffering, and we began to remember what had passed rather as a frightful dream from which we had been happily awakened, than as events which had taken place in sober and naked reality. I have since found that this species of partial oblivion is usually brought about by sudden transition, whether from joy to sorrow or from sorrow to joy—the degree of forgetfulness being proportioned to the degree of difference in the exchange. Thus, in my own case, I now feel it impossible to realize the full extent of the misery which I endured during the days spent upon the hulk. The incidents are remembered, but not the feelings which the incidents elicited at the time of their occurrence. I only know that, when they did occur, I *then* thought human nature could sustain nothing more of agony.

We continued our voyage for some weeks without any incidents of greater moment than the occasional meeting with whaling-ships, and more frequently with the black or right whale, so called in contradistinction to the spermaceti. These, however, were chiefly found south of the twenty-fifth parallel. On the sixteenth of September, being in the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope, the schooner encountered her first gale of any violence since leaving Liverpool. In this neighbourhood, but more frequently to the south and east of the promontory (we were to the westward), navigators have often to contend with storms from the northward which rage with great fury. They always bring with them a heavy sea, and one of their most dangerous features is the instantaneous chopping round of the wind, an occurrence almost certain to take place during the greatest force of the gale. A perfect hurricane will be blowing at one moment from the northward or northeast, and in the next not a breath of wind will be felt in that direction, while from the southwest it will come out all at once with a violence almost inconceivable. A bright spot to the southward is the sure forerunner of the change, and vessels are thus enabled to take the proper precautions.

It was about six in the morning when the blow came on with a white squall, and, as usual, from the northward. By eight it had increased very much, and brought down upon us one of the most tremendous seas I had then ever beheld. Everything had been made as snug as possible, but the schooner laboured excessively, and gave evidence of her bad qualities as a sea-boat, pitching her fore-castle under at every plunge, and with the great-

est difficulty struggling up from one wave before she was buried in another. Just before sunset the bright spot for which we had been on the lookout made its appearance in the southwest, and in an hour afterward we perceived the little headsail we carried flapping listlessly against the mast. In two minutes more, in spite of every preparation, we were hurled on our beam-ends as if by magic, and a perfect wilderness of foam made a clear breach over us as we lay. The blow from the southwest, however, luckily proved to be nothing more than a squall, and we had the good fortune to right the vessel without the loss of a spar. A heavy cross sea gave us great trouble for a few hours after this, but towards morning we found ourselves in nearly as good condition as before the gale. Captain Guy considered that he had made an escape little less than miraculous.

On the thirteenth of October we came in sight of Prince Edward's Island, in latitude $46^{\circ} 53'$ S., longitude $37^{\circ} 46'$ E. Two days afterward we found ourselves near Possession Island, and presently passed the islands of Crozet, in latitude $42^{\circ} 59'$ S., longitude 48° E. On the eighteenth we made Kerguelen's or Desolation Island, in the Southern Indian Ocean, and came to anchor in Christmas Harbour, having four fathoms of water.

This island, or rather group of islands, bears southeast from the Cape of Good Hope, and is distant therefrom nearly eight hundred leagues. It was first discovered in 1772, by the Baron de Kerguelen, or Kerguelen, a Frenchman, who, thinking the land to form a portion of an extensive southern continent, carried home information to that effect, which produced much excitement at the time. The government, taking the matter up, sent the baron back in the following year for the purpose of giving his new discovery a critical examination, when the mistake was discovered. In 1777, Captain Cook fell in with the same group, and gave to the principal one the name of Desolation Island, a title which it certainly well deserves. Upon approaching the land, however, the navigator might be induced to suppose otherwise, as the sides of most of the hills, from September to March, are clothed with very brilliant verdure. This deceitful appearance is caused by a small plant resembling saxifrage, which is abundant, growing in large patches on a species of crumbling moss. Besides this plant there is scarcely a sign of vegetation on the island, if we except some coarse rank grass near the harbour, some lichen, and a shrub which bears resemblance to a cabbage shooting into seed, and which has a bitter and acrid taste.

The face of the country is hilly, although none of the hills can be called lofty. Their tops are perpetually covered with snow. There are several harbours, of which Christmas Harbour is the most convenient. It is the first to be met with on the northeast side of the island after passing Cape François, which forms the northern shore, and, by its peculiar shape, serves to distinguish the harbour. Its projecting point terminates in a high rock, through

which is a large hole, forming a natural arch. The entrance is in latitude $48^{\circ} 40'$ S., longitude $69^{\circ} 6'$ E. Passing in here, good anchorage may be found under the shelter of several small islands, which form a sufficient protection from all easterly winds. Proceeding on eastwardly from this anchorage you come to Wasp Bay, at the head of the harbour. This is a small basin, completely landlocked, into which you can go with four fathoms, and find anchorage in from ten to three, hard clay bottom. A ship might lie here with her best bower ahead all the year round without risk. To the westward, at the head of Wasp Bay, is a small stream of excellent water, easily procured.

Some seal of the fur and hair species are still to be found on Kerguelen's Island, and sea elephants abound. The feathered tribes are discovered in great numbers. Penguins are very plenty, and of these there are four different kinds. The royal penguin, so called from its size and beautiful plumage, is the largest. The upper part of the body is usually gray, sometimes of a lilach tint; the under portion of the purest white imaginable. The head is of a glossy and most brilliant black, the feet also. The chief beauty of the plumage, however, consists in two broad stripes of a gold colour, which pass along from the head to the breast. The bill is long, and either pink or bright scarlet. These birds walk erect, with a stately carriage. They carry their heads high, with their wings drooping like two arms, and, as their tails project from their body in a line with the legs, the resemblance to a human figure is very striking, and would be apt to deceive the spectator at a casual glance or in the gloom of the evening. The royal penguins which we met with on Kerguelen's Land were rather larger than a goose. The other kinds are the macaroni, the jackass, and the rookery penguin. These are much smaller, less beautiful in plumage, and different in other respects.

Besides the penguin many other birds are here to be found, among which may be mentioned seahens, blue peterels, teal, ducks, Port Egmont hens, shags, Cape pigeons, the nelly, seaswallows, terns, seagulls, Mother Carey's chickens, Mother Carey's geese, or the great peterel, and, lastly, the albatross.

The great peterel is as large as the common albatross, and is carnivorous. It is frequently called the breakbones, or osprey peterel. They are not at all shy, and, when properly cooked, are palatable food. In flying they sometimes sail very close to the surface of the water, with the wings expanded, without appearing to move them in the least degree, or make any exertion with them whatever.

The albatross is one of the largest and fiercest of the South Sea birds. It is of the gull species, and takes its prey on the wing, never coming on land except for the purpose of breeding. Between this bird and the penguin the most singular friendship exists. Their nests are constructed with great uniformity, upon a plan concerted between the two species, that of the albatross

being placed in the centre of a little square formed by the nests of four penguins. Navigators have agreed in calling an assemblage of such encampments a rookery. These rookeries have been often described, but, as my readers may not all have seen these descriptions, and as I shall have occasion hereafter to speak of the penguin and albatross, it will not be amiss to say something here of their mode of building and living.

When the season for incubation arrives, the birds assemble in vast numbers, and for some days appear to be deliberating upon the proper course to be pursued. At length they proceed to action. A level piece of ground is selected, of suitable extent, usually comprising three or four acres, and situated as near the sea as possible, being still beyond its reach. The spot is chosen with reference to its evenness of surface, and that is preferred which is the least encumbered with stones. This matter being arranged, the birds proceed, with one accord, and actuated apparently by one mind, to trace out, with mathematical accuracy, either a square or other parallelogram, as may best suit the nature of the ground, and of just sufficient size to accommodate easily all the birds assembled, and no more—in this particular seeming determined upon preventing the access of future stragglers who have not participated in the labour of the encampment. One side of the place thus marked out runs parallel with the water's edge, and is left open for ingress or egress.

Having defined the limits of the rookery, the colony now begin to clear it of every species of rubbish, picking up stone by stone, and carrying them outside of the lines, and close by them, so as to form a wall on the three inland sides. Just within this wall a perfectly level and smooth walk is formed, from six to eight feet wide, and extending around the encampment—thus serving the purpose of a general promenade.

The next process is to partition out the whole area into small squares exactly equal in size. This is done by forming narrow paths, very smooth, and crossing each other at right angles throughout the entire extent of the rookery. At each intersection of these paths the nest of an albatross is constructed, and a penguin's nest in the centre of each square, thus every penguin is surrounded by four albatrosses, and each albatross by a like number of penguins. The penguin's nest consists of a hole in the earth, very shallow, being only just of sufficient depth to keep her single egg from rolling. The albatross is somewhat less simple in her arrangements, erecting a hillock about a foot high and two in diameter. This is made of earth, seaweed, and shells. On its summit she builds her nest.

The birds take especial care never to leave their nests unoccupied for an instant during the period of incubation, or, indeed, until the young progeny are sufficiently strong to take care of themselves. While the male is absent at sea in search of food, the female remains on duty, and it is only

upon the return of her partner that she ventures abroad. The eggs are never left uncovered at all—while one bird leaves the nest, the other nestling in by its side. This precaution is rendered necessary by the thievish propensities prevalent in the rookery, the inhabitants making no scruple to purloin each other's eggs at every good opportunity.

Although there are some rookeries in which the penguin and albatross are the sole population, yet in most of them a variety of oceanic birds are to be met with, enjoying all the privileges of citizenship, and scattering their nests here and there, wherever they can find room, never interfering, however, with the stations of the larger species. The appearance of such encampments, when seen from a distance, is exceedingly singular. The whole atmosphere just above the settlement is darkened with the immense number of the albatross (mingled with the smaller tribes) which are continually hovering over it, either going to the ocean or returning home. At the same time a crowd of penguins are to be observed, some passing to and fro in the narrow alleys, and some marching, with the military strut so peculiar to them, around the general promenade-ground which encircles the rookery. In short, survey it as we will, nothing can be more astonishing than the spirit of reflection evinced by these feathered beings, and nothing surely can be better calculated to elicit reflection in every well-regulated human intellect.

On the morning after our arrival in Christmas Harbour the chief mate, Mr. Patterson, took the boats, and (although it was somewhat early in the season) went in search of seal, leaving the captain and a young relation of his on a point of barren land to the westward, they having some business, whose nature I could not ascertain, to transact in the interior of the island. Captain Guy took with him a bottle, in which was a sealed letter, and made his way from the point on which he was set on shore towards one of the highest peaks in the place. It is probable that his design was to leave the letter on that height for some vessel which he expected to come after him. As soon as we lost sight of him we proceeded (Peters and myself being in the mate's boat) on our cruise around the coast, looking for seal. In this business we were occupied about three weeks, examining with great care every nook and comer, not only of Kerguelen's Land, but of the several small islands in the vicinity. Our labours, however, were not crowned with any important success. We saw a great many fur seal, but they were exceedingly shy, and, with the greatest exertions, we could only procure three hundred and fifty skins in all. Sea elephants were abundant, especially on the western coast of the main island, but of these we killed only twenty, and this with great difficulty. On the smaller islands we discovered a good many of the hair seal, but did not molest them. We returned to the schooner on the eleventh, where we found Captain Guy and his nephew, who gave a very bad account of the interior, representing it as one of the most dreary and utterly barren

countries in the world. They had remained two nights on the island, owing to some misunderstanding, on the part of the second mate, in regard to the sending of a jollyboat from the schooner to take them off.

Chapter XV

On the twelfth we made sail from Christmas Harbour, retracing our way to the westward, and leaving Marion's Island, one of Crozet's group, on the larboard. We afterward passed Prince Edward's Island, leaving it also on our left; then, steering more to the northward, made, in fifteen days, the islands of Tristan d'Acunha, in latitude $37^{\circ} 8' S.$, longitude $12^{\circ} 8' W.$

This group, now so well known, and which consists of three circular islands, was first discovered by the Portuguese, and was visited afterward by the Dutch in 1643, and by the French in 1767. The three islands together form a triangle, and are distant from each other about ten miles, there being fine open passages between. The land in all of them is very high, especially in Tristan d'Acunha, properly so called. This is the largest of the group, being fifteen miles in circumference, and so elevated that it can be seen in clear weather at the distance of eighty or ninety miles. A part of the land towards the north rises more than a thousand feet perpendicularly from the sea. A tableland at this height extends back nearly to the centre of the island, and from this tableland arises a lofty cone like that of Teneriffe. The lower half of this cone is clothed with trees of good size, but the upper region is barren rock, usually hidden among the clouds, and covered with snow during the greater part of the year. There are no shoals or other dangers about the island, the shores being remarkably bold and the water deep. On the northwestern coast is a bay, with a beach of black sand, where a landing with boats can be easily effected, provided there be a southerly wind. Plenty of excellent water may here be readily procured; also cod, and other fish, may be taken with hook and line.

The next island in point of size, and the most westwardly of the group, is that called the Inaccessible. Its precise situation is $37^{\circ} 17' S.$ latitude, longitude $12^{\circ} 24' W.$ It is seven or eight miles in circumference, and on all sides presents a forbidding and precipitous aspect. Its top is perfectly flat, and the whole region is sterile, nothing growing upon it except a few stunted shrubs.

Nightingale Island, the smallest and most southerly, is in latitude $37^{\circ} 26' S.$, longitude $12^{\circ} 12' W.$ Off its southern extremity is a high ledge of rocky islets; a few also of a similar appearance are seen to the northeast. The ground is irregular and sterile, and a deep valley partially separates it.

The shores of these islands abound, in the proper season, with sea lions, sea elephants, the hair and fur seal, together with a great variety of oceanic birds. Whales are also plenty in their vicinity. Owing to the ease with which these various animals were here formerly taken, the group has been much visited since its discovery. The Dutch and French frequented it at a very early period. In 1790, Captain Patten, of the ship *Industry*, of Philadelphia, made Tristan d'Acunha, where he remained seven months (from August, 1790, to April, 1791) for the purpose of collecting sealskins. In this time he gathered no less than five thousand six hundred, and says that he would have had no difficulty in loading a large ship with oil in three weeks. Upon his arrival he found no quadrupeds, with the exception of a few wild goats—the island now abounds with all our most valuable domestic animals, which have been introduced by subsequent navigators.

I believe it was not long after Captain Patten's visit that Captain Colquhoun, of the American brig *Betsey*, touched at the largest of the islands for the purpose of refreshment. He planted onions, potatoes, cabbages, and a great many other vegetables, an abundance of all which are now to be met with.

In 1811, a Captain Heywood, in the *Nereus*, visited Tristan. He found there three Americans, who were residing upon the islands to prepare seal-skins and oil. One of these men was named Jonathan Lambert, and he called himself the sovereign of the country. He had cleared and cultivated about sixty acres of land, and turned his attention to raising the coffee-plant and sugar-cane, with which he had been furnished by the American minister at Rio Janeiro. This settlement, however, was finally abandoned, and in 1817 the islands were taken possession of by the British government, who sent a detachment for that purpose from the Cape of Good Hope. They did not, however, retain them long; but, upon the evacuation of the country as a British possession, two or three English families took up their residence there independently of the government. On the twenty-fifth of March 1824, the *Berwick*, Captain Jeffrey, from London to Van Diemen's Land, arrived at the place, where they found an Englishman of the name of Glass, formerly a corporal in the British artillery. He claimed to be supreme governor of the islands, and had under his control twenty-one men and three women. He gave a very favourable account of the salubrity of the climate and of the productiveness of the soil. The population occupied themselves chiefly in collecting sealskins and sea elephant oil, with which they traded to the Cape of Good Hope, Glass owning a small schooner. At the period of our arrival the governor was still a resident, but his little community had multiplied, there being fifty-six persons upon Tristan, besides a smaller settlement of seven on Nightingale Island. We had no difficulty in procuring almost every kind of refreshment which we required—sheep, hogs, bul-

locks, rabbits, poultry, goats, fish in great variety, and vegetables were abundant. Having come to anchor close in with the large island, in eighteen fathoms, we took all we wanted on board very conveniently. Captain Guy also purchased of Glass five hundred sealskins and some ivory. We remained here a week, during which the prevailing winds were from the northward and westward, and the weather somewhat hazy. On the fifth of November we made sail to the southward and westward, with the intention of having a thorough search for a group of islands called the Auroras, respecting whose existence a great diversity of opinion has existed.

These islands are said to have been discovered as early as 1762, by the commander of the ship *Aurora*. In 1790, Captain Manuel de Oyarvido, in the ship *Princess*, belonging to the Royal Philippine Company, sailed, as he asserts, directly among them. In 1794, the Spanish corvette *Atrevida* went with the determination of ascertaining their precise situation, and, in a paper published by the Royal Hydrographical Society of Madrid in the year 1809, the following language is used respecting this expedition. "The corvette *Atrevida* practised, in their immediate vicinity, from the twenty-first to the twenty-seventh of January, all the necessary observations, and measured by chronometers the difference of longitude between these islands and the port of Soledad in the Malvinas. The islands are three; they are very nearly in the same meridian; the centre one is rather low, and the other two may be seen at nine leagues distance." The observations made on board the *Atrevida* give the following results as the precise situation of each island. The most northern is in latitude $52^{\circ} 37' 24''$ S., longitude $47^{\circ} 43' 15''$ W.; the middle one in latitude $53^{\circ} 2' 40''$ S., longitude $47^{\circ} 55' 15''$ W.; and the most southern in latitude $53^{\circ} 15' 22''$ S., longitude $47^{\circ} 57' 15''$ W.

On the twenty-seventh of January, 1820, Captain James Weddell, of the British navy, sailed from Staten Land also in search of the Auroras. He reports that, having made the most diligent search, and passed not only immediately over the spots indicated by the commander of the *Atrevida*, but in every direction throughout the vicinity of these spots, he could discover no indication of land. These conflicting statements have induced other navigators to look out for the islands; and, strange to say, while some have sailed through every inch of sea where they are supposed to lie without finding them, there have been not a few who declare positively that they have seen them, and even been close in with their shores. It was Captain Guy's intention to make every exertion within his power to settle the question so oddly in dispute.*

We kept on our course, between the south and west, with variable weather, until the twentieth of the month, when we found ourselves on the debated ground, being in latitude $53^{\circ} 15'$ S., longitude $47^{\circ} 58'$ W.—that is to say, very nearly upon the spot indicated as the situation of the most

southern of the group. Not perceiving any sign of land, we continued to the westward in the parallel of fifty-three degrees south, as far as the meridian of fifty degrees west. We then stood to the north as far as the parallel of fifty-two degrees south, when we turned to the eastward, and kept our parallel by double altitudes, morning and evening, and meridian altitudes of the planets and moon. Having thus gone eastwardly to the meridian of the western coast of Georgia, we kept that meridian until we were in the latitude from which we set out. We then took diagonal courses throughout the entire extent of sea circumscribed, keeping a lookout constantly at the mast-head, and repeating our examination with the greatest care for a period of three weeks, during which the weather was remarkably pleasant and fair, with no haze whatsoever. Of course we were thoroughly satisfied that, whatever islands might have existed in this vicinity at any former period, no vestige of them remained at the present day. Since my return home I find that the same ground was traced over with equal care in 1822 by Captain Johnson, of the American schooner *Henry*, and by Captain Morrell, in the American schooner *Wasp*—in both cases with the same result as in our own.

Chapter XVI

It had been Captain Guy's original intention, after satisfying about the Auroras, to proceed through the Strait of Magellan, and up along the western coast of Patagonia; but information received at Tristan d'Acunha induced him to steer to the southward, in the hope of falling in with some small islands said to lie about the parallel of 60° S., longitude $41^{\circ} 20'$ W. In the event of his not discovering these lands, he designed, should the season prove favourable, to push on towards the pole. Accordingly, on the twelfth of December, we made sail in that direction. On the eighteenth we found ourselves about the station indicated by Glass, and cruised for three days in that neighbourhood without finding any traces of the islands he had mentioned. On the twenty-first, the weather being unusually pleasant, we again made sail to the southward, with the resolution of penetrating in that course as far as possible. Before entering upon this portion of my narrative, it may be as well, for the information of those readers who have paid little attention to the progress of discovery in these regions, to give some brief account of the very few attempts at reaching the southern pole which have hitherto been made.

*Among the vessels which at various times have professed to meet with the Auroras may be mentioned the ship *San Miguel*, in 1769; the ship *Aurora*, in 1774; the brig *Pearl*, in 1779; and the ship *Dolores*, in 1790. They all agree in giving the mean latitude fifty-three degrees south.

That of Captain Cook was the first of which we have any distinct account. In 1772 he sailed to the south in the *Resolution*, accompanied by Lieutenant Furneaux in the *Adventure*. In December he found himself as far as the fifty-eighth parallel of south latitude, and in longitude $26^{\circ} 57'$ E. Here he met with narrow fields of ice, about eight or ten inches thick, and running northwest and southeast. This ice was in large cakes, and usually it was packed so closely that the vessels had great difficulty in forcing a passage. At this period Captain Cook supposed, from the vast number of birds to be seen, and from other indications, that he was in the near vicinity of land. He kept on to the southward, the weather being exceedingly cold, until he reached the sixty-fourth parallel, in longitude $38^{\circ} 14'$ E. Here he had mild weather, with gentle breezes, for five days, the thermometer being at thirty-six. In January, 1773, the vessels crossed the Antarctic circle, but did not succeed in penetrating much farther; for, upon reaching latitude $67^{\circ} 15'$, they found all farther progress impeded by an immense body of ice, extending all along the southern horizon as far as the eye could reach. This ice was of every variety and some large floes of it, miles in extent, formed a compact mass, rising eighteen or twenty feet above the water. It being late in the season, and no hope entertained of rounding these obstructions, Captain Cook now reluctantly turned to the northward.

In the November following he renewed his search in the Antarctic. In latitude $59^{\circ} 40'$ he met with a strong current setting to the southward. In December, when the vessels were in latitude $67^{\circ} 31'$, longitude $142^{\circ} 54'$ W., the cold was excessive, with heavy gales and fog. Here also birds were abundant; the albatross, the penguin, and the peterel especially. In latitude $70^{\circ} 23'$ some large islands of ice were encountered, and shortly after-ward, the clouds to the southward were observed to be of a snowy whiteness, indicating the vicinity of field ice. In latitude $71^{\circ} 10'$, longitude $106^{\circ} 54'$ W., the navigators were stopped, as before, by an immense frozen expanse, which filled the whole area of the southern horizon. The northern edge of this expanse was ragged and broken, so firmly wedged together as to be utterly impassable, and extending about a mile to the southward. Behind it the frozen surface was comparatively smooth for some distance, until terminated in the extreme back-ground by gigantic ranges of ice mountains, the one towering above the other. Captain Cook concluded that this vast field reached the southern pole or was joined to a continent. Mr. J. N. Reynolds, whose great exertions and perseverance have at length succeeded in getting set on foot a national expedition, partly for the purpose of exploring these regions, thus speaks of the attempt of the *Resolution*. "We are not surprised that Captain Cook was unable to go beyond $71^{\circ} 10'$, but we are astonished that he did attain that point on the meridian of $106^{\circ} 54'$, west longitude. Palmer's Land lies south of the Shetland, latitude sixty-four degrees, and

tends to the southward and westward farther than any navigator has yet penetrated. Cook was standing for this land when his progress was arrested by the ice; which, we apprehend, must always be the case in that point, and so early in the season as the sixth of January—and we should not be surprised if a portion of the icy mountains described was attached to the main body of Palmer's Land, or to some other portions of land lying farther to the southward and westward."

In 1803, Captains Kreutzenstern and Lisiausky were despatched by Alexander of Russia for the purpose of circumnavigating the globe. In endeavouring to get south, they made no farther than $59^{\circ} 58'$, in longitude $70^{\circ} 15'$ W. They here met with strong currents setting eastwardly. Whales were abundant, but they saw no ice. In regard to this voyage, Mr. Reynolds observes that, if Kreutzenstern had arrived where he did earlier in the season, he must have encountered ice—it was March when he reached the latitude specified. The winds prevailing, as they do, from the southward and westward, had carried the floes, aided by currents, into that icy region bounded on the north by Georgia, east by Sandwich Land and the South Orkneys, and west by the South Shetland Islands.

In 1822, Captain James Weddell, of the British navy, with two very small vessels, penetrated farther to the south than any previous navigator, and this too, without encountering extraordinary difficulties. He states that although he was frequently hemmed in by ice *before* reaching the seventy-second parallel, yet, upon attaining it, not a particle was to be discovered, and that, upon arriving at the latitude of $74^{\circ} 15'$, no fields, and only three islands of ice were visible. It is somewhat remarkable that, although vast flocks of birds were seen, and other usual indications of land, and although, south of the Shetlands, unknown coasts were observed from the masthead tending southwardly, Weddell discourages the idea of land existing in the polar regions of the south.

On the eleventh of January 1823, Captain Benjamin Morrell, of the American schooner *Wasp*, sailed from Kerguelen's Land with a view of penetrating as far south as possible. On the first of February he found himself in latitude $64^{\circ} 52'$ S., longitude $118^{\circ} 27'$ E. The following passage is extracted from his journal of that date. "The wind soon freshened to an eleven-knot breeze, and we embraced this opportunity of making to the west; being however convinced that the farther we went south beyond latitude sixty-four degrees the less ice was to be apprehended, we steered a little to the southward, until we crossed the Antarctic circle, and were in latitude $69^{\circ} 15'$ E. In this latitude there was *no field ice*, and very few ice islands in sight."

Under the date of March fourteenth I find also this entry. "The sea was now entirely free of field ice, and there were not more than a dozen ice

islands in sight. At the same time the temperature of the air and water was at least thirteen degrees higher (more mild) than we had ever found it between the parallels of sixty and sixty-two south. We were now in latitude $70^{\circ} 14' S.$, and the temperature of the air was forty-seven, and that of the water forty-four. In this situation I found the variation to be $14^{\circ} 27'$ easterly, per azimuth \acute{E} . I have several times passed within the Antarctic circle on different meridians, and have uniformly found the temperature, both of the air and the water, to become more and more mild the farther I advanced beyond the sixty-fifth degree of south latitude, and that the variation decreases in the same proportion. While north of this latitude, say between sixty and sixty-five south, we frequently had great difficulty in finding a passage for the vessel between the immense and almost innumerable ice islands, some of which were from one to two miles in circumference, and more than five hundred feet above the surface of the water."

Being nearly destitute of fuel and water, and without proper instruments, it being also late in the season, Captain Morrell was now obliged to put back, without attempting any farther progress to the southward, although an entirely open sea lay before him. He expresses the opinion that, had not these overruling considerations obliged him to retreat, he could have penetrated, if not to the pole itself, at least to the eighty-fifth parallel. I have given his ideas respecting these matters somewhat at length, that the reader may have an opportunity of seeing how far they were borne out by my own subsequent experience.

In 1831, Captain Briscoe, in the employ of the Messieurs Enderby, whale-ship owners of London, sailed in the brig *Lively* for the South Seas, accompanied by the cutter *Tula*. On the twenty-eighth of February, being in latitude $66^{\circ} 30' S.$, longitude $47^{\circ} 31' E.$, he descried land, and "clearly discovered through the snow the black peaks of a range of mountains running E.S.E." He remained in this neighbourhood during the whole of the following month, but was unable to approach the coast nearer than within ten leagues, owing to the boisterous state of the weather. Finding it impossible to make farther discovery during this season, he returned northward to winter in Van Diemen's Land.

In the beginning of 1832 he again proceeded southwardly, and on the fourth of February land was seen to the southeast in latitude $67^{\circ} 15'$, longitude $69^{\circ} 29' W.$ This was soon found to be an island near the headland of the country he had first discovered. On the twenty-first of the month he succeeded in landing on the latter, and took possession of it in the name of William IV, calling it Adelaide's Island, in honour of the English queen. Those particulars being made known to the Royal Geographical Society of London, the conclusion was drawn by that body "that there is a continuous tract of land extending from $47^{\circ} 30' E.$ to $69^{\circ} 29' W.$ longitude, running the

parallel of from sixty-six to sixty-seven degrees south latitude." In respect to this conclusion Mr. Reynolds observes, "In the correctness of it we by no means concur; nor do the discoveries of Briscoe warrant any such inference. It was within these limits that Weddell proceeded south on a meridian to the east of Georgia, Sandwich Land, and the South Orkney and Shetland Islands." My own experience will be found to testify most directly to the falsity of the conclusion arrived at by the Society.

These are the principal attempts which have been made at penetrating to a high southern latitude, and it will now be seen that there remained, previous to the voyage of the *Jane*, nearly three hundred degrees of longitude in which the Antarctic circle had not been crossed at all. Of course a wide field lay before us for discovery, and it was with feelings of most intense interest that I heard Captain Guy express his resolution of pushing boldly to the southward.

Chapter XVII

We kept our course southwardly for four days after giving up the search for Glass's islands, without meeting with any ice at all. On the twenty-sixth, at noon, we were in latitude $63^{\circ} 23'$ S., longitude $41^{\circ} 25'$ W. We now saw several large ice islands, and a floe of field ice, not, however, of any great extent. The winds generally blew from the southeast, or the northeast, but were very light. Whenever we had a westerly wind, which was seldom, it was invariably attended with a rain squall. Every day we had more or less snow. The thermometer, on the twenty-seventh, stood at thirty-five.

January 1, 1828. This day we found ourselves completely hemmed in by the ice, and our prospects looked cheerless indeed. A strong gale blew, during the whole forenoon, from the northeast, and drove large cakes of the drift against the rudder and counter with such violence that we all trembled for the consequences. Towards evening, the gale still blowing with fury, a large field in front separated, and we were enabled, by carrying a press of sail, to force a passage through the smaller flakes into some open water beyond. As we approached this space we took in sail by degrees, and having at length got clear, lay to under a single reefed foresail.

January 2. We had now tolerably pleasant weather. At noon we found ourselves in latitude $69^{\circ} 10'$ S., longitude $42^{\circ} 20'$ W., having crossed the Antarctic circle. Very little ice was to be seen to the southward, although large fields of it lay behind us. This day we rigged some sounding gear, using a large iron pot capable of holding twenty gallons, and a line of two hundred fathoms. We found the current setting to the north, about a quar-

ter of a mile per hour. The temperature of the air was now about thirty-three. Here we found the variation to be $14^{\circ} 28'$ easterly, per azimuth.

January 5. We had still held on to the southward without any very great impediments. On this morning, however, being in latitude $73^{\circ} 15'$ E., longitude $42^{\circ} 10'$ W., we were again brought to a stand by an immense expanse of firm ice. We saw, nevertheless, much open water to the southward, and felt no doubt of being able to reach it eventually. Standing to the eastward along the edge of the floe, we at length came to a passage of about a mile in width, through which we warped our way by sundown. The sea in which we now were was thickly covered with ice islands, but had no field ice, and we pushed on boldly as before. The cold did not seem to increase, although we had snow very frequently, and now and then had squalls of great violence. Immense flocks of the albatross flew over the schooner this day, going from southeast to northwest.

January 7. The sea still remained pretty well open, so that we had no difficulty in holding on our course. To the westward we saw some icebergs of incredible size, and in the afternoon passed very near one whose summit could not have been less than four hundred fathoms from the surface of the ocean. Its girth was probably, at the base, three quarters of a league, and several streams of water were running from crevices in its sides. We remained in sight of this island two days, and then only lost it in a fog.

January 10. Early this morning we had the misfortune to lose a man overboard. He was an American, named Peter Vredenburg, a native of New-York, and was one of the most valuable hands on board the schooner. In going over the bows his foot slipped, and he fell between two cakes of ice, never rising again. At noon of this day we were in latitude $78^{\circ} 30'$, longitude $40^{\circ} 15'$ W. The cold was now excessive, and we had hail squalls continually from the northward and eastward. In this direction also we saw several more immense icebergs, and the whole horizon to the eastward appeared to be blocked up with field ice, rising in tiers, one mass above the other. Some driftwood floated by during the evening, and a great quantity of birds flew over, among which were nellies, peterels, albatrosses, and a large bird of a brilliant blue plumage. The variation here, per azimuth, was less than it had been previously to our passing the Antarctic circle.

January 12. Our passage to the south again looked doubtful, as nothing was to be seen in the direction of the pole but one apparently limitless floe, backed by absolute mountains of ragged ice, one precipice of which arose frowningly above the other. We stood to the westward until the fourteenth, in the hope of finding an entrance.

January 14. This morning we reached the western extremity of the field which had impeded us, and, weathering it, came to an open sea, without a particle of ice. Upon sounding with two hundred fathoms, we here found a

current setting southwardly at the rate of half a mile per hour. The temperature of the air was forty-seven, that of the water thirty-four. We now sailed to the southward, without meeting any interruption of moment until the sixteenth, when, at noon, we were in latitude $81^{\circ} 21'$, longitude $42^{\circ} W$. We here again sounded, and found a current setting still southwardly, and at the rate of three quarters of a mile per hour. The variation per azimuth had diminished, and the temperature of the air was mild and pleasant, the thermometer being as high as fifty-one. At this period not a particle of ice was to be discovered. All hands on board now felt certain of attaining the pole.

January 17. This day was full of incident. Innumerable flights of birds flew over us from the southward, and several were shot from the deck; one of them, a species of pelican, proved to be excellent eating. About midday a small floe of ice was seen from the masthead off the larboard bow, and upon it there appeared to be some large animal. As the weather was good and nearly calm, Captain Guy ordered out two of the boats to see what it was. Dirk Peters and myself accompanied the mate in the larger boat. Upon coming up with the floe, we perceived that it was in the possession of a gigantic creature of the race of the Arctic bear, but far exceeding in size the largest of these animals. Being well armed, we made no scruple of attacking it at once. Several shots were fired in quick succession, the most of which took effect, apparently, in the head and body. Nothing discouraged, however, the monster, which threw himself from the ice, and swam, with open jaws, to the boat in which were Peters and myself. Owing to the confusion which ensued among us at this unexpected turn of the adventure, no person was ready immediately with a second shot, and the bear had actually succeeded in getting half his vast bulk across our gunwale, and seizing one of the men by the small of his back, before any efficient means were taken to repel him. In this extremity nothing but the promptness and agility of Peters saved us from destruction. Leaping upon the back of the huge beast, he plunged the blade of a knife behind the neck, reaching the spinal marrow at a blow. The brute tumbled into the sea lifeless, and without a struggle, rolling over Peters as he fell. The latter soon recovered himself, and a rope being thrown him, he secured the carcass before entering the boat. We then returned in triumph to the schooner, towing our trophy behind us. This bear, upon admeasurement, proved to be full fifteen feet in his greatest length. His wool was perfectly white, and very coarse, curling tightly. The eyes were of a blood red, and larger than those of the Arctic bear—the snout also more rounded, rather resembling the snout of the bulldog. The meat was tender, but excessively rank and fishy, although the men devoured it with avidity, and declared it excellent eating.

Scarcely had we got our prize alongside, when the man at the masthead gave the joyful shout of "Land on the starboard bow!" All hands were now

upon the alert, and, a breeze springing up very opportunely from the northward and eastward, we were soon close in with the coast. It proved to be a low rocky islet, of about a league in circumference, and altogether destitute of vegetation, if we except a species of prickly pear. In approaching it from the northward, a singular ledge of rock was seen projecting into the sea, and bearing a strong resemblance to corded bales of cotton. Around this ledge to the westward was a small bay, at the bottom of which our boats effected a convenient landing.

It did not take us long to explore every portion of the island, but, with one exception, we found nothing worthy of observation. In the southern extremity, we picked up near the shore, half buried in a pile of loose stones, a piece of wood, which seemed to have formed the prow of a canoe. There had been evidently some attempt at carving upon it, and Captain Guy fancied that he made out the figure of a tortoise, but the resemblance did not strike me very forcibly. Besides this prow, if such it were, we found no other token that any living creature had ever been here before. Around the coast we discovered occasional small floes of ice—but these were very few. The exact situation of this islet (to which Captain Guy gave the name of Bennett's Islet, in honour of his partner in the ownership of the schooner) is $82^{\circ} 50'$ S. latitude, $42^{\circ} 20'$ W. longitude.

We had now advanced to the southward more than eight degrees farther than any previous navigators, and the sea still lay perfectly open before us. We found, too, that the variation uniformly decreased as we proceeded, and, what was still more surprising, that the temperature of the air, and latterly of the water, became milder. The weather might even be called pleasant, and we had a steady but very gentle breeze always from some northern point of the compass. The sky was usually clear, with now and then a slight appearance of thin vapour in the southern horizon—this, however, was invariably of brief duration. Two difficulties alone presented themselves to our view; we were getting short of fuel, and symptoms of scurvy had occurred among several of the crew. These considerations began to impress upon Captain Guy the necessity of returning, and he spoke of it frequently. For my own part, confident as I was of soon arriving at land of some description upon the course we were pursuing, and having every reason to believe, from present appearances, that we should not find it the sterile soil met with in the higher Arctic latitudes, I warmly pressed upon him the expediency of persevering, at least for a few days longer, in the direction we were now holding. So tempting an opportunity of solving the great problem in regard to an Antarctic continent had never yet been afforded to man, and I confess that I felt myself bursting with indignation at the timid and ill-timed suggestions of our commander. I believe, indeed, that what I could not refrain from saying to him on this head had the effect of inducing him to push on.

While, therefore, I cannot but lament the most unfortunate and bloody events which immediately arose from my advice, I must still be allowed to feel some degree of gratification at having been instrumental, however remotely, in opening to the eye of science one of the most intensely exciting secrets which has ever engrossed its attention.

Chapter XVIII

January 18. This morning* we continued to the south ward, with the same pleasant weather as before. The sea was entirely smooth, the air tolerably warm and from the northeast, the temperature of the water fifty-three. We now again got our sounding-gear in order, and, with a hundred and fifty fathoms of line, found the current setting towards the pole at the rate of a mile an hour. This constant tendency to the southward, both in the wind and current, caused some degree of speculation, and even of alarm, in different quarters of the schooner, and I saw distinctly that no little impression had been made upon the mind of Captain Guy. He was exceedingly sensitive to ridicule, however, and I finally succeeded in laughing him out of his apprehensions. The variation was now very trivial. In the course of the day we saw several large whales of the right species, and innumerable flights of the albatross passed over the vessel. We also picked up a bush, full of red berries, like those of the hawthorn, and the carcass of a singular-looking land-animal. It was three feet in length, and but six inches in height, with four very short legs, the feet armed with long claws of a brilliant scarlet, and resembling coral in substance. The body was covered with a straight silky hair, perfectly white. The tail was peaked like that of a rat, and about a foot and a half long. The head resembled a cat's, with the exception of the ears—these were flapped like the ears of a dog. The *teeth* were of the same brilliant scarlet as the claws.

January 19. To-day, being in latitude $83^{\circ} 20'$, longitude $43^{\circ} 5' W$. (the sea being of an extraordinarily dark colour), we again saw land from the masthead, and, upon a closer scrutiny, found it to be one of a group of very large islands. The shore was precipitous, and the interior seemed to be well wooded, a circumstance which occasioned us great joy. In about four hours

*The terms *morning* and *evening*, which I have made use of to avoid confusion in my narrative, as far as possible, must not, of course, be taken in their ordinary sense. For a long time past we had had no night at all, the daylight being continual. The dates throughout are according to nautical time, and the bearings must be understood as per compass. I would also remark in this place, that I cannot, in the first portion of what is here written, pretend to strict accuracy in respect to dates, or latitudes and longitudes, having kept no regular journal until after the period of which this first portion treats. In many instances I have relied altogether upon memory.

from our first discovering the land we came to anchor in ten fathoms, sandy bottom, a league from the coast, as a high surf, with strong ripples here and there, rendered a nearer approach of doubtful expediency. The two largest boats were now ordered out, and a party, well armed (among whom were Peters and myself), proceeded to look for an opening in the reef which appeared to encircle the island. After searching about for some time, we discovered an inlet, which we were entering, when we saw four large canoes put off from the shore, filled with men who seemed to be well armed. We waited for them to come up, and, as they moved with great rapidity, they were soon within hail. Captain Guy now held up a white handkerchief on the blade of an oar, when the strangers made a fall stop, and commenced a loud jabbering all at once, intermingled with occasional shouts, in which we could distinguish the words *Anamoo-moo!* and *Lama-Lama!* They continued this for at least half an hour, during which we had a good opportunity of observing their appearance.

In the four canoes, which might have been fifty feet long and five broad, there were a hundred and ten savages in all. They were about the ordinary stature of Europeans, but of a more muscular and brawny frame, their complexion a jet black, with thick and long woolly hair. They were clothed in skins of an unknown black animal, shaggy and silky, and made to fit the body with some degree of skill, the hair being inside, except where turned out about the neck, wrists, and ankles. Their arms consisted principally of clubs, of a dark, and apparently very heavy wood. Some spears, however, were observed among them, headed with flint, and a few slings. The bottoms of the canoes were full of black stones about the size of a large egg.

When they had concluded their harangue (for it was clear they intended their jabbering for such), one of them who seemed to be the chief stood up in the prow of his canoe, and made signs for us to bring our boats alongside of him. This hint we pretended not to understand, thinking it the wiser plan to maintain, if possible, the interval between us, as their number more than quadrupled our own. Finding this to be the case, the chief ordered the three other canoes to hold back, while he advanced towards us with his own. As soon as he came up with us he leaped on board the largest of our boats, and seated himself by the side of Captain Guy, pointing at the same time to the schooner, and repeating the words *Anamoo-moo!* and *Lama-Lama!* We now put back to the vessel, the four canoes following at a little distance.

Upon getting alongside the chief evinced symptoms of extreme surprise and delight, clapping his hands, slapping his thighs and breast, and laughing obstreperously. His followers behind joined in his merriment, and for some minutes the din was so excessive as to be absolutely deafening. Quiet being at length restored, Captain Guy ordered the boats to be hoisted up, as a necessary precaution, and gave the chief (whose name we soon found to

be "Too-wit") to understand that we could admit no more than twenty of his men on deck at one time. With this arrangement he appeared perfectly satisfied, and gave some directions to the canoes, when one of them approached, the rest remaining about fifty yards off. Twenty of the savages now got on board, and proceeded to ramble over every part of the deck, and scramble about among the rigging, making themselves much at home, and examining every article with great inquisitiveness.

It was quite evident that they had never before seen any of the white race—from whose complexion, indeed, they appeared to recoil. They believed the *Jane* to be a living creature, and seemed to be afraid of hurting it with the points of their spears, carefully turning them up. Our crew were much amused with the conduct of Too-wit in one instance. The cook was splitting some wood near the galley, and, by accident, struck his axe into the deck, making a gash of considerable depth. The chief immediately ran up, and pushing the cook on one side rather roughly, commenced a half whine, half howl, strongly indicative of sympathy in what he considered the sufferings of the schooner, patting and smoothing the gash with his hand, and washing it from a bucket of seawater which stood by. This was a degree of ignorance for which we were not prepared, and for my part I could not help thinking some of it affected.

When the visitors had satisfied, as well as they could, their curiosity in regard to our upper works, they were admitted below, when their amazement exceeded all bounds. Their astonishment now appeared to be far too deep for words, for they roamed about in silence, broken only by low ejaculations. The arms afforded them much food for speculation, and they were suffered to handle and examine them at leisure. I do not believe that they had the least suspicion of their actual use, but rather took them for idols, seeing the care we had of them, and the attention with which we watched their movements while handling them. At the great guns their wonder was redoubled. They approached them with every mark of the profoundest reverence and awe, but forbore to examine them minutely. There were two large mirrors in the cabin, and here was the acme of their amazement. Too-wit was the first to approach them, and he had got in the middle of the cabin, with his face to one and his back to the other, before he fairly perceived them. Upon raising his eyes and seeing his reflected self in the glass, I thought the savage would go mad; but, upon turning short round to make a retreat, and beholding himself a second time in the opposite direction, I was afraid he would expire upon the spot. No persuasions could prevail upon him to take another look; but, throwing himself upon the floor, with his face buried in his hands, he remained thus until we were obliged to drag him upon deck.

The whole of the savages were admitted on board in this manner, twenty at a time, Too-wit being suffered to remain during the entire period. We saw no disposition to thievery among them, nor did we miss a single article after their departure. Throughout the whole of their visit they evinced the most friendly manner. There were, however, some points in their demeanour which we found it impossible to understand: for example, we could not get them to approach several very harmless objects—such as the schooner's sails, an egg, an open book, or a pan of flour. We endeavoured to ascertain if they had among them any articles which might be turned to account in the way of traffic, but found great difficulty in being comprehended. We made out, nevertheless, what greatly astonished us, that the islands abounded in the large tortoise of the Gallipagos, one of which we saw in the canoe of Too-wit. We saw also some *biche de mer* in the hands of one of the savages, who was greedily devouring it in its natural state. These anomalies, for they were such when considered in regard to the latitude, induced Captain Guy to wish for a thorough investigation of the country, in the hope of making a profitable speculation in his discovery. For my own part, anxious as I was to know something more of these islands, I was still more earnestly bent on prosecuting the voyage to the southward without delay. We had now fine weather, but there was no telling how long it would last; and being already in the eighty-fourth parallel, with an open sea before us, a current setting strongly to the southward, and the wind fair, I could not listen with any patience to a proposition of stopping longer than was absolutely necessary for the health of the crew and the taking on board a proper supply of fuel and fresh provisions. I represented to the captain that we might easily make this group on our return, and winter here in the event of being blocked up by the ice. He at length came into my views (for in some way, hardly known to myself, I had acquired much influence over him), and it was finally resolved that, even in the event of our finding *biche de mer*, we should only stay here a week to recruit, and then push on to the southward while we might. Accordingly we made every necessary preparation, and, under the guidance of Too-wit, got the *Jane* through the reef in safety, coming to anchor about a mile from the shore, in an excellent bay, completely landlocked, on the southeastern coast of the main island, and in ten fathoms of water, black sandy bottom. At the head of this bay there were three fine springs (we were told) of good water, and we saw abundance of wood in the vicinity. The four canoes followed us in, keeping, however, at a respectful distance. Too-wit himself remained on board, and, upon our dropping anchor, invited us to accompany him on shore, and visit his village in the interior. To this Captain Guy consented; and ten savages being left on board as hostages, a party of us, twelve in all, got in readiness to attend the chief. We took care to be well armed, yet without evincing any distrust. The

schooner had her guns run out, her boarding nettings up, and every other proper precaution was taken to guard against surprise. Directions were left with the chief mate to admit no person on board during our absence, and, in the event of our not appearing in twelve hours, to send the cutter, with a swivel, round the island in search of us.

At every step we took inland the conviction forced itself upon us that we were in a country differing essentially from any hitherto visited by civilized men. We saw nothing with which we had been formerly conversant. The trees resembled no growth of either the torrid, the temperate, or the northern frigid zones, and were altogether unlike those of the lower southern latitudes we had already traversed. The very rocks were novel in their mass, their colour, and their stratification; and the streams themselves, utterly incredible as it may appear, had so little in common with those of other climates, that we were scrupulous of tasting them, and, indeed, had difficulty in bringing ourselves to believe that their qualities were purely those of nature. At a small brook which crossed our path (the first we had reached) Too-wit and his attendants halted to drink. On account of the singular character of the water, we refused to taste it, supposing it to be polluted; and it was not until some time afterward we came to understand that such was the appearance of the streams throughout the whole group. I am at a loss to give a distinct idea of the nature of this liquid, and cannot do so without many words. Although it flowed with rapidity in all declivities where common water would do so, yet never, except when falling in a cascade, had it the customary appearance of *limpidity*. It was, nevertheless, in point of fact, as perfectly limpid as any limestone water in existence, the difference being only in appearance. At first sight, and especially in cases where little declivity was found, it bore resemblance, as regards consistency, to a thick infusion of gum Arabic in common water. But this was only the least remarkable of its extraordinary qualities. It was not colourless, nor was it of any one uniform colour—presenting to the eye, as it flowed, every possible shade of purple, like the hues of a changeable silk. This variation in shade was produced in a manner which excited as profound astonishment in the minds of our party as the mirror had done in the case of Too-wit. Upon collecting a basinful, and allowing it to settle thoroughly, we perceived the whole mass of liquid was made up of a number of distinct veins, each of a distinct hue; that these veins did not commingle; and that their cohesion was perfect in regard to their own particles among themselves, and imperfect in regard to neighbouring veins. Upon passing the blade of a knife athwart the veins, the water closed over it immediately, as with us, and also, in withdrawing it, all traces of the passage of the knife were instantly obliterated. If, however, the blade was passed down accurately between two veins, a perfect separation was effected, which the power of cohesion did not

immediately rectify. The phenomena of this water formed the first definite link in that vast chain of apparent miracles with which I was destined to be at length encircled.

Chapter XIX

W e were nearly three hours in reaching the village, it being more than nine miles in the interior, and the path lying through a rugged country. As we passed along, the party of Too-wit (the whole hundred and ten savages of the canoes) was momentarily strengthened by smaller detachments, of from two to six or seven, which joined us, as if by accident, at different turns in the road. There appeared so much of system in this that I could not help feeling distrust, and I spoke to Captain Guy of my apprehensions. It was now too late, however, to recede, and we concluded that our best security lay in evincing a perfect confidence in the good faith of Too-wit. We accordingly went on, keeping a wary eye upon the manoeuvres of the savages, and not permitting them to divide our numbers by pushing in between. In this way, passing through a precipitous ravine, we at length reached what we were told was the only collection of habitations upon the island. As we came in sight of them, the chief set up a shout, and frequently repeated the word "Klock-Klock"; which we supposed to be the name of the village, or perhaps the generic name for villages.

The dwellings were of the most miserable description imaginable, and, unlike those of even the lowest of the savage races with which mankind are acquainted, were of no uniform plan. Some of them (and these we found belonged to the *Wampoos* or *Yampoos*, the great men of the land) consisted of a tree cut down at about four feet from the root, with a large black skin thrown over it, and hanging in loose folds upon the ground. Under this the savage nestled. Others were formed by means of rough limbs of trees, with the withered foliage upon them, made to recline, at an angle of forty-five degrees, against a bank of clay, heaped up, without regular form, to the height of five or six feet. Others, again, were mere holes dug in the earth perpendicularly, and covered over with similar branches, these being removed when the tenant was about to enter, and pulled on again when he had entered. A few were built among the forked limbs of trees as they stood, the upper limbs being partially cut through, so as to bend over upon the lower, thus forming thicker shelter from the weather. The greater number, however, consisted of small shallow caverns, apparently scratched in the face of a precipitous ledge of dark stone, resembling fuller's earth, with which three sides of the village was bounded. At the door of each of these primitive caverns was a small rock, which the tenant carefully placed before the

entrance upon leaving his residence, for what purpose I could not ascertain, as the stone itself was never of sufficient size to close up more than a third of the opening.

This village, if it were worthy of the name, lay in a valley of some depth, and could only be approached from the southward, the precipitous ledge of which I have already spoken cutting off all access in other directions. Through the middle of the valley ran a brawling stream of the same magical-looking water which has been described. We saw several strange animals about the dwellings, all appearing to be thoroughly domesticated. The largest of these creatures resembled our common hog in the structure of the body and snout; the tail, however, was bushy, and the legs slender as those of the antelope. Its motion was exceedingly awkward and indecisive, and we never saw it attempt to run. We noticed also several animals very similar in appearance, but of a greater length of body, and covered with a black wool. There were a great variety of tame fowls running about, and these seemed to constitute the chief food of the natives. To our astonishment we saw black albatross among these birds in a state of entire domestication, going to sea periodically for food, but always returning to the village as a home, and using the southern shore in the vicinity as a place of incubation. There they were joined by their friends the penguins as usual, but these latter never followed them to the dwellings of the savages. Among the other kinds of tame fowls were ducks, differing very little from the canvass-back of our own country, black gannets, and a large bird not unlike the buzzard in appearance, but not carnivorous. Of fish there seemed to be a great abundance. We saw, during our visit, a quantity of dried salmon, rock cod, blue dolphins, mackerel, blackfish, skate, conger eels, elephantfish, mullets, soles, parrotfish, leather-jackets, gurnards, hake, flounders, paracutas, and innumerable other varieties. We noticed, too, that most of them were similar to the fish about the group of the Lord Auckland Islands, in a latitude as low as fifty-one degrees south. The Gallipago tortoise was also very plentiful. We saw but few wild animals, and none of a large size, or of a species with which we were familiar. One or two serpents of a formidable aspect crossed our path, but the natives paid them little attention, and we concluded that they were not venomous.

As we approached the village with Too-wit and his party, a vast crowd of the people rushed out to meet us, with loud shouts, among which we could only distinguish the everlasting "Anamoo-moo!" and "Lama-Lama!" We were much surprised at perceiving that, with one or two exceptions, these new comers were entirely naked, the skins being used only by the men of the canoes. All the weapons of the country seemed also to be in the possession of the latter, for there was no appearance of any among the villagers. There were a great many women and children, the former not altogether

wanting in what might be termed personal beauty. They were straight, tall, and well formed, with a grace and freedom of carriage not to be found in civilized society. Their lips, however, like those of the men, were thick and clumsy, so that, even when laughing, the teeth were never disclosed. Their hair was of a finer texture than that of the males. Among these naked villagers there might have been ten or twelve who were clothed, like the party of Too-wit, in dresses of black skin, and armed with lances and heavy clubs. These appeared to have great influence among the rest, and were always addressed by the title "Wampoo." These, too, were the tenants of the black skin palaces. That of Too-wit was situated in the centre of the village, and was much larger and somewhat better constructed than others of its kind. The tree which formed its support was cut off at a distance of twelve feet or thereabout from the root, and there were several branches left just below the cut, these serving to extend the covering, and in this way prevent its flapping about the trunk. The covering, too, which consisted of four very large skins fastened together with wooden skewers, was secured at the bottom with pegs driven through it and into the ground. The floor was strewn with a quantity of dry leaves by way of carpet.

To this hut we were conducted with great solemnity, and as many of the natives crowded in after us as possible. Too-wit seated himself on the leaves, and made signs that we should follow his example. This we did, and presently found ourselves in a situation peculiarly uncomfortable, if not indeed critical. We were on the ground, twelve in number, with the savages, as many as forty, sitting on their hams so closely around us that, if any disturbance had arisen, we should have found it impossible to make use of our arms, or indeed to have risen on our feet. The pressure was not only inside the tent, but outside, where probably was every individual on the whole island, the crowd being prevented from trampling us to death only by the incessant exertions and vociferations of Too-wit. Our chief security lay, however, in the presence of Too-wit himself among us, and we resolved to stick by him closely, as the best chance of extricating ourselves from the dilemma, sacrificing him immediately upon the first appearance of hostile design.

After some trouble a certain degree of quiet was restored, when the chief addressed us in a speech of great length, and very nearly resembling the one delivered in the canoes, with the exception that the "Anamoomoos!" were now somewhat more strenuously insisted upon than the "Lama-Lamas!" We listened in profound silence until the conclusion of his harangue, when Captain Guy replied by assuring the chief of his eternal friendship and good-will, concluding what he had to say by a present of several strings of blue beads and a knife. At the former the monarch, much to our surprise, turned up his nose with some expression of contempt; but the knife gave him the most unlimited satisfaction, and he immediately ordered

dinner. This was handed into the tent over the heads of the attendants, and consisted of the palpitating entrails of a species of unknown animal, probably one of the slim-legged hogs which we had observed in our approach to the village. Seeing us at a loss how to proceed, he began, by way of setting us an example, to devour yard after yard of the enticing food, until we could positively stand it no longer, and evinced such manifest symptoms of rebellion of stomach as inspired his majesty with a degree of astonishment only inferior to that brought about by the looking-glasses. We declined, however, partaking of the delicacies before us, and endeavoured to make him understand that we had no appetite whatever, having just finished a hearty *dejeuner*.

When the monarch had made an end of his meal, we commenced a series of cross-questioning in every ingenious manner we could devise, with a view of discovering what were the chief productions of the country, and whether any of them might be turned to profit. At length he seemed to have some idea of our meaning, and offered to accompany us to a part of the coast where he assured us the *biche de mer* (pointing to a specimen of that animal) was to be found in great abundance. We were glad at this early opportunity of escaping from the oppression of the crowd, and signified our eagerness to proceed. We now left the tent, and, accompanied by the whole population of the village, followed the chief to the southeastern extremity of the island, not far from the bay where our vessel lay at anchor. We waited here for about an hour, until the four canoes were brought round by some of the savages to our station. The whole of our party then getting into one of them, we were paddled along the edge of the reef before mentioned, and of another still farther out, where we saw a far greater quantity of *biche de mer* than the oldest seaman among us had ever seen in those groups of the lower latitudes most celebrated for this article of commerce. We stayed near these reefs only long enough to satisfy ourselves that we could easily load a dozen vessels with the animal if necessary, when we were taken alongside the schooner, and parted with Too-wit after obtaining from him a promise that he would bring us, in the course of twenty-four hours, as many of the canvass-back ducks and Gallipago tortoises as his canoes would hold. In the whole of this adventure we saw nothing in the demeanour of the natives calculated to create suspicion, with the single exception of the systematic manner in which their party was strengthened during our route from the schooner to the village.

Chapter XX

The chief was as good as his word, and we were soon plentifully supplied with fresh provision. We found the tortoises as fine as we had ever seen,

and the ducks surpassed our best species of wild fowl, being exceedingly tender, juicy, and well-flavoured. Besides these, the savages brought us, upon our making them comprehend our wishes, a vast quantity of brown celery and scurvy grass, with a canoe-load of fresh fish and some dried. The celery was a treat indeed, and the scurvy grass proved of incalculable benefit in restoring those of our men who had shown symptoms of disease. In a very short time we had not a single person on the sick-list. We had also plenty of other kinds of fresh provision, among which may be mentioned a species of shellfish resembling the muscle in shape, but with the taste of an oyster. Shrimps, too, and prawns were abundant, and albatross and other birds' eggs with dark shells. We took in, too, a plentiful stock of the flesh of the hog which I have mentioned before. Most of the men found it a palatable food, but I thought it fishy and otherwise disagreeable. In return for these good things we presented the natives with blue beads, brass trinkets, nails, knives, and pieces of red cloth, they being fully delighted in the exchange. We established a regular market on shore, just under the guns of the schooner, where our barterings were carried on with every appearance of good faith, and a degree of order which their conduct at the village of "Klock-Klock" had not led us to expect from the savages.

Matters went on thus very amicably for several days, during which parties of the natives were frequently on board the schooner, and parties of our men frequently on shore, making long excursions into the interior, and receiving no molestation whatever. Finding the ease with which the vessel might be loaded with *biche de mer*, owing to the friendly disposition of the islanders, and the readiness with which they would render us assistance in collecting it, Captain Guy resolved to enter into negotiation with Too-wit for the erection of suitable houses in which to cure the article, and for the services of himself and tribe in gathering as much as possible, while he himself took advantage of the fine weather to prosecute his voyage to the southward. Upon mentioning this project to the chief he seemed very willing to enter into an agreement. A bargain was accordingly struck, perfectly satisfactory to both parties, by which it was arranged that, after making the necessary preparations, such as laying off the proper grounds, erecting a portion of the buildings, and doing some other work in which the whole of our crew would be required, the schooner should proceed on her route, leaving three of her men on the island to superintend the fulfilment of the project, and instruct the natives in drying the *biche de mer*. In regard to terms, these were made to depend upon the exertions of the savages in our absence. They were to receive a stipulated quantity of blue beads, knives, red cloth, and so forth, for every certain number of piculs of the *biche de mer* which should be ready on our return.

A description of the nature of this important article of commerce, and the method of preparing it, may prove of some interest to my readers, and I can find no more suitable place than this for introducing an account of it. The following comprehensive notice of the substance is taken from a modern history of a voyage to the South Seas.

"It is that *mollusca* from the Indian Seas which is known in commerce by the French name *bouche de mer* (a nice morsel from the sea). If I am not much mistaken, the celebrated Cuvier calls it *Gasteropeda pulmonifera*. It is abundantly gathered in the coasts of the Pacific Islands, and gathered especially for the Chinese market, where it commands a great price, perhaps as much as their much-talked-of edible bird's nests, which are probably made up of the gelatinous matter picked up by a species of swallow from the body of these *molluscae*. They have no shell, no legs, nor any prominent part, except an *absorbing* and an *excretory*, opposite organs; but, by their elastic rings, like caterpillars or worms, they creep in shallow waters, in which, when low, they can be seen by a kind of swallow, the sharp bill of which, inserted in the soft animal, draws a gummy and filamentous substance, which, by drying, can be wrought into the solid walls of their nest. Hence the name of *Gasteropeda pulmonifera*.

"This *mollusca* is oblong, and of different sizes, from three to eighteen inches in length; and I have seen a few that were not less than two feet long. They are nearly round, a little flattish on one side, which lies next the bottom of the sea; and they are from one to eight inches thick. They crawl up into shallow water at particular seasons of the year, probably for the purpose of gendering, as we often find them in pairs. It is when the sun has the most power on the water, rendering it tepid, that they approach the shore; and they often go up into places so shallow, that, on the tide's receding, they are left dry, exposed to the heat of the sun. But they do not bring forth their young in shallow water, as we never see any of their progeny, and the full-grown ones are always observed coming in from deep water. They feed principally on that class of zoophytes which produce the coral.

"The *biche de mer* is generally taken in three or four feet of water; after which they are brought on shore, and split at one end with a knife, the incision being one inch or more, according to the size of the *mollusca*. Through this opening the entrails are forced out by pressure, and they are much like those of any other small tenant of the deep. The article is then washed, and afterward boiled to a certain degree, which must not be too much or too little. They are then buried in the ground for four hours, then boiled again for a short time, after which they are dried, either by the fire or the sun. Those cured by the sun are worth the most; but where one picul (133 1/3 lbs.) can be cured that way, I can cure thirty piculs by the fire. When once properly cured, they can be kept in a dry place for two or three years without any

risk; but they should be examined once in every few months, say four times a year, to see if any dampness is likely to affect them.

“The Chinese, as before stated, consider *biche de mer* a very great luxury, believing that it wonderfully strengthens and nourishes the system, and renews the exhausted system of the immoderate voluptuary. The first quality commands a high price in Canton, being worth ninety dollars a picul; the second quality seventy-five dollars; the third fifty dollars; the fourth thirty dollars; the fifth twenty dollars; the sixth twelve dollars; the seventh eight dollars; and the eighth four dollars; small cargoes, however, will often bring more in Manilla, Singapore, and Batavia.”

An agreement having been thus entered into, we proceeded immediately to land everything necessary for preparing the buildings and clearing the ground. A large flat space near the eastern shore of the bay was selected, where there was plenty both of wood and water, and within a convenient distance of the principal reefs on which the *biche de mer* was to be procured. We now all set to work in good earnest, and soon, to the great astonishment of the savages, had felled a sufficient number of trees for our purpose, getting them quickly in order for the framework of the houses, which in two or three days were so far under way that we could safely trust the rest of the work to the three men whom we intended to leave behind. These were John Carson, Alfred Harris, and —— Peterson (all natives of London, I believe), who volunteered their services in this respect.

By the last of the month we had everything in readiness for departure. We had agreed, however, to pay a formal visit of leave-taking to the village, and Too-wit insisted so pertinaciously upon our keeping the promise, that we did not think it advisable to run the risk of offending him by a final refusal. I believe that not one of us had at this time the slightest suspicion of the good faith of the savages. They had uniformly behaved with the greatest decorum, aiding us with alacrity in our work, offering us their commodities frequently without price, and never, in any instance, pilfering a single article, although the high value they set upon the goods we had with us was evident by the extravagant demonstrations of joy always manifested upon our making them a present. The women especially were most obliging in every respect, and, upon the whole, we should have been the most suspicious of human beings had we entertained a single thought of perfidy on the part of a people who treated us so well. A very short while sufficed to prove that this apparent kindness of disposition was only the result of a deeply-laid plan for our destruction, and that the islanders for whom we entertained such inordinate feelings of esteem were among the most barbarous, subtle, and bloodthirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe.

It was on the first of February that we went on shore for the purpose of visiting the village. Although, as said before, we entertained not the slightest suspicion, still no proper precaution was neglected. Six men were left in the schooner with instructions to permit none of the savages to approach the vessel during our absence, under any pretence whatever, and to remain constantly on deck. The boarding-nettings were up, the guns double-shotted with grape and canister, and the swivels loaded with canisters of musket-balls. She lay, with her anchor apeak, about a mile from the shore, and no canoe could approach her in any direction without being distinctly seen and exposed to the full fire of our swivels immediately.

The six men being left on board, our shore-party consisted of thirty-two persons in all. We were armed to the teeth, having with us muskets, pistols, and cutlasses, besides each a long kind of seaman's knife, somewhat resembling the Bowie knife now so much used throughout our western and southern country. A hundred of the black skin warriors met us at the landing for the purpose of accompanying us on our way. We noticed, however, with some surprise, that they were now entirely without arms; and, upon questioning Too-wit in relation to this circumstance, he merely answered that "*Mattee non we pa pa si*"—meaning that there was no need of arms where all were brothers. We took this in good part, and proceeded.

We had passed the spring and rivulet of which I before spoke, and were now entering upon a narrow gorge leading through the chain of soapstone hills among which the village was situated. This gorge was very rocky and uneven, so much so that it was with no little difficulty we scrambled through it on our first visit to Klock-Klock. The whole length of the ravine might have been a mile and a half, or probably two miles. It wound in every possible direction through the hills (having apparently formed, at some remote period, the bed of a torrent), in no instance proceeding more than twenty yards without an abrupt turn. The sides of this dell would have averaged, I am sure, seventy or eighty feet in perpendicular altitude throughout the whole of their extent, and in some portions they arose to an astonishing height, overshadowing the pass so completely that but little of the light of day could penetrate. The general width was about forty feet, and occasionally it diminished so as not to allow the passage of more than five or six persons abreast. In short, there could be no place in the world better adapted for the consummation of an ambushade, and it was no more than natural that we should look carefully to our arms as we entered upon it. When I now think of our egregious folly, the chief subject of astonishment seems to be, that we should have ever ventured, under any circumstances, so completely into the power of unknown savages as to permit them to march both before and behind us in our progress through this ravine. Yet such was the order we blindly took up, trusting foolishly to the force of our party, the

unarmed condition of Too-wit and his men, the certain efficacy of our fire-arms (whose effect was yet a secret to the natives), and, more than all, to the long-sustained pretension of friendship kept up by these infamous wretches. Five or six of them went on before, as if to lead the way, ostentatiously busying themselves in removing the larger stones and rubbish from the path. Next came our own party. We walked closely together, taking care only to prevent separation. Behind followed the main body of the savages, observing unusual order and decorum.

Dirk Peters, a man named Wilson Allen, and myself were on the right of our companions, examining, as we went along, the singular stratification of the precipice which overhung us. A fissure in the soft rock attracted our attention. It was about wide enough for one person to enter without squeezing, and extended back into the hill some eighteen or twenty feet in a straight course, sloping afterward to the left. The height of the opening, as far as we could see into it from the main gorge, was perhaps sixty or seventy feet. There were one or two stunted shrubs growing from the crevices, bearing a species of filbert, which I felt some curiosity to examine, and pushed in briskly for that purpose, gathering five or six of the nuts at a grasp, and then hastily retreating. As I turned, I found that Peters and Allen had followed me. I desired them to go back, as there was not room for two persons to pass, saying they should have some of my nuts. They accordingly turned, and were scrambling back, Allen being close to the mouth of the fissure, when I was suddenly aware of a concussion resembling nothing I had ever before experienced, and which impressed me with a vague conception, if indeed I then thought of anything, that the whole foundations of the solid globe were suddenly rent asunder, and that the day of universal dissolution was at hand.

Chapter XXI

As soon as I could collect my scattered senses, I found myself nearly suffocated, and grovelling in utter darkness among a quantity of loose earth, which was also falling upon me heavily in every direction, threatening to bury me entirely. Horribly alarmed at this idea, I struggled to gain my feet, and at length succeeded. I then remained motionless for some moments, endeavouring to conceive what had happened to me, and where I was. Presently I heard a deep groan just at my ear, and afterward the smothered voice of Peters calling to me for aid in the name of God. I scrambled one or two paces forward, when I fell directly over the head and shoulders of my companion, who, I soon discovered, was buried in a loose mass of earth as far as his middle, and struggling desperately to free himself from

the pressure. I tore the dirt from around him with all the energy I could command, and at length succeeded in getting him out.

As soon as we sufficiently recovered from our fright and surprise to be capable of conversing rationally, we both came to the conclusion that the walls of the fissure in which we had ventured had, by some convulsion of nature, or probably from their own weight, caved in overhead, and that we were consequently lost for ever, being thus entombed alive. For a long time we gave up supinely to the most intense agony and despair, such as cannot be adequately imagined by those who have never been in a similar situation. I firmly believe that no incident ever occurring in the course of human events is more adapted to inspire the supremeness of mental and bodily distress than a case like our own, of living inhumation. The blackness of darkness which envelops the victim, the terrific oppression of lungs, the stifling fumes from the damp earth, unite with the ghastly considerations that we are beyond the remotest confines of hope, and that such is the allotted portion of *the dead*, to carry into the human heart a degree of appalling awe and horror not to be tolerated—never to be conceived.

At length Peters proposed that we should endeavour to ascertain precisely the extent of our calamity, and grope about our prison; it being barely possible, he observed, that some opening might be yet left us for escape. I caught eagerly at this hope, and, arousing myself to exertion, attempted to force my way through the loose earth. Hardly had I advanced a single step before a glimmer of light became perceptible, enough to convince me that, at all events, we should not immediately perish for want of air. We now took some degree of heart, and encouraged each other to hope for the best. Having scrambled over a bank of rubbish which impeded our farther progress in the direction of the light, we found less difficulty in advancing, and also experienced some relief from the excessive oppression of lungs which had tormented us. Presently we were enabled to obtain a glimpse of the objects around, and discovered that we were near the extremity of the straight portion of the fissure, where it made a turn to the left. A few struggles more, and we reached the bend, when, to our inexpressible joy, there appeared a long seam or crack extending upward a vast distance, generally at an angle of about forty-five degrees, although sometimes much more precipitous. We could not see through the whole extent of this opening; but, as a good deal of light came down it, we had little doubt of finding at the top of it (if we could by any means reach the top) a clear passage into the open air.

I now called to mind that three of us had entered the fissure from the main gorge, and that our companion, Allen, was still missing; we determined at once to retrace our steps and look for him. After a long search, and much danger from the farther caving in of the earth above us, Peters at length cried out to me that he had hold of our companion's foot, and that

his whole body was deeply buried beneath the rubbish, beyond a possibility of extricating him. I soon found that what he said was too true, and that, of course, life had been long extinct. With sorrowful hearts, therefore, we left the corpse to its fate, and again made our way to the bend.

The breadth of the seam was barely sufficient to admit us, and, after one or two ineffectual efforts at getting up, we began once more to despair. I have before said that the chain of hills through which ran the main gorge was composed of a species of soft rock resembling soapstone. The sides of the cleft we were now attempting to ascend were of the same material, and so excessively slippery, being wet, that we could get but little foothold upon them even in their least precipitous parts. In some places, where the ascent was nearly perpendicular, the difficulty was, of course, much aggravated; and, indeed, for some time we thought it insurmountable. We took courage, however, from despair; and what, by dint of cutting steps in the soft stone with our Bowie knives, and swinging, at the risk of our lives, to small projecting points of a harder species of slaty rock which now and then protruded from the general mass, we at length reached a natural platform, from which was perceptible a patch of blue sky, at the extremity of a thickly-wooded ravine. Looking back now, with somewhat more leisure, at the passage through which we had thus far proceeded, we clearly saw, from the appearance of its sides, that it was of late formation, and we concluded that the concussion, whatever it was, which had so unexpectedly overwhelmed us, had also, at the same moment, laid open this path for escape. Being quite exhausted with exertion, and, indeed, so weak that we were scarcely able to stand or articulate, Peters now proposed that we should endeavour to bring our companions to the rescue by firing the pistols which still remained in our girdles; the muskets as well as cutlasses had been lost among the loose earth at the bottom of the chasm. Subsequent events proved that, had we fired, we should have sorely repented it; but, luckily, a half suspicion of foul play had by this time arisen in my mind, and we forbore to let the savages know of our whereabouts.

After having reposed for about an hour, we pushed on slowly up the ravine, and had gone no great way before we heard a succession of tremendous yells. At length we reached what might be called the surface of the ground; for our path hitherto, since leaving the platform, had lain beneath an archway of high rock and foliage, at a vast distance overhead. With great caution we stole to a narrow opening, through which we had a clear sight of the surrounding country, when the whole dreadful secret of the concussion broke upon us in one moment and at one view.

The spot from which we looked was not far from the summit of the highest peak in the range of the soapstone hills. The gorge in which our party of thirty-two had entered ran within fifty feet to the left of us. But,

for at least one hundred yards, the channel or bed of this gorge was entirely filled up with the chaotic ruins of more than a million tons of earth and stone that had been artificially tumbled within it. The means by which the vast mass had been precipitated were not more simple than evident, for sure traces of the murderous work were yet remaining. In several spots along the top of the eastern side of the gorge (we were now on the western) might be seen stakes of wood driven into the earth. In these spots the earth had not given way; but throughout the whole extent of the face of the precipice from which the mass had fallen, it was clear, from marks left in the soil resembling those made by the drill of the rock-blaster, that stakes similar to those we saw standing had been inserted, at not more than a yard apart, for the length of perhaps three hundred feet, and ranging at about ten feet back from the edge of the gulf. Strong cords of grape vine were attached to the stakes still remaining on the hill, and it was evident that such cords had also been attached to each of the other stakes. I have already spoken of the singular stratification of these soapstone hills; and the description just given of the narrow and deep fissure through which we effected our escape from inhumation will afford a further conception of its nature. This was such that almost every natural convulsion would be sure to split the soil into perpendicular layers or ridges running parallel with one another; and a very moderate exertion of art would be sufficient for effecting the same purpose. Of this stratification the savages had availed themselves to accomplish their treacherous ends. There can be no doubt that, by the continuous line of stakes, a partial rupture of the soil had been brought about, probably to the depth of one or two feet, when, by means of a savage pulling at the end of each of the cords (these cords being attached to the tops of the stakes, and extending back from the edge of the cliff), a vast leverage power was obtained, capable of hurling the whole face of the hill, upon a given signal, into the bosom of the abyss below. The fate of our poor companions was no longer a matter of uncertainty. We alone had escaped from the tempest of that overwhelming destruction. We were the only living white men upon the island.

Chapter XXII

Our situation, as it now appeared, was scarcely less dreadful than when we had conceived ourselves entombed for ever. We saw before us no prospect but that of being put to death by the savages, or of dragging out a miserable existence in captivity among them. We might, to be sure, conceal ourselves for a time from their observation among the fastnesses of the hills, and, as a final resort, in the chasm from which we had just issued; but

we must either perish in the long Polar winter through cold and famine, or be ultimately discovered in our efforts to obtain relief.

The whole country around us seemed to be swarming with savages, crowds of whom, we now perceived, had come over from the islands to the southward on flat rafts, doubtless with a view of lending their aid in the capture and plunder of the *Jane*. The vessel still lay calmly at anchor in the bay, those on board being apparently quite unconscious of any danger awaiting them. How we longed at that moment to be with them! either to aid in effecting their escape, or to perish with them in attempting a defence. We saw no chance even of warning them of their danger without bringing immediate destruction upon our own heads, with but a remote hope of benefit to them. A pistol fired might suffice to apprise them that something wrong had occurred; but the report could not possibly inform them that their only prospect of safety lay in getting out of the harbour forthwith—it could not tell them that no principles of honour now bound them to remain, that their companions were no longer among the living. Upon hearing the discharge they could not be more thoroughly prepared to meet the foe, who were now getting ready to attack, than they already were, and always had been. No good, therefore, and infinite harm, would result from our firing, and, after mature deliberation, we forbore.

Our next thought was to attempt a rush towards the vessel, to seize one of the four canoes which lay at the head of the bay, and endeavour to force a passage on board. But the utter impossibility of succeeding in this desperate task soon became evident. The country, as I said before, was literally swarming with the natives, skulking among the bushes and recesses of the hills, so as not to be observed from the schooner. In our immediate vicinity especially, and blockading the sole path by which we could hope to attain the shore in the proper point, were stationed the whole party of the black skin warriors, with Too-wit at their head, and apparently only waiting for some re-enforcement to commence his onset upon the *Jane*. The canoes, too, which lay at the head of the bay were manned with savages, unarmed, it is true, but who undoubtedly had arms within reach. We were forced, therefore, however unwillingly, to remain in our place of concealment, mere spectators of the conflict which presently ensued.

In about half an hour we saw some sixty or seventy rafts, or flatboats, with outriggers, filled with savages, and coming round the southern bight of the harbour. They appeared to have no arms except short clubs, and stones which lay in the bottom of the rafts. Immediately afterward another detachment, still larger, approached in an opposite direction, and with similar weapons. The four canoes, too, were now quickly filled with natives, starting up from the bushes at the head of the bay, and put off swiftly to join the other parties. Thus, in less time than I have taken to tell it, and as if by

magic, the *Jane* saw herself surrounded by an immense multitude of desperadoes evidently bent upon capturing her at all hazards.

That they would succeed in so doing could not be doubted for an instant. The six men left in the vessel, however resolutely they might engage in her defence, were altogether unequal to the proper management of the guns, or in any manner to sustain a contest at such odds. I could hardly imagine that they would make resistance at all, but in this was deceived; for presently I saw them get springs upon the cable, and bring the vessel's starboard broadside to bear upon the canoes, which by this time were within pistol range, the rafts being nearly a quarter of a mile to windward. Owing to some cause unknown, but most probably to the agitation of our poor friends at seeing themselves in so hopeless a situation, the discharge was an entire failure. Not a canoe was hit or a single savage injured, the shots striking short and *ricocheting* over their heads. The only effect produced upon them was astonishment at the unexpected report and smoke, which was so excessive that for some moments I almost thought they would abandon their design entirely, and return to the shore. And this they would most likely have done had our men followed up their broadside by a discharge of small arms, in which, as the canoes were now so near at hand, they could not have failed in doing some execution, sufficient, at least, to deter this party from a farther advance, until they could have given the rafts also a broadside. But, in place of this, they left the canoe party to recover from their panic, and, by looking about them, to see that no injury had been sustained, while they flew to the larboard to get ready for the rafts.

The discharge to larboard produced the most terrible effect. The star and double-headed shot of the large guns cut seven or eight of the rafts completely asunder, and killed, perhaps, thirty or forty of the savages outright, while a hundred of them, at least, were thrown into the water, the most of them dreadfully wounded. The remainder, frightened out of their senses, commenced at once a precipitate retreat, not even waiting to pick up their maimed companions, who were swimming about in every direction, screaming and yelling for aid. This great success, however, came too late for the salvation of our devoted people. The canoe party were already on board the schooner to the number of more than a hundred and fifty, the most of them having succeeded in scrambling up the chains and over the boarding nettings even before the matches had been applied to the larboard guns. Nothing could now withstand their brute rage. Our men were borne down at once, overwhelmed, trodden under foot, and absolutely torn to pieces in an instant.

Seeing this, the savages on the rafts got the better of their fears, and came up in shoals to the plunder. In five minutes the *Jane* was a pitiable scene indeed of havoc and tumultuous outrage. The decks were split open

and ripped up; the cordage, sails, and everything moveable on deck demolished as if by magic; while, by dint of pushing at the stern, towing with the canoes, and hauling at the sides, as they swam in thousands around the vessel, the wretches finally forced her on shore (the cable having been slipped), and delivered her over to the good offices of Too-wit, who, during the whole of the engagement, had maintained, like a skilful general, his post of security and reconnoissance among the hills, but, now that the victory was completed to his satisfaction, condescended to scamper down with his warriors of the black skin, and become a partaker in the spoils.

Too-wit's descent left us at liberty to quit our hiding-place and reconnoitre the hill in the vicinity of the chasm. At about fifty yards from the mouth of it we saw a small spring of water, at which we slaked the burning thirst that now consumed us. Not far from the spring we discovered several of the filbert-bushes which I mentioned before. Upon tasting the nuts we found them palatable, and very nearly resembling in flavour the common English filbert. We collected our hats full immediately, deposited them within the ravine, and returned for more. While we were busily employed in gathering these, a rustling in the bushes alarmed us, and we were upon the point of stealing back to our covert, when a large black bird of the bittern species strugglingly and slowly arose above the shrubs. I was so much startled that I could do nothing, but Peters had sufficient presence of mind to run up to it before it could make its escape, and seize it by the neck. Its struggles and screams were tremendous, and we had thoughts of letting it go, lest the noise should alarm some of the savages who might be still lurking in the neighbourhood. A stab with a Bowie knife, however, at length brought it to the ground, and we dragged it into the ravine, congratulating ourselves that, at all events, we had thus obtained a supply of food enough to last us for a week.

We now went out again to look about us, and ventured a considerable distance down the southern declivity of the hill, but met with nothing else which could serve us for food. We therefore collected a quantity of dry wood and returned, seeing one or two large parties of the natives on their way to the village, laden with the plunder of the vessel, and who, we were apprehensive, might discover us in passing beneath the hill.

Our next care was to render our place of concealment as secure as possible, and, with this object, we arranged some brushwood over the aperture which I have before spoken of as the one through which we saw the patch of blue sky, on reaching the platform from the interior of the chasm. We left only a very small opening, just wide enough to admit of our seeing the bay, without the risk of being discovered from below. Having done this, we congratulated ourselves upon the security of the position; for we were now completely excluded from observation, as long as we chose to remain within the

ravine itself, and not venture out upon the hill. We could perceive no traces of the savages having ever been within this hollow; but, indeed, when we came to reflect upon the probability that the fissure through which we attained it had been only just now created by the fall of the cliff opposite, and that no other way of attaining it could be perceived, we were not so much rejoiced at the thought of being secure from molestation as fearful lest there should be absolutely no means left us for descent. We resolved to explore the summit of the hill thoroughly, when a good opportunity should offer. In the mean time we watched the motions of the savages through our loophole.

They had already made a complete wreck of the vessel, and were now preparing to set her on fire. In a little while we saw the smoke ascending in huge volumes from her main-hatchway, and, shortly afterward, a dense mass of flame burst up from the fore-castle. The rigging, masts, and what remained of the sails caught immediately, and the fire spread rapidly along the decks. Still a great many of the savages retained their stations about her, hammering with large stones, axes, and cannon balls at the bolts and other copper and iron work. On the beach, and in canoes and rafts, there were not less, altogether, in the immediate vicinity of the schooner, than ten thousand natives, besides the shoals of them who, laden with booty, were making their way inland and over to the neighbouring islands. We now anticipated a catastrophe, and were not disappointed. First of all there came a smart shock (which we felt distinctly where we were as if we had been slightly galvanized), but unattended with any visible signs of an explosion. The savages were evidently startled, and paused for an instant from their labours and yellings. They were upon the point of recommencing, when suddenly a mass of smoke puffed up from the decks, resembling a black and heavy thundercloud—then, as if from its bowels, arose a tall stream of vivid fire to the height, apparently, of a quarter of a mile—then there came a sudden circular expansion of the flame—then the whole atmosphere was magically crowded, in a single instant, with a wild chaos of wood, and metal, and human limbs—and, lastly, came the concussion in its fullest fury, which hurled us impetuously from our feet, while the hills echoed and re-echoed the tumult, and a dense shower of the minutest fragments of the ruins tumbled headlong in every direction around us.

The havoc among the savages far exceeded our utmost expectation, and they had now, indeed, reaped the full and perfect fruits of their treachery. Perhaps a thousand perished by the explosion, while at least an equal number were desperately mangled. The whole surface of the bay was literally strewn with the struggling and drowning wretches, and on shore matters were even worse. They seemed utterly appalled by the suddenness and completeness of their discomfiture, and made no efforts at assisting one another. At length we observed a total change in their demeanour. From absolute

stupor they appeared to be, all at once, aroused to the highest pitch of excitement, and rushed wildly about, going to and from a certain point on the beach, with the strangest expressions of mingled horror, rage, and intense curiosity depicted on their countenances, and shouting, at the top of their voices, "Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!"

Presently we saw a large body go off into the hills, whence they returned in a short time, carrying stakes of wood. These they brought to the station where the crowd was the thickest, which now separated so as to afford us a view of the object of all this excitement. We perceived something white lying on the ground, but could not immediately make out what it was. At length we saw that it was the carcass of the strange animal with the scarlet teeth and claws which the schooner had picked up at sea on the eighteenth of January. Captain Guy had had the body preserved for the purpose of stuffing the skin and taking it to England. I remember he had given some directions about it just before our making the island, and it had been brought into the cabin and stowed away in one of the lockers. It had now been thrown on shore by the explosion; but why it had occasioned so much concern among the savages was more than we could comprehend. Although they crowded around the carcass at a little distance, none of them seemed willing to approach it closely. By-and-by the men with the stakes drove them in a circle around it, and, no sooner was this arrangement completed, than the whole of the vast assembly rushed into the interior of the island, with loud screams of "Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!"

Chapter XXIII

During the six or seven days immediately following we remained in our hiding-place upon the hill, going out only occasionally, and then with the greatest precaution, for water and filberts. We had made a kind of pent-house on the platform, furnishing it with a bed of dry leaves, and placing in it three large flat stones, which served us for both fireplace and table. We kindled a fire without difficulty by rubbing two pieces of dry wood together, the one soft, the other hard. The bird we had taken in such good season proved excellent eating although somewhat tough. It was not an oceanic fowl, but a species of bittern, with jet black and grizzly plumage, and diminutive wings in proportion to its bulk. We afterward saw three of the same kind in the vicinity of the ravine, apparently seeking for the one we had captured; but, as they never alighted, we had no opportunity of catching them.

As long as this fowl lasted we suffered nothing from our situation; but it was now entirely consumed, and it became absolutely necessary that we

should look out for provision. The filberts would not satisfy the cravings of hunger, afflicting us, too, with severe gripings of the bowels, and, if freely indulged in, with violent headache. We had seen several large tortoises near the seashore to the eastward of the hill, and perceived they might be easily taken, if we could get at them without the observation of the natives. It was resolved, therefore, to make an attempt at descending.

We commenced by going down the southern declivity, which seemed to offer the fewest difficulties, but had not proceeded a hundred yards before (as we had anticipated from appearances on the hill-top) our progress was entirely arrested by a branch of the gorge in which our companions had perished. We now passed along the edge of this for about a quarter of a mile, when we were again stopped by a precipice of immense depth, and, not being able to make our way along the brink of it, we were forced to retrace our steps by the main ravine.

We now pushed over to the eastward, but with precisely similar fortune. After an hour's scramble, at the risk of breaking our necks, we discovered that we had merely descended into a vast pit of black granite, with fine dust at the bottom, and whence the only egress was by the rugged path in which we had come down. Toiling again up this path, we now tried the northern edge of the hill. Here we were obliged to use the greatest possible caution in our manoeuvres, as the least indiscretion would expose us to the full view of the savages in the village. We crawled along, therefore, on our hands and knees, and, occasionally, were even forced to throw ourselves at full length, dragging our bodies along by means of the shrubbery. In this careful manner we had proceeded but a little way, when we arrived at a chasm far deeper than any we had yet seen, and leading directly into the main gorge. Thus our fears were fully confirmed, and we found ourselves cut off entirely from access to the world below. Thoroughly exhausted by our exertions, we made the best of our way back to the platform, and, throwing ourselves upon the bed of leaves, slept sweetly and soundly for some hours.

For several days after this fruitless search we were occupied in exploring every part of the summit of the hill, in order to inform ourselves of its actual resources. We found that it would afford us no food, with the exception of the unwholesome filberts, and a rank species of scurvy grass which grew in a little patch of not more than four rods square, and would be soon exhausted. On the fifteenth of February, as near as I can remember, there was not a blade of this left, and the nuts were growing scarce; our situation, therefore, could hardly be more lamentable.* On the sixteenth we again went round the walls of our prison, in hope of finding some avenue of escape, but to no purpose. We also descended the chasm in which we had

*This day was rendered remarkable by our observing in the south several huge wreaths of the grayish vapour I have before spoken of.

been overwhelmed, with the faint expectation of discovering, through this channel, some opening to the main ravine. Here, too, we were disappointed, although we found and brought up with us a musket.

On the seventeenth we set out with the determination of examining more thoroughly the chasm of black granite into which we had made our way in the first search. We remembered that one of the fissures in the sides of this pit had been but partially looked into, and we were anxious to explore it, although with no expectation of discovering here any opening.

We found no great difficulty in reaching the bottom of the hollow as before, and were now sufficiently calm to survey it with some attention. It was, indeed, one of the most singular-looking places imaginable, and we could scarcely bring ourselves to believe it altogether the work of nature. The pit, from its eastern to its western extremity, was about five hundred yards in length, when all its windings were threaded; the distance from east to west in a straight line not being more (I should suppose, having no means of accurate examination) than forty or fifty yards. Upon first descending into the chasm, that is to say, for a hundred feet downward from the summit of the hill, the sides of the abyss bore little resemblance to each other, and, apparently, had at no time been connected, the one surface being of the soapstone and the other of marl, granulated with some metallic matter. The average breadth, or interval between the two cliffs, was probably here sixty feet, but there seemed to be no regularity of formation. Passing down, however, beyond the limit spoken of, the interval rapidly contracted, and the sides began to run parallel, although, for some distance farther, they were still dissimilar in their material and form of surface. Upon arriving within fifty feet of the bottom, a perfect regularity commenced. The sides were now entirely uniform in substance, in colour, and in lateral direction, the material being a very black and shining granite, and the distance between the two sides, at all points facing each other, exactly twenty yards. The precise formation of the chasm will be best understood by means of a delineation taken upon the spot; for I had luckily with me a pocketbook and pencil, which I preserved with great care through a long series of subsequent adventure, and to which I am indebted for memoranda of many subjects which would otherwise have been crowded from my remembrance.

This figure (see figure 1) gives the general outlines of the chasm, without the minor cavities in the sides, of which there were several, each cavity having a corresponding protuberance opposite. The bottom of the gulf was covered to the depth of three or four inches with a powder almost impalpable beneath which we found a continuation of the black granite. To the right, at the lower extremity, will be noticed the appearance of a small opening; this is the fissure alluded to above, and to examine which more minutely than before was the object of our second visit. We now pushed into it with

vigour, cutting away a quantity of brambles which impeded us, and removing a vast heap of sharp flints somewhat resembling arrowheads in shape. We were encouraged to persevere, however, by perceiving some little light proceeding from the farther end. We at length squeezed our way for about thirty feet, and found that the aperture was a low and regularly-formed arch, having a bottom of the same impalpable powder as that in the main chasm. A strong light now broke upon us, and, turning a short bend, we found ourselves in another lofty chamber, similar to the one we had left in every respect but longitudinal form. Its general figure is here given. (See figure 2.)

The total length of this chasm, commencing at the opening <a> and proceeding round the curve to the extremity <d>, is five hundred and fifty yards. At <c> we discovered a small aperture similar to the one through which we had issued from the other chasm, and this was choked up in the same manner with brambles and a quantity of the white arrowhead flints. We forced our way through it, finding it about forty feet long, and emerged into a third chasm. This, too, was precisely like the first, except in its longitudinal shape, which was thus. (See figure 3.)

We found the entire length of the third chasm three hundred and twenty yards. At the point <a> was an opening about six feet wide, and extending fifteen feet into the rock, where it terminated in a bed of marl, there being no other chasm beyond, as we had expected. We were about leaving this fissure, into which very little light was admitted, when Peters called my attention to a range of singular-looking indentures in the surface of the marl forming the termination of the *cul-de-sac*. With a very slight exertion of the imagination, the left, or most northerly of these indentures might have been taken for the intentional, although rude, representation of a human figure standing erect, with outstretched arm. The rest of them bore also some lit-

Figure 1.

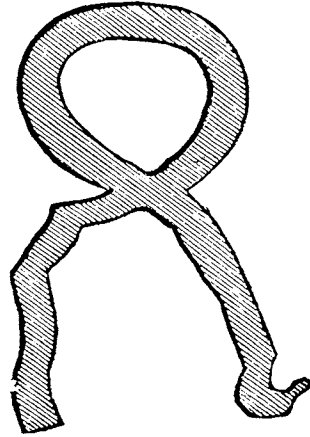


Figure 2.

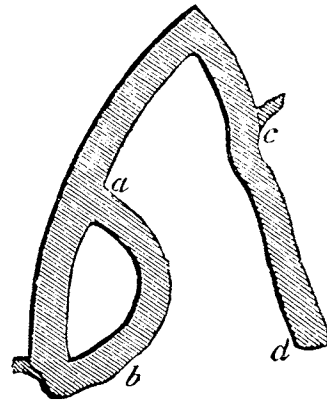


Figure 3.

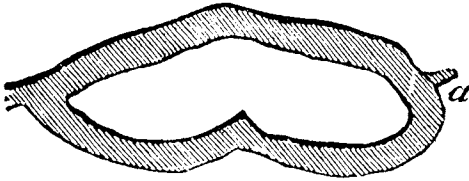
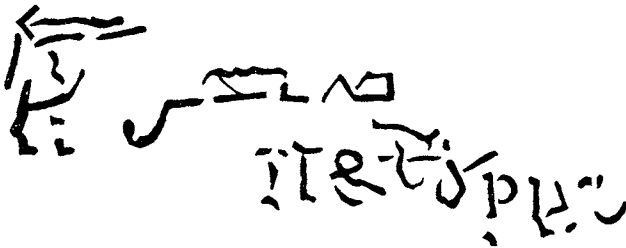


Figure 5.



tle resemblance to alphabetical characters, and Peters was willing, at all events, to adopt the idle opinion that they were really such. I convinced him of his error, finally, by directing his attention to the floor of the fissure, where, among the powder, we picked up, piece by piece, several large flakes of the marl, which had evidently been broken off by some convulsion from the surface where the indentures were found, and which had projecting points exactly fitting the indentures; thus proving them to have been the work of nature. Figure 4. presents an accurate copy of the whole.

Figure 4.



After satisfying ourselves that these singular caverns afforded us no means of escape from our prison, we made our way back, dejected and dispirited, to the summit of the hill. Nothing worth mentioning occurred during the next twenty-four hours, except that, in examining the ground to the eastward of the third chasm, we found two triangular holes of great depth, and also with black granite sides. Into these holes we did not think it worth while to attempt descending, as they had the appearance of mere natural wells, without outlet. They were each about twenty yards in circumference, and their shape, as well as relative position in regard to the third chasm, is shown in figure 5, already presented.

Chapter XXIV

On the twentieth of the month, finding it altogether impossible to subsist any longer upon the filberts, the use of which occasioned us the most excruciating torment, we resolved to make a desperate attempt at descending the southern declivity of the hill. The face of the precipice was here of the softest species of soapstone, although nearly perpendicular throughout its whole extent (a depth of a hundred and fifty feet at the least), and in many places even overarching. After long search we discovered a narrow ledge about twenty feet below the brink of the gulf; upon this Peters contrived to leap, with what assistance I could render him by means of our pocket-handkerchiefs tied together. With somewhat more difficulty I also got down; and we then saw the possibility of descending the whole way by the process in which we had clambered up from the chasm when we had been buried by the fall of the hill—that is, by cutting steps in the face of the soapstone with our knives. The extreme hazard of the attempt can scarcely be conceived; but, as there was no other resource, we determined to undertake it.

Upon the ledge where we stood there grew some filbert bushes; and to one of these we made fast an end of our rope of handkerchiefs. The other end being tied round Peters's waist, I lowered him down over the edge of the precipice until the handkerchiefs were stretched tight. He now proceeded to dig a deep hole in the soapstone (as far in as eight or ten inches), sloping away the rock above to the height of a foot, or thereabout, so as to allow of his driving, with the butt of a pistol, a tolerably strong peg into the levelled surface. I then drew him up for about four feet, when he made a hole similar to the one below, driving in a peg as before, and having thus a resting-place for both feet and hands. I now unfastened the handkerchiefs from the bush, throwing him the end, which he tied to the peg in the uppermost hole, letting himself down gently to a station about three feet lower than he had yet been, that is, to the full extent of the handkerchiefs. Here he dug another hole, and drove another peg. He then drew himself up, so as to rest his feet in the hole just cut, taking hold with his hands upon the peg in the one above. It was now necessary to untie the handkerchiefs from the topmost peg, with the view of fastening them to the second; and here he found that an error had been committed in cutting the holes at so great a distance apart. However, after one or two unsuccessful and dangerous attempts at reaching the knot (having to hold on with his left hand while he laboured to undo the fastening with his right), he at length cut the string, leaving six inches of it affixed to the peg. Tying the handkerchiefs now to the second peg, he descended to a station below the third, taking care not to go too far down. By these means (means which I should never have conceived of

myself, and for which we were indebted altogether to Peters's ingenuity and resolution) my companion finally succeeded, with the occasional aid of projections in the cliff, in reaching the bottom without accident.

It was some time before I could summon sufficient resolution to follow him; but I did at length attempt it. Peters had taken off his shirt before descending, and this, with my own, formed the rope necessary for the adventure. After throwing down the musket found in the chasm, I fastened this rope to the bushes, and let myself down rapidly, striving, by the vigour of my movements, to banish the trepidation which I could overcome in no other manner. This answered sufficiently well for the first four or five steps; but presently I found my imagination growing terribly excited by thoughts of the vast depth yet to be descended, and the precarious nature of the pegs and soapstone holes which were my only support. It was in vain I endeavoured to banish these reflections, and to keep my eyes steadily bent upon the flat surface of the cliff before me. The more earnestly I struggled *not to think*, the more intensely vivid became my conceptions, and the more horribly distinct. At length arrived that crisis of fancy, so fearful in all similar cases, the crisis in which we begin to anticipate the feelings with which we *shall* fall—to picture to ourselves the sickness, and dizziness, and the last struggle, and the half swoon, and the final bitterness of the rushing and headlong descent. And now I found these fancies creating their own realities, and all imagined horrors crowding upon me in fact. I felt my knees strike violently together, while my fingers were gradually yet certainly relaxing their grasp. There was a ringing in my ears, and I said, "This is my knell of death!" And now I was consumed with the irrepressible desire of looking below. I could not, I would not, confine my glances to the cliff; and, with a wild, indefinable emotion, half of horror, half of a relieved oppression, I threw my vision far down into the abyss. For one moment my fingers clutched convulsively upon their hold, while, with the movement, the faintest possible idea of ultimate escape wandered, like a shadow, through my mind—in the next my whole soul was pervaded with a *longing to fall*; a desire, a yearning, a passion utterly uncontrollable. I let go at once my grasp upon the peg, and, turning half round from the precipice, remained tottering for an instant against its naked face. But now there came a spinning of the brain; a shrill-sounding and phantom voice screamed within my ears; a dusky, fiendish, and filmy figure stood immediately beneath me; and, sighing, I sunk down with a bursting heart, and plunged within its arms.

I had swooned, and Peters had caught me as I fell. He had observed my proceedings from his station at the bottom of the cliff; and, perceiving my imminent danger, had endeavoured to inspire me with courage by every suggestion he could devise; although my confusion of mind had been so great as to prevent my hearing what he said, or being conscious that he had

even spoken to me at all. At length, seeing me totter, he hastened to ascend to my rescue, and arrived just in time for my preservation. Had I fallen with my full weight, the rope of linen would inevitably have snapped, and I should have been precipitated into the abyss; as it was, he contrived to let me down gently, so as to remain suspended without danger until animation returned. This was in about fifteen minutes. On recovery, my trepidation had entirely vanished; I felt a new being, and, with some little further aid from my companion, reached the bottom also in safety.

We now found ourselves not far from the ravine which had proved the tomb of our friends, and to the southward of the spot where the hill had fallen. The place was one of singular wildness, and its aspect brought to my mind the descriptions given by travellers of those dreary regions marking the site of degraded Babylon. Not to speak of the ruins of the disraptured cliff, which formed a chaotic barrier in the vista to the northward, the surface of the ground in every other direction was strewn with huge tumuli, apparently the wreck of some gigantic structures of art; although, in detail, no semblance of art could be detected. Scoria were abundant, and large shapeless blocks of the black granite, intermingled with others of marl*, and both granulated with metal. Of vegetation there were no traces whatsoever throughout the whole of the desolate area within sight. Several immense scorpions were seen, and various reptiles not elsewhere to be found in the high latitudes.

As food was our most immediate object, we resolved to make our way to the seacoast, distant not more than half a mile, with a view of catching turtle, several of which we had observed from our place of concealment on the hill. We had proceeded some hundred yards, threading our route cautiously between the huge rocks and tumuli, when, upon turning a corner, five savages sprung upon us from a small cavern, felling Peters to the ground with a blow from a club. As he fell the whole party rushed upon him to secure their victim, leaving me time to recover from my astonishment. I still had the musket, but the barrel had received so much injury in being thrown from the precipice that I cast it aside as useless, preferring to trust my pistols, which had been carefully preserved in order. With these I advanced upon the assailants, firing one after the other in quick succession. Two savages fell, and one, who was in the act of thrusting a spear into Peters, sprung to his feet without accomplishing his purpose. My companion being thus released, we had no further difficulty. He had his pistols also, but prudently declined using them, confiding in his great personal strength, which far exceeded that of any person I have ever known. Seizing a club from one of the savages who had fallen, he dashed out the brains of the three

*The marl was also black, indeed, we noticed no light-coloured substances of any kind upon the island.

who remained, killing each instantaneously with a single blow of the weapon, and leaving us completely masters of the field.

So rapidly had these events passed, that we could scarcely believe in their reality, and were standing over the bodies of the dead in a species of stupid contemplation, when we were brought to recollection by the sound of shouts in the distance. It was clear that the savages had been alarmed by the firing, and that we had little chance of avoiding discovery. To regain the cliff, it would be necessary to proceed in the direction of the shouts; and even should we succeed in arriving at its base, we should never be able to ascend it without being seen. Our situation was one of the greatest peril, and we were hesitating in which path to commence a flight, when one of the savages whom I had shot, and supposed dead, sprang briskly to his feet, and attempted to make his escape. We overtook him, however, before he had advanced many paces, and were about to put him to death, when Peters suggested that we might derive some benefit from forcing him to accompany us in our attempt at escape. We therefore dragged him with us, making him understand that we would shoot him if he offered resistance. In a few minutes he was perfectly submissive, and ran by our sides as we pushed in among the rocks, making for the seashore.

So far, the irregularities of the ground we had been traversing hid the sea, except at intervals, from our sight, and, when we first had it fairly in view, it was, perhaps, two hundred yards distant. As we emerged into the open beach we saw, to our great dismay, an immense crowd of the natives pouring from the village, and from all visible quarters of the island, making towards us with gesticulations of extreme fury, and howling like wild beasts. We were upon the point of turning upon our steps, and trying to secure a retreat among the fastnesses of the rougher ground, when I discovered the bows of two canoes projecting from behind a large rock which ran out into the water. Towards these we now ran with all speed, and, reaching them, found them unguarded, and without any other freight than three of the large Gallipago turtles and the usual supply of paddles for sixty rowers. We instantly took possession of one of them, and, forcing our captive on board, pushed out to sea with all the strength we could command.

We had not made, however, more than fifty yards from the shore before we became sufficiently calm to perceive the great oversight of which we had been guilty in leaving the other canoe in the power of the savages, who, by this time, were not more than twice as far from the beach as ourselves, and were rapidly advancing to the pursuit. No time was now to be lost. Our hope was, at best, a forlorn one, but we had none other. It was very doubtful whether, with the utmost exertion, we could get back in time to anticipate them in taking possession of the canoe; but yet there was a chance that

we could. We might save ourselves if we succeeded, while not to make the attempt was to resign ourselves to inevitable butchery.

The canoe was modelled with the bow and stem alike, and, in place of turning it round, we merely changed our position in paddling. As soon as the savages perceived this they redoubled their yells, as well as their speed, and approached with inconceivable rapidity. We pulled, however, with all the energy of desperation, and arrived at the contested point before more than one of the natives had attained it. This man paid dearly for his superior agility, Peters shooting him through the head with a pistol as he approached the shore. The foremost among the rest of his party were probably some twenty or thirty paces distant as we seized upon the canoe. We at first endeavoured to pull her into the deep water, beyond the reach of the savages, but, finding her too firmly aground, and there being no time to spare, Peters, with one or two heavy strokes from the butt of the musket, succeeded in dashing out a large portion of the bow and of one side. We then pushed off. Two of the natives by this time had got hold of our boat, obstinately refusing to let go, until we were forced to despatch them with our knives. We were now clear off, and making great way out to sea. The main body of the savages, upon reaching the broken canoe, set up the most tremendous yell of rage and disappointment conceivable. In truth, from everything I could see of these wretches, they appeared to be the most wicked, hypocritical, vindictive, bloodthirsty, and altogether fiendish race of men upon the face of the globe. It is clear we should have had no mercy had we fallen into their hands. They made a mad attempt at following us in the fractured canoe, but, finding it useless, again vented their rage in a series of hideous vociferations and rushed up into the hills.

We were thus relieved from immediate danger, but our situation was still sufficiently gloomy. We knew that four canoes of the kind we had were at one time in the possession of the savages, and were not aware of the fact (afterward ascertained from our captive) that two of these had been blown to pieces in the explosion of the *Jane Guy*. We calculated, therefore, upon being yet pursued, as soon as our enemies could get round to the bay (distant about three miles) where the boats were usually laid up. Fearing this, we made every exertion to leave the island behind us, and went rapidly through the water, forcing the prisoner to take a paddle. In about half an hour, when we had gained, probably, five or six miles to the southward, a large fleet of the flat-bottomed canoes or rafts was seen to emerge from the bay, evidently with the design of pursuit. Presently they put back, despairing to overtake us.

CHAPTER XXV

W e now found ourselves in the wide and desolate Antarctic Ocean, in a latitude exceeding eighty-four degrees, in a frail canoe, and with no provision but the three turtles. The long Polar winter, too, could not be considered as far distant, and it became necessary that we should deliberate well upon the course to be pursued. There were six or seven islands in sight belonging to the same group, and distant from each other about five or six leagues; but upon neither of these had we any intention to venture. In coming from the northward in the *Jane Guy* we had been gradually leaving behind us the severest regions of ice—this, however little it may be in accordance with the generally-received notions respecting the Antarctic, was a fact experience would not permit us to deny. To attempt, therefore, getting back, would be folly—especially at so late a period of the season. Only one course seemed to be left open for hope. We resolved to steer boldly to the southward, where there was at least a probability of discovering other lands, and more than a probability of finding a still milder climate.

So far we had found the Antarctic, like the Arctic Ocean, peculiarly free from violent storms or immoderately rough water; but our canoe was, at best, of frail structure, although large, and we set busily to work with a view of rendering her as safe as the limited means in our possession would admit. The body of the boat was of no better material than bark, the bark of a tree unknown. The ribs were of a tough osier, well adapted to the purpose for which it was used. We had fifty feet room from stem to stern, from four to six in breadth, and in depth throughout four feet and a half—the boats thus differing vastly in shape from those of any other inhabitants of the Southern Ocean with whom civilized nations are acquainted. We never did believe them the workmanship of the ignorant islanders who owned them; and some days after this period discovered, by questioning our captive, that they were in fact made by the natives of a group to the southwest of the country where we found them, having fallen accidentally into the hands of our barbarians. What we could do for the security of our boat was very little indeed. Several wide rents were discovered near both ends, and these we contrived to patch up with pieces of woollen jacket. With the help of the superfluous paddles, of which there were a great many, we erected a kind of framework about the bow, so as to break the force of any seas which might threaten to fill us in that quarter. We also set up two paddle-blades for masts, placing them opposite each other, one by each gunwale, thus saving the necessity of a yard. To these masts we attached a sail made of our shirts—doing this with some difficulty, as here we could get no assistance from our prisoner whatever, although he had been willing enough to labour in all the other operations. The sight of the linen seemed to affect him in a very singular manner.

He could not be prevailed upon to touch it or go near it, shuddering when we attempted to force him, and shrieking out "Tekeli-li!"

Having completed our arrangements in regard to the security of the canoe, we now set sail to the south southeast for the present, with the view of weathering the most southerly of the group in sight. This being done, we turned the bow full to the southward. The weather could by no means be considered disagreeable. We had a prevailing and very gentle wind from the northward, a smooth sea, and continual daylight. No ice whatever was to be seen; *nor did I ever see one particle of this after leaving the parallel of Bennett's Islet.* Indeed, the temperature of the water was here far too warm for its existence in any quantity. Having killed the largest of our tortoises, and obtained from him not only food, but a copious supply of water, we continued on our course, without any incident of moment, for perhaps seven or eight days, during which period we must have proceeded a vast distance to the southward, as the wind blew constantly with us, and a very strong current set continually in the direction we were pursuing.

March 1.* Many unusual phenomena now indicated that we were entering upon a region of novelty and wonder. A high range of light gray vapour appeared constantly in the southern horizon, flaring up occasionally in lofty streaks, now darting from east to west, now from west to east, and again presenting a level and uniform summit—in short, having all the wild variations of the Aurora Borealis. The average height of this vapour, as apparent from our station, was about twenty-five degrees. The temperature of the sea seemed to be increasing momentarily, and there was a very perceptible alteration in its colour.

March 2. To-day, by repeated questioning of our captive, we came to the knowledge of many particulars in regard to the island of the massacre, its inhabitants, and customs—but with these how can I *now* detain the reader? I may say, however, that we learned there were eight islands in the group—that they were governed by a common king, named Tsalemon or Psalemoun, who resided in one of the smallest of the islands—that the black skins forming the dress of the warriors came from an animal of huge size to be found only in a valley near the court of the king—that the inhabitants of the group fabricated no other boats than the flat-bottomed rafts; the four canoes being all of the kind in their possession, and these having been obtained, by mere accident, from some large island to the southwest—that his own name was Nu-Nu—that he had no knowledge of Bennett's Islet—and that the appellation of the island we had left was Tsalal. The commencement of the words Tsalemon and Tsalal was given with a prolonged hissing sound, which we found it impossible to imitate, even after repeated

*For obvious reasons I cannot pretend to strict accuracy in these dates. They are given principally with a view to perspicuity of narration, and as set down in my pencil memoranda.

endeavours, and which was precisely the same with the note of the black bittern we had eaten upon the summit of the hill.

March 3. The heat of the water was now truly remarkable, and its colour was undergoing a rapid change, being no longer transparent, but of a milky consistency and hue. In our immediate vicinity it was usually smooth, never so rough as to endanger the canoe—but we were frequently surprised at perceiving, to our right and left, at different distances, sudden and extensive agitations of the surface—these, we at length noticed, were always preceded by wild flickerings in the region of vapour to the southward.

March 4. To-day, with the view of widening our sail, the breeze from the northward dying away perceptibly, I took from my coat-pocket a white handkerchief. Nu-Nu was seated at my elbow, and the linen accidentally flaring in his face, he became violently affected with convulsions. These were succeeded by drowsiness and stupor, and low murmurings of “Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!”

March 5. The wind had entirely ceased, but it was evident that we were still hurrying on to the southward, under the influence of a powerful current. And now, indeed, it would seem reasonable that we should experience some alarm at the turn events were taking—but we felt none. The countenance of Peters indicated nothing of this nature, although it wore at times an expression I could not fathom. The Polar winter appeared to be coming on—but coming without its terrors. I felt a numbness of body and mind—a dreaminess of sensation—but this was all.

March 6. The gray vapour had now arisen many more degrees above the horizon, and was gradually losing its grayness of tint. The heat of the water was extreme, even unpleasant to the touch, and its milky hue was more evident than ever. To-day a violent agitation of the water occurred very close to the canoe. It was attended, as usual, with a wild flaring up of the vapour at its summit, and a momentary division at its base. A fine white powder, resembling ashes—but certainly not such—fell over the canoe and over a large surface of the water, as the flickering died away among the vapour and the commotion subsided in the sea. Nu-Nu now threw himself on his face in the bottom of the boat, and no persuasions could induce him to arise.

March 7. This day we questioned Nu-Nu concerning the motives of his countrymen in destroying our companions; but he appeared to be too utterly overcome by terror to afford us any rational reply. He still obstinately lay in the bottom of the boat; and, upon our reiterating the questions as to the motive, made use only of idiotic gesticulations, such as raising with his forefinger the upper lip, and displaying the teeth which lay beneath it. These were black. We had never before seen the teeth of an inhabitant of Tsalal.

March 8. To-day there floated by us one of the white animals whose appearance upon the beach at Tsalal had occasioned so wild a commotion among the savages. I would have picked it up, but there came over me a sudden listlessness, and I forbore. The heat of the water still increased, and the hand could no longer be endured within it. Peters spoke little, and I knew not what to think of his apathy. Nu-Nu breathed, and no more.

March 9. The white ashy material fell now continually around us, and in vast quantities. The range of vapour to the southward had arisen prodigiously in the horizon, and began to assume more distinctness of form. I can liken it to nothing but a limitless cataract, rolling silently into the sea from some immense and far-distant rampart in the heaven. The gigantic curtain ranged along the whole extent of the southern horizon. It emitted no sound.

March 21. A sullen darkness now hovered above us—but from out the milky depths of the ocean a luminous glare arose, and stole up along the bulwarks of the boat. We were nearly overwhelmed by the white ashy shower which settled upon us and upon the canoe, but melted into the water as it fell. The summit of the cataract was utterly lost in the dimness and the distance. Yet we were evidently approaching it with a hideous velocity. At intervals there were visible in it wide, yawning, but momentary rents, and from out these rents, within which was a chaos of flitting and indistinct images, there came rushing and mighty, but soundless winds, tearing up the enkindled ocean in their course.

March 22. The darkness had materially increased, relieved only by the glare of the water thrown back from the white curtain before us. Many gigantic and pallidly white birds flew continuously now from beyond the veil, and their scream was the eternal "Tekeli-li!" as they retreated from our vision. Hereupon Nu-Nu stirred in the bottom of the boat; but, upon touching him, we found his spirit departed. And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow.

NOTE

The circumstances connected with the late sudden and distressing death of Mr. Pym are already well known to the public through the medium of the daily press. It is feared that the few remaining chapters which were to have completed his narrative, and which were retained by him, while the above were in type, for the purpose of revision, have been irrecoverably lost through the accident by which he perished himself. This, however, may prove not to be the case, and the papers, if ultimately found, will be given to the public.

No means have been left untried to remedy the deficiency. The gentleman whose name is mentioned in the preface, and who, from the statement there made, might be supposed able to fill the vacuum, has declined the task—this, for satisfactory reasons connected with the general inaccuracy of the details afforded him, and his disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narration. Peters, from whom some information might be expected, is still alive, and a resident of Illinois, but cannot be met with at present. He may hereafter be found, and will, no doubt, afford material for a conclusion of Mr. Pym's account.

The loss of two or three final chapters (for there were but two or three) is the more deeply to be regretted, as, it cannot be doubted, they constrained matter relative to the Pole itself, or at least to regions in its very near proximity; and as, too, the statements of the author in relation to these regions may shortly be verified or contradicted by means of the governmental expedition now preparing for the Southern Ocean.

On one point in the narrative some remarks may be well offered; and it would afford the writer of this appendix much pleasure if what he may here observe should have a tendency to throw credit, in any degree, upon the very singular pages now published. We allude to the chasms found in the island of Tsalal, and to the whole of the figures in Chapter XXIII.

Mr. Pym has given the figures of the chasms without comment, and speaks decidedly of the *indentures* found at the extremity of the most easterly of these chasms as having but a fanciful resemblance to alphabetical characters, and, in short, as being positively *not such*. This assertion is made in a manner so simple, and sustained by a species of demonstrations so conclusive, *viz.* (the fitting of the projections of the fragments found among the dust into the indentures upon the wall), that we are forced to believe the writer in earnest; and no reasonable reader should suppose otherwise. But as the facts in relation to *all* the figures are most singular (especially when taken in connection with statements made in the body of the narrative), it may be as well to say a word or two concerning them all—this, too, the

more especially as the facts in question have, beyond doubt, escaped the attention of Mr. Poe.

Figure 1, then, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 5, when conjoined with one another in the precise order which the chasms themselves presented, and when deprived of the small lateral branches or arches (which, it will be remembered, served only as a means of communication between the main chambers, and were of totally distinct character), constitute an Ethiopian verbal root—the root **ⲁⲒⲠⲓ**, ‘to be shady’—whence all the inflections of shadow or darkness.

In regard to the ‘left or most northwardly’ of the indentures in Figure 4, it is more than probable that the opinion of Peters was correct, and that the hieroglyphical appearance was really the work of art, and intended as the presentation of a human form. The delineation is before the reader, and he may, or may not, perceive the resemblance suggested; but the rest of the upper range is evidently the Arabic verbal root **√سلب**, ‘to be white,’ whence all the inflections of brilliancy and whiteness. The lower range is not so immediately perspicuous. The characters are somewhat broken and disjointed; nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that, in their perfect state, they formed the full Egyptian word **ⲡⲉⲩⲩⲣⲉⲥ**, ‘The region of the south.’ It should be observed that these interpretations confirm the opinion of Peters in regard to the ‘most northwardly’ of the figures. The arm is outstretched towards the south.

Conclusions such as these open a wide field for speculation and exciting conjecture. They should be regarded, perhaps, in connection with some of the most faintly detailed incidents of the narrative; although in no visible manner is this chain of connection complete. “Tekeli-li!” was the cry of the affrighted natives of Tsalal upon discovering the carcass of the *white* animal picked up at sea. This also was the shuddering exclamation of the captive Tsalalian upon encountering the *white* materials in possession of Mr. Pym. This also was the shriek of the swift-flying, *white*, and gigantic birds which issued from the vapoury white curtain of the South. Nothing white was to be found at Tsalal, and nothing otherwise in the subsequent voyage to the region beyond. It is not impossible that “Tsalal,” the appellation of the island of the chasms, may be found, upon minute philological scrutiny, to betray either some affiance with the chasms themselves, or some reference to the Ethiopian characters so mysteriously written in their windings.

“I have given it within the hills, and my vengeance upon the dust within the rock.”

About *The Greatest Adventure*

Eric Temple Bell (1883–1960) was a renowned mathematician and the author of several tomes on math. But he led a double life. He also wrote under the name “John Taine”, and what he wrote was a great number of fascinating science fiction and Lost Race novels. His work brims with fascinating ideas, cosmic majesty, and exotic color and stolid characters worthy of the great Talbot Mundy. His many books include *Seeds of Life*, *The Iron Star*, *The Forbidden Garden*, *Gog 666*, *White Lilly*, *The Purple Sapphire*, *The Time Stream*, and the present short novel *The Greatest Adventure*. I am convinced that Bell (or Taine, let us call him, in accord with his preference) was a major influence on Lovecraft, and particularly that *The Greatest Adventure* was a major influence upon *At the Mountains of Madness*. The dates are right: Lovecraft could have and would have seen it, since Taine’s novel was first published in 1929. Can we ignore (as so many Lovecraft scholars have done) the overt similarities? Explorers visit Antarctica. Early on there are finds implying freakish early cycles of evolution. Later discoveries reveal an ancient superrace which used genetic science to breed a race of monsters. This experiment led to their own downfall. This secret is contained on massive wall inscriptions left by that race.

William Fulwiler has demonstrated that Edgar Rice Burroughs was another, largely ignored, influence on *At the Mountains of Madness*. Now I think John Taine must be added to that elite list, along with Poe and Burroughs. But just as it would be foolish to relegate Burroughs’ Pellucidar novels and Poe’s Pym to the status of mere precursors to HPL, it would be absolutely ridiculous to regard Taine as some sort of literary curiosity. I hope that this taste of John Taine’s marvelous fiction may get the used book dealers’ phones ringing off the hook! There are even several unpublished books by Taine! Let’s hope someone undertakes to share them with a newly Taine-hungry reading public!



The Greatest Adventure

by John Taine

1

Bird or Reptile?

Undoubtedly Dr. Eric Lane was a man to be envied. With ordinary luck he might yet look forward to thirty-five years of the keenest pleasure a highly intelligent and healthy man can experience, the discovery of natural laws and their application to the good of his fellow men.

Although today was his fortieth birthday he felt not a day over eighteen. He smiled as the thought occurred to him, for it reminded him of his daughter Edith. She was just the age that he felt.

"We're a pair of kids," he laughed, looking fondly at the white and gold porcelain image of a sleepy tomcat, which she had deposited on his worktable as a birthday offering. Their appreciation of cats was but one among scores of likings which they shared in perfect understanding.

Edith's gift of sympathy no doubt was responsible for her father's continued widowerhood. Not once in the ten years since his wife's death had Dr. Lane thought of marrying. His wife had been like Edith, quick to understand when he left the thought but half-expressed, and tactfully willing to let him think in silence for days when the mood was on him. Her early death had broken him for a year or two, but with Edith and his work to live for he had gradually taken a grip on himself and set his face to the future.

"I wonder what she is doing," he mused, dwelling affectionately on the sleepy cat of her offering. As if in answer to his unspoken thought the

study door opened noiselessly two inches. An appraising brown eye took in the situation.

"Come in," he called. "I'm not working. Your precious cat makes me long to sleep."

Edith entered. "Have you everything you want?" she asked, ready to withdraw at the slightest symptom of work on her father's part.

"Everything," he replied with a smile, "but you. Come in and stay a bit. Birthdays come only once a year."

Edith joined him by the worktable with its litter of microscopes and queer-looking specimens pallid in their neatly stoppered alcohol jars.

"Do you know," he said, "it sometimes scares me a little.

"What scares you, dear?" she queried, for once at a loss.

"Why, that I do have everything I want."

"Well, why shouldn't you? Surely you have earned it."

"So have thousands of other men. Yet they have nothing while I have everything."

"Oh," she laughed, "it isn't so bad as all that. You are not a billionaire. Nor do you want the whole Earth as some of the others do, and cry when they can't get it."

"Still," he persisted, "there are thousands of men as able as I am who slave all their lives and have nothing but a bare living to show for all their labor."

He strolled over to the French windows and stood gazing absently at the clear spring beauty of San Francisco Bay and the tawny Marin hills on the farther shore. With all the world to choose from he had selected this spot as his abiding place, high upon Telegraph Hill overlooking San Francisco and the whole sublime sweep of the harbor. Often he would stand at this window for an hour at a time, lost in thought, only half consciously watching the swift white ferry boats rounding Goat Island with the clocklike precision of mechanical toys.

In all weathers the colorful panorama of bay, city, and steep bills had a stimulating yet soothing effect on his mind. Although much of his work with the strangely diseased things of the sea was not beautiful, the ever-changing beauty of his outlook seemed to infuse him with inexhaustible energy for the repellent drudgery which is the necessary foundation of any scientific advance. The warm spring breeze rustling the leaves of the young eucalyptus by the open window brought him back to the present and his surroundings.

"Yes," he continued, "there is young Drake, for instance, twenty and as poor as a crow. When I was his age I had been a millionaire several times over for almost six years. Yet Drake has a fundamentally better mind than I have. He simply did not have my chance. That is all."

"But suppose he had been given your chance," Edith protested, "could he have taken it?"

"No," her father replied thoughtfully. "There's not a grain of business sense in him. Still, for all that, I maintain that his head is better than mine."

"Then why doesn't he use it?" There was just a tinge of scorn in Edith's retort. Her father glanced up at her face in surprise.

"I thought you and Drake were great pals," he said.

"We are," she admitted readily enough. "But the sheer futility of his everlasting inscriptions rather gets on my nerves. I do wish he would turn his brains to something less trivial."

"How do you know his work is so useless?" the Doctor parried.

"Oh, if you are going to begin one of your scientific attacks on me," she laughed, "I'll retire at once to my humble corner. I'm routed. But can't you see," she protested earnestly, "that all his deciphering of outlandish inscriptions cannot make an atom of difference, one way or the other, to human beings today? What does it matter how a half-civilized race, extinct centuries ago, predicted eclipses of the moon? And who on Earth cares whether they counted by twenties instead of by tens as we do? Will it make life more endurable for any human being to know how those dead and forgotten people disposed of their corpses?"

"Perhaps," the Doctor hazarded with a smile, "you would prefer to see our young friend Drake turning his unique talents to the unsolved problem of infant colics?"

"It would be more useful," she flashed.

"But consider," her father demurred, "what would become of the Mexican and Guatemalan inscriptions in the meantime. Who would ever read them, fully and satisfactorily? If Drake can't do it, nobody can. After his brilliant success with the Bolivian puzzles he is almost certain to make short work of the rest."

"Yes," Edith admitted. "And if he does, what then?"

"Why, my dear, he will have saved numberless future generations of young Drakes from wasting their lives on a useless piece of tomfoolery."

She laughed. "I knew when we began that you would corner me. Still, I'm morally right, because you slipped out by the back door. That isn't what you really think of Drake's work."

"It isn't, angel child," he admitted. "You must look at life in a broader way. The conquest of disease and the discovery of the origin of life are not even half the problem. As the old fellows used to say, the whole is one, and you can't change the smallest part in any place without altering the entire fabric everywhere. Drake's Bolivian hieroglyphics are just as vital a part of science as are the obscure fish parasites that I mess with in the hope of learn-

ing something about cancer. And I shouldn't wonder," he concluded half-seriously, "if some day Drake's work gives us a clue to the central problem."

"And shows us what life is?" she laughed. "When it does, I'll eat that."

She pointed to a particularly loathsome reptile in a glass jar. It was one of the Doctor's favorites, as the tumor to which it had succumbed appeared to be something unique in the history of disease.

"You will eat it without salt or pepper?" he stipulated.

"Absolutely," she agreed.

"Very well then. We shall see."

Edith turned to go. "Shall I send up anyone who comes with a real specimen?"

"Only if it looks pretty good."

"Pretty bad, you mean. All right, I'll inspect the horror and use my judgment."

With a last smile she was gone as noiselessly as she had come. She had her work, and the Doctor his. Her morning would be begun in a short conference with the Chinese servants, short because both she and they were efficient and wasted no words. Then she might work for an hour or two among her flowers in the English garden which was her pride, before settling down to the serious business of the day. This consisted of systematic reading directed by her father. At her own request he had mapped out a course of study and experiment which would enable her to understand something of what he was attempting to do. For two hours every evening a young doctor just from the University eked out his meager practice helping her over the rough places in the day's work. In this way she made rapid and substantial progress. She never bothered her father with difficulties that any competent teacher could set right.

During the sunny part of the day she studied under the pepper trees by the gate, to be ready to receive and pay the Italian and Japanese fishermen who brought the curiosities of their catches to her father. All up and down the Pacific Coast and even to Hawaii and far-off Japan, Dr. Lane of San Francisco was a celebrity among the fishermen and sailors. They knew him only distantly and impersonally as a deluded crank eager to pay one dollar apiece for curiously diseased and otherwise unsaleable fish. For weird monstrosities from the deep-sea levels he had been known to give as high as ten dollars each. What he did with all these abominations they never inquired. Sufficient unto their ignorance was the price thereof.

Occasionally some ambitious sailor would offer Edith his ingenious masterpiece of months of painstaking work in the forecastle. This usually took the form of a fantastic kelp and coconut mermaid, or an elaborately contrived sea serpent of fish bladders and seaweeds. One such offering convinced him that he had been wasting his time. Edith recognized the subtle

distinction between abandoned nature and the highest art at the first glance. If the fraud was sufficiently horrible and otherwise pleasing she would buy it for her own collection, intending, as she told her father when he protested at her growing collection of freaks, some day to write a monograph on marine diseases of the imagination. Left to himself the Doctor returned to the open window.

Spring fever was upon him. Work and all its paraphernalia appeared as an insult to nature. Accordingly he yielded himself to the soft influences of the warm breeze and the flashing blue and silver glory of the bay. Standing there he let the memories of a busy lifetime stream through his mind and out to the future with all its promise of great things to be.

Ever since his school days he had been bitten by the ambition to trace life to its secret source and lay bare its mystery. To create life, or at least to control and direct it when once created, that was the great problem. Then, when he had begun to learn something of systematic biology, he had seen the utter hopelessness of a direct attack. Wasting no time he had turned his energies elsewhere, to humbler things, in order that he might, if lucky, surprise the enemy unaware. For he realized that a wholesale creation of a fully living organism by artificial means was probably centuries beyond the capabilities of science, and his was too high an intelligence to waste itself on unsolvable riddles. If in laborious investigations of lesser problems he might catch a glimpse of the goal he would be happy, provided only that his search was not otherwise fruitless and bore abundant good to humanity in the alleviation of pain and preventable misery. But he would not waste his gifts on crass impossibilities.

His course at first had been hard and indirect. Forced by poverty to work his way through school and college, he had come early to a wisdom far beyond his years. With absolute clarity he had seen that freedom from worry over money matters is the first essential for genuinely creative scientific work. While constantly harassed by poverty he had been powerless to concentrate his abilities on any problem worth the solving. He therefore decided in his second college year to swerve aside temporarily from his ambition and make money. To the regret of his instructors he abruptly threw up the study of medicine and changed over to geology.

The new science was congenial. At many points it touched the past story of life if not the present. Putting every ounce of brain and energy into the work, he mastered the geology of coal and oil formations and graduated easily at the top of his class.

He was now twenty. The day after graduation he shipped as a coal passer on a steamer bound for China. Arrived there, ignorant though he was of the language, he disappeared into the interior.

His subsequent career is one of the classics of mining engineering. In eighteen months he had located one of the richest anthracite fields in the history of coal. Moreover, he had obtained from the Chinese government certain concessions which, if worked, would make him one of the hundred richest white men in the world. All he had to do was to stay on the ground and let his prize develop. Capital would come almost unasked.

It was here that he showed the stuff he was made of. Instead of degenerating into a money-making machine he placed all his rights in the hands of an English company. Within six weeks he had sold out for ten million dollars cash all of his interest which, if nursed with ordinary business acumen, would have netted him a hundred million before he died. But he had no time to squander in making money. The most precious years of his life were slipping through his hands, and he was still but half-educated for the work he had set himself.

While idling about Shanghai waiting to close up his business he met and married the English girl who for eight years made him a flawlessly happy man.

Having invested his fortune in government bonds he forgot it and proceeded with his wife to Vienna to finish his medical education. That accomplished, he left his wife and infant daughter with his mother, and took a year's holiday with half a dozen friends exploring the southernmost extremity of Patagonia in a fossil-hunting expedition.

The fossils aroused his purely biological interests. On returning to civilization he again went with his wife to Europe. There he specialized for two years in the great centers of pure biology. At twenty-seven, on returning to America, he felt himself fitted to begin useful work.

Resolutely putting from his mind the fantastic hope of discovering the origin of life, he concentrated his powers on the difficult problems of cell growth. Thus gradually and naturally was he led to the study of cancer, on which he had now been engaged for about ten years, publishing little but learning much, if only in a negative way. Always, subconsciously, at the back of his mind loomed up the greater problem. In his reading and in his experimental investigations he let slip no chance of following out the slightest clue. These excursions into the impractical sometimes cost him weeks of precious time. Yet he never regretted them, for the least profitable yielded two or three definite facts worth the having.

With singular detachment he had kept his mind free from speculative theories. He followed neither Driesch nor Loeb. To him vitalism and mechanism, as judged by their positive achievements, were equally impotent to describe life. One side philosophized without experiment, while the other, experimenting blindly without reason, contented itself with a vague reference to electricity as the probable source of all living phenomena. Profound

technicalities like the intriguing “polarity” and “heliotropism” that seemed to the unthinking to “explain” so much while in fact they explained nothing but their authors’ taste in names, left him cold. All this might be the first step, but surely it was no more. With the rapidly changing fashions in science and the influx of men of genius into biology, ten years might see polarity displaced by some newer fetish equally noncommittal. In the meantime he would remain neutral.

The door opened softly and Edith appeared.

“Oh,” she said, “you’re not working. I’ll bring him up, then.”

“Bring who up?”

But Edith had vanished. Presently she reappeared, ushering in a gray-bearded stranger, evidently a seafarer. The newcomer carried a tar-soaked box about four feet long and ten inches square.

“This is Captain Anderson,” she said. “He insisted on showing you what he has brought himself.”

“Pleased to meet you, Captain,” said the Doctor, advancing to shake hands with his visitor. “Won’t you sit down?”

“After you have seen what’s in here.” Captain Anderson produced a huge clasp knife and proceeded methodically to pry off the lid of his long box. As he worked crystals of rock salt spilled out over the table and floor. The mess seemed to trouble him not at all. Evidently he had great faith in the soothing efficacy of his pickled monster, whatever it might be.

At last the cover was off and the closely packed salt invitingly ready to be scooped out by the handful. The Captain used both hands. Then, reaching in, he got the deceased monstrosity by what had been its neck, gave it a vigorous shake to free it from the last crystals of salt, and asked complacently, “Isn’t he a little peach?”

Edith, case-hardened as she was to monstrosities, could not repress a gasp and a shudder of repulsion. Lane looked paralyzed.

“Good Lord,” he exclaimed, “what is it? Bird or reptile?”

2

Captain Anderson’s Story

The Doctor and Edith stood dumb before Captain Anderson’s dried monster. Its elaborate hideousness, unlike that of any living thing, held them with a perverse fascination. Neither bird, reptile, nor fish, it was an incredible mongrel of all three. The serpentlike, heavily scaled belly contradicted the batlike wings with their short, bristly feathers; while the exaggerated beak, crammed full of cruel yellow teeth, revealed by the hard backward snarl of the horny lips, refuted the monstrosity’s claims to be consid-

ered a bird. Flattened against its withered flanks were two lizard hands armed with ugly claws, to one of which still adhered the dried scales of the last fish the creature had devoured.

A skeptic at first glance would have declared the creature an impossible fraud perpetrated by some overimaginative sailor in his misused leisure. But Dr. Lane, also at the first glance, thought he knew better.

"It's only a baby of its kind," he said. "The parents have been dead millions of years. This is the one perfect specimen in existence." The Doctor thought he knew what he was talking about.

"Then there are others like it?" Captain Anderson asked, somewhat crestfallen.

"No, only their fossilized bones and impressions of a few feathers in the rocks that were mud when these things flew. The most perfect impression was found in a mine in Bulgaria about four years ago. But it was only a mark on the stone—not a shadow to this beauty. Where on Earth did you get it?"

"In the South Polar seas."

"Frozen into the ice?" the Doctor hazarded. He recalled instantly the reputed discoveries of long-extinct mastodons in Alaska, Northern Siberia, and elsewhere, their meat as fresh as on the day the giants were trapped on the ice floes hundreds of centuries ago.

"No," the Captain replied. "This thing was still warm when we picked it up. It could not have been dead more than fifteen minutes."

"But how on Earth—"

"First let me ask you one or two questions. What is it?"

"I don't know," the Doctor confessed doubtfully. "At first I thought it might be the missing link between the reptiles and the birds—a halfway creature something like a pterodactyl and not quite an archaeopteryx. The last is the ancestor of all the birds. We know only its fossil remains. Then I thought—but here, see for yourself." Dr. Lane strode over to the bookshelves and selected a large green portfolio. "Put your beast on the table and compare it with this," he said, exhibiting a photographic reproduction of the famous Bulgarian fossil. "Now, isn't yours like this?"

"In the main, yes. But that snake-bird in the mud had no scales on its belly," the Captain objected.

"So much the better for yours. Either this is a forefather of the known reptilian ancestor of the birds or it is a distinctly new species."

"Now for my second question," the Captain continued. "What is this thing worth?"

"That depends upon whom you ask to buy it. A fishmonger down the street might give you ten cents for it as a curiosity. Then again the American

Museum of Natural History would offer you, I imagine, whatever it could afford. For this specimen is priceless.”

“Very well. I’m only an ex-mining engineer and an old whaler. I know next to nothing about such things and must take your word for the value of this. Now, my last question. How much will you give me for it?”

Dr. Lane hesitated, but only for a second.

“Nothing,” he replied.

“Then that’s settled,” the Captain retorted, restoring his despised monstrosity to its coffin.

“Hold on a minute, Captain. By itself your wonderful find is of little or no value to me. I care only for diseased things. This is perfectly sound. A museum is the proper place for it after the right men have worked out its anatomy in detail. When I said that I would give you nothing for it I meant what I said. But I will give you a considerable sum if you take me to the exact spot where you found this thing, as you said, still warm.”

The Captain desisted in his efforts to scoop up all the salt spilled in his first exuberant haste.

“When you say a considerable sum what do you mean?”

“Name what you think right and I’ll see.”

“Ten thousand dollars?”

“It is not too much. I would offer even more under certain conditions.”

“For instance?”

“That you could show me where to find a living specimen like this one you found so recently dead. Can you do that?”

“Let me be aboveboard with you from the beginning, Dr. Lane. I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Because we picked this up in the sea a hundred and twenty miles from the nearest land.”

“It had fallen into the water from exhaustion and been drowned?”

“I guess not. In fact I know that it never flew the hundred and twenty miles from the land. For I saw it roll up from below directly under the stem of our ship.”

“Did it leap out like a salmon? If so that was a queer performance for a creature built like this.”

“No, it boiled out, dead as a dummy.”

The doctor regarded the grizzled whale pirate with rather more than a touch of suspicion.

“If I had not seen this thing with my own eyes,” he remarked, “I should disbelieve your whole story.”

“You haven’t heard it yet,” the Captain dryly rejoined. “Before I tell it will you agree either to pay me ten thousand dollars for it or to keep still about it after I leave this house?”

"That's fair enough. I agree."

"And this young lady?" the Captain queried, with an interrogative glance at Edith.

"My daughter Edith, Captain Anderson. Pardon me for not having introduced you before."

"Oh, we had a fine row in the garden," Edith laughed, "before I came up. I agree too, Captain Anderson, if you will let me stay and listen. Only please cover up the hideous thing before you begin. I shall have nightmares for a month as it is."

With a laugh the Captain replaced the cover of his box. But the Doctor, after a moment's hesitation, removed it, telling Edith she might turn her back if the creature's beauty overpowered her.

"I want to have a good long look at this thing," he said. "It isn't what I thought it might be. Well, Captain, how did you happen to come to me with your find?"

"It was on the mate's advice. One of my men, it seems, once got five dollars from your daughter for a fake mermaid. I thought," he added with a malicious glint in his steel-gray eyes, "she might be willing to give me ten for a real one."

"You may be sure, Captain Anderson," Edith retorted indignantly, "that I knew perfectly well what I was buying. And if I gave your man five dollars for a wretched fake worth fifty cents it was because the poor fellow looked half-clothed and underfed. Really, Captain Anderson, you should treat your men better."

"He can't have been one of mine. The only thing my men suffer from is a lack of rum."

"That's fortunate," the Doctor interposed. "Otherwise they might pass by feathered reptiles as mere creations of a rummy imagination."

"True," the Captain agreed. "As a matter of fact all my men know of you and your hobby. I was only trying to get a rise out of your daughter for what she did to me in the garden. We're quits now."

"Are you sure?" Edith asked with exasperating calm.

"Not so sure as I was a second ago," the honest Captain admitted. "No wonder your father lets you do the buying. Now, Dr. Lane," he continued with a change in tone, "as I said in the beginning I want this whole business to be open and aboveboard. So I should like you to know that one of the main reasons for my troubling you at all is the fact that you are a rich man with barrels of money to spend on your bobbies. I have known of you for years. They still talk of your big coal strike over in China. Now a man who knows as much as you do about coal should be able to appreciate the value of oil."

"To a certain extent," the Doctor smiled. "I have sense enough to let wildcatting alone.

"I haven't. And that, in a word, is why I'm here. Unless I can persuade you for once to invest heavily in oil I shall have to take my queer fish elsewhere."

"Perhaps I can afford to throw ten thousand dollars down your oil well to feed the fish at the bottom. Go ahead and see if you can sell me."

"Then here goes. Don't call me a liar until I've finished. I shall tell you only enough to let you see for yourself whether you want to come in or stay out and forget all about me and my queer fowl.

"I was educated as a mining engineer, but gave up my profession to follow the sea. For the past twenty years I have been master and part owner of a whaling vessel.

"About eighteen months ago, having cleaned up for the season, we started north. We were in the South Polar seas, to the east of Cape Horn and considerably south. That is close enough description of our position for the present. The nearest coastline of the Antarctic continent lay about a hundred and twenty miles southeast of us. The season, though well advanced, was extraordinarily mild and open. For eight days we had sighted no ice.

"One night shortly before eleven I was awakened by a peculiar jarring of the whole ship. It lasted fully forty seconds. The mate and the man at the wheel also felt it. Like me they could make nothing of it till daylight. Then we guessed. For the water was a peculiar milky green, as if muddied by finely powdered chalk. There had evidently been a submarine earthquake and a volcanic eruption on the ocean floor during the night. All that morning the water grew milkier and milkier. By noon it was the color of a dirty river and as sluggish as molasses.

"Suddenly, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the whole surface of the water began to boil up in huge bubbles like a cauldron of hot porridge. The ship rattled and clattered as if it were being shaken to bits. The men, of course, acted like a pack of panic-stricken idiots. Discipline went to the devil. That fool of a mate's account of what probably was happening a mile or two beneath us drove them clean crazy. Then I took a fist in things and knocked some sense into their silly heads.

"But for the infernal boiling there was a dead calm. It was shortly after three o'clock that the first great bubble of black oil burst with a gurgling plop half over the decks. Inside of ten minutes the sea was a heaving blanket of heavy oil three feet thick. If only we had been a fleet of tankers with pumping gear we could have made our fortunes within a radius of half a mile. Sheer to the horizon the whole sea was a dance of sleek black bubbles as big as whales.

"About five o'clock the oily mess began to boil more furiously. Our decks were one black slop from stem to stern. Then without warning a great

gusher of sticky brown tar burst right under our bows and shot roaring straight up a hundred and fifty feet above our masts in a tumbling spout.

"We had banked our fires at the beginning of the row. Otherwise we should have been ablaze in a sea of fire hours before. Now the filthy brown tar began streaming down our funnels to the boilers. There was only one thing to do, stuck there as we were, and we did it, half-smothered in the sticky brown mess. Somehow or another we got the funnels capped with tarpaulins. There we rocked and rattled in that boiling filth till dark, unable to get up steam and dodge the worst of it, stuck fast under that slapping deluge of brown muck.

"Night came down slowly. Except for the eruption of oil and tar, and the queer deadness of the air, the last hours of that rotten day were like those of any other open weather twilight in the South Polar seas. Just as it began to get too dusky to see clearly that beastly tar spout gave a mumbling gulp and dropped down into the pitch as dead as a stone. That was the end of it.

"We thought our troubles were over. And so they were in a way. I sent the mate below to kick the men up to swab the decks. The sea was still boiling violently when he left. I was alone on deck when the next nightmare, and the jumpiest of all, leapt from the sea."

Captain Anderson paused for a moment in his narrative, seeking the right words to convince his curious audience of his veracity.

"The mate had just disappeared," he resumed, "when a terrific jar, as if the ship were being hit with a hundred battering rams, warned me that the devil was about to break loose. And he did. A huge chunk of black rock—the size of the Baptist church down the street—shot from the heaving oil about a hundred yards east of the ship, whizzed clear over us in a crazy curve, and sent up a whooping splash of black muck as it dived that nearly swamped us. If that chunk had been aimed a trifle lower I shouldn't be here now.

"Well, that was only the first of them. At intervals of half a mile to a mile apart the whole sputtering mess of black oil began to spit up the floor of the sea in hunks of black rock as big as city hotels. None of them broke loose or hit closer to the ship than half a mile. The first was our one close call.

"That fool of a mate got the men on deck just when the show was at its best. They let out one yell and ducked back to their holes in the fore-castle. The idiots missed a sight they'll never get another chance of seeing, for in five minutes that particular row was over. Either there was nothing left on the bottom of the sea to be thrown up, or sufficient vents had been torn in the floor for what was to come next. It came with a gurgling, oily rush.

"Before it happened, however, the black oil suddenly stopped heaving. No more bubbles rose. Evidently the intermittent supply of oil from below had given place to slow, even gushers. The surface of the oil became almost

flat with the whirling ends of stream lines spinning up and twisting out everywhere. It looked just like a gigantic black millrace, gnarled over like the water of a river half a mile below a high fall.

"The mate and I are the only witnesses of what seethed up through the crawling oil. The only human witnesses, I mean. For if our pickled friend in the salt there could speak he might spin us a good yarn. He came up in that slow, churning motion of the pitch, one of thousands like him, and one small fry in a stew of huge beasts whose horny ugliness made him and his bigger sisters look like rosy June brides.

"All the three-hundred-foot nightmares of our dragon-ridden fairy-tale days boiled lazily up in that infernal black stew. Lizards as big as small trains with grinning mouths jammed full of six-inch teeth rolled over and over in the swashing oil as dead as Trojans, and huge armor-plated, four-legged brutes the size of locomotives twirled round and round belly up in the twilight. Some of them had been split wide open, and their insides, black with oil, steamed and smoked like slaughter houses. Smaller beasts in thousands, and a thick scum of broken insects, littered the crawling oil between the slowly plunging carcasses of the big fellows.

"The mate is a fussy man given to footling hobbies. Photography is his messiest. He now dived below to fetch up his camera. Any fool could have told the idiot there was no use trying to get a snapshot in that light. But he kept at it like a mule and wasted five dollars' worth of films. He found out what an extravagant fool he had been about three weeks later when he got time to develop his rubbish.

"His idiocy gave me an idea. Nobody would believe our unsupported story. So I took a line and fished up this freak." He indicated the bird-reptile in its box. "I should have liked one of the big lizard brutes, but that we had no room to stow it on deck. And anyway the light was about gone."

"You said, Captain," Dr. Lane began, "that your catch was evidently just dead when you hauled it in. How do you know?"

"Because I stuck my knife into its neck to make sure. Thick warm blood oozed out. Here, I'll show you the place."

Once more he exhibited his scaly, feathered monster. It was as he had said. There was plainly visible on the left side of the neck a deep gash.

"It's a queer fish and a queerer story," Edith remarked, with a glance of distaste at the poor pickled monster.

Dr. Lane agreed with his daughter's estimate.

"For all its strangeness," he said, "I am inclined to take a chance. Captain Anderson, I will back your oil stock to the extent of ten thousand dollars, on one condition. You must take me to the exact spot where you picked up this creature. Mind, I am not swallowing your yarn whole. It is

just possible that in your excitement you saw things that weren't there. The light, according to your own statement, was about gone."

"But the mate?" Captain Anderson protested. "Was he crazy too?"

"Possibly. Any psychologist will tell you that such things do happen frequently. Collective hallucination is the scientific name for such a state of affairs. Both you and he, I suppose, have seen pictures, or restorations, of extinct animals like the ones you thought you saw boiling up through the oil—dinosaurs, huge lizards three hundred feet long, the ceratops, and the like? You, Captain, must have seen such things when you were studying mining engineering."

"I know I have," the Captain admitted. "And the mate is such a hobby-ridden fool, always messing about libraries and reading rooms when he is ashore, that doubtless he's in the same fix. For all that you can't convince me that the whole thing was a nightmare. I saw it."

"Did any of the men see it too?" Edith asked. "Next morning, I mean."

"Not the main part of the show. All the heavy brutes had sunk. Nothing but the scum of broken insects floated through the night."

"It sounds queer," was Edith's frank comment.

"Indeed it does, Captain," her father agreed. "Now this is my guess. You found this bird-reptile right enough, for here it is. I don't think," he said with a smile, "that even I can explain it away to your satisfaction. What you took for thick warm blood oozing from the slash in its neck was nothing but brown tar."

"Well, suppose it was," the Captain retorted. "What does that prove?"

"Everything. And in a perfectly reasonable way. I accept the eruption of oil from beneath the sea floor as real. Your crew saw that?"

The Captain nodded.

"Very well, then, it's all clear. First let me tell you about a somewhat similar state of affairs less than four hundred miles from here in Southern California. It is at the famous asphalt and oil hole on the Rancho La Brea. Some years ago the geologists from the University of California began digging out of the oily ooze all manner of bones and other remains of extinct animals—skulls of sabre-tooth tigers that haven't lived in this part of the world for the past hundred thousand years, and many others equally interesting.

"The explanation of these remains is quite simple. Ages ago drinking pools of rainwater collected on the sticky surface of the oily ooze. The prehistoric beasts, not knowing the danger, picked their way out to drink. On trying to return to solid ground they quickly mired themselves like flies on tanglefoot. Now is it likely that in an entire continent of tar holes this one at La Brea should be unique as an animal trap?"

"So you believe my reptile or whatever be is was thrown up from some prehistoric asphalt bole buried under the floor of the Antarctic Ocean?"

"Undoubtedly, Captain."

The Captain grinned behind his gray beard. "A thoroughly scientific theory no doubt, Doctor. As such it does you credit. According to you my reptile should be full of brown tar, not dried blood and other stuff. Suppose you cut him open and see."

"That's a practical test," the Doctor assented, rising to get his implements. "If he has anything inside him besides pitch, like a badly cured mummy, I'll double my offer."

"Then you might as well hand me your check for twenty thousand now. I'll equal your offer. If you find nothing but mummy pudding inside I'll let you have my yarn for the stuffing."

The Doctor did not reply immediately. He was too busy making his incision where it would do the least damage to the appearance of the specimen. Presently he drew up with a gasp of astonishment.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's as fresh as a newly pickled salmon."

"Of course it is. I packed it in salt the minute the mate had finished washing it off with rum and turpentine."

"Great Scott, what a find! Edith, bring me the largest of those jars about a third full of alcohol. This beats me. The thing must have been miraculously preserved for ages. My offer stands, Captain. Take me to the place where you found this and the twenty thousand is yours the day we start."

"You will raise that to fifty thousand when I tell you the rest," the Captain prophesied confidently. "I asked you not to call me a liar until I had finished. As a matter of fact I am only halfway through."

"Have you more specimens?"

"No, but I have a round gross of first-class photographs."

"But you said the mate's pictures were a failure."

"So they were that time. He had better luck the next when I could boss him properly."

"Prehistoric animals?"

"Something much better, unless I'm badly off."

"Do go on," Edith begged, "and tell us what else you found."

"In a moment. Shall I telephone the mate to bring up his pictures?"

"Yes, do!" they exclaimed together, and Edith handed him the desk telephone.

Having got his number Anderson asked if Ole Hansen were still about. The answer apparently was satisfactory, for Ole was asked to step to the telephone.

"It's all right, Ole," the Captain shouted, as if his faithful mate were still in the vicinity of the South Pole. "The Doctor has swallowed it all so far, bait, hook, and sinker. Bring the rest of the junk up here to his house. Get Christensen to show you the way. Jump on a street car and shake a leg."

3

A Puzzle for Drake

While we are waiting for Hansen," the Captain resumed, "I may as well tell you how he collected his photographs. As the blundering idiot will probably manage to lose himself between the gate and the back door, I have plenty of time."

"Is your mate Hansen so stupid as you make out?" Edith asked with genuine interest. "If so he must be worth studying."

"Stupider, Miss Lane. You never met his equal for cracked theorizing. Well, let us leave him to find his way here and get on with our business. I'll tell you what I want from you, Doctor, when I reach the end of my story."

"Although you may not be aware of the fact," Dr. Lane replied shrewdly, "you have already told me. You want me to foot the bill for an expedition to tack down those new oil fields in your name. Well, it's all right with me. I'll take the fossils and anything else in that line and you can have the oil. Convince me that I should go in heavily and you need have no worry about finances."

"Hansen's pictures will put the finishing touches to what I begin. Well, except for one thing, the morning after the shake-up was just like any other perfectly clear South Polar calm. The sea was still covered with heavy black oil to a depth of several feet. Only a long, even swell heaved it gently up and down in billows a mile long.

"During the night I had ordered the fires drawn. We dared take no chances with the oil-soaked decks and rigging. With the first light the mate and I got the men out to clean up the mess. We drove them like niggers to keep their minds off the oil. It wouldn't do when we reached port to have them blabbing to the first shark they met. Later we decided to take the whole crew in on the scheme. They are to get a third share of all profits if they keep their mouths shut. That seems to be the only safe way. They're as mum as clams.

"All that day we sweated to get the worst of the oil off or covered up so it wouldn't be noticed when we reached civilization. By nightfall we had done a pretty thorough job. I decided to explain the oil-soaked hull by saying it was an idea of Hansen's to use crude oil instead of paint as a weather defier. It sounds just like one of his theories.

"The next question was how to swim out of the soup. With steam up of course it would have been easy. But the mate and I agreed—for once—that it would be a fool's trick to start any kind of a fire. The air reeked of natural gas and oil fumes. A spark, and the whole sea would be hell. There

was nothing for it but to trust to the sails. By dark we were fully rigged and whistling for the breeze.

"It came like a thunderclap from seven directions at once. All in all that was the worst blow I have weathered through in twenty years of dirty squalls from the equator to Cape Horn. The mate of course had a theory to account for the suddenness of the hurricane. Like most of his efforts it came five minutes late. I'll tell you of it presently.

"For the moment I didn't give a damn for theories, being more interested in trying to save our masts. Except for a few whistling ribbons like rags on a clothesline the sails were gone. The filthy black oil broke over the decks in buckets and hogsheads, smothering us whenever we attempted to make a line fast. All our deck tackle went by the board, knocked clean off the plates by the sledgehammer kicks of the heavy pitch.

"After the first mad wrench the hurricane settled down to a steady, snoring gale from the north. The ship drove dead ahead for the ice barrier a hundred and twenty miles south of us. Nothing was to be done. We could only sit tight for the smash. Unless the wind fell we should ram the ice cliffs full tilt sometime between midnight and dawn. The wind held.

"Tired of holding his breath, Hansen suggested that all hands join in prayer. He is always at it, before meals, at meals, and after meals. I told him to go to hell and took the wheel out of his lily-white hands. In the howling uproar he misunderstood the order. Evidently he thought I wished him to hold chapel in the forecabin. Anyway there is where I found him at daybreak with half the crew bellowing Norwegian hymns to beat the devil.

"Toward midnight I first noticed a cherry-colored glow coming and going in the sky ahead of the ship. If I thought at all in the mad rush to the final smash I put the flickering down to an aurora, and tried to steer a course that would graze the ice when we struck. By my reckoning we should have been smashed about three o'clock in the morning. Four o'clock passed and still the ship staggered on through the oil under the terrific gale. I began to think I must have misjudged our speed. Five o'clock came, and with the first light the wind began to drop. In half an hour it was broad daylight over a sea with only a film of oil coating the waves, and not a sign of the ice barrier ahead. I left the wheel to hammer some sense into those hymn-singing idiots of Hansen's.

"When they shot up on deck the wind was no longer a gale and the ship was manageable. Hansen said we had been saved by his bawling in the forecabin. About an hour later he sighted the volcano. Then he gave it the honor and glory for everything, including the wind.

"For a stretch of at least twenty miles the great ice barrier had been wiped out. Whether it had sunk or whether it had been lifted up bodily by the eruption and tossed back on the continent I don't know. Hansen says

the rock and ice just cracked apart that far in the earthquake. Anyhow the twenty miles of solid ice and rock was gone. In its place stretched a long broad inlet as straight as a street running clear out of sight into the continent.

"The wind dropped abruptly to a mere breeze and the last of the oil film fell away in our wake. All about us the water was white as milk, thick and soupy.

"When we came fully to our senses we noticed the unusual warmth. The air was as balmy as a spring day in California. It occurred to me to test the temperature of the water. One of the men drew up a bucketful of the milky soup. It was lukewarm.

"A yell from that excitable idiot Hansen made me drop the bucket. He was pointing up the inlet to a huge pillar of ink billowing up like the smoke from a burning oil well. I judged it must have been at least fifty miles from where we were. But I had no means then of making more than a crude guess.

"As we stood gaping at it the whole mass of ink was suddenly sucked down out of the sky. Only a dirty brown mist marked the place where it had been.

"ÔIt's an eruption,' Hansen was good enough to explain. He meant well, but who ever saw an eruption acting down instead of up? There was no time to argue it out with him, for while we were looking the show began in earnest.

"First an enormous black smoke ring teetered crazily up and mushroomed out over the skyline like an umbrella. Then a solid pillar of red flames gushed up after the smoke. My common sense was working in spite of me, for I found myself counting off the seconds. When I got to fifty-eight, the fist of the explosion struck us with all its force. Being ready for it I was braced against the funnel with my bands over my ears. Hansen, theorizing as usual, wasn't prepared. Nor were the men. For an hour after they had picked themselves up they went about staring like owls.

"If my count was right the volcano must be two hundred fifty to three hundred miles inland. At that distance I had no fears for the ship.

"The next thing to do was to get out before something started under our keel. Before doing so I could not resist the temptation of lowering a boat to see what had happened ashore—if anything was to be seen without dangerous delay. I decided to take Hansen and two men to pull the oars. When he understood what I was doing—he was still deaf like the rest of the theorizers—he made a dive below to bring up his everlasting camera and a bale of films.

"The pull through that beastly warm milk to the shore was both pleasant and disgusting. How these society women can bathe in hot milk—as I understand from the Sunday newspapers they do—beats me! That by the

way, however. I see Miss Lane is blushing. Our landing was as easy as a picnic on a river. We at once tramped inland over the level snow fields to see what was to be seen.

"Hansen saw it first. About a mile ahead of us he made out a black dot on the snow. We made for it as fast as the loosely crystallized surface would let us. Coming up to it we found a chunk of black rock the size of a cow. At least that was all of it above the ice and snow. The rest lay buried in the star-shaped pit which its fall had dented through to the ice and underlying rock.

"One side of the rock was smooth. The rest was just a jagged nothing. Hansen took a photograph of the smooth side.

"I don't blame him for wanting to find another of the black chunks. Nor do I criticize him for stopping to take its picture. If the camera had been mine I should have been just as unreasonable. He dragged us over that forsaken wilderness of snow and ice for ten mortal hours hunting black rocks. There was no returning to the ship until he had shot his last roll of films. In all he got twelve dozen first-class negatives.

"Once I got him aboard our normal relations were resumed. He recovered his mind and obeyed orders. We steamed out of that photographer's heaven without another picture."

"Are you sure, Captain Anderson," Edith smiled, "that your mate's craze for photography isn't by your orders too?"

"Oh, quite. Still, I admit that Hansen is the keeper of my artistic temperament. Otherwise I should be mincing about Rio de Janeiro in pale lavender kid gloves instead of boiling blubber on Kerguelen like a Christian."

"What was Hansen's explanation of the storm?" Dr. Lane asked.

"The common-sense one, for a wonder. The sudden rise in temperature over the land caused the cold air from the sea to rush in toward the volcano and take us with it."

"In Hansen I recognize a brother," the Doctor laughed.

"You won't when you see him," the Captain prophesied grimly. "He looks like a fat barrel that has been well hammered down. Hullo, here's one of your mandarins."

The diplomatic Wong announced in faultless English that a gentleman by the name of Ole Hansen awaited the Doctor's pleasure.

"Show him up, Wong."

Hansen entered, as red as a lobster and shaped like a brandy keg.

"I've brought the photographs," he announced after the introductions.

"Dump them on the table and let the Doctor see for himself. They need no explanation—"

"But," Hansen expostulated, unburdening himself of his twelve dozen masterpieces, "I have a theory. If you will let me—"

"I won't, so don't try."

Giving his captain a red explosive look, Hansen sat on the safety valve and obeyed orders. Heaven only knows what clouds of theories he generated under the suppression of all that superheated steam. A man of less robust build must have burst into a thousand hypotheses. The barrel-shaped Hansen merely swelled and held his peace.

Meanwhile Dr. Lane was devouring the photographs of the black rocks with feverish interest. Occasionally he passed one to Edith with a terse suggestion to "take a look at that." Each picture was that of a smooth black surface, in many cases badly fissured by the violence of the explosion which had disrupted the mass from its matrix, densely incised with pictograms.

"Call up Drake," the Doctor ordered before he had worked half through the pile, "and tell him we have a puzzle here that makes the Bolivian inscriptions look like A.B.C."

Edith reported that Drake would join them as fast as his legs would let him.

"Captain Anderson," the Doctor said, rising, "I'm in with you on this to the limit of my means. You can have the oil, I'll take the rest. It's worth more."

4

The Riddle of the Rocks

Lean, lanky, hatless, Drake arrived at the conference breathless and disheveled. Edith greeted him with applause and a peal of laughter.

Drake shot one agonized glance at his long legs. Reassured that the worst had not happened, he drew himself up with the dignity of a stork and replied in frigid tones, "I am perfectly dressed."

"Where did you leave your tie and socks, John?"

Drake groaned. The telephone message had interrupted the stream of his Mexican musings and here he was, just as he had flung himself together. Striking negligences in public were his specialty. Given ten years more of bachelor freedom and he would evolve into the ideal absent-minded professor who moons through the movies and the comic supplements, but scarcely at all through the businesslike atmosphere of a living university. Drake was one of the extremely rare exceptions. Like many other mortals afflicted with the same failing, Drake always indignantly repudiated the insinuation that he was not as other men. Only repeated ocular proof, which he promptly forgot after each application, convinced him when he was a walking comic. Edith's attitude toward this embryo delight was a little philistine. She should have encouraged him for the sake of art. It surely would be a great pity to thwart his almost unique proclivities to play the idiotic part demanded of him by the practical man. And what would be the net gain of

her motherly efforts? Drake at thirty-five would be outwardly like any ordinary scholar—except of course the professional quacks—and quite indistinguishable from any floor walker or bank cashier.

“Never mind, Drake,” the Doctor consoled him. “I’ll lend you things before dinner. In the meantime, here is something more important.”

He handed the ruffled young archaeologist a pocket lens and one of Hansen’s photographs. With a nod of acknowledgment to Captain Anderson and the mate whom the Doctor introduced, Drake seated himself near the open window and peered through the lens at the photograph.

The fifteen-minute silence lengthened to twenty and the atmosphere of the study grew unpleasantly tense. Half an hour passed without a sound. At last Drake rose and handed back the picture to Dr. Lane.

“Well, what do you make of it?” the Doctor demanded.

“Do you want the truth?”

“Of course.”

“Very well. I do not wish to insult either of your guests,” Drake began with anxious diffidence. “Especially as I have just been introduced,” he added with an apprehensive glance at the compressed, husky Hansen. “However, you asked for the truth. I may as well let you have it before I know what parts precisely Mr. Hansen and Captain Anderson play in this affair. That photograph, in my opinion, is a clever fake.”

“What!” the Captain exploded, bounding out of his chair. “You’re crazy. Tell him about it, Ole.”

But the outraged Hansen was beyond coherent speech. One of his round gross of masterpieces, and therefore the whole twelve dozen, had been pronounced fraudulent by this herring-gutted young dude without a shirt to his back or a collar to his neck.

“You’ll eat those words,” he spluttered in a turkey-cock fury.

Drake, with roseate visions of an early martyrdom in the cause of Truth, stood his ground before the advancing barrel of high explosives.

“Gentlemen!” the Doctor intervened sharply. “This isn’t the fore-castle. Be seated, Mr. Hansen. Drake, remember where you are. I won’t have you making a prize ring out of my study. Sit down and explain yourself.”

The bewildered Drake, by nature a pacifist to the marrow of his bones, subsided into a chair. Hansen, with a few choice compliments in Norwegian, also sat. Captain Anderson opened the attack.

“You’re dead wrong, Mr. Drake. As a man of common sense, would you suppose it likely that any fakir has money enough to manufacture a hundred and forty-four frauds weighing fifty to five hundred tons apiece? You wouldn’t, eh? Well, neither would I. You’ve only seen the picture of one. Show him the rest, Dr. Lane.”

Retiring once more with his glass to the window, Drake made a rapid inspection of the entire series of photographs. After the first few his frankly skeptical expression changed rapidly to bewilderment and finally to intense interest. Beginning again with the first he ran more slowly through the series, selecting fourteen of the pictures for further consideration.

"Well," said the Captain, "what do you make of them now?"

Like most specialists Drake saw his beloved hobby in everything.

"Pictograms," he announced incisively.

"Real or fake?" Hansen demanded with a red scowl.

"Real, I should say."

"What significance, if any, have they?" the Doctor inquired.

"That I don't know. In fact this is a problem that may well take fifty years or a century to solve."

"I have a theory—" Hansen began, but the rude Captain nipped it cruelly in the bud.

"Bother your theory!" he snapped. "Let us hear what Mr. Drake has to say."

"Perhaps," Drake hesitated, "if you told me where these pictures were taken I might be able to form a more intelligent opinion."

"No," the Doctor objected, "we want an expert's unbiased estimate. Mr. Drake," he continued, "is probably the best man in the world for our purpose. Whatever he decides will be worth learning and absolutely without prejudice. Go ahead, Drake. Take your time."

Drake picked up the fourteen pictures which he had selected from the pile.

"These," he said, "seem to go together. They are parts, I judge, of some much larger inscription. The rest of the pictures seem to be dislocated, but a close examination would be necessary before reaching a definite conclusion. I feel certain, however, of one very curious fact. Two widely separated ages of art are represented in these entire series. This feature is extremely puzzling for one peculiarity. Any archaeologist will tell you that two such periods of art are never of equal brilliance. Yet these pictograms, in respect of artistic excellence, are all on a par—and a very high one at that. Now these," he continued, exhibiting the fourteen, "are not by any means nearly the whole of their story. They are nothing more than disjointed fragments. Yet they are the one evidence of some sort of continuity in the whole lot. On them, if at all, we must base our attempt at decipherment."

"I told you we should have spent a week looking for the rest," Captain Anderson bellowed at the indignant Hansen. "Why did you drag me back to the ship?"

"It was you who got as fussy as an old woman and dragged me back," Ole retorted, swelling ominously. "I knew we hadn't enough—"

"Oh, well. Go on, Mr. Drake."

"As I was saying," Drake resumed, "these fourteen hang together. But they are evidently not by any means the whole story. However, they are enough to show that there must be some consistent scheme running through the lot. Whether I shall be able to unravel the tangle is another question. At present I doubt whether the inscriptions are more than mere picture writing. If so, what meaning are we to give all these excellent representations, literally by the thousands, of impossible monsters?"

"Not so impossible as you think," Lane objected. "Had your education been less lopsided you would recognize many of these monsters as first-class and highly probably restorations of extinct animals. They are lifelike to an amazing degree."

Such was Dr. Lane's first opinion, reached after only a cursory examination of those remarkable inscriptions. He has since modified his estimate profoundly. Attentive study under suggestions from Drake in fact wrought a radical change in the Doctor's view within the year. For the present, however, it made a fair enough working guess.

"I must disagree with you," Drake replied. "In a way I can appreciate the obvious fact that these pictured monsters are vividly lifelike, although I never saw anything resembling them. But in a more significant sense they are strikingly artificial and, if I may make a rough hypothesis, intentionally so. The people who cut these rows upon rows of pictures into the rocks must have been in a highly advanced state of civilization. The very perfection of the art was the chief thing that made me suspicious at first. Our own stone-cutters with all their modern appliances could do no better today. Now is it not at least curious, I ask you, that artists capable of such excellent work should deliberately go out of their way to cast an air of unlikelike unreality over certain aspects of their art? I shall not attempt at present to support my contention that the art is intentionally fantastic. The evidence is here; examine it for yourselves. Again, another circumstance roused my suspicions at once. There is a complete absence of any attempt to represent the human figure. How are we to explain this? I confess I don't know. Such a lack is unheard of in the art of any known race."

"Would you expect to find portraits of human beings in a treatise, say, on crabs?"

"Yes," Hansen promptly and unexpectedly replied, with a hard stare at the Captain.

"I'll crab you when we get aboard," the Captain promised sweetly. "Your style is improving, Ole. But you must not interrupt the speaker. This is not a labor temple."

"I see your point, Doctor," Drake admitted. "Yet what race of human beings would go to all this trouble to cut into hard stone a work on

prehistoric animals—as you say these are—when paper and printers' ink are so cheap?"

"Suppose printing hadn't been invented when these inscriptions were cut into the rocks?"

"Your hypothesis is fantastic. What—"

"I have a theory—" Hansen interrupted with desperate eagerness, but the Captain squashed it.

"Ole!"

"Since Drake is all at sea," the Doctor smiled, "perhaps it would be as well to hear what Mr. Hansen has to say."

"All right, Ole. Get it off your chest and don't take till next Sunday."

"It's like this," Ole began, rising to give his utterance all the impressiveness of his rotund authority. "I agree with Dr. Lane and therefore disagree with Mr. Drake. Those pictures are lifelike. They are life itself! And now I tell you why.

"Two years ago in the Sailors' Free Reading Room at Rio de Janeiro I saw a book with pictures of extinct animals from some French and Spanish caves. Now who made those pictures? The damn fool who found them?"

"Ole!"

"All right, Captain. I forgot the lady. No, the d—the fool, I mean, who found those pictures did not make them. He had not brains enough, not what you call the artistic genius, to draw like that. Nobody any longer has so much genius. Those pictures were made by men who had never seen what you call modern art. They were too good, too much like nature, only better—if you know what I mean. Did the great Michaelangelo ever paint a herd of wild buffaloes? No. Michaelangelo only painted flocks of big she angels out of his head. Then came Rubenstein. Did he—"

"It's getting late, Ole. Cut out the wild asses and the encyclopaedia and come to your theory."

"I am arriving, Captain. Therefore, I say, those long-extinct buffaloes were drawn by men who had seen buffaloes, who had lived with them *en famille* as the French say. And therefore it follows in the same way," he concluded with a geometrical flower of rhetoric culled from his gourmand reading, "the men who cut the pictures of those monstrous animals into the rocks lived with them. They drew their likenesses from nature. For these animals are lifelike, they are almost alive! Did those forgotten geniuses delay their masterpieces for Gutenberg? No. They needed no printing presses in their business. Which was to be proved, was it not?"

"Preposterous," Drake remarked as Ole, with a self-conscious bow, resumed his creaking chair.

"Is it?" the Doctor asked quizzically. "Precisely why is Mr. Hansen's theory absurd?"

“Because it would put the art of a million years before the Stone Age on a higher level than that of the twentieth century. “

“Perhaps it was. It seems impossible that it could have been any lower. Edith, can you find the last number of *Vanity Fair* with the latest masterpieces of potato-peeling embroidery or whatever it is that the connoisseurs are raving over? Never mind, if you don't know where to look. After dinner will do.

“The point is, Drake,” he continued, “that you know as little of what art was in prehistoric times as do I. Why, it is less than thirty years since you archaeological chaps were telling us that all real art began with the Greeks. Then they found those Stone Age cave paintings that Mr. Hansen has mentioned. Since then we haven't heard so much of ‘Greece, wonder-child of the Ages.’ You are open-minded enough about your own stuff. Why can't you examine Hansen's photographs in the same spirit?”

“Never. At least not until I have deciphered them.”

“Then go to it. That's just what we want you to do.”

“How can I make anything out of a bald catalogue of dead beasts? Why, I don't even know their blessed names.”

“Drake, you are deliberately playing the fool for some reason of your own. I believe you have guessed more than you admit.”

“It is always best,” Drake generalized, “to know nothing at the beginning of an investigation. For then one is certain not to know less at the end.”

“Do you see any sort of regularities running through those fourteen you put aside?” the Doctor persisted.

“Dozens of them.”

“That sounds encouraging. What, for instance?”

“First, about five eighths of the monsters have four legs each. Second, approximately fifty-five percent of them have no tails and the rest one apiece. Third, each of several has one eye by actual count, or two by inference, the second being on the invisible side of the profile. Fourth—”

“You're an ass,” the Doctor interrupted irritably.

“Hear, hear, sir,” Ole agreed.

Drake grinned. “Did you ever try opening a live oyster with a toothpick? When I have something definite I'll let you know. Until then Mr. Hansen no doubt will be glad to hatch out poetic theories for you.”

“All right,” Lane assented good-naturedly. “Only don't spend ten years in finding out that all these inscriptions are nothing more exciting than a fossilized multiplication table.”

“Or a treatise on the integral calculus,” Ole gravely added.

“Oh Lord,” said Drake, “do you know the name of that too? When do you find time to navigate your raft?”

"He doesn't know half of what he gabs about," Anderson explained. There was a distinct note of jealousy in the Captain's voice. "He owns the A, Q, X volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *Song of Solomon* in Norwegian, Balzac's *Droll Stories* in French—which I can't read, confound it—a third-rate pocket dictionary, Herbert Spencer's *Through Nature to God*, about three quarters of Maeterlinck's *Bluebird* in Swedish and half of it in English, and a seven-figure table of logarithms. That's his whole damned library. Now if you think he's a blazing genius it's your own lookout."

"When I was in Boston two and a half years ago," Ole volunteered *propos* of nothing, "I took an intelligence test. The psychologist said I was in the upper one percent of the entire population of the United States."

"He lied," said the Captain.

"My library is not the only source of my erudition," Ole continued, ignoring the Captain's remark. "I also read much in public libraries while ashore," he concluded with smug modesty.

"Well, gentlemen," the Doctor remarked, "I am sure Mr. Hansen makes good use of his library, small though it may be. It isn't the gross tonnage that counts so much; it is the choice of one's reading matter. Mr. Hansen seems to have selected his 'five foot shelf' with a taste and care that has not been exceeded by Dr. Eliot himself. Would you like a copy of William Jennings Bryan's memoirs on evolution as a companion piece to your Herbert Spencer, Mr. Hansen?"

Ole blushed his thanks. The Doctor turned to Anderson.

"Now, Captain, what about oil?"

"Are you coming in?"

"Yes, even if our friend Drake doesn't succeed before he's seventy in deciphering Mr. Hansen's photographs. We shall need a ship, I suppose."

"The old whaler will do."

"Not much ice, then, where we are going?"

"No more than she can buck. Our troubles will begin on land."

"So I have guessed. Would an airplane be of any use? Amundsen is taking one with him on his North Polar expedition."

"Who would fly the beastly thing if we did take one along?"

"Why not Drake? He's young and therefore teachable."

"Oh, let me learn too," Edith begged. "You know how useless Drake is when anything goes wrong with his typewriter."

"Indeed?" said Drake, deeply mortified. He truly was as helpless as a baby before any machine more complicated than a monkey wrench. Rather pathetically he imagined himself a first-class amateur mechanic, for Edith always tactfully let him do the bossing while she did the tinkering when his typewriter collapsed.

The Doctor turned to Edith. "Who said you were coming with us, young lady?"

"Nobody yet. But you were just going to invite me. Weren't you, dear?"

"What about it, Captain?"

"It's up to you. She's not my daughter. If she can stand forty below zero she may enjoy the trip."

"I'm afraid not," the Doctor said doubtfully. "You do so hate the cold, Edith."

"Fiddlesticks! Captain Anderson said the water was warm. Anyway I'm younger than you are. If I'm unfit to go it will be suicide for you."

"Well, we'll consider your case when the time comes."

Knowing that she had won, Edith sensibly said no more.

"How long will it take us to get ready?" the Doctor asked.

"About six months. You, Drake, and your daughter if she comes, must get thoroughly hardened before we start. Hansen and I can see to overhauling the ship and laying in the necessary stores. We're both old hands at the game."

"Where is your ship now?"

"Drydock. Rio de Janeiro."

"What!" the Doctor exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you came clear to San Francisco just to show me that reptile bird?"

"Why not?" the Captain asked complacently. "I knew you would join us."

"Am I as easy as they told you I was?"

"No, Doctor. You wouldn't swallow a mermaid."

"Such is the bubble reputation. Edith, this comes of your collection of freaks. I wish you would adopt some less humiliating form of charity in future."

"You haven't believed my story of all those big beasts in the oil yet," the Captain reminded him soothingly.

"No, and I'll be banged if I do until I see them with my own eyes. Well, I'm game. That thing in the box is real, anyway. You can telegraph the Rio de Janeiro drydock to give your ship a thorough overhauling. Fit up quarters somewhere for a passenger or two."

"Ole and I saw to all that before we left."

"Easier and easier. Well, well. You are a surprising person." This bit of information seemed almost to surprise him more than the Captain's strange tale. "It's too late for lunch and too early for dinner. Will you have tea with us?"

"We shall be only too glad to enjoy your hospitality," Ole sententiously replied.

“Ah, Hansen, I see you have a treatise on Dutch etiquette among your literary treasures as well as a table of logarithms. All right, boys. Edith, tell Wong to do his best in the true old Spanish style.”

5

Battles Long Ago

Seven strenuous months of physical toughening lay behind Drake, Edith, and her father. They had lost no time in setting about their preparations for the hardships ahead.

The day after the tea with Captain Anderson and the mate they were on their way to the Canadian Rockies. Before leaving, Dr. Lane gave the efficient Wong a sheaf of checks dated the first of each month for the next three years. With these Wong was to pay his own salary and keep the house in order.

To his rage and stupefaction Drake was dragged kicking from his puzzles to become a hardened mountaineer. The Doctor was determined that the obstinate archaeologist should accompany them to see with his own eyes the originals of Hansen's photographs. Anderson and the mate left San Francisco the same afternoon to return to Rio via Boston.

The party of three had gone straight north to a fashionable resort in the heart of the Canadian Rockies. They planned to begin their training gradually. Arrived at the luxurious hotel they hired guides and mapped out their program. Four hours' mountain hiking a day for the first week, six the second, and so on up to fifteen, when they would be sufficiently seasoned to dispense with the guides.

Drake, who had brought with him the fourteen most promising of Hansen's puzzles for study, proved a most refractory companion. As the daily marches lengthened he seemed to demand more and more sleep. It was a ten-minute job to get him out of bed in the mornings. The Doctor became alarmed, thinking the rarefied air and violent exercise might have affected the young man's heart. A searching physical examination showed him to be in perfect health. Drake himself said nothing, enduring the interminable climbs up precipices and the endless crawls over glaciers with glum stoicism.

When the party left their quarters at the hotel to live in the bleak open with only their sleeping bags for shelter, Drake became positively morose. Edith declared in confidence to her father that the cranky young antiquarian was developing such a devil of a temper that the only comfortable course would be to send him home. She had stood all she could of the snapping tur-

tle. The thought of a possible two years with him in a frozen wilderness appeared singularly uninviting.

"I should like to beat him up," she confided, "for I am sure there is nothing the matter with him but a vile disposition."

An unusually cold and foggy night on the snow fields gave her the key to Drake's ailment. Unable to sleep for the wretched discomfort, she lay on her side staring wide-eyed at the soupy mist. Presently she became aware of a tiny, faint glow in the direction of Drake's quarters. Slipping from her bag she crawled on all fours over the soft snow toward the source of the light. Unobserved she got close enough to see Drake lying flat on his stomach in his sleeping bag, his head propped up on his hands, intent on one of Hansen's photographs. The dim illumination came from an improvised reading lamp consisting of two inches of candle in a small tomato can on its side. She stole back to her bag and crept in, to keep a lookout on the dim glow. After what seemed an eternity it vanished, only to reappear half a minute later. Drake had lighted another two-inch candle. And so it went until about an hour before dawn when the glow finally disappeared and Drake presumably slept the sleep of the unjust.

Edith said nothing of her discovery to her father. The next night was clearer. Between catnaps she watched again. Once more the light vanished an hour before dawn, and the criminal slept. Edith decided not to peach. Instead she contrived an ingenious plan for the salvaging of whatever survived the general wreck of Drake's temper.

She had not long to wait before putting her plan into action. The two men shared the labor of splitting wood and keeping the campfire going while she cooked. They planned at last two hot meals a week, descending from the snow fields to the timberline to find fuel, for with their heavy packs it was impossible to carry oil. On these occasions the men peeled off their coats and went after wood with a will. The prospect of a well cooked steaming hot meal put enthusiasm even into the dissipated, cantankerous Drake.

Edith bided her time. When next the perspiring Drake, having collected twice as much wood as he could carry, was swearing under his breath like a bobcat, she quietly abstracted the fourteen photographic puzzles from the inner pocket of his discarded coat.

"It's a dirty trick," she murmured, stowing them safely away inside her shirt, "but it is for his own good."

That night Drake was like a forlorn cow that has just lost its beloved calf. Edith heard him rooting about in the dark, scraping his shins and swearing at anything and everything. That night, she said later, was just one long, whispered curse.

She let him suffer for his calf three days. Then, with a six-foot crevasse between them, she confessed. Drake looked murder at her. But by the time

he scrambled the mile and a half which she, with rare foresight, had placed between them by going rapidly ahead of the party, the outraged Drake was too exhausted to fight. He regained his fourteen tormentors only on the solemn promise that he would blow out the candle every morning at two o'clock sharp. Thus, unless the enthusiastic Doctor insisted upon routing them from their bags ahead of schedule, Drake would get a full four hours' sleep every night.

"If that isn't enough to sweeten your disposition," Edith stipulated, "I'll add half an hour at a time until we hit the right dose."

Under the new ordering of his disreputable habits Drake became as suave as melted butter. Not that he talked much more than he had, for he still emulated the oyster. What little he did say, however, was all that Edith desired in affability. The Doctor, noticing the change, ascribed it to a sudden, bone-freezing drop in the temperature.

"Drake will do famously when we get to the real thing," he told Edith. "Just see how this cold snap bucks him up."

"Oh, he will be all right," Edith agreed. "When he gets something to do he will lose his grouch for good."

After twelve weeks of roughing it on the snow fields and glaciers of the Rockies the three went to Alaska for a more drastic course of the same training. Little by little they accustomed themselves to scantier and scantier clothing, until by the end of their hardening they were clambering over ice and snow in howling blizzards with no clothing but a single loose overall garment of wool. The Doctor in his joyous enthusiasm was inclined to go farther, pointing out that if stark nakedness in the snow is the proper thing for consumptive children, surely a breech clout in a blizzard should be sufficient for tough campaigners like themselves. But Edith wouldn't hear of it, although Drake seemed to entertain the suggestion favorably.

And now all this, the hardship and the fun, lay behind them. That night they were sailing from Montreal for Rio de Janeiro, there to meet the rest of the expedition and undergo their last training. They must learn to fly. Dr. Lane still believed that an airplane might prove the decisive factor in the success of their venture, although Captain Anderson, with all an old sailor's conservatism, belittled the idea and grudged the two months' delay which it would cost.

Ole, on the contrary, by letter and cablegram, fairly gloated over the prospect. A mastery of flying would bring him many steps nearer the omniscience which was his ideal in this imperfect life. The Captain's letters reported him already a past master of the art of flying—on paper. He had even invented an improved type of flying machine which, according to the envious Anderson, resembled a wheelbarrow with wings. This masterpiece of Ole's unsuspected mechanical genius was still in the chrysaloid stage of

development, being as yet only one-third drawings and two-thirds pure theory. Still, all in all it justified Ole's high rating in the Boston intelligence tests. Anderson could never have done anything like it.

Except for Drake's alleged seasickness the voyage down to Rio de Janeiro was uneventful. Drake had telegraphed from Vancouver to one of his antiquarian cronies to meet him in Montreal with half a ton of carefully selected books, for the most part profusely illustrated works on biology, geology, and evolution. With these he shut himself up in his cabin, admitting only the stewards who reported him in the last stages of seasickness. Smelling a prosperous rat, Dr. Lane left the sufferer to his agonies and hopefully promenaded the decks or played quoits with Edith.

On the morning of the last day of the voyage the Doctor's patience was rewarded. The invalid emerged from his cabin looking, as Edith informed him, as fresh as a young string bean.

"I'm better," Drake announced.

"That's good," said the Doctor. "How are Hansen's photographs?"

Drake tried not to look pleased. He failed. His face broke into a grin.

"Doing as well as could be expected, thank you," he replied.

"Have you deciphered them?"

"If I say 'yes' you will pester me to death with questions; if I say 'no' you will set me down as a blockhead. So I shall evade the question by answering both yes and no. And that, as a matter of fact, is the exact state of affairs."

"The Lord should have made you a woman," the Doctor remarked.

"A beautiful blonde," Drake sighed. "A perfect thirty-six," he added with an admiring glance at Edith's lithe figure.

"I'll give you a swift kick unless you come through with what you have found," the Doctor snapped. "Come on; out with it."

"Before violence I am powerless. I am too proud to run away." He became more serious. "You were right when you said my education was lopsided. A thorough knowledge of biology, geology, evolution, and half a dozen tougher sciences is just what I lack now to read those fragments fully. I have been doing my weak best to make up the deficiency and learn something worth knowing. At present I can guess at the meaning of those fragments, but only through thick blankets of woolly ignorance. Unless I am clean off there is vastly more than can be read at a glance in those rows upon rows of prehistoric monsters. I don't believe those inscriptions will ever be fully deciphered by any man who like me is an ignoramus on all the sciences connected with living things."

"You evidently have found more than you admit. Tell us what you know. If you need more science to go ahead I'll give you all I have."

After a brief tussle with his antiquarian conscience Drake yielded.

"First," he began, "this sort of work is very deceptive. Take the case of the Etruscan writing for instance, or the Hittite inscriptions if you prefer. Either one has been 'read' in half a dozen different ways. One man making perfect sense of a particular inscription says it is an extremely modest account of a marriage ceremony. His opponent and critic reads precisely the same signs as a detailed description of the slaughter of forty bulls. Both can't be right, unless of course the forty bulls are a poetic metaphor for the bridegroom. And so it goes; what one theorist reads as a beautiful prayer to the goddess of love another decipheres as a simple recipe for lentil soup. Unless there are dates, numerals, or other mathematical signs that can be definitely checked against facts in such work it is all likely to be a mere reflection of the decipherer's personality. So when a man says 'forty bulls', I know what to think of him."

"And you are afraid now," Edith smiled, "of giving yourself away? Never mind, I'll forget all the compromising parts."

"I have nothing to be ashamed of in my private life," he retorted, drawing himself up like a stork.

"That is what they all say when they begin to tell their dreams," the Doctor laughed. "Then they are as mad as tarantulas when they find they have given away the whole show. But go ahead; those beasts of yours are not all purely subjective."

"That is where you are wrong. It is the ideal, the subjective part that matters in these particular inscriptions. And that is precisely what I can't decipher. The rest is easy enough. Superficially those fourteen inscriptions are fragments of the history of a terrible war. It is the symbolism behind the bald account of battles and sieges that I can't get at. It is like one of those sentences that can be read in a dozen different ways to give good sense. The surface meaning seems perfectly clear. Then when the sentence is read a second time another meaning begins to appear, and so on, until the whole shows up as a most ingeniously constructed cipher.

"Consider, for example, the simple statement 'It rained yesterday.' Ordinarily we should think nothing of it. But suppose you were an intelligence officer in the army and you found one of your men sneaking over to the enemy with 'It rained yesterday' sewn into his left sock. You would ask for the code, wouldn't you, before shooting?"

"Well, so it is in my case. At first sight those inscriptions record only fragments of a hideous war. But only at first sight. The account of the war is consistent and thorough, even if it is appalling in its stark insanity. Intelligence, if I may say so without becoming oratorical, is dethroned. There never was another war like it, and there never will be again. For the fighting material has gone out of existence."

"Beast against beast?" the Doctor hazarded.

"No. Beast against intellect and intellect against beast. Only I can't make out whose intellect it was or what, exactly, the beasts were.

"That, however, is not my main difficulty. The whole story, I am convinced, is merely the symbol of the real conflict which those inscriptions record. I have no definite knowledge that this is the case. Yet I feel it to be the absolute truth. Some terrific struggle has been disguised under the fairly straightforward account of a war unique in the history of the world. It is my guess that the real conflict was of so terrible a character that the survivors deliberately wrapped it up in a symbolism that may never be explained."

"What could have been their motive for recording this struggle at all if they took such pains to obscure its history?"

"Can't you see? Perhaps they guessed that some day a similar devil might break loose, and they left this hint of their own chaining of the fiend. They suppressed a plain history lest some idiot be tempted to try again what had wrecked them. Such things do happen. If it were not for the lofty patriotism of certain old men we younger fellows might never have to face gas and other horrors never intended for the destruction of life. The makers of those inscriptions decided to disguise the truth so that only beings as intelligent as they themselves could decipher its meaning. This is only my theory, as our friend Hansen would say."

"Still," the Doctor objected, "I fail to see in your theory why a record of the horror should have been left at all, even in the most obscure form. If they wished oblivion for it, surely the safest way would have been to leave no record, symbolic or otherwise."

"If that was their only anxiety, yes. But what if they wished to leave a warning to anyone intelligent enough to read and take it? Suppose, for the sake of argument, they had discovered some secret of nature. And suppose that this very discovery undid them. Would they not wish to leave a caution to the next race of investigators who might blunder through to the forbidden door?"

"Your imagination is running away with your brains, to say nothing of your tongue. What about the actual war that is recorded?"

"I'm feeling seasick again," Drake prevaricated, diving for his cabin. "Some other time."

And that was all they got out of him, for he locked his stateroom door.

6

A Witness to the Truth

Their two busy months in Rio de Janeiro passed pleasantly enough. With the help of a young lieutenant from the Brazilian navy one at least of

the adventure seekers became an expert aviator. Possibly it was Edith's striking beauty that caused the young officer to lavish his skill and patience upon perfecting her in those finer points of aviation which she probably would never use unless she became a stuntist at a county fair. It is at any rate certain that he took far less pains with the industrious Ole who, after one shocking misalliance with a gilded virgin—on top of a church—developed into a safe and sane air navigator, largely self-taught.

Captain Anderson gave it up immediately after his first stomach-raising flight with the daredevil lieutenant. He refused flatly to learn the knack of being seasick all over again.

Dr. Lane, learning easily, showed a bad tendency to loop the loop without due provocation. Edith begged the Captain to set her father to work on the ship's stores—taking inventory, anything to keep him out of the dazzling sapphire sky. The Captain consenting, Edith was left a clean heaven which she shared with the lieutenant. Ole, an indiscriminating admirer of Maeterlinck, remarked to Drake that Edith's airy antics were precisely those of a queen bee on her prenuptial flight. What Drake replied is unrepeatable.

Poor Drake had proven himself a hopeless duffer at the game. After a truly conscientious attempt to teach him the rudiments of flight, the lieutenant announced with considerable relief that Mr. Drake would make excellent ballast in an emergency, but was otherwise useless. So Drake, discomfited and humiliated, returned to his inscriptions. Such at least was the outward appearance of things. But Ole evolved a deeper theory which he generously confided to Edith.

"No man, Miss Lane, can be such a fool as Drake made of himself. Drake does not want to fly. He goes back to my photographs. That young man has brains. Some day he will have a theory." Ole spoke in the hushed tones of a fat old woman contemplating her buxom daughter-in-law.

Edith, reflecting that she had begged Drake to let her give him private lessons, felt like boxing Ole's red ears. In her heart of hearts she knew that the mate's theory was the truth; Drake was infatuated with a lovely abstraction. Sighing her exasperation she resumed her beelike flirtation with the lieutenant. He at any rate was aware of her charms. But she would have liked to set her even white teeth in the one apple just beyond her reach.

By the end of the first month in Rio Drake's habits were ruined. He now had the whole of Hansen's masterpieces in his room for study, one hundred and forty-four dumb tormentors of the reason. Although the heat was terrific, the long lean Drake seemed not to suffer. But his food did, intensely. Meals brought to his door remained outside until the porter devoured them with ghoulish glee or took them away for burial. At last, however, the sympathetic landlord concocted a villainous ration which was both meat and drink, and which could be downed at one gulp with a minimum of

attention to details. Oysters and cream formed the basis of this ghastly diet, to which rum and a dash of absinthe gave the finishing flavor. The intervening strata were a horrible mystery. A suspicious granulated blackness about the middle suggested caviar. This perhaps was confirmed at the curled surface by the unmistakable odor of finely chopped garlic. The necessary balance of carbohydrates was supplied by a liberal admixture of brown sugar. A quart of this ambrosial hooch placed four times daily in his hand, with unlimited coffee "as black as the devil, as sweet as love, and as hot as hell" in the Spanish phrase, kept the wolf from Drake's vitals.

Lane spent his nights aboard ship, while Edith danced till three in the morning with the amorous lieutenant under the perfunctory chaperonage of his aged mother. So Drake had a free hand to do what he liked with the twenty-four hours between dawn and dawn. He slept when sleep stole upon him from behind and overpowered him in his chair. If when exhausted he instinctively sought his bed he lay down without bothering to undress. Within four hours he was at his problem again. Refuting all theories of the hygienists he took no exercise whatever and remained in perfect health, as hard as a rock. After all, a busy mind is perhaps the perfect tonic and the best exerciser.

Ole, gleaning daily bulletins from the landlord, developed an awed respect for this unprecedented young hatcher of theories. That something huge and universal must at last leap forth from such an aeonial gestation he had not the slightest doubt. On the morning of departure he led Drake aboard to his quarters on the old whaler—now cleansed and rechristened the *Edith*—with all the solicitude he would have shown an expectant mother.

The *Edith* slunk under her own steam from the grand harbor, rounded the point, and headed due south in the sparkling air, cleaving a sea of chrysophase. Officially they were on a whaling expedition. The airplane was sophisticated to the Brazilian officers as a freak hobby of the rich and eccentric Dr. Lane who wished before he died to harpoon a whale from the air.

The great adventure had begun, but what was to be its outcome not one soul aboard the silent ship had the slightest idea. They were headed due south for the undiscovered oil fields and for a stranger thing which, could they have foreseen it, they would not have wished to discover. It is in this unreasoning way that human beings are forever blundering into the mysteries of life.

By Lane's orders Drake was left to himself. Hansen's reports had impressed him, and he knew from experience the powerful drive of unbroken thought.

As the days flew over them like azure birds the breeze freshened and knife-edged cold cut the unhardened members of the crew to the bones. The old-timers and the well seasoned beginners merely quickened their move-

ments and went about their work with a new energy. The greenhorns would soon get used to it. In the meantime they must stamp and swear and get on with it as best they could.

The lightly ballasted *Edith* beginning to pitch and roll like a porpoise, the oysters, caviar, and brown sugar of Drake's orgy had their revenge. His abused stomach, protesting at the sound ship fare, rejected honest salt horse with ineffable scorn. Edith forgot his inconstancy, pardoning him all his theories, and ministered to him like a white-robed angel of forgiveness. His recovery was as sudden as his collapse. With the return of his vigor and his temper—he had been as sweet as a consumptive curate during his prostration—he once more jilted Edith for his hour.

"Let us go to the Captain's cabin and talk over what we are to do," he suggested. "You bring your father and I'll rout out Ole. This is the second mate's watch. They will be off duty."

Seated comfortably round the red baize of the Captain's table the five discussed their plans. Anderson and Lane had decided to head directly for the inlet which the Captain had discovered the morning after the submarine eruption. They were then to steam up the inlet as far as possible. Then they were to leave the ship in charge of Bronson, the second mate and a capable seaman, and travel inland by dog team and sledges to the volcano whose smoke and flames Anderson and the mate had seen from the inlet. If practicable to use the airplane two of the party could return for it.

The men under Bronson's charge were to wait at the ship three months for the party to return. If at the end of that time they had heard nothing from the explorers they were to dispatch a relief party to go in search. The organization of the relief had been planned to its last detail. Should circumstances so dictate Bronson would have only to carry out his written instructions to the letter.

Anderson had made only a rough guess as to the probable location of the oil which he expected to find. Although this first conjecture was founded on a theory of Ole's the Captain refused to give him any credit. With a rare flash of common sense Ole had observed that since the heavy black smoke and ruddy pillar of flame which they had seen from the inlet looked like burning oil, probably it was burning oil.

The one stumbling block which this sensible hypothesis had to surmount was, as Lane pointed out, the Captain's estimate of two hundred fifty to three hundred miles inland as the distance of the explosion which they had heard. It hardly seemed probable that an outburst of burning oil could make itself heard and seen at such a distance. A volcanic eruption, on the other hand, easily might carry that far. Krakatoa, Katmai, Pelée, and many others among the more famous eruptions had carried even farther.

The Captain, however, would have none of Lane's objections. To him the mere vastness of an oil field was no slur on its probability. The bigger the likelier was his theory. Staring up at the swinging kerosene lamp he beheld a beatific vision of stocks and shares floating like all the leaves of Vallombrosa on an ocean of unlimited liability.

Lane was curiously reticent about what he expected to get out of the expedition. Since that afternoon, now ten months ago, in his San Francisco study, he had not once alluded to the Captain's tale of dead prehistoric monsters boiling up as fresh as life through a sea of pitch. If questioned he would have said that his judgment was suspended, as undoubtedly it was. The indubitable bird-reptile obstinately continued to exist as an awkward reality not yet satisfactorily explained away.

On mature reflection he had abandoned his first theory that the reptilian bird had been preserved for ages like a sardine in oil. But he refrained from acquainting the Captain with his changed state of mind lest that imaginative ex-mining engineer and inventive whaler should be moved to show what he really could do in the way of a yarn when put on his mettle. In the true scientific spirit the Doctor was resolved to wait further facts before abandoning himself like Ole to seductive theories.

One sore spot in his memories hardened him in this decision. He had not yet forgiven the Captain for assuming that he was a gullible enthusiast eager to swallow the first mermaid with a coconut head dangled before his mouth. Above all, still holding the opinion that Drake was the greatest decipherer of his time, he wished to hear what the young archaeologist had to report as to the outcome of his intense concentration on Hansen's photographs. Edith, with Drake's permission, had revealed the secret of his vile temper in the Canadian Rockies.

"Well, oyster," said the Doctor, turning to Drake, "are you ready to open up yet?"

"Have you a theory?" Ole blurted out.

"Two," Drake replied.

"Two theories!" Ole rhapsodized. "Young man, you are a scientist. What are your theories?"

"The first, and the one which I favor, is that I'm crazy."

"So impossible as all that?" the Doctor asked, raising his brows.

"I told you in San Francisco it was impossible," the Captain asserted. "Now Drake is going to prove what I said. Wait till you see it with your own eyes."

"It is not that part of it which is impossible," Drake replied. "After what I have guessed as the true meaning of the symbolism of the inscriptions your stew of monsters sounds a little tame. I am willing to accept your account as true to the facts, even if Dr. Lane is still too cautious to commit himself.

But the other thing, the real meaning of that fragmentary history recorded in the inscriptions, is a subject which I must decline to discuss until events have proved me either crazy or right."

"I appreciate your stand, Drake," said the Doctor. "Under like circumstances I should feel the same way. Still, you can tell us this much without prejudicing your case. From what you have made out so far do you believe that we shall find any tangible evidence of the true struggle? I mean of course the one which the makers of the inscriptions took such pains to disguise."

Drake gave him a shrewd look. "You have guessed the nature of that conflict?"

"Perhaps, reasoning from other data, I have. In that case you can understand why I prefer to wait before venturing my guesses. Shall we find any traces of the real fight?"

"I don't know. To me it is incredible that we should."

"Some things are eternal," the Doctor remarked quietly. "For all we know life may be indestructible."

"Have you ever whiffed a dead whale?" the Captain interposed. He was a practical man.

"That isn't what the Doctor means," Ole expostulated, beginning to redden.

"I know, Ole. I know what the doctor means. He's talking the soul. Now, did you ever see a whale with a soul?"

"Not after it was dead," the Doctor admitted with a smile. "However, that was not what I had in mind. My idea was something much more prosaic—question of energy and cells, and all that commonplace sort of stuff."

"Cells?" the Captain snorted. "Rotten fish is rotten fish, cells or no cells."

"That isn't—"

"Shut up, Ole. No, Dr. Lane, I'm not fool enough to argue with you on your own deck. But when you show me a whale that I can't set stinking ripe in three weeks I'll begin to believe in the indestructibility of life.

"That—"

"Shut up, Ole. Well, Doctor, where's your immortal whale?"

"In Heaven," the Doctor replied without the flicker of an eyelash.

"Father," Edith protested, "you are irreverent."

"Not necessarily, Chick. Remember the prophet of Nineveh. Now, Drake, what is your second theory?"

"That the whole thing is literally true."

"And that is mine," said the Doctor.

"Mine too," Ole echoed before the Captain could squelch him.

"It can't be, Ole," the Doctor replied. "For, prolific as you may be, you are constitutionally incapable of hatching such a nightmare."

Ole looked crestfallen. He was rebuked. Edith felt for him as she was suffering acutely from repressed curiosity.

"I wish you two wouldn't talk as if I were a baby in long dresses. If I'm old enough to be here I'm certainly old enough to be let in on things."

"You might take the plane and fly back to Rio in the night," her father laughed, "if we frightened you with all our half-baked theories. Better wait and see—"

He was cut short by a jarring tremor that shook the stout ship from stem to stern.

"My God!" the Captain shouted, bolting for the door, "we've struck! All hands on deck!"

They reached the deck a second behind him. Instantly an overpowering stench enveloped them body and soul, searching out the secret convolutions of their brains with a sense-destroying, paralyzing nausea. Hardened old whale pirates were leaning over the rail in a paroxysm of the extremest misery.

On the less callused members of the expedition the effect was instantaneous and drastic. It was complete. No chemist in the distorted ambition of his wildest nightmare ever dreamed of a smell such as that which defiled the very soul of this night, otherwise so beautiful and serene.

A full moon silvered the calm meadows of the sea. Nature, dead and living, lay peacefully asleep. Athwart the silver road through the ripples floated majestically the vast corpse through whose middle rotteness the sturdy ship had churned her filthy way. Four pillars, two at either end, towered up in the mystic light like the ruins of a shattered temple on a hill in Greece. These were the creature's legs. What else of it the moonlight revealed had better be veiled.

"There's your immortal whale, Captain," the Doctor sobbed when from very emptiness he ceased his calisthenics.

"Whale be blowed. That carcass is the size of four whales. It's one of them."

"I believe," said the penitent Doctor, "smelling is a severer test of truth than seeing. Lead us below and give us asafetida from your medicine chest to take the taste of truth out of our mouths."

Returning to the Captain's cabin they sought forgetfulness in rum tinctured with Jamaica ginger.

"How shall I ever get it out of my hair?" Edith wailed.

"Shave your hair, dear," the Doctor prescribed, "and then boil it in lye."

7

Beached

Shortly after midnight Captain Anderson called the sleepers.

"This is the spot, Doctor," he said. "You wanted to see it with your own eyes."

"What spot?" the Doctor sleepily inquired.

"Where all those big beasts boiled up from the bottom of the sea."

They stood gazing over the rail at the cold, glittering Antarctic waste of black water. Far to the south the dim shapes of five huge bergs towered up like vast frozen ghosts in the moonlight.

"The water looks clean enough," the Doctor remarked suspiciously. The smell having dissipated, his skepticism was returning. "Where's your oil?"

"Blest if I know. Washed ashore months ago, I expect."

"In what direction is the nearest land?"

"Southeast. Directly in line with the southernmost of those bergs."

"When shall we reach it?"

"Within twelve hours if the wind doesn't rise."

The Doctor glanced at the cloudless sky. "Everything looks serene. Well, we should see your inlet sometime tomorrow afternoon. By the way, has the lookout sighted any more dead—whales?"

"Whales? That was no whale we cut through, I tell you. It had four times the bulk of the biggest whale afloat. Think what you like, that was one of those brutes that boiled up when I was here before. And the lookout saw three others."

"How close?"

"About two miles. Of course he couldn't make out exactly what they were at that distance. But I'll bet they were not floating islands, or ice, or dead whales. If we sight another I'll steam up close to give you a whiff if you like."

"For mercy's sake don't," Edith begged. "My cabin is full of the last one still."

"A mere smell proves nothing," the Doctor remarked dryly.

"Mere smell?" Drake exploded. "Great Scott! What is your idea of full-blown reek?"

"I mean," the Doctor explained, "the smell may have come from putrefying whale blubber. The odor is notorious and far-reaching, I'm told."

"You bet it is," the Captain asserted. "Twenty years of it have made me an expert. And I tell you straight that a ripe whale smells like a bunch of violets beside that beauty we cut through."

Disdaining further argument the Doctor retired to his cabin, and the others after a last look at the austere grandeur of the icy night turned in to their warm bunks.

About nine o'clock the next morning the breeze veered and blew from the icebound land far to the southeast. It was still a mere sigh. The Captain and Ole anticipated a safe and early arrival at their goal. That afternoon would bring them to the mouth of the volcanic inlet.

No spot on the oceans of the Earth could have been more coldly serene, more vastly mysterious. The water, almost black in the mass, curled over in hard glassy waves intensely green as they broke, and far to the south the airy peaks and pinnacles of huge bergs swam like dreams athwart the taut horizon. Then the offshore breeze freshening brought with it the first faint hint of an indescribable pollution.

"Dead whales," the Captain laconically remarked to Lane.

"Undoubtedly," replied the Doctor, through his handkerchief.

Edith gazed longingly at the high-powered airplane under its tarpaulins.

"We must have run over another of them," she sighed.

Anderson laughed. "Did you feel a jar, Edith? No? Well, neither did I, and my sea legs are more sensitive than yours. We're not running over the rotten brutes; we're running into them."

With that comforting assurance he swung below to see if the engineer could crowd on more steam. He was tremendously eager.

Lunch time passed unobserved. Those of the crew who were off duty followed the example of the passengers and sought seclusion belowdecks. But the ever increasing stench found them out like a forgotten sin. Every mile less between them and the land multiplied their misery tenfold. To the inexperienced passengers this penetrating torment which prostrated hardened whalers became unendurable. At last Lane, reaching his limit, went in search of medical relief.

He had no definite idea of what he wanted, trusting blindly to the stores for inspiration. He found it. Presently he returned with three improvised gas masks of surgical gauze soaked in spirits of camphor.

"Who ever would have guessed that we should need gas masks in the Antarctic," he laughed ruefully as he adjusted Drake's. "Edith, get out your needles and thread and make nosebags for all hands."

Under her father's supervision Edith labored diligently at a new style of mask designed to filter the tainted air through finely sifted ashes. If the temperature kept up the ashes might be soaked in deodorizer. Otherwise the sufferers would have to put up with the lesser efficiency of the dry material.

Ole, coming in to see how the greenhorns were bearing up, found Edith at her task. The poor fellow was the sickly hue of cheesy white phosphorus. Some of the men, he reported, were on the point of mutiny.

"Order them to make masks for themselves," Edith advised. "They can all sew. Here, take this one as a pattern."

His rotundity drooping from his shoulders in soggy folds, Ole departed. Although his faith in the vanity of nosebags was slight, yet in the true scientific spirit he would test any theory before condemning it as useless. The men, therefore, were soon in the throes of a sewing bee. And it may be said here that the masks later made enduring a labor which without them might well have proved impossible.

Land was sighted at two thirty-five. Due south along the horizon stretched the great barrier cliff of black rock and sheer ice, shadowy in the distance and insubstantial as a vision. Anderson joined the three at the rail and passed Lane his binoculars.

"Look about two points east of south and you will see the opening of the inlet."

"Ah, I get it. Not very wide, is it?"

"No. Just a twenty-mile crack in the Antarctic continent that wasn't there two years ago. I imagine it narrows down fast after it gets farther inland."

He turned and left them to go about his business. They stood watching the distant shadow assume definite outline. Presently Lane hailed the Captain on the bridge.

"We're getting off our course, aren't we?"

"No. Dead on it."

"But we are going thirty degrees east of the inlet."

"Thirty-three, Doctor. There's an eight-mile stony beach over there that I want to have a look at first. It might give the men fresh seal meat if there's any way of landing. We have plenty of time to make the inlet before dark if we decide to go on."

"Oh, all right. You're the captain."

Although their changed course drifted them across the breeze instead of directly into it, the stench became more terrific. Without their masks they could not have faced it. Presently the Captain called Lane up on the bridge and handed him his glasses.

"There's the beach, Doctor. Now if smelling isn't believing perhaps seeing is. Take a close look at your whales."

Lane almost dropped the Captain's best glasses.

"Good Lord," he gasped, "hundreds and hundreds of them! Full steam ahead, Captain!"

He ran down the steps to tell the others to keep their eyes open. As the *Edith* rapidly neared the long beach they saw at first only a coal-black slope littered with what looked like huge rounded lumps of black rock. Then a blast from the whistle raised a cloud of scavengers from the black masses

and the truth leapt out before their eyes. The eight-mile beach was a refuse heap of huge oil-soaked carcasses festering in the sun.

Piled five and six deep where the winter hurricanes had hurled them, the monsters of a forgotten age rotted in the delayed death which should have been theirs nine million years ago. On that beach there must have been hundreds of thousands of the gigantic brutes. The smaller monstrosities wedged and packed between the mountainous carcasses were without number. The Antarctic cold, their long immersion in the salt water, and their thick coating of oil had but postponed the colossal corruption which now, at the height of a mild open season, preyed upon their mountains of rich flesh.

A boat was already being lowered. They sprang in with Ole and the Captain and were rapidly pulled ashore. The landing on that shelving beach was easy. They stood up in the oozing slop of oil to gaze as in a nightmare at the horror of the shambles surrounding them.

"Well," said the Captain, pointing to the sheer black cliffs barring the beach from the frozen continent, "there's what is left of my oil. The wind swabbed those rocks with some of it and blew the rest inland or wasted it all over the ocean from here to Cape Horn. Is there any money to make out of these carcasses, Doctor? What about blubber? That big brute over there," he indicated a twisted dragon mailed in triangular two-foot plates of horn, "looks pretty good to me. He's not so ripe as some of the others."

"Money be damned!" snapped the Doctor. "This is a bigger thing than the Standard Oil and Dutch Shell combined. It would be nothing short of an infamous sacrilege to hack these beautiful things to pieces for the sake of a few dirty dollars. No sir! I am financing this expedition, and so long as you are on land you will obey my orders. Aboard ship you are the master, but only for so long as I choose to employ you. I am the owner. Now, is that clear?"

"All right, Doctor. Keep your shirt on."

The soft answer mollified the indignant lover of beauty.

"Do as I tell you," he said, "and I'll see that you find your precious oil. You can go prospecting while the rest of us are discovering our treasure. And although it isn't in our contract I'll give you gratis all the very best expert mining and geological advice I can. To begin now, there is not the ghost of a possibility of striking oil on a beach like this. For your encouragement, however, I may tell you that I have already formed a pretty rational theory where to look for the main reservoir. Your earthquake tapped only a top bubble of it."

"So have I a theory," Ole announced with modest pride.

"Shut up, Ole. I want to hear what the Doctor thinks."

"I was only going to say," Lane continued, "that if my guess is right all the oil you saw is only a bucketful of the big tank. Unless I'm all wrong you will stumble into a reservoir of the highest grade oil as big as the State of

California. To settle this thing once for all, I promise to finance another expedition for oil prospecting if you return from this a cent poorer than you wish to be. If we don't get your oil this time we certainly will next. There is no argument about it; I am positive. Now let us get to something more important and inspect some of these gorgeous jewels while the light lasts."

They followed him into the thick of the shambles.

"Ole," he continued, "I see you have brought your camera. Get busy. Begin with the big fellows and be sure you take enough pictures of each to show clearly the head, neck, position of the legs, pattern of the scales, and tail—if there is one. Take in the small fry, too. They're just as important as the big fellows.

While Ole industriously clicked away at the mountains before him, the rest of the party clambered over monsters whose horny armor still afforded a sure footing, carefully avoiding the inviting slopes of the colossal three-hundred-foot lizards. A step on those smooth, bloated bodies meant a plunge up to the neck in corruption.

From many of the hideous skulls most of the flesh had already disappeared, leaving only irregular patches of blackened skin above the arsenals of sabre teeth and around the huge glasslike masses of lusterless jelly in the eye sockets.

As they passed from monster to monster along that shambles of a beach, Lane's expression changed gradually from reverent wonder to puzzled incredulity. His theory was taking shape before his eyes. Yet so strange was it that he doubted the evidence of tangible proofs. The thing he had imagined was unbelievable when seen. What, he wondered, lay behind this veil which his own speculations and those of Drake had lifted ever so little? Had they guessed the whole truth, or did an unimagined catastrophe wait for them at the end of their untrodden path into the unknown? At this first partial confirmation of their theory his belief in himself faltered. For once he hoped that he had been misled by reason.

Going up to one huge head he peered into the gaping cavity of the mouth and began to count the teeth. Their number would either confirm or destroy Drake's theory and his. Hoping that he had made a mistake he counted the teeth a second time. He had made no error.

"As I thought," he said, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "These things are all wrong."

"Is an ugly brute like that ever right?" Anderson asked.

"Always, in nature. At least according to their fossil remains they are invariably true to type. What would you think of a man with forty-eight teeth instead of the normal thirty-two?"

"As a practical seaman," said the Captain, "I should advise him to go to a dentist and have sixteen pulled. It would save him a lot of toothache on the high seas."

"That wouldn't work on this fellow. It would take a steam shovel to dig out his eight superfluous molars."

"Perhaps," Drake suggested hopefully, "this one is a freak. Try another. There are plenty lying about."

"Yes, but I don't see one of the same species. That's another curious thing about all this. There are not more than a dozen specimens of any one kind, I should judge, in the whole stew."

"Isn't that one over there the same sort as this?" Edith asked, pointing to a huger brute that resembled the monster of too many teeth.

The Doctor surveyed its frozen death agony. "I believe you are right," he said. "Let's count his teeth."

The count checked. Again the monster had eight molars in excess of what nature should have given him.

"That settles it," the Doctor muttered, sitting down on the treacherous tail of a defunct reptile.

"Oh, see what a mess you are in!" Edith cried. "Stand up. You can't come back to the ship till you've burned your clothes."

"Clothes don't matter in a crisis like this. Science is rotting to its foundations."

"That's no reason why you should sit down in the basement," Edith retorted. Her mask had slipped, and naturally she was inclined to be severe.

"If this is science," Drake remarked, "I agree. It's putrid from cellar to attic."

"Don't play the fool. If you have guessed as much as I think you have, you should be able to appreciate what this may mean. This is serious. Not one of these creatures, I'll wager, is all that it should be. Each at first glance is like its supposed type. When you look at them closely and begin to apply scientific tests you find they are all either deformities or new species. Offhand one would say that nature had been practicing and had forgotten her art."

"That," said Drake, "isn't your theory, however. Is it?"

"No," the Doctor admitted. "But the facts, all theories aside, can be ascertained either to establish or to refute my contention that these things are not as nature should have made them. Now here is a crucial test. See that blue brute like a potbellied crocodile over there? No, not the one with the saw ridge of three-foot spines down its back, but the one with the red bags hanging down from its jowls. All right. According to all we know from fossil anatomy that beast was comparatively harmless. Its only weapons were its teeth and its claws. I don't know what those obscene-looking

pouches mean—they don't show in any fossil remains yet found. Nor do I know whether red is their natural color, or whether it is due to faster decay owing to all the oil having dripped down off them. So much for its supposed identity.

"Now I suspect," he continued, "from the shape of that beast's head and snout that it was venomous when alive. The true animal, the one in the fossil beds, was as innocuous as a tame worm. I'm going over to see. If that brute has poison glands above its evil fangs the question is settled. It is some reptile utterly unknown to science."

Accompanying him to the grinning head they watched while he inspected the rows of yellowish knives bared by the upward snarl of the dry, scaled lips. The great cavern of the mouth gaped open, revealing a single five-foot row of teeth on each side of the gums. Having carefully selected the fang for his test, Lane picked up the largest stone he could heft and hurled it with all his strength at the point. The stone rebounded like a pebble from a brick wall.

"Here, Ole!" the Captain shouted. "Come and play handball."

Ole with his knotted strength was more successful. Behind his thirty-pound pebble he put the full barrel of his strength. The fang was jarred. The deep musical boom which it emitted died gradually away and Ole took another shot. At the fifth impact the fang was loose. The sixth, aimed at the base, sent it crashing out of the monster's head. Lane peered up in the gaping cavity.

"There's a sac of something up there," he said, "but it may only be a cushion of fat. Ole, will you fetch an oar from the boat?"

When the oar arrived Lane thrust the blade far up the cavity and prodded hard. The sac broke, and a heavy oily green liquid oozed down like cold pitch on the decaying remnants of the reptile's tongue.

"I want some of that," the Doctor, exclaimed, hastily emptying the brandy from his pocket flask. "Ole, scoop up a ladleful on the end of the oar. I'll hold the flask; you let the stuff pour in like molasses."

"What is the decision?" Drake asked curiously, as the Doctor carefully tucked away his pint of supposed venom.

"We can't tell until this stuff is tried on some living creature. Nevertheless I am willing to stake my reputation on the outcome. That brute, when alive, was as venomous as a regiment of rattlesnakes."

"Then it is like no prehistoric monster known to science?"

"As different as a hen is from a hippopotamus. And so, I am willing to wager, is every other creature that we have seen on this nightmare of a beach. They are all new. For one thing the majority of them are enormously bigger and bulkier than they should be. That in itself, however, is not conclusive. It would be possible for such a state of affairs to exist in, say, a

herd of cattle. If all suffered from the same disease of certain glands—those regulating growth—they might all be enormous giants and yet not unnatural. These are abnormal in a far more radical way.”

“But,” Edith protested, “several of them look very much like the restorations in some of your books on fossils.”

“That is the strangest part of all this unearthly dream. They are like bad copies, botched imitations if you like, of those huge brutes whose bones we chisel out of the rocks from Wyoming to Patagonia. Nature must have been drunk, drugged, or asleep when she allowed these aborted beasts to mature. Every last one of them is a freak. It is just like looking at a shambles of all the deformities of a nation.”

“The whole thing is inexpressibly hideous and depressing,” Edith shivered. “And these masks are becoming useless.”

“Hideous? Depressing? Why, this is Heaven!”

“Then I wish I were in hell,” the mate remarked.

“Hadn’t we better be getting back to the ship, Doctor? We shan’t want to plow our way through this in the dark.”

“Perhaps we had,” the Doctor reluctantly admitted, feeling like Adam when the angel showed him the back door of paradise. “How many pictures did you get, Ole?”

“Twenty dozen.”

“You look it,” said Drake with a glance at Ole’s bulging sweater. “Are you always half loaded or is part of it natural?”

“Pinhead,” said Ole under his breath, beginning to pull on his oar.

Drake, who had been unusually taciturn on the beach, expressed himself before reaching the ship.

“Doctor,” he said, “your conclusion that all those rotten brutes are only half natural confirms my theory of the inscriptions.”

“Mine too,” said the Doctor.

“And you still want to go on with this?”

“Of course.”

“Well, I don’t. I’m beginning to turn back and go home right now.”

“When it is just beginning to get interesting?”

“I don’t believe you know what you are up against.”

“Neither do you. But we both seem to have made a pretty good guess. I’m going to see it through and find out what is at the other end of the chain.”

“Then I shall have to stick it out too. For I’m hanged if I’ll let an old man like you get the better of me.”

“Old man?” Edith exclaimed indignantly. “He’s only eleven years older than you are, baby. And he’s not half so frightened of the dark.”

8

A Significant Hint

The Doctor and Ole would have been deliriously happy to spend the rest of their days among the monsters on the beach. The weather, however, cut short their ecstasies in the middle of the fifth week.

It had been growing gradually colder, although the sky still retained its crystal clarity. The wind steadily freshened. Twice the party had been caught by a "woolly" which knocked them sprawling in the evil-smelling brown slush.

Young ice beginning to tinkle and chafe against the ship, Anderson became anxious lest they be frozen fast for the season over three hundred miles from their goal. He counseled an immediate withdrawal to the inlet. Ole and the Doctor reluctantly gave him best.

They were not ten hours too soon in their decision. All about the ship the water curdled rapidly into a churning waste of young ice which in another twelve hours would render the propeller useless. As it was, the propeller several times on their short run to the inlet jammed, and the Captain's heart descended to his boots to rise again as the desperate expedient of full steam ahead sent the screw kicking.

If the worst came to the worst, Lane reflected, and they were caught, they could leave the ship in charge of Bronson and make their way over the pack to the mainland with dogs and sledges. But to be forced to this expedient would disrupt the plan of their whole campaign.

Anderson, still obstinately trusting to his volcanic theory, expected to find open water in the inlet. Indeed as they bucked their slow course toward the mouth the severe cold moderated several degrees and the pack became less dense. Lane and Ole began to regret their precipitate flight from the heaven of their dreams.

The sudden departure from the slaughter beach had cut short the Doctor's most ambitious project. Another day might have seen it accomplished. With the help of Bronson and Ole he had rigged up a tackle by which he planned to transport one of the larger horn-plated monstrosities intact to the ship.

The crew had already cleared a place for it on deck. Over the protests of Edith, Drake, and the crew, all was ready for the reception of the huge evil-smelling brute when the sudden necessity for getting out or being frozen in caused Lane to abandon the beast and tackle at the water's edge.

"Never mind," Anderson consoled him, "we can hoist your lily aboard when we come back this way. It will be no sweeter then than it is now."

With a sigh of regret Lane resigned himself to the loss of his loved one. It was the prize of the whole filthy brood. Whatever may have been the state of its interior the heavy armor of its enormous scales had preserved it, outwardly at least, from the more distressing features of dissolution. Edith rejoiced openly at her father's misfortune, and the crew wore a smile that even the knife-edged blast from the south was powerless to chill.

Despite his heartbreaking loss Lane did not quit the beach in absolute poverty. Every available nook of the *Edith* was packed with his well salted and pitch-soaked mummies. His collection as it stood would be the scientific sensation of a century.

More valuable still were Ole's photographs. An able-bodied Norwegian seaman with the most expensive cameras and an unlimited supply of films can take an overpowering abundance of excellent photographs in five and a half weeks. Under Lane's expert direction he had photographed practically everything visible on that eight-mile beach.

This indeed was but the minor part of Ole's Herculean labor. His greater masterpieces had been achieved by the freehanded expenditure of Anderson's dynamite and blasting powder. This the sagacious Captain had stowed aboard the *Edith* in ton lots, confident that he should have heavy blasting to do in his oil prospecting. He expected to find his oceans of wealth under rocks buried beneath the accumulated ice of ages. An incautious remark to the Doctor, who was bewailing his stupidity in not having brought crosscut saws, steam shovels, and other modern implements of surgery in the large, had betrayed the Captain's hoard to the rapacious zoologist. The three weeks' orgy of judicious blasting which followed gave Ole his unique collection of interior views.

In this filthy business Lane and the mate toiled alone. The others refused point blank to be present at the opening ceremonies. A day's practice with its attendant disasters, which may be imagined but not described, made the adaptable Ole expert in the planting of the charge. By the evening of the second day he was splitting open swollen monsters with the expert neatness of a specialist on prehistoric appendicitis. A second charge skillfully inserted when the Doctor so desired brought forth the creature's stomach for detailed examination.

Lane was anxious to learn all that he could of the dead monsters' life habits. Anatomy alone, as revealed by Ole's beautiful interior photographs, was not enough. He must find out on what the creatures had lived. As a rich byproduct of this work he obtained, from the undigested contents of the stomachs of the carnivorous reptiles and mammals in the shambles, many of his most curious specimens. Seclusion from the air in the stomachs of the huge lizards and enormous salamanders had preserved many of these beautiful objects practically fresh.

One remarkable incident of all that surgical saturnalia deserves to be recorded here. At the time it gained only a passing notice from Ole and the Doctor, absorbed as they were in the larger beauties of their obscene orgy. But had Lane given it the attention which it merited, and which he as a scientifically trained man should have accorded it, the party might later have avoided a disastrous mistake. Through ignorance of its inevitable consequences they were all but destroyed.

Late one afternoon Ole had placed an unusually heavy charge against the belly of an enormous brute whose carcass, from its well preserved condition, promised a rich mine of vegetable treasures. An inspection of the teeth showed Lane that the dead monster had been an eater of herbs, leaves, and grass. The charge exploding prematurely only half did its work. The downward force of the dynamite tore a deep pit in the loose, oil-soaked shale of the beach and shattered the underlying bed of perpetual ice. The broken surface of the deepest ice lay clean of oil. Immediately after the explosion some undigested green fronds of a mossy plant dropped from the creature's torn stomach upon the clean, freshly broken ice.

The half accidental explosion having ruined the specimen for further investigation, Lane and his assistant shed no tears over the mess but hurried on to the next. They had but three quarters of an hour's daylight left, and their time was too precious for regrets.

Having finished their next operation successfully they prepared to return to the ship while the light still served.

Their shortest way back led past the botched job. Glancing down at the ice pit, Lane called Ole's attention to the rich bright green mass of hairlike vegetation which, presumably, had fallen from the rip in the creature's stomach. Already overburdened with their implements and specimens, they abandoned their intention of immediately collecting some of the curious plant. Reluctantly deciding to leave it till tomorrow they hurried on through the dusk to the boat.

During the night the temperature rose several degrees. This otherwise fortunate incident robbed them of their expected prize. For when they visited the hole in the ice they found that the oily slush oozing down through the shale had made of the vegetation a dirty brown soup.

Nothing was to be gained by crying over rotten vegetables. They proceeded at once to their surgery elsewhere, confident that the next herb eater would furnish them with a ton of the green stuff.

In this they were deceived. It was not until some weeks later, however, that Lane discovered their serious error. They found an abundance of green vegetation in the stomachs of such monsters as were plant feeders, including tons of a particular variety whose green fronds and masses of long tendrils resembled closely those which they had missed.

Mere resemblance is far from identity, as the Doctor realized when it was too late. When knowledge finally came the party was fighting for its life with a foe which gave no quarter. But for this unpardonable negligence on Lane's part the explorers need not have brought upon themselves a hideous warfare for which they, as twentieth-century human beings, were totally unprepared. The dropped fragments of Ole's and Lane's green loot littered the clean shore, the fresh young ice from the beach to the ship, and the decks. Had Lane used his scientific eyes he would have noticed immediately the sinister difference between the habits of the plants he had collected and that which, through force of circumstances, he had abandoned.

This oversight and its subsequent consequences gave Lane the scientific chastisement of his life. Since that ghastly fight on the ice he has not scorned the humblest detail in his battles with the unknown.

The *Edith* reached the mouth of the inlet not an hour too soon. Snow began to fall as the gap of the inlet swung into view. Within ten minutes the opening disappeared behind a thick gray confusion of whirling feathers. The ship crushed her way through a thickening ice pack, cautiously feeling for the door in the iron wall ahead. To take the pack at a rush was impossible. Every yard of the way must be felt out or a smash against the barrier would send the ship like a brick to the bottom. Along this barren coast the ice cliffs plunged sheer down to deep water.

The slow going all but blocked the propeller with floating ice. At each succeeding jar the Captain's face became whiter.

He had no physical fear; his anguish was purely mental. It was the prospect of losing his hypothetical oil that froze his nerves.

Suddenly the nerve-racking grinding lessened. In fifteen minutes it had ceased completely.

"We're in," Anderson announced with undisguised relief. He would die rich after all. "No ice, as I expected."

A sounding gave no bottom. The volcanic crack in the earth's crust, if such indeed was its nature, was deeper than the Captain had anticipated. Although before them loomed the impenetrable gray wall of tumbling snow it seemed safe to proceed at half speed.

"For twenty miles at least this thing is as straight street," the Captain explained, "and we want to get on."

Occasional blasts from the whistle reverberating from the high cliffs nearest them gave a check on the course and kept the ship off the rocks. By daylight they had made only thirty miles, having slackened speed for greater safety during the darkest hours of the morning. The snow had thinned and now showed signs of clearing. Shortly after nine o'clock only a dazzling glitter of finely divided crystals scintillated in the sunlight. For the first time the party saw its surroundings.

Ahead, and due south, stretched the inlet at this point about a quarter of a mile wide, to disappear finally as a jagged black line on the white waste.

Not a particle of ice floated on the water. Anderson ordered one of the men to draw up a bucketful and take the temperature. The reading gave forty degrees Fahrenheit—eight degrees above freezing, while all about them the bleak wilderness beneath its shroud of dry snow crystals lay locked in perpetual ice.

“What do you make of it, Doctor?” the Captain asked.

“Nothing, yet. I just accept it as a fact. What current is there?”

“About two miles an hour against us. Shall we go ahead, or land here and have a look at things?”

“Go ahead, full steam. For all we know this may freeze over with the first blizzard. Besides I am anxious to see what is at the end of this long street.”

“So am I. Full steam ahead it is.”

Their progress was finally blocked in a most peculiar manner. Sixty odd miles of the roughly straight watercourse lay behind them when they began to notice a decided rise in temperature. Simultaneously a heavy fog met them, rolling up from the south toward which they were beaded. The dazzling sunshine and the stark blue sky became memories. Anderson now proceeded as slowly as it was possible to do and still make headway against the current. The street showing unmistakable signs of degenerating into a crooked alleyway, he kept the whistle tooting almost continuously. The engineer kept the screw just turning, ready to reverse at the first blackening of the mist ahead. But it was water, not rock, that stopped them.

A sudden gush sweeping down the channel in a three-foot wave sent the *Edith* spinning. Full steam ahead kept her barely abreast of her former position. A second torrent brought with it clouds of steam. Instantly the ship was racing to keep her place in a scalding deluge. The waves breaking over the stem drenched and blistered the deckhands with boiling water.

There was but one thing to do. Taking a desperate chance in the blinding steam, Anderson slewed the ship about in the narrow channel and went down with the torrent, trusting to sound signals to keep him off the cliffs. By midnight the immediate danger was past. Once more the *Edith* lay where she had started ahead at full steam.

“No lobsters boiled yet,” said the Captain with a sigh. “Even Ole is still raw.” The stars glittered in the hard black sky like crystals of icy fire. “I shall drop anchor for the night here. The lookout can see far enough ahead to give warning if anything breaks loose.”

“We should be safe enough here,” the Doctor agreed. “The last of the steam fog is all of forty miles away.”

And so it proved. However, the night was not to pass without a flurry. At three in the morning the lookout called Captain Anderson to view a

spectacle which had been troubling him at intervals for the past two hours. Having seen it, Anderson at once routed out Ole and all the passengers. They found the watchman staring straight ahead at a heavy pall of low black clouds suspended above the southern horizon.

"Keep your eyes on those clouds," Anderson directed.

He had barely spoken when the underside of the pall burst into vivid crimson. For perhaps three minutes the cloud pall pulsated from crimson to cherry red like the intermittent reflection from a forge fanned by an old-fashioned bellows. Then suddenly the light went black.

"How long before it lights up again?" Anderson asked the watchman.

"Thirteen and a half minutes, sir. Regular as a clock."

The interval passed and again the clouds burst into fire. So it went till dawn, when the rising winds of the upper atmosphere, tattering the pall, flung it far to the frozen south. During all that time the party had watched in fascination, not heeding the stiffening of their joints in the cold. The unearthly beauty of that distant inferno, and the mysterious regularity with which its manifestations recurred, made conversation trivial. Little was said until daylight, when the upper winds and the rising sun obliterated the awful grandeur of the night.

"Is that your volcano?" the Doctor asked.

"Ole's burning oil well, you mean. No, I'm sure it isn't. Those clouds were not more than fifty miles away at the most. My estimate of the other thing, you remember, was between two hundred and fifty and three hundred miles inland. That would make it over two hundred miles from here."

"Then what do you make of it?" Edith asked.

The Captain grinned. "Like the Doctor, I'll wait and see what's ahead before I jump."

"I have a theory," Ole began.

"Bottle it. When it's ripe enough to blow the cork let it fizz."

Ole rolled off rumbling to vent his emotions on purely masculine ears.

"What is it to be, Lane?" the Captain asked. "Do we try it again upstream or shall we take to the land?"

"How long will it take to get ready for the land journey?"

"Four hours. I saw to rationing the sledges while you and Ole were enjoying yourselves."

"Are the dogs in fit shape?"

"They will do. The four weeks' exercise on that rotten beach wasn't all it should have been, but it will have to do."

"Why not compromise?" Drake suggested. "Let us go by ship as far as we can before taking to the sledges. I don't relish dragging the beastly things over the ice. For that is what it will come to when the fool dogs give

in. Sooner or later they are bound to go. We can't pack four months' grub for them and ourselves."

"What about it, Captain?" the Doctor asked. "Are you willing to risk the boiling water?"

"Now that we know what to expect I see no great danger. Unless," he added, "boiling mud comes down with the water and mires us a hundred miles from the sea."

"We'll chance it," the Doctor decided. "If there had been no more of an eruption than boiling water so far it seems improbable that there will be one now just to welcome us."

"There is always the airplane as a last resort," Edith pointed out.

"Yes," said the Captain, "and who would be the happy pair to escape while the rest stayed behind and starved?"

"Don't you see? The pilot could take off the men one at a time. In a pinch five or six could crowd on somehow. The plane can lift the weight of ten men easily."

"And get the last of them off the night after Judgment Day. No, Edith, if we do get caught your plan won't work. However, I'm as game as your father. And what I say the men will do—and be damned quick about it, too. Now, Doctor, since we are going back I should like to ask a favor."

"Go ahead. If it's anything reasonable consider it granted."

"It is this. I want to find out what caused that glow on the clouds. Suppose we take a side trip to find out before going on to the main show?"

"That sounds all right to me. And it will give the dogs some real exercise."

"To say nothing of ourselves," Drake prophesied gloomily "I know the brutes will be unmanageable. One tried yesterday to take a piece out of my leg—and I have no meat to spare."

Without further discussion the ship was put about. They proceeded upstream at full speed. By noon they reached the point where they judged it would be wise to leave the ship and take to the sledges.

Within two hours Anderson, Ole, Drake, Lane, and Edith, who refused to be separated from her father, were on their way over the ice with a week's provisions. Bronson was left in charge of the ship with orders to head her downstream and keep a sharp lookout for trouble. At the first hint he was to steam for the mouth of the inlet. Should the party send no word to the contrary before the seventh night out, he was to organize a relief and go in search.

9 Into It

The party had two sledges. Anderson and Ole, being the only members experienced with dogs, taking charge of the sledges, instructed the others. One who has never had the pleasure cannot appreciate how much sport goes with the skillful manipulation of a dog team. The greenhorns soon learned. A temperature several degrees above zero, dead calm, a blinding glare from the undulating snow fields, and their own panting exertions quickly brought out the perspiration. Edith bore it with compressed lips, the Doctor grinned like a cat in pain, and Drake, wishing he might lie down and die, contented himself with a continuous profane commentary on the dogs, the desolate landscape, and the idiot who had dragged him into this brainless mess.

Drake's misery reached its climax when he was just on the point of abandoning the expedition after three grueling hours of elaborate awkwardness. His sledge at the moment was careening sideways like a crab down a gentle ice slope which the winds had swept clean of ice crystals. Reaching the bottom without mishap he stubbed his toe on some hard obstruction cunningly concealed beneath the loose drift. At the same instant one runner of the sledge found another stumbling block. Before Drake knew what it was all about he was sprawling on his back like a lanky frog in the snow, his sledge was upside down, and the dear dogs had tied themselves into a true lovers' knot.

Scrambling to his feet he forgot Edith, his surroundings, everything in fact but his fluent vocabulary. His rhythmic denunciation of the universe brought a blush to the ears of the sensitive Ole, who at that moment was acting as Edith's instructor. Quitting Edith's side with alacrity Ole hastened over to extinguish Drake. Anderson and the Doctor, taking things easy, were some distance ahead. In that clear, cold air every syllable carried like a bullet. They spun round as if shot by a machine gun.

"Great Scott!" said the Doctor, "I didn't know he had that much in him. Let us go back and see what brought it out."

Ole discovered the cause of offense before the others reached the spot. Drake's eruption had ceased abruptly in an ominous calm. With a glare of suppressed rage he stood regarding Ole's dangerously inviting pose. The mate was on his knees scratching like a terrier to scoop away the loose snow from a black object, of which the pointed cap had already been exposed by his frantic enthusiasm.

"Ah," he puffed, "you are a born researcher, Mr. Drake. Invisible though this was to the naked eye, you found it. You have the scientific pen-

etration, the genius that sees through deceptive appearances to the underlying truth."

Drake, speechless, considered. Should he give Ole a thundering kick, or was his toe too sore? By habit he kicked only with his right foot, the one which had "researched" Ole's treasure. He decided for peace.

"What is it, idiot?"

Ole ignored the compliment. "See for yourself. Inscriptions!"

Drake was now on his knees, rooting with Ole. An exclamation from the Captain proclaimed the discovery of the second black stone which, buried in the snow, had wrecked the sledge. All hands now began digging. In a few minutes two small, jagged fragments, evidently pieces of a larger rock which had been shattered by its impact on the ground ice, lay clean for inspection.

At first the result was deeply disappointing. One of the fragments had been so badly scarred by its rough treatment that not a single pictogram remained on its surface, while the other exhibited only the broken remains of half a dozen. Neither was worth photographing. Anderson, having set Drake's disaster to rights, suggested that they move on.

But Drake appeared to be deaf. The more badly damaged of the two fragments seemed to hold him hypnotized. Presently he rose to his feet and kicked the black mass savagely with his heel.

"Fetch a sledge hammer," he ordered Ole.

"Where in hell am I to get one?"

Edith had already located the handaxe, which she now offered to Drake. With one sharp blow he split the black fragment into two along a plane of cleavage. The sight which met their eyes brought a cry of astonishment from all but Anderson and Ole. One surface of the divided rock was covered with the deeply incised pictograms of prehistoric monsters, while the other, like a relief map, bore the raised replica of the same inscription. Yet the whole fragment before Drake split it into two had seemed to be an ordinary chunk of black, cementlike rock. Drake's brain was at work.

"If you found twelve dozen of one kind, Hansen," he said, "it is against all probability that you saw none of the other. Why didn't you photograph some of them too?"

"I did," Ole replied like a stolid keg. "In all I took over one hundred pictures of the raised kind of inscriptions. They are in my chest aboard the ship."

"Then why on Earth didn't you show them to me?"

"Because," Anderson informed him, "we knew what sort of men you scientific chaps are. We didn't want to give you too much to swallow all at once—just enough in fact to make you hungry for more."

"You win," said Lane. "I want everything you have."

"That's the lot, Doctor, honest. From now on we are as green as you are."

"And that's saying a good deal. Does this throw any light on your difficulties with Ole's photographs, Drake?"

"Enough to show me why the whole series doesn't hang together. No wonder the drawings of those animals are in two different styles belonging to two totally distinct epochs of art. It also explains a thing you would have noticed if you had taken the trouble to examine the pictures carefully. Even I, with my vast ignorance of natural science, can see that the monsters represented belong to different ages of the Earth's history. Roughly they seem to be alike. But the resemblance, although real, is no deeper than the similarity between men and apes. They belong to the same races of creatures, but are separated by millions of years of evolution."

"You're wrong there, Drake. I prefer to think that the differences are merely the varying expression of a fixed idea. The minds of the artists have evolved, not the creations of their art. I'll argue it out with you later. For the present, does this find affect your guess as to what's ahead of us?"

"Not materially. The struggle that I deduced from the symbolism of the inscriptions must have been longer than I thought. That's all."

"Where did you find your inscriptions, Ole?"

"A good seventy miles north of here."

"Then there should be more in this neighborhood, because it probably is nearer the source of the explosion. If so, we shall find enough to write a prehistoric encyclopaedia from A to Z."

So it proved. At intervals of half a mile to a mile they found the vast undulating snow fields littered with colossal fragments of black rock, many of which on their level faces were covered with the deeply cut figures of prehistoric monsters. As many more smaller chunks doubtless lay buried beneath the snow and ice of two winters. Not stopping to photograph these now they hurried on to their goal, the source of the eerie light which they had seen from the ship.

That night, without much wind, was cloudless. Although the temperature dropped below zero none of the party experienced any serious discomfort in their dry sleeping bags. The months of hardening in the Canadian Rockies and Alaska had well prepared the newcomers to the Antarctic for hardships which otherwise might have proved unendurable. The absence of high winds on the bleak plateau was an unexpected piece of good luck. By rare fortune they had penetrated one of those mysterious, almost windless regions of the Antarctic continent which have puzzled explorers.

The first day they covered only twenty miles. With the experience of a march behind them they made a little over forty miles through the dead calm of the second day, to creep into their bags at night exhausted. The men took watch by turns in two-hour spells. Not a flicker of the strange fire they were seeking stained the cloudless night sky. Beginning to doubt the cor-

rectness of their route they were wholly unprepared for the inferno into which they blundered at five o'clock of the third day.

The start at five o'clock on that memorable morning was made under a sky blazing with the icy jewels of innumerable stars. At sunrise they found themselves ascending a sharp declivity of blue ice. Up that long ascent the going was necessarily slow. By slogging ahead they had risen two thousand feet shortly before ten o'clock. As nearly as they could judge they were now climbing over a huge fold rock running almost due north and South. The view from the crest of the rise confirmed their guess. Below them they saw a broad trough running north and south as far as vision carried, filled almost to the brim with tumbling white mist. Some thirty miles distant the farther side of the trough towered high above the rolling mists in an unbroken barrier of jagged black peaks.

Although it looked hopeless they decided after a brief consultation to continue on their course. Should the black barrier prove as forbidding as it looked from thirty miles away they must turn back. They were not going to be balked, however, by the mere aspect of difficulties. Without further debate they descended the long ice slope into the heaving pall of white fog.

The descent was made without accident. Arrived on the floor of the trough Anderson produced his compass and led off through the swirling mist. Lane assumed command of one sledge with Drake as helper. A few yards behind the leader Ole and Edith managed the second. So thick was the fog that Anderson's figure only some forty feet ahead was invisible to the tenders of the second sledge. Nevertheless the Captain set a stiff pace over the blue ice and hard-packed snow crystals.

They had now but four and a half days left in which to make their objective and return to the ship. The Captain was determined to find out the nature of that black barrier before Bronson could overtake him with an unwelcome relief party. The stiff pace, almost a run, suited the others, for the clutching cold of the fog sought out and gripped the marrow of their bones.

For perhaps three quarters of an hour all went well. Then a horrified shout from Anderson brought the party to a palpitating halt.

"Don't come here," the Captain called back. "Wait till I fetch you."

One by one he led the others to the brink of the death which he had escaped by half a second. There it gaped, a sheer well in the blue ice thirty feet across and of depth unknown. The lip of the circular hole lay flush with the surrounding ice. Its sides dropped straight down as if carved out with a huge knife. It was a perfect circular well, over a hundred feet in circumference and of a depth which they could only guess, for it was full to the brim with white fog.

Edith had an inspiration. She returned to the first sledge.

"Here," she said, handing the Captain a pound tin of soup, "throw that down and listen for the echo. Then we can figure out how deep it is."

Anderson tossed the can into the center of the hole. Only the breathing of the dogs broke the intense stillness. Not the ghost of an echo rose from the well.

"Probably there is soft snow at the bottom," the Captain remarked. "Well, I'm glad I'm above instead of below."

Not suspecting what lay before them, the party proceeded through the fog at a brisk trot. An astonished shout again brought them instantly to a halt.

"Here's another of the damned things," the Captain announced. "Ole, fetch a rope. There's one on the second sledge."

"You're not going down it, are you?" Drake asked nervously.

"Not if I can help it, nor the next one either." He tied one end of the rope securely about his middle and passed the other end to Lane. "Make that fast to both sledges. When they begin to shoot ahead, pull back hard. All right, come on. These may be oil wells for all we know."

He marched rapidly forward through the blinding mist. "Follow me exactly," he called back. "I've just gone two yards south of another."

From that time on they passed at least two of the wells every five minutes, occasionally cutting across the narrow strip which separated three or four in a cluster. Prudence urged them to return, but the determination to see the thing through held them to their course.

They had neither time nor inclination to speculate on the significance of those sheer pits in the ice and rock. All their will was concentrated on their feet. One slip and they might learn more of the mystery than they cared to know.

Anderson forged steadily ahead without speaking. He was bent on reaching the barrier before turning back, holes or no holes.

At five o'clock they had been marching almost continuously for twelve hours. The constant strain on their nerves no less than the pull on their muscles was beginning to tell. Anderson suggested a brief halt and a warm drink. It would take half an hour to prepare the chocolate. That would leave them about an hour of such daylight as there was in the cheesy fog. They were just about to enjoy the steaming drink when, with a rapid up and down vibration, the ice beneath them began to shake violently. The dogs howled dismally and tried to bolt. Suddenly a terrific jar directly under them sent the party rolling. Staggering to their feet they succeeded in cowing the dogs. The jarring ceased. In dead silence the last tremor died.

White and still, they stood staring at each other's scared eyes in the ghostly mist. Few things so terrify even the most courageous human being as a violent earthquake. There is about the terrific jarring an impression of

uncontrollable and insane force that temporarily upsets the balance of the reason, and the helpless victim, powerless to escape, can only wonder when the torment will cease. Lane had experienced earthquakes in central China. This, however, was a different order. To the other members of the party it was a new test of courage. Drake's knees turned to water. He almost went down when Edith, suffering from the same malady, clung to him for support. Ole said nothing. He was too scared to pray. Anderson stood it best.

"That's nothing," he said. "It will save my blasting powder."

The words were hardly off his tongue before it began again, worse than ever. In ten seconds it was over.

"That's the queerest shake I ever felt," said the Doctor, wiping the perspiration from his face. "The motion was entirely vertical. It felt exactly as if someone miles below us was hitting the roof over him with a heavy iron bar. Listen!"

Miles under their feet they heard a muffled crashing like the slamming of thousands of doors along a hundred-mile corridor. With a last crescendo of slams the noise ceased, to be followed immediately by a hollow rumble as of water bursting underground from the sea through labyrinths of rock. Rising to a sudden, deafening thunder directly beneath them the shattering noise passed, to mutter itself out in the bowels of the Earth leagues to the south. Then the mist all about them took sudden life. A great wind, eddying like a maelstrom, spun them helplessly on the ice.

By instinct rather than reason Anderson got his claspknife open and cut the rope which bound him to the sledges. At the same instant Drake and Ole each clutched one of Edith's arms, Lane seized Anderson by his collar and with the other hand grasped Ole's coat, and all five huddled together, flattened themselves on the ice. Not one of them afterward recalled any thought in all of this. It had been purely the instinct of self-preservation acting automatically.

Spinning like straws in a whirlwind, now this way, now that, they were too dazed to comprehend what was happening. Only a dim realization that the air was being swept clean of fog penetrated their numbed consciousness.

The vortex motion of the atmosphere ceased as abruptly as it had begun. Staggering to their feet in an air as clear and hard as glass they found themselves less than two feet from the brink of a well fifty yards across. The last vestige of the fog had been sucked down the innumerable blowholes. These they now saw thickly pitted over the desolate ice in all directions to the range of vision.

It was some seconds before they realized the full horror of their plight. Drake was the first to come out of the stupor.

"The sledges?" he muttered, staring about him in a daze.

They were gone. Anderson took in the situation at a glance. He kept his nerve.

“Out of this as fast as we can,” he said quietly.

He still clutched his compass. They followed him at a run. There was no time to speculate down which of the wells the sledges had been sucked. Every nerve strained to get out of that ghastly maze of death traps.

“It’s beginning again,” Lane said presently. “I felt a slight jar. Down on your stomachs and all hang together. Hansen, you’re heaviest. Get in the middle.”

They cowered on the ice, their hands joined round Ole’s stout figure, waiting for they knew not what.

10 Undaunted

Huddled on the trembling ice they set their teeth and prayed inwardly, expecting to be hurled skyward. A rushing roar, like the tumbling of flames in a furnace when the door is suddenly opened, rose with incredible speed to a high, singing pitch of shattering intensity. Just when the shrill whistling grew unendurable there shot from the innumerable wells dotted over the ice hard white pillars of compressed mist. With explosive violence the fog which the wind had sucked down into the bowels of the rocks was being expelled.

Straight up shot the thousands upon thousands of dense white columns to fray themselves out in a whirling tracery on the roof of the sky like the groining of a vast cathedral.

Then the bottoms of the rushing fog pillars soared free of the wells. The shortening columns, sucked up into the newly formed clouds, flattened themselves upon the misty roof in thousands of rings that vibrated, clashed into one another, rebounded, clashed again, and finally rolled along the underside of the cloudy dome in a mazy tangle of spinning filaments.

The pitch of the singing note from the blowholes heightened. Air or gas was being forced up under tremendous pressure from the interior of the Earth. Speechless with awe, the huddled watchers beheld the tops of the invisible columns burst into pale blue conical flames. Almost immediately after they heard the thudding of the ignition.

For perhaps ten seconds the whole cloud roof over the vast ice trough was hung with the thousands of these pendant cones of blue flame. As the sustaining pressure now rapidly dropped the shrillness of the whistling diminished, and by great trembling bounds the blue cones descended toward the wells, reddening as they fell.

Halfway between the blood-red ice and the crimsoned cloud roof the downward-rushing cones of red flame halted, suspended in midair, roaring like ten thousand blast furnaces. Then with a tumbling reverberation the innumerable tongues of crimson lengthened, swooped upon the wells, and with a last earth-shaking thunder disappeared.

Although daylight still lingered beneath the high gray pall of fog, the party, blinded by that last downward rush of fire, saw nothing. Dazed and trembling, they got to their feet. Gradually vision returned. Without a word Anderson peered at his compass and led off. They were too stunned by the mere magnitude of what they had seen to attempt as yet to comprehend it. Only the instinct of self-preservation urged them to immediate flight.

They had made a little less than a mile when again the subterranean thunder shook the ice under their feet. Then they remembered for the first time their night vigil on the deck of the *Editb*. That periodic glow on the distant clouds had recurred every thirteen and a half minutes.

For safety they again huddled together on the ice. Again the surface air was sucked down the wells, but with considerably less violence. Apparently the initial disturbance had stored up fuel for the succeeding flames. Once more the shrill whistle from innumerable vents announced the coming of the fires, and again the blue cones hung from the massive cloud roof, to hover down presently in crimson fire before the final swift plunge to the darkness of the wells.

Long before they escaped from the trap night overtook them. Their march had been a succession of panting runs while the tumbling flames and the crimson glow lit up the icy desolation like a frozen hell. When the flames vanished and the air all about them became a black well, they halted breathless with fear while the rapid jarring of the ice rocked their brains, and the fierce whirlwinds clutched at their bodies to hurl them down the bottomless pits of fire.

The terror of the fiftieth grim watch was no less than that of the first. At any instant the gyrating wind might get a surer hold of their shrinking bodies and dash them all to a horrible death. Ordinary courage, steeled by lifelong habit to brave the commonplace dangers of human existence, availed them nothing. Their minds being unprepared for this torture they could only cower under its fiendish recurrence.

Dawn found them still crouched in the trap or stumbling blindly forward under the lash of instinct. They had no idea how many miles they had reeled through during the night. For all they knew they might be two miles or twenty from the comparative heaven of the icy desolation between them and the ship.

With the coming of full daylight the temperature rose and the heavy pall above them began slowly to descend. A new terror gripped them when

the icy mists swirled down, enveloping the party in impenetrable gray. They must now grope their way forward a step at a time. Haste meant death in the wells, which still with maddening regularity shot up their pillars of descending flame. Numb with cold and stupefied by fatigue as they were, they yet had feelings of awe for the mysterious beauty of the infernal dream when the crimson flames, smoky as milky-red opals through the shrouding mists, paused for a fraction of a second above the wells for their final plunge.

Three hours after dawn the last rumble jarred the ice, and the blow-holes droned wearily, but no flame issued. It was as if some titan chained beneath the rock had expired his last flaming breath. For that day at least the strange terror was ended.

Through the searching cold of the dead mist they groped their way in stunned misery for another four hours. Only the necessary words of caution as the leader avoided the pitfalls at his feet broke their dazed silence.

At last they felt themselves climbing uphill. They were out of the inferno. Urging their jaded bodies to the limit of endurance, they panted up the long slope. Two hours later they flung themselves on the ice, face up in the glorious sunlight.

For half an hour they lay there in silence, soaking in the light of heaven. The heat of their bodies melting the ice, presently their clothes were sagging with freezing water. In spite of themselves they slept.

"We can't stay here," Anderson said, getting to his feet. "Wake up, everybody. We must go on as far as we can and trust that Bronson will find us."

The Captain was right. Sleep with no covering but their clothes, even in the afternoon sunshine, was almost certain suicide. Like automatons they followed Anderson over the dazzling snow fields, tramping monotonously till dark. Among the weary five of them there was not a particle of food. Having no fuel they could not thaw out the hard frozen snow or ice to drink. The bits of ice which they sucked in the stinging cold to allay the raging thirst cracked their lips and seared their tongues, causing them exquisite torture.

Never slacking his gait, Anderson crunched steadily ahead. Fatigue to him might have been an alien mystery. The three men followed him doggedly. Hansen appeared to notice nothing more than the ordinary day's work. He bobbed along like a jogging barrel directly behind Anderson, treading down a firm foothold for Edith, who trudged after him. Lane came next, some yards behind, and Drake, cursing softly to himself to keep up his spirits, brought up the rear.

The deepest darkness of the early morning made no difference to Anderson. He kept on. It is a perennial miracle what the human body can

stand when it is driven by a relentless mind. All that night, half-mad with thirst, the party slogged on through the black cold.

Dawn found them still marching.

"Anybody for a rest?" Anderson croaked through his cracked lips.

Edith nodded, and sank down in her tracks. Instantly she was asleep. Taking off his outer coat, Ole rolled her in it and slapped his sides to keep from freezing. To the protests of Drake and Lane, who peeled their coats, Ole replied that he, having more blubber than both of them together, could better stand a freeze.

None of the men attempted to sleep. They sat on the ice or stamped about when they began to stiffen. "Hereafter I carry my sleeping bag on my back," the Captain croaked. "Damn the dogs."

"Captain Anderson!" Ole reproved him.

"She's asleep, idiot. Shut up."

Stirring uneasily, Edith rolled over on her side. Suddenly she sat up with a start.

"O, I'm dreadfully ashamed," she cried, scrambling painfully to her feet.

"How long have I slept?"

"Five minutes," Anderson lied nobly, and Drake nodded.

"It felt like five seconds," Edith sighed. Then she noticed Ole's coat. "Oh Ole, how generous of you," she exclaimed, helping him into it. "But you shouldn't have done it; I'm not a baby."

"That's nothing," Ole protested.

"It's a great deal," she replied. "My, but it's cold."

"All right," Anderson croaked, "we'll go on. You will soon warm up."

From that hour Edith became a firm adherent of the theory that five-minute naps at the proper time are as refreshing as a night's sleep. None of the men had the heart to explode her theory. They never told her that she had slept three hours and twelve minutes.

Another rest of two hours in midafternoon refreshed them all. By huddling together three of the men generated warmth enough in the clear sunshine to enjoy a profound sleep. The fourth kept watch, rousing the next man when his turn came. Edith slept straight through the two hours.

That night they marched briskly from dusk to dawn without a halt. Another two-hour rest restored them for the final effort. The men had found their second wind. Edith's sufficient sleep and youth made her a good match for the men. She would go through with it to the end and come out smiling. Curiously enough, hunger did not greatly distress them. After the first sharp pangs they forgot food in the intense longing for copious draughts of water. Putting their wills to it they forged ahead almost at a run over the hard, packed snow.

Seventeen hours later they saw the rubies and emeralds of the ship's lights gleaming through the crystal night air. In fifteen minutes they were wallowing alternately in cold water and steaming hot chocolate.

"Never again," said the Captain, limping off to his cabin. "I'll leave that sort of thing to professional explorers who enjoy talking about it afterward from a platform."

This, however, was the rash statement of a pessimistic and leg-weary man. By twelve o'clock the next day he was up to his neck in plans for another assault on the black barrier which he was determined to cross. He persisted in his belief that oceans of oil lapped the farther side of the jagged range which they had failed to reach.

Lane regarded this as a delusion. Finally as a geological expert he convinced the Captain that sweet pickles were a likelier prospect than oil in a rock formation such as they had seen. Later he modified this verdict.

"Have patience," he said, "and you will get your oil. Don't expect it to rain down on your head like blessings from above."

"Listen to me," Ole broke in. For some time he had been suffering agonies from the high pressure of his superheated theories. "Those blowholes," he said impressively, "spouted natural gas. Therefore there is oil at the bottom of them. There are our wells, Captain."

"Idiot," said the Captain, "how are we to get at the oil if it is at the bottom of those hell holes?"

"Pumps."

"Pump yourself and dry up." The Captain turned to Lane. "What is it to be?"

"Full steam ahead as far as we can go. Then deposit a cache of dynamite and provisions, send the ship downstream a safe distance, and make it inland by sledges to your volcano."

"Burning oil well," Ole corrected under his breath.

"We shall see when we get there," said the Doctor. "Suppose we can approach to within fifty or even a hundred miles of the volcano—pardon me, Ole, burning oil well. We could establish a base there—bury our supplies in the ice, if necessary—and deposit caches of food and fuel every ten miles to the place itself. There are plenty of able-bodied men aboard to chop holes in the ice and pack in the stuff. Then we won't be bothered with those beastly dogs."

"There are only two teams left, anyway," said the Captain. "Your plan sounds reasonable."

"And I know John will go wild over it," Edith added. "He would rather fall down one of those wells than coo to a dog team again."

Drake was absent from the council, having locked himself in with Ole's photographs.

"Oh," the Doctor replied, "I was planning on Drake managing one sledge and you the other. We shall need all the transport we can scrape together, for there is no telling how long we may be away from our base. Ole, Anderson, and I will be busy looking for oil wells."

Edith ignored the suggestion.

"May a mere woman participate in the councils of the gods?" she asked with mock humility.

"Yea," her father answered, "even a mere child may prattle about our feet. 'Out of the mouths of babes—' you know. Proceed, infant."

"I shall do so," the child replied. "And presently you won't be able to see me for my smoke. For I intend to take Ole with me on a tour of inspection while you and the others are breaking pickaxes and your backs over cast-iron ice."

"How so, child?"

"I have wings, have I not?"

"Even so, angel child. You were born with feathers on your back."

"Then I shall fly. In three hours I shall find out more about this country than you and the blessed dogs will learn in ten years. If Ole's cameras are good for anything we shall supply you with a map of the continent from here to the South Pole. Then you will be able to find your way to the Captain's oil field without stubbing your toes over every brick on the road as poor John did. Ole, consider yourself engaged as official photographer of the air reconnaissance. In the meantime, Captain Anderson, full steam ahead while our luck lasts."

The last order being confirmed by Lane, the Captain obeyed. Returning to the cabin, he found Lane with his back to the wall fighting his last battle against Ole and Edith.

"Help me talk these lunatics out of their insanity," he begged, "before they break their silly necks."

But the Captain, having reflected, was less inclined than the Doctor to the lunacy theory.

"Let me take a squint at the barometer, first," he said.

"Set fair," he announced. "This seems to be an almost windless region. Those tornadoes round the blowholes don't count. The devil alone is responsible for them. Having his hands full there he won't bother us here—at least not for twelve hours, unless the barometer is a worse liar than he is."

"Now here is my vote," he continued. "If the weather stays set until we reach our anchorage I say Edith and Ole should go. She is right. In three hours they can find out what it would take us years to bungle through. At the first sign of wind or dirty weather she can scoot back to the ship. She is the best air pilot of us all. And I'll say this of Ole: He is second-best."

Ole blushed appreciatively. "You bet your boots I am."

"Also you are as dumb as a barrel," the Captain resumed, "so you won't put Miss Lane up to any foolishness. She will do the thinking for both of you."

"Ole can take the pictures and theorize," Edith promised consolingly.

"And mend the motor when you bust it," Ole added with a touch of vindictiveness. It is one thing to call a man a master builder of theories and quite another to say he theorizes. Ole sensed the distinction.

The Doctor was finally routed. And so it happened that Edith and Ole took not one reconnoitering flight, while the men and gods toiled fifteen hours a day at the caches, but several.

That afternoon they proceeded upstream to within fifty miles of their projected goal. For twelve days of perfect calm they anchored in the narrow channel, ready at a second's notice to race from the deluge of hot mud which they half expected but which never came. The stout ship was to leave her timbers in that desolate spot to the end of time, but it was not mud or lava which would hold her fast.

The powerful airplane had been unshipped without difficulty. A level stretch of hard-packed snow made an ideal landing ground. When tanked to capacity the plane carried enough petrol for a thousand-mile flight. Taking no chances, the explorers carried the full complement on each trip.

"Au revoir," Edith said as she climbed in for her first flight. "We'll be back before midnight. I promise."

"How far are you going?" Drake asked.

"To Hades."

Edith's answer had been given merely to shock Ole. Yet it contained an unsuspected element of truth. That was precisely where she landed before the end of her explorations.

11

Hot Water

Edith's intention was to fly due south. She wished if possible to discover the source of the eruption which Anderson had observed on his first trip. The account of the gigantic smoke ring, visible at over two hundred and fifty miles, "teetering crazily up the sky", had taken her imagination by storm. She wished to see for herself what sort of a monster blew such delightful rings. Ole's burning oil well theory did not seem entirely satisfactory. Edith rather expected to find a crater pursed up through the ice like a smoker's lips, lazily generating smoke for the next puff.

So far the party had seen no sign of the distant disturbance from the ship. The cordial gush of hot water which had first welcomed them, however, they regarded as highly significant.

If there was hot water in the vicinity Edith longed to be in it. Her rather inactive part in the expedition so far had made her feel young and unimportant. She now wished, as she said to herself, to return from her trip distinguished or busted. Giving the engine more gas she let it out to seventy miles an hour, humming through the zero air in a beeline for her hive. If Anderson's estimate had been correct she should reach it in less than an hour.

Ole set himself with stolid perseverance to photograph the Antarctic continent as seen from above. With the results of his labors it would be possible, he hoped, for subsequent explorers to find their way blindfolded to the South Pole.

Forty freezing minutes flew behind them before they noticed any feature of interest on the desolate, icebound landscape rolling up from the south to meet them. The jagged black crests of what appeared as an almost perpendicular rock barrier pricked the horizon.

Nearing this barrier at the rate of a mile a minute they saw it rise by leaps above the white wilderness. Ole had charge of the navigating instruments. By a rough calculation, half guess and half arithmetic, he estimated the barren cliffs to be not over three hundred feet high. A glance vertically down showed an undulating ice plain thickly dotted with huge fragments of black rock. Occasionally one of these jagged fragments, having fallen with the flat side uppermost, presented a thatch of last winter's snow to the observers, but for the most part their stark pinnacles were bare and black.

Presently Ole gave a shout that was audible above the droning of the propeller.

"Blowholes," he bellowed, handing Edith his binoculars.

Peering over the side Edith beheld a pockmarked expanse of blue ice, pitted with bottomless wells and littered with huge fragments of rock. Putting her trust in Providence not to "blow" the wells until she had flown over them, she gave the engine more gas and spun toward the low barrier at a hundred-mile clip.

Coming directly over the barrier they saw that the apparent wall was a tumbled desolation of huge rock masses at least five miles broad. It would be impossible to traverse that jumble with dog teams. If the goal of the expedition lay beyond that chaos they must traverse it painfully on foot with packs on their backs.

Edith flew on. The speedometer showed eighty miles an hour. Some minutes later they saw the black mass beneath them curving precipitously down like the slope of a steep mountain.

Determined to ascertain the extent of the vast crater—for such they judged it to be—Edith continued to fly due south with one eye on the speedometer. The walls of the huge depression below them were soon no longer visible. Only a sheer void with slowly heaving sooty black clouds at the bottom, apparently several miles below them, met their awed gaze.

That deep expanse of inky billows seemed never ending. On they flew at eighty miles an hour until seventy minutes lay between them and their starting point at the lip of the gigantic crater, and the precipitous slopes of the farther side soared suddenly up out of the black smoke to meet them. The crater, they inferred, must be ninety miles across. Vast as this estimate made it, they could not be sure that it was adequate, as they had no means of judging whether they had flown above a diameter.

When they finally cleared the last of the shattered buttress and level ice stretched unbroken for miles beneath them, Ole signified his urgent wish to descend. They landed without mishap.

“Where are you going?” Edith demanded as Ole started on a run back to the lip of the crater.

“I have just had a theory,” he bellowed, forgetting in his enthusiasm that he was no longer competing with the propeller. “Now I test it.”

When he rejoined her forty minutes later his face bore the smug expression of one who has looked on Truth and found her all that he hoped.

“Just as I thought,” he said. “The south sides of those rocks on the edge of the crater are covered with lichens.”

“Well,” said Edith, testy from the cold, “did you expect to find barnacles—”

“No,” he replied with the bland complacency of a sunfish, “I knew I should find lichens.”

“Then it was stupid of you to waste nearly an hour looking for them,” she retorted. “Get in. I’m going on.”

“But,” he expostulated, “I have proved my theory. That is no new crater. It must be very old. Therefore Captain Anderson did not see it erupting.”

“Then what did he see?”

“An eruption within an eruption. Just the old floor of this volcano has blown up in our times.”

“And the floor was covered with inscriptions? Yours is a likely theory, I must say. Who ever heard of people carving inscriptions on the floor of a volcano?”

“Who ever didn’t hear of it?” Ole retorted, not quite sure of his logic. “Why shouldn’t they? Perhaps those inscriptions were only tombstones. Haven’t you seen the flat ones in the churchyards? Those ancient makers of inscriptions wished to bury something.”

“So they dug a hole in the red-hot lava and put a lid over it?”

"Not of course. I mean," he corrected himself, "of course not. No, that isn't what I mean. I want to say it doesn't follow. The main eruption may have been millions and millions of years ago." Ole grew poetical. "When the Earth was but an infant in swaddling clothes that ancient eruption moved, and lived, and had its being."

"Colic?" Edith asked innocently. "Is that from the *Song of Solomon*? It sounds familiar."

"No," said Ole, as stolid as a keg of soused herrings, "Solomon sang of other things. All those rocks I photographed," he continued, "are parts of that old cracked floor. Satan has recently been unchained again down there"—Ole's polite way of saying that hell had broken loose again in modern times—"and those far-hurled tons of inscriptions testify to his inordinate vehemence. We are witnessing a recrudescence of that prehistoric calamity which rocked the Pole to its roots."

"I too have a theory," Edith announced.

"Yes?" said Ole eagerly.

"My theory is that you will be left here talking through your hat forever if you don't climb in at once. I'm going on."

The unappreciated Ole took the hint. They were off again.

Edith decided to fly home in a wide circle, following the southern rim of the crater until it began to turn sharply to the north. Then, leaving it behind, she hummed on due west for about a hundred miles. She was on the point of turning north again, and home to the ship, when a peculiar dim blue line across the western horizon caught her attention. To investigate would take only half an hour. She investigated.

So did Ole. He again discovered innumerable blowholes in the ice over which they whizzed, and called Edith's attention to the significant detail.

"This looks promising," she said to herself, for Ole could bear nothing. "Now if Nature knows anything at all about logic she should have planted another big hole in the ice over behind that blue line."

Nature proved herself logical. The blue line became the sheer edge of a tremendous ice precipice sweeping in a gradual curve round the horizon. Fifty miles was a conservative guess at the diameter of this vast depression. Unlike the other no jumble of black rock cluttered its edge or the surrounding plain.

Half a mile from the edge Edith landed. In silence she and Ole hurried over to the edge of the precipice. Reaching it they stood a few yards back and gazed into the immense void before them. No smoke obscured the sunlit floor of this vast amphitheater. So far below them it lay that it appeared only as a dim blue shadow.

"Come," said Edith, "that's too good to spoil today. We shall return tomorrow and see it properly. Don't say anything to the others about this. One thing at a time is enough for those doubting Thomas cats."

"I won't," Ole promised. "My theory is," he jabbered before Edith could choke him off, "my theory is that Satan is still chained down there."

"There will be the devil to pay," she said simply, "if he breaks loose tomorrow while you and I are exploring. I hope you are on good terms with him."

Ole was shocked. Never before had he heard a young lady use such language outside of a church. He registered his disapproval by climbing into the machine without another theory.

Edith's report brought tears to the Captain's eyes.

"That fool Ole was right," he admitted generously. "What he and I saw from the ship was a burning oil well. Now you have found it."

"Full of black smoke," Ole added gloomily. "Probably all the oil is burning away."

"No, idiot," the Captain replied, "or you would have seen flames."

"I suppose it was just smoldering?" Ole suggested with a nasty touch of irony.

"Oh, undoubtedly," the Captain sneered. "The obvious, practical solution always escapes your colossal mind. Can't you see it? That smoke is simply what has settled down after the fire went out."

"And burned up all the oil," the pessimist supplemented.

"Oh, shut up. If what he says is true, Doctor, isn't there likely to be more oil under the floor of that hole in the rock?"

"I'll tell you when I see the floor."

"Well, whatever theory you and he may hatch between you, I'm going to tear up an acre or two of what's left of that floor with dynamite. Tomorrow we begin packing my part of the show to the circus tent."

Before sunrise the next morning Edith and Ole were stirring in preparation for their trip. They were off with the first ray. The Captain having assured Lane that the cold, windless spell was certain to continue, Edith coaxed her father into giving his consent at the last minute. She departed with the Captain's heartfelt blessing and his best thermos bottle full of hot chocolate. What souvenir the blessed girl might bring back to him today he could only speculate, but he hoped it would be another oil well of even vaster dimensions than her first.

What Edith and Ole expected to find on their private expedition they kept to themselves. Neither had the least suspicion of the handsome surprise which Nature had generously prepared for their welcome.

Turning sharply to the west as soon as the airplane lost sight of the ship, Edith steered a straight line toward her find. Ole as navigator gave her the

signals keeping her on the course. She made the propeller hum. Not being interested in the dreary Antarctic landscape she shot over it at a hundred and twenty miles an hour, the limit of the machine's capacity.

The dim blue line on the horizon raced forward to meet them. Slackening her speed to eighty miles an hour Edith spiraled down like a seagull. Reaching the level of the lip she circled for a turn near the precipitous wall and then, to Ole's horror, made a nose dive for the bottom of that vast well. Cutting out the engine presently she tilted to forty-five degrees and glided down, down to the sunlight of the blue plain below.

"Where are we going?" Ole gibbered in his fright.

"Down there, of course. It looks nice and sunny. I'm half frozen."

"What if we can't land?"

"Then we must fly out again."

"But suppose something goes wrong with the engine?"

"Then we shall be a pair of scrambled eggs with no toast, but only the hard ground, beneath us."

The sunlight swam up to meet them, and to their astonished eyes was revealed an azure river winding through a green plain. Dropping lower they saw the huge trees rush out, and then, farther away, the innumerable silvery plumes of the pampas grass undulating to the warm breeze. Entranced they saw the long billows of light rising and falling like the swell of a silver tide. Here, sunk deep in the icy heart of the Antarctic continent, lay a paradise of flowing water and luxuriant vegetation.

Accepting it for what it was they flew on in silence, looking for a spot to land. For once Ole was without a theory. Later he hatched several. The probable solution of the mystery was not, however, his work alone. Drake supplied the egg; Ole merely brooded on it and gave it wings wherewith to soar.

The dense vegetation by the river thinned here and there into rolling meadows of lush grass. They flew over these, seeking more level ground for a landing. At last they spied what they sought, a long sandy spit cleaving a still blue bay in the river.

They made a perfect landing. Then, when they stood with their numbed feet on the warm sand, they realized the wonder of the place and its beauty. They were almost in the center of the vast well. Twenty-five miles distant in whatever direction they looked towered up the sheer blue cliffs fifteen thousand feet above the floor of the valley.

Age-old ice bound the brows of those precipices, and over the circular opening to the sky howled the winter blizzards of the Antarctic, powerless to freeze the water in this blue river or blight the tenderest flowers of the valley's perpetual spring. By what miracle had time preserved this deep garden against the advancing cold? Dying ages had piled on the once-tropical

regions above a crushing desolation of ice a thousand feet thick. While overhead the yelling gales of winter warred against themselves with whirlwinds of frozen sleet and splintered shafts of clanging ice, only rain fell through this mild atmosphere above the valley. How had this spot, this very heart of a forgotten paradise, retained its life-giving warmth, while all about lay the stark body of life frozen cold in the death of ages? Or had it always been as they now saw it? These were questions which they could only ask themselves but not answer.

"This is more beautiful than a California valley," Edith sighed, "and on a far grander scale than any of them. No other valley in the world is an almost perfect circle like this one, nor is there another with cliffs like those to shelter it. Those walls are three miles high."

"Less about a fifth of a mile," the precise Ole corrected her. "I watched the barometer as we dropped down. Say two and four-fifths miles high."

"Ole, you are impossible."

They strolled off the sandy spit to ascend a little knoll whence they might obtain a view of the whole valley. Not until they had been walking about five minutes did they notice the oppressive discomfort of locomotion. Thinking that it must be due to their own thawing out in this mild air after the long flight through zero temperature, they took off their heavy sheep-skin tunics. Another ten yards and they stripped their jaegers.

"At this rate," Edith laughed, "we shall be shedding our skins before we reach the top of the hill."

Ole, puffing like an overfed porpoise, tried hard not to look shocked. He took a mental oath not to shed another rag. Respecting his modesty Edith forbore her next impulse and toiled up the slope lugging only her outer garments. She wished she were Eve and he Adam.

"I know what it is," Ole exclaimed, not stopping to do his theorizing. "We are two and four-fifths miles below the surface of the Earth, aren't we?"

"Three," said Edith. "But it's too stuffy to argue. Go on."

"Then we are at the bottom of a mine. I mean," he explained laboriously, "it is just as if we were at the bottom of a mine. All that air is crushing us."

"You do seem to bulge more than usual," Edith admitted.

Ole ignored this verification of his theory.

"And," he continued, expounding the article on *abyss* from the A volume of his sample of the encyclopaedia, "the internal heat of the Earth can be felt at this depth. It gets so hot in the deep mines that the miners have to stop going down, and just burrow out sideways like moles."

"Thank Heaven," Edith sighed, "you don't own the entire *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. I simply couldn't stand it all in this infernal heat."

"Miss Lane!"

"Oh, I shall swear in a minute. Don't mind me; it's my nerves."

At the crest of the hill they flung themselves panting on the thick, mossy grass.

"I shall never growl at the cold again," Edith declared. "This place must be like a steam bath when the sky is clouded up over the opening.

"And the clouds blanket in the radiation," Ole added appreciatively. This evidently was a gem from the one masterpiece of Herbert Spencer's which he possessed. It certainly seemed unlikely that he found anything so sensible in either the tattered *Bluebird* or his seven-figure table of logarithms. "On such occasions the humidity must be very high."

"As muggy as lukewarm pea soup for breakfast. I'm fed up. Let's get out of here. Put on your clothes. It's less bother to wear than to carry them."

As she stood up to shake on her sealskin a darker blue stain on the azure of the distant wall caught her eye. Looking intently at the deeper blue she imagined that she could see clear through the vast cliffs into a dim azure world beyond. Then dismissing the illusion with a laugh at her own fancifulness she started slightly at a new aspect of the shadow. It was in the form of a perfect arch at least three thousand feet high. Ole's remark about the miners burrowing out sideways when the heat grew unendurable stuck in her mind with an odd persistence. What if this were an old mine, disused since a million years before the dawn of history?

"What do you see?" Ole demanded nervously. He was struggling with his heavy tunic.

"Nothing. But you have a look. What is that shadow on the cliffs over there?"

Ole stared long and hard. His seaman's eyes made out no more than had Edith's. Not wishing to commit himself to an untenable theory he wheeled slowly round, searching the whole hundred and sixty mile precipice.

"There is another," he began cautiously, "three points east of south."

"Yes," said Edith, "and I have counted four more. That makes six in all. Let's investigate."

"Right, Miss Lane. I'm with you."

Their lassitude vanished at the prospect of adventure. Joining hands they raced down the little hill by a shortcut which would take them through a clump of high bushes directly to the airplane. Laughing like a pair of children off for a picnic they romped into the shade.

Suddenly a huge gray boulder blocking their path came to life with an earth-shaking screech. Edith screamed and clung to Ole. He stood frozen in his tracks, paralyzed with terror.

How they ever reached the plane they were unable afterward to recall. Edith remembers being thrown in bodily by Ole. He only has a blurred memory of cranking the propeller, climbing, and kicking madly at the evil

red eyes in a hideous serpent bead that shot up after him on a massive thirty-foot neck. He swears that he struck one glaring red eye just before the motor lifted and the heavy-bodied brute flopped on its belly in the sand, fanning the air with the vast spread of its ineffectual, batlike membranes.

12 Trapped

To the Captain's anxious inquiries the fliers replied that they had returned early on account of the cold. Although sorely disappointed that Edith had not discovered another oil hole for him, Anderson said nothing. He contented himself with putting Ole to the dirtiest job in sight. Lane was far inland, superintending the caching of stores. Drake had gone off somewhere to exercise his beloved dogs.

Edith and Ole conspired to keep their find to themselves until they should have explored it thoroughly. They began to regret their panicky flight straight back to the ship. Tomorrow, however, they would keep their nerve and spend a heavenly day investigating the abode of the dragon. A landing in the open should be sufficient protection from a surprise. By avoiding clumps of brush, rock piles, and the pampas they might see much before being chased.

That evening they gathered in the Captain's cabin. The Doctor, having unpacked his scientific paraphernalia, was absorbed in an attempt to analyze the green venom which he had collected from the giant reptile on the beach. The scanty equipment proving insufficient he put away his test tubes with a sigh of disappointment.

"I shall have to wait for a living victim."

"Let me see your flask, Doctor," Ole begged.

"Have you a theory?" the Doctor laughed, handing over the pint of thick, evil, green fluid.

"Not this time. But I have a knife."

To the astonishment of the party Ole proceeded to anoint the eight-inch blade of his murderous knife with the sticky green venom.

"There," he said complacently, brandishing the knife to dry it, "nobody gets fresh with me any more."

"It may be harmless," Edith remarked with a meaning look. "You had better not put too much faith in that messy stuff."

"I'll chance it."

As he spoke he unconsciously fixed his eyes on Anderson. The Captain stirred uneasily.

"Look here, Ole, I set you at that job this afternoon because all the men were away with Lane."

"That's all right, Captain." Ole was not going to let his accidental advantage slip. "It gave me a touch of lumbago. Can Bronson take my watch tonight?"

"I'll take it myself if he can't. With lumbago like that you're not fit to be on deck. Will you be able to fly tomorrow?"

"Flying rests my back. I'll be better in a week or two."

Edith rose to retire. As she went out she shot Ole a significant glance. Mumbling an excuse he followed her.

"Why not take a revolver tomorrow?" she whispered.

"No use. I couldn't hit the side of the ship at ten yards."

"But suppose we do get caught again? That stuff may take hours to act. I doubt whether it is a poison at all. Father really knows nothing about it."

"What can we do? A guess is better than nothing. Besides, I don't mean to get caught."

"Neither do I. Oh, that awful brute. I shall have a ghastly nightmare. Good-night, Ole."

They were off at sunrise in the stinging cold. Drake for a spell at breakfast had grown quite peevish, not to say profanely rude, when Ole harmlessly asked him to pass the butter. The memory of what Drake had said was food and warmth to Edith on the freezing spin south. Having nothing to cheer him but the shadowy prospect of sticking an overdeveloped lizard with wings in the gullet, Ole froze. It was with reckless relief that he shed his sealskin when at last they landed.

Today they had come down in the center of a five-mile meadow. Unless the enemy flew they were safe.

Ole had brought the Captain's strongest binoculars. With these he now slowly swept every mile of the vast precipices, blue in the hazy distance. On each of the six sapphire shadows he lingered a full five minutes. The dim shadows, he decided, might be weather stains on the cliffs. If nothing more a three-thousand-foot stain should be worth investigating.

"You take a look, Miss Lane."

"Those are eaves full of mist," she said decisively, handing back the glasses. "Which one shall we try first?"

"The nearest. That one to the southeast. If we don't like what we find this is a good place to fall back on."

"You think we may wish to turn tail in a hurry?"

"We can't tell," he said uneasily. "I am no coward."

"Of course you are not. Neither am I. Shall we go?"

"My eyes are better than yours, Miss Lane. Remember, I have been half my life at sea."

"Well?"

"I thought I saw things moving at the base of those cliffs. They were only shadows."

"Afraid of a shadow, Ole?"

"Yes," he admitted frankly. "Show me something real and I'll fight it like the next man. Put me up against a nightmare the devil himself never dreamed of and my legs turn to water. Now you know how I feel."

Impressed by his outspokenness she held out her hand for the glasses. Long and curiously she searched the base of the cliff.

"I believe you are right. There is something over there at the foot of the precipice. How far away from it are we?"

"About twenty-three miles."

"Even if the shadow were an elephant's we couldn't make it out at that distance."

"Not with these glasses," he admitted.

"Has it struck you that those moving things can't possibly be shadows?"

"Why not?" he queried nervously.

"Because that whole sector of the cliffs is itself in deep shadow."

"I hadn't thought of that," the impractical builder of theories admitted. "Are you going on?"

"Yes."

"No woman ever got the better of me yet, and I'm damned if a kid in short skirts is going to make a monkey of me now."

"Ole!"

"Oh, it's all right, Miss Lane. The Captain isn't here."

"You behave yourself or I'll leave you with the reptiles."

Flying as slowly as was possible they cautiously approached the mysterious stain on the southeastern wall. At that hour of the morning the shadow of the precipice lay in a great blue crescent on the valley before them. Soon entering the shadow they experienced a sudden drop in spirits. To the superstitious Ole the semitwilight was a gloomy omen of disaster.

Edith began to wish she had been less daring. Hating to back out after her bold front to Ole she kept her forebodings to herself. Nevertheless she had a strong premonition of trouble. The thought that the motor might fail them at a critical moment almost made her sick. Swallowing hard she anxiously scanned the terrain for a safe landing place. To her joy she observed a gentle three-mile grassy slope from the base of the precipice to the edge of the pampas.

They were now near enough to make out the nature of the stain. It was indeed what they had first guessed, a colossal archway over half a mile high in the face of the sheer cliff. Smoky with blue mist it might have been either a huge cave or the entrance to a tunnel under the continent. If the latter,

Edith made a sudden resolution to explore it to the end—some day. At present she felt too shaky. Her nervousness soon received a shock that acted as a counterirritant.

Ole had been making efficient use of the binoculars.

“Let me have the wheel,” he said presently, “while you take a look with the glasses.”

They were now within five miles of the cliffs. Although it was not exactly a sane proceeding, they changed places in midair. Ole now became the pilot and Edith the observer.

Her first observation stopped her heart for two sickening seconds. The green slope at the base of the cliffs was a crawling den of gigantic monsters. The huge, torpid beasts blundered and crawled over one another’s sluggish carcasses like blind salamanders. Evidently they were just awakening to greet the sunlight which in a few hours would stir them into activity. The vast cave or tunnel no doubt was their den and breeding place.

“Fly lower,” Edith ordered, “and let us see what the brutes look like.” Her stomach had resumed its normal position.

Without the flicker of an eyelash the stolid Ole obeyed. No snippy kid in short dresses could outdare him. He dropped sharply to the fifty-foot level, let out the motor to its limit, and shot straight as a bullet toward the misty cavern. Edith shrieked. She had met her master.

The droning roar of the propeller roused the lethargic brutes to a trumpeting rage. A hideous forest of writhing necks shot up; flat, brainless heads swayed up to spit their hatred and their venom at the breaker of their bestial sloth, and the obscene red membranes of the huge brutes’ aborted wings clattered impotently against their bloated bodies. The fetid stench of their breath mingling with the reek of their foul lair defiled the morning with an unforgettable sickness. A flashing vision of innumerable eyes red with brainless ferocity, a din of yellowed fangs clashing after their unattainable prey, the penetrating breath of a living decay, and the hideous flight was a memory.

Was Hansen insane? Again Edith shrieked as he shot full speed into the blue mists of the cavern. Shutting her eyes she instinctively braced herself for the obliterating crash.

It never came. Whether or not she fainted she doesn’t know. Ole swears she did.

When she opened her eyes she thought for one wild moment that she was in hell. The blue mists had given way to a rapidly flickering crimson glow. The oppressive heat all but stifled her. Great gushers of flame thundering up from the floor of the vast tunnel flattened and curled in fringed fire over the arched rock half a mile above. Down the endless distance colon-

nades of pillared flames dwindled in vistas of alluring terror, enticing the damned to their torments.

Ole had been less rash than he seemed. While Edith was taking her fill of the den over which they had shot he, like a born navigator, was minding his own business. As the blue entrance of the tunnel rushed forward to meet him he saw that its interior was approximately straight and sufficiently well lighted for safe flying. The chance he took was negligible. A mile from the entrance he sighted the first flaming well, and thereafter the tunnel became a well lighted corridor, broad and lofty, ideal for rapid flight. Danger of a collision with one of the roaring flame pillars was nil, the highway down the tunnel being over a mile broad and the avenue of flame wells at least half a mile wide at its narrowest point.

Those three-thousand-foot pillars of flame were absolutely without smoke. Ole's reasonable theory—inadequate, as later events proved—made them vast natural gas jets. He recalled that there are on record in Asia oil wells and escapes of natural gas which have been flaming continuously for over two thousand years. Therefore, he said, this probably was the same sort of thing on a much grander scale. The age-long action of water opening fissures in the rocks had first let vents into the subterranean oil and gas reservoirs. Then the heat of chemical reactions between the water and the minerals in the rocks had ignited the gas. This detail of his theory led him seriously astray. Had he chanced upon the true explanation of how those gas pillars took fire—which any competent physicist would have guessed at once from the peculiar behavior of the flames over the blowholes which Anderson had discovered—he would not have rushed like a fool into the trap which nature had prepared for him.

Granting the ignition of the gas the astute Ole reflected that the rest of the inferno explained itself. Intense heat and the constant high pressure of escaping gas had enlarged the first vents into huge circular wells, up which the solid flames shot until they impinged on the rock roof three thousand feet above. Doubtless, he reflected, the red hot rocks up there were constantly flaking. In time an avenue of blowholes would burst through the roof of rock and ice for some later explorer, far in the future, to find and wonder over. He inferred naturally that under Anderson's trough of blowholes there probably extended another vast tunnel through the solid rock. The six shadowy arches which he and Edith had observed on the wall of their circular valley no doubt were all of one kind. The continent must be, in this strange region, a vast rabbit warren with tunnels branching in all directions, some even to the sea.

At this point of his meditations Ole experienced his first qualm. Those other blowholes onto which the party had blundered differed in one significant respect from those which the future explorer of his musings was to dis-

cover. The escape of gas and flames through the first was intermittent and its period strangely regular. The periodicity of the first blowholes was the disturbing peculiarity. These gushing webs of fire in the tunnel seemed to be continuous. Did they ever go out like the others? Ole's imagination leapt ahead of the racing machine. What if those pillared flames should suddenly drop down their vents and disappear? In the dark he must smash himself against the tunnel wall like a ripe tomato.

This squeamish reflection passed from his mind to make way for another. One detail of his inadequate blowhole theory received a sudden and disconcerting confirmation. Half a ton of red-hot rock shattered itself with a crash on the floor of the tunnel not a hundred yards to the right of his course. The whole roof must be cracking under the fierce bombardment of flames from those thousands of gigantic blast furnaces.

For the first time he now noticed the stifling heat of the tunnel. The rushing air positively scorched. What if his petrol tank should explode? And what if a red-hot fragment of stone set fire to the airplane? Ole began to sweat from a combination of too many clothes, too much heat, and too little nerve. He was not having the best time in the world. Nevertheless he shot on like a courageous fool at a hundred and twenty miles an hour down that vast tunnel into the bowels of the Earth. No snippy little kid in short dresses should make a monkey of him.

The kid had recovered her senses. She was having a heavenly time. Her one regret was that her father had not seen all those nice beasts. She must take him back an egg if the beasts were that sort.

The air in the tunnel began to grow faintly smoky. They were not over an hour from the entrance. Consequently at least a hundred and twenty miles lay between them and daylight.

The same thought occurred to the pair: They should now be nearing the vicinity of the smoked-filled crater which they had discovered first. Theorizing rapidly Ole concluded that the tunnel joined these two, the ruined crater and the vast depression still green as a paradise. Doubtless the explosion of a huge reservoir of oil beneath the first had sent its floor skyward to litter the surrounding desolation with chunks of black rock. Then, he speculated, had the first also been a den of prehistoric monsters—or, as Lane maintained, botched imitations of such—before its destruction? It had. The verification of Ole's speculation was twofold and twice convincing. Like a dead memory from a forgotten existence a nauseating stench assailed their nostrils. They remembered that moonlit night on the Antarctic Ocean and the soul-destroying pollution of the winds from the beach of monsters.

Presently through the thickening smoke they saw the shambles. The tunnel was all but blocked by the rotting carcasses of huge brutes which had

trampled one another to pulp in their panic to escape the fumes which had finally suffocated their multitudes.

Cutting out the engine Ole glided toward the mountain of decay. Just as he turned the plane to escape from the immense corruption he spied the second confirmation of his theory.

Great, slow-moving brutes, each the bulk of three full-grown hippopotami, mailed in horn and with a ridge of jagged armor sticking up along their spines from the flat, broad head to the tip of the thirty-foot tail, were crawling like huge newts over the rotting mountain, or splashing heavily through the foul brown ooze from its base.

These gigantic scavengers took no notice of the intruders, continuing with voracity their filthy feasts. The whole decaying pile crawled with them. Their number could only be guessed, for the end of the tunnel was invisible through the murky smoke. For all the explorers definitely knew, they might be one mile or twenty from the ruined crater.

They decided it was time to fly. Both felt faint from the awful stench. Ole let out the engine to its limit. The sudden roar startled a flapping horde of lesser scavengers which they had not seen. Being almost the color of their obscene food these had escaped notice in the murky light. They now arose in thousands, cloud upon cloud of long-necked reptilian "birds" with the wings of bats. From tip to tip the spread of their leathery membranes averaged a good eight feet, and on each six-foot neck a grinning head the size of a horse's stretched hungrily forward. Hard round eyes like those of gigantic serpents stared stonily at the intruders, estimating their value as food. The six-inch teeth clashing aimlessly at nothing filled the air with a hideous cacophony.

Either their own foul banquet was more to their taste or the reptilian birds were by nature peace-loving scavengers averse to combat, for they contented themselves with flapping round and round this unknown bird of the twentieth century. Their lineage went back millions of years; this *parvenu* was an infant yesterday. With hard stares of contempt they circled back in wide spirals to their interrupted repast.

Thanking Heaven for this deliverance, Edith breathed again. Her thanks were premature. A strangely familiar rumbling was but the prelude to a remembered thunder of subterranean explosions. She knew what was coming.

So did Ole. Anticipating it he cut out the engine and dipped gradually. Taking the desperate chance that no considerable mass of shattered rock littered the floor immediately ahead he brought the plane down. Luck favored him. They came to rest whole on the rocky floor.

They climbed hastily out. The jarring under their feet all but threw them prostrate. They heard the sudden suction of the rushing whirlwinds rushing down to the subterranean chambers, and saw what they dreaded.

As if struggling for their life with the demon winds the pillars of descending flame quivered for an instant in midair. Then with a knelling roar they disappeared in absolute night down the wells.

13 Hades

An hour in the impenetrable darkness of that suffocating stench was a hundred years long. Unfortunately Ole had a liberal supply of matches. Under ordinary trials these would have been a godsend. Here they proved an exceedingly cunning gift from the devil.

The instant the terrific jarring ceased Ole lit his first match. It was just half past eleven in the morning. Five hours before he and Edith had been enjoying an extensive breakfast. For lunch they now had nothing but the air, such as it was. They had given up the attempt to eat their sandwiches after the first mouthful. The meat tasted like carrion, and the bread had made of itself a sponge to soak up all the noisomeness of that foul shambles.

They climbed back into the machine to await the next earthquake and the rekindling of the gas wells. To pass the time Ole theorized and struck matches every five minutes. The brief light showed him a set white face, the large brown eyes with their dilated pupils almost black, and the resolute, finely shaped mouth compressed in a firm bow. The kid, he admitted to himself, was sticking it like a hero. He had expected her to blubber.

"I have been wondering," she said about the fifth match, "how we are to get out of this beastly tunnel if the darkness continues for, say, a week." She laughed ruefully. "'Beastly' is right in more ways than one. The smell is beastly, there is a hideous den of prehistoric beasts at the less obscene end of this filthy burrow, and a stinking mountain of dead beasts blocking the back door. Suppose we do have to walk out, which way shall we go? All those scavengers and hideous bird things are behind us too.

"Whatever happens," he replied with savage conviction, "I am not going to walk. To the living devils it is a hundred and twenty miles. What kind of a fool would walk that far to be torn to pieces? Especially on an empty stomach?"

"Not my kind," she admitted ruefully enough.

"And do you think I'm going to swim through those miles of muck behind us?"

She shuddered. "I couldn't go that way even if those vile bird creatures and the huge crawling brutes weren't there."

"No more could I. No, I shall not walk."

"Then if the wells have gone out for good we must stay here forever."

"We can fly," he asserted.

"And smash ourselves in the dark like a pair of goose eggs. I can think of nothing stupider than two unhatched geese unless it be three."

"Well, isn't a quick smash better than slow rotting? It wouldn't be suicide," he added to pacify his conscience, "because we should be doing it on the chance of saving our lives."

"Yes, a quick death is better. I wonder if I shall ever see my father again. And my garden, and the dear cats in San Francisco É."

Ole was touched. The poor kid was going to cry. He struck a match. Her eyes had grown larger and darker, but there were no tears. After all she was a brick.

"Listen," he said confidently. "I have a theory."

"If it's as depressing as the rest of this nightmare please keep it to yourself."

"But it isn't. You remember how long it was between blowoffs at those holes the other day?"

"About thirteen minutes."

"And the flames only lasted a few minutes after they caught. Now those jets in here were going full blast for over an hour. Suppose they had been going for a full day when we flew in."

"I'll suppose it. What then?"

"They will light up again as the others did. But not for a much longer time."

"A week, perhaps? We shall suffocate long before we see."

"No. The same cause must be at the bottom of those flame holes and these."

"And that cause may operate only once a month, once a year, or once a century for all we know. The next flare may light our bones."

"For two reasons I say no. The first is practical, the second is theory. First, those bat birds have eyes. They can see. I know that is so from the way they glared at us. Now animals that can see don't stay long away from the light."

"The encyclopaedia has fooled you, Ole. All that you say may be true. But there is probably a back door to this tunnel, and those filthy things just swoop in here to feed. When they are gorged they flap out again to roost in their dens. They get all the fresh air and sunshine they need for perfect health in their rookeries."

"I hadn't thought of that. Still, having eyes they must be used to seeing their food."

"Eyes for such creatures in this stinking place are an ornament of luxury. They have nostrils. I saw them myself—two holes on the snout like a snake's."

"Well, listen now to my theory. You can't knock out that, anyway, because it is all pure reason."

He lit another match. Her eyes were fixed straight ahead on the impenetrable soot. The match died.

"Why do these blowholes come and go?" he continued. "Why don't they shoot off burning gas all the time?"

"Is it a riddle?"

"Not to me," Ole replied proudly, lavishing two matches on the invisible stench.

"I give it up. What's the answer?"

"The moon."

She wondered if she could climb out unnoticed by the theorizer. Poor Ole; his mind must suddenly have given way. She was sorry for him, but sorer for herself. A lunatic on top of her other troubles would be too much.

"Where are you going?" Ole demanded.

The flaring match revealed a seared pair of eyes searching his. Edith had started to climb down.

"I thought you had gone crazy," she said, climbing back just as the match expired and burnt Ole's fingers. "But you seem no more insane than usual. Go on with your theory."

"The moon does it all. Really it is quite simple when you get the idea. As a practical seaman I know how the moon raises the tides—they follow it round the Earth. The moon attracts the water. Then a big heap of water gathers in the middle of the sea, and the bulge follows the moon."

"I wish I could follow you."

"When the moon gets so far ahead that the bulge can't keep up the tide falls. When the bulge sweeps over a place it is high tide there. Anyhow that's something like it."

Ole proceeded to elaborate his account by an obscure reference to that bane of all amateur theorizers, centrifugal force. With the squaring of the circle and perpetual motion this mystical conception forms the unholy trinity of the born paradoxer. Not one of them knows what it means, yet by invoking its magic powers they explain everything from germs to God. Edith, trying not to listen, felt like a quart of milk in a cream separator. Centrifugal force was separating her mind from her body, but which was which she could not have told. Mercifully it did not last long, and Ole soon reached the practical application of his moonshine.

"Now my theory is," he said more rationally, "that there is a vast tank of oil—perhaps several—under the whole region.

"Won't Captain Anderson be pleased to hear that? I'm glad somebody will be happy in all this mess."

"Not all oil, perhaps. I think it may be floating on salt water."

"I wish it were carbolic acid."

"Now when the moon raises a tide on all that oil it rushes through the underground galleries of this continent and forces up all the collected gases of twenty-four hours through the blowholes."

"And somebody is waiting to set a match to it, I suppose?"

"You mean how does it catch fire?"

For a moment the inventive Ole was badly stumped. Then his chambered mind gave up its buried reminiscences: All gases when compressed get hot. Keep on compressing them far enough and they get red-hot—if gases ever do behave in such a revolutionary way.

"Compression," he answered offhandedly, as if the effort had cost him no labor. "Compression heats up the gas. When the wave passes it presses the gas into a small volume next to the roof. That makes it red-hot. Then it escapes through the blowholes. Friction on the sides makes it hotter still. Of course it catches fire—high up in the air, high enough so the rush of escaping gas can't blow out the flame. It couldn't light up, could it, before it reached the air? Then the tide falls, air has to rush in to fill up the place left by the falling oil and water, and the flames are sucked down."

"Tides don't rise and fall every thirteen minutes. Your theory is up the spout."

"My theory is irrefutable. Of course tides don't happen every thirteen minutes. But haven't you ever seen the way the water swings back and forth, up and down, when you set it going in a long bathtub?"

"I do bathe occasionally when I'm in civilization. And you may be sure I shall spend a month in the first real tub I see. Yes, I may even have time to try your experiment."

"When the tide rushes into some vast underground cavern, half filling it, big waves must be set up traveling back and forth, up and down along the trough. Suppose the wave comes in by a long tunnel into a vast hole, and has to squeeze out by another tunnel. In trying to squeeze out all at once the waves will be started at the wall above the tunnel. And all the time the hole is filling up, compressing the gas against the roof. Now suppose it takes a wave thirteen minutes to run the length of the underground tank. Then it will force up the gases at a particular place once every thirteen minutes.

"As it passes the place," he went on with enthusiasm that fed upon itself, "the air will be sucked down again. That explains our first blowholes. Now for these. The tank under them must be much longer. The waves therefore take a longer time to pass under. It follows that the flame jets will burn much longer. Which was to be proved."

"You have proved also," she pointed out, "that the flame pillars will be dead for half an eternity. We must wait at least until the next full moon raises the gas for our torches. And by then we shall be in Heaven—I hope."

"No, I think every tide must raise the gas enough to send up a flame. Of course at full moon the flame will be hotter and last much longer."

"And where does your blessed salt water come from to float the oil and gas and raise the tides?"

"Where all salt water comes from—the sea. These tunnels, or others like them—bigger and longer, of course—must stretch far out under the floor of the Antarctic Ocean."

He became encyclopaedic, explaining how, gradually weakening under the pressure and seeping of ages of water, the bottom of things aqueous had suddenly given way, letting the ocean burst down to the subterranean fires, flooding them and the innumerable tunnels. This, he said, accounted for everything. The oily stew of prehistoric monsters which he and the Captain had witnessed was merely the backwash, the jetsam of the sudden deluge which had drowned out perhaps a dozen of the interconnected paradises such as the one Edith and he had discovered. Some day the floor of the unruined one would give way too, and there would be another grand boiling up of monsters somewhere between South Georgia and Cape Horn. Or the accumulating gas under its rock bottom might suddenly hurl it skyward at some tide higher than the usual one.

The origin of these vast tunnels and semitropical paradises in the frozen continent he was as yet unable to explain. At them his theory balked, baffled. He doubted now whether the monsters of the stew had been so recently dead as he and Anderson imagined. Their freshness and the still uncoagulated blood of the baby devil they had fished up could be rationally explained on a twenty-four hour immersion in warm oil and water.

Theorizing thus freely Ole was happy despite the ever-present, all-enveloping, stinking darkness. Edith's respectful silence flattered him. He outdid himself. Never before had he lectured to an audience so sympathetically appreciative. During his interminable harangue he forgot even to strike a match. When finally he did, Edith's eyes were closed. She was fast asleep.

Although deeply chagrined Ole considerably let her sleep. Taking out his pipe he ramméd it full of twist. The coarsely cut tobacco refusing to burn, he reached into his pocket for his knife. Only when he was about to cut up the tobacco in his palm did he remember what he had done to the blade. In a cold sweat he closed the knife and returned it to his pocket. A scratch, for all he knew, might be deadlier than the fangs of a hundred cobras. Anyway, he would take no chance of a slip in the dark.

Refilling his pipe he tried again to smoke. Finally he compromised at the rate of a match to a puff. It became a continuous performance. The tobacco in that smoke-fouled atmosphere reeking with an unspeakable corruption lacked the rich, nutty flavor emphasized by the billboards, yet it was

some consolation. The matches, especially their heads, tasted even better than the tobacco smoke.

The devil betrayed him just as he broached the fourth box of matches. He became aware of a wet, dragging noise. Instantly he had a theory that made him sick. Those filthy scavengers also had eyes. Not only the bat-birds were by nature lovers of the light. One of those huge foul brutes, dripping corruption at every move, was wallowing toward Ole's friendly little beacon in the universal darkness.

The noise stopped. Then a measured slopping announced that the filthy monster had paused to lick itself. Having swabbed off its lunch, or having performed its unseemly *toilette*, it sighed prodigiously and rattled the grating armor of its horny scales. Once more there was silence.

Presently a hideous rasping proclaimed that the obscenity was scratching its parasites. Again it sighed heavily, profoundly. The companionable candle of its quest was perhaps but the disordered illusion of an overloaded stomach. A long-winded, slobbering belch automatically begot and confirmed this hypothesis in Ole's paralyzed brain. He struck no more matches.

Should he wake Edith? If she made any sound the monster must find them. On the other hand if she woke suddenly when the beast had crawled closer, as it might, she would go mad from terror and be unmanageable. He decided to rouse her as gently as possible.

"What is it?" she said, and remembered. "Oh—" He clapped his hand over her mouth. Again thinking him demented she struggled violently.

"Danger," he whispered in her ear. "Be quiet."

All her muscles tensed; she instantly became still. Then she heard the dragging shuffle of some ponderous body approaching the airplane. In a flash she realized what was upon them.

"Your knife," she whispered.

He opened the blade. Of what use was this toy against a mailed brute weighing over a hundred tons? Yet it was his one weapon, and instinct compelled him to be ready for his feeble best.

The creature heard their movements. Its lurching drag, bringing with it a leprosy of smells, quickened. It was abreast of them, on Edith's side. Was it going past the machine? In the sooty darkness the brute blundered forward. Its horny side rasped and rocked the plane, all but upsetting it.

For some seconds the slow brain of the brute failed to interpret the unusual sensations. Then it registered, and the foul monster squatted. The plane tipped sideways. A foot higher and it must capsize.

The dull brain proving inadequate for its problem, the huge brute resumed its wallowing progress. Presently, to judge by the sounds, it turned at right angles to the line of the machine, slewed round on its belly, and squatted. Was its head or its tail toward them? And in which position could

it hear the better? They soon learned. One or other of the occupants of the machine moved slightly and something creaked. For some ten seconds the brute took no notice. Then, the significance of the noise penetrating its ganglia, the monster moved slightly forward, directly toward Edith's side of the plane.

"Quick!" she cried, "the knife! Light!"

A cold breath, unutterably foul, blasted her own and extinguished Ole's half-handful of matches. But the flare had shown her where to aim. With her whole body she struck at the brute's eye. The keen eight-inch blade cut it like jelly. Her hand plunged into the slit, burying the knife.

No injury to the slow-witted creature's eye alone could account for the terrible sound which tore the silence of the tunnel to tatters of screaming agony. The green paste on the blade was indeed a venom. It had shot along the blood vessels and the optic nerve directly to the monster's brain.

Its every nerve was in hell. In its excruciating agony it bounded furiously about the tunnel, missing the plane by bare yards, and thundering down from its convulsive leaps in a writhing mass of torment that shook the very rocks.

No human being could hear those terrible screams without pity. In the minute and a half that it lived the wretched thing suffered all the agonies of all the hells imagined by human beings since the beginning of the world.

With a last shivering yell of absolute pain it was dead.

"Oh my God," Edith gasped, "I did it. Hell, hell, hell!"

In a paroxysm of sobbing she beat her clenched fists against her ears.

14

The Devil Chick

Their brother's death agonies had roused the bewildered scavengers in a bellowing horde. Blundering into one another in the darkness, the monsters fought and screamed till the roof shook. The multitude of reptilian birds, alarmed at the tumult, clattered down the black tunnel in flapping clouds, screeching their fright or pain where they dashed their brainless heads against the unseen walls. Their broken bodies, raining down on the rock floor, flapped convulsively till the maddened monsters trampled them to smears.

Twice when a bat-winged bird became entangled for a moment in the guy wires the plane jarred dizzily, and once a bellowing monster lumbering from its pursuer set the whole machine spinning like a top. Unless the pillars of fire burst forth soon it would be only a matter of minutes until the plane was splinters and the bodies of its occupants pulp.

Above the jarring din they sensed a deeper tremor and a heavier reverberation. The subterranean waves were buffeting their way through the labyrinthine corridors beneath the tunnel. In a moment the solid rock floor heaved like a swell of the sea, the blowholes roared, and ten thousand pillars of flame burst thundering to the roof.

Panic-stricken, the huge monsters scuttled for their burrows in the mountain of corruption. On a vast scale it was the scurrying of a multitude of beetles when a board is lifted, letting down the sun on their secret world.

Blinded by the sudden glare, clouds of the reptilian bat-birds crashed against the walls of the tunnel, breaking heads and wings and necks. Most horrible of all, hundreds dashed directly into the pillared flames to be roasted alive and shot to the rock vault, where they exploded. Their steaming viscera rained upon the floor.

Before she realized what he was about, Ole had cranked the propeller and was back in the machine. The impact of the bewildered scavenger had reversed the plane.

"The shortest way," Ole shouted, and headed for the shambles.

Soaring over it, he plunged into the smoke and stench above. They saw now the cause of the dimmer light above the festering pile. The blowholes were choked with the huge carcasses which had rolled down from the vast heap undermined by the feeding of the scavengers. Until the rushing flames could incinerate these obstructions they must bell out in roses of fire. Heavy black smoke billowing up from these fierce crematories filled the narrow channel above the mountain of corruption with an indescribable foulness.

Mile after mile they flew down the shallow channel between the corruption and the rock roof, lighted only by the flickering crimson reflected from the vault. Would it never end? Twenty miles fell behind them, twenty-five, and still the obscene bat-birds rose at their approach to circle down to their interrupted banquet when the droning *parvenu* had passed.

The smoke thickened, but became less foul. Like a breath of Heaven they recognized the reek of burning petroleum.

A cleaner wind cut their faces. Black with soot, the plane shot clear of the tunnel into the relatively clean night.

They were still enveloped in billowing smoke, but it was not unclean. An occasional banner of crimson flame unfurling for a moment at the bottom of the black sea revealed the source of the conflagration. A vast lake of oil was burning far down there on the floor of the ruined crater.

Rising sharply, they pierced the heaving smoke pall up to the wonder of sweet air and icy stars.

The moon had just set. They had emerged into the ruined crater of their first discovery far west of the line along which they had previously flown.

Edith, as a rational being, assumed that Ole would fly straight for the ship at top speed. He, however, had a nobler intention, and one which did him great credit. Taking the shortest air line to the jagged rim against the northern stars he let out the engine, soared over the wilderness of black rocks, black now as Tophet in the moonless night, and then, when the dim gray of the icy desolation swam into sight, cut out the motor.

“What in the name of sin are you going to do?” Edith demanded.

“I am going to land on the snow field beyond these rocks.”

“And what for? Are you crazy?”

“Not crazy,” he replied solemnly, “although the scoffers would call me so. And why? Because I am thankful.”

“You’re raving.”

“This is not the first time I have been scorned and mocked for my faith. If I can forgive Captain Anderson’s blasphemous jeers I can put up with yours.”

“I haven’t jeered at you, and besides I’m not blasphemous. Just now I wish I were.”

“Whosoever lusteth in his heart after an oath to say it hath committed the unmentionable sin.”

The plane was running along the snow field parallel to the outlying mass of jumbled rocks and about eight hundred yards from the nearest.

“On my knees,” Ole announced as the plane came to rest, “I shall offer up thanks for our merciful deliverance to God.”

“If you do any such thing in this absurd place I shall box your fat ears till they sing like all the hosts of Heaven. Don’t be a fool. Get on home to the ship. I’m freezing.”

“I pray that you may not some day long for a lump of ice to cool your tongue.” And with that hypocritical intercession he climbed down to the frozen snow.

“Look here, Ole,” she flung after him, “if you think the Creator is as big a fool as you are, you are jolly well mistaken. It will serve you right if you fall down a blowhole. You might at least have the decency to crank the propeller before you commit suicide.”

But Ole was absorbed in his search for the most uncomfortable square foot on the Antarctic continent. To offer thanks from a bed of downy ease would not be treating his audience with due respect.

Having found what he sought, he knelt down, uncovered his head, and opened fire. Edith suspected that his extreme humility, voiced in an unnecessarily loud tone, was aimed at her instead of at Heaven. His impersonal allusions to hardness of heart, a stiff neck, a disagreeable temper, and an ungrateful disposition were put with remarkable skill. Although Edith’s name, age, sex, and color were meticulously omitted from his oration, he yet contrived to give her a severe and exceedingly long-winded lecture on her

numerous shortcomings. Bitterly did she regret that her aim was like that of any girl. Otherwise she would have heaved the heavy thermos bottle into his fat, smug face. It was such a lovely chance to miss; with his eyes closed like a sleeping lobster's he wouldn't see it coming.

But common sense and the Lord were on her side. Ole had overlooked more than the blowholes. In so astute a theorizer his oversight really was unpardonable. He should have observed that all the monsters of his acquaintance were confirmed lovers of a mild temperature. He should have reflected that such of the poor brutes as had wandered back to their ruined home would naturally gather round the cheerful hearths to drool over the good old times.

In short, Ole should have known that these heat-loving, carnivorous monsters would frequent the vicinity of the blowholes. To be snugly out of the draughts they would retire between eruptions to their spacious lairs in the jumble of rocks. When the home fires burned again they would emerge and gather round the blaze. The spells of cold between roasts would be excellent sharpeners of the appetite. Undoubtedly the home-loving beasts were communists, sharing all things. When a journey from the cheery blowholes to the gloomy banquet halls of the tunnel seemed long and unattractive, they stayed at home and ate one another.

To these simple-minded beasts the thankful Ole was literally a godsend. Their pious instincts perceived him as manna dropped from Heaven. It chanced that he had selected his uncomfortable spot opposite one of the poorer rookeries. For a week all the famished beasts had been of two sizes only: mere babies just born and therefore still dear to their ferocious mothers, and huge, agile brutes of approximately equal fighting abilities. All intermediate sizes had devoted their lives to the welfare of the community.

Being of extremely low intelligence, the strapping survivors had not yet mastered the theory and practice of cooperation. It never entered their brainless heads that any two of them were more than a match for an unlucky third. Consequently all starved, whereas two thirds of them at any time until the Armageddon between the last gigantic pair might have wallowed in luxury. Lacking farsighted statesmen they lived in armed neutrality and hunger until such time as the babies of the community should develop militarism. But this sporadic sort of uprising furnished pretty lean pickings.

Unaware of his grateful audience, Ole prayed vigorously. He thanked Heaven that the blowholes in his immediate vicinity were not as other blowholes. These were orderly and quiet, the others roaring furnaces of the devil. He proceeded to inform headquarters that he had a theory.

"This chain of blowholes, O Lord, vents the gas of another tunnel. The oil tank under these is not connected with the tank under the others. Thus,

O Lord, hast Thou prepared a safe place in the wilderness that Thy servant may give thanks unto Thee."

To say the least, Ole lacked neither brazen nerve nor conceit. To give Edith the full strength of his lecture he continued facing her. His back, therefore, was toward the rookery. Nevertheless his remarks carried in all directions, unimpaired by distance in that intensely still air. Staccato echoes from the black rocks repeated his vainglorious theory. The echoes even improved on his remarks. To Edith, trying not to listen, it seemed that over there in the rocks there was a sound of sleepy revelry, a drowsy, incredulous chuckling as it were, reinforced by subdued squawks. The infernal brood was awake.

Curiously watching a shadow against the starry sky she saw it move, black out a dazzling planet, and grow larger. Evidently it was not a lump of rock. A long neck cautiously raised itself above the black mass like a periscope. Having sighted its prey, the hungry head was quickly lowered. The black mass effaced itself on the blacker slope of the rocks.

"Look out!" she cried. "It's coming."

Ignoring the unseemly interruption, Ole theorized louder.

"You idiot! Crank the propeller—run for it!"

"The Lord is mindful of his own," Ole responded unctuously, and proceeded to give thanks for the fact.

A piercing shriek from Edith brought him to his common sense. One glance over his shoulder and he was on his feet, running as he had never run in his fat life. After him like a gigantic ostrich raced the enormous lizard on its long hind legs, the tail curved up like a scimitar and the twenty-foot neck stretched forward to the elastic limit. No turkey after a hapless grasshopper was ever more eager.

Ole's seven- or eight-hundred-yard start saved him. He fell into Edith's lap just as a vicious swish of the monster's tail cut the air under the machine in two.

Looking back toward the rocks, they saw the whole black brood boiling out over the dim gray desolation. As aimlessly as brainless hens they darted hither and thither over the snow fields, seeking a prey which had escaped. Far over the black expanse they raced like great scuttling lizards, and behind some of the huger shadows trailed three or four tiny dots like pursuing vermin. These were the babies of the brood following their eager mothers.

Evidently these creatures were of a breed distinct from any that Edith and Ole had yet seen alive. On the slaughter beach Ole and Lane had operated on three roughly similar giants.

So entranced were the observers with the ludicrous steeplechase that they failed to note the familiar thunder preceding a "blow." Before Edith

knew what was happening the plane was bounding and tumbling like a glass ball in a fountain.

She came to her senses just in time. As she shot the plane up for a sixty-degree climb the air immediately below them burst with a dull roar into thousands of blue flame cones. It was a sharp rebuke to Ole's irreverent conceit. The theory which he had confided to Heaven evidently was faulty. After all, the oil tank under this region of blowholes probably was connected with that under the tunnel. The backwash of the tide under the tunnel was now forcing up the compressed gas through the secondary chain of vents.

Looking down, they saw the flame cones descending rapidly. In a moment they would disappear down the wells. Such, at least, was Ole's confident prediction. As if to teach him caution in theorizing, the flames did nothing of the kind. This eruption of gas was not of precisely the same sort as that first one into which Anderson had blundered with his party. It was more like the neighboring one under the tunnel. The flames did not disappear, but lengthening downward to the blowholes became short pillars of fire. These, however, were on a much smaller scale, mere conical candles a hundred feet high and from five to thirty feet thick.

The home fires were again burning merrily. It was impossible not to feel a twinge of sympathy for the exiled monsters scurrying over the icy plain to the friendly fires. Mothers abandoned their trailing young in the race after their more agile mates to the cheery hearths, and many a small monster was left squawking piteously in the cold. Around the invigorating warmth and light of the blowholes sociable groups of three or four huge lizards squatted in amiable content, their hunger and its consequent animosities for the moment forgotten. Edith was touched; Ole wasn't.

Mother instinct is said to be universal. Those brainless females hobnobbing with their ferocious mates around the comforting fires while their babies cried miserably in the cold disproved the theory. Again Edith was deeply touched.

Wheeling back in the starlight, she dipped and circled low above the forlorn little monsters on the ice. All her dormant mother love awoke and strode rampant over one particularly shameful case of abandonment. The isolated little creature, no bigger than a Newfoundland dog, could not have been more than a few days old. Its ridiculous little tail was a mere stub, and its grotesquely disproportionate head all but overbalanced the emaciated body seesawing on two feeble pins.

"Ole," she exclaimed, "we must take that darling little devil chick back to the ship. It is perishing for warmth and its mother."

"You're not its mother, and I'm blown if I'll warm it."

"Oh yes you will. For you are going to catch it."

"Who is crazy now?"

“Not I. You will be perfectly safe with the parents away selfishly enjoying themselves. Besides, you will have a fair start of nearly three quarters of a mile if the mother sees your kidnapping. If you can’t outrun her at that distance you’re no good. Here we are. Climb out and fetch the baby. Grab it well up by the neck so it can’t bite.”

“I’ll be damned if I do.”

“You will be if you don’t. Now look here, Ole. Either you get that chick for me or I make your life miserable forever by telling the Captain how you ran away from your prayers. You will be famous from Liverpool to San Francisco and from there to Hong Kong as the grateful seaman whose able-bodied prayers raised the devil. Get that poor little beast for me and I swear never to tell a soul what kind of a fool you looked racing that two-legged reptile.”

It was rank blackmail, and as such succeeded in a continent where there is not a single lawyer.

With elaborate but unnecessary caution Ole sneaked up on the squawking foundling from behind. In its hunger and pathetic loneliness it would have welcomed him with open mouth. Grabbing its long thin neck with one hand, he clutched its stubby tail with the other. Then putting forth all his barrel of strength he started to lug the kicking little monster toward the airplane.

Who would have suspected that the puny wretch had such a fight in its emaciated body? Who would have dreamed from its plaintive squawk that the little devil had lungs of leather? It bawled for its daddy, screeched for its big brother, and yelled for its gadding mother. They came bounding in great hops.

All things considered, we must conclude with Edith that Ole, not the abandoned chick, was the attraction.

Edith’s mother love suddenly fell below zero. She implored Ole to drop the little beast—he was now carrying it bodily by its neck and tail—and win the race to the propeller. But Ole’s Norwegian perseverance was roused. Having begun the job he would finish it or bust.

Only an exceptionally strong man could have duplicated his feat. While with one hand he cranked the propeller he held the chick by its neck at arm’s length with the other. The little beast had a wicked, raking kick with its feeble-looking legs. One rip with its claws might have taught Ole anatomy.

The bereaved family arrived in time to hear their darling’s farewell wafted from above. It was dangling over the side of the plane, still kicking. Ole had not relaxed his strangle hold on its neck. With a deft swing he got it aboard and sat on its stomach. He still did not trust the chick with its own

head. Consequently its last message to its mother was sufficiently like the skirl of a bagpipe to be distressing.

"Cuddle it up in the sealskins," Edith directed, "so it won't freeze on the way home."

Ole cuddled it. He was careful, however, not to let go of its neck.

"Won't father be delighted?" Edith resumed. "This is better than a whole continent of dead ones. I wonder what it eats?"

"Shall I let go of its neck and find out?"

"Not yet. Milk, I think, is probably the right diet for so tender an infant. Have we plenty of the canned variety aboard?"

"About a hundred cases, I suppose. They will last this little devil all of a week."

Their way home passed over a region which was new to them, some thirty miles west of the line which they had flown first. About ten miles beyond the blowholes they saw far beneath them a strange black lake.

"That looks interesting," Edith remarked, dipping down, "let's investigate. We can't be much later than we are already."

Nearing the surface of the lake they saw that it was in violent motion. Even by starlight Ole recognized the appearance of those huge bubbles instantly.

"Oil!" he shouted. Oil was in fact bubbling up from hundreds of gushers at the bottom of the lake. The theory which Ole spontaneously brought forth was probably not far from the truth. The underground tides having risen to the rock roof above them were forcing the crude oil through a chain of blowholes. At this point some obstruction, possibly a heavy fall of rock from the roof, jarred loose by the violent earthquakes, had blocked the passageway damming back the tidal oil. Consequently it now spouted through the gas vents. The correspondingly slower motion of the heavy oil as it was forced upward had not generated sufficient friction to ignite the fluid. Such at any rate was Ole's theory.

As a first rough guess it may pass. Much further work, however, must be done before all the scientific puzzles raised by Lane's historic expedition are finally elucidated.

The practical question troubling Ole now was whether the oil would be sucked down with the receding subterranean tide. If so Anderson might find it difficult to form a stock company. For obviously it would be one thing to sell shares in a thirty- by fifteen-mile lake of oil and quite another to float stock on a dirty hole in the ground. He comforted himself with the reflection that more oil stock is sold on one smell of oil than on a thousand gushers. With a practically unlimited supply of smell in the hole even when empty they might easily make millionaires of themselves and the entire crew in a month.

The southern boundary of the lake gave Ole a qualm. On the south the oil was dammed back by a mere swell in the ice not fifty feet broad on top and less than twenty feet high. What if this slight wall should give way before the pressure of the oil? The millions of dollars in that beautiful lake would rush down the blowholes on the plain beyond. To the north, on the shore nearer the ship, conditions were more satisfactory. Here the wall of the long trough—fifteen miles broad by thirty long—was well over a hundred yards across the top.

His calculations, of course, were only rough estimates based on their time of flight and their first observation from above that the lake was about twice as long as it was broad.

With a thousand fortunes in sight Ole forgot himself. A tentative nip on his leg reminded him of his infant charge. Once more he grasped it firmly by the neck.

The reception of the wanderers was cordial in the extreme. Edith had expected the very deuce from her father, but she was totally unprepared for Drake's attack. The devoted John tersely vented a longing to shake the tar out of her.

"Try it," Edith suggested. "You might find it profitable."

"What?" the Captain shouted. "Have you found oil?"

"Oceans of it."

The Captain forgave both her and Ole on the spot.

"Father," said Edith, uncovering the devil chick which till now they had kept concealed beneath the skins, "I have brought you a little playmate. Am I forgiven?"

Ole at that instant loosened his stranglehold on the chick's windpipe. A whooping squawk greeted the Doctor.

"Oh you beautiful child!" he exclaimed with wondering reverence. Whether he was referring to Edith or her peace offering she was unable to decide.

15

Anticipations

What do you expect to get out of all this, Doctor?" the Captain asked curiously.

They were sitting in the Captain's cabin. Eight days had elapsed since the advent of the devil chick. Tomorrow the explorers were to begin their first serious attack on the unknown. Everything was in readiness for a quick march to the heart of the mystery and for a safe return to the ship.

Lane parried the Captain's question.

"I may have come for my share of the oil stock. I'm a member of the crew, am I not?"

"You're no money-grubber. Come on, tell us why you came. I've owned up to everything. A thousand-acre orange grove in California with nothing to do but boss it drove me into this mess. After twenty years of whaling you might be just as ready as I am to sell your soul for a pint of dirty oil. I've had enough of the cold and the stink. Now I want sunshine and orange blossoms. What do you want? You have all the money you need. Now just why did you come?"

"Perhaps I came to collect all those magnificent specimens we have stowed away. The lively little devil chick alone is enough to make any lover of the beautiful happy for life. Perhaps that is what I expect in return for my money.

"I don't think so," said the Captain shrewdly.

"To change the subject for a moment," Lane rejoined after a pause, "have you any relatives who would miss you if you died?"

"Not one. Why?"

"Because we may never see the ship again after tomorrow."

"If these two," the Captain indicated Edith and Ole, "got through alive, why can't we? There is dynamite enough between here and the crater to blow up an army of two-legged reptiles. We shan't be taken by surprise."

"It isn't that. Yet if you were to ask me what I anticipate I should have to put you off. For I don't know myself. Only I have a feeling that we may blunder into more than we foresee. Don't you feel the same, Drake?"

"Yes," he admitted uneasily. "That's why I say Edith shouldn't go. Not on the first attack, anyway. If everything is all right she can come with us the second time."

"There may be no second attempt," Edith replied. "I'm coming, John. Now don't get fussy about it."

"All this may seem rather old-womanish to you, Captain," the Doctor resumed. "Nevertheless that is how Drake and I feel. We have collaborated during the past seven or eight evenings and have now a fairly definite theory."

"As to feeling nervous," the Captain laughed, "I occasionally have an attack of nerves myself when I think of all that beautiful oil being sucked down the blowholes. It may at any time, you know. But you haven't told us yet why you want to go on.

"Drake really knows more about what may be ahead of us than I do." He grew strangely serious. "On the eve of what may be our last peaceful day on Earth I think it only right to tell you everything I suspect. Drake can speak for himself later.

"This is no mere naturalist's holiday. The tons of specimens we have gathered are priceless beyond count, no doubt, compared to the oceans of oil which you expect to discover. Yet priceless as our collections are, and rich as your oil fields may prove, both together are not worth the fraction of a cent when balanced against the true purpose of this expedition."

Anderson gaped at him. "What under the sun did you come for?"

"As I have said, I don't really know. I can only guess. If my suspicion is right we shall save civilization from a horrible destruction."

The Captain looked incredulous. "You're pulling my leg for what Ole and I did to yours in San Francisco. When did you find out that we are a gang of anointed crusaders prancing forth to make the world safe for democracy?"

"We shall not make it safe for democracy, or for aristocracy, or for socialism, or for any other pet creed. What we shall make the world safe for is life itself. I am serious. This is the greatest adventure. It was on the slaughter beach that I first definitely recognized something fundamentally evil in all the strange things we have seen so far. The second definite hint came from that black rock over which Drake stumbled."

"The inscriptions on it?" Ole asked sagaciously.

"No. The rock itself gave the clue. Drake, have you a piece of the one you chipped yesterday?"

Drake produced a small fragment of the black rock. Lane handed it to the Captain.

"You were trained as a mining engineer, Anderson. Even twenty years of whales can't have made you forget all the simplest things in elementary geology. Take a good look at that chunk of rock and tell me what you think it is. Here's my magnifying glass."

The Captain studied the fragment long and curiously.

"I don't want to make a fool of myself," he said at last, handing back the glass and rock.

"Go ahead. What is the stuff? I'm not trying to trap you."

"Well, Doctor, either I have forgotten all I ever knew or that stuff isn't rock at all."

"If it isn't rock, what is it?"

"Manufactured, I should say—some artificial stone, if you like, or a queer sort of cement."

"Precisely."

"Well, what of it?"

"Doesn't it strike you as remarkable that millions upon millions of tons of artificial cement, scribbled over with inscriptions, should exist on a continent that died before America was born? The inscriptions alone would not be so mysterious. Races without number, I am convinced, have lived, died, and been forgotten since the beginning of time. The archaean rocks are an

unread history. But that any race should pave vast areas of its dwelling place with an unimaginable mass of artificial cement as hard as diamond is a thing for which history has no parallel. It is unique."

"You are right," Ole agreed. "No race known ever paved more than ten acres in one place. The ancient Babylonians—"

"Shut up, Ole. Go on, Doctor."

"Well, that is about all. Drake can tell the rest better."

"But you haven't said yet what made you bite in San Francisco."

"Your pickled reptile."

"That won't go. You have just said that all your junk isn't worth half a cent compared to the real thing you are after."

"I am after my life's ambition. Does that satisfy you?"

"Perfectly. What is your life's ambition?"

The Doctor laughed. "You are a greater sea lawyer than Ole. I may as well give you the whole story and be done with it. Then Drake can tell you something worth hearing."

He paused for a moment, selecting the few facts necessary.

"It all began," he resumed, "when I was about ten years old. An aunt gave me for Christmas a copy of that remarkable scientific romance by Mary Shelley—the wife of the poet—based on the artificial creation of life."

"I've read it," Ole interrupted eagerly. "It's a peach. Just like a nightmare. *Frankenstein* is the name of the book."

"Most readers with any brains at all enjoy the story. If nothing else it is imaginative, and that's a great deal in a world of prosy, oversexed bores. Well, that book determined the course of my life. You remember, Ole, how the hero of the story creates a living creature out of chemicals. This creature was no mere amoeba, but a complex, highly organized, half-human monstrosity.

"It is nothing against Mrs. Shelley's fascinating tale to state that today we know definitely that such a thing is impossible. By merely mixing together chemicals as her hero did it is not feasible to create a complex, highly organized animal.

"On the other hand it *may* be possible to create out of chemicals a colloid—a sort of jelly or gluelike substance having some of the essential properties of living matter. Although thus far no chemist or biologist has actually done this, it is not a sheer impossibility. If it could be done, and this is what I wish to emphasize, it would be an incomparably easier feat than the one which is the basis of Mrs. Shelley's story.

"We can see the relative difficulty of the two by an example from another field. The first savages killed one another by hurling stones with their bare hands. We destroy one another wholesale by—among other ingenious and devilish ways—exceedingly complicated machines. There is a

vastly greater gap between a gluelike substance having some resemblance to living matter and the simplest organized living creature, than exists between a lump of stone hurtling through the air and a torpedo directed by wireless.

"All this by the way. The significant thing for me in Mrs. Shelley's book is that it awoke my imagination when I was ten years old. I determined to become a scientist. The creation of life was to be my life's ambition. This, I believe, is the greatest adventure.

"Then later, learning something of science while picking up an education in odd hours, I saw clearly that I was a million miles from my goal. Still later, digging deeper into the natural sciences, I realized that my ambition was a fantastic dream.

"I saw then, and I see now, that if life is to be created by human beings using purely artificial means it will not be in our generation, nor in our century, nor perhaps in the next two centuries. That it will be done eventually I have not the slightest doubt. But thus far we have not succeeded even in stating the problem precisely.

"When we come to know exactly what it is that we are seeking we shall find it. At present we lack even a definition of life that is scientific and more than a scholastic jumble of words. Consequently, although many of us may feel that we know what we are looking for, few indeed have the training, the ability, and the scientific tact to seek it intelligently. Men who today search for the origin of life are hopeless cranks in a class with circle squarers and inventors of perpetual motion.

"Having realized early that my first ambition was a chimera, I turned to more natural and far more useful investigations. I do not regret the time lost in the vain pursuit of unattainable knowledge. It was not indeed lost, for it was my apprenticeship to true science. Most of my work since has been in the laws governing the growth and decay of animals, and, as a byproduct, the study of such diseases as depend upon abnormal growth. I need not bore you with any of this.

"I said that I abandoned my quest for life. That is not strictly true. It is impossible to eradicate from the mind the hopes, desires, and fears of childhood and adolescence. Although in maturity I put away all thought of ever directly attacking the problem of life, my subconscious habits of thought were unalterably fixed in my youth. My psychology is what it was and I yet am driven against my will, for the most part subconsciously, to think incessantly of the problem of life.

"All my work, I sometimes think, has been aimed at my first ambition. It frequently gives me a shock to discover that what I am truly interested in doing is not the artificial duplication of cancerous growths, but the out and out creation of living cells. It is almost as if some familiar spirit keeps whispering, 'Do this, and in spite of yourself you will find what you are looking

for, and I, not consciously hearing the whisper, do as I am directed. This of course is merely my own repressed desire taking its revenge.

"Again I do not regret. For my work has led to at least three positive facts recognized by competent authorities as contributions of real value to our knowledge and control of certain diseases.

"Now, Anderson, you will ask what all this has to do with our expedition. In one word, everything. But for my repressed ambition you would never have obtained one cent toward expenses. I am not interested in oil or in any other form of wealth. I would not walk across this cabin to make a million dollars. For I have all the money that is good for myself and Edith. More would be a nuisance. Had you come to me without that pickled reptile I should have shown you the door at once.

"You remember how at first I mistook your find for a young specimen of a known prehistoric animal. It is true that no fossil yet discovered has both scales and feathers. There is a 'missing link' in the chain from reptiles to birds no less than in that from anthropoids to men. But for all that your monster did not at first look wholly anomalous. It might, in short, have been a natural animal. And that is what I at first thought it was.

"Then, while you were talking of your adventures, I began to think. If you were an ex-zoologist instead of an ex-mining engineer, I could make my next point—the crux of the whole story—much clearer.

"Thinking over your specimen and looking more closely at it, I recognized that the monster was indeed a monster, a thing never created and evolved by nature. There were certain astounding differences between the obvious anatomy of the creature and any conceivable product of orderly evolution.

"A frog will not evolve into a horse no matter how much time you give him. From now to the end of eternity all the descendants of frogs will retain certain specific peculiarities of structure which will easily differentiate them from horses. At no point of the story will the two become confused. It will be possible a million years hence for any trained scientist to say at a glance that the descendants of our frogs and of our horses living in his day, or fossilized in the rocks of his time, never had a common ancestor.

"And so it was with your monster. At first it might have been a missing link between the birds and the reptiles. Closer inspection showed that none of its ancestors were related to reptiles and that none of its descendants would ever evolve into birds. And it fitted nowhere else into the scheme of evolution.

"Nor was it a deformity. A kitten with three eyes is still a young cat for all its eyes. A man with six fingers on his right hand still belongs to the family of men. Mere abnormality does not exclude a freak from the family to which it otherwise would belong. Your queer find, Anderson, was no

deformed reptile, nor was it a freak bird, thrust into the world before its time but half made up.'

"There remained but one rational conclusion. The thing was no creation of nature but the result of a conscious attempt to imitate nature. Either that monster had been created whole and alive by intelligent beings, or it was the descendant of remote ancestors so created.

"The first possibility was out of the question. Had the monster been recently created we should have had another Frankenstein. I know enough of the present state of biology to be certain that such a complete creation of a highly complex organism today is impossible.

"There remained the alternative. Your monster was the descendant of inconceivably remote ancestors, and those ancestors, incomparably simpler in structure, had been created by conscious, intelligent beings.

"Evolution had done the rest. Shaping the initial, simple organism through millions of years, time and evolution had gradually complicated its simplicity into a highly developed organism.

"The first creation probably was a mere speck of living matter, perhaps a single cell, and this full-blown monster of yours was the slow flower of ages blooming from that first almost formless seed.

"Such was my guess while you sat talking of the monsters boiling up in oil from the floor of the ocean. I decided to chance your veracity and see for myself.

"On the slaughter beach, you remember, I pointed out how all those dead monsters differed radically, in spite of superficial resemblances, from their nearest types in the fossil beds. The number and arrangement of one monster's teeth I emphasized as particularly significant. Nature does not cram one man's mouth full with eighty teeth and give his neighbor only sixteen. She does nothing by violent jumps that can be seen by a blind man. Her changes are minute. That is my second point.

"On that beach another thought disturbed me greatly. All those monsters gave me the impression of being badly botched jobs. Suppose you were aiming to create a harmless toad and achieved a deadly rattlesnake. You wouldn't consider yourself a master of the technique of life, would you? Well, neither can the beings whose scientific blundering millions of years ago started the evolution of all those hideous monsters on the beach.

"What those misguided experimenters intended to do I don't know. What they did start, I do know, and I pronounce its fruit an obscene abomination. Not one of those huge creatures had intelligence above a worm's and not one of them ever could be of any possible value to the world. They are merely gigantic feeding, breeding, and fighting machines with just a spark of intelligence—enough to make them exceedingly dangerous and no more.

"I suspect that all those huge brutes are, as I have tried to make clear, the result of minute seeds first created and sown millions of years ago. Further, I believe that nature, taking the artificially created seeds, has grown from them, through countless mutations, the changing shapes whose perfected, dangerous uselessness infests the secret places of this continent. The beginning was unnatural, the development and its conclusion are the work of natural laws.

"Finally I believe that the original creators of those monstrosities realized when it was too late what they were doing, foresaw its consequences, became terrified, tried to undo their blundering work, and perished in a war to destroy their own creations. This, however, belongs to Drake's part of the investigation. He can tell it better than I.

"Now last, let me say exactly what I expect to get from this expedition. I hope from close study of the anatomy, habits, and environment of these strange creatures to rediscover their origin. See what this implies. If I am successful I shall be able to create artificially a true living seed of life. Whether or not I shall wish to do so depends upon what we discover in the next few days.

"Mind, I am not expecting to make a gigantic lizard out of dead slime or anything of that fantastic sort. But I do hope to rediscover the lost secret which started all those monstrosities. A mere speck of living matter, a single cell visible only under a high-power microscope, is all that I shall achieve, if anything. For I am convinced that the originators of that aborted creation on the beach achieved no more. One spark starts the forest fire; their invisible specks of artificial living matter started the self-imposed catastrophe that wiped them out."

"But Doctor," Ole objected, "if they only made those very small specks of living matter, how were they wiped out? You say it took millions of years to evolve dangerous animals out of those bad beginnings. The things were too small, according to you, to bother a flea. If I get your meaning they were nothing better than pieces of jelly invisible to the naked eye. How could such things fight anybody?"

"That is what I hope to find out, definitely and in detail. Drake and I already have a rational theory."

"Is it your theory that they were disease germs when first created?"

"No, Ole, nothing so romantic. As I tried to make plain, a robin's egg will never hatch crocodiles. Nor will a disease germ ever evolve into a three-hundred-foot brute with a head and body like a bad dream."

"Then what is your theory?"

"On that point, if I understand your question, I have none. Before indulging in hypotheses on the origin of life I shall find out the facts."

"Listen, Doctor. I have a theory. Those things were first created—"

"Oh, pipe down, Ole." The Captain was back on the job. "Now, Drake, let us have your side of it."

"It is so late," Drake yawned, "that I shall have to beg off this time. We start at five in the morning. Good-night, everybody."

16 Attack

By forced marches the party reached the north shore of the oil lake early the third morning after leaving the ship. Lane, Anderson, Ole, and Drake had gone by land. Edith was to arrive at the base by air. While the men marched she flew back and forth to the ship for last-minute supplies which she dropped conveniently near the southern boundary of the oil lake.

No detail that might increase the safety of the expedition had been neglected. Between the ship and the north shore of the lake a chain of provision caches made starvation impossible no matter what might happen. The party of five might all have hung onto the plane somehow, and so have reached their goal more quickly. For several reasons they decided to march, carrying with them the essentials of a light prospecting outfit. Anderson half expected to find indications of oil by zigzagging slightly across the line of caches. He was nothing if not optimistic.

In case of an accident to the ship, Bronson's men had deposited provisions in caches parallel to the inlet north a distance of forty miles. As a final measure of safety they had landed every gallon of petrol, storing it a mile inland in a deep dugout. Even if forced to flee on foot the expedition would have sufficient provisions. Each man could pack on his back a sleeping bag and short rations enough from the northerly caches to last him to the coast. Should no whaling vessel appear within two weeks to take them off, Edith or Ole was to fly northeast to the nearest whaling station for help. No member of the party expected the worst to happen. But Anderson disbelieved in luck, preferring arduous certainty to easy going chance.

At this moment the Captain, speechless with cupidity, was gazing over the thirty-mile expanse of bubbling black oil. With a hundred huge fortunes before his eyes he was beginning to regret that Ole and the crew had been promised a share of the profits. More potential gold bubbled and swirled in that vast bowl than the most ingeniously dissolute debauch \geq e could squander in fifty lifetimes. Yet the Captain wished that Ole and the crew were in Halifax. Such is human nature.

The men were waiting for Edith. She was to transport them and their packs comfortably one at a time to the south shore of the lake. They were then to march at once for the blowholes where Edith and Ole had seen the

monsters warming themselves. Lane's objective was the ruined crater. He and Drake were determined to inspect the black rocks at first hand. The shattered floor being his ultimate goal, the Doctor hoped also to penetrate the black smoke at the bottom and search for further animal remains.

An immediate assault on the crater would, of course, be suicide. The famished monsters would consider the party as a trifling hors d'oeuvre vouchsafed by the generosity of Heaven for the great feast to come.

How then were the explorers to traverse the region of blowholes, scale the crater lip, and reach the Doctor's objective? This puzzle had exercised the wits of the party for the first two days after the return of Edith and Ole with the devil chick. Between the oil lake and the black rocks lay the blowholes, and round these the sociable monsters might gather at just the most embarrassing moment.

The puzzle had indeed seemed unsolvable. Of all unpracticable beings it was Drake who solved the problem by a brilliant flash of imagination. Of all things that might have inspired him it actually was the last that might occur to a practical man. Who but Drake would have turned for inspiration to the memory of his sufferings in a dentist's chair? Having sat for several hours with the glass hook of a long rubber siphon under his tongue, he now remembered his discomfort with advantage.

As a consequence Edith and Ole during the six days following had transported every foot of hose—fire hose and other—on the ship to the south shore of the oil lake. All the iron pipe that could be spared also was taken to the same depot. To both ends of each section of hose the men had tied heavy iron slugs, and the end of each pipe they bent into a short L. This inefficient-looking junk, a tangle of doubly weighted hoses and bent pipes, constituted the entire arsenal of the attacking party. With this alone they must overcome the army of huge lizards. Otherwise they must turn back, provided they were not eaten first.

"There she comes," the Doctor announced, pointing to a tiny speck against the blue far to the north. "Ole, You fly over first and take our packs. Hang them on somehow."

Ole seemed nervous at the prospect of being left alone with the packs on the south shore while Edith returned for the next passenger.

"What if those brutes come out to get warm while the plane is over on this side?"

"But you said the blowholes end quite a distance south of the lake," the Doctor replied. "They won't come several miles from the heat just to say hello to you."

"They will if they smell me."

"Cheer up, Ole," said Drake; "we will see you avenged"

"Lot of good that will do me. You go over first."

"I'm not fat enough."

The dispute was cut short by the landing of Edith.

"Captain Anderson," she began at once, "Bronson asked me to tell you that he may be forced to steam down the inlet at any minute. A wave of warm water came down again early this morning."

"Boiling?"

"No, just warm enough to raise a thick fog over the inlet."

"There is no great danger, I guess. If he has to run he can make it. And we are safe with all the supplies cached and the plane. What did he want me to do?"

"To send back word by me if he is to move at once. If he doesn't hear from you by night he will stay where he is."

"What about it, Lane?"

"I see no immediate danger. There has been no violent earthquake."

"That's my best judgment too. He is safe enough where he is. All right, Ole, hop in. Miss Lane will waft you over for lunch."

"For lunch?"

"Yes, idiot. Not yours, theirs."

With a fat groan Ole obeyed orders.

Arrived at the south shore of the lake they noted with alarm that the oil had risen since their visit the previous week. The black waves were crawling slowly up the narrow rise separating the lake from the chain of blowholes. Should the wall of rock and ice give way under the steadily increasing pressure, Anderson's fortune would vanish down the blowholes in a week. The thought that even if the wall held yet a flow of oil over the top might overspread the plain and catch fire from the blowholes, setting the entire lake aflame, was anything but reassuring. Leaving Ole to his dismal theories Edith skimmed back for the next passenger.

Shortly after one o'clock the party assembled on the south shore with their packs, ready for the opening move of their offensive. The blowholes were still quiescent. This favoring the strategy of the proposed attack the party decided to take advantage of it immediately.

Their first question was, who is to bell the cat? More definitely, which members of the party should risk their lives to carry out Drake's ingenious plan? The scheme demanded half an hour's work around the blowholes. The workers, if seen by the reptiles, certainly would be welcomed by the whole rookery, and no pair of human legs was a match for the slowest of the huge lizards. Again, if the work party proceeded on foot by daylight to the blowholes, they were sure to be seen. If they waited till dark the blowholes might flare up just at the wrong time, and refreshments would enliven an otherwise dull gathering round the home fires. It was clear that the party must go by airplane.

The landing on a plain spotted with bottomless wells would be difficult enough, but the quick escape, if necessary, would be a feat for the most expert aviator. A landing at night obviously was out of the question.

Edith was elected pilot by the simple process of elimination. Who should be her helper? An active, practical man was needed for the job. Although Drake pleaded for the honor of carrying his scheme into effect, he was rejected on the first ballot. His forte was brains, not beef. Lane followed him on the second. It was between Ole and the Captain. Anderson being ignorant of aviation, Ole won the honor which only Drake coveted.

Having loaded the plane with all the bent pipe and weighted hose it could lift, Ole took his place behind Edith. They were off.

In all they made ten trips. Their work, they hoped, had converted a hundred and eight of the blowholes nearest the ruined crater into deadly engines of destruction. They had worked unmolested. The rookery either was asleep or all except the babies were away for the weekend foraging under the black smoke of the crater.

"Well, Drake," the Doctor asked, "have you the courage of your invention?"

"Absolutely. It would wipe out an army."

"That may be just the optimism of the inventor. What about it, Anderson? Do you feel like marching forward to await developments? Or shall we camp here until after the blow is over?"

"To stay here would be the sane thing, I suppose. Still, I want to see the show. I vote for marching."

"So do I. Unless we sit on him Drake of course won't miss seeing his idea in action. How about you, Ole?"

"Miss Lane and I will take care of the plane."

"All right, go ahead with our packs and wait for us on this side just before the beginning of the blowholes. If the reptiles see you before the blow, don't bother about our packs. Leave them and fly due east to confuse the brutes. Then they won't blunder into us."

Two hours after sundown Edith heard the far-off crunching of the men's boots in the frozen snow.

"There they are," she said. "Ole, meet them and show them the way here."

A hot drink all round from the thermos bottles and a full meal cheered the tedium of the early watch. Deciding at eleven o'clock that the blowholes probably would not spout that night, all but the first watchman turned into their sleeping bags. The temperature being several degrees above zero they were quite comfortable.

In the brilliantly clear starlight the black barrier of the crater lip seemed ominously near. Yet, conscious as they were of what the rocks hid, all but the sentry slept like stones. The rookery also was fast asleep or

numbed by the cold, for no drowsy squawks floated over the silence of no man's land.

It was the calm sleep before battle. Should Drake's strategy prove inadequate the attackers would not see the sunrise. If on the other hand Drake's invention was all that he hoped, those huge two-legged reptiles would never again visit the black ruins of their shattered paradise. Their next gathering round the cheerful fires would be their last. They would die happy, poor brutes. Better one last hour of comfort and then oblivion forever, than the slow death of years of recurrent cold and increasing starvation. Left to themselves they might starve and fight and freeze and cling with all their brute instinct to life for half a century. It was more humane to destroy them outright.

Midnight passed without a tremor. Anderson relieved Lane. Two o'clock uneventfully came and went, and Drake relieved Anderson.

For the first half hour of Drake's watch all remained quiet with the stillness of a dead world. Then he became aware of a faint stirring among the infested rocks. Huge creatures not yet awake were moving uneasily in their sleep. Something had disturbed them.

In a few moments they might awake fully and scour the plain. For all Drake or the others knew the creatures might be nocturnal in their habits, prowling for their food only in the darkest hours of the early morning. He had not anticipated this. Should the monsters emerge before the blowholes spouted his stratagem was worthless. It took him but a second to make up his mind. He instantly roused the sleepers.

"Get out of here at once. They're coming."

Not stopping to argue the men shook themselves together. They were still half-dazed by sleep. Drake's news falling on befogged brains completed their befuddlement. It did not occur to one of them that all five might easily climb onto the plane and reach safety in ten minutes. The impractical Drake, being the only member of the party with all his wits, of course did not think of anything so simple and obvious.

"Take your father north ten miles, leave him, and come back for one of us," he ordered Edith. "Ole, crank up."

Ole was about to obey when a sleepy chorus of clattering squawks drifted over the ice of no man's land. It occurred to him that probably the reptiles had been away from home, foraging, while he and Edith were preparing the attack that afternoon. This, in Ole's opinion, accounted for their good luck.

"If I start the motor," he said in a hoarse whisper, "those brutes will hear it. In five minutes we shall be smothered."

"They are awake anyway," Drake whispered back. "If they come out they will see the plane against the snow."

Still hesitating Ole regarded Drake curiously in the dark.

"I can't see your face, String Bean," he said, still whispering hoarsely, "but I can guess its color. What are you going to do if those brutes race out before Miss Lane comes back to fetch you? She will take you next."

"Don't stand there whispering and shaking like a blasted jelly. Crank that motor! She could have been there and back by now."

"All right, General," Ole whispered. "One second. Now before I obey orders I'll tell you what I'm going to do next. The instant this propeller hums you'll see me making tracks for the nearest blowhole. If I beat the brutes to it, I dive. It won't be suicide because there is no way out. I had rather smash or drown in oil than die the other way. Take my tip and follow me. I've seen the brutes; you haven't. And I've had one race. Miss Lane will tell you about it in Heaven. I don't want another. All right, General, here goes."

He braced himself to spin the blades.

"Wait," Lane whispered tensely. "I felt it coming."

His more sensitive nervous system had detected the true cause of the reptiles' awakening. Scarcely breathing, the others stood rigid in an agony of hoping. Did the ice sway beneath their feet ever so gently? Or was it merely the wish rocking their imaginations? Seconds passed without a recurrence of the sensation. Then, with infinite relief, they heard, miles beneath them and far to the north, the faint, muffled buffeting of subterranean thunder. The jarring became unmistakable. In moment the icebound plain was vibrating like a steel plate beneath the impact of a triphammer.

Half a mile to the south they heard the swish of air being sucked down the blowholes. Then while the ice heaved like a wave of the sea, they saw the black skyline of the ruined paradise boiling with gigantic shapes that inked out the low stars for an instant and vanished.

A moment later a thudding in the upper air announced the kindling of the innumerable flame cones, the ice for twenty miles around leapt into dull crimson, and they saw the whole herd of gigantic monsters racing with incredible speed directly toward them.

Ten minutes would decide whether Drake's invention meant victory or death. The flame cones descended, hovered a second in midair, lengthened downward with a reverberant roar, and became pillars of fire.

Once more the sociable monsters forgot the miseries of their frozen existence. Gathering round the comforting flames with ludicrous yet touching exclamations of delight they surrendered themselves to the gracious warmth. Around many of the roaring fires a dozen or more snuggled at a safe distance in rings of blissful enjoyment. Thawing rapidly in the fierce heat they licked their flanks, rolled over on their backs, and pawed luxuriously at the warm air.

The sounds of their pleasure, the inarticulate noises of their gratitude, would have softened the most callused heart to pity. There was an appeal in the playful antics of the colossal beasts that was irresistible. Huge tails that might have buckled steel plates in the full viciousness of their cut slapped harmlessly against lean sides whose ribs stuck out like the timbers of an unfinished hull. They were starving, yet for this hour they frolicked in the enjoyment of their other great need, heat.

Their slow brains neither speculated nor dreamed. When once more the flames vanished into the bowels of the Earth they would crawl back to their frozen caves. Waking or sleeping they would remember nothing of their transient happiness. Only at the distant thunder of the next subterranean tide would their instincts urge them to break anew the iron spell of their misery. Without memory each pain was a miracle, each pleasure an accident without cause or consequence. Without consciousness of the past their future was a blank, their existence a void. With no pleasure remembered they could look forward to none.

They were damned with life. Would it not be a gentle act of mercy to bless them with death?

Watching their happiness the author of their destruction felt no regret. They would be killed painlessly at the high tide of their pleasure.

"Look," he said, pointing to a blowhole where four of the great lizards basked in the heat. "Those have it already."

They saw the four huge bodies roll over as if to sleep.

The monsters shuffled on their sides and lay still, their great tails listlessly curved on the ice and their long necks resting on one another's flanks.

One by one others of the friendly rings fell asleep. Then, in fifteen minutes, all were locked fast in death.

Still the cheerful flames thundered up undiminished. The latecomers, the babies of the sleeping monsters, began to arrive. Hopping feebly they joined their mothers and nestled down in the genial glow. Soon they too were asleep forever.

Suddenly the air about the sleepers burst with a dull explosion into a sheet of fire. The instant flame lived but a second. Only the cheery fires rustled and glowed above the dead.

17

At Close Quarters

An hour before sunrise the ice again began to shake. They heard the returning subterranean wave bursting through the underground corri-

dors. The pillared flames, struggling an instant, plunged down the blow-holes. Only the morning star shed its chilly ray on the sleeping monsters, cold now as the barren ice they cumbered. Obliterating the very memory of their last happiness the passing wave, with a whistling reverberation, sucked down the warm air about the sleeping forms.

The party waited until two hours after sunrise before venturing among the dead. There remained one simple task before proceeding to the ruined paradise, lest on their return they meet the same fate as the monsters.

To save time the men loaded their packs before starting. On the previous afternoon Edith and Ole had transported four fifty-pound cases of dynamite from the caches on the south shore of the oil lake. Each of the men now loaded one of the fifty-pound cases on his back with his sleeping bag and enough food to last two days, or on short rations four. In addition Ole packed a five-foot steel drill and a heavy sledgehammer.

Edith was to have charge of the plane. A landing in the ruined crater being out of the question she was to circle above the men in their descent, mark their route, and watch until they emerged from the smoke. Should they not reappear by dark she was to fly to a safe place, camp, and return at daylight to watch for them. If they appeared she was to observe the easiest route up the rocks of the crater side, and by flying toward it direct them. If by noon they did not come out of the smoke she was to fly straight back to the ship and guide Bronson's search party.

The men planned to descend the crater only far enough to learn what they wished to know: Anderson and Ole whether oil was to be found, Lane and Drake the appearance of the black cement *in situ*.

Edith accompanied the men on foot to the blowholes. Threading their way between the huge carcasses the party methodically undid Ole's and Edith's work of the previous afternoon. There being no further use for the weighted hose and bent pipes they threw the sections down the blowholes. No echoes rose.

"How on earth did you ever think of it?" Anderson asked Drake as he heaved down the last bent pipe.

"As I told you," Drake answered modestly. "That siphon arrangement the dentist puts into your mouth to keep it dry while he works gave me the idea. If we could stick one leg of a pipe bent into a right angle down a blow-hole, laying the other flush along the surface of the ice, some of the gas being forced up the hole would spray out over the surrounding ice. From watching those flames the first day we saw them I knew that the gas ignites only when it meets the air. The columns of gas caught at the top. The flame only traveled down the column as the upward pressure of the gas diminished. For this and other obvious reasons it was clear that the flames did not start down in the blowholes, at least not until after the pressure had

decreased markedly and the flames were about to be sucked down and extinguished. A considerable volume of gas therefore would be blown out through the pipes and hose over the ice before the flames descended low enough to ignite the mixture of air and gas near the surface.

"As for the rest I trusted to nature. The gas, I knew from my school chemistry, must be rich in carbon monoxide. Now carbon monoxide is deadly in even minute quantities to all animal life. Less than a minute under that enormous pressure would suffice to spray out enough of the gas to asphyxiate an army of monsters. Long before it became rich enough in carbon monoxide to explode, the mixture of gas and air would reach the point fatal to animal life. You saw what happened."

"The monsters probably did not actually die," Lane added, "until some time after the flash. The gas they had inhaled took some minutes to do its work thoroughly."

"Well," said Edith, sadly regarding the pathetic groups, "I am glad it was painless. They just fell asleep."

"I shouldn't have cried if they had kicked a bit," Ole remarked viciously.

"I'll never call you impractical again," Edith said to Drake "Merely in putting these poor things out of their misery you have justified your existence."

Drake shouldered his heavy pack and strode off after the others.

"Because a man prefers to use his head instead of his feet like a baboon," he flung back, "you call him impractical. You're as short-sighted as the pick and shovel men in the street."

"Now don't get a swelled head over your smartness," she called after him, "or you'll rise and burst like a toy balloon."

"Good-bye. I'll come and fetch you when you stub your toe."

The men fully realized the danger of their undertaking.

Although they probably had exterminated one rookery of the huge monsters there must be hundreds more infesting the ruined crater. They accordingly chose a route down the steep side as nearly as possible in line with the destroyed rookery. The scramble down over the chaotic fragments of rock alone was no easy undertaking, nor was its safety increased by the two hundred pounds of dynamite which the men carried. A slip on the treacherous rocks might set off a private eruption. There was one comforting thought, however, which gave them courage. Should one of them stumble and explode his charge neither he nor the rest would ever know it.

By noon they had safely descended about a thousand feet. Another thousand feet would take them down to the rolling black billows. Already the reek of burning petroleum was acrid in their nostrils. Ole and the Captain, breathing deeply, filled their lungs with the odor of wealth.

"Here you are, Anderson," said the Doctor. "Strike the rock and see the oil gush forth." They were resting on a ledge of blocks at the base of a two-hundred-foot cliff in the face of the crater wall. On either side of the unbroken expanse of cement great void pockets and tunnels gaped in the shattered wall of what, before the explosion which destroyed it, had been a green paradise such as that of Edith's and Ole's discovery. The whole wall probably was honeycombed with galleries, tunnels, and vast chambers which, until the eruption, had been sealed over by thick masses of cement. The explanation of these which Lane gave later is reasonable and probably correct.

"Where is my oil?" Anderson demanded.

"Almost anywhere behind those rocks if you go far enough, I should say. For some time past I have noticed indications. See that stain up there?" The Captain nodded. "That's oil. It is probably oozing along a fissure through the rocks. Find the other end of the fissure and you tap your first oil tank."

"But you said the other day that oil in this kind of rock or cement is impossible."

"And I meant it. Since then I have done some thinking. The oil is seeping through defects in the ruins of this artificial wall. I have good reasons for supposing that this wall was built ages ago partly to keep out the raw material that ultimately became oil."

"How thick is this cement?"

"I haven't the least idea. It may be a foot or a hundred miles. I should chance a shot if I were you."

The Captain was already busy with his dynamite.

"Better stand aside when you do," Lane advised. "The oil may shoot you into the middle of eternity."

Ole's steady swing soon drilled a hole for the stick of dynamite. He stood back on the ledge a few feet wiping the sweat from his face while Anderson placed the charge and laid out the three-minute fuse. He moved forward to watch the Captain just in time. A fifty-ton block of the black cement hurtled down from the brow of the cliff, shot directly through the place where he had been standing, ricocheted on the lip of the ledge, and shattered itself to bits all down the steep slope to the smoke.

"Who in hell did that?" Ole shouted, white with rage.

"Not guilty," said Drake, flattening himself against the wall just as the next huge missile crashed clear of the ledge. Smaller fragments showered down, spattering the ledge with energetic chunks of cement that stung and bruised the would-be dynamiters.

"I have a theory," the Doctor announced with a wry smile when the pelting finally ceased. "Pardon me, Ole, for taking it out of your mouth. There is something alive up there moving about and dislodging the loose

blocks. Of course that first fifty-ton brick may have been very nicely balanced, needing only a slight push to send it over. The alternative is that our friend up there weighs two or three hundred tons. Take your choice."

"What shall we do?" Anderson asked, going white.

"Go ahead with our work. If the brute comes down after us we can crawl along the base of the cliff and get into one of those empty pockets. The ledge peters out nicely over there to the right. That beast, if it is the size I estimate, can't get a foothold on anything narrower than a city highway.

"Yes," said Drake, "and this ledge right here is just broad enough for the brute's rump. It will camp here for a week if necessary, waiting for us to come out to dinner."

"Would you prefer to race it to the bottom? The smoke down there, I suspect, covers a multitude of prowlers feasting on the dead."

"It isn't so bad," the Captain said hopefully. "We can set off dynamite sticks to scare the brute away."

"Our pop gun won't annoy it after the explosions it must have heard in the neighborhood of this exciting hole," Drake objected. "But your idea is good. Edith will hear our efforts and bring help."

"Dessert, you mean," Lane dryly corrected him. "Go ahead, Captain, touch it off. We might as well find out all there is to be known about the place if we've got to die in it."

"If I strike oil," the Captain grimly rejoined, "I'll sell stock to the devil himself."

He lit the fuse and followed the others to a safe place against the wall.

The explosion flaked off a thick slab of the cement, revealing a deep pocket, or possibly the entrance to a tunnel, similar to the others in the face of the cliff. Not a drop of oil issued.

"Sold." The Captain swore heartily.

They followed him to the hole. The entrance was just high enough for a tall man to walk through without bending his neck. Anderson entered. His feet raised a cloud of greenish-gray dust.

"Empty," he said to those without.

He was about to continue his disgruntled observations when a cascade of rubble plunged over the top of the cliff. Not waiting for an invitation the others joined him in the dark pocket. Their haste raised the pungent, suffocating greenish-gray dust in clouds.

"It's coming," said the Doctor. "Down the slope to the left as fast as its tonnage will let it. Our fireworks attracted its attention."

"I hope it slips and breaks its beastly neck," Drake remarked viciously.

"Oh," the Doctor replied, "since the big blow-up here it probably has acquired a sure foot in scrambling about this hole. Most likely it does all its

heavier feeding in Ole's tunnel restaurant, coming out here merely for exercise and lighter refreshments. We're just in time for lunch."

"I don't believe you give a damn whether you live or die," the Captain snapped.

"Except for Edith's sake I don't. I would give a great deal to see one of those brutes alive and at close quarters."

"You'll shake hands with it in five minutes."

"If it becomes too sociable I shall take a short cut out of my troubles. Fit up one of your sticks with a cap and give it about a ten-second fuse."

"Do you mean it?"

"Certainly. If I must die I see neither virtue nor courage in deliberately choosing a hideous death. I shall not kiss death till hell stares me in the face."

The Captain handed him the prepared stick of dynamite.

"If you go that way," he said, "the rest of us must follow, you know."

"Not necessarily. This pocket is almost a tunnel, I'm sure. It certainly is long enough for you to get your packs out of danger of detonation from my explosion."

"I'm for the shortcut," said Drake.

"So am I." It was Anderson.

"Then I must," said Ole. "In my case it won't be suicide. Do it against my will."

Unstrapping his pack he knelt down and prayed, silently. The others respectfully turned their backs, listening to the crash of falling rocks heralding the approach of the monster. Anderson began to grow nervous.

"We might as well go farther back," he suggested.

"All right," Lane replied. "You men leave your packs and go clear to the back of the cave. I'll take three sticks together so as to be sure of setting off the lot. It will be over before you know anything."

"What about you?"

"I'm going to see it. Don't be afraid. I shall take no chance of being caught before my time."

Ole rose from his knees. Their gigantic enemy, to judge by the sounds, was now lumbering its slow way along the ledge. Ole spoke.

"The Lord has answered."

"Let us hear what He said." The Captain was sarcastic. He disbelieved in Ole's private conversations with headquarters. "Most likely it will be your last message."

"That beast may be too big to get in through the hole."

"Then it will sit down outside and wait for us."

"I see your idea," Drake exclaimed. "When the brute squats we can tickle its rump and make it move on. Captain, fit up a punk with a three-minute fuse."

Anderson did the quickest job of his life. Fantastic visions of euthanasia vanished like the fumes of a sickly dream. The men once more were what nature intended them to be, resourceful, self-reliant, and instinctively determined to fight to the last breath.

"I'll never sneer at you again, Ole," the Captain promised solemnly. "You put guts into us. Take your dynamite clear to the back of the tunnel-mine too. Hurry! Drake, lug back yours and Lane's."

Drake and Ole rejoined the others just as the fast bulk of the monster blacked out the opening. Still lumbering stupidly forward it passed the entrance. Daylight again entering the pocket the four crept to the opening.

Lane peered out. The brainless monster had reached the end of its path. Further progress along the narrowing ledge being impossible the brute squatted. In its stupidity it had gone so far that now it could not turn with safety. A cat in a similar predicament would have backed instantly. Apparently the solution of its problem was beyond the monster's infinitesimal intelligence. It just squatted.

The Doctor was entranced. He saw only the creature's mountainous back, one enormous hind foot with its fifty-inch talons, and the gross, forty-foot tail tapering out to a blunt nub. But even this much, with the close view of the monster's irregular ridge of fleshy humps and its blotched hide—it had no armor of horny scales, merely a thick skin like an elephant's—rotten with festering colonies of parasites, was a feast to the eyes. He longed to scrape off a specimen of those living diseases devouring the monster from the nub of its tail to the limit of visibility. And he did.

Emptying his tobacco box he stepped softly through the entrance. Going noiselessly up to the nearest patch of disease on the brute's tail he scraped it with the sharp edge of the open box. The huge beast gave no sign of feeling. Closing the box carefully Lane estimated the distance to the entrance to the cave. Then with all his force he kicked the sores-looking spot on the tail and bolted. He regained the cave just as the tail struck the cliff like a broadside from a battleship.

"Why the devil did you do that?" Anderson demanded. "Are you crazy?"

"We planned to make it move on, didn't we?" the Doctor asked innocently.

"Not that way. But for your damn foolishness we might have got out of here unnoticed."

"To tell the truth I wanted to see how long it would take a nervous impulse to travel the distance from the brute's tail to its head."

"Well, you saw, confound it. Now you've started the machinery. Go out and stop it."

"I have made a most interesting discovery," the Doctor rhapsodized. "Zoologists have long suspected that the biggest of the prehistoric monsters

had two main nervous centers, one in the head, the other somewhere in the rear. One paleontologist of note even went so far as to assert that reptiles roughly like this one could reason simultaneously *a priori* and *a posteriori*. His theory is brilliantly confirmed. That brainless lout registered my kick in its tail. It would have taken a week to get the news up in its head."

"Oh, blast your theories!"

The Captain had good grounds for his impatience. Lane's energetic kick had solved the monster's problem. The whole stupid mass was slowly backing. In a few moments the brute's brainless head would be opposite the entrance.

"Draw farther back," Lane advised. "It will probably want to look in. Sort of reverse reflex action, you know. Where the tail went the head will follow."

He was right. The last few yards of the bony neck passed, and the flat, reptilian head blocked the entrance. By tilting it sideways the monster managed to insinuate its head. The thirty-foot neck followed slowly, with ample leeway on either side of the entrance.

Just as they became aware of its heavy, slow breathing the monster saw them in the dim light. In a flash the lethargy of the brute vanished. The straining neck, lashing from side to side, cut the air like a whip. The whole vast bulk of the giant hurled itself furiously against the jarring cliff in an endeavor to follow the head.

Great flakes of the black cement crumbled from the rapidly widening entrance as the balked hunger of the monster rose to a screaming fury.

Its deafening screeches, like the shrilling of a herd of wild camels, shook the cave with a terrific din, and its panting breath raised the gray-green dust in stifling clouds.

It was now or never. While Drake struck matches, Anderson rapidly but coolly prepared two more sticks of dynamite. Then, watching his chance, he lit all three fuses at once and deftly rolled the sticks over the floor of the cave so that one lay in the middle and one at either end of the arc threshed out by the huge serpent head. He overtook the others before they reached the end of the cave.

When the terrific thunder finally ceased, and the men realized that their two hundreds had not exploded, they stumbled back through the dark in a daze to the entrance. In their confusion they blundered directly into the headless stump of neck—gushing blood like a hydrant.

18 The Enemy

They blasted their way out. When the gory job was done they were scarlet from boots to hair. Crawling out under the smoking shoulders of the butchered giant they saw Edith circling dangerously near the rocks, risking herself and the plane in her eagerness to help should her chance come. They signaled that all was well, and she wheeled farther from the shattered wall.

During their long descent Edith had lost sight of the men among the huge blocks littering the sides of the crater. She rediscovered them a second after she observed the monster starting to back in response to her father's kick. With her binoculars she made out her father peering through the entrance to the cave. Until that moment she had not seen the monster. From her height it was as inconspicuous as an ant crawling about among the jumbled blocks. Unless one knew exactly where to look it was safe from detection.

Her feelings as she watched the gigantic brute trying to break its way into the cave may be imagined. The three muffled detonations in rapid succession, the third of which blew off the monster's head, reassured her. Someone's brain was still working in that cave. She saw the entire carcass of the brute bound from the ledge as if in astonished pain. Descending with a dead slap that echoed round the crater, the massive body struck the ledge, the enormous hind legs kicked convulsively, the powerful tail thrashed the flying blocks of cement, and with a last shudder from shoulder to rump the monster became still. The neck was not withdrawn. Guessing what had happened Edith sighed her thankfulness and stood by to help.

"Well," said Anderson, "is that a day's work? Does anyone want to go farther down?"

"Let us go down another hundred feet," Drake proposed. "So far we have passed only half a dozen blocks showing traces of inscriptions. I should like if possible to photograph one unbroken record. Ole has a pocket camera."

"Very well," the Captain agreed. "You and Ole keep in sight of this ledge while Lane and I take a look round the cave. There may be an ooze of oil at the back. Didn't you smell petroleum, Doctor, when we were waiting for that shot to go off?"

"I can't say that I did, but then I was so busy waiting. Drake, why don't you try that other unbroken bluff over to the left? If our theory is right you should find inscriptions, if anywhere, either on what was the surface of the cement before the explosion or on a concealed layer some inches deeper into the cement. If you can find an unbroken stretch you will have the revised version of the prehistoric fight. What we want is the original histo-

ry. Look for a place where only a few inches of the outer surface have been flaked off by the explosion."

While Lane and Anderson explored the cave, Drake and Ole descended in quest of inscriptions. Edith hovered above the climbers like an anxious robin over her fledglings.

"That's for you," Ole remarked with a grin.

"Mind your own business," Drake snapped.

Reaching the unbroken cliff which Lane had pointed out they found it blank.

"There's another over there," Ole observed hopefully, indicating a smooth vertical expanse about a thousand yards to their left.

"Yes, but if we go there we shall be out of sight of the ledge. "

"It's safe enough." He glanced up at the circling airplane. "Take my tip and don't let her see you running away."

With a muttered comment on Ole's meddling stupidity Drake started over the intervening blocks like an excited crab. His impetuosity was rewarded.

"Hurry up with your camera," he shouted. "This is just what we want."

They regretted keenly that Ole had not packed a hundred pounds of films instead of his dynamite. Five or six acres of cliff were covered with representations of monsters in every conceivable posture. Evidently this was a record of importance.

Both strata of inscriptions were represented on the cliff. In several places the impact of the bombarding blocks from the eruption had flaked off great scales from the outer layer of cement, baring the original inscriptions. The unscarred surface bore the revised version. After deliberating they decided to photograph the entire cliff in three dozen sections, the limit of Ole's films. This seemed better than concentrating on individual inscriptions. Drake hoped from enlargement of the three dozen pictures to obtain a complete record of everything on the cliff.

Anderson and Lane meanwhile were busy in the cave. To the Captain's disappointment they found no trace of oil.

"You have that lake beyond the blowholes," Lane expostulated. "Isn't that enough?"

"No. I want to endow a school of whales."

"For that rotten pun you deserve to lose everything from your shirt to your soul. Let us get into the fresh air. This vile dust is choking me."

"It has a moldy smell, hasn't it?"

"You're right," the Doctor agreed. "I wonder what it is." His interest was aroused.

"Take some out to the daylight and see. These matches were made by the devil only to burn my fingers."

Lane scooped up a double handful of the dust and hurried to the entrance. "Spores," he announced excitedly.

Although he did not recognize it he had met the enemy.

"I'm no wiser," the Captain remarked.

"These are masses of seeds from some fernlike plant. Lord, I wish I had a microscope. Haven't you ever seen the underside of a fern frond?" The Captain nodded. "Well, all that brown stuff on it is millions of fern seeds finer than dust."

"But this stuff is grayish green."

"That makes it all the more interesting. These are the spores, the life germs, of some unknown plant. I am sure of it. We must take back all we can carry. Cram your pockets."

Lane dived into the cave and set the example. Reluctantly enough Anderson followed suit.

"Over by the wall where we haven't trampled the stuff should be a good place," Lane continued. "Sift it through with your fingers and save anything not finer than dust."

Presently Lane rose to his feet with an exclamation of delight.

"Look what I've found!"

Anderson followed him to the light. The Doctor was lost in the contemplation of a tiny desiccated frond of some plant that resembled a fern yet most decidedly was not a fern. The dried foliage, more like a rank mold than a decent plant, was of hairlike fineness.

"Where have I seen something like this before?" Lane muttered to himself. "It was alive. Where the deuce was it?"

"In Heaven, before you were born," the Captain suggested. He also was an admirer of Maeterlinck, having read Ole's bedraggled *Bluebird*.

"Rot," said the Doctor. He was not an admirer of the romantic Belgian. "But your suggestion, by the law that action and reaction are equal and opposite, recalls the place where I did see this plant growing. It was next door to hell."

"San Francisco?" the Captain hazarded.

"No. On that beach of monsters. Ole blew the stomach out of one and in the process ripped the lining. Some of this plant, as fresh as newly cut lettuce, dropped out of the rent. I remember now. We planned to collect some on our way back to the ship. When we returned we were too heavily loaded to take on more. Also it was getting dark. So we had to leave it till next day. By morning the oil and slush oozing into the hole in the ice where the plant lay had made soup of everything. Well, this more than makes up for our loss. I shall have a chance to settle whether life remains dormant under the right conditions, practically indefinitely."

"Ah, your theory of immortal whales?"

"The laugh will be on you when I make this greenish dust grow. The chances are infinity to nothing that the living plant disappeared from the Earth millions of years ago."

Lane was wrong in his first statement. Less than twenty-four hours later he found that the laugh was on him. A nasty, sardonic laugh it was at that. He spoke from insufficient knowledge.

Between them he and Drake had reconstructed the history of the perished race whose records the rigors of the Antarctic solitudes had preserved unviolated. Drake as decipherer, and Lane as scientist, working together imagined themselves in possession of all the essential details of the catastrophe which had swept intelligence from the Earth when the poles were regions of perpetual summer. In the light of what happened less than twenty-four hours after Lane's discovery of the greenish spores, neither he nor Drake is now willing to claim finality for their conclusions. Before the struggle in which they all but perished, both were confident of their theory. It explained all the facts in their possession and it was rational.

Their desperate fight for life showed them that they had not visualized one half of the truth. What they had guessed was the obvious part. Their failure to reconstruct a single less obvious detail has taught them modesty. Neither Drake nor Lane will now admit that he knows more than a small fraction of that obliterated history.

Lane moreover for the present is disinclined to speculate on the obscure science behind the history. He prefers to leave fundamental theories and explanations to Ole. And it may be said in passing that Ole's most ambitious theory has already attracted numerous followers. His fame, however, is rather mixed. His following is as large as Lane's is select. For the notorious conservatism of professional scientists holds them back in following Ole in regions where the more adventurous layman rushes in whooping.

Lane had been so absorbed in his greenish spores that he failed to note the disappearance of Ole and Drake. They came into sight just as Anderson began to swear. Joining the others they voted it a day's work, firmly strapped on their packs, and started up the thousand-foot scramble to the skyline. Topping it shortly before sunset they marched fast and reached the site of their last night's camp before dusk. Edith joined them presently.

"Shall we camp here?" she asked.

"We might as well," Anderson replied. "It is convenient to the crater. Have you any reason for wishing to go farther back toward the oil lake?"

"Perhaps not. You can decide best. The wind seems to be rising. Up on the three-thousand-foot level it is blowing half a gale—thirty miles an hour from the north. Camped here in the open we shall have trouble with the plane if the current descends during the night."

"There is only a four- or five-mile breeze blowing from the southeast down here at present," the Captain pointed out. "So far as I can see the weather is exactly what it has been the past nine days."

"All right. If you are satisfied I am. Only I thought if there is any danger of the wind rising in the night it would be easier to manage the plane in the shelter of the south bank of the oil lake."

"There is no danger, I am sure. This breeze won't go to more than six miles an hour at any time during the night. Your speaking of the lake reminds me of something. Will you take Ole and fly to the cache on the south shore for more matches? He can dig them out."

"Of course. We shall be back in half an hour."

"And while you are there," her father begged, "dig up some sort of a tin can for me. Bring one with a lid. I want to pack these precious spores safely away."

"Very well. I shall bring a fresh tin of ship bread and we can have a real feast. I know how to make a heavenly hoosh with hardtack and corned beef. You may have the tin."

"And the rest of you the stew, I suppose?"

"If you go shares on your blessed spores," she laughed, "we'll do likewise on the banquet."

When she returned Anderson thankfully emptied his pockets of the greenish-gray mess.

"Be careful," Lane admonished, hopping about excitedly on the frozen snow. "You're losing half of the stuff. The breeze carries it off like smoke."

The Captain did indeed lose about a pound and three quarters. Finally turning his pockets inside out he gave them a thorough dusting in the breeze. Although Lane was more careful he also lost half a pound to the wind.

"Well," he said, "I have enough anyway." He slapped down the lid. "With this I should be able to prove whether or not the life principle can remain indefinitely in abeyance."

"The great Swedish chemist Arrhenius almost says it can," Ole informed them. "He has a theory that life originates on planets by the life seeds from another planet. The seeds drift across empty spaces for ages till they strike a planet cool enough for life. When the life seeds drift too close to the sun or some other star the heat destroys them."

Lane received Arrhenius' famous theory with the silence of disrespect. He was already familiar with it as a speculation of the well known physicists Tait and Stewart. To him it had always been the example par excellence of the incompetence of the average scientist to reason straight about another man's specialty. The Captain thought he saw the point.

"The hen and the egg over again, isn't it? What starts life on the first planet? How do your precious life seeds begin in the first place?"

"They're not mine," Ole retorted indignantly. "Arrhenius invented them. The life came to the first planet from another planet."

"Exactly," the Captain sneered. "And when the chain is complete you have perpetual motion. Go and patent it."

The dispute becoming personal, the pacific Drake intervened.

"Both of you are right. Ole can't be held responsible for any foolishness but his own. Nor can you, Captain, be blamed for criticizing a scientific theory. The ones that I have looked into are all like that. They assume the egg in order to produce the hen to explain the egg.

"And you," the Doctor hotly interposed, "being a bat-eyed archaeologist, are a competent critic of science. You may be able to read prehistoric picture books but you couldn't tell the difference between evolution and relativity. Just because you mess about with fossilized opinions you set yourself up as a judge of modern science."

"Not at all," Drake retorted. "I only say that my training in antiquities enables me to tell fresh eggs from Chinese. And if Arrhenius' perpetual motion theory of the origin of life isn't a scientific bad egg I have no nose. One doesn't need a brain to test things as far gone as that."

"Now you two," said Edith, giving each of them a shake, "eat your hoosh before it freezes. You can fight afterward."

"We won't want to," Drake grinned, "with a gallon of food under our belts."

"True," the Doctor agreed. "If those poor monsters over there had been properly fed they might have made great pets. The struggle for subsistence ruined their tempers."

"I wonder if the blowholes will perform tonight?" Edith asked.

"No," Ole confidently asserted. "By my theory they should not go off till early tomorrow forenoon."

"Your theory be blowed," the Captain growled. He was jealous. "You're always theorizing and always wrong."

But Ole was right. There was no flare-up till nine o'clock the next morning.

19

Attacked

After the meal they luxuriously crawled into their warm sleeping bags and lay talking for an hour. Having exterminated the adjacent rookery of monsters they saw no necessity for setting a watch. The chances of any adventurous prowlers from the interior of the crater foraging the icy wilderness were negligible.

They decided to have a good night's sleep and be fresh in the morning for a deeper descent into the crater. The day following Edith had reserved to take her father to the unruined paradise which she and Ole had discovered. The others were to march to the oil lake and wait there for Edith to take them across. They were then to return to the ship for a second attempt to reach the black barrier of Anderson's first objective. Although they had not yet devised a means for traversing the dangerous trough of blowholes which they had blundered on in their first expedition, nevertheless they felt confident that necessity would stimulate their inventiveness to a safe plan.

Anderson was more determined than ever to reach his first goal. There was no doubt that the black rock barrier beyond the trough was the wall of another vast ruined paradise. Therefore, he argued, there must be oil in its vicinity. What was true of one hole in the ice, he said, must be true of another just like it. Lane had considerably modified his veto of the possibility of finding oil in such a formation. The deciding factor in his change of opinion was his discovery that the black cement was not of natural origin.

"What do you make of it all, Lane?" the Captain asked from his sleeping bag.

"I told you the other day. We have discovered the final product of an intelligence that vanished from the Earth before America was a continent. That intelligence, I believe, either deliberately or accidentally solved the problem of life. For some reasons I think it more probable that the initial discovery was a blunder.

"The authors of the mistake were impotent to control it. Everything we have discovered points to their inability to direct their creation. As I said the other day they realized what they had done only when it was too late, foresaw its probable consequences, and destroyed their entire civilization in the attempt to nullify their blunder. That they failed to carry out their destructive purpose completely is self-evident. Had they succeeded not one of those dead monsters over there would ever have come into existence."

"If they knew enough to create life," Ole objected, "they must have known how to destroy it."

"Not necessarily. An idiot with a test tube of the right sort of germs might start a plague that not all the doctors of the world could control. And so with this thing. The minute specks of living matter which they created—I am assuming the process for the sake of illustration only—multiplied like bacteria. Now what is the last remedy for a plague-infested village? Why, to burn it to the ground. So possibly those rash experimenters learned. But the seeds of life—again I am merely guessing—had been scattered, broadcast over the country by the winds.

"What was to be done? Fire the whole country? That would have been useless. For it is impossible to bake the soil over thousands of square miles

to a depth of several feet. I am assuming from tangible evidence that the plague of life had passed so far beyond control that the very soil was impregnated with its germs.

“What would they do? What could they do but seal every mile of the infected soil? No air must reach the life spores. Light must be excluded. They systematically set about burying the fertility of their continent under millions of tons of airtight cement.”

“But why should they bring slow starvation on themselves,” Edith objected, “if, as you say, they had not created any dangerous animals to prey on them, but only the merest beginnings of life?”

“For one very good reason, my darling angel child. We may assume that their intelligence was higher than ours. Otherwise they could not have created life. Knowing enough even to blunder onto the secret of life they certainly would be competent to decide whether their creation was in line with orderly, normal evolution. Finding that their artificial life spores all were but the potential ancestors of abominations to be evolved to maturity millions of years in the future, they looked forward to the probable state of the world as a result of their mistake. They foresaw hell on Earth.

“There was no immediate danger. There was not even the possibility of slight discomfort for millions upon millions of years. But there was the absolute certainty at the end of ages of a world that a decent beast wouldn’t live in. They weighed one against the other—the certainty of continued happiness for their race for a few million years longer against the equal certainty of hell on Earth forever thereafter. And they decided that their protracted happiness, even their continued existence, was not worth its deferred cost.

“I have said that they were intelligent. The deliberate sacrifice of their own happiness for a future that would never dream of their existence proves my assertion. It is your stupid man who has the soul of a hog. Drake, you go on.”

“Let me first knock the stuffing out of one of Ole’s numerous theories,” Drake began. “Then I can go on where the Doctor stopped. Ole maintains that the intelligent beings—I won’t call them human, for they were too unselfish to deserve the epithet—who depicted all those acres of fantastic monsters actually saw the creatures whose outlines they pressed into the wet cement. He contends that the artists drew from living models. That I flatly deny. I admit that they saw the models which inspired them. But they saw with the mind’s eye only. Lane, I believe, is right. They actually created nothing more terrifying to behold than tiny specks of jelly.”

“You must prove your theory,” Ole exploded, rising bodily in his sleeping bag to defend his offspring.

"It proved itself the first time I saw your precious photographs. Of all those thousands of different monsters represented in your pictures, not one was in a posture that by any stretch of the imagination could be called natural. Every last one of them is drawn in some grotesque attitude that would set an Apache artist's teeth on edge. There has been a deliberate and successful attempt to make each posture unnatural in at least one detail. The variations are not mere conventions. They are systematic, infinitely various, and exceedingly ingenious.

"That gave me my first clue. Whatever race designed those inscriptions had done its best to convey the information that the beasts were in a definite sense imaginary. They were not imaginary in the sense that a fire-breathing dragon is fictitious. By the help of half a ton of books I learned that such creatures were not flesh-and-bone impossibilities. They might have come into being if natural evolution had started from different beginnings. Lane helped me a lot on this. My own first guess was merely a jump in the dark.

"Being ideal representations of nonexistent but possible creatures, what could they signify? The answer was immediate: the results of an elaborate scientific prophecy.

"Even I, unscientific antiquarian as I am, have heard of those astronomers who predicted the exact spot in the heavens in which a planet—Neptune—that no human eye had ever seen, would be found at a definite time on a certain night. And in spite of Lane's harsh estimate of my scientific incompetence, I have also admired that splendid discovery by the Scotch mathematician who foresaw from his equations our wireless waves and described their behavior a generation before wireless became practical.

"Knowing these antiquarian scraps of scientific history I let my imagination loose. If it is possible for us to predict unseen planets and foretell in detail great scientific advances, why should not a more intelligent race beat us at our own game? We predict only physical things. Why shouldn't Lane, if he had brains enough, predict the future course of a hen's life from an examination of the unhatched egg?"

"No reason at all," Lane laughed. "Some day they will do better than that. You should let your imagination go."

"It might never come back to Earth if I let loose altogether. Well, I made my working guess. I supposed that the authors of those inscriptions were predicting the distant evolution of some form of life. Taking that as a foundation I tried what I could build.

"You remember my remarking the entire absence of human figures from the inscriptions. Not one of those thousands of creatures represented could by any flight of the imagination be considered above brute intelli-

gence. The artists had taken great trouble to depict in each instance a savage, almost brainless stupidity.

"Now I had also noticed immediately the vivid and lifelike pictograms of sanguinary battles. Putting these two facts together, the total absence of all higher intelligence and the repeated depiction of terrible conflicts, I reached what seemed an obvious conclusion.

"The authors of the inscriptions, I inferred, were predicting their own annihilation by an enemy as yet not fully created. Further, they predicted the subsequent reign of brutal anarchy and nonintelligence. The inscriptions were a forecast of what was to happen in the course of evolution. Intelligence, they predicted, was to disappear from the Earth. Brute force, nature gone mad, and a chaos of living things were to rule in the place of dethroned order.

"So much for the prophecy. Now for the recorded history. Almost at the first glance I recognized that two distinct periods of art, separated by a vast interval of time, were represented in the inscriptions. Between the earlier and the later the technique of pictorial design had changed fundamentally. The art of both periods is developed almost to perfection. Nevertheless, ages separate the two schools, and they belong to the same race. I need not bore you with the evidence. It is of the same sort as that which enables archaeologists to say at a glance whether a sculpture is Greek or Egyptian and further to fix its date relatively to some standard object.

"Notice now the extraordinary and significant detail. The two periods of art, although widely separated in time, were of equal brilliance. During the ages between the first and second there had been no decline. We have no parallel to this in recorded history. A few centuries, or at most two or three thousand years, sees the rise to approximate perfection and the sure descent to mediocrity.

"This fact puzzled me more than all the other difficulties together, and it still is baffling although to a lesser degree. I was totally unable to decide which inscriptions were the earlier. The inscriptions of both periods depicted struggles and, so far as I could see for a long time, struggles of almost identical character. What was the obvious conclusion? The earlier inscriptions prophesied the ghastly conflict, the later recorded its occurrence. I became convinced that the forgotten race early foresaw its extinction in the shadowy future, lived for ages in undiminished vigor anticipating destruction, and finally was overwhelmed in the height of its power, surviving only long enough to leave a record of impending and absolute defeat.

"I then tried on this hypothesis to decide which set of inscriptions was the earlier. The net result was nil. Either the problem was beyond me or I had gone stale.

"The intense scrutiny was not, however, a dead waste. A suspicion which had long been germinating in my subconscious mind struggled up to certainty. One set of inscriptions undoubtedly, and possibly the other also, was in cipher. The actual conflict depicted was merely the symbol of a deeper war. It was not beast against beast, but beast against intelligence. Unmistakably the battles of one set of inscriptions were symbols of a conflict that was not material. What then could have been its nature?

"By a process of exclusion I decided that the only rational guess was a struggle against natural laws. The conflict was not material; it could not be against spirits. It therefore most probably was intellect against brute nature, the endless struggle of intelligence to be master of itself and creator of its own fate. The symbolic set of inscriptions, I decided, must record the struggles of the long-extinct race to subdue nature. In short, the inscription must be a summary of the more important scientific discoveries and technical achievements of the race.

"The next question was, why should they wish to conceal their scientific knowledge? My answer was immediate. It was also, I am now convinced, inadequate. The scientific knowledge of the race, I reasoned, must have been entrusted to a particular cult whose business it was to increase and apply the store of wisdom. To prevent disasters this cult by means of hieroglyphics and symbolic language would conceal from the uninitiated all dangerous discoveries. Only a history of the severe struggle to master the secrets of life and the material universe would be recorded, so that later generations of seekers should not repeat the experiments and encounter the same dangers.

"It was now natural to ascribe the purely symbolic, or scientific, writings to the earlier period. The later inscriptions I took to be a record of the destruction of the race by the creations of its own science. The ruin which their scientists early predicted overtook them, and the perishing race left a warning to intelligent life, should such ever again inhabit the world, not to repeat the uncontrollable blunder which had destroyed its first perpetrators.

"This hypothesis received a startling confirmation when we discovered that lump of black cement with the embedded inscriptions. The interior inscriptions, those which had been cemented over, belonged to what I had decided was the earlier period, those on the face of the fragment to the latter. Evidently the attempt at concealment had been much more thorough than I dreamed. The race not only disguised their dangerous scientific knowledge in ambiguous symbolism; it actually buried the obnoxious wisdom beneath several inches of a cement as hard as diamond.

"What could have driven them to such drastic caution? Only the desperate determination to obliterate the last traces of their scientific knowledge. And why? Because in the final conflict they had found its conse-

quences terrible beyond belief. As to the nature of their dangerous knowledge and the aspect of the monstrous catastrophe which it engendered, I can only follow Lane in his speculations. That race blundered onto the secret of life. Creating it, they fashioned the seeds of abominations. This they realized. And they foresaw that with the lapse of ages evolution would breed from their beginnings, innocuous enough at the time and for millions of years to come, a swarming, uncontrollable multitude of monstrosities without intelligence.

"Lane has outlined their probable motives in choosing for themselves wholesale destruction. Until we shall have spent several years on the inscriptions we can venture no theory as to how they created life."

"I have a theory!" Ole exploded. He had been suffering for twenty minutes.

"Pipe down," the Captain ordered. "Lane, how do you account for all those dead monsters over there by the blowholes? And for the thousands on the beach, to say nothing of the half million I saw boiling up from the bottom of the ocean?"

"Easily. Those originators of life destroyed their creation, I pointed out, by burying the fertile soil of their continent under millions of tons of airtight cement. A job like that takes time. The longer they worked at it the slower became their rate of progress. And for a very simple reason. As the cemented region grew the food supply diminished. They took care, of course, to cement over the most dangerous places first, leaving the lighter work for the last few survivors of the race.

"Now where did they get the rock and other material for making their untold millions of tons of the hardest cement?"

"Out of the ground, of course. Mines."

"Exactly. That crater we were in today is the ruin of one of their mines. The vast circular depression that Ole and Edith visited is another. It fortunately is still undestroyed. That black barrier you are so determined to explore is the ruined floor of another, heaved up by the explosion of vast quantities of oil and natural gas. How many more there may be dotted about this frozen continent I hope some day to discover.

"Well, as I see it, they mined out those enormous holes to get material for their cement. The execution of so vast a project as theirs demanded the highest intelligence and extraordinary engineering skill. I suspect that they sunk those pits so deep in order to utilize the internal heat of the Earth. In their day, millions of years ago, the heat at comparatively shallow depths must have been much greater than it is today in our deepest mines. For the same purpose, and also perhaps in the search for rarer minerals required in making their time-outlasting cement, they drove enormous tunnels, gal-

leries, and vast pockets far into the rocks at every stage of their work. We have heard the tides of oil and water surging along them under our feet.

“Now for your animals. The race in its prime having cemented all the most dangerous regions, the diminishing survivors had only to complete the project by cementing the easier places. Their task was to seal the mines and subterranean chambers. The mines are these vast holes in this forsaken wilderness. The one we explored this morning certainly has been plastered with cement. They did a thorough job. That black wall must have been yards thick before the gas explosion blew the whole interior to bits.

“The first engineers, foreseeing that the last survivors must perish of starvation before the completion of their work, took the precaution of making the sides of their mines perpendicular. It was extremely improbable that every square yard of the floors, walls, and roofs of the open mines and subterranean galleries would be safely cemented over before the last worker perished. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of acres of free soil would be left exposed to the light, air, and moisture. The dangerous life seeds polluting these extensive uncemented areas would live and develop, and with the lapse of ages evolve into abominations. That is why they made those pits, three miles deep, with perpendicular walls as smooth as glass. Whatever bred in those mines and galleries would live and die there. Soil and heat alike eventually becoming exhausted, the last vestiges of life in the mines and tunnels would perish. We happen to have arrived before the natural end, which may not come for millions of years yet.

“Why don’t we find the mighty engines which those great workers must have used? Those which they left exposed to the air were rust a million years ago. Stone will outlast iron, and this cement, hard as diamond, would outlast the finest steel. As for such of their machines as they used in their tunnels and caves, I confidently expect to find traces, perhaps even one or two complete engines. For I intend to explore thoroughly every mile of those subterranean galleries from here to the South Pole if necessary, and from there to far under the floor of the Antarctic Ocean.

“I am convinced that the age-long action of heat and water has slowly widened the tunnels and extended them far out under the ocean. The roof of one of these, weakening under the same course, gave way, letting in the ocean. You saw the backwash of oil and dead beasts blown up by the steam when the returning wave burst through to the subterranean fires. The monsters, I suspect, came from another such paradise as the one Ole and Edith discovered. I shouldn’t wonder if it turned out to be the one you are set on visiting.

“I have also a theory, as Ole might say, concerning the origin of your oil. These monsters have been living, evolving, multiplying, and dying in the galleries and uncemented mines for millions of years, literally for ages of

geologic time. Their constantly decomposing carcasses are responsible for the lakes and oceans of oil which, I feel confident, swing their black tides deep down under this polar ice cap.

"Now, one last thing, and I shall have done. We've been talking an hour and it's time we all went to sleep. I am willing to bet my specimens, including the incomparable devil chick, against your oil lake that when we visit the unruined mine the day after tomorrow, Edith and I shan't find a single inscription on its walls. No other pit besides the one we explored today, I am convinced, will show the trace of an inscription. One record, the authors of the inscriptions rightly surmised, would be sufficient. So why waste their labor in leaving a score? The first record, the one which they later cemented over, was inscribed near the beginning of their gigantic labor. They were just about to cement over the walls of the first vast mine, now grown so unwieldy as to be unmanageable. They decided to leave a record of the harsh science which was driving them to suicide.

"Accordingly, as they worked, they pressed into the unset cement the secret symbolism of their fatal discoveries. This record they intended as a warning to their successors should intelligence ever again visit the Earth. Thousands of years later, still toiling at their stupendous task, they realized fully its crushing magnitude and the horror of the doom which they labored to nullify. While their own end still was thousands of years in the future they decided to obliterate forever the record of the knowledge which had driven their race down the long, slow way to death. Returning to their first mine they cemented over the dangerous science which was their ruin. Now let us go to sleep."

"Not yet," Ole expostulated. "You have no theory of how they created life. Your science comes to a dead halt. Now I have a theory—"

"Shut up, Ole!" the Captain roared. "We want to sleep."

"Shut up yourself!" Ole bellowed, struggling to his feet, sleeping bag and all. "It is always 'Shut up Ole.' The rest of you gab all day and rave all night. I never get a chance to say anything. Now you are going to listen to me and learn something for once. I have a theory," he shouted, "and you've got to accept it because it is common sense and the only true theory of life."

They were sound asleep already.

Ole, however, was not to be balked. He talked to the bags and, having delivered himself, joined his audience in slumber.

Edith was the first to awake. She first noticed an oppressive warmth. Not yet fully aroused she turned over on her side for a last nap. The sense of discomfort increased. Her hair, she imagined, had fallen over her face as she turned. Some strands evidently had got into her mouth.

Still lazy, she tried to eject the supposed hair with her tongue. Failing, she used her fingers. The suspected hair having an unusual feel she held it

before her eyes for examination. In the semidarkness she saw that it was green. Startled, she looked more attentively. What she saw was a mass of fernlike foliage of hairlike fineness. It was the enemy.

20 Desperate

Edith's cries brought the others, unable to get out of their sleeping bags, struggling to their feet. The mouths of the bags were choked with thick masses of the hairlike vegetation.

Freeing their heads from the entangling meshes they stared out over a dense, matted jungle of green hair five feet high.

To the south numerous vivid mounds marked the thickly overgrown carcasses of the asphyxiated monsters. To the north stretched a dense mat of impenetrable vegetation disappearing in a dark green cloud on the horizon.

A hundred yards beyond the mounded monsters the tangled green mass ended abruptly, save for a single band a hundred yards broad reaching to the base of the black rocks. There the band stopped. It marked the course which the men had taken across the ice on their return from the crater.

Were their ears deceived? They stood motionless, five blunted pillars festooned with great streamers and wreaths of the rank, funguslike green weed, listening in fear to the rustling crepitation. The whole mass was growing audibly.

Then they noticed a deep green discoloration of the ice on the west side of the broad band between the blowholes and rocks. The edges of the band were not sharp, like the edge of a cornfield. The green mass, tapering down at the boundaries, merged with the ice and snow. The green tinge on the ice far beyond the limit of growing vegetation was the dust of innumerable spores blown from the living plants by the east wind which rose with the dawn.

Attempting to move they found themselves bound from feet to armpits by living ropes woven from thousands of growing, hairlike strands. They fully realized their desperate situation only when Edith with a frightened cry called attention to the airplane. It had disappeared beneath a tangled mound of green ropes. Even if they could extricate the machine it would be impossible to rise. That matted vegetation would stop a thousand-horsepower tractor in less than a hundred yards.

"It is those infernal spores," the Doctor said quietly. "See how our track from the rocks to the blowholes is marked by the filthy weeds. All that started from the dust Anderson and I shed from our boots and our clothes as we marched. The sea of green rope between us and the horizon grew up

in the night from the spores we lost to the wind. Evidently this stuff grows very slowly at first, then like a fire, or we should have noticed it before we went to sleep. So much for theory. Has anyone a plan for getting out of this? Don't get panicky. Take your time."

"We might try to break our way through to the clean ice east of the band," the Captain suggested, "and march round the stuff."

"Not much chance of beating it to the ship, I'm afraid. Still, that's one plan. Any more?"

There was no response.

"Well!" said Lane, "I suppose it is forward march. Not that I am particularly anxious to return to civilization with this blunder on my head. My stupidity has let loose one of the enemies which that forgotten race gave its life to chain. Having done the asinine thing I now see how it could have been avoided. Evidently these spores require cold and moisture in order to grow like this. Possibly a low temperature actually forces the growth beyond all nature. In the dry, warm pockets in the cement, sealed from light and moisture, the spores would lie dormant indefinitely.

"Probably what we found is the mass of spores from a growth which started from a few dusted off the bodies of the last workers. When the vegetation had exhausted the soil and moisture in the pocket it ceased to grow. In the warmth, I imagine, the growth was slow and natural. The spores have retained their life all these millions of years, waiting for a fool like me to broadcast them over the ideal medium for their luxuriant growth and propagation. Did those dead workers foresee the ice ages ahead? Did they seal the caves against the escape of this fiend to its stimulating cold? I don't know. Such is my theory, and it is my last. Which way, Anderson?"

"Head northeast. Ole, you're the strongest. Go first till you give in. We must head off the stuff before it grows over that bay against the rocks to the left, Then we can climb along the rocks and beat it to the east—if we can. It is an inch higher than it was when we began talking."

Ole made about twenty feet. Panting and sweating he stopped for breath. He made another two feet and collapsed in the green slush,

"All right, Ole," the Captain said, taking his place. "Fall behind while I have a go."

Anderson gave out at the third yard.

"Drake, you're next."

Drake made less than a yard. Lane followed with a yard and a half. Edith shoved. And so it went until complete exhaustion overtook them less than a hundred feet from their starting place. By now the green mass grew high above their heads when they stood erect.

"I can do no more," Anderson panted. "We might as well give up."

Saying nothing they flung themselves down on the green mess they had trampled. Presently Edith got to her feet and beckoned to Drake. He followed her back along the green tunnel. The hairlike mass at the farther end was already a foot high. This was a second growth springing rankly up from the trampled slush of the first.

"I wish you to know," Edith began when they reached the end, "that I have always loved you. We shall not get out of here. I feel no shame in telling you."

"Why didn't you tell me before?" he said, touched to the heart. "I never knew you cared that way for me, although I hoped that some day you might, darling. We shall die here. Let us forget the past and not think of the cold eternity before us. The present is enough."

They spent their priceless moments as only lovers know how. Death might strangle them before night, certainly before morning. These few moments were their eternity.

Years later, it seemed to them, they heard someone ripping through the young growth in the tunnel. It was Ole.

"The Doctor sent me to fetch some grub," he apologized guiltily.

Edith's heart gave a great leap. While there is appetite there is hope. Her father's head had started working again.

"Come on," she said to Drake, "we shall be married after all."

They found Lane and the Captain sitting in silence. Anderson's face was expressionless. The Doctor glanced up at Edith's happy face, and a spasm of pain contracted his own. For he had sent Ole to fetch, not food, but a hundred pounds of dynamite. He had hoped to end the misery of all of them painlessly and instantaneously without Edith's foreknowledge.

"Have you thought of a way out?" she asked hopefully.

"Yes," he said. "But seeing you I haven't the courage to take it."

She guessed.

"John and I," she said, laying her hand on Drake's arm, "will go back again to the end of the tunnel where you can't see us. I'm not afraid."

"But I am," he said.

She stood looking down at him, all the love and affection of her past happy life in her eyes.

"You needn't be afraid. I never was frightened of the dark."

Ole joined them, dragging his moss-grown pack. Anderson glared at him.

"Why didn't you do it back there instead of coming here to scare the girl to death?"

"I'm not going to do it. You are. Suicide and murder are against my religion."

"Blowing you to hell is the only good thing about this whole business. Hand me a cap and cut off a three-inch fuse."

In spite of himself Ole began to fumble. His half-frozen fingers refused to pick out the cap. Then searching for his knife to cut the fuse he remembered what had become of it. He looked at Edith.

"You couldn't fetch my knife, could you?"

"No, stupid," she laughed. "How could I fly back to the tunnel?"

"Here," the Captain exclaimed, impatiently brushing him aside, "I'll do it if you haven't brains enough to use your teeth." Drawing out his knife he opened the blade and gave Ole a sour look.

"I've a good mind to cut your throat," he said. "They can't hang me."

"Then you will go to hell for sure," Ole asserted with certain confidence.

Working in silence Anderson methodically set about his business. Lane still sat in the green slush, trying not to think of Edith. Presently he rose to his feet.

"The blowholes will spout in a moment," he said. "I just felt the suspicion of a tremor."

Involuntarily Anderson paused in his work.

"You're right. Well, we shall add to the general celebration in a minute or two."

The violent shaking began and ended with unexpected suddenness, throwing them down in the slush. A dull thudding in the air announced the kindling of the flame cones.

"Gas, oil!" Lane shouted.

In his excitement he was incapable of giving coherent expression to the association of ideas which had flashed across his memory. The others started away from him. Even Edith drew back in alarm. Although they were about to die it seemed a terrible thing that one of their number should go out of life mad.

"Don't you remember, Ole?" he continued, barely able to utter the words for emotion. "The oil from the shale on the beach oozed down into the hole where that green stuff lay. That plant was the same as this. What destroyed it? Oil! The whole mass was dissolved, a mess of brown sludge when we saw it next. Oil is its natural enemy! Those gas flames made me think of oil. Thank God for memory!"

They still thought him demented.

"Nitric acid might as well be its natural enemy," Drake remarked, "for all the good it will do us. Where are we to get oil?"

Drake had not yet learned that genius is the gift for making the most of circumstances.

"Where?" the Doctor shouted. "From the tank of the airplane, of course. Edith, can you spare two hundred gallons and still have enough petrol to take us to the south shore of the oil lake?"

"Yes. It is less than a ten-minute fly. I can spare three hundred gallons if you need that much and have plenty to fly to the cache by the ship."

But Lane had not yet thought that far. Neither his own possible escape from death nor that of the party had yet come above his horizon. He was planning a greater deliverance.

"Break through to the plane, Ole," he ordered, "while I get the can."

The twelve feet to the oil tank took only half an hour. Hope had trebled their strength. The first petrol drawn was used to soak the spores in the can. They were then thrown away in the tunnel and the can washed clean.

"Strip that green devil off the plane somehow, the rest of you," Lane directed, "while I spread the petrol in the tunnel."

They went at the job like tigers.

"Look," Lane cried from the tunnel. "See what the soaked spores did."

Hurrying back they found him standing in a pool of brow muck. Like a field of dry flax before a fire the eight-foot wall of green hair was dissolving round the edges of the pool. The almost instantaneous decay ate like a flame into the impenetrable thicket.

Lane carefully spread his can of oil against the matted roots along the left side of the tunnel. When he returned with the second can a band of brown slush two feet broad marked the destruction wrought by the first.

Four hours later they had cleared the plane and opened up a straight alleyway through the matted tangle sufficiently broad and long enough for the plane to run along and take the air.

"Hang on to all your dynamite," Lane ordered. "I'll bring the can. Leave everything else."

Ole and Edith climbed into their places, Drake sat on the back of the seat clutching Ole round the neck, while Lane and the Captain disposing themselves on either side of Drake clung to him and to one another. The load, although considerable, was far below the plane's lifting capacity. Edith ran it down the long alleyway and lifted from the brown sludge with thirty feet to spare.

Their last look at the blowholes showed the green mounds all about them lit up by the cheery fires.

Rising to the thousand-foot level they saw beneath them a vivid green band twelve miles broad winding like a river due north toward the oil lake.

"That's what the wind did with the spores we lost last night. The stuff multiplies on itself like compound interest at ten thousand percent. Unless we stop its growth now this whole continent will be matted thick in a month."

"And then it will blow across the ocean to South America."

"Not if I can help it. We don't know yet whether it can multiply like this in a warmer climate. Freezing temperature seems to act on it like a violent stimulant. For all we know it might be controllable at ten degrees and perish at fifty. But I'm not going to find out. This plague will never get farther than that lake. Land near the cache, Edith. We shall need all the dynamite we have."

Anderson, guessing the Doctor's purpose, made no remonstrance. The oil had risen high in the lake during the night. Six inches more and it would begin spilling over the south barrier of the lake. But they could not wait for nature. The green plague river was broadening before their eyes. In half a day it would have streamed up the intervening three miles to the oil lake, surrounded it, and swept onto the desolate plain beyond in its ever swifter rush to the ocean.

Ole unearthed the pick and began digging furiously into the ice under the narrowest point of the barrier.

"How long will it take to fly across the lake, Edith?" Lane asked.

"Twenty minutes at the most."

"Then give your shots a twenty-minute fuse," Lane directed. "We shan't stay to see the show. The oil may catch when the dynamite explodes. All hands soak themselves in crude oil. We can't risk starting those infernal spores in a new place."

Setting the example Lane baled up several canfuls of the black oil and drenched himself from head to feet. Then he soused the plane. Having finished he passed the can to Drake and stood watching Anderson at his work. The Captain was saying nothing in the presence of his tragedy.

"Look here, Captain," Lane said, "all this is due to my stupidity alone. I have lost your oil for you. In slight return I shall make you a present of the finest thousand-acre orange grove in California."

The proud temptation to refuse gave way to the memory of twenty years of cold and stink.

"I accept the sunshine and orange blossoms with all my thanks," the Captain replied.

"And while you are about that job," Lane continued, "put this in with the dynamite too." He handed the Captain his tobacco box containing the parasites which he had scraped from the monster's tail. "I shall not take another chance with any of the infernal diseases of the archæan age," he said.

Having planted the last charge Anderson soaked his clothing in oil before lighting all four fuses. He then clambered up on the plane with the others. They were off as fast as they could fly.

Twenty minutes passed, twenty-five, and they were well beyond the north shore of the lake speeding toward the ship. "Are you sure those fuses were dry?" Lane shouted above the roar of the propeller.

Anderson nodded. They flew another three minutes before hearing in rapid succession the four dull explosions which announced the release of the oil flood.

Nearing the ship they saw Bronson and the men on the ice near the petrol cache loafing about, exercising the dogs and the now sturdy devil chick.

"Out of here at once," Anderson ordered. "Is steam up?"

"Yes sir."

"Send four of the men to the petrol cache to fill the tank of the plane to capacity. Order the rest to get the sledges and their packs in shape for an immediate march to the coast. Hell's going to break loose."

Bronson obeyed orders on the run.

"Now Edith," Anderson continued, "you and Hansen stand by ready to follow the ship down the channel. If mud comes down and mires us fly as fast as you can to the nearest whaling station and send help. Ole will do the navigating. We shall pack to the coast and wait there for relief."

"Can I take the devil chick?" she pleaded.

"That brute? It's as big as a cow."

"The plane can lift it easily."

"Nothing doing. But," he added, seeing the tears in her eyes, "we'll herd the ugly beast along with us to the coast if we have to hike."

Bronson rejoined them to say that the plane was now ready for a thousand-mile flight.

"Very well. Get the ship out of here. Have the men ready to leave her at the first sign of trouble."

The men were already stowing their effects, including the obstinate devil chick, aboard the ship.

Bronson had gone but four steps when the ice leapt into a crimson glow "Get the men on the ice and run for the coast," Anderson shouted. The men needed no orders. They were swarming out as fast as they could. The appalling concussion swept over them just as they reached the ice. Looking south they saw the roof of the continent hurtling skyward. A vast gush of red flames surging up overtook the black mass, flattened along its underside in curling billows of crimson, and for an instant pressed the millions of tons of suspended rock and cement hard against the sky. Then it fell.

The fliers were already headed for the coast. Edith's last vision of the ship revealed one of the crew tugging desperately at the devil chick's head in a final attempt to get it ashore again. Failing, the man abandoned the wretched creature and jumped to save his own life.

The falling of the suspended rock had set up a choppy land tide of waves twenty feet high. Like a thunderclap the walls of the inlet met, parted, and met again. The ship was matches.

Explosion after explosion rolled the fleeing machine over and over in the turbulent air like a feather. But it was a well built plane, and nothing of consequence snapped.

The fliers, better than the men far behind reeling over the heaving ice, knew what might come at any instant. The oil which had gushed over the plain from the lake, to plunge down the flaming blowholes and generate vast quantities of gas, must still be rushing in a river of fire toward the subterranean reservoirs beneath the unruined paradise. That the two chains of underground lakes were connected they had good grounds for believing.

Their expectations were realized late that afternoon as they sped northeast in their flight toward the nearest whaling station. Neither has any memory of how they weathered the unimaginable tempest of detonations which shook the upper air from the Antarctic to Rio. The unruined paradise was ruined.

Four weeks later the whaling vessel *Orion* of Boston rescued a party of stunned and half-starved men shivering on the ice at the mouth of what had been the inlet. They were unable to give any coherent account of their experiences. Not a member of the crew had been lost. The expedition had returned with its life.

About *At the Mountains of Madness*

At the Mountains of Madness is obviously the centerpiece of our collection. It is Lovecraft's second-longest novella, second only to *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. It sprang ultimately from Lovecraft's life-long fascination with the Antarctic region. As a boy he followed avidly the many expeditions exploring the South Pole, and, as Jason Eckhardt has shown, he modeled several details of the Miskatonic expedition on that of Admiral Byrd ("Behind the Mountains of Madness: Lovecraft and the Antarctic in 1930", *Lovecraft Studies* 14, Spring 1987, pp. 31–38). His interest in the Antarctic was a twin to his interest in the starry heavens, and it is no surprise that *At the Mountains of Madness* combines both: space aliens found in the Antarctic. The link is a natural, because in Lovecraft's day the South Polar continent was so little known that many first thought it was a pair of separate landmasses. Antarctica was the unknown Antipodes, the Dark Side of the Earth. It was a Moon closer to home, a barren white desert more like the Moon than the rest of the Earth.

The novella certainly has some relation to Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, but, as S. T. Joshi rightly observes, it is not quite a sequel, at least not in the same sense as Jules Verne's "The Sphinx of the Ice Fields" is. The story does contain several overt tips of the hat to Poe, but there are about as many references to the paintings of Theosophist Nicholas Roerich, upon whose eerie ancient mountainscapes (inspired by his own quest for Shamballah) HPL based his conception of the towering city of the Old Ones. Thus it would be better to consider the Lovecraftian epic as being inspired in large measure by Poe, as also by Roerich (and Burroughs and Taine).

Let me direct you to a very fascinating book by Joscelyn Godwin, called *Arktos: The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival* (Kempton, Illinois: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1996), which discusses, among a great many other things, *At the Mountains of Madness* as one of several examples of fiction set among the mysteries of the North and South Poles. Godwin begins her survey with an intriguing bit of historical reporting, explaining how several of the pre-Socratic Greek thinkers, perhaps in dependence upon earlier Egyptian and Chaldean mages, theorized that the Earth's axis had not always tilted at its present angle of 23 1/2 degrees. At least this is the way their theory reads once corrected for a spherical Earth; they actually spoke just of the relative position and motions of the stars. The belief has been embraced by various modern esotericists, who paint a striking picture of the way the Earth used to be before some prehuman catastrophe tilted it over. They say its axis used to be perfectly perpendicular to the orbital ecliptic, its equator precisely parallel to the ecliptic. While things stood this way, the world was quite different. For one thing, there would have been no seasons. Temperatures would vary, of course, being hotter around the equator, colder at the poles, but most of the world would have enjoyed a perpetual spring. Even Antarctica could have supported life year-round. The year would have been a perfect 360 days long, with none of your intercalated leap years or days. Night and day would be the same duration the whole year in every given place, and they would always be of equal length, equinoctial. No months-long Arctic and Antarctic nights bereft of light and life. The stars above would seem to shift just a degree's worth every night, and by the end of a year their circuit would

have completed itself. Above the poles, the stars would seem to rotate like a bowl, which is what the ancients thought the sky was. To this age of near-universal temperate paradise correspond all the myths of a pre-Fall Golden Age, for after the disaster that tilted the globe, life would have become more difficult, the world a fiercer place to live. If there were any people living on the Earth during the catastrophe, they would certainly have perceived what happened as a Fall of Nature. But it seems more likely the changeover happened before the appearance of our species.

Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* reckons with great geological, biological, and climatic changes at the South Pole, with cycles of unknown life thrown into suspension as continents rose and fell. The freezing and thawing of the Old Ones, the latter thanks to the interloping of the Miskatonic explorers, cannot but remind us of the similar accidental resurrection of dreaming Cthulhu from his house at R'lyeh thanks to Johansen's hapless men. The whole scenario may take on new resonance when we apply to it this ancient/esoteric cosmological doctrine. We have in both cases a scenario in which life once thrived but became impossible due to geological revolutions on the globe. What once lived now sleeps, waiting for what? For the stars to become right again. What does that mean? Perhaps what they awaited was what our ancient and occult theorists also expected: an eventual righting of the world axis, a return to its original 90 degree position. If this happened, "the stars would be right"—they would have returned to their precataclysmic positions as seen from Earth. In "The Dunwich Horror" we hear that the Old Ones planned to "drag the earth off to some nameless dimension for some nameless purpose", to where it used to be when the Old Ones threw upon its surface. May this not be another way of saying the same thing? The other "dimension" would then refer to the Earth's relative geometric position vis-a-vis the ecliptic. Such a change, if it could be wrought, would most certainly do what Wilbur Whateley was hoping for: clear the planet of human life.



At the Mountains of Madness

by H. P. Lovecraft

I.

I am forced into speech because men of science have refused to follow my advice without knowing why. It is altogether against my will that I tell my reasons for opposing this contemplated invasion of the Antarctic—with its vast fossil hunt and its wholesale boring and melting of the ancient ice cap—and I am the more reluctant because my warning may be in vain. Doubt of the real facts, as I must reveal them, is inevitable; yet, if I suppressed what will seem extravagant and incredible there would be nothing left. The hitherto withheld photographs, both ordinary and aerial, will count in my favor, for they are damnably vivid and graphic. Still, they will be doubted because of the great lengths to which clever fakery can be carried. The ink drawings, of course, will be jeered at as obvious impostures, notwithstanding a strangeness of technique which art experts ought to remark and puzzle over.

In the end I must rely on the judgment and standing of the few scientific leaders who have, on the one hand, sufficient independence of thought to weigh my data on its own hideously convincing merits or in the light of certain primordial and highly baffling myth cycles; and on the other hand, sufficient influence to deter the exploring world in general from any rash and over ambitious program in the region of those mountains of madness. It is an unfortunate fact that relatively obscure men like myself and my associates, connected only with a small university, have little chance of making an impression where matters of a wildly bizarre or highly controversial nature are concerned.

It is further against us that we are not, in the strictest sense, specialists in the fields which came primarily to be concerned. As a geologist, my object in leading the Miskatonic University Expedition was wholly that of securing deep-level specimens of rock and soil from various parts of the Antarctic continent, aided by the remarkable drill devised by Professor Frank H. Pabodie of our engineering department. I had no wish to be a pioneer in any other field than this, but I did hope that the use of this new mechanical appliance at different points along previously explored paths would bring to light materials of a sort hitherto unreached by the ordinary methods of collection. Pabodie's drilling apparatus, as the public already knows from our reports, was unique and radical in its lightness, portability, and capacity to combine the ordinary artesian drill principle with the principle of the small circular rock drill in such a way as to cope quickly with strata of varying hardness. Steel head, jointed rods, gasoline motor, collapsible wooden derrick, dynamiting paraphernalia, cording, rubbish-removal auger, and sectional piping for bores five inches wide and up to one thousand feet deep all formed, with needed accessories, no greater load than three seven-dog sledges could carry. This was made possible by the clever aluminum alloy of which most of the metal objects were fashioned. Four large Dornier airplanes designed especially for the tremendous attitude flying necessary on the Antarctic plateau, and with added fuel-warming and quick-starting devices worked out by Pabodie, could transport our entire expedition from a base at the edge of the great ice barrier to various suitable inland points, and from these points a sufficient quota of dogs would serve us.

We planned to cover as great an area as one Antarctic season—or longer, if absolutely necessary—would permit, operating mostly in the mountain ranges and on the plateau south of Ross Sea: regions explored in varying degree by Shackleton, Amundsen, Scott, and Byrd. With frequent changes of camp, made by airplane and involving distance great enough to be of geological significance, we expected to unearth a quite unprecedented amount of material, especially in the pre-Cambrian strata of which so narrow a range of Antarctic specimens had previously been secured. We wished also to obtain as great as possible a variety of the upper fossiliferous rocks, since the primal life history of this bleak realm of ice and death is of the highest importance to our knowledge of the Earth's past. That the Antarctic continent was once temperate and even tropical, with a teeming vegetable and animal life of which the lichens, marine fauna, arachnida, and penguins of the northern edge are the only survivals, is a matter of common information, and we hoped to expand that information in variety, accuracy, and detail. When a simple boring revealed fossiliferous signs, we would enlarge the aperture by blasting, in order to get specimens of suitable size and condition.

Our borings, of varying depth according to the promise held out by the upper soil or rock, were to be confined to exposed, or nearly exposed, land surfaces—these inevitably being slopes and ridges because of the mile or two-mile thickness of solid ice overlying the lower levels. We could not afford to waste drilling the depth of any considerable amount of mere glaciation, though Pabodie had worked out a plan for sinking copper electrodes in thick clusters of borings and melting off limited areas of ice with current from a gasoline-driven dynamo. It is this plan—which we could not put in effect except experimentally on an expedition such as ours—that the coming Starkweather-Moore Expedition proposes to follow, despite the warnings I have issued since our return from the Antarctic.

The public knows of the Miskatonic Expedition through our frequent wireless reports to the *Arkham Advertiser* and Associated Press, and through the later articles of Pabodie and myself. We consisted of four men from the University—Pabodie, Lake of the biology department, Atwood of the physics department (also a meteorologist), and myself, representing geology and having nominal command—besides sixteen assistants: seven graduate students from Miskatonic and nine skilled mechanics. Of these sixteen, twelve were qualified airplane pilots, all but two of whom were competent wireless operators. Eight of them understood navigation with compass and sextant, as did Pabodie, Atwood, and I. In addition, of course, our two ships—wooden ex-whalers, reinforced for ice conditions and having auxiliary steam—were fully manned. The Nathaniel Derby Pickman Foundation, aided by a few special contributions, financed the expedition; hence our preparations were extremely thorough, despite the absence of great publicity. The dogs, sledges, machines, camp materials, and unassembled parts of our five planes were delivered in Boston, and there our ships were loaded. We were marvelously well equipped for our specific purposes, and in all matters pertaining to supplies, regimen, transportation, and camp construction we profited by the excellent example of our many recent and exceptionally brilliant predecessors. It was the unusual number and fame of these predecessors which made our own expedition—ample though it was—so little noticed by the world at large.

As the newspapers told, we sailed from Boston Harbor on September 2nd, 1930, taking a leisurely course down the coast and through the Panama Canal, and stopping at Samoa and Hobart, Tasmania, at which latter place we took on final supplies. None of our exploring party had ever been in the polar regions before, hence we all relied greatly on our ship captains—J. B. Douglas, commanding the brig *Arkham*, and serving as commander of the sea party, and Georg Thorfinnssen, commanding the barque *Miskatonic*—both veteran whalers in Antarctic waters. As we left the inhabited world behind the sun sank lower and lower in the north, and stayed

longer and longer above the horizon each day. At about 62° south latitude we sighted our first icebergs—tablelike objects with vertical sides—and just before reaching the Antarctic Circle, which we crossed on October 20th with appropriately quaint ceremonies, we were considerably troubled with field ice. The falling temperature bothered me considerably after our long voyage through the tropics, but I tried to brace up for the worse rigors to come. On many occasions the curious atmospheric effects enchanted me vastly, these including a strikingly vivid mirage—the first I had ever seen—in which distant bergs became the battlements of unimaginable cosmic castles.

Pushing through the ice, which was fortunately neither extensive nor thickly packed, we regained open water at south latitude 67° east longitude 175°. On the morning of October 26th a strong “land blink” appeared on the south, and before noon we all felt a thrill of excitement at beholding a vast, lofty, and snow-clad mountain chain which opened out and covered the whole vista ahead. At last we had encountered an outpost of the great unknown continent and its cryptic world of frozen death. These peaks were obviously the Admiralty Range discovered by Ross, and it would now be our task to round Cape Adare and sail down the east coast of Victoria Land to our contemplated base on the shore of McMurdo Sound, at the foot of the volcano Erebus in south latitude 77° 9’.

The last lap of the voyage was vivid and fancy-stirring great barren peaks of mystery loomed up constantly against the west as the low northern sun of noon or the still lower horizon-grazing southern sun of midnight poured its hazy reddish rays over the white snow, bluish ice and water lanes, and black bits of exposed granite slope. Through the desolate summits swept raging, intermittent gusts of the terrible Antarctic wind, whose cadences sometimes held vague suggestions of a wild and half-sentient musical piping, with notes extending over a wide range, and which for some subconscious mnemonic reason seemed to me disquieting and even dimly terrible. Something about the scene reminded me of the strange and disturbing Asian paintings of Nicholas Roerich, and of the still stranger and more disturbing descriptions of the evilly fabled plateau of Leng which occur in the dreaded *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred. I was rather sorry, later on, that I had ever looked into that monstrous book at the college library.

On the 7th of November, sight of the westward range having been temporarily lost, we passed Franklin Island; and the next day descried the cones of Mts. Erebus and Terror on Ross Island ahead, with the long line of the Perry Mountains beyond. There now stretched off to the east the low, white line of the great ice barrier, rising perpendicularly to a height of two hundred feet like the rocky cliffs of Quæbec, and marking the end of southward navigation. In the afternoon we entered McMurdo Sound and stood

off the coast in the lee of smoking Mt. Erebus. The scoriac peak towered up some twelve thousand, seven hundred feet against the eastern sky, like a Japanese print of the sacred Fujiyama, while beyond it rose the white, ghost-like height of Mt. Terror, ten thousand, nine hundred feet in altitude, and now extinct as a volcano. Puffs of smoke from Erebus came intermittently, and one of the graduate assistants—a brilliant young fellow named Danforth—pointed out what looked like lava on the snowy slope, remarking that this mountain, discovered in 1840, had undoubtedly been the source of Poe's image when he wrote seven years later of

—the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Danforth was a great reader of bizarre material, and had talked a good deal of Poe. I was interested myself because of the Antarctic scene of Poe's only long story—the disturbing and enigmatical *Arthur Gordon Pym*. On the barren shore, and on the lofty ice barrier in the background, myriads of grotesque penguins squawked and flapped their fins, while many fat seals were visible on the water, swimming or sprawling across large cakes of slowly drifting ice.

Using small boats, we effected a difficult landing on Ross Island shortly after midnight on the morning of the 9th, carrying a line of cable from each of the ships and preparing to unload supplies by means of a breeches-buoy arrangement. Our sensations on first treading Antarctic soil were poignant and complex, even though at this particular point the Scott and Shackleton expeditions had preceded us. Our camp on the frozen shore below the volcano's slope was only a provisional one, headquarters being kept aboard the *Arkham*. We landed all our drilling apparatus, dogs, sledges, tents, provisions, gasoline tanks, experimental ice-melting outfit, cameras, both ordinary and aerial, airplane parts, and other accessories, including three small portable wireless outfits—besides those in the planes—capable of communicating with the *Arkham's* large outfit from any part of the Antarctic continent that we would be likely to visit. The ship's outfit, communicating with the outside world, was to convey press reports to the *Arkham Advertiser's* powerful wireless station on Kingsport Head, Massachusetts. We hoped to complete our work during a single Antarctic summer, but if this proved impossible we would winter on the *Arkham*, sending the *Miskatonic* north before the freezing of the ice for another summer's supplies.

I need not repeat what the newspapers have already published about our early work: of our ascent of Mt. Erebus; our successful mineral borings at several points on Ross Island and the singular speed with which Pabodie's apparatus accomplished them, even through solid rock layers; our provisional test of the small ice-melting equipment; our perilous ascent of the great barrier with sledges and supplies; and our final assembling of five huge airplanes at the camp atop the barrier. The health of our land party—twenty men and fifty-five Alaskan sledge dogs—was remarkable, though of course we had so far encountered no really destructive temperatures or windstorms. For the most part, the thermometer varied between zero and 20° or 25° above, and our experience with New England winters had accustomed us to rigors of this sort. The barrier camp was semipermanent, and destined to be a storage cache for gasoline, provisions, dynamite, and other supplies. Only four of our planes were needed to carry the actual exploring material, the fifth being left with a pilot and two men from the ships at the storage cache to form a means of reaching us from the *Arkham* in case all our exploring planes were lost. Later, when not using all the other planes for moving apparatus, we would employ one or two in a shuttle transportation service between this cache and another permanent base on the great plateau from six hundred to seven hundred miles southward, beyond Beardmore Glacier. Despite the almost unanimous accounts of appalling winds and tempests that pour down from the plateau, we determined to dispense with intermediate bases, taking our chances in the interest of economy and probable efficiency.

Wireless reports have spoken of the breathtaking, four-hour, nonstop flight of our squadron on November 21st over the lofty shelf ice, with vast peaks rising on the west, and the unfathomed silences echoing to the sound of our engines. Wind troubled us only moderately, and our radio compasses helped us through the one opaque fog we encountered. When the vast rise loomed ahead, between latitudes 83° and 84° , we knew we had reached Beardmore Glacier, the largest valley glacier in the world, and that the frozen sea was now giving place to a frowning and mountainous coastline. At last we were truly entering the white, aeon-dead world of the ultimate south. Even as we realized it we saw the peak of Mt. Nansen in the eastern distance, towering up to its height of almost fifteen thousand feet.

The successful establishment of the southern base above the glacier in latitude $86^{\circ} 7'$, east longitude $174^{\circ} 23'$, and the phenomenally rapid and effective borings and blastings made at various points reached by our sledge trips and short airplane flights, are matters of history, as is the arduous and triumphant ascent of Mt. Nansen by Pabodie and two of the graduate students—Gedney and Carroll—on December 13–15. We were some eight thousand, five hundred feet above sea level, and when experimental drillings

revealed solid ground only twelve feet down through the snow and ice at certain points, we made considerable use of the small melting apparatus and sunk bores and performed dynamiting at many places where no previous explorer had ever thought of securing mineral specimens. The pre-Cambrian granites and beacon sandstones thus obtained confirmed our belief that this plateau was homogeneous, with the great bulk of the continent to the west, but somewhat different from the parts lying eastward below South America—which we then thought to form a separate and smaller continent divided from the larger one by a frozen junction of Ross and Weddell Seas, though Byrd has since disproved the hypothesis.

In certain of the sandstones, dynamited and chiseled after boring revealed their nature, we found some highly interesting fossil markings and fragments—notably ferns, seaweed, trilobites, crinoids, and such mollusks as linguellae and gastropods—all of which seemed of real significance in connection with the region's primordial history. There was also queer triangular, striated marking, about a foot in greatest diameter, which Lake pieced together from three fragments of slate brought up from a deep-blasted aperture. The fragments came from a point to the westward, near Queen Alexandra Range, and Lake, as a biologist, seemed to find their curious marking unusually puzzling and provocative, though to my geological eye it looked not unlike some of the ripple effects reasonably common in the sedimentary rocks. Since slate is no more than a metamorphic formation into which a sedimentary stratum is pressed, and since the pressure itself produces odd distorting effects on any markings which may exist, I saw no reason for extreme wonder over the striated depression.

On January 6th, 1931, Lake, Pabodie, Daniels, all six of the students, four mechanics, and myself flew directly over the South Pole in two of the great planes, being forced down once by a sudden high wind, which, fortunately, did not develop into a typical storm. This was, as the papers have stated, one of several observation flights, during others of which we tried to discern new topographical features in areas unreached by previous explorers. Our early flights were disappointing in this latter respect, though they afforded some magnificent examples of the richly fantastic and deceptive mirages of the polar regions, of which our sea voyage had given us some brief foretastes. Distant mountains floated in the sky as enchanted cities, and often the whole white world would dissolve into a gold, silver, and scarlet land of Dunsanian dreams and adventurous expectancy under magic of the low midnight sun. On cloudy days we had considerable trouble in flying owing to the tendency of snowy earth and sky to merge into one mystical opalescent void with no visible horizon to mark the junction of the two.

At length we resolved to carry out our original plan of flying five hundred miles eastward with all four exploring planes and establishing a fresh

subbase at a point which would probably be on the smaller continental division, as we mistakenly conceived it. Geological specimens obtained there would be desirable for purposes of comparison. Our health so far had remained excellent—lime juice well offsetting the steady diet of tinned and salted food, and temperatures generally above zero enabling us to do without our thickest furs. It was now midsummer, and with haste and care we might be able to conclude work by March and avoid a tedious wintering through the long Antarctic night. Several savage windstorms had burst upon us from the west, but we had escaped damage through the skill of Atwood in devising rudimentary airplane shelters and windbreaks of heavy snow blocks, and reinforcing the principal camp buildings with snow. Our good luck and efficiency had indeed been almost uncanny.

The outside world knew, of course, of our program, and was told also of Lake's strange and dogged insistence on a westward—or rather, north-westward—prospecting trip before our radical shift to the new base. It seems that he had pondered a great deal, and with alarmingly radical daring, over that triangular striated marking in the state, reading into it certain contradictions in nature and geological period which whetted his curiosity to the utmost, and made him avid to sink more borings and blastings in the west-stretching formation to which the exhumed fragments evidently belonged. He was strangely convinced that the marking was the print of some bulky, unknown, and radically unclassifiable organism of considerably advanced evolution, notwithstanding that the rock which bore it was of so vastly ancient a date—Cambrian if not actually pre-Cambrian—as to preclude the probable existence not only of all highly evolved life, but of any life at all above the unicellular or at most the trilobite stage. These fragments, with their odd marking, must have been 500 million to a thousand million years old.

II.

Popular imagination, I judge, responded actively to our wireless bulletins of Lake's start northwestward into regions never trodden by human foot or penetrated by human imagination, though we did not mention his wild hopes of revolutionizing the entire sciences of biology and geology. His preliminary sledging and boring journey of January 11–18 with Pabodie and five others—marred by the loss of two dogs in an upset when crossing one of the great pressure ridges in the ice—had brought up more and more of the Archaean slate; and even I was interested by the singular profusion of evident fossil markings in that unbelievably ancient stratum. These markings, however, were of very primitive life forms involving no great paradox

except that any life forms should occur in rock as definitely pre-Cambrian as this seemed to be; hence I still failed to see the good sense of Lake's demand for an interlude in our time-saving program—an interlude requiring the use of all four planes, many men, and the whole of the expedition's mechanical apparatus. I did not, in the end, veto the plan, though I decided not to accompany the northwestward party despite Lake's plea for my geological advice. While they were gone, I would remain at the base with Pabodie and five men and work out final plans for the eastward shift. In preparation for this transfer, one of the planes had begun to move up a good gasoline supply from McMurdo Sound, but this could wait temporarily. I kept with me one sledge and nine dogs, since it is unwise to be at any time without possible transportation in an utterly tenantless world of aeon-long death.

Lake's subexpedition into the unknown, as everyone will recall, sent out its own reports from the short-wave transmitters on the planes, these being simultaneously picked up by our apparatus at the southern base and by the *Arkham* at McMurdo Sound, whence they were relayed to the outside world on wave lengths up to fifty meters. The start was made January 22nd at 4 a.m., and the first wireless message we received came only two hours later, when Lake spoke of descending and starting a small-scale ice-melting and bore at a point some three hundred miles away from us. Six hours after that a second and very excited message told of the frantic, beaverlike work whereby a shallow shaft had been sunk and blasted, culminating in the discovery of slate fragments with several markings approximately like the one which had caused the original puzzlement.

Three hours later a brief bulletin announced the resumption of the flight in the teeth of a raw and piercing gale; when I dispatched a message of protest against further hazards, Lake replied curtly that his new specimens made any hazard worth taking. I saw that his excitement had reached the point of mutiny, and that I could do nothing to check this headlong risk of the whole expedition's success; but it was appalling to think of his plunging deeper and deeper into that treacherous and sinister white immensity of tempests and unfathomed mysteries which stretched off for some fifteen hundred miles to the half-known, half-suspected coastline of Queen Mary and Knox Lands.

Then, in about an hour and a half more, came that doubly excited message from Lake's moving plane, which almost reversed my sentiments and made me wish I had accompanied the party:

10:05 p.m. On the wing. After snowstorm, have spied mountain range ahead higher than any hitherto seen. May equal Himalayas allowing for height of plateau. Probable latitude $76^{\circ} 15'$, longitude $113^{\circ} 10'$ E. Reaches far as can see to right and left. Suspicion of two smoking

cones. All peaks black and bare of snow. Gale blowing off them impedes navigation.

After that Pabodie, the men, and I bung breathlessly over the receiver. Thought of this titanic mountain rampart seven hundred miles away inflamed our deepest sense of adventure, and we rejoiced that our expedition, if not ourselves personally, had been its discoverers. In half an hour Lake called us again:

Moulton's plane forced down on plateau in foothills, but nobody hurt and perhaps can repair. Shall transfer essentials to other three for return or further moves if necessary, but no more heavy plane travel needed just now. Mountains surpass anything in imagination. Am going up scouting in Carroll's plane, with all weight out. You can't imagine anything like this. Highest peaks must go over 35,000 feet. Everest out of the running. Atwood to work out height with theodolite while Carroll and I go up. Probably wrong about cones, for formations look stratified. Possibly pre-Cambrian slate with other strata mixed in. Queer skyline effects—regular sections of cubes clinging to highest peaks. Whole thing marvelous in red-gold light of low sun. Like land of mystery in a dream or gateway to forbidden world of untrodden wonder. Wish you were here to study.

Though it was technically sleeping time, not one of us listeners thought for a moment of retiring. It must have been a good deal the same at McMurdo Sound, where the supply cache and the *Arkham* were also getting the messages; for Captain Douglas gave out a call congratulating everybody on the important find, and Sherman, the cache operator, seconded his sentiments. We were sorry, of course, about the damaged airplane, but hoped it could be easily mended. Then, at 11 p.m., came another call from Lake:

Up with Carroll over highest foothills. Don't dare try really tall peaks in present weather, but shall later. Frightful work climbing, and hard going at this altitude, but worth it. Great range fairly solid, hence can't get any glimpses beyond. Main summits exceed Himalayas, and very queer. Range looks like pre-Cambrian slate, with plain signs of many other upheaved strata. Was wrong about volcanism. Goes farther in either direction than we can see. Swept clear of snow above about 21,000 feet. Odd formations on slopes of highest mountains. Great low square blocks with exactly vertical sides, and rectan-

gular lines of low, vertical ramparts, like the old Asian castles clinging to steep mountains in Roerich's paintings. Impressive from distance. Flew close to some, and Carroll thought they were formed of smaller separate pieces, but that is probably weathering. Most edges crumbled and rounded off as if exposed to storms and climate changes for millions of years. Parts, especially upper parts, seem to be of lighter-colored rock than any visible strata on slopes proper, hence of evidently crystalline origin. Close flying shows many cave mouths, some unusually regular in outline, square or semicircular. You must come and investigate. Think I saw rampart squarely on top of one peak. Height seems about 30,000 to 35,000 feet. Am up 21,500 myself, in devilish, gnawing cold. Wind whistles and pipes through passes and in and out of caves, but no flying danger so far.

From then on for another half hour Lake kept up a running fire of comment, and expressed his intention of climbing some of the peaks on foot. I replied that I would join him as soon as he could send a plane, and that Pabodie and I would work out the best gasoline plan—just where and how to concentrate our supply in view of the expedition's altered character. Obviously, Lake's boring operations, as well as his airplane activities, would require a great deal for the new base which he planned to establish at the foot of the mountains; and it was possible that the eastward flight might not be made, after all, this season. In connection with this business I called Captain Douglas and asked him to get as much as possible out of the ships and up the barrier with the single dog team we had left there. A direct route across the unknown region between Lake and McMurdo Sound was what we really ought to establish.

Lake called me later to say that he had decided to let the camp stay where Moulton's plane had been forced down, and where repairs had already progressed somewhat. The ice sheet was very thin, with dark ground here and there visible, and he would sink some borings and blasts at that very point before making any sledge trips or climbing expeditions. He spoke of the ineffable majesty of the whole scene, and the queer state of his sensations at being in the lee of vast, silent pinnacles whose ranks shot up like a wall reaching the sky at the world's rim. Atwood's theodolite observations had placed the height of the five tallest peaks at from 30,000 to 34,000 feet. The windswept nature of the terrain clearly disturbed Lake, for it argued the occasional existence of prodigious gales, violent beyond anything we had so far encountered. His camp lay a little more than five miles from where the higher foothills rose abruptly. I could almost trace a note of subconscious

alarm in his words—lashed across a glacial void of seven hundred miles—as he urged that we all hasten with the matter and get the strange, new region disposed of as soon as possible. He was about to rest now, after a continuous day's work of almost unparalleled speed, strenuousness, and results.

In the morning I had a three-cornered wireless talk with Lake and Captain Douglas at their widely separated bases. It was agreed that one of Lake's planes would come to my base for Pabodie, the five men, and myself, as well as for all the fuel it could carry. The rest of the fuel question, depending on our decision about an easterly trip, could wait for a few days, since Lake had enough for immediate camp heat and borings. Eventually the old southern base ought to be restocked, but if we postponed the easterly trip we would not use it till the next summer, and, meanwhile, Lake must send a plane to explore a direct route between his new mountains and McMurdo Sound.

Pabodie and I prepared to close our base for a short or long period, as the case might be. If we wintered in the Antarctic we would probably fly straight from Lake's base to the *Arkham* without returning to this spot. Some of our conical tents had already been reinforced by blocks of hard snow, and now we decided to complete the job of making a permanent village. Owing to a very liberal tent supply, Lake had with him all that his base would need, even after our arrival. I wirelessed that Pabodie and I would be ready for the northwestward move after one day's work and one night's rest.

Our labors, however, were not very steady after 4 p.m., for about that time Lake began sending in the most extraordinary and excited messages. His working day had started unpropitiously, since an airplane survey of the nearly exposed rock surfaces showed an entire absence of those Archaean and primordial strata for which he was looking, and which formed so great a part of the colossal peaks that loomed up at a tantalizing distance from the camp. Most of the rocks glimpsed were apparently Jurassic and Comanchian sandstones and Permian and Triassic schists, with now and then a glossy black outcropping suggesting a hard and slaty coal. This rather discouraged Lake, whose plans all hinged on unearthing specimens more than five hundred million years older. It was clear to him that in order to recover the Archaean slate vein in which he had found the odd markings, he would have to make a long sledge trip from these foothills to the steep slopes of the gigantic mountains themselves.

He had resolved, nevertheless, to do some local boring as part of the expedition's general program; hence he set up the drill and put five men to work with it while the rest finished settling the camp and repairing the damaged airplane. The softest visible rock—a sandstone about a quarter of a mile from the camp—had been chosen for the first sampling; the drill made excellent progress without much supplementary blasting. It was about three hours afterward, following the first really heavy blast of the

operation, that the shouting of the drill crew was heard; and that young Gedney—the acting foreman—rushed into the camp with the startling news.

They had struck a cave. Early in the boring the sandstone had given place to a vein of Comanchian limestone, full of minute fossil cephalopods, corals, echini, and spirifera, and with occasional suggestions of siliceous sponges and marine vertebrate bones—the latter probably of teleosts, sharks, and ganoids. This, in itself, was important enough, as affording the first vertebrate fossils the expedition had yet secured; but when shortly afterward the drill head dropped through the stratum into apparent vacancy, a wholly new and doubly intense wave of excitement spread among the excavators. A good-sized blast had laid open the subterrene secret; and now, through a jagged aperture perhaps five feet across and three feet thick, there yawned before the avid searchers a section of shallow limestone hollowing worn more than fifty million years ago by the trickling ground waters of a bygone tropic world.

The hollowed layer was not more than seven or eight feet deep but extended off indefinitely in all directions and had a fresh, slightly moving air which suggested its membership in an extensive subterranean system. Its roof and floor were abundantly equipped with large stalactites and stalagmites, some of which met in columnar form, but important above all else was the vast deposit of shells and bones, which in places nearly choked the passage. Washed down from unknown jungles of Mesozoic tree ferns and fungi, and forests of Tertiary cycads, fan palms, and primitive angiosperms, this osseous medley contained representatives of more Cretaceous, Eocene, and other animal species than the greatest paleontologist could have counted or classified in a year. Mollusks, crustacean armor, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and early mammals—great and small, known and unknown. No wonder Gedney ran back to the camp shouting, and no wonder everyone else dropped work and rushed headlong through the biting cold to where the tall derrick marked a newfound gateway to secrets of inner earth and vanished aeons.

When Lake had satisfied the first keen edge of his curiosity he scribbled a message in his notebook and had young Moulton run back to the camp to dispatch it by wireless. This was my first word of the discovery, and it told of the identification of early shells, bones of ganoids and placoderms, remnants of labyrinthodonts and thecodonts, great mosasaur skull fragments, dinosaur vertebrae and armor plates, pterodactyl teeth and wing bones, *Archaeopteryx* debris, Miocene sharks' teeth, primitive bird skulls, and other bones of archaic mammals such as palaeotheres, xiphodonts, eohippi, oreodonts, and titanotheres. There was nothing as recent as a mastodon, elephant, true camel, deer, or bovine animal; hence Lake concluded that the last deposits had occurred during the Oligocene age, and that the hollowed

stratum had lain in its present dried, dead, and inaccessible state for at least thirty million years.

On the other hand, the prevalence of very early life forms was singular in the highest degree. Though the limestone formation was, on the evidence of such typical imbedded fossils as ventriculites, positively and unmistakably Comanchian and not a particle earlier, the free fragments in the hollow space included a surprising proportion from organisms hitherto considered as peculiar to far older periods—even rudimentary fishes, mollusks, and corals as remote as the Silurian or Ordovician. The inevitable inference was that in this part of the world there had been a remarkable and unique degree of continuity between the life of over three hundred million years ago and that of only thirty million years ago. How far this continuity had extended beyond the Oligocene Age when the cavern was closed was of course past all speculation. In any event, the coming of the frightful ice in the Pleistocene some five hundred thousand years ago—a mere yesterday as compared with the age of this cavity—must have put an end to any of the primal forms which had locally managed to outlive their common terms.

Lake was not content to let his first message stand, but had another bulletin written and dispatched across the snow to the camp before Moulton could get back. After that Moulton stayed at the wireless in one of the planes, transmitting to me—and to the *Arkham* for relaying to the outside world—the frequent postscripts which Lake sent him by a succession of messengers. Those who followed the newspapers will remember the excitement created among men of science by that afternoon's reports—reports which have finally led, after all these years, to the organization of that very Starkweather-Moore Expedition which I am so anxious to dissuade from its purposes. I had better give the messages literally as Lake sent them, and as our base operator McTighe translated them from the pencil shorthand:

Fowler makes discovery of highest importance in sandstone and limestone fragments from blasts. Several distinct triangular striated prints like those in Archæan slate, proving that source survived from over six hundred million years ago to Comanchian times without more than moderate morphological changes and decrease in average size. Comanchian prints apparently more primitive or decadent, if anything, than older ones. Emphasize importance of discovery in press. Will mean to biology what Einstein has meant to mathematics and physics. Joins up with my previous work and amplifies conclusions. Appears to indicate, as I suspected, that Earth has seen whole cycle or cycles of organic life before known one that begins with Archæozoic cells. Was evolved and

specialized not later than a thousand million years ago, when planet was young and recently uninhabitable for any life forms or normal protoplasmic structure. Question arises when, where, and how development took place.

Later. Examining certain skeletal fragments of large land and marine saurians and primitive mammals, find singular local wounds or injuries to bony structure not attributable to any known predatory or carnivorous animal of any period. Of two sorts—straight, penetrant bores, and apparently hacking incisions. One or two cases of cleanly severed bones. Not many specimens affected. Am sending to camp for electric torches. Will extend search area underground by hacking away stalactites.

Still later. Have found peculiar soapstone fragment about six inches across and an inch and a half thick, wholly unlike any visible local formation. Greenish, but no evidence to place its period. Has curious smoothness and regularity. Shaped like five-pointed star with tips broken off, and signs of other cleavage at inward angles and in center of surface. Small, smooth depression in center of unbroken surface. Arouses much curiosity as to source and weathering. Probably some freak of water action. Carroll, with magnifier, thinks he can make out additional markings of geologic significance. Groups of tiny dots in regular patterns. Dogs growing uneasy as we work, and seem to hate this soapstone. Must see if it has any peculiar odor. Will report again when Mills gets back with light and we start on underground area.

10:15 p.m. Important discovery. Orrendorf and Watkins, working underground at 9:45 with light, found monstrous barrel-shaped fossil of wholly unknown nature; probably vegetable unless overgrown specimen of unknown marine radiata. Tissue evidently preserved by mineral salts. Tough as leather, but astonishing flexibility retained in places. Marks of broken-off parts at ends and around sides. six feet end to end, three and a

half feet central diameter, tapering to one foot at each end. Like a barrel with five bulging ridges in place of staves. Lateral breakages, as of thinnish stalks, are at equator in middle of these ridges. In furrows between ridges are curious growths. Combs or wings that fold up and spread out like fans. All greatly damaged but one, which gives almost seven-foot wing spread. Arrangement reminds one of certain monsters of primal myth, especially fabled Elder Things in *Necronomicon*. Their wings seem to be membranous, stretched on framework of glandular tubing. Apparent minute orifices in frame tubing at wing tips. Ends of body shriveled, giving no clue to interior or to what has been broken off there. Must dissect when we get back to camp. Can't decide whether vegetable or animal. Many features obviously of almost incredible primitiveness. Have set all hands cutting stalactites and looking for further specimens. Additional scarred bones found, these must wait. Having trouble with dogs. They can't endure the new specimen, and would probably tear it to pieces if we didn't keep it at a distance from them.

11:30 p.m. Attention, Dyer, Pabodie, Douglas. Matter of highest—I might say transcendent—importance. *Arkham* must relay to Kingsport Head Station at once. Strange barrel growth is the Archaean thing that left prints in rocks. Mills, Boudreau, and Fowler discover cluster of thirteen more at underground point forty feet from aperture. Mixed with curiously rounded and configured soapstone fragments smaller than one previously found—star-shaped, but no marks of breakage except at some of the points. Of organic specimens, eight apparently perfect, with all appendages. Have brought all to surface, leading off dogs to distance. They cannot stand the things. Give close attention to description and repeat back for accuracy. Papers must get this right.

Objects are eight feet long all over. Six-foot, five-ridged barrel torso three and five-tenths feet central diameter, one foot end diameters. Dark gray, flexible, and infinitely tough. Seven-foot membranous wings of same color, found folded, spread out of furrows between ridges.

Wing framework tubular or glandular, of lighter gray, with orifices at wing tips. Spread wings have serrated edge. Around equator, one at central apex of each of the five vertical, stavelike ridges are five systems of light gray flexible arms or tentacles found tightly folded to torso but expansible to maximum length of over 3 feet. Like arms of primitive crinoid. Single stalks 3 inches diameter branch after six inches into five substalks, each of which branches after eight inches into small, tapering tentacles or tendrils, giving each stalk a total of twenty-five tentacles.

At top of torso blunt, bulbous neck of lighter gray, with gill-like suggestions, holds yellowish five-pointed starfish-shaped apparent head covered with three-inch wiry cilia of various prismatic colors. Head thick and puffy, about two feet point to point, with three-inch flexible yellowish tubes projecting from each point. Slit in exact center of top probably breathing aperture. At end of each tube is spherical expansion where yellowish membrane rolls back on handling to reveal glassy, reddirised globe, evidently an eye. Five slightly longer reddish tubes start from inner angles of starfish-shaped head and end in saclike swellings of same color which, upon pressure, open to bell-shaped orifices two inches maximum diameter and lined with sharp, white toothlike projections. Probably mouths. All these tubes, cilia, and points of starfish head found folded tightly down; tubes and points clinging to bulbous neck and torso. Flexibility surprising despite vast toughness.

At bottom of torso, rough but dissimilarly functioning counterparts of head arrangements exist. Bulbous light gray pseudoneck, without gill suggestions, holds greenish five-pointed starfish arrangement. Tough, muscular arms 4 feet long and tapering from seven inches diameter at base to about two and a half at point. To each point is attached small end of a greenish five-veined membranous triangle eight inches long and six wide at farther end. This is the paddle, fin, or pseudofoot which has made prints in rocks from a thousand million to fifty or sixty million years old. From inner angles of starfish arrangement project two-foot reddish tubes tapering

from three inches diameter at base to one at tip. Orifices at tips. All these parts infinitely tough and leathery, but extremely flexible. Four-foot arms with paddles undoubtedly used for locomotion of some sort, marine or otherwise. When moved, display suggestions of exaggerated muscularity. As found, all these projections tightly folded over pseudoneck and end of torso, corresponding to projections at other end.

Cannot yet assign positively to animal or vegetable kingdom, but odds now favor animal. Probably represents incredibly advanced evolution of radiata without loss of certain primitive features. Echinoderm resemblances unmistakable despite local contradictory evidences. Wing structure puzzles in view of probable marine habitat, but may have use in water navigation. Symmetry is curiously vegetablelike, suggesting vegetable's essential up-and-down structure rather than animal's fore-and-aft structure. Fabulously early date of evolution, preceding even simplest Archaean protozoa hitherto known, baffles all conjecture as to origin.

Complete specimens have such uncanny resemblance to certain creatures of primal myth that suggestion of ancient existence outside Antarctic becomes inevitable. Dyer and Pabodie have read *Necronomicon* and seen Clark Ashton Smith's nightmare paintings based on text, and will understand when I speak of Elder Things supposed to have created all Earth life as jest or mistake. Students have always thought conception formed from morbid imaginative treatment of very ancient tropical radiata. Also like prehistoric folklore things Wilmarth has spoken of—Cthulhu cult appendages, etc.

Vast field of study opened. Deposits probably of late Cretaceous or early Eocene period, judging from associated specimens. Massive stalagmites deposited above them. Hard work hewing out, but toughness prevented damage. State of preservation miraculous, evidently owing to limestone action. No more found so far, but will resume search later. Job now to get fourteen huge specimens to camp without dogs, which bark furiously and can't be trusted near them. With nine men—three

left to guard the dogs—we ought to manage the three sledges fairly well, though wind is bad. Must establish plane communication with McMurdo Sound and begin shipping material. But I've got to dissect one of these things before we take any rest. Wish I had a real laboratory here. Dyer better kick himself for having tried to stop my westward trip. First the world's greatest mountains, and then this. If this last isn't the high spot of the expedition, I don't know what is. We're made scientifically. Congrats, Pabodie, on the drill that opened up the cave. Now will *Arkham* please repeat description?

The sensations of Pabodie and myself at receipt of this report were almost beyond description, nor were our companions much behind us in enthusiasm. McTighe, who had hastily translated a few high spots as they came from the droning receiving set, wrote out the entire message from his shorthand version as soon as Lake's operator signed off. All appreciated the epoch-making significance of the discovery, and I sent Lake congratulations as soon as the *Arkham's* operator had repeated back the descriptive parts as requested; my example was followed by Sherman from his station at the McMurdo Sound supply cache, as well as by Captain Douglas of the *Arkham*. Later, as head of the expedition, I added some remarks to be relayed through the *Arkham* to the outside world. Of course, rest was an absurd thought amid this excitement, and my only wish was to get to Lake's camp as quickly as I could. It disappointed me when he sent word that a rising mountain gale made early aerial travel impossible.

But within an hour and a half interest again rose to banish disappointment. Lake, sending more messages, told of the completely successful transportation of the fourteen great specimens to the camp. It had been a hard pull, for the things were surprisingly heavy, but nine men had accomplished it very neatly. Now some of the party were hurriedly building a snow corral at a safe distance from the camp, to which the dogs could be brought for greater convenience in feeding. The specimens were laid out on the hard snow near the camp, save for one on which Lake was making crude attempts at dissection.

This dissection seemed to be a greater task than had been expected, for, despite the heat of a gasoline stove in the newly raised laboratory tent, the deceptively flexible tissues of the chosen specimen—a powerful and intact one—lost nothing of their more than leathery toughness. Lake was puzzled as to how he might make the requisite incisions without violence destructive enough to upset all the structural niceties he was looking for. He had, it is true, seven more perfect specimens; but these were too few to use up recklessly unless the cave might later yield an unlimited supply. Accordingly

he removed the specimen and dragged in one which, though having remnants of the starfish arrangements at both ends, was badly crushed and partly disrupted along one of the great torso furrows.

Results, quickly reported over the wireless, were baffling and provocative indeed. Nothing like delicacy or accuracy was possible with instruments hardly able to cut the anomalous tissue, but the little that was achieved left us all awed and bewildered. Existing biology would have to be wholly revised, for this thing was no product of any cell growth science knows about. There had been scarcely any mineral replacement, and despite an age of perhaps forty million years the internal organs were wholly intact. The leathery, undeteriorative, and almost indestructible quality was an inherent attribute of the thing's form of organization, and pertained to some paleocean cycle of invertebrate evolution utterly beyond our powers of speculation. At first all that Lake found was dry, but as the heated tent produced its thawing effect, organic moisture of pungent and offensive odor was encountered toward the thing's uninjured side. It was not blood, but a thick, dark green fluid apparently answering the same purpose. By the time Lake reached this stage all 37 dogs had been brought to the still uncompleted corral near the camp, and even at that distance set up a savage barking and show of restlessness at the acrid, diffusive smell.

Far from helping to place the strange entity, this provisional dissection merely deepened its mystery. All guesses about its external members had been correct, and on the evidence of these one could hardly hesitate to call the thing animal; but internal inspection brought up so many vegetable evidences that Lake was left hopelessly at sea. It had digestion and circulation, and eliminated waste matter through the reddish tubes of its starfish-shaped base. Cursorily, one would say that its respiratory apparatus handled oxygen rather than carbon dioxide, and there were odd evidences of air-storage chambers and methods of shifting respiration from the external orifice to at least two other fully developed breathing systems—gills and pores. Clearly, it was amphibian and probably adapted to long airless hibernation periods as well. Vocal organs seemed present in connection with the main respiratory system, but they presented anomalies beyond immediate solution. Articulate speech, in the sense of syllable utterance, seemed barely conceivable, but musical piping notes covering a wide range were highly probable. The muscular system was almost prematurely developed.

The nervous system was so complex and highly developed as to leave Lake aghast. Though excessively primitive and archaic in some respects, the thing had a set of ganglial centers and connectives arguing the very extremes of specialized development. Its five-lobed brain was surprisingly advanced, and there were signs of a sensory equipment, served in part through the wiry cilia of the head, involving factors alien to any other terrestrial organ-

ism. Probably it had more than five senses, so that its habits could not be predicted from any existing analogy. It must, Lake thought, have been a creature of keen sensitiveness and delicately differentiated functions in its primal world—much like the ants and bees of today. It reproduced like the vegetable cryptogams, especially the *Pteridophyta*, having spore cases at the tips of the wings and evidently developing from a thallus or prothallus.

But to give it a name at this stage was mere folly. It looked like a radiate, but was clearly something more. It was partly vegetable, but had three fourths of the essentials of animal structure. That it was marine in origin, its symmetrical contour and certain other attributes clearly indicated; yet one could not be exact as to the limit of its later adaptations. The wings, after all, held a persistent suggestion of the aerial. How it could have undergone its tremendously complex evolution on a newborn Earth in time to leave prints in Archaean rocks was so far beyond conception as to make Lake whimsically recall the primal myths about Great Old Ones who filtered down from the stars and concocted Earth life as a joke or mistake, and the wild tales of cosmic hill things from Outside told by a folklorist colleague in Miskatonic's English department.

Naturally, he considered the possibility of the pre-Cambrian prints having been made by a less evolved ancestor of the present specimens, but quickly rejected this too-facile theory upon considering the advanced structural qualities of the older fossils. If anything, the later contours showed decadence rather than higher evolution. The size of the pseudofeet had decreased, and the whole morphology seemed coarsened and simplified. Moreover, the nerves and organs just examined held singular suggestions of retrogression from forms still more complex. Atrophied and vestigial parts were surprisingly prevalent. Altogether, little could be said to have been solved; and Lake fell back on mythology for a provisional name—jocosely dubbing his finds "The Elder Ones."

At about 2:20 a.m., having decided to postpone further work and get a little rest, he covered the dissected organism with a tarpaulin, emerged from the laboratory tent, and studied the intact specimens with renewed interest. The ceaseless Antarctic sun had begun to limber up their tissues a trifle, so that the head-points and tubes of two or three showed signs of unfolding; but Lake did not believe there was any danger of immediate decomposition in the almost subzero air. He did, however, move all the undissected specimens close together and throw a spare tent over them in order to keep off the direct solar rays. That would also help to keep their possible scent away from the dogs, whose hostile unrest was really becoming a problem, even at their substantial distance and behind the higher and higher snow walls which an increased quota of the men were hastening to raise around their quarters. He had to weight down the corners of the tent

cloth with heavy blocks of snow to hold it in place amid the rising gale, for the titan mountains seemed about to deliver some gravely severe blasts. Early apprehensions about sudden Antarctic winds were revived, and under Atwood's supervision precautions were taken to bank the tents, new dog corral, and crude airplane shelters with snow on the mountainward side. These latter shelters, begun with hard snow blocks during odd moments, were by no means as high as they should have been, and Lake finally detached all hands from other tasks to work on them.

It was after four when Lake at last prepared to sign off and advised us all to share the rest period his outfit would take when the shelter walls were a little higher. He held some friendly chat with Pabodie over the ether, and repeated his praise of the really marvelous drills that had helped him make his discovery. Atwood also sent greetings and praises. I gave Lake a warm word of congratulation, owning up that he was right about the western trip, and we all agreed to get in touch by wireless at ten in the morning. If the gale was then over Lake would send a plane for the party at my base. Just before retiring I dispatched a final message to the *Arkham* with instructions about toning down the day's news for the outside world, since the full details seemed radical enough to rouse a wave of incredulity until further substantiated.

III.

None of us, I imagine, slept very heavily or continuously that morning. Both the excitement of Lake's discovery and the mounting fury of the wind were against such a thing. So savage was the blast, even where we were, that we could not help wondering how much worse it was at Lake's camp, directly under the vast unknown peaks that bred and delivered it. McTighe was awake at ten o'clock and tried to get Lake on the wireless, as agreed, but some electrical condition in the disturbed air to the westward seemed to prevent communication. We did, however, get the *Arkham*, and Douglas told me that he had likewise been vainly trying to reach Lake. He had not known about the wind, for very little was blowing at McMurdo Sound, despite its persistent rage where we were.

Throughout the day we all listened anxiously and tried to get Lake at intervals, but invariably without results. About noon a positive frenzy of wind stampeded out of the west, causing us to fear for the safety of our camp, but it eventually died down, with only a moderate relapse at 2 p.m. After three o'clock it was very quiet, and we redoubled our efforts to get Lake. Reflecting that he had four planes, each provided with an excellent short-wave outfit, we could not imagine any ordinary accident capable of

cripling all his wireless equipment at once. Nevertheless the stony silence continued, and when we thought of the delirious force the wind must have had in his locality we could not help making the most direful conjectures.

By six o'clock our fears had become intense and definite, and after a wireless consultation with Douglas and Thorfinnssen I resolved to take steps toward investigation. The fifth airplane, which we had left at the McMurdo Sound supply cache with Sherman and two sailors, was in good shape and ready for instant use, and it seemed that the very emergency for which it had been saved was now upon us. I got Sherman by wireless and ordered him to join me with the plane and the two sailors at the southern base as quickly as possible, the air conditions being apparently highly favorable. We then talked over the personnel of the coming investigation party, and decided that we would include all hands, together with the sledge and dogs which I had kept with me. Even so great a load would not be too much for one of the huge planes built to our special orders for heavy machinery transportation. At intervals I still tried to reach Lake with the wireless, but all to no purpose.

Sherman, with the sailors Gunnarsson and Larsen, took off at 7:30, and reported a quiet flight from several points on the wing. They arrived at our base at midnight, and all hands at once discussed the next move. It was risky business sailing over the Antarctic in a single airplane without any line of bases, but no one drew back from what seemed like the plainest necessity. We turned in at two o'clock for a brief rest after some preliminary loading of the plane, but were up again in four hours to finish the loading and packing.

At 7:15 a.m., January 25th, we started flying northwestward under McTighe's pilotage with ten men, seven dogs, a sledge, a fuel and food supply, and other items including the plane's wireless outfit. The atmosphere was clear, fairly quiet, and relatively mild in temperature, and we anticipated very little trouble in reaching the latitude and longitude designated by Lake as the site of his camp. Our apprehensions were over what we might find, or fail to find, at the end of our journey, for silence continued to answer all calls dispatched to the camp.

Every incident of that four-and-a-half-hour flight is burned into my recollection because of its crucial position in my life. It marked my loss, at the age of fifty-four, of all that peace and balance which the normal mind possesses through its accustomed conception of external nature and nature's laws. Thenceforward the ten of us—but the student Danforth and myself above all others—were to face a hideously amplified world of lurking horrors which nothing can erase from our emotions, and which we would refrain from sharing with mankind in general if we could. The newspapers have printed the bulletins we sent from the moving plane, telling of our

nonstop course, our two battles with treacherous upper-air gales, our glimpse of the broken surface where Lake had sunk his midjourney shaft three days before, and our sight of a group of those strange fluffy snow cylinders noted by Amundsen and Byrd as rolling in the wind across the endless leagues of frozen plateau. There came a point, though, when our sensations could not be conveyed in any words the press would understand, and a latter point when we had to adopt an actual rule of strict censorship.

The sailor Larsen was first to spy the jagged line of witchlike cones and pinnacles ahead, and his shouts sent everyone to the windows of the great cabined plane. Despite our speed, they were very slow in gaining prominence; hence we knew that they must be infinitely far off, and visible only because of their abnormal height. Little by little, however, they rose grimly into the western sky, allowing us to distinguish various bare, bleak, blackish summits, and to catch the curious sense of fantasy which they inspired as seen in the reddish Antarctic light against the provocative background of iridescent ice-dust clouds. In the whole spectacle there was a persistent, pervasive hint of stupendous secrecy and potential revelation. It was as if these stark, nightmare spires marked the pylons of a frightful gateway into forbidden spheres of dream, and complex gulfs of remote time, space, and ultradimensionality. I could not help feeling that they were evil things—mountains of madness whose farther slopes looked out over some accursed ultimate abyss. That seething, half-luminous cloud background held ineffable suggestions of a vague ethereal *beyondness* far more than terrestrially spatial, and gave appalling reminders of the titter remoteness, separateness, desolation, and aeon-long death of this untrodden and unfathomed austral world.

It was young Danforth who drew our notice to the curious regularities of the higher mountain skyline—regularities like clinging fragments of perfect cubes, which Lake had mentioned in his messages, and which indeed justified his comparison with the dreamlike suggestions of primordial temple ruins, on cloudy Asian mountaintops so subtly and strangely painted by Roerich. There was indeed something hauntingly Roerich-like about this whole unearthly continent of mountainous mystery. I had felt it in October when we first caught sight of Victoria Land, and I felt it afresh now. I felt, too, another wave of uneasy consciousness of Archaean mythical resemblances, of how disturbingly this lethal realm corresponded to the evilly famed plateau of Leng in the primal writings. Mythologists have placed Leng in Central Asia; but the racial memory of man—or of his predecessors—is long, and it may well be that certain tales have come down from lands and mountains and temples of horror earlier than Asia and earlier than any human world we know. A few daring mystics have hinted at a pre-Pleistocene origin for the fragmentary *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, and have suggested that the devotees of Tsathoggua were as alien to mankind as

Tsathoggua itself. Leng, wherever in space or time it might brood, was not a region I would care to be in or near, nor did I relish the proximity of a world that had ever bred such ambiguous and Archaean monstrosities as those Lake had just mentioned. At the moment I felt sorry that I had ever read the abhorred *Necronomicon*, or talked so much with that unpleasantly erudite folklorist Wilmarth at the university.

This mood undoubtedly served to aggravate my reaction to the bizarre mirage which burst upon us from the increasingly opalescent zenith as we drew near the mountains and began to make out the cumulative undulations of the foothills. I had seen dozens of polar mirages during the preceding weeks, some of them quite as uncanny and fantastically vivid as the present sample; but this one had a wholly novel and obscure quality of menacing symbolism, and I shuddered as the seething labyrinth of fabulous walls and towers and minarets loomed out of the troubled ice vapors above our heads.

The effect was that of a Cyclopean city of no architecture known to man or to human imagination, with vast aggregations of night-black masonry embodying monstrous perversions of geometrical laws. There were truncated cones, sometimes terraced or fluted, surmounted by tall cylindrical shafts here and there bulbously enlarged and often capped with tiers of thinnish scalloped disks; and strange beetling, tablelike constructions suggesting piles of multitudinous rectangular slabs or circular plates or five-pointed stars with each one overlapping the one beneath. There were composite cones and pyramids either alone or surmounting cylinders or cubes or flatter truncated cones and pyramids, and occasional needlelike spires in curious clusters of five. All of these febrile structures seemed knit together by tubular bridges crossing from one to the other at various dizzy heights, and the implied scale of the whole was terrifying and oppressive in its sheer gigantism. The general type of mirage was not unlike some of the wilder forms observed and drawn by the arctic whaler Scoresby in 1820; but at this time and place, with those dark, unknown mountain peaks soaring stupendously ahead, that anomalous elder-world discovery in our minds, and the pall of probable disaster enveloping the greater part of our expedition, we all seemed to find in it a taint of latent malignity and infinitely evil portent.

I was glad when the mirage began to break up, though in the process the various nightmare turrets and cones assumed distorted, temporary forms of even vaster hideousness. As the whole illusion dissolved to churning opalescence we began to look earthward again, and saw that our journey's end was not far off. The unknown mountains ahead rose dizzily up like a fearsome rampart of giants, their curious regularities showing with startling clearness even without a field-glass. We were over the lowest foothills now, and could see amid the snow, ice, and bare patches of their main plateau a couple of darkish spots which we took to be Lake's camp and bor-

ing. The higher foothills shot up between five and six miles away, forming a range almost distinct from the terrifying line of more than Himalayan peaks beyond them. At length Ropes—the student who had relieved McTighe at the controls—began to head downward toward the left-hand dark spot whose size marked it as the camp. As he did so, McTighe sent out the last uncensored wireless message the world was to receive from our expedition.

Everyone, of course, has read the brief and unsatisfying bulletins of the rest of our Antarctic sojourn. Some hours after our lancing we sent a guarded report of the tragedy we found, and reluctantly announced the wiping out of the whole Lake party by the frightful wind of the preceding day, or of the night before that. Eleven known dead, young Gedney missing. People pardoned our hazy lack of details through realization of the shock the sad event must have caused us, and believed us when we explained that the mangling action of the wind had rendered all eleven bodies unsuitable for transportation outside. Indeed, I flatter myself that even in the midst of our distress, utter bewilderment, and soul-clutching horror, we scarcely went beyond the truth in any specific instance. The tremendous significance lies in what we dared not tell—what I would not tell now but for the need of warning others off from nameless terrors.

It is a fact that the wind had brought dreadful havoc. Whether all could have lived through it, even without the other thing, is gravely open to doubt. The storm, with its fury of madly driven ice particles, must have been beyond anything our expedition had encountered before. One airplane shelter—all, it seems, had been left in a far too flimsy and inadequate state—was nearly pulverized; and the derrick at the distant boring was entirely shaken to pieces. The exposed metal of the grounded planes and drilling machinery was bruised into a high polish, and two of the small tents were flattened despite their snow banking. Wooden surfaces left out in the blast were pitted and denuded of paint, and all signs of tracks in the snow were completely obliterated. It is also true that we found none of the Archaean biological objects in a condition to take outside as a whole. We did gather some minerals from a vast, tumbled pile, including several of the greenish soapstone fragments whose odd five-pointed rounding and faint patterns of grouped dots caused so many doubtful comparisons; and some fossil bones, among which were the most typical of the curiously injured specimens.

None of the dogs survived, their hurriedly built snow enclosure near the camp being almost wholly destroyed. The wind may have done that, though the greater breakage on the side next the camp, which was not the windward one, suggests an outward leap or break of the frantic beasts themselves. All three sledges were gone, and we have tried to explain that the wind may have blown them off into the unknown. The drill and ice-melting machinery at the boring were too badly damaged to warrant salvage, so

we used them to choke up that subtly disturbing gateway to the past which Lake had blasted. We likewise left at the camp the two most shaken up of the planes, since our surviving party had only four real pilots—Sherman, Danforth, McTighe, and Ropes—in all, with Danforth in a poor nervous shape to navigate. We brought back all the books, scientific equipment, and other incidentals we could find, though much was rather unaccountably blown away. Spare tents and furs were either missing or badly out of condition.

It was approximately 4 p.m., after wide plane cruising had forced us to give Gedney up for lost, that we sent our guarded message to the *Arkham* for relaying; and I think we did well to keep it as calm and noncommittal as we succeeded in doing. The most we said about agitation concerned our dogs, whose frantic uneasiness near the biological specimens was to be expected from poor Lake's accounts. We did not mention, I think, their display of the same uneasiness when sniffing around the queer greenish soapstones and certain other objects in the disordered region: objects including scientific instruments, airplanes, and machinery, both at the camp and at the boring, whose parts had been loosened, moved, or otherwise tampered with by winds that must have harbored singular curiosity and investigativeness.

About the fourteen biological specimens we were pardonably indefinite. We said that the only ones we discovered were damaged, but that enough was left of them to prove Lake's description wholly and impressively accurate. It was hard work keeping our personal emotions out of this matter—and we did not mention numbers or say exactly how we had found those which we did find. We had by that time agreed not to transmit anything suggesting madness on the part of Lake's men, and it surely looked like madness to find six imperfect monstrosities carefully buried upright in nine-foot snow graves under five-pointed mounds punched over with groups of dots in patterns exactly those on the queer greenish soapstones dug up from Mesozoic or Tertiary times. The eight perfect specimens mentioned by Lake seemed to have been completely blown away.

We were careful, too, about the public's general peace of mind; hence Danforth and I said little about that frightful trip over the mountains the next day. It was the fact that only a radically lightened plane could possibly cross a range of such height which mercifully limited that scouting tour to the two of us. On our return at 1 a.m., Danforth was close to hysterics, but kept an admirably stiff upper lip. It took no persuasion to make him promise not to show our sketches and the other things we brought away in our pockets, not to say anything more to the others than what we had agreed to relay outside, and to hide our camera films for private development later on; so that part of my present story will be as new to Pabodie, McTighe, Ropes, Sherman, and the rest as it will be to the world in gener-

al. Indeed—Danforth is closer-mouthed than I: for he saw—or thinks he saw—one thing he will not tell even me.

As all know, our report included a tale of a hard ascent; a confirmation of Lake's opinion that the great peaks are of Archaean slate and other very primal crumpled strata unchanged since at least middle Comanchian times; a conventional comment on the regularity of the clinging cube and rampart formations; a decision that the cave mouths indicate dissolved calcareous veins; a conjecture that certain slopes and passes would permit the scaling and crossing of the entire range by seasoned mountaineers; and a remark that the mysterious other side holds a lofty and immense superplateau as ancient and unchanging as the mountains themselves—20,000 feet in elevation, with grotesque rock formations protruding through a thin glacial layer and with low gradual foothills between the general plateau surface and the sheer precipices of the highest peaks.

This body of data is in every respect true as far as it goes, and it completely satisfied the men at the camp. We laid our absence of sixteen hours—a longer time than our announced flying, landing, reconnoitering, and rock-collecting program called for—to a long mythical spell of adverse wind conditions, and told truly of our landing on the farther foothills. Fortunately our tale sounded realistic and prosaic enough not to tempt any of the others into emulating our flight. Had any tried to do that, I would have used every ounce of my persuasion to stop them—and I do not know what Danforth would have done. While we were gone, Pabodie, Sherman, Ropes, McTighe, and Williamson had worked like beavers over Lake's two best planes, fitting them again for use despite the altogether unaccountable juggling of their operative mechanisms.

We decided to load all the planes the next morning and start back for our old base as soon as possible. Even though indirect, that was the safest way to work toward McMurdo Sound, for a straight-line flight across the most utterly unknown stretches of the aeon-dead continent would involve many additional hazards. Further exploration was hardly feasible in view of our tragic decimation and the ruin of our drilling machinery. The doubts and horrors around us—which we did not reveal—made us wish only to escape from this austral world of desolation and brooding madness as swiftly as we could.

As the public knows, our return to the world was accomplished without further disasters. All planes reached the old base on the evening of the next day—January 27th—after a swift nonstop flight; and on the 28th we made McMurdo Sound in two laps, the one pause being very brief, and occasioned by a faulty rudder in the furious wind over the ice shelf after we had cleared the great plateau. In five days more, the *Arkham* and *Miskatonic*, with all hands and equipment on board, were shaking clear of the thicken-

ing field ice and working up Ross Sea, with the mocking mountains of Victoria Land looming westward against a troubled Antarctic sky and twisting the wind's wails into a wide-ranged musical piping which chilled my soul to the quick. Less than a fortnight later we left the last hint of polar land behind us and thanked heaven that we were clear of a haunted, accursed realm where life and death, space and time, have made black and blasphemous alliances in the unknown epochs since matter first writhed and swam on the planet's scarce-cooled crust.

Since our return we have all constantly worked to discourage Antarctic exploration, and have kept certain doubts and guesses to ourselves with splendid unity and faithfulness. Even young Danforth, with his nervous breakdown, has not flinched or babbled to his doctors—indeed, as I have said, there is one thing he thinks he alone saw which he will not tell even me, though I think it would help his psychological state if he would consent to do so. It might explain and relieve much, though perhaps the thing was no more than the delusive aftermath of an earlier shock. That is the impression I gather after those rare, irresponsible moments when he whispers disjointed things to me—things which he repudiates vehemently as soon as he gets a grip on himself again.

It will be hard work deterring others from the great white south, and some of our efforts may directly harm our cause by drawing inquiring notice. We might have known from the first that human curiosity is undying, and that the results we announced would be enough to spur others ahead on the same age-long pursuit of the unknown. Lake's reports of those biological monstrosities had aroused naturalists and palaeontologists to the highest pitch, though we were sensible enough not to show the detached parts we had taken from the actual buried specimens, or our photographs of those specimens as they were found. We also refrained from showing the more puzzling of the scarred bones and greenish soapstones, while Danforth and I have closely guarded the pictures we took or drew on the superplateau across the range, and the crumpled things we smoothed, studied in terror, and brought away in our pockets. But now the Starkweather-Moore party is organizing, and with a thoroughness far beyond anything our outfit attempted. If not dissuaded, they will get to the innermost nucleus of the Antarctic and melt and bore till they bring up that which may end the world we know. So I must break through all reticences at last—even about that ultimate, nameless thing beyond the mountains of madness.

IV.

It is only with vast hesitancy and repugnance that I let my mind go back to Lake's camp and what we really found there—and to that other thing beyond the mountains of madness. I am constantly tempted to shirk the details, and to let hints stand for actual facts and ineluctable deductions. I hope I have said enough already to let me glide briefly over the rest—the rest, that is, of the horror at the camp. I have told of the wind-ravaged terrain, the damaged shelters, the disarranged machinery, the varied uneasiness of our dogs, the missing sledges and other items, the deaths of men and dogs, the absence of Gedney, and the six insanely buried biological specimens, strangely sound in texture for all their structural injuries, from a world forty million years dead. I do not recall whether I mentioned that upon checking the canine bodies we found one dog missing. We did not think much about that till later—indeed, only Danforth and I have thought of it at all.

The principal things I have been keeping back relate to the bodies, and to certain subtle points which may or may not lend a hideous and incredible kind of rationale to the apparent chaos. At the time, I tried to keep the men's minds off those points, for it was so much simpler—so much more normal—to lay everything to an outbreak of madness on the part of some of Lake's party. From the look of things, that demon mountain wind must have been enough to drive any man mad in the midst of this center of all earthly mystery and desolation.

The crowning abnormality, of course, was the condition of the bodies—men and dogs alike. They had all been in some terrible kind of conflict, and were torn and mangled in fiendish and altogether inexplicable ways. Death, as far as we could judge, had in each case come from strangulation or laceration. The dogs had evidently started the trouble, for the state of their ill-built corral bore witness to its forcible breakage from within. It had been set some distance from the camp because of the hatred of the animals for those hellish Archaean organisms, but the precaution seemed to have been taken in vain. When left alone in that monstrous wind, behind flimsy walls of insufficient height, they must have stampeded—whether from the wind itself, or from some subtle, increasing odor emitted by the nightmare specimens, one could not say. Those specimens, of course, had been covered with a tent cloth; yet the low Antarctic sun had beat steadily upon that cloth, and Lake had mentioned that solar heat tended to make the strangely sound and tough tissues of the things relax and expand. Perhaps the wind had whipped the cloth from over them, and jostled them about in such a way that their more pungent olfactory qualities became manifest despite their unbelievable antiquity.

Whatever had happened, it was hideous and revolting enough. Perhaps I had better put squeamishness aside and tell the worst at last—though with a categorical statement of opinion, based on the first-hand observations and most rigid deductions of both Danforth and myself, that the then-missing Gedney was in no way responsible for the loathsome horrors we found. I have said that the bodies were frightfully mangled. Now I must add that some were incised and subtracted from in the most curious, cold-blooded, and inhuman fashion. It was the same with dogs and men. All the healthier, fatter bodies, quadrupedal or bipedal, had had their most solid masses of tissue cut out and removed, as by a careful butcher; and around them was a strange sprinkling of salt—taken from the ravaged provision chests on the planes—which conjured up the most horrible associations. The thing had occurred in one of the crude airplane shelters from which the plane had been dragged out, and subsequent winds had effaced all tracks which could have supplied any plausible theory. Scattered bits of clothing, roughly slashed from the human incision subjects, hinted no clues. It is useless to bring up the half-impression of certain faint snowprints in one shielded corner of the ruined enclosure—because that impression did not concern human prints at all, but was clearly mixed up with all the talk of fossil prints which poor Lake had been giving throughout the preceding weeks. One had to be careful of one's imagination in the lee of those overshadowing mountains of madness.

As I have indicated, Gedney and one dog turned out to be missing in the end. When we came on that terrible shelter we had missed two dogs and two men, but the fairly unharmed dissecting tent, which we entered after investigating the monstrous graves, had something to reveal. It was not as Lake had left it, for the covered parts of the primal monstrosity had been removed from the improvised table. Indeed, we had already realized that one of the six imperfect and insanely buried things we had found—the one with the trace of a peculiarly hateful odor—must represent the collected sections of the entity which Lake had tried to analyze. On and around that laboratory table were strewn other things, and it did not take long for us to guess that those things were the carefully though oddly and inexpertly dissected parts of one man and one dog. I shall spare the feelings of survivors by omitting mention of the man's identity. Lake's anatomical instruments were missing, but there were evidences of their careful cleansing. The gasoline stove was also gone, though around it we found a curious litter of matches. We buried the human parts beside the other ten men, and the canine parts with the other 35 dogs. Concerning the bizarre smudges on the laboratory table, and on the jumble of roughly handled illustrated books scattered near it, we were much too bewildered to speculate.

This formed the worst of the camp horror, but other things were equally perplexing. The disappearance of Gedney, the one dog, the eight unin-

jured biological specimens, the three sledges, and certain instruments, illustrated technical and scientific books, writing materials, electric torches and batteries, food and fuel, heating apparatus, spare tents, fur suits, and the like, was utterly beyond sane conjecture, as were likewise the spatter-fringed ink blots on certain pieces of paper, and the evidences of curious alien fumbling and experimentation around the planes and all other mechanical devices both at the camp and at the boring. The dogs seemed to abhor this oddly disordered machinery. Then, too, there was the upsetting of the larder, the disappearance of certain staples, and the jarringly comical heap of tin cans pried open in the most unlikely ways and at the most unlikely places. The profusion of scattered matches, intact, broken, or spent, formed another minor enigma, as did the two or three tent cloths and fur suits which we found lying about with peculiar and unorthodox slashings conceivably due to clumsy efforts at unimaginable adaptations. The maltreatment of the human and canine bodies, and the crazy burial of the damaged Archaean specimens, were all of a piece with this apparent disintegrative madness. In view of just such an eventuality as the present one, we carefully photographed all the main evidences of insane disorder at the camp, and shall use the prints to buttress our pleas against the departure of the proposed Starkweather-Moore Expedition.

Our first act after finding the bodies in the shelter was to photograph and open the row of insane graves with the five-pointed snow mounds. We could not help noticing the resemblance of these monstrous mounds, with their clusters of grouped dots, to poor Lake's descriptions of the strange greenish soapstones; and when we came on some of the soapstones themselves in the great mineral pile we found the likeness very close indeed. The whole general formation, it must be made clear, seemed abominably suggestive of the starfish head of the Archaean entities; and we agreed that the suggestion must have worked potently upon the sensitized minds of Lake's overwrought party. Our own first sight of the actual buried entities formed a horrible moment, and sent the imaginations of Pabodie and myself back to some of the shocking primal myths we had read and heard. We all agreed that the mere sight and continued presence of the things must have cooperated with the oppressive polar solitude and demon mountain wind in driving Lake's party mad.

For madness—centering in Gedney as the only possible surviving agent—was the explanation spontaneously adopted by everybody as far as spoken utterance was concerned, though I will not be so naive as to deny that each of us may have harbored wild guesses which sanity forbade him to formulate completely. Sherman, Pabodie, and McTighe made an exhaustive airplane cruise over all the surrounding territory in the afternoon, sweeping the horizon with field glasses in quest of Gedney and of the various missing

things, but nothing came to light. The party reported that the titan barrier range extended endlessly to right and left alike, without any diminution in height or essential structure. On some of the peaks, though, the regular cube and rampart formations were bolder and plainer, having doubly fantastic similitudes to Roerich-painted Asian hill ruins. The distribution of cryptical cave mouths on the black snow-denuded summits seemed roughly even as far as the range could be traced.

In spite of all the prevailing horrors we were left with enough sheer scientific zeal and adventurousness to wonder about the unknown realm beyond those mysterious mountains. As our guarded messages stated, we rested at midnight after our day of terror and bafflement, but not without a tentative plan for one or more range-crossing altitude flights in a lightened plane with aerial camera and geologist's outfit, beginning the following morning. It was decided that Danforth and I try it first, and we awaked at 7 a.m. intending an early trip; however, heavy winds—mentioned in our brief bulletin to the outside world—delayed our start till nearly nine o'clock.

I have already repeated the noncommittal story we told the men at camp—and relayed outside—after our return sixteen hours later. It is now my terrible duty to amplify this account by filling in the merciful blanks with hints of what we really saw in the hidden transmontane world—hints of the revelations which have finally driven Danforth to a nervous collapse. I wish he would add a really frank word about the thing which he thinks he alone saw—even though it was probably a nervous delusion—and which was perhaps the last straw that put him where he is; but he is firm against that. All I can do is to repeat his later disjointed whispers about what set him shrieking as the plane soared back through the wind-tortured mountain pass after that real and tangible shock which I shared. This will form my last word. If the plain signs of surviving elder horrors in what I disclose be not enough to keep others from meddling with the inner Antarctic—or at least from prying too deeply beneath the surface of that ultimate waste of forbidden secrets and inhuman, aeon-cursed desolation—the responsibility for unnamable and perhaps immeasurable evils will not be mine.

Danforth and I, studying the notes made by Pabodie in his afternoon flight and checking up with a sextant, had calculated that the lowest available pass in the range lay somewhat to the right of us, within sight of camp, and about 23,000 or 24,000 feet above sea level. For this point, then, we first headed in the lightened plane as we embarked on our flight of discovery. The camp itself, on foothills which sprang from a high continental plateau, was 12,000 feet in altitude; hence the actual height increase necessary was not as vast as it might seem. Nevertheless we were acutely conscious of the rarefied air and intense cold as we rose, for, on account of visi-

bility conditions, we had to leave the cabin windows open. We were dressed, of course, in our heaviest furs.

As we drew near the forbidding peaks, dark and sinister above the line of crevasse-riven snow and interstitial glaciers, we noticed more and more the curiously regular formations clinging to the slopes, and thought again of the strange Asian paintings of Nicholas Roerich. The ancient and wind-weathered rock strata fully verified all of Lake's bulletins, and proved that these pinnacles had been towering up in exactly the same way since a surprisingly early time in Earth's history—perhaps over fifty million years. How much higher they had once been, it was futile to guess, but everything about this strange region pointed to obscure atmospheric influences unfavorable to change, and calculated to retard the usual climatic processes of rock disintegration.

But it was the mountainside tangle of regular cubes, ramparts, and cave mouths which fascinated and disturbed us most. I studied them with a field glass and took aerial photographs while Danforth drove, and at times I relieved him at the controls—though my aviation knowledge was purely an amateur's—in order to let him use the binoculars. We could easily see that much of the material of the things was a lightish Archaean quartzite, unlike any formation visible over broad areas of the general surface, and that their regularity was extreme and uncanny to an extent which poor Lake had scarcely hinted.

As he had said, their edges were crumbled and rounded from untold aeons of savage weathering, but their preternatural solidity and tough material had saved them from obliteration. Many parts, especially those closest to the slopes, seemed identical in substance with the surrounding rock surface. The whole arrangement looked like the ruins of Machu Picchu in the Andes, or the primal foundation walls of Kish as dug up by the Oxford Field Museum Expedition in 1929; and both Danforth and I obtained that occasional impression of *separate Cyclopean blocks* which Lake had attributed to his flight companion Carroll. How to account for such things in this place was frankly beyond me, and I felt queerly humbled as a geologist. Igneous formations often have strange regularities—like the famous Giants' Causeway in Ireland—but this stupendous range, despite Lake's original suspicion of smoking cones, was above all else nonvolcanic in evident structure.

The curious cave mouths, near which the odd formations seemed most abundant, presented another albeit a lesser puzzle because of their regularity of outline. They were, as Lake's bulletin had said, often approximately square or semicircular, as if the natural orifices had been shaped to greater symmetry by some magic band. Their numerousness and wide distribution were remarkable, and suggested that the whole region was honeycombed with tunnels dissolved out of limestone strata. Such glimpses as we secured

did not extend far within the caverns, but we saw that they were apparently clear of stalactites and stalagmites. Outside, those parts of the mountain slopes adjoining the apertures seemed invariably smooth and regular; and Danforth thought that the slight cracks and pittings of the weathering tended toward unusual patterns. Filled as he was with the horrors and strangenesses discovered at the camp, he hinted that the pittings vaguely resembled those baffling groups of dots sprinkled over the primeval greenish soapstones, so hideously duplicated on the madly conceived snow mounds above those six buried monstrosities.

We had risen gradually in flying over the higher foothills and along toward the relatively low pass we had selected. As we advanced we occasionally looked down at the snow and ice of the land route, wondering whether we could have attempted the trip with the simpler equipment of earlier days. Somewhat to our surprise we saw that the terrain was far from difficult as such things go, and that despite the crevasses and other bad spots it would not have been likely to deter the sledges of a Scott, a Shackleton, or an Amundsen. Some of the glaciers appeared to lead up to wind-bared passes with unusual continuity, and upon reaching our chosen pass we found that its case formed no exception.

Our sensations of tense expectancy as we prepared to round the crest and peer out over an untrodden world can hardly be described on paper; even though we had no cause to think the regions beyond the range essentially different from those already seen and traversed. The touch of evil mystery in these barrier mountains, and in the beckoning sea of opalescent sky glimpsed betwixt their summits, was a highly subtle and attenuated matter not to be explained in literal words. Rather was it an affair of vague psychological symbolism and aesthetic association—a thing mixed up with exotic poetry and paintings, and with archaic myths lurking in shunned and forbidden volumes. Even the wind's burden held a peculiar strain of conscious malignity, and for a second it seemed that the composite sound included a bizarre musical whistling or piping over a wide range as the blast swept in and out of the omnipresent and resonant cave mouths. There was a cloudy note of reminiscent repulsion in this sound, as complex and unplaceable as any of the other dark impressions.

We were now, after a slow ascent, at a height of 23,570 feet according to the aneroid, and had left the region of clinging snow definitely below us. Up here were only dark, bare rock slopes and the start of rough-ribbed glaciers—but with those provocative cubes, ramparts, and echoing cave mouths to add a portent of the unnatural, the fantastic, and the dreamlike. Looking along the line of high peaks, I thought I could see the one mentioned by poor Lake, with a rampart exactly on top. It seemed to be half lost in a queer Antarctic haze—such a haze, perhaps, as had been responsible for Lake's early

notion of volcanism. The pass loomed directly before us, smooth and windswept between its jagged and malignly frowning pylons. Beyond it was a sky fretted with swirling vapors and lighted by the low polar sun—the sky of that mysterious farther realm upon which we felt no human eye had ever gazed.

A few more feet of altitude and we would behold that realm. Danforth and I, unable to speak except in shouts amid the howling, piping wind that raced through the pass and added to the noise of the unmuffled engines, exchanged eloquent glances. Then, having gained those last few feet, we did indeed stare across the momentous divide and over the unsampled secrets of an elder and utterly alien earth.

V.

I think that both of us simultaneously cried out in mixed awe, wonder, terror, and disbelief in our own senses as we finally cleared the pass and saw what lay beyond. Of course, we must have had some natural theory in the back of our heads to steady our faculties for the moment. Probably we thought of such things as the grotesquely weathered stones of the Garden of the Gods in Colorado, or the fantastically symmetrical wind-carved rocks of the Arizona desert. Perhaps we even half thought the sight a mirage like that we had seen the morning before on first approaching those mountains of madness. We must have had some such normal notions to fall back upon as our eyes swept that limitless, tempest-scarred plateau and grasped the almost endless labyrinth of colossal, regular, and geometrically eurythmic stone masses which reared their crumbled and pitted crests above a glacial sheet not more than forty or fifty feet deep at its thickest, and in places obviously thinner.

The effect of the monstrous sight was indescribable, for some fiendish violation of known natural law seemed certain at the outset. Here, on a hellishly ancient tableland fully 20,000 feet high, and in a climate deadly to habitation since a prehuman age not less than 500,000 years ago, there stretched nearly to the vision's limit a tangle of orderly stone which only the desperation of mental self-defense could possibly attribute to any but a conscious and artificial cause. We had previously dismissed, as far as serious thought was concerned, any theory that the cubes and ramparts of the mountainsides were other than natural in origin. How could they be otherwise, when man himself could scarcely have been differentiated from the great apes at the time when this region succumbed to the present unbroken reign of glacial death?

Yet now the sway of reason seemed irrefutably shaken, for this Cyclopean maze of squared, curved, and angled blocks had features which cut off all comfortable refuge. It was, very clearly, the blasphemous city of the mirage in stark, objective, and ineluctable reality. That damnable portent had had a material basis after all—there had been some horizontal stratum of ice dust in the upper air, and this shocking stone survival had projected its image across the mountains according to the simple laws of reflection. Of course, the phantom had been twisted and exaggerated, and had contained things which the real source did not contain; yet now, as we saw that real source, we thought it even more hideous and menacing than its distant image.

Only the incredible, inhuman massiveness of these vast stone towers and ramparts had saved the frightful thing from utter annihilation in the hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions-of years it had brooded there amid the blasts of a bleak upland. “Corona Mundi ... Roof of the World ... Ó All sorts of fantastic phrases sprang to our lips as we looked dizzily down at the unbelievable spectacle. I thought again of the eldritch primal myths that had so persistently haunted me since my first sight of this dead Antarctic world—of the demoniac plateau of Leng, of the Mi-Go, or Abominable Snowmen of the Himalayas, of the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* with their prehuman implications, of the Cthulhu cult, of the *Necronomicon*, and of the Hyperborean legends of formless Tsathoggua and the worse than formless star-spawn associated with that semi-entity.

For boundless miles in every direction the thing stretched off with very little thinning; indeed, as our eyes followed it to the right and left along the base of the low, gradual foothills which separated it from the actual mountain rim we decided that we could see no thinning at all except for an interruption at the left of the pass through which we had come. We had merely struck, at random, a limited part of something of incalculable extent. The foothills were more sparsely sprinkled with grotesque stone structures, linking the terrible city to the already familiar cubes and ramparts which evidently formed its mountain outposts. These latter, as well as the queer cave mouths, were as thick on the inner as on the outer sides of the mountains.

The nameless stone labyrinth consisted, for the most part, of walls from 10 to 150 feet in ice-clear height, and of a thickness varying from five to ten feet. It was composed mostly of prodigious blocks of dark primordial slate, schist, and sandstone—blocks in many cases as large as 4 x 6 x 8 feet—though in several places it seemed to be carved out of a solid, uneven bedrock of pre-Cambrian slate. The buildings were far from equal in size, there being innumerable honeycomb-arrangements of enormous extent as well as smaller separate structures. The general shape of these things tended to be conical, pyramidal, or terraced, though there were many perfect

cylinders, perfect cubes, clusters of cubes, and other rectangular forms, and a peculiar sprinkling of angled edifices whose five-pointed ground plan roughly suggested modern fortifications. The builders had made constant and expert use of the principle of the arch, and domes had probably existed in the city's heyday.

The whole tangle was monstrously weathered, and the glacial surface from which the towers projected was strewn with fallen blocks and immemorial debris. Where the glaciation was transparent we could see the lower parts of the gigantic piles, and we noticed the ice-preserved stone bridges which connected the different towers at varying distances above the ground. On the exposed walls we could detect the scarred places where other and higher bridges of the same sort had existed. Closer inspection revealed countless largish windows, some of which were closed with shutters of a petrified material originally wood, though most gaped open in a sinister and menacing fashion. Many of the ruins, of course, were roofless, and with uneven though wind-rounded upper edges; while others, of a more sharply conical or pyramidal model or else protected by higher surrounding structures, preserved intact outlines despite the omnipresent crumbling and pitting. With the field glass we could barely make out what seemed to be sculptural decorations in horizontal bands—decorations including those curious groups of dots whose presence on the ancient soapstones now assumed a vastly larger significance.

In many places the buildings were totally ruined and the ice sheet deeply riven from various geologic causes. In other places the stonework was worn down to the very level of the glaciation. One broad swath, extending from the plateau's interior to a cleft in the foothills about a mile to the left of the pass we had traversed, was wholly free from buildings. It probably represented, we concluded, the course of some great river which in Tertiary times—millions of years ago—had poured through the city and into some prodigious subterranean abyss of the great barrier range. Certainly, this was above all a region of caves, gulfs, and underground secrets beyond human penetration.

Looking back on our sensations, and recalling our dazedness at viewing this monstrous survival from aeons we had thought prehuman, I can only wonder that we preserved the semblance of equilibrium which we did. Of course, we knew that something—chronology, scientific theory, or our own consciousness—was woefully awry; yet we kept enough poise to guide the plane, observe many things quite minutely, and take a careful series of photographs which may yet serve both us and the world in good stead. In my case, ingrained scientific habit may have helped, for above all my bewilderment and sense of menace there burned a dominant curiosity to fathom more of this age-old secret—to know what sort of beings had built and lived

in this incalculably gigantic place, and what relation to the general world of its time or of other times so unique a concentration of life could have had.

For this place could be no ordinary city. It must have formed the primary nucleus and center of some archaic and unbelievable chapter of Earth's history whose outward ramifications, recalled only dimly in the most obscure and distorted myths, had vanished utterly amid the chaos of terrene convulsions long before any human race we know had shambled out of apedom. Here sprawled a Palaeogaeon megalopolis compared with which the fabled Atlantis and Lemuria, Commorion and Uzuldaroum, and Olatho' in the land of Lomar are recent things of today—not even of yesterday; a megalopolis ranking with such whispered prehuman blasphemies as Valusia, R'lyeh, Ib in the land of Mnar, and the Nameless City of Arabia Deserta. As we flew above that tangle of stark titan towers my imagination sometimes escaped all bounds and roved aimlessly in realms of fantastic associations—even weaving links betwixt this lost world and some of my own wildest dreams concerning the mad horror at the camp.

The plane's fuel tank, in the interest of greater lightness, had been only partly filled; hence we now had to exert caution in our explorations. Even so, however, we covered an enormous extent of ground—or rather, air—after swooping down to a level where the wind became virtually negligible. There seemed to be no limit to the mountain range, or to the length of the frightful stone city which bordered its inner foothills. Fifty miles of flight in each direction showed no major change in the labyrinth of rock and masonry that clawed up corpselike through the eternal ice. There were, though, some highly absorbing diversifications, such as the carvings on the canyon where that broad river had once pierced the foothills and approached its sinking place in the great range. The headlands at the stream's entrance had been boldly carved into Cyclopean pylons, and something about the ridgy, barrel-shaped designs stirred up oddly vague, hateful, and confusing semi-remembrances in both Danforth and me.

We also came upon several star-shaped open spaces, evidently public squares, and noted various undulations in the terrain. Where a sharp hill rose, it was generally hollowed out into some sort of rambling stone edifice, but there were at least two exceptions. Of these latter, one was too badly weathered to disclose what had been on the jutting eminence, while the other still bore a fantastic conical monument carved out of the solid rock and roughly resembling such things as the well known Snake Tomb in the ancient valley of Petra.

Flying inland from the mountains, we discovered that the city was not of infinite width, even though its length along the foothills seemed endless. After about thirty miles the grotesque stone buildings began to thin out, and in ten more miles we came to an unbroken waste virtually without signs

of sentient artifice. The course of the river beyond the city seemed marked by a broad, depressed line, while the land assumed a somewhat greater ruggedness, seeming to slope slightly upward as it receded in the mist-hazed west.

So far we had made no landing, yet to leave the plateau without an attempt at entering some of the monstrous structures would have been inconceivable. Accordingly, we decided to find a smooth place on the foothills near our navigable pass, there grounding the plane and preparing to do some exploration on foot. Though these gradual slopes were partly covered with a scattering of ruins, low flying soon disclosed an ample number of possible landing places. Selecting that nearest to the pass, since our flight would be across the great range and back to camp, we succeeded about 12:30 p.m. in effecting a landing on a smooth, hard snow field wholly devoid of obstacles and well adapted to a swift and favorable take-off later on.

It did not seem necessary to protect the plane with a snow banking for so brief a time and in so comfortable an absence of high winds at this level; hence we merely saw that the landing skis were safely lodged, and that the vital parts of the mechanism were guarded against the cold. For our foot journey we discarded the heaviest of our flying furs, and took with us a small outfit consisting of pocket compass, hand camera, light provisions, voluminous notebooks and paper, geologist's hammer and chisel, specimen bags, coil of climbing rope, and powerful electric torches with extra batteries, this equipment having been carried in the plane on the chance that we might be able to effect a landing, take ground pictures, make drawings and topographical sketches, and obtain rock specimens from some bare slope, outcropping, or mountain cave. Fortunately we had a supply of extra paper to tear up, place in a spare specimen bag, and use on the ancient principle of hare-and-hounds for marking our course in any interior mazes we might be able to penetrate. This had been brought in case we found some cave system with air quiet enough to allow such a rapid and easy method in place of the usual rock-chipping method of trail-blazing.

Walking cautiously downhill over the crusted snow toward the stupendous stone labyrinth that loomed against the opalescent west, we felt almost as keen a sense of imminent marvels as we had felt on approaching the unfathomed mountain pass four hours previously. True, we had become visually familiar with the incredible secret concealed by the barrier peaks; yet the prospect of actually entering primordial walls reared by conscious beings perhaps millions of years ago—before any known race of men could have existed—was nonetheless awesome and potentially terrible in its implications of cosmic abnormality. Though the thinness of the air at this prodigious altitude made exertion somewhat more difficult than usual both Danforth and I found ourselves bearing up very well, and felt equal to almost any task which might fall to our lot. It took only a few steps to bring us to

a shapeless ruin worn level with the snow, while ten or fifteen rods farther on there was a huge, roofless rampart still complete in its gigantic five-pointed outline and rising to an irregular height of ten or eleven feet. For this latter we headed; when at last we were actually able to touch its weathered Cyclopean blocks, we felt that we had established an unprecedented and almost blasphemous link with forgotten aeons normally closed to our species.

This rampart, shaped like a star and perhaps three hundred feet from point to point, was built of Jurassic sandstone blocks of irregular size, averaging six by eight feet in surface. There was a row of arched loopholes or windows about four feet wide and five feet high, spaced quite symmetrically along the points of the star and at its inner angles, and with the bottoms about four feet from the glaciated surface. Looking through these, we could see that the masonry was fully five feet thick, that there were no partitions remaining within, and that there were traces of banded carvings or bas-reliefs on the interior walls, facts we had indeed guessed before, when flying low over this rampart and others like it. Though lower parts must have originally existed, all traces of such things were now wholly obscured by the deep layer of ice and snow at this point.

We crawled through one of the windows and vainly tried to decipher the nearly effaced mural designs, but did not attempt to disturb the glaciated floor. Our orientation flights had indicated that many buildings in the city proper were less ice-choked, and that we might perhaps find wholly clear interiors leading down to the true ground level if we entered those structures still roofed at the top. Before we left the rampart we photographed it carefully, and studied its mortarless Cyclopean masonry with complete bewilderment. We wished that Pabodie were present, for his engineering knowledge might have helped us guess how such titanic blocks could have been handled in that unbelievably remote age when the city and its outskirts were built up.

The half-mile walk downhill to the actual city, with the upper wind shrieking vainly and savagely through the skyward peaks in the background, was something of which the smallest details will always remain engraved on my mind. Only in fantastic nightmares could any human beings but Danforth and me conceive such optical effects. Between us and the churning vapors of the west lay that monstrous tangle of dark stone towers, its outreaching and incredible forms impressing us afresh at every new angle of vision. It was a mirage in solid stone, and were it not for the photographs I would still doubt that such a thing could be. The general type of masonry was identical with that of the rampart we had examined; but the extravagant shapes which this masonry took in its urban manifestations were past all description.

Even the pictures illustrate only one or two phases of its endless variety, preternatural massiveness, and utterly alien exoticism. There were geometrical forms for which a Euclid would scarcely find a name—cones of all degrees of irregularity and truncation, terraces of every sort of provocative disproportion, shafts with odd bulbous enlargements, broken columns in curious groups, and five-pointed or five-ridged arrangements of mad grotesqueness. As we drew nearer we could see beneath certain transparent parts of the ice sheet, and detect some of the tubular stone bridges that connected the crazily sprinkled structures at various heights. Of orderly streets there seemed to be none, the only broad open swath being a mile to the left, where the ancient river had doubtless flowed through the town into the mountains.

Our field glasses showed the external, horizontal bands of nearly effaced sculptures and dot groups to be very prevalent, and we could half imagine what the city must once have looked like—even though most of the roofs and tower tops had necessarily perished. As a whole, it had been a complex tangle of twisted lanes and alleys, all of them deep canyons, and some little better than tunnels because of the overhanging masonry or over-arching bridges. Now, outspread below us, it loomed like a dream fantasy against a westward mist through whose northern end the low, reddish Antarctic sun of early afternoon was struggling to shine; and when, for a moment, that sun encountered a denser obstruction and plunged the scene into temporary shadow, the effect was subtly menacing in a way I can never hope to depict. Even the faint howling and piping of the unfelt wind in the great mountain passes behind us took on a wilder note of purposeful malignity. The last stage of our descent to the town was unusually steep and abrupt, and a rock outcropping at the edge where the grade changed led us to think that an artificial terrace had once existed there. Under the glaciation, we believed, there must be a flight of steps or its equivalent.

When at last we plunged into the town itself, clambering over fallen masonry and shrinking from the oppressive nearness and dwarfing height of omnipresent crumbling and pitted walls, our sensations again became such that I marvel at the amount of self-control we retained. Danforth was frankly jumpy, and began making some offensively irrelevant speculations about the horror at the camp—which I resented all the more because I could not help sharing certain conclusions forced upon us by many features of this morbid survival from nightmare antiquity. The speculations worked on his imagination, too: In one place—where a debris-littered alley turned a sharp corner—he insisted that he saw faint traces of ground markings which he did not like; while elsewhere he stopped to listen to a subtle, imaginary sound from some undefined point—a muffled musical piping, he said, not unlike that of the wind in the mountain caves, yet somehow dis-

turbingly different. The ceaseless *five-pointedness* of the surrounding architecture and of the few distinguishable mural arabesques had a dimly sinister suggestiveness we could not escape, and gave us a touch of terrible subconscious certainty concerning the primal entities which had reared and dwelt in this unhallowed place.

Nevertheless, our scientific and adventurous souls were not wholly dead, and we mechanically carried out our program of chipping specimens from all the different rock types represented in the masonry. We wished a rather full set in order to draw better conclusions regarding the age of the place. Nothing in the great outer walls seemed to date from later than the Jurassic and Comanchian periods, nor was any piece of stone in the entire place of a greater recency than the Pliocene Age. In stark certainty, we were wandering amid a death which had reigned at least 500,000 years, and in all probability even longer.

As we proceeded through this maze of stone-shadowed twilight we stopped at all available apertures to study interiors and investigate entrance possibilities. Some were above our reach, while others led only into ice-choked ruins as unroofed and barren as the rampart on the hill. One, though spacious and inviting, opened on a seemingly bottomless abyss without visible means of descent. Now and then we had a chance to study the petrified wood of a surviving shutter, and were impressed by the fabulous antiquity implied in the still discernible grain. These things had come from Mesozoic gymnosperms and conifers—especially Cretaceous cycads—and from fan palms and early angiosperms of plainly Tertiary date. Nothing definitely later than the Pliocene could be discovered. In the placing of these shutters—whose edges showed the former presence of queer and long-vanished hinges—usage seemed to be varied, some being on the outer and some on the inner side of the deep embrasures. They seemed to have become wedged in place, thus surviving the rusting of their former and probably metallic fixtures and fastenings.

After a time we came across a row of windows—in the bulges of a colossal five-edged cone of undamaged apex—which led into a vast, well preserved room with stone flooring, but these were too high in the room to permit descent without a rope. We had a rope with us, but did not wish to bother with this twenty-foot drop unless obliged to—especially in this thin plateau air where great demands were made upon the heart action. This enormous room was probably a hall or concourse of some sort, and our electric torches showed bold, distinct, and potentially startling sculptures arranged round the walls in broad, horizontal bands separated by equally broad strips of conventional arabesques. We took careful note of this spot, planning to enter here unless a more easily gained interior were encountered.

Finally, though, we did encounter exactly the opening we wished: an archway about six feet wide and ten feet high, marking the former end of an aerial bridge which had spanned an alley about five feet above the present level of glaciation. These archways, of course, were flush with upper-story floors, and in this case one of the floors still existed. The building thus accessible was a series of rectangular terraces on our left facing westward. That across the alley, where the other archway yawned, was a decrepit cylinder with no windows and with a curious bulge about ten feet above the aperture. It was totally dark inside, and the archway seemed to open on a well of illimitable emptiness.

Heaped debris made the entrance to the vast left-hand building doubly easy, yet for a moment we hesitated before taking advantage of the long-wished chance. For though we had penetrated into this tangle of archaic mystery, it required fresh resolution to carry us actually inside a complete and surviving building of a fabulous elder world whose nature was becoming more and more hideously plain to us. In the end, however, we made the plunge, and scrambled up over the rubble into the gaping embrasure. The floor beyond was of great slate slabs, and seemed to form the outlet of a long, high corridor with sculptured walls.

Observing the many inner archways which led off from it, and realizing the probable complexity of the nest of apartments within, we decided that we must begin our system of hare-and-hound trail-blazing. Hitherto our compasses, together with frequent glimpses of the vast mountain range between the towers in our rear, had been enough to prevent our losing our way; but from now on, the artificial substitute would be necessary. Accordingly we reduced our extra paper to shreds of suitable size, placed these in a bag to be carried by Danforth, and prepared to use them as economically as safety would allow. This method would probably gain us immunity from straying, since there did not appear to be any strong air currents inside the primordial masonry. If such should develop, or if our paper supply should give out, we could of course fall back on the more secure though more tedious and retarding method of rock-chipping.

Just how extensive a territory we had opened up, it was impossible to guess without a trial. The close and frequent connection of the different buildings made it likely that we might cross from one to another on bridges underneath the ice, except where impeded by local collapses and geologic rifts, for very little glaciation seemed to have entered the massive constructions. Almost all the areas of transparent ice had revealed the submerged windows as tightly shuttered, as if the town had been left in that uniform state until the glacial sheet came to crystallize the lower part for all succeeding time. Indeed, one gained a curious impression that this place had been deliberately closed and deserted in some dim, bygone aeon, rather than

overwhelmed by any sudden calamity or even gradual decay. Had the coming of the ice been foreseen, and had a nameless population left *en masse* to seek a less doomed abode? The precise physiographic conditions attending the formation of the ice sheet at this point would have to wait for later solution. It had not, very plainly, been a grinding drive. Perhaps the pressure of accumulated snows had been responsible, and perhaps some flood from the river, or from the bursting of some ancient glacial dam in the great range, had helped to create the special state now observable. Imagination could conceive almost anything in connection with this place.

VI.

It would be cumbersome to give a detailed, consecutive account of our wanderings inside that cavernous, aeon-dead honeycomb of primal masonry, that monstrous lair of elder secrets which now echoed for the first time, after uncounted epochs, to the tread of human feet. This is especially true because so much of the horrible drama and revelation came from a mere study of the omnipresent mural carvings. Our flashlight photographs of those carvings will do much toward proving the truth of what we are now disclosing, and it is lamentable that we had not a larger film supply with us. As it was, we made crude notebook sketches of certain salient features after all our film was used up.

The building which we had entered was one of great size and elaborateness, and gave us an impressive notion of the architecture of that nameless geologic past. The inner partitions were less massive than the outer walls, but on the lower levels were excellently preserved. Labyrinthine complexity, involving curiously irregular difference in floor levels, characterized the entire arrangement; and we should certainly have been lost at the very outset but for the trail of torn paper left behind us. We decided to explore the more decrepit upper parts first of all, hence climbed aloft in the maze for a distance of some one hundred feet, to where the topmost tier of chambers yawned snowily and ruinously open to the polar sky. Ascent was effected over the steep, transversely ribbed stone ramps or inclined planes which everywhere served in lieu of stairs. The rooms we encountered were of all imaginable shapes and proportions, ranging from five-pointed stars to triangles and perfect cubes. It might be safe to say that their general average was about thirty by thirty feet in floor area, and twenty feet in height, though many larger apartments existed. After thoroughly examining the upper regions and the glacial level we descended, story by story, into the submerged part, where indeed we soon saw we were in a continuous maze of connected chambers and passages probably leading over unlimited areas

outside this particular building. The Cyclopean massiveness and gigantism of everything about us became curiously oppressive, and there was something vaguely but deeply inhuman in all the contours, dimensions, proportions, decorations, and constructional nuances of the blasphemously archaic stonework. We soon realized, from what the carvings revealed, that this monstrous city was many million years old.

We cannot yet explain the engineering principles used in the anomalous balancing and adjustment of the vast rock masses, though the function of the arch was clearly much relied on. The rooms we visited were wholly bare of all portable contents, a circumstance which sustained our belief in the city's deliberate desertion. The prime decorative feature was the almost universal system of mural sculpture, which tended to run in continuous horizontal bands three feet wide and arranged from floor to ceiling in alternation with bands of equal width given over to geometrical arabesques. There were exceptions to this rule of arrangement, but its preponderance was overwhelming. Often, however, a series of smooth cartouches containing oddly patterned groups of dots would be sunk along one of the arabesque bands.

The technique, we soon saw, was mature, accomplished, and aesthetically evolved to the highest degree of civilized mastery, though utterly alien in every detail to any known art tradition of the human race. In delicacy of execution no sculpture I have ever seen could approach it. The minutest details of elaborate vegetation, or of animal life, were rendered with astonishing vividness despite the bold scale of the carvings, while the conventional designs were marvels of skillful intricacy. The arabesques displayed a profound use of mathematical principles, and were made up of obscurely symmetrical curves and angles based on the quantity of five. The pictorial bands followed a highly formalized tradition and involved a peculiar treatment of perspective, but had an artistic force that moved us profoundly notwithstanding the intervening gulf of vast geologic periods. Their method of design hinged on a singular juxtaposition of the cross-section with the two-dimensional silhouette, and embodied an analytical psychology beyond that of any known race of antiquity. It is useless to try to compare this art with any represented in our museums. Those who see our photographs will probably find its closest analogue in certain grotesque conceptions of the most daring futurists.

The arabesque tracery consisted altogether of depressed lines, whose depth on unweathered walls varied from one to two inches. When cartouches with dot groups appeared—evidently as inscriptions in some unknown and primordial language and alphabet—the depression of the smooth surface was perhaps an inch and a half, and of the dots perhaps a half-inch more. The pictorial bands were in countersunk low relief, their background being depressed about two inches from the original wall sur-

face. In some specimens marks of a former coloration could be detected, though for the most part the untold aeons had disintegrated and banished any pigments which may have been applied. The more one studied the marvellous technique the more one admired the things. Beneath their strict conventionalization one could grasp the minute and accurate observation and graphic skill of the artists; indeed, the very conventions themselves served to symbolize and accentuate the real essence or vital differentiation of every object delineated. We felt, too, that besides these recognizable excellences there were others lurking beyond the reach of our perceptions. Certain touches here and there gave vague hints of latent symbols and stimuli which another mental and emotional background, and a fuller or different sensory equipment, might have made of profound and poignant significance to us.

The subject matter of the sculptures obviously came from the life of the vanished epoch of their creation, and contained a large proportion of evident history. It is this abnormal historic-mindedness of the primal race—a chance circumstance operating, through coincidence, miraculously in our favor—which made the carvings so awesomely informative to us, and which caused us to place their photography and transcription above all other considerations. In certain rooms the dominant arrangement was varied by the presence of maps, astronomical charts, and other scientific designs of an enlarged scale—these things giving a naive and terrible corroboration to what we gathered from the pictorial friezes and dadoes. In hinting at what the whole revealed, I can only hope that my account will not arouse a curiosity greater than sane caution on the part of those who believe me at all. It would be tragic if any were to be allured to that realm of death and horror by the very warning meant to discourage them.

Interrupting these sculptured walls were high windows and massive twelve-foot doorways, both now and then retaining the petrified wooden planks—elaborately carved and polished—of the actual shutters and doors. All metal fixtures had long ago vanished, but some of the doors remained in place and had to be forced aside as we progressed from room to room. Window frames with odd transparent panes—mostly elliptical—survived here and there, though in no considerable quantity. There were also frequent niches of great magnitude, generally empty, but once in a while containing some bizarre object carved from green soapstone which was either broken or perhaps held too inferior to warrant removal. Other apertures were undoubtedly connected with bygone mechanical facilities—heating, lighting, and the like—of a sort suggested in many of the carvings. Ceilings tended to be plain, but had sometimes been inlaid with green soapstone or other tiles, mostly fallen now. Floors were also paved with such tiles, though plain stonework predominated.

As I have said, all furniture and other movables were absent; but the sculptures gave a clear idea of the strange devices which had once filled these tomblike, echoing rooms. Above the glacial sheet the floors were generally thick with detritus, litter, and debris, but farther down this condition decreased. In some of the lower chambers and corridors there was little more than gritty dust or ancient encrustations, while occasional areas had an uncanny air of newly swept immaculateness. Of course, where rifts or collapses had occurred, the lower levels were as littered as the upper ones. A central court—as in other structures we had seen from the air—saved the inner regions from total darkness; so that we seldom had to use our electric torches in the upper rooms except when studying sculptured details. Below the ice cap, however, the twilight deepened, and in many parts of the tangled ground level there was an approach to absolute blackness.

To form even a rudimentary idea of our thoughts and feelings as we penetrated this aeon-silent maze of inhuman masonry one must correlate a hopelessly bewildering chaos of fugitive moods, memories, and impressions. The sheer appalling antiquity and lethal desolation of the place were enough to overwhelm almost any sensitive person, but added to these elements were the recent unexplained horror at the camp, and the revelations all too soon effected by the terrible mural sculptures around us. The moment we came upon a perfect section of carving, where no ambiguity of interpretation could exist, it took only a brief study to give us the hideous truth—a truth which it would be naïve to claim Danforth and I had not independently suspected before, though we had carefully refrained from even hinting it to each other. There could now be no further merciful doubt about the nature of the beings which had built and inhabited this monstrous dead city millions of years ago, when man's ancestors were primitive archaic mammals, and vast dinosaurs roamed the tropical steppes of Europe and Asia.

We had previously clung to a desperate alternative and insisted—each to himself—that the omnipresence of the five-pointed motif meant only some cultural or religious exaltation of the Archaean natural object which had so patently embodied the quality of five-pointedness, as the decorative motifs of Minoan Crete exalted the sacred bull, those of Egypt the scarabaeus, those of Rome the wolf and the eagle, and those of various savage tribes some chosen totem animal. But this lone refuge was now stripped from us, and we were forced to face definitely the reason-shaking realization which the reader of these pages has doubtless long ago anticipated. I can scarcely bear to write it down in black and white even now, but perhaps that will not be necessary.

The things once rearing and dwelling in this frightful masonry in the age of dinosaurs were not indeed dinosaurs, but far worse. Mere dinosaurs were new and almost brainless objects—but the builders of the city were wise

and old, and had left certain traces in rocks even then laid down well nigh a thousand million years ... rocks laid down before the true life of Earth had advanced beyond plastic groups of cells ... rocks laid down before the true life of Earth had existed at all. They were the makers and enslavers of that life, and above all doubt the originals of the fiendish elder myths which things like the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* and the *Necronomicon* affrightedly hint about. They were the Great Old Ones that had filtered down from the stars when Earth was young—the beings whose substance an alien evolution had shaped, and whose powers were such as this planet had never bred. And to think that only the day before Danforth and I had actually looked upon fragments of their millennially fossilized substance . . . and that poor Lake and his party had seen their complete outlines

It is of course impossible for me to relate in proper order the stages by which we picked up what we know of that monstrous chapter of prehuman life. After the first shock of the certain revelation we had to pause a while to recuperate, and it was fully three o'clock before we got started on our actual tour of systematic research. The sculptures in the building we entered were of relatively late date—perhaps two million years ago—as checked up by geological, biological, and astronomical features, and embodied an art which would be called decadent in comparison with that of specimens we found in older buildings after crossing bridges under the glacial sheet. One edifice hewn from the solid rock seemed to go back forty or possibly even fifty million years—to the lower Eocene or upper Cretaceous—and contained bas-reliefs of an artistry surpassing anything else, with one tremendous exception, that we encountered. That was, we have since agreed, the oldest domestic structure we traversed.

Were it not for the support of those photographs soon to be made public, I would refrain from telling what I found and inferred, lest I be confined as a madman. Of course, the infinitely early parts of the patchwork tale—representing the preterrestrial life of the star-headed beings on other planets, in other galaxies, and in other universes—can readily be interpreted as the fantastic mythology of those beings themselves; yet such parts sometimes involved designs and diagrams so uncannily close to the latest findings of mathematics and astrophysics that I scarcely know what to think. Let others judge when they see the photographs I shall publish.

Naturally, no one set of carvings which we encountered told more than a fraction of any connected story, nor did we even begin to come upon the various stages of that story in their proper order. Some of the vast rooms were independent units as far as their designs were concerned, while in other cases a continuous chronicle would be carried through a series of rooms and corridors. The best of the maps and diagrams were on the walls of a frightful abyss below even the ancient ground level—a cavern perhaps 200 feet

square and sixty feet high, which had almost undoubtedly been an educational center of some sort. There were many provoking repetitions of the same material in different rooms and buildings, since certain chapters of experience, and certain summaries or phases of racial history, had evidently been favorites with different decorators or dwellers. Sometimes, though, variant versions of the same theme proved useful in settling debatable points and filling in gaps.

I still wonder that we deduced so much in the short time at our disposal. Of course, we even now have only the barest outline, and much of that was obtained later on from a study of the photographs and sketches we made. It may be the effect of this later study—the revived memories and vague impressions acting in conjunction with his general sensitiveness and with that final supposed horror-glimpse whose essence he will not reveal even to me—which has been the immediate source of Danforth's present breakdown. But it had to be; for we could not issue our warning intelligently without the fullest possible information, and the issuance of that warning is a prime necessity. Certain lingering influences in: that unknown Antarctic world of disordered time and alien natural law make it imperative that further exploration be discouraged.

VII.

The full story so far as deciphered will eventually appear in an official bulletin of Miskatonic University. Here I shall sketch only the salient highlights in a formless, rambling way. Myth or otherwise, the sculptures told of the coming of those star-headed things to the nascent, lifeless Earth out of cosmic space—their coming, and the coming of many other alien entities such as at certain times embark upon spatial pioneering. They seemed able to traverse the interstellar ether on their vast membranous wings—thus oddly confirming some curious hill folklore long ago told me by an antiquarian colleague. They had lived under the sea a good deal, building fantastic cities and fighting terrific battles with nameless adversaries by means of intricate devices employing unknown principles of energy. Evidently their scientific and mechanical knowledge far surpassed man's today, though they made use of its more widespread and elaborate forms only when obliged to. Some of the sculptures suggested that they had passed through a stage of mechanized life on other planets, but had receded upon finding its effects emotionally unsatisfying. Their preternatural toughness of organization and simplicity of natural wants made them peculiarly able to live on a high plane without the more specialized fruits of arti-

ficial manufacture, and even without garments, except for occasional protection against the elements.

It was under the sea, at first for food and later for other purposes, that they first created Earth life—using available substances according to long-known methods. The more elaborate experiments came after the annihilation of various cosmic enemies. They had done the same thing on other planets, having manufactured not only necessary foods, but certain multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs under hypnotic influence and thereby forming ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community. These viscous masses were without doubt what Abdul Alhazred whispered about as the “shoggoths” in his frightful *Necronomicon*, though even that mad Arab had not hinted that any existed on Earth except in the dreams of those who had chewed a certain alkaloidal herb. When the star-headed Old Ones on this planet had synthesized their simple food forms and bred a good supply of shoggoths, they allowed other cell groups to develop into other forms of animal and vegetable life for sundry purposes, extirpating any whose presence became troublesome.

With the aid of the shoggoths, whose expansions could be made to lift prodigious weights, the small, low cities under the sea grew to vast and imposing labyrinths of stone not unlike those which later rose on land. Indeed, the highly adaptable Old Ones had lived much on land in other parts of the universe, and probably retained many traditions of land construction. As we studied the architecture of all these sculptured palaeogean cities, including that whose aeon-dead corridors we were even then traversing, we were impressed by a curious coincidence which we have not yet tried to explain, even to ourselves. The tops of the buildings, which in the actual city around us had, of course, been weathered into shapeless ruins ages ago, were clearly displayed in the bas-reliefs, and showed vast clusters of needle-like spires, delicate finials on certain cone and pyramid apexes, and tiers of thin, horizontal scalloped disks capping cylindrical shafts. This was exactly what we had seen in that monstrous and portentous mirage, cast by a dead city whence such skyline features had been absent for thousands and tens of thousands of years, which loomed on our ignorant eyes across the unfathomed mountains of madness as we first approached poor Lake’s ill-fated camp.

Of the life of the Old Ones, both under the sea and after part of them migrated to land, volumes could be written. Those in shallow water had continued the fullest use of the eyes at the ends of their five main head tentacles, and had practiced the arts of sculpture and of writing in quite the usual way—the writing accomplished with a stylus on waterproof waxen surfaces. Those lower down in the ocean depths, though they used a curious phosphorescent organism to furnish light, pieced out their vision with obscure special senses operating through the prismatic cilia on their heads—

senses which rendered all the Old Ones partly independent of light in emergencies. Their forms of sculpture and writing had changed curiously during the descent, embodying certain apparently chemical coating processes—probably to secure phosphorescence—which the bas-reliefs could not make clear to us. The beings moved in the sea partly by swimming—using the lateral crinoid arms—and partly by wriggling with the lower tier of tentacles containing the pseudofeet. Occasionally they accomplished long swoops with the auxiliary use of two or more sets of their fanlike folding wings. On land they locally used the pseudofeet, but now and then flew to great heights or over long distances with their wings. The many slender tentacles into which the crinoid arms branched were infinitely delicate, flexible, strong, and accurate in muscular-nervous coordination, ensuring the utmost skill and dexterity in all artistic and other manual operations.

The toughness of the things was almost incredible. Even the terrific pressure of the deepest sea bottoms appeared powerless to harm them. Very few seemed to die at all except by violence, and their burial places were very limited. The fact that they covered their vertically inhumed dead with five-pointed inscribed mounds set up thoughts in Danforth and me which made a fresh pause and recuperation necessary after the sculptures revealed it. The beings multiplied by means of spores—like vegetable pteridophytes, as Lake had suspected—but, owing to their prodigious toughness and longevity, and consequent lack of replacement needs, they did not encourage the large-scale development of new prothallia except when they had new regions to colonize. The young matured swiftly, and received an education evidently beyond any standard we can imagine. The prevailing intellectual and aesthetic life was highly evolved, and produced a tenaciously enduring set of customs and institutions which I shall describe more fully in my coming monograph. These varied slightly according to sea or land residence, but had the same foundations and essentials.

Though able, like vegetables, to derive nourishment from inorganic substances, they vastly preferred organic and especially animal food. They ate uncooked marine life under the sea, but cooked their viands on land. They hunted game and raised meat herds—slaughtering with sharp weapons whose odd marks on certain fossil bones our expedition had noted. They resisted all ordinary temperatures marvelously, and in their natural state could live in water down to freezing. When the great chill of the Pleistocene drew on, however—nearly a million years ago—the land-dwellers had to resort to special measures, including artificial heating, until at last the deadly cold appears to have driven them back into the sea. For their prehistoric flights through cosmic space, legend said, they absorbed certain chemicals and became almost independent of eating, breathing, or heat conditions, but by the time of the great cold they had lost track of the

method. In any case they could not have prolonged the artificial state indefinitely without harm.

Being nonpairing and semivegetable in structure, the Old Ones had no biological basis for the family phase of mammal life, but seemed to organize large households on the principles of comfortable space-utility and, as we deduced from the pictured occupations and diversions of co-dwellers, congenial mental association. In furnishing their homes they kept everything in the center of the huge rooms, leaving all the wall spaces free for decorative treatment. Lighting, in the case of the land inhabitants, was accomplished by a device probably electrochemical in nature. Both on land and under water they used curious tables, chairs and couches like cylindrical frames—for they rested and slept upright with folded-down tentacles—and racks for the hinged sets of dotted surfaces forming their books.

Government was evidently complex and probably socialistic, though no certainties in this regard could be deduced from the sculptures we saw. There was extensive commerce, both local and between different cities—certain small, flat counters, five-pointed and inscribed, serving as money. Probably the smaller of the various greenish soapstones found by our expedition were pieces of such currency. Though the culture was mainly urban, some agriculture and much stock raising existed. Mining and a limited amount of manufacturing were also practiced. Travel was very frequent, but permanent migration seemed relatively rare except for the vast colonizing movements by which the race expanded. For personal locomotion no external aid was used, since in land, air, and water movement alike the Old Ones seemed to possess excessively vast capacities for speed. Loads, however, were drawn by beasts of burden—shoggoths under the sea, and a curious variety of primitive vertebrates in the later years of land existence.

These vertebrates, as well as an infinity of other life forms—animal and vegetable, marine, terrestrial, and aerial—were the products of unguided evolution acting on life cells made by the Old Ones, but escaping beyond their radius of attention. They had been suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come in conflict with the dominant beings. Bothersome forms, of course, were mechanically exterminated. It interested us to see in some of the very last and most decadent sculptures a shambling, primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land-dwellers, whose vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable. In the building of land cities the huge stone blocks of the high towers were generally lifted by vast-winged pterodactyls of a species heretofore unknown to paleontology.

The persistence with which the Old Ones survived various geologic changes and convulsions of the Earth's crust was little short of miraculous. Though few or none of their first cities seem to have remained beyond the

Archaean Age there was no interruption in their civilization or in the transmission of their records. Their original place of advent to the planet was the Antarctic Ocean, and it is likely that they came not long after the matter forming the Moon was wrenched from the neighboring South Pacific. According to one of the sculptured maps the whole globe was then under water, with stone cities scattered farther and farther from the Antarctic as aeons passed. Another map shows a vast bulk of dry land around the South Pole, where it is evident that some of the beings made experimental settlements, though their main centers were transferred to the nearest sea bottom. Later maps, which display the landmass as cracking and drifting, and sending certain detached parts northward, uphold in a striking way the theories of continental drift lately advanced by Taylor, Wegener, and Joly.

With the upheaval of new land in the South Pacific tremendous events began. Some of the marine cities were hopelessly shattered, yet that was not the worst misfortune. Another race—a land race of beings shaped like octopi and probably corresponding to fabulous prehuman spawn of Cthulhu—soon began filtering down from cosmic infinity and precipitated a monstrous war which for a time drove the Old Ones wholly back to the sea—a colossal blow in view of the increasing land settlements. Later, peace was made, and the new lands were given to the Cthulhu spawn while the Old Ones held the sea and the older lands. New land cities were founded—the greatest of them in the Antarctic, for this region of first arrival was sacred. From then on, as before, the Antarctic remained the center of the Old Ones' civilization, and all the cities built there by the Cthulhu spawn were blotted out. Then suddenly the lands of the Pacific sank again, taking with them the frightful stone city of R'lyeh and all the cosmic octopi, so that the Old Ones were again supreme on the planet except for one shadowy fear about which they did not like to speak. At a rather later age their cities dotted all the land and water areas of the globe—hence the recommendation in my coming monograph that some archaeologist make systematic borings with Pabodie's type of apparatus in certain widely separated regions.

The steady trend down the ages was from water to land, a movement encouraged by the rise of new landmasses, though the ocean was never wholly deserted. Another cause of the landward movement was the new difficulty in breeding and managing the shoggoths upon which successful sea life depended. With the march of time, as the sculptures sadly confessed, the art of creating new life from inorganic matter had been lost, so that the Old Ones had to depend on the molding of forms already in existence. On land the great reptiles proved highly tractable, but the shoggoths of the sea, reproducing by fission and acquiring a dangerous degree of accidental intelligence, presented for a time a formidable problem.

They had always been controlled through the hypnotic suggestions of the Old Ones, and had modeled their tough plasticity into various useful temporary limbs and organs; but now their self-modeling powers were sometimes exercised independently, and in various imitative forms implanted by past suggestion. They had, it seems, developed a semistable brain whose separate and occasionally stubborn volition echoed the will of the Old Ones without always obeying it. Sculptured images of these shoggoths filled Danforth and me with horror and loathing. They were normally shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly which looked like an agglutination of bubbles, and each averaged about fifteen feet in diameter when a sphere. They had, however, a constantly shifting shape and volume—throwing out temporary developments or forming apparent organs of sight, hearing, and speech in imitation of their masters, either spontaneously or according to suggestion.

They seem to have become peculiarly intractable toward the middle of the Permian Age, perhaps one hundred and fifty million years ago, when a veritable war of resubjugation was waged upon them by the marine Old Ones. Pictures of this war, and of the headless, slime-coated fashion in which the shoggoths typically left their slain victims, held a marvelously fearsome quality despite the intervening abyss of untold ages. The Old Ones had used curious weapons of molecular and atomic disturbance against the rebel entities, and in the end had achieved a complete victory. Thereafter the sculptures showed a period in which shoggoths were tamed and broken by armed Old Ones as the wild horses of the American west were tamed by cowboys. Though during the rebellion the shoggoths had shown an ability to live out of water, this transition was not encouraged, since their usefulness on land would hardly have been commensurate with the trouble of their management.

During the Jurassic Age the Old Ones met fresh adversity in the form of a new invasion from outer space—this time by half-fungous, half-crustacean creatures from a planet identifiable as the remote and recently discovered Pluto; creatures undoubtedly the same as those figuring in certain whispered hill legends of the north, and remembered in the Himalayas as the Mi-Go, or Abominable Snowmen. To fight these beings the Old Ones attempted, for the first time since their terrene advent, to sally forth again into the planetary ether; but, despite all traditional preparations, found it no longer possible to leave the Earth's atmosphere. Whatever the old secret of interstellar travel had been, it was now definitely lost to the race. In the end the Mi-Go drove the Old Ones out of all the northern lands, though they were powerless to disturb those in the sea. Little by little the slow retreat of the elder race to their original Antarctic habitat was beginning.

It was curious to note from the pictured battles that both the Cthulhu spawn and the Mi-Go seem to have been composed of matter more widely different from that which we know than was the substance of the Old Ones. They were able to undergo transformations and reintegrations impossible for their adversaries, and seem therefore to have originally come from even remoter gulfs of cosmic space. The Old Ones, but for their abnormal toughness and peculiar vital properties, were strictly material, and must have had their absolute origin within the known space-time continuum; whereas the first sources of the other beings can only be guessed at with bated breath. All this, of course, assuming that the nonterrestrial linkages and the anomalies ascribed to the invading foes are not pure mythology. Conceivably, the Old Ones might have invented a cosmic framework to account for their occasional defeats, since historical interest and pride obviously formed their chief psychological elements. It is significant that their annals failed to mention many advanced and potent races of beings whose mighty cultures and towering cities figure persistently in certain obscure legends.

The changing state of the world through long geologic ages appeared with startling vividness in many of the sculptured maps and scenes. In certain cases existing science will require revision, while in other cases its bold deductions are magnificently confirmed. As I have said, the hypothesis of Taylor, Wegener, and Joly that all the continents are fragments of an original Antarctic landmass which cracked from centrifugal force and drifted apart over a technically viscous lower surface—an hypothesis suggested by such things as the complementary outlines of Africa and South America, and the way the great mountain chains are rolled and shoved up—receives striking support from this uncanny source.

Maps evidently showing the Carboniferous world of an hundred million or more years ago displayed significant rifts and chasms destined later to separate Africa from the once continuous realms of Europe (then the Valusia of primal legend), Asia, the Americas, and the Antarctic continent. Other charts—and most significantly one in connection with the founding fifty million years ago of the vast dead city around us—showed all the present continents well differentiated. In the latest discoverable specimen—dating perhaps from the Pliocene Age—the approximate world of today appeared quite clearly despite the linkage of Alaska with Siberia, of North America with Europe through Greenland, and of South America with the Antarctic continent through Graham Land. In the Carboniferous map the whole globe—ocean floor and rifted landmass alike—bore symbols of the Old Ones' vast stone cities, but in the later charts the gradual recession toward the Antarctic became very plain. The final Pliocene specimen showed no land cities except on the Antarctic continent and the tip of South America, nor any ocean cities north of the fiftieth parallel of south latitude.

Knowledge and interest in the northern world, save for a study of coastlines probably made during long exploration flights on those fanlike membranous wings, had evidently declined to zero among the Old Ones.

Destruction of cities through the upthrust of mountains, the centrifugal rending of continents, the seismic convulsions of land or sea bottom, and other natural causes was a matter of common record; it was curious to observe how fewer and fewer replacements were made as the ages wore on. The vast dead megalopolis that yawned around us seemed to be the last general center of the race, built early in the Cretaceous age after a titanic earth-buckling had obliterated a still vaster predecessor not far distant. It appeared that this general region was the most sacred spot of all, where reputedly the first Old Ones had settled on a primal sea bottom. In the new city—many of whose features we could recognize in the sculptures, but which stretched fully a hundred miles along the mountain range in each direction beyond the farthest limits of our aerial survey—there were reputed to be preserved certain sacred stones forming part of the first sea-bottom city, which thrust up to light after long epochs in the course of the general crumbling of strata.

VIII.

Naturally, Danforth and I studied with especial interest and a peculiarly personal sense of awe everything pertaining to the immediate district in which we were. Of this local material there was naturally a vast abundance; and on the tangled ground level of the city we were lucky enough to find a house of very late date whose walls, though somewhat damaged by a neighboring rift, contained sculptures of decadent workmanship carrying the story of the region much beyond the period of the Pliocene map whence we derived our last general glimpse of the prehuman world. This was the last place we examined in detail, since what we found there gave us a fresh immediate objective.

Certainly, we were in one of the strangest, weirdest, and most terrible of all the corners of Earth's globe. Of all existing lands it was infinitely the most ancient. The conviction grew upon us that this hideous upland must indeed be the fabled nightmare plateau of Leng which even the mad author of the *Necronomicon* was reluctant to discuss. The great mountain chain was tremendously long—starting as a low range at Luitpold Land on the coast of Weddell Sea and virtually crossing the entire continent. The really high part stretched in a mighty arc from about latitude 82°, E. longitude 60° to latitude 70°, E. longitude 115°, with its concave side toward our camp and

its seaward end in the region of that long, ice-locked coast whose hills were glimpsed by Wilkes and Mawson at the Antarctic Circle.

Yet even more monstrous exaggerations of nature seemed disturbingly close at hand. I have said that these peaks are higher than the Himalayas, but the sculptures forbid me to say that they are Earth's highest. That grim honor is beyond doubt reserved for something which half the sculptures hesitated to record at all, while others approached it with obvious repugnance and trepidation. It seems that there was one part of the ancient land—the first part that ever rose from the waters after the Earth had flung off the Moon and the Old Ones had seeped down from the stars—which had come to be shunned as vaguely and namelessly evil. Cities built there had crumbled before their time, and had been found suddenly deserted. Then when the first great earth-buckling had convulsed the region in the Comanchian Age, a frightful line of peaks had shot suddenly up amid the most appalling din and chaos—and Earth had received her loftiest and most terrible mountains.

If the scale of the carvings was correct, these abhorred things must have been much over forty thousand feet high—radically vaster than even the shocking mountains of madness we had crossed. They extended, it appeared, from about latitude 77° , E. longitude 70° to latitude 70° , E. longitude 100° —less than 300 miles away from the dead city, so that we would have spied their dreaded summits in the dim western distance had it not been for that vague, opalescent haze. Their northern end must likewise be visible from the long Antarctic Circle coastline at Queen Mary Land.

Some of the Old Ones, in the decadent days, had made strange prayers to those mountains—but none ever went near them or dared to guess what lay beyond. No human eye had ever seen them, and as I studied the emotions conveyed in the carvings I prayed that none ever might. There are protecting hills along the coast beyond them—Queen Mary and Kaiser Wilhelm Lands—and I thank Heaven no one has been able to land and climb those hills. I am not as skeptical about old tales and fears as I used to be, and I do not laugh now at the prehuman sculptor's notion that lightning paused meaningfully now and then at each of the brooding crests and that an unexplained glow shone from one of those terrible pinnacles all through the long polar night. There may be a very real and very monstrous meaning in the old Pnakotic whispers about Kadath in the Cold Waste.

But the terrain close at hand was hardly less strange, even if less namelessly accursed. Soon after the founding of the city the great mountain range became the seat of the principal temples, and many carvings showed what grotesque and fantastic towers had pierced the sky where now we saw only the curiously clinging cubes and ramparts. In the course of ages the caves had appeared, and had been shaped into adjuncts of the temples. With the

advance of still later epochs all the limestone veins of the region were hollowed out by ground waters, so that the mountains, the foothills, and the plains below them were a veritable network of connected caverns and galleries. Many graphic sculptures told of explorations deep underground, and of the final discovery of the Stygian sunless sea that lurked at Earth's bowels.

This vast nighted gulf had undoubtedly been worn by the great river which flowed down from the nameless and horrible westward mountains, and which had formerly turned at the base of the Old Ones' range and flowed beside that chain into the Indian Ocean between Budd and Totten Lands on Wilkes's coastline. Little by little it had eaten away the limestone hill base at its turning, till at last its sapping currents reached the caverns of the ground waters and joined with them in digging a deeper abyss. Finally its whole bulk emptied into the hollow hills and left the old bed toward the ocean dry. Much of the later city as we now found it had been built over that former bed. The Old Ones, understanding what had happened and exercising their always keen artistic sense, had carved into ornate pylons those headlands of the foothills where the great stream began its descent into eternal darkness.

This river, once crossed by scores of noble stone bridges, was plainly the one whose extinct course we had seen in our airplane survey. Its position in different carvings of the city helped us to orient ourselves to the scene as it had been at various stages of the region's age-long, aeon-dead history, so that we were able to sketch a hasty but careful map of the salient features—squares, important buildings, and the like—for guidance in further explorations. We could soon reconstruct in fancy the whole stupendous thing as it was a million or ten million or fifty million years ago, for the sculptures told us exactly what the buildings and mountains and squares and suburbs and landscape setting and luxuriant Tertiary vegetation had looked like. It must have had a marvelous and mystic beauty, and as I thought of it I almost forgot the clammy sense of sinister oppression with which the city's inhuman age and massiveness and deadness and remoteness and glacial twilight had choked and weighed on my spirit. Yet according to certain carvings the denizens of that city had themselves known the clutch of oppressive terror; for there was a somber and recurrent type of scene in which the Old Ones were shown in the act of recoiling affrightedly from some object—never allowed to appear in the design—found in the great river and indicated as having been washed down through waving, vine-draped cycad forests from those horrible westward mountains.

It was only in the one late-built house with the decadent carvings that we obtained any foreshadowing of the final calamity leading to the city's desertion. Undoubtedly there must have been many sculptures of the same age elsewhere, even allowing for the slackened energies and aspirations of a

stressful and uncertain period; indeed, very certain evidence of the existence of others came to us shortly afterward. But this was the first and only set we directly encountered. We meant to look farther later on; but as I have said, immediate conditions dictated another present objective. There would, though, have been a limit-for after all hope of a long future occupancy of the place had perished among the Old Ones, there could not but have been a complete cessation of mural decoration. The ultimate blow, of course, was the coming of the great cold which once held most of the Earth in thrall, and which has never departed from the ill-fated poles—the great cold that, at the world's other extremity, put an end to the fabled lands of Lomar and Hyperborea.

Just when this tendency began in the Antarctic it would be hard to say in terms of exact years. Nowadays we set the beginning of the general glacial periods at a distance of about 500,000 years from the present, but at the poles the terrible scourge must have commenced much earlier. All quantitative estimates are partly guesswork, but it is quite likely that the decadent sculptures were made considerably less than a million years ago, and that the actual desertion of the city was complete long before the conventional opening of the Pleistocene—500,000 years ago—as reckoned in terms of the Earth's whole surface.

In the decadent sculptures there were signs of thinner vegetation everywhere, and of a decreased country life on the part of the Old Ones. Heating devices were shown in the houses, and winter travelers were represented as muffled in protective fabrics. Then we saw a series of cartouches (the continuous band arrangement being frequently interrupted in these late carvings) depicting a constantly growing migration to the nearest refuges of greater warmth—some fleeing to cities under the sea off the faraway coast, and some clambering down through networks of limestone caverns in the hollow hills to the neighboring black abyss of subterrene waters.

In the end it seems to have been the neighboring abyss which received the greatest colonization. This was partly due, no doubt, to the traditional sacredness of this special region, but may have been more conclusively determined by the opportunities it gave for continuing the use of the great temples on the honeycombed mountains, and for retaining the vast land city as a place of summer residence and base of communication with various mines. The linkage of old and new abodes was made more effective by means of several gradings and improvements along the connecting routes, including the chiseling of numerous direct tunnels from the ancient metropolis to the black abyss—sharply down-pointing tunnels whose mouths we carefully drew, according to our most thoughtful estimates, on the guide map we were compiling. It was obvious that at least two of these tunnels lay within a reasonable exploring distance of where we were, both being on the

mountainward edge of the city, one less than a quarter of a mile toward the ancient river course, and the other perhaps twice that distance in the opposite direction.

The abyss, it seems, had shelving shores of dry land at certain places, but the Old Ones built their new city underwater—no doubt because of its greater certainty of uniform warmth. The depth of the hidden sea appears to have been very great, so that the Earth's internal heat could ensure its habitability for an indefinite period. The beings seem to have had no trouble in adapting themselves to part-time—and eventually, of course, whole-time—residence underwater, since they had never allowed their gill systems to atrophy. There were many sculptures which showed how they had always frequently visited their submarine kinsfolk elsewhere, and how they had habitually bathed on the deep bottom of their great river. The darkness of inner earth could likewise have been no deterrent to a race accustomed to long Antarctic nights.

Decadent though their style undoubtedly was, these latest carvings had a truly epic quality where they told of the building of the new city in the cavern sea. The Old Ones had gone about it scientifically, quarrying insoluble rocks from the heart of the honeycombed mountains, and employing expert workers from the nearest submarine city to perform the construction according to the best methods. These workers brought with them all that was necessary to establish the new venture—shoggoth tissue from which to breed stone lifters and subsequent beasts of burden for the cavern city, and other protoplasmic matter to mold into phosphorescent organisms for lighting purposes.

At last a mighty metropolis rose on the bottom of that Stygian sea, its architecture much like that of the city above, and its workmanship displaying relatively little decadence because of the precise mathematical element inherent in building operations. The newly bred shoggoths grew to enormous size and singular intelligence, and were represented as taking and executing orders with marvelous quickness. They seemed to converse with the Old Ones by mimicking their voices—a sort of musical piping over a wide range, if poor Lake's dissection had indicated aright—and to work more from spoken commands than from hypnotic suggestions as in earlier times. They were, however, kept in admirable control. The phosphorescent organisms supplied light with vast effectiveness, and doubtless atoned for the loss of the familiar polar auroras of the outer-world night.

Art and decoration were pursued, though of course with certain decadence. The Old Ones seemed to realize this falling off themselves, and in many cases anticipated the policy of Constantine the Great by transplanting especially fine blocks of ancient carving from their land city, just as the emperor, in a similar age of decline, stripped Greece and Asia of their finest

art to give his new Byzantine capital greater splendors than its own people could create. That the transfer of sculptured blocks had not been more extensive was doubtless owing to the fact that the land city was not at first wholly abandoned. By the time total abandonment did occur—and it surely must have occurred before the polar Pleistocene was far advanced—the Old Ones had perhaps become satisfied with their decadent art—or had ceased to recognize the superior merit of the older carvings. At any rate, the aeon-silent ruins around us had certainly undergone no wholesale sculptural denudation, though all the best separate statues, like other movables, had been taken away.

The decadent cartouches and dadoes telling this story were, as I have said, the latest we could find in our limited search. They left us with a picture of the Old Ones shuttling back and forth betwixt the land city in summer and the sea-cavern city in winter, and sometimes trading with the seabottom cities off the Antarctic coast. By this time the ultimate doom of the land city must have been recognized, for the sculptures showed many signs of the cold's malign encroachments. Vegetation was declining, and the terrible snows of the winter no longer melted completely even in midsummer. The saurian livestock were nearly all dead, and the mammals were standing it none too well. To keep on with the work of the upper world it had become necessary to adapt some of the amorphous and curiously cold-resistant shoggoths to land life—a thing the Old Ones had formerly been reluctant to do. The great river was now lifeless, and the upper sea had lost most of its denizens except the seals and whales. All the birds had flown away, save only the great, grotesque penguins.

What had happened afterward we could only guess. How long had the new sea-cavern city survived? Was it still down there, a stony corpse in eternal blackness? Had the subterranean waters frozen at last? To what fate had the ocean-bottom cities of the outer world been delivered? Had any of the Old Ones shifted north ahead of the creeping ice cap? Existing geology shows no trace of their presence. Had the frightful Mi-Go been still a menace in the outer-land world of the north? Could one be sure of what might or might not linger, even to this day, in the lightless and unplumbed abysses of Earth's deepest waters? Those things had seemingly been able to withstand any amount of pressure—and men of the sea have fished up curious objects at times. And has the killer-whale theory really explained the savage and mysterious scars on Antarctic seals noticed a generation ago by Borchgrevink?

The specimens found by poor Lake did not enter into these guesses, for their geologic setting proved them to have lived at what must have been a very early date in the land city's history. They were, according to their location, certainly not less than thirty million years old, and we reflected that in

their day the sea-cavern city, and indeed the cavern itself, had had no existence. They would have remembered an older scene, with lush Tertiary vegetation everywhere, a younger land city of flourishing arts around them, and a great river sweeping northward along the base of the mighty mountains toward a faraway tropic ocean.

Yet we could not help thinking about these specimens—especially about the eight perfect ones that were missing from Lake's hideously ravaged camp. There was something abnormal about that whole business—the strange things we had tried so hard to lay to somebody's madness—those frightful graves—the amount *and nature* of the missing material—Gedney—the unearthly toughness of those archaic monstrosities, and the queer vital freaks the sculptures now showed the race to have . . . Danforth and I had seen a good deal in the last few hours, and were prepared to believe and keep silent about many appalling and incredible secrets of primal nature.

IX.

I have said that our study of the decadent sculptures brought about a change in our immediate objective. This, of course, had to do with the chiseled avenues to the black inner world, of whose existence we had not known before, but which we were now eager to find and traverse. From the evident scale of the carvings we deduced that a steeply descending walk of about a mile through either of the neighboring tunnels would bring us to the brink of the dizzy, sunless cliffs about the great abyss, down whose side adequate paths, improved by the Old Ones, led to the rocky shore of the hidden and nighted ocean. To behold this fabulous gulf in stark reality was a lure which seemed impossible of resistance once we knew of the thing—yet we realized we must begin the quest at once if we expected to include it in our present flight.

It was now 8 p.m., and we did not have enough battery replacements to let our torches burn on forever. We had done so much studying and copying below the glacial level that our battery supply had had at least five hours of nearly continuous use, and despite the special dry cell formula would obviously be good for only about four more—though by keeping one torch unused, except for especially interesting or difficult places, we might manage to eke out a safe margin beyond that. It would not do to be without a light in these Cyclopean catacombs, hence in order to make the abyss trip we must give up all further mural deciphering. Of course we intended to revisit the place for days and perhaps weeks of intensive study and photography—curiosity having long ago got the better of horror—but just now we

must hasten. Our supply of trail-blazing paper was far from unlimited, and we were reluctant to sacrifice spare notebooks or sketching paper to augment it, but we did let one large notebook go. If worse came to worst we could resort to rock-chipping—and of course it would be possible, even in case of really lost direction, to work up to full daylight by one channel or another if granted sufficient time for plentiful trial and error. So at last we set off eagerly in the indicated direction of the nearest tunnel.

According to the carvings from which we had made our map, the desired tunnel mouth could not be much more than a quarter of a mile from where we stood, the intervening space showing solid-looking buildings quite likely to be penetrable still at a subglacial level. The opening itself would be in the basement—on the angle nearest the foothills—of a vast five-pointed structure of evidently public and perhaps ceremonial nature, which we tried to identify from our aerial survey of the ruins. No such structure came to our minds as we recalled our flight, hence we concluded that its upper parts had been greatly damaged, or that it had been totally shattered in an ice rift we had noticed. In the latter case the tunnel would probably turn out to be choked, so that we would have to try the next nearest one—the one less than a mile to the north. The intervening river course prevented our trying any of the more southern tunnels on this trip; indeed, if both of the neighboring ones were choked it was doubtful whether our batteries would warrant an attempt on the next northerly one—about a mile beyond our second choice.

As we threaded our dim way through the labyrinth with the aid of map and compass—traversing rooms and corridors in every stage of ruin or preservation, clambering up ramps crossing upper floors and bridges and clambering down again, encountering choked doorways and piles of debris, hastening now and then along finely preserved and uncannily immaculate stretches, taking false leads and retracing our way (in such cases removing the blind paper trail we had left), and once in a while striking the bottom of an open shaft through which daylight poured or trickled down—we were repeatedly tantalized by the sculptured walls along our route. Many must have told tales of immense historical importance, and only the prospect of later visits reconciled us to the need of passing them by. As it was, we slowed down once in a while and turned on our second torch. If we had had more film we would certainly have paused briefly to photograph certain bas-reliefs, but time-consuming hand-copying was clearly out of the question.

I come now once more to a place where the temptation to hesitate, or to hint rather than state, is very strong. It is necessary, however, to reveal the rest in order to justify my course in discouraging further exploration. We had wormed our way very close to the computed site of the tunnel's mouth—having crossed a second-story bridge to what seemed plainly the

tip of a pointed wall, and descended to a ruinous corridor especially rich in decadently elaborate and apparently ritualistic sculptures of late workmanship—when, shortly before 8:30 p.m., Danforth's keen young nostrils gave us the first hint of something unusual. If we had had a dog with us, I suppose we would have been warned before. At first we could not precisely say what was wrong with the formerly crystal-pure air, but after a few seconds our memories reacted only too definitely. Let me try to state the thing without flinching. There was an odor—and that odor was vaguely, subtly, and unmistakably akin to what had nauseated us upon opening the insane grave of the horror poor Lake had dissected.

Of course the revelation was not as clearly cut at the time as it sounds now. There were several conceivable explanations, and we did a good deal of indecisive whispering. Most important of all, we did not retreat without further investigation; having come this far, we were loath to be balked by anything short of certain disaster. Anyway, what we must have suspected was altogether too wild to believe. Such things did not happen in any normal world. It was probably sheer irrational instinct which made us dim our single torch—tempted no longer by the decadent and sinister sculptures that leered menacingly from the oppressive walls—and which softened our progress to a cautious tiptoeing and crawling over the increasingly littered floor and heaps of debris.

Danforth's eyes as well as nose proved better than mine, for it was likewise he who first noticed the queer aspect of the debris after we had passed many half-choked arches leading to chambers and corridors on the ground level. It did not look quite as it ought after countless thousands of years of desertion, and when we cautiously turned on more light we saw that a kind of swath seemed to have been lately tracked through it. The irregular nature of the litter precluded any definite marks, but in the smoother places there were suggestions of the dragging of heavy objects. Once we thought there was a hint of parallel tracks as if of runners. This was what made us pause again.

It was during that pause that we caught—simultaneously this time—the other odor ahead. Paradoxically, it was both a less frightful and a more frightful odor—less frightful intrinsically, but infinitely appalling in this place under the known circumstances—unless, of course, Gedney For the odor was the plain and familiar one of common petrol—everyday gasoline.

Our motivation after that is something I will leave to psychologists. We knew now that some terrible extension of the camp horrors must have crawled into this nighted burial place of the aeons, hence could doubt any longer the existence of nameless conditions—present or at least recent—just ahead. Yet in the end we did let sheer burning curiosity—or anxiety—or autohypnotism—or vague thoughts of responsibility toward Gedney—or

whatnot—drive us on. Danforth whispered again of the print he thought he had seen at the alley turning in the ruins above, and of the faint musical piping—potentially of tremendous significance in the light of Lake's dissection report, despite its close resemblance to the cave-mouth echoes of the windy peaks—which he thought he had shortly afterward half-heard from unknown depths below. I, in my turn, whispered of how the camp was left—of what had disappeared, and of how the madness of a lone survivor might have conceived the inconceivable—a wild trip across the monstrous mountains and a descent into the unknown, primal masonry—

But we could not convince each other, or even ourselves, of anything definite. We had turned off all light as we stood still, and vaguely noticed that a trace of deeply filtered upper day kept the blackness from being absolute. Having automatically begun to move ahead, we guided ourselves by occasional flashes from our torch. The disturbed debris formed an impression we could not shake off, and the smell of gasoline grew stronger. More and more ruin met our eyes and hampered our feet, until very soon we saw that the forward way was about to cease. We had been all too correct in our pessimistic guess about that rift glimpsed from the air. Our tunnel quest was a blind one, and we were not even going to be able to reach the basement out of which the abyssward aperture opened.

The torch, flashing over the grotesquely carved walls of the blocked corridor in which we stood, showed several doorways in various states of obstruction, and from one of them the gasoline odor—quite submerging that other hint of odor—came with especial distinctness. As we looked more steadily, we saw that beyond a doubt there had been a slight and recent clearing away of debris from that particular opening. Whatever the lurking horror might be, we believed the direct avenue toward it was now plainly manifest. I do not think anyone will wonder that we waited an appreciable time before making any further motion.

Yet, when we did venture inside that black arch, our first impression was one of anticlimax. For amid the littered expanse of that sculptured crypt—a perfect cube with sides of about twenty feet—there remained no recent object of instantly discernible size, so that we looked instinctively, though in vain, for a farther doorway. In another moment, however, Danforth's sharp vision had descried a place where the floor debris had been disturbed, and we turned on both torches full strength. Though what we saw in that light was actually simple and trifling, I am nonetheless reluctant to tell of it because of what it implied. It was a rough leveling of the debris, upon which several small objects lay carelessly scattered, and at one corner of which a considerable amount of gasoline must have been spilled lately enough to leave a strong odor even at this extreme superplateau altitude. In other words, it could not be other than a sort of camp—a camp made by

questing beings who, like us, had been turned back by the unexpectedly choked way to the abyss.

Let me be plain. The scattered objects were, as far as substance was concerned, all from Lake's camp, and consisted of tin cans as queerly opened as those we had seen at that ravaged place, many spent matches, three illustrated books more or less curiously smudged, an empty ink bottle with its pictorial and instructional carton, a broken fountain pen, some oddly snipped fragments of fur and tent cloth, a used electric battery with circular of directions, a folder that came with our type of tent heater, and a sprinkling of crumpled papers. It was all bad enough, but when we smoothed out the papers and looked at what was on them we felt we had come to the worst. We had found certain inexplicably blotted papers at the camp which might have prepared us, yet the effect of the sight down there in the pre-human vaults of a nightmare city was almost too much to bear.

A mad Gedney might have made the groups of dots in imitation of those found on the greenish soapstones, just as the dots on those insane five-pointed grave mounds might have been made; and he might conceivably have prepared rough, hasty sketches—varying in their accuracy or lack of it—which outlined the neighboring parts of the city and traced the way from a circularly represented place outside our previous route—a place we identified as a great cylindrical tower in the carvings and as a vast circular gulf glimpsed in our aerial survey—to the present five-pointed structure and the tunnel mouth therein. He might, I repeat, have prepared such sketches; for those before us were quite obviously compiled, as our own had been, from late sculptures somewhere in the glacial labyrinth, though not from the ones which we had seen and used. But what that art-blind bungler could never have done was to execute those sketches in a strange and assured technique perhaps superior, despite haste and carelessness, to any of the decadent carvings from which they were taken—the characteristic and unmistakable technique of the Old Ones themselves in the dead city's heyday.

There are those who will say Danforth and I were utterly mad not to flee for our lives after that, since our conclusions were now—notwithstanding their wildness—completely fixed, and of a nature I need not even mention to those who have read my account as far as this. Perhaps we were mad for have I not said those horrible peaks were mountains of madness? But I think I can detect something of the same spirit—albeit in a less extreme form—in the men who stalk deadly beasts through African jungles to photograph them or study their habits. Half paralyzed with terror though we were, there was nevertheless fanned within us a blazing flame of awe and curiosity which triumphed in the end.

Of course we did not mean to face that—or those—which we knew had been there, but we felt that they must be gone by now. They would by

this time have found the other neighboring entrance to the abyss, and have passed within, to whatever night-black fragments of the past might await them in the ultimate gulf—the ultimate gulf they had never seen. Or if that entrance, too, was blocked, they would have gone on to the north seeking another. They were, we remembered, partly independent of light.

Looking back to that moment, I can scarcely recall just what precise form our new emotions took—just what change of immediate objective it was that so sharpened our sense of expectancy. We certainly did not mean to face what we feared—yet I will not deny that we may have had a lurking, unconscious wish to spy certain things from some hidden vantage point. Probably we had not given up our zeal to glimpse the abyss itself, though there was interposed a new goal in the form of that great circular place shown on the crumpled sketches we had found. We had at once recognized it as a monstrous cylindrical tower figuring in the very earliest carvings, but appearing only as a prodigious round aperture from above. Something about the impressiveness of its rendering, even in these hasty diagrams, made us think that its subglacial levels must still form a feature of peculiar importance. Perhaps it embodied architectural marvels as yet unencountered by us. It was certainly of incredible age according to the sculptures in which it figured—being indeed among the first things built in the city. Its carvings, if preserved, could not but be highly significant. Moreover, it might form a good present link with the upper world—a shorter route than the one we were so carefully blazing, and probably that by which those others had descended.

At any rate, the thing we did was to study the terrible sketches—which quite perfectly confirmed our own—and start back over the indicated course to the circular place; the course which our nameless predecessors must have traversed twice before us. The other neighboring gate to the abyss would lie beyond that. I need not speak of our journey—during which we continued to leave an economical trail of paper—for it was precisely the same in kind as that by which we had reached the cul de sac, except that it tended to adhere more closely to the ground level and even descend to basement corridors. Every now and then we could trace certain disturbing marks in the debris or litter underfoot; and after we had passed outside the radius of the gasoline scent we were again faintly conscious—spasmodically—of that more hideous and more persistent scent. After the way had branched from our former course we sometimes gave the rays of our single torch a furtive sweep along the walls, noting in almost every case the well-nigh omnipresent sculptures, which indeed seem to have formed a main aesthetic outlet for the Old Ones.

About 9:30 p.m., while traversing a long, vaulted corridor whose increasingly glaciated floor seemed somewhat below the ground level and

whose roof grew lower as we advanced, we began to see strong daylight ahead and were able to turn off our torch. It appeared that we were coming to the vast circular place, and that our distance from the upper air could not be very great. The corridor ended in an arch surprisingly low for these megalithic ruins, but we could see much through it even before we emerged. Beyond there stretched a prodigious round space—fully 200 feet in diameter—strewn with debris and containing many choked archways corresponding to the one we were about to cross. The walls were—in available spaces—boldly sculptured into a spiral band of heroic proportions, and displayed, despite the destructive weathering caused by the openness of the spot, an artistic splendor far beyond anything we had encountered before. The littered floor was quite heavily glaciated, and we fancied that the true bottom lay at a considerably lower depth.

But the salient object of the place was the titanic stone ramp which, eluding the archways by a sharp turn outward into the open floor, wound spirally up the stupendous cylindrical wall like an inside counterpart of those once climbing outside the monstrous towers or ziggurats of antique Babylon. Only the rapidity of our flight, and the perspective which confounded the descent with the tower's inner wall, had prevented our noticing this feature from the air, and thus caused us to seek another avenue to the subglacial level. Pabodie might have been able to tell what sort of engineering held it in place, but Danforth and I could merely admire and marvel. We could see mighty stone corbels and pillars here and there, but what we saw seemed inadequate to the function performed. The thing was excellently preserved up to the present top of the tower—a highly remarkable circumstance in view of its exposure—and its shelter had done much to protect the bizarre and disturbing cosmic sculpture on the walls.

As we stepped out into the awesome half-daylight of this monstrous cylinder bottom—fifty million years old, and without doubt the most primally ancient structure ever to meet our eyes—we saw that the ramp-traversed sides stretched dizzily up to a height of fully sixty feet. This, we recall from our aerial survey, meant an outside glaciation of some forty feet, since the yawning gulf we had seen from the plane had been at the top of an approximately twenty-foot mound of crumbled masonry, somewhat sheltered for three fourths of its circumference by the massive curving walls of a line of higher ruins. According to the sculptures the original tower had stood in the center of an immense circular plaza, and had been perhaps 500 or 600 feet high, with tiers of horizontal disks near the top and a row of needlelike spires along the upper rim. Most of the masonry had obviously toppled outward rather than inward—a fortunate happening, since otherwise the ramp might have been shattered and the whole interior choked. As

it was, the ramp showed sad battering, while the choking was such that all the archways at the bottom seemed to have been recently half-cleared.

It took us only a moment to conclude that this was indeed the route by which those others had descended, and that this would be the logical route for our own ascent despite the long trail of paper we had left elsewhere. The tower's mouth was no farther from the foothills and our waiting plane than was the great terraced building we had entered, and any further subglacial exploration we might make on this trip would lie in this general region. Oddly, we were still thinking about possible later trips—even after all we had seen and guessed. Then, as we picked our way cautiously over the debris of the great floor, there came a sight which for the time excluded all other matters.

It was the neatly huddled array of three sledges in that farther angle of the ramp's lower and outward-projecting course which had hitherto been screened from our view. There they were—the three sledges missing from Lake's camp—shaken by a hard usage which must have included forcible dragging along great reaches of snowless masonry and debris, as well as much hand portage over utterly unnavigable places. They were carefully and intelligently packed and strapped, and contained things memorably familiar enough: the gasoline stove, fuel cans, instrument cases, provision tins, tarpaulins obviously bulging with books, and some bulging with less obvious contents—everything derived from Lake's equipment. After what we had found in that other room, we were in a measure prepared for this encounter. The really great shock came when we stepped over and undid one tarpaulin whose outlines had peculiarly disquieted us. It seems that others as well as Lake had been interested in collecting typical specimens; for there were two here, both stiffly frozen, perfectly preserved, patched with adhesive plaster where some wounds around the neck had occurred, and wrapped with care to prevent further damage. They were the bodies of young Gedney and the missing dog.

X.

Many people will probably judge us callous as well as mad for thinking about the northward tunnel and the abyss so soon after our somber discovery, and I am not prepared to say that we would have immediately revived such thoughts but for a specific circumstance which broke in upon us and set up a whole new train of speculations. We had replaced the tarpaulin over poor Gedney and were standing in a kind of mute bewilderment when the sounds finally reached our consciousness—the first sounds we had heard since descending out of the open where the mountain wind whined faintly from its unearthly heights. Well known and mundane though they

were, their presence in this remote world of death was more unexpected and unnerving than any grotesque or fabulous tones could possibly have been—since they gave a fresh upsetting to all our notions of cosmic harmony.

Had it been some trace of that bizarre musical piping over a wide range which Lake's dissection report had led us to expect in those others—and which, indeed, our overwrought fancies had been reading into every wind bowl we had heard since coming on the camp horror—it would have had a kind of hellish congruity with the aeon-dead region around us. A voice from other epochs belongs in a graveyard of other epochs. As it was, however, the noise shattered all our profoundly seated adjustments—all our tacit acceptance of the inner Antarctic as a waste utterly and irrevocably void of every vestige of normal life. What we heard was not the fabulous note of any buried blasphemy of elder Earth from whose supernal toughness an age-denied polar sun had evoked a monstrous response. Instead, it was a thing so mockingly normal and so unerringly familiarized by our sea days off Victoria Land and our camp days at McMurdo Sound that we shuddered to think of it here, where such things ought not to be. To be brief—it was simply the raucous squawking of a penguin.

The muffled sound floated from subglacial recesses nearly opposite to the corridor whence we had come—regions manifestly in the direction of that other tunnel to the vast abyss. The presence of a living water bird in such a direction—in a world whose surface was one of age-long and uniform lifelessness—could lead to only one conclusion; hence our first thought was to verify the objective reality of the sound. It was, indeed, repeated, and seemed at times to come from more than one throat. Seeking its source, we entered an archway from which much debris had been cleared, resuming our trail-blazing—with an added paper supply taken with curious repugnance from one of the tarpaulin bundles on the sledges—when we left daylight behind.

As the glaciated floor gave place to a litter of detritus, we plainly discerned some curious, dragging tracks; once Danforth found a distinct print of a sort whose description would be only too superfluous. The course indicated by the penguin cries was precisely what our map and compass prescribed as an approach to the more northerly tunnel mouth, and we were glad to find that a bridgeless thoroughfare on the ground and basement levels seemed open. The tunnel, according to the chart, ought to start from the basement of a large pyramidal structure which we seemed vaguely to recall from our aerial survey as remarkably well preserved. Along our path the single torch showed a customary profusion of carvings, but we did not pause to examine any of these.

Suddenly a bulky white shape loomed up ahead of us, and we flashed on the second torch. It is odd how wholly this new quest had turned our minds from earlier fears of what might lurk near. Those other ones, having

left their supplies in the great circular place, must have planned to return after their scouting trip toward or into the abyss; yet we had now discarded all caution concerning them as completely as if they had never existed. This white, waddling thing was fully six feet high, yet we seemed to realize at once that it was not one of those others. They were larger and dark, and, according to the sculptures, their motion over land surfaces was a swift, assured matter despite the queerness of their sea-born tentacle equipment. But to say that the white thing did not profoundly frighten us would be vain. We were indeed clutched for an instant by primitive dread almost sharper than the worst of our reasoned fears regarding those others. Then came a flash of anticlimax as the white shape sidled into a lateral archway to our left to join two others of its kind which had summoned it in raucous tones. For it was only a penguin—albeit of a huge, unknown species larger than the greatest of the known king penguins, and monstrous in its combined albinism and virtual eyelessness.

When we had followed the thing into the archway and turned both our torches on the indifferent and unheeding group of three we saw that they were all eyeless albinos of the same unknown and gigantic species. Their size reminded us of some of the archaic penguins depicted in the Old Ones' sculptures, and it did not take us long to conclude that they were descended from the same stock—undoubtedly surviving through a retreat to some warmer inner region whose perpetual blackness had destroyed their pigmentation and atrophied their eyes to mere useless slits. That their present habitat was the vast abyss we sought, was not for a moment to be doubted; and this evidence of the gulf's continued warmth and habitability filled us with the most curious and subtly perturbing fancies.

We wondered, too, what had caused these three birds to venture out of their usual domain. The state and silence of the great dead city made it clear that it had at no time been an habitual seasonal rookery, while the manifest indifference of the trio to our presence made it seem odd that any passing party of those others should have startled them. Was it possible that those others had taken some aggressive action or tried to increase their meat supply? We doubted whether that pungent odor which the dogs had hated could cause an equal antipathy in these penguins, since their ancestors had obviously lived on excellent terms with the Old Ones—an amicable relationship which must have survived in the abyss below as long as any of the Old Ones remained. Regretting—in a flare-up of the old spirit of pure science—that we could not photograph these anomalous creatures, we shortly left them to their squawking and pushed on toward the abyss whose openness was now so positively proved to us, and whose exact direction occasional penguin tracks made clear.

Not long afterward a steep descent in a long, low, doorless, and peculiarly sculptureless corridor led us to believe that we were approaching the tunnel mouth at last. We had passed two more penguins, and heard others immediately ahead. Then the corridor ended in a prodigious open space which made us gasp involuntarily—a perfect inverted hemisphere, obviously deep underground, fully a hundred feet in diameter and fifty feet high, with low archways opening around all parts of the circumference but one, and that one yawning cavernously with a black, arched aperture which broke the symmetry of the vault to a height of nearly fifteen feet. It was the entrance to the great abyss.

In this vast hemisphere, whose concave roof was impressively though decadently carved to a likeness of the primordial celestial dome, a few albino penguins waddled—aliens there, but indifferent and unseeing. The black tunnel yawned indefinitely off at a steep, descending grade, its aperture adorned with grotesquely chiseled jambs and lintel. From that cryptical mouth we fancied a current of slightly warmer air and perhaps even a suspicion of vapor proceeded; and we wondered what living entities other than penguins the limitless void below, and the contiguous honeycombs of the land and the titan mountains, might conceal. We wondered, too, whether the trace of mountaintop smoke at first suspected by poor Lake, as well as the odd haze we had ourselves perceived around the rampart-crowned peak, might not be caused by the tortuous-channeled rising of some such vapor from the unfathomed regions of Earth's core.

Entering the tunnel, we saw that its outline was—at least at the start—about fifteen feet each way—sides, floor, and arched roof composed of the usual megalithic masonry. The sides were sparsely decorated with cartouches of conventional designs in a late, decadent style, and all the construction and carving were marvelously well preserved. The floor was quite clear, except for a slight detritus bearing outgoing penguin tracks and the inward tracks of these others. The farther one advanced, the warmer it became, so that we were soon unbuttoning our heavy garments. We wondered whether there were any actually igneous manifestations below, and whether the waters of that sunless sea were hot. After a short distance the masonry gave place to solid rock, though the tunnel kept the same proportions and presented the same aspect of carved regularity. Occasionally its varying grade became so steep that grooves were cut in the floor. Several times we noted the mouths of small lateral galleries not recorded in our diagrams, none of them such as to complicate the problem of our return, and all of them welcome as possible refuges in case we met unwelcome entities on their way back from the abyss. The nameless scent of such things. was very distinct. Doubtless it was suicidally foolish to venture into that tunnel under the known conditions, but the lure of the unplumbed is stronger in certain per-

sons than most suspect—indeed, it was just such a lure which had brought us to this unearthly polar waste in the first place. We saw several penguins as we passed along, and speculated on the distance we would have to traverse. The carvings had led us to expect a steep downhill walk of about a mile to the abyss, but our previous wanderings had shown us that matters of scale were not wholly to be depended on.

After about a quarter of a mile that nameless scent became greatly accentuated, and we kept very careful track of the various lateral openings we passed. There was no visible vapor as at the mouth, but this was doubtless due to the lack of contrasting cooler air. The temperature was rapidly ascending, and we were not surprised to come upon a careless heap of material shudderingly familiar to us. It was composed of furs and tent cloth taken from Lake's camp, and we did not pause to study the bizarre forms into which the fabrics had been slashed. Slightly beyond this point we noticed a decided increase in the size and number of the side galleries, and concluded that the densely honeycombed region beneath the higher foothills must now have been reached. The nameless scent was now curiously mixed with another and scarcely less offensive odor—of what nature we could not guess, though we thought of decaying organisms and perhaps unknown subterranean fungi. Then came a startling expansion of the tunnel for which the carvings had not prepared us—a broadening and rising into a lofty, natural-looking elliptical cavern with a level floor, some 75 feet long and 50 broad, and with many immense side passages leading away into cryptical darkness.

Though this cavern was natural in appearance, an inspection with both torches suggested that it had been formed by the artificial destruction of several walls between adjacent honeycombings. The walls were rough, and the high, vaulted roof was thick with stalactites; but the solid rock floor had been smoothed off, and was free from all debris, detritus, or even dust to a positively abnormal extent. Except for the avenue through which we had come, this was true of the floors of all the great galleries opening off from it, and the singularity of the condition was such as to set us vainly puzzling. The curious new fetor which had supplemented the nameless scent was excessively pungent here, so much so that it destroyed all trace of the other. Something about this whole place, with its polished and almost glistening floor, struck us as more vaguely baffling and horrible than any of the monstrous things we had previously encountered.

The regularity of the passage immediately ahead, as well as the larger proportion of penguin droppings there, prevented all confusion as to the right course amid this plethora of equally great cave mouths. Nevertheless we resolved to resume our paper trail-blazing if any further complexity should develop, for dust tracks, of course, could not longer be expected. Upon resuming our direct progress we cast a beam of torchlight over the

tunnel walls—and stopped short in amazement at the supremely radical change which had come over the carvings in this part of the passage. We realized, of course, the great decadence of the Old Ones' sculpture at the time of the tunneling, and had indeed noticed the inferior workmanship of the arabesques in the stretches behind us. But now, in this deeper section beyond the cavern, there was a sudden difference wholly transcending explanation—a difference in basic nature as well as in mere quality, and involving so profound and calamitous a degradation of skill that nothing in the hitherto observed rate of decline could have led one to expect it.

This new and degenerate work was coarse, bold, and wholly lacking in delicacy of detail. It was countersunk with exaggerated depth in bands following the same general line as the sparse cartouches of the earlier sections, but the height of the reliefs did not reach the level of the general surface. Danforth had the idea that it was a second carving—a sort of palimpsest formed after the obliteration of a previous design. In nature it was wholly decorative and conventional, and consisted of crude spirals and angles roughly following the quintile mathematical tradition of the Old Ones, yet seemingly more like a parody than a perpetuation of that tradition. We could not get it out of our minds that some subtly but profoundly alien element had been added to the aesthetic feeling behind the technique—an alien element, Danforth guessed, that was responsible for the laborious substitution. It was like, yet disturbingly unlike, what we had come to recognize as the Old Ones' art; and I was persistently reminded of such hybrid things as the ungainly Palmyrene sculptures fashioned in the Roman manner. That others had recently noticed this belt of carving was hinted by the presence of a used flashlight battery on the floor in front of one of the most characteristic designs.

Since we could not afford to spend any considerable time in study, we resumed our advance after a cursory look, though frequently casting beams over the walls to see if any further decorative changes developed. Nothing of the sort was perceived, though the carvings were in places rather sparse because of the numerous mouths of smooth-floored lateral tunnels. We saw and heard fewer penguins, but thought we caught a vague suspicion of an infinitely distant chorus of them somewhere deep within the earth. The new and inexplicable odor was abominably strong, and we could detect scarcely a sign of that other nameless scent. Puffs of visible vapor ahead bespoke increasing contrasts in temperature, and the relative nearness of the sunless sea cliffs of the great abyss. Then, quite unexpectedly, we saw certain obstructions on the polished floor ahead—obstructions which were quite definitely not penguins—and turned on our second torch after making sure that the objects were quite stationary.

XI.

Still another time have I come to a place where it is very difficult to proceed. I ought to be hardened by this stage; but there are some experiences and intimations which sear too deeply to permit of healing, and leave only such an added sensitiveness that memory reinspires all the original horror. We saw, as I have said, certain obstructions on the polished floor ahead; and I may add that our nostrils were assailed almost simultaneously by a very curious intensification of the strange prevailing fetor, now quite plainly mixed with the nameless stench of those others which had gone before. The light of the second torch left no doubt of what the obstructions were, and we dared approach them only because we could see, even from a distance, that they were quite as past all harming power as had been the six similar specimens unearthed from the monstrous star-mounded graves at poor Lake's camp.

They were, indeed, as lacking in completeness as most of those we had unearthed—though it grew plain from the thick, dark green pool gathering around them that their incompleteness was of infinitely greater recency. There seemed to be only four of them, whereas Lake's bulletins would have suggested no less than eight as forming the group which had preceded us. To find them in this state was wholly unexpected, and we wondered what sort of monstrous struggle had occurred down here in the dark.

Penguins, attacked in a body, retaliate savagely with their beaks; and our ears now made certain the existence of a rookery far beyond. Had those others disturbed such a place and aroused murderous pursuit? The obstructions did not suggest it, for penguins' beaks against the tough tissues Lake had dissected could hardly account for the terrible damage our approaching glance was beginning to make out. Besides, the huge blind birds we had seen appeared to be singularly peaceful.

Had there, then, been a struggle among those others, and were the absent four responsible? If so, where were they? Were they close at hand and likely to form an immediate menace to us? We glanced anxiously at some of the smooth-floored lateral passages as we continued our slow and frankly reluctant approach. Whatever the conflict was, it had clearly been that which had frightened the penguins into their unaccustomed wandering. It must, then, have arisen near that faintly heard rookery in the incalculable gulf beyond, since there were no signs that any birds had normally dwelt here. Perhaps, we reflected, there had been a hideous running fight, with the weaker party seeking to get back to the cached sledges when their pursuers finished them. One could picture the demoniac fray between namelessly monstrous entities as it surged out of the black abyss with great clouds of frantic penguins squawking and scurrying ahead.

I say that we approached those sprawling and incomplete obstructions slowly and reluctantly. Would to Heaven we had never approached them at all, but had run back at top speed out of that blasphemous tunnel with the greasily smooth floors and the degenerate murals aping and mocking the things they had superseded—run back, before we had seen what we did see, and before our minds were burned with something which will never let us breathe easily again!

Both of our torches were turned on the prostrate objects, so that we soon realized the dominant factor in their incompleteness. Mauled, compressed, twisted, and ruptured as they were, their chief common injury was total decapitation. From each one the tentacled starfish head had been removed; and as we drew near we saw that the manner of removal looked more like some hellish tearing or suction than like any ordinary form of cleavage. Their noisome dark green ichor formed a large, spreading pool, but its stench was half overshadowed by the newer and stranger stench, here more pungent than at any other point along our route. Only when we had come very close to the sprawling obstructions could we trace that second, unexplainable fetor to any immediate source—and the instant we did so Danforth, remembering certain very vivid sculptures of the Old Ones' history in the Permian Age 150 million years ago, gave vent to a nerve-tortured cry which echoed hysterically through that vaulted and archaic passage with the evil, palimpsest carvings.

I came only just short of echoing his cry myself; for I had seen those primal sculptures, too, and had shudderingly admired the way the nameless artist had suggested that hideous slime-coating found on certain incomplete and prostrate Old Ones—those whom the frightful shoggoths had characteristically slain and sucked to a ghastly headlessness in the great war of resubjugation. They were infamous, nightmare sculptures even when telling of age-old, bygone things; for shoggoths and their work ought not to be seen by human beings or portrayed by any beings. The mad author of the *Necronomicon* had nervously tried to swear that none had been bred on this planet, and that only drugged dreamers had even conceived them. Formless protoplasm able to mock and reflect all forms and organs and processes—viscous agglutinations of bubbling cells—rubbery fifteen-foot spheroids infinitely plastic and ductile—slaves of suggestion, builders of cities—more and more sullen, more and more intelligent, more and more amphibious, more and more imitative—Great God! What madness made even those blasphemous Old Ones willing to use and carve such things?

And now, when Danforth and I saw the freshly glistening and reflectively iridescent black slime which clung thickly to those headless bodies and stank obscenely with that new, unknown odor whose cause only a diseased fancy could envisage—clung to those bodies and sparkled less volu-

minously on a smooth part of the accursedly resculptured wall in a series of grouped dots—we understood the quality of cosmic fear to its uttermost depths. It was not fear of those four missing others—for all too well did we suspect they would do no harm again. Poor devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being. Nature had played a hellish jest on them—as it will on any others that human madness, callousness, or cruelty may hereafter dig up in that hideously dead or sleeping polar waste—and this was their tragic homecoming.

They had not been even savages—for what indeed had they done? That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch—perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defense against them and the equally frantic white simians with the queer wrappings and paraphernalia ... poor Lake, poor Gedney ... and poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last—what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! What a facing of the incredible, just as those carven kinsmen and forbears had faced things only a little less incredible! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star spawn—whatever they had been, they were men!

They had crossed the icy peaks on whose templed slopes they had once worshipped and roamed among the tree-ferns. They had found their dead city brooding under its curse, and had read its carven latter days as we had done. They had tried to reach their living fellows in fabled depths of blackness they had never seen—and what had they found? All this flashed in unison through the thoughts of Danforth and me as we looked from those headless, slime-coated shapes to the loathsome palimpsest sculptures and the diabolical dot groups of fresh slime on the wall beside them—looked and understood what must have triumphed and survived down there in the Cyclopean water-city of that nighted, penguin-fringed abyss, whence even now a sinister curling mist had begun to belch pallidly as if in answer to Danforth's hysterical scream.

The shock of recognizing that monstrous slime and headlessness had frozen us into mute, motionless statues, and it is only through later conversations that we have learned of the complete identity of our thoughts at that moment. It seemed aeons that we stood there, but actually it could not have been more than ten or fifteen seconds. That hateful, pallid mist curled forward as if veritably driven by some remoter advancing bulk—and then came a sound which upset much of what we had just decided, and in so doing broke the spell and enabled us to run like mad past squawking, confused penguins over our former trail back to the city, along ice-sunken megalithic corridors to the great open circle, and up that archaic spiral ramp in a frenzied, automatic plunge for the sane outer air and light of day.

The new sound, as I have intimated, upset much that we had decided, because it was what poor Lake's dissection had led us to attribute to those we had judged dead. It was, Danforth later told me, precisely what he had caught in infinitely muffled form when at that spot beyond the alley corner above the glacial level; and it certainly had a shocking resemblance to the wind pipings we had both heard around the lofty mountain caves. At the risk of seeming puerile I will add another thing, too, if only because of the surprising way Danforth's impressions chimed with mine. Of course common reading is what prepared us both to make the interpretation, though Danforth has hinted at queer notions about unsuspected and forbidden sources to which Poe may have had access when writing his *Arthur Gordon Pym* a century ago. It will be remembered that in that fantastic tale there is a word of unknown but terrible and prodigious significance connected with the Antarctic and screamed eternally by the gigantic spectrally snowy birds of that malign region's core. "*Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!*" That, I may admit, is exactly what we thought we heard conveyed by that sudden sound behind the advancing white mist—that insidious musical piping over a singularly wide range.

We were in full flight before three notes or syllables had been uttered, though we knew that the swiftness of the Old Ones would enable any scream-roused and pursuing survivor of the slaughter to overtake us in a moment if it really wished to do so. We had a vague hope, however, that nonaggressive conduct and a display of kindred reason might cause such a being to spare us in case of capture, if only from scientific curiosity. After all, if such a one had nothing to fear for itself it would have no motive in harming us. Concealment being futile at this juncture, we used our torch for a running glance behind, and perceived that the mist was thinning. Would we see, at last, a complete and living specimen of those others? Again came that insidious musical piping—"*Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!*"

Then, noting that we were actually gaining on our pursuer, it occurred to us that the entity might be wounded. We could take no chances, however, since it was very obviously approaching in answer to Danforth's scream, rather than in flight from any other entity. The timing was too close to admit of doubt. Of the whereabouts of that less conceivable and less mentionable nightmare—that fetid, unglimped mountain of slime-spewing protoplasm whose race had conquered the abyss and sent land pioneers to recarve and squirm through the burrows of the hills—we could form no guess; and it cost us a genuine pang to leave this probably crippled Old One—perhaps a lone survivor—to the peril of recapture and a nameless fate.

Thank Heaven we did not slacken our run. The curling mist had thickened again, and was driving ahead with increased speed, while the straying penguins in our rear were squawking and screaming and displaying signs of

a panic really surprising in view of their relatively minor confusion when we had passed them. Once more came that sinister, wide-ranged piping—*"Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!"* We had been wrong. The thing was not wounded, but had merely paused on encountering the bodies of its fallen kindred and the hellish slime inscription above them. We could never know what that demon message was—but those burials at Lake's camp had shown how much importance the beings attached to their dead. Our recklessly used torch now revealed ahead of us the large open cavern where various ways converged, and we were glad to be leaving those morbid palimpsest sculptures—almost felt even when scarcely seen—behind.

Another thought which the advent of the cave inspired was the possibility of losing our pursuer at this bewildering focus of large galleries. There were several of the blind albino penguins in the open space, and it seemed clear that their fear of the oncoming entity was extreme to the point of unaccountability. If at that point we dimmed our torch to the very lowest limit of traveling need, keeping it strictly in front of us, the frightened squawking motions of the huge birds in the mist might muffle our footfalls, screen our true course, and somehow set up a false lead. Amid the churning, spiraling fog the littered and unglistering floor of the main tunnel beyond this point, as differing from the other morbidly polished burrows, could hardly form a highly distinguishing feature; even, as far as we could conjecture, for those indicated special senses which made the Old Ones partly, though imperfectly, independent of light in emergencies. In fact, we were somewhat apprehensive lest we go astray ourselves in our haste. For we had, of course, decided to keep straight on toward the dead city, since the consequences of loss in those unknown foothill honeycombs would be unthinkable.

The fact that we survived and emerged is sufficient proof that the thing did take a wrong gallery while we providentially hit on the right one. The penguins alone could not have saved us, but in conjunction with the mist they seem to have done so. Only a benign fate kept the curling vapors thick enough at the right moment, for they were constantly shifting and threatening to vanish. Indeed, they did lift for a second just before we emerged from the nauseatingly resculptured tunnel into the cave, so that we actually caught one first and only half-glimpse of the oncoming entity as we cast a final, desperately fearful glance backward before dimming the torch and mixing with the penguins in the hope of dodging pursuit. If the fate which screened us was benign, that which gave us the half-glimpse was infinitely the opposite, for to that flash of semivision can be traced a full half of the horror which has ever since haunted us.

Our exact motive in looking back again was perhaps no more than the immemorial instinct of the pursued to gauge the nature and course of its pursuer; or perhaps it was an automatic attempt to answer a subconscious

question raised by one of our senses. In the midst of our flight, with all our faculties centered on the problem of escape, we were in no condition to observe and analyze details; yet even so our latent brain cells must have wondered at the message brought them by our nostrils. Afterward we realized what it was—that our retreat from the fetid slime-coating on those headless obstructions and the coincident approach of the pursuing entity had not brought us the exchange of stenches which logic called for. In the neighborhood of the prostrate things that new and lately unexplainable fetor had been wholly dominant, but by this time it ought to have largely given place to the nameless stench associated with those others. This it had not done—instead, the newer and less bearable smell was now virtually undiluted, and growing more and more poisonously insistent each second.

So we glanced back—simultaneously, it would appear, though no doubt the incipient motion of one prompted the imitation of the other. As we did so we flashed both torches full strength at the momentarily thinned mist, either from sheer primitive anxiety to see all we could, or in a less primitive but equally unconscious effort to dazzle the entity before we dimmed our light and dodged among the penguins of the labyrinth center ahead. Unhappy act! Not Orpheus himself, or Lot's wife, paid much more dearly for a backward glance. And again came that shocking, wide-ranged piping—"*Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!*"

I might as well be frank—even if I cannot bear to be quite direct—in stating what we saw, though at the time we felt that it was not to be admitted even to each other. The words reaching the reader can never even suggest the awfulness of the sight itself. It crippled our consciousness so completely that I wonder we had the residual sense to dim our torches as planned, and to strike the right tunnel toward the dead city. Instinct alone must have carried us through—perhaps better than reason could have done—though if that was what saved us, we paid a high price. Of reason we certainly had little enough left. Danforth was totally unstrung, and the first thing I remember of the rest of the journey was hearing him light-headedly chant an hysterical formula in which I alone of mankind could have found anything but insane irrelevance. It reverberated in falsetto echoes among the squawks of the penguins, reverberated through the vaultings ahead and—thank God—through the now empty vaultings behind. He could not have begun it at once—else we would not have been alive and blindly racing. I shudder to think of what a shade of difference in his nervous reactions might have brought.

"South Station Under—Washington Under—Park Street Under—Kendall—Central—Harvard . . ." The poor fellow was chanting the familiar stations of the Boston-Cambridge tunnel that burrowed through our peaceful native soil thousands of miles away in New England, yet to me the

ritual had neither irrelevance nor home feeling. It had only horror, because I knew unerringly the monstrous, nefarious analogy that had suggested it. We had expected, upon looking back, to see a terrible and incredible moving entity if the mists were thin enough, but of that entity we had formed a clear idea. What we did see—for the mists were indeed all too malignly thinned—was something altogether different, and immeasurably more hideous and detestable. It was the utter, objective embodiment of the fantastic novelist's Òthing that should not beÓ, and its nearest comprehensible analogue is a vast, onrushing subway train as one sees it from a station platform—the great black front looming colossally out of infinite subterranean distance, constellated with strangely colored lights and filling the prodigious burrow as a piston fills a cylinder.

But we were not on a station platform. We were on the track ahead as the nightmare, plastic column of fetid black iridescence oozed tightly onward through its fifteen-foot sinus, gathering unholy speed and driving before it a spiral, rethickening cloud of the pallid abyss vapor. It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train—a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind had swept so evilly free of all litter. Still came that eldritch, mocking cry—“*Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!*”—and at last we remembered that the demoniac shoggoths—given life, thought, and plastic organ patterns solely by the Old Ones, and having no language save that which the dot groups expressed—*had likewise no voice save the imitated accents of their bygone masters.*

XII.

Danforth and I have recollections of emerging into the great sculptured hemisphere and of threading our back trail through the Cyclopean rooms and corridors of the dead city; yet these are purely dream fragments involving no memory of volition, details, or physical exertion. It was as if we floated in a nebulous world or dimension without time, causation, or orientation. The gray half-daylight of the vast circular space sobered us somewhat, but we did not go near those cached sledges or look again at poor Gedney and the dog. They have a strange and titanic mausoleum, and I hope the end of this planet will find them still undisturbed.

It was while struggling up the colossal spiral incline that we first felt the terrible fatigue and short breath which our race through the thin plateau air had produced, but not even fear of collapse could make us pause before

reaching the normal outer realm of sun and sky. There was something vaguely appropriate about our departure from those buried epochs; for as we wound our panting way up the sixty-foot cylinder of primal masonry we glimpsed beside us a continuous procession of heroic sculptures in the dead race's early and undecayed technique—a farewell from the Old Ones, written fifty million years ago.

Finally scrambling out at the top, we found ourselves on a great mound of tumbled blocks, with the curved walls of higher stonework rising westward, and the brooding peaks of the great mountains showing beyond the more crumbled structures toward the east. The low Antarctic sun of midnight peered redly from the southern horizon through rifts in the jagged ruins, and the terrible age and deadness of the nightmare city seemed all the starker by contrast with such relatively known and accustomed things as the features of the polar landscape. The sky above was a churning and opalescent mass of tenuous ice vapors, and the cold clutched at our vitals. Wearily resting the outfit-bags to which we had instinctively clung throughout our desperate flight, we rebuttoned our heavy garments for the stumbling climb down the mound and the walk through the aeon-old stone maze to the foothills where our airplane waited. Of what had set us fleeing from that darkness of Earth's secret and archaic gulfs we said nothing at all.

In less than a quarter of an hour we had found the steep grade to the foothills—the probable ancient terrace—by which we had descended, and could see the dark bulk of our great plane amid the sparse ruins on the rising slope ahead. Halfway uphill toward our goal we paused for a momentary breathing spell, and turned to look again at the fantastic tangle of incredible stone shapes below us—once more outlined mystically against an unknown west. As we did so we saw that the sky beyond had lost its morning haziness, the restless ice vapors having moved up to the zenith, where their mocking outlines seemed on the point of settling into some bizarre pattern which they feared to make quite definite or conclusive.

There now lay revealed on the ultimate white horizon behind the grotesque city a dim, elfin line of pinnacled violet whose needle-pointed heights loomed dreamlike against the beckoning rose color of the western sky. Up toward this shimmering rim sloped the ancient tableland, the depressed course of the bygone river traversing it as an irregular ribbon of shadow. For a second we gasped in admiration of the scene's unearthly cosmic beauty, and then vague horror began to creep into our souls. For this far violet line could be nothing else than the terrible mountains of the forbidden land—highest of Earth's peaks and focus of Earth's evil; harborers of nameless horrors and Archaean secrets; shunned and prayed to by those who feared to carve their meaning; untrodden by any living thing on Earth, but visited by the sinister lightnings and sending strange beams across the

plains in the polar night—beyond doubt the unknown archetype of that dreaded Kadath in the Cold Waste beyond abhorrent Leng, whereof primal legends hint evasively. We were the first human beings ever to see them—and I hope to god we may be the last.

If the sculptured maps and pictures in that prehuman city had told truly, these cryptic violet mountains could not be much less than 300 miles away; yet none the less sharply did their dim elfin essence appear above that remote and snowy rim, like the serrated edge of a monstrous alien planet about to rise into unaccustomed heavens. Their height, then, must have been tremendous beyond all comparison—carrying them up into tenuous atmospheric strata peopled only by such gaseous wraiths as rash flyers have barely lived to whisper of after unexplainable falls. Looking at them, I thought nervously of certain sculptured hints of what the great bygone river had washed down into the city from their accursed slopes—and wondered how much sense and how much folly had lain in the fears of those Old Ones who carved them so reticently. I recalled how their northerly end must come near the coast at Queen Mary Land, where even at that moment Sir Douglas Mawson's expedition was doubtless working less than a thousand miles away; and hoped that no evil fate would give Sir Douglas and his men a glimpse of what might lie beyond the protecting coastal range. Such thoughts formed a measure of my overwrought condition at the time—and Danforth seemed to be even worse.

Yet long before we had passed the great star-shaped ruin and reached our plane our fears had become transferred to the lesser but vast-enough range whose recrossing lay ahead of us. From these foothills the black, ruin-crusted slopes reared up starkly and hideously against the east, again reminding us of those strange Asian paintings of Nicholas Roerich; and when we thought of the frightful amorphous entities that might have pushed their fetidly squirming way even to the topmost hollow pinnacles, we could not face without panic the prospect of again sailing by those suggestive skyward cave mouths where the wind made sounds like an evil musical piping over a wide range. To make matters worse, we saw distinct traces of local mist around several of the summits—as poor Lake must have done when he made that early mistake about volcanism—and thought shiveringly of that kindred mist from which we had just escaped—of that, and of the blasphemous, horror-fostering abyss whence all such vapors came.

All was well with the plane, and we clumsily hauled on our heavy flying furs. Danforth got the engine started without trouble, and we made a very smooth take-off over the nightmare city. Below us the primal Cyclopean masonry spread out as it had done when first we saw it, and we began rising and turning to test the wind for our crossing through the pass. At a very high level there must have been great disturbance, since the ice-

dust clouds of the zenith were doing all sorts of fantastic things; but at 24,000 feet, the height we needed for the pass, we found navigation quite practicable. As we drew close to the jutting peaks the wind's strange piping again became manifest, and I could see Danforth's hands trembling at the controls. Rank amateur that I was, I thought at that moment that I might be a better navigator than he in effecting the dangerous crossing between pinnacles; when I made motions to change seats and take over his duties he did not protest. I tried to keep all my skill and self-possession about me, and stared at the sector of reddish farther sky betwixt the walls of the pass—resolutely refusing to pay attention to the puffs of mountain-top vapor, and wishing that I had wax-stopped ears like Ulysses' men off the Siren's coast to keep that disturbing wind-piping from my consciousness.

But Danforth, released from his piloting and keyed up to a dangerous nervous pitch, could not keep quiet. I felt him turning and wriggling about as he looked back at the terrible receding city, ahead at the cave-riddled, cube-barnacled peaks, sidewise at the bleak sea of snowy, rampart-strewn foothills, and upward at the seething, grotesquely clouded sky. It was then, just as I was trying to steer safely through the pass, that his mad shrieking brought us so close to disaster by shattering my tight hold on myself and causing me to fumble helplessly with the controls for a moment. A second afterward my resolution triumphed and we made the crossing safely—yet I am afraid that Danforth will never be the same again.

I have said that Danforth refused to tell me what final horror made him scream out so insanely—a horror which, I feel sadly sure, is mainly responsible for his present breakdown. We had snatches of shouted conversation above the wind's piping and the engine's buzzing as we reached the safe side of the range and swooped slowly down toward the camp, but that had mostly to do with the pledges of secrecy we had made as we prepared to leave the nightmare city. Certain things, we had agreed, were not for people to know and discuss lightly—and I would not speak of them now but for the need of heading off that Starkweather-Moore expedition, and others, at any cost. It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of Earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be let alone, lest sleeping abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests.

All that Danforth has ever hinted is that the final horror was a mirage. It was not, he declares, anything connected with the cubes and caves of those echoing, vaporous, wormily honeycombed mountains of madness which we crossed; but a single fantastic, demoniac glimpse, among the churning zenith clouds, of what lay back of those other violet westward mountains which the Old Ones had shunned and feared. It is very probable

that the thing was a sheer delusion born of the previous stresses we had passed through, and of the actual though unrecognized mirage of the dead transmontane city experienced near Lake's camp the day before; but it was so real to Danforth that he suffers from it still.

He has on rare occasions whispered disjointed and irresponsible things about "the black pit", "the carven rim", "the protoshoggoths", "the windowless solids with five dimensions", "the nameless cylinder", "the elder Pharos", "Yog-Sothoth", "the primal white jelly", "the color out of space", "the wings", "the eyes in darkness", "the moon-ladder", "the original, the eternal, the undying", and other bizarre conceptions; but when he is fully himself he repudiates all this and attributes it to his curious and macabre reading of earlier years. Danforth, indeed, is known to be among the few who have ever dared go completely through that worm-riddled copy of the *Necronomicon* kept under lock and key in the college library.

The higher sky, as we crossed the range, was surely vaporous and disturbed enough; and although I did not see the zenith I can well imagine that its swirls of ice dust may have taken strange forms. Imagination, knowing how vividly distant scenes can sometimes be reflected, refracted, and magnified by such layers of restless cloud, might easily have supplied the rest—and, of course, Danforth did not hint any of these specific horrors till after his memory had had a chance to draw on his bygone reading. He could never have seen so much in one instantaneous glance.

At the time, his shrieks were confined to the repetition of a single, mad word of all too obvious source:

"Tékeli-li! Tékeli-li!"

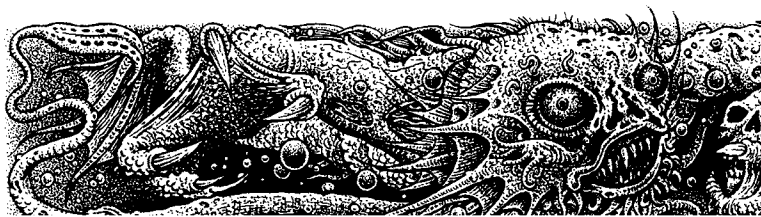
About “The Tomb of the Old Ones”

Just as Colin Wilson’s *The Mind Parasites* springboards off the quite real enigma of the coded *Vöynich Manuscript* (which Wilson fictively makes a version of the *Necronomicon*), so does the present novella, “The Tomb of the Old Ones”, utilize another historical puzzle, that of the Piri Reis map and other ancient specimens of the cartographer’s art. In his *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings: Evidence of Advanced Civilization in the Ice Age*, Charles H. Hapgood tries to demonstrate that a number of ancient navigation maps include features we had imagined unknown to ancient civilizations and their mariners. How did they know Antarctica was there?

How did they know what the preglacial coastline looked like? Hapgood is no Erich von Däniken or Zechariah Sitchin, arguing for ancient extraterrestrial visitors, but he does think we have seriously shortchanged the ancients, whom we falsely imagine to have been stupid when in fact they simply lacked our observational technology. In this case, maybe they didn’t even lack that!

Colin Wilson has written a number of books synthesizing and popularizing the theories of others, often because he has seen new implications and wants to take the discoveries of others in directions they had not thought of. The results are always instructive and fascinating. His recent book *From Atlantis to the Sphinx* follows Hapgood and carries his case further. That book is Wilson’s attempt at a speculative but nonfiction extension of Hapgood’s work. What you are about to read is his admittedly fictive extension of the Hapgood theory. In my view, Wilson, at least as far back as *The Mind Parasites*, has demonstrated a knack for making science fiction sparkle with the excitement of new discovery, making the reader feel much as he might if the discoveries Wilson writes about had really occurred and shaken the world, for good or for ill. He does it again here, and we find ourselves seduced by the accumulation of scientific verisimilitude, just as in Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness*.

“The Tomb of the Old Ones” appears here in print for the first time. Whether that means this is its first “publication” is beyond little intellects like mine. It has already shown up on the Colin Wilson fan Web site. But here it is in glorious black and white with, I may add, a much-needed dose of editing! Does that make it a second edition? You tell me.



The Tomb of the Old Ones

by Colin Wilson

It is a strange thought that most human beings imagine they possess free will, and yet that the most important events in their lives may be determined long before they were born. My own story is a case in point, for the genesis of the most important event in my life occurred fifty years before my birth, even to falling on the date of my birthday.

On April 19, 1930, my great-grandfather Daniel Willoughby, at that time President of the Geographical Society of Winchester, Virginia, introduced as guest speaker the famous polar explorer Admiral Richard E. Byrd. In the previous November, Admiral Byrd and his three companions were the first men to fly over the South Pole—Byrd had already been the first man to fly over the North Pole in May 1926.

Winchester, where I was born, was also the birth place of Admiral Byrd, who often returned there to see his family. Before the lecture, my great-grandfather took him to dinner, and later they returned his house for a late-night drink. It was then that my great-grandfather, fortified by a large glass of bootleg brandy imported from Canada, summoned the courage to ask the great explorer about a rumor that had been confided to him by the last guest speaker: whether it was true that Byrd had flown over an immense hollow where the South Pole should be, in which he had seen green hills and lakes.

According to my great-grandfather, Byrd looked grave, stared into his glass for a long time, then said, "To be honest, Dan, I'm not in a position to confirm it or deny it."

At that moment, they were joined by my great-grandmother, who brought in the coffee; whether Byrd would have said any more is a matter for conjecture, but in any case, they now changed the subject.

Understandably, my great-grandfather took the comment as an admission that Byrd had seen something that he was not allowed to talk about—

after all, if he had seen nothing but snow and ice, he would simply have said no. Byrd was a good-natured, kindly man, full of consideration for others, and this was undoubtedly why he answered my great-grandfather instead of refusing to comment.

When my great-grandfather told his wife at breakfast the following morning, my grandfather—also called Daniel—happened to be next door, in the kitchen, and heard every word. He went off to school in a state of wild excitement. As he understood it, Admiral Byrd had confirmed that there was a vast hollow at the South Pole, full of mountains, green vegetation, lakes, and rivers. That could only mean one thing: that the Earth was hollow.

At school that day, he told several school friends. As soon as he got home, he asked his mother about it. To his astonishment and disappointment, she made light of it, claiming that the admiral had simply meant that he had been unable to see the Pole through the clouds. Yet she obviously told his father, for later that evening, Dan senior reprimanded his son for eavesdropping, then told him not to repeat what he had heard. To my grandfather, this only confirmed that there was some tremendous secret.

That night he had an exceptionally vivid dream. (He was to tell me years later that he had always been subject to unusual dreams.) He was in an airplane with Admiral Byrd, and they were flying over a snow-covered landscape. Then, suddenly, they were looking into a kind of immense volcano, in the center of which there was a deep blue lake. Then my grandfather was alone, standing on the rim of the caldera, looking down at the magically brilliant landscape, in which the grass and tress were greener than any in the real world. The odd thing was that he knew he was lying in bed in his own bedroom, but that as long as he kept his eyes closed, he could go on looking at the land inside the volcano. He could actually feel the solidified lava under his feet, and see a flock of strange yellow birds that rose from the trees. Then he opened his eyes and was back in his own room.

He had experienced what is now called a lucid dream, and when he woke up could still recall the landscape as if he had actually seen it. Naturally, he was filled with feverish curiosity, and he read all he could find on the subject of Antarctica. In fact, over the years he became something of an expert on the continent, even delivering a lecture on its history to the Winchester Geographical Society when he was still a college student. Admiral Byrd's son attended this lecture, but my grandfather was too shy to raise the subject of the "hole" in the South Pole.

In 1949, my grandfather—now a married man and a lecturer in applied mathematics at the University of New Hampshire—was excited by a piece of news that he read in the *New York Times*. In that year, an Antarctic expedition mounted by Norway, Sweden, and Britain had taken sonar soundings through the ice around the coast of Queen Maud Land—which in places

was a mile thick—and discovered bays that had been frozen over for thousands of years. Although my grandfather had long ago ceased to believe in the great hole at the South Pole, he was thrilled to realize that modern science could now look below the ice. As he later explained to me, some instinct told him that there was something important buried beneath the ice, and that it would be one day uncovered. He went to the trouble of obtaining copies of all the reports of the exploration team and having them bound.

My grandfather entered into correspondence with Dr. G. H. Wilbye, the American team's sonar expert, as a result of which he was invited to write an article for the *National Geographic* magazine, and then for a number of other journals. His name became known as an expert on Antarctic.

There is an amusing story of how my grandfather came to marry. At a faculty cocktail party, he met a shy, brown-haired girl, and in the course of the conversation, asked her whether she would prefer to spend her honeymoon at Niagara Falls or the South Pole. He was surprised and delighted when she answered promptly, "At the South Pole." Less than a year later, this is precisely where they did spend their honeymoon. The pair were subsequently to visit Antarctica many times, treating it as a holiday destination in much the same way that other families treat the Adirondacks or Atlantic City.

In 1954, my grandfather was appointed to a committee to coordinate planning for the International Geophysical Year, which would take place in 1957–58. It was to have a twofold emphasis: on the study of outer space, and on the continent of Antarctica; my grandfather was on the committee for Antarctica, and a fellow committee member was George Wilbye.

Now came what is, I suppose, one of the major turning points in this story. In August 1956, my grandfather was asked to take part in a radio discussion of a controversial new discovery: the so-called Piri Reis map.

Most of my readers will know about the map, so I shall offer only a brief summary.

Earlier that year, a Turkish naval officer had presented the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office with a copy a map whose original had been found in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul in 1929. It was painted on parchment and dated 1513, and showed the Atlantic Ocean, with a small part of the coast of Africa on the right and the whole coast of South America on the left. At the bottom of the map was what looked like Antarctica.

The map was passed on to the Hydrographic Office's cartographic expert, W. I. Walters, who in turn had shown it to a friend named Captain Arlington H. Mallery, who studied old Viking maps. It was after he had studied the map at home that Mallery made the astonishing statement that he believed it showed the coast of Antarctica as it had been before it was

covered by thick ice. It appeared to show certain bays in Queen Maud Land as they had been before they were frozen over.

Now a few days before the broadcast, my grandfather had received a copy of the Piri Reis map from the producer of the program. He compared it with the reports of the 1949 expedition, and was thrilled to discover that the bays corresponded exactly.

It was amazing enough that a 16th-century map should show Antarctica, which had not been discovered until 1820, but that it should show Antarctica as it had been in prehistoric times seemed preposterous. In the discussion, which took place at Georgetown University, in Washington D.C., indignant scholars had said as much, and my grandfather then assured them that, as far as he could see, the bays on the Piri Reis map seemed to correspond to bays discovered under the ice in 1949. I must be honest and admit that my grandfather did not press the point—he was an academic and had no wish to be thought a crank. But he certainly threw his authority on the side of the map and Captain Mallery. The discussion was lively, and was widely reported in the newspapers.

My grandfather liked Mallery, who was a scholarly and friendly man. They had dinner together after the broadcast, and my grandfather had told Mallery his story about Admiral Byrd, and how this had stimulated his interest in Antarctica. Mallery told my grandfather that maps like the Piri Reis map were by no means uncommon. They were called *portolans*—which means “from port to port”—and they were used by mariners in the Middle Ages; the Library of Congress apparently had dozens of them.

A few months later, Mallery contacted my grandfather to tell him that he had been in touch with another academic who was interested in the Piri Reis map—a professor of the history of science called Charles Hapgood, who taught at Keene State College, fifty miles or so from the University of New Hampshire in Durham. He gave my grandfather Hapgood’s phone number, and the two of them spoke on the telephone the same evening. They agreed to keep in touch and share their results.

It was some time later that Hapgood rang my grandfather in a state of great excitement. He had spent several days at the Library of Congress, where he had been to study portolans. He expected to see half a dozen or so; instead, he found that the librarian had laid out a whole room full of them. There were dozens, probably hundreds. They appeared to show that these mediaeval mariners knew far more about the geography of the world than is generally supposed. Moreover, said Hapgood, he had discovered a map that undoubtedly showed the whole of Antarctica, as if photographed from the air. The map had been drawn by a mapmaker called Oronteus Finaeus in 1531, and showed ranges of coastal mountains that are now deep under the ice. Hapgood was in the process of studying this map, but his pre-

liminary findings indicated that the rivers on it followed natural drainage patterns, which meant that the coasts were then ice-free. Inland there were no rivers or mountains, suggesting that they were covered with ice.

We know that at the end of the last Ice Age—around 11,000 B.C.—Antarctica spent thousands of years free of ice. Then, about 4,000 B.C., the ice sheets began to return. That seemed to date the map—or the original map on which it was based—around 4,000 B.C.

Then why, asked my grandfather, were these amazing maps not better known—at least among scholars?

That, said Hapgood, was precisely the question he had asked. The answer appeared to be that no one really cared. They were just a lot of old maps, drawn in the days when one mapmaker showed England looking like a teapot.

A few days later, Hapgood and my grandfather met for dinner, choosing Manchester as a convenient midpoint. They took an immediate liking to one another, and spent the whole evening talking about portolans. Why, asked my grandfather, did Hapgood not organize his students to make the first complete study of portolans? “That,” said Hapgood, “is just what I intend to do.”

On that evening, Hapgood told my grandfather more exciting news. In the *Atlas* by Gerard Kremer—better known as Mercator—of 1569, there were several maps that showed Antarctica, including many features that had been “discovered” in recent years, such as Cape Dart and Cape Herlacher, the Amundsen Sea, Thurston Island, the Fletcher Islands, the Weddell Sea, and the Regula Range in Queen Maud Land, which was shown as a series of islands. All this left no doubt whatever that Mercator had based his maps on several older maps, not just those of Piri Reis and Oronteus Finaeus.

My grandfather told me later that although he drank no wine that evening, he felt as lightheaded as if he were drunk. It seemed to these two respectable academics that they were discussing ideas that would change the history of the world. After all, this proved, beyond all possible doubt, that Antarctica had been known for centuries—perhaps thousands of years—before it was “discovered” by Edward Bransfield and others in 1820.

All this obviously had tremendous implications. According to the historians civilization began in the Middle East about 9,000 B.C., with the first farmers and the earliest cities. It took more than 5,000 years more to develop into the great cities of Sumer and Akkad, where writing was invented. Yet according to Hapgood, Antarctica was inhabited, more than 6,000 years ago, by men who sailed the seven seas and made maps. And a map would be no use without writing. Hapgood was saying that civilization is far, far older than we think.

My grandfather noted in his diary that when he left Hapgood that night, he could not sleep. If Hapgood was correct, it would change the history of civilization. The sensation would be tremendous. And Hapgood would certainly become one of the most famous academics of his generation . . .

Not long after that first meeting, when Hapgood spent a weekend with my grandfather at his home in Durham, he brought the most exciting news so far. He had discovered yet another map, this time by a Frenchman called Philippe Buache, dated 1737. This showed Antarctica divided into two islands, as it was before the ice came. Inland, there were rivers and mountains. This map seemed to have been made in the days when the whole of Antarctica was free of ice. This could surely only mean one thing: that the mapmakers lived in Antarctica—for why should sailors bother to go a thousand miles inland to map the interior—even if they could then sail to the South Pole?

There could be no possible doubt: The maps demonstrated that in the days before civilization “began” in the Middle East, there was a worldwide seagoing civilization that sailed as far as Russia and China—which were shown on other ancient maps.

This also meant, of course, that there must be evidence of ancient cities beneath the ice. Imagine, for example, what would have happened if ancient Athens, or Rome, or Ephesus, had been buried under a blanket of snow and ice. Two thousand years later, their major monuments would still be perfectly preserved; the Parthenon and the Colosseum and the Arcadian Way would look exactly as they had when the ice came. And even under a mile of ice, sonar would still show traces of their outlines.

This is why my grandfather decided to persuade the Committee for the Geophysical Year to authorize sonar soundings all over Antarctica—inland as well as the coastal regions.

A week later, he attended a meeting of his committee in Rome; he flew there with George Wilbye. Before he left, my grandfather had come to a decision. If Wilbye raised the subject of the broadcast, or the Piri Reis controversy, my grandfather would take him into his confidence about Hapgood and the “ancient maritime civilization”, and ask his help in persuading the committee to authorize sonar soundings. But if Wilbye knew nothing about the broadcast or the map, my grandfather would keep silent. After all, Wilbye was a scientist, not a historian. He might well feel pangs of conscience about trying to persuade the committee to spend money on an idea that might turn out to be nothing more than wild speculation. My grandfather liked him too much to want to embarrass him.

Of course, there was no question of telling the committee about the real reason. To begin with, they might think him hopelessly eccentric and unreliable. But there was also the fact that he had to right to talk about

Hapgood's ideas before Hapgood was ready to publish them. It would only undermine their impact when they were finally made public.

In fact, it turned out that Wilbye knew nothing of the broadcast and the Piri Reis controversy. But his help was unnecessary in persuading the committee. After all, 95% of Antarctica is under a thick sheet of ice; it was only common sense to take sonar soundings to learn about the underlying geographical features. The proposal was passed without a dissenting voice.

The IGY—International Geophysical Year—began in July 1957; since this is midwinter in the southern hemisphere, the physical surveys in the Antarctic began after the September equinox (when, of course, it becomes perpetual daylight). This time the Russians and the Japanese conducted surveys in Queen Maud Land; the American team organized by my grandfather and Wilbye were in the south, based at Byrd, while a second American team was based at Siple in West Antarctica, near the Ronne Ice Shelf.

My grandfather told me that those first two months in Antarctica were the happiest of his life. In fact, his journals show that he felt as if he were on the brink of a great discovery that would astonish the world. This was because of something he had learned only hours before he left, in late September 1957.

He had spent the previous weekend with Hapgood at Keene State and looked at his latest findings. The more Hapgood studied the old portolans, the more convinced he became that the original maps proved the existence of a great civilization long before the beginnings of Middle Eastern civilization in the Land of the Two Rivers. And his students had found one piece of evidence whose implications were staggering.

A map is, of course, a distortion of what it represents, because the Earth is a sphere and a map is flat. It was Mercator who found the most convenient solution to that problem when he divided the Earth's surface into latitude and longitude, and then "projected" it on to a flat surface. The old mapmakers used a simpler method. They chose some town as a convenient "center", then drew a circle around it and subdivided this into sixteen segments, like cutting a cake into sixteen slices. Along the outer edge of every "slice" they drew various squares, and went on like this for as far as they needed to go.

It was easy to see that the original center of the Piri Reis map was off the map. A friend of Hapgood's, a mathematician at MIT, had calculated that this center had to be in Egypt. This seemed to make sense, for the great library of Alexandria was in Egypt, and Hapgood had already decided that many of the original maps must have been in the library of Alexandria in the days before it was destroyed.

But more calculation revealed that the "center" of the Piri Re's map was not Alexandria, but a spot five hundred miles further south—a small

town called Syene, which is modern Aswan. Why should the old mapmakers choose Syene as the center of their maps?

Hapgood thought he knew the answer. About 240 B.C., a Greek called Eratosthenes had used a well in Syene to work out the size of the Earth. He knew that at midday on June 21, the sun was reflected in the water of the well, and so must be directly overhead. That meant that objects in Syene cast no shadow. All Eratosthenes had to do was to measure the length of the shadow of a tower in Alexandria at midday on June 21 and calculate the angle of the sun's rays, which proved to be 7.5 degrees. Since he knew that Syene was five hundred miles from Alexandria, he was able to work out the size of the Earth by multiplying 500 by 48—the number of times 7.5 degrees goes into 360. He came up with the amazingly accurate figure of 24,000 miles, which is very nearly the correct length of the equator.

But my grandfather pointed out an error in Hapgood's reasoning. If the original maps had been made thousands of years before Eratosthenes, then it was unlikely that the mapmakers had Eratosthenes in mind. Just before he left for the Antarctic, my grandfather spent an hour in the university library and learned that Syene had another significance. It was at the same location as the island of Elephantine, on the Nile, and the ancient Egyptians regarded it as the southern limit of their country. Since they measured Egypt upside-down, and regarded the south as "Upper Egypt" and the north as "Lower Egypt", Syene had the same significance for ancient Egyptian geographers that Greenwich has for modern ones—it was, in a sense, the most important place in Egypt.

My grandfather had tried to telephone Hapgood before he left, but been unable to reach him. Throughout the plane journey to the Antarctic, he brooded on the significance of what he had discovered. If the ancient Egyptians regarded Elephantine as one of the most important places in Egypt, and the ancient mapmakers had used it as their "center", it argued that there must be some connection between the "maritime civilization" of Antarctica and ancient Egypt.

Of course, that was mere common sense if Antarctica was the home of a worldwide maritime civilization. You would expect its sailors to know ancient Egypt ... except, of course, that Egyptian civilization is supposed to have started about 3000 B.C., when Antarctica was already covered with an ice sheet. If there was a connection between ancient Egypt and the Antarctic civilization, then Egyptian civilization must be far older than historians believe.

As he sat on the plane and reflected on these incredible speculations, my grandfather felt almost physically dizzy. As far as he could see, Hapgood had proved that Antarctica was the home of a civilization that was thousands of years older than anything known to historians or archaeologists.

Now it looked as if he had also proved, quite unintentionally, that the civilization of ancient Egypt was also thousands of years older than anyone believed. This theory was going to explode like a bomb in the academic world. If he, by some incredible piece of luck, could find evidence of an ancient civilization under the Antarctic ice, the theory would be virtually proved.

They had flown through a day and night, and it was an hour after dawn when they sighted the coast of Queen Maud Land. This was the seventh time my grandfather had visited Antarctica, but this time he saw it in a new way. Now he was looking at it as the home of a lost civilization, whose bays, now invisible under the ice, had once been crowded with sailing ships. As he gazed down at the ice that reflected the morning sun like a mirror, he told me that he experienced such an agony of curiosity that he said aloud, "If only I knew . . ."

Then, exhausted by excitement (and also by the sheer length of the plane journey in a propeller-driven transport plane) he fell into an uneasy sleep.

Sometime during those last few hours of the journey, he had another lucid dream. It was, he wrote, as if some invisible agency had decided to answer his prayer. In his dream, the plane was flying over an immense green continent, with lakes and forests and mountains. The dream was so clear that he was able to focus on the unfolding scenery. As in all lucid dreams, he was aware that this was a dream and that he would soon be awake. What he now longed was to see some sign of life—or, better still, some kind of human settlement. With desperate urgency, he wanted to know what kind of people had lived in this lost continent nine thousand years earlier.

At this point, his dream turned into a kind of phantasmagoria. He was no longer in the air, but on the ground surrounded by forest. The trees were conifers, and they were immense, like the columns of some Egyptian temple. Underfoot, the ground was wet, covered with some bright green moss that squelched as he walked. The air was oddly warm—unpleasantly warm, like a steam bath—and it smelt of sulfur. He had a very strong and clear sense that he was about to meet the inhabitants of this strange land. At that point, one of those dreamlike transformations took place. He had become one of the inhabitants he was searching for. But it was not human. It was a kind of mass of tentacles, like an octopus, swaying as slowly and gently as seaweed in a current, or the tentacles around the mouth of a sea anemone. Yet he knew he was not under water. He was in a warm, stifling atmosphere that smelt of sulfur and decaying vegetation.

This was not a nightmare. He told me that he experienced no sense of fear. He felt he was being given the answer to his question. The only trouble was that the answer was incomprehensible.

Now, as in his childhood dream of Antarctica, he became aware that he was asleep; he could hear the engines of the plane, and feel the pressure of

his seat. There was a sense in which he was wide awake. Yet as he continued to keep his eyes closed, he continued to feel identified with the swaying tentacles. He told me that he sat there for perhaps five minutes, absorbed in this strange sensation of being another creature, a timeless creature that had existed for thousands, perhaps millions, of years..

As soon as he opened his eyes, the “octopus” disappeared, and he was “himself” again.

For the remaining hour of flight, he reflected on what had happened. He was certain that it could not be dismissed as a dream. Yet what did it mean? Was it some curious hallucination, conjured up by his unconscious mind in response to the urgency of his question? If so, why did it seem so oddly real? And if it was Antarctica that he had seen, why was it covered in enormous trees—trees the size of the giant redwoods of North America?

He was still as puzzled as ever when the plane landed at the Byrd airstrip.

Although the sun was dazzling on the snow, the pilot warned them that the temperature outside was well below zero. Wilbye was there to meet him, dressed in furs that made him look like a polar bear. As they shook hands, my grandfather knew that he had to take Wilbye into his confidence about Hapgood and the portolans. That same evening, over dinner, my grandfather told him the whole story, beginning with the Washington broadcast—and confessed his real reason for wanting to take sonar soundings through the inland ice sheet.

To his relief, Wilbye found it all as fascinating as he did. But he pointed out that their chance of finding ancient cities under the ice was remote. If they existed, they would be more likely to be in the coastal regions, particularly in bays and inlets, where harbors could be constructed.

So they got out their huge map of Antarctica, provided by the U.S. government, and spread it out over the tabletop. Where would an ancient civilization build a major port? The most obvious place was at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier, for that was once the point where a great river had once flowed into the sea. But this area was already being covered by the New Zealand team. Their own team would be working mainly inland.

My grandfather pointed out that the Philip Buache map suggested that the civilization of Antarctica also extended inland—otherwise, why bother to map it? Now if the Ice Age took a thousand years to arrive, the inhabitants of Antarctica would have chosen sheltered places. You would not expect to find the remains of a city on the Rockefeller Plateau or the Holick-Kenyon Plateau. Since the prevailing winds blow from the west, you might expect to find a city under the brow of a mountain or the shelter of a plateau.

They marked out on the map the area assigned to their team. It covered about thirty thousand square miles between the Byrd Research Station and the Ross Ice Sheet. In those days, most of this area was unmapped.

Wilby had already decided that the best place to set up a base camp would be about two hundred miles southeast of Byrd, in the area now called the Robertson Plain, sheltered from the prevailing west winds (which have been known to reach more than a hundred miles an hour) by Holyoake Peak.

As my grandfather studied the map, he saw that Wilby had also chosen the best place to search for signs of a lost civilization. Between Holyoake Peak and Mount Jerome there is a valley that runs southwest toward the Dotson Ice Shelf—clearly a river valley. It is a place to avoid because of the winds that are funneled down from the Amundsen Sea—the team would christen it Windy Gap. But in the days before the ice, it would have been an obvious place to choose for an inland city. The width of the valley suggested that it had once held a river that was both wide and deep, ideal transport for a nation of seafarers.

They saw the actual site for the first time a week later, on October 9, when their seven-man team arrived with dog sleds. Wilby was waiting for them—he had gone ahead by helicopter with the team that had constructed their living quarters. That afternoon, while the technicians tested their equipment, Wilby and my grandfather trudged two miles through the hard-packed snow, until Mount Holyoake ceased to protect them, and they were struck by the icy wind from the southwest. Behind them stretched the Robertson Plain, with Faure Peak visible in the distance. It certainly seemed an unlikely place to look for a lost city. But Wilby pointed out that it was less unlikely than it looked. At present, Mount Holyoake ended in a forty-five degree slope, and as soon as they were beyond its protection, they were almost blown off their feet by the wind. In the days when Antarctica was green, the valley floor was perhaps half a mile below their feet, and the mountains probably descended into foothills that would have afforded shelter.

Their first sonar soundings showed that Wilby was correct. There were foothills at the base of the southern slope of Mount Holyoake, and the main one stretched like the foot of some gigantic three-toed saurian toward the river; its southern lee would have been ideal for a settlement. But the sonar revealed no traces that might have been the remains of buildings.

I have said that my grandfather regarded those first two months in Antarctica as the happiest of his life. His journal describes how he woke every morning with a wonderful sense of excitement and optimism—the feeling that “This is going to be the day!” Yet when he climbed into his sleeping bag in the evening, after sixteen hours of utterly routine surveying, he felt no disappointment—only the same curious sense of euphoria, the feeling that something wonderful and exciting lay in store the next day.

In fact, from the point of view of topography, the Robertson Plain was disappointing. They had hoped to find interesting geographical features that could be mapped, but the land below the ice seemed as flat as its sur-

face. (It is now an established fact that the ice in Antarctica follows the contours of the underlying land, but in 1957 this was still unknown.) But there would have been no time to feel discouraged. They were busy from morning till night. On some days they traveled as much as fifty miles with the dog teams, then set up camp overnight—in tents whose basic design was the same as those used by Scott and Amundsen—and moved on again the next day.

I have a photograph of my grandfather and George Wilbye outside the hut they shared below Mount Holyoake. The photographer is standing with his back to the mountains, and behind the men stretches an endless flat expanse of snow, looking as bleak and dreary as the midwest on a dull winter day.

My grandfather would tell me—forty years later—that when the photograph was taken, he was reflecting on the fact that the secrets of an unknown civilization lay under more than half a mile of ice. He said he often found himself thinking how wonderful it would be if a sudden change in the Earth's climate melted away the ice—until he remembered that 90% of the world's ice is locked up in Antarctica, and that if it should melt, the sea level would rise by 200 feet, enough to submerge half the populated areas and drown most of the great coastal cities, including New York, London, Tokyo, and Amsterdam.

The journal records that the team spent that Christmas in the “township” of Little America, on the Ross Ice Shelf, and ate turkey and Christmas pudding and drank rum punch.

On Christmas morning, they were all invited to make telephone calls to their homes at the expense of the U.S. government. After exchanging greetings with his wife and children, my grandfather rang Hapgood.

“Merry Christmas, Charles. Anything new?”

“Not a lot. We make steady progress. How about you? Have you found anything interesting?”

“Afraid not.” He summarized the result of their sonar findings. “My own feeling is that if there was a pre-Ice Age civilization, it's probably left very few trace behind.”

Hapgood said, “Oh, I don't know. Look at those descriptions in Plato—huge palaces built from stone blocks. They wouldn't disappear in a hurry.”

My grandfather had lost the thread of the conversation.

“Plato? What has Plato to do with it?”

“Don't you remember the description of Atlantis in the Critias? That's supposed to be before 9000 B.C.”

My grandfather had never read Plato, but he had read about Atlantis as a child.

“But wasn't that supposed to be in the north Atlantic?”

"Plato just says it was beyond the Pillars of Hercules—Gibraltar."

"That's a long way from Antarctica."

"Of course. But there was a time when Antarctica was closer to the equator. In fact, there's evidence that it was once on the equator."

"Are you sure?"

"Haven't you read my book *Earth's Shifting Crust*?"

"No."

"I'll send you a copy. It has an introduction by Einstein. I argue that the surface of the Earth is like the skin on gravy—it can be pulled around. There's evidence that seventeen thousand years ago, Antarctica was thousands of miles further north."

My grandfather asked incredulously, "You're not suggesting—"

Hapgood said quickly, "I'm not suggesting anything. Look, it's too complicated to discuss over the phone. We'll talk about it later."

Then it was time to end the conversation—there were still a dozen people waiting to use the phone. As he hung up, my grandfather felt utterly baffled and frustrated. For the first time since he had been in Antarctica, he wished he was back home—back in Hapgood's study at Keene State, where he could ask him what on earth he was talking about.

Outside, he met Wilbye.

"Do you know anything about Atlantis?"

"Only what everybody knows. Why?"

"Oh, I think Hapgood's gone mad. He seems to think Antarctica was once at the equator."

"So it was. But that was millions of years ago—when there was only a single continent called Pangea. But what has that to do with Atlantis?"

"I'm damned if I know. Do you know if there's a library in this place?"

"A small one. It's in the hut next to the quartermaster's. You won't find much there."

Wilbye was right—the library consisted mainly of detective fiction. But there was a college paperback called *Ten Dialogues of Plato*, and it contained the dialogue he was looking for, the Critias. He took it back to his quarters and read it in less than an hour—it is only a fragment. Critias describes to Socrates how there was a great war nine thousand years earlier, between "those who dwelt within the Pillars of Hercules, and those who dwelt without." Those who dwelt without were the inhabitants of the island of Atlantis, "bigger than Libya and Asia put together." Critias explains that his grandfather heard the story from the statesman Solon, who had heard it from the priests in Egypt. His description of the city and harbor of Atlantis is incredibly detailed—Plato makes it sound as massive as the Acropolis of Athens.

When my grandfather had finished it, he was as confused as ever. Why had Hapgood mentioned Atlantis? Was he suggesting that the inhabitants of Atlantis—which had been destroyed by earthquakes and engulfed by the ocean—had fled to Antarctica?

He felt he had to speak of it to someone—otherwise he felt his head would explode. Yet as he was about to sit up and leave the room, he was overcome by unexpected drowsiness. He closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Once again, he experienced a curiously vivid and realistic dream. He was back at the base camp below Mount Holyoake, but there was no ice, and the atmosphere was almost tropically warm. The Robertson Plain was covered in lush grass, and he could see many trees. He turned north and began walking in the direction of Windy Gap, as he and Wilbye had on their first afternoon there. On his left he could see the three outcrops of rock that looked like the foot of a three-toed saurian. Then, suddenly, he was aware that he was looking at the Robertson Plain as it had been in the remote past. At this point it became a lucid dream, in which he was aware he was dreaming. He began to walk faster, anxious to see as much as he could before waking up. He noted that there were no birds in the sky, no animals visible on the plain, and that a broad river flowed northwest toward the sea. Now he emerged past the outcrops of rock and looked along Windy Gap. The mountains on either side looked taller. About a mile away, on both sides of the river, he could see dark gray angular masses that looked like the buildings of a city. He stared at them, wondering if they were some kind of natural formation. But when he raised his field glasses to his eyes, there could be no doubt about it: These were buildings, massive buildings, with sloping sides and flat tops. To remove all possible doubt, many of them had tall openings, like doors, with curved tops—although as far as he could see, there was no sign of windows.

What puzzled him was this did not look in the least like the city Plato had described in the *Critias*. That sounded more like ancient Athens. This looked like something out of a science fiction story.

In spite of his efforts, the dream dissolved, and he found himself back in his room. As he lay there on the bed, he said aloud, "Of course!"

For what he had forgotten was that Antarctica had not always been a land of icy winds. Exploration of some of the 5% of land that was free of ice had revealed coal deposits, which meant that it had once been covered with forests. Surely, the natural place to choose for a city would have been a river valley ...? They had been looking in the wrong direction.

His first impulse was to hurry off and find Wilbye. Yet the thought of describing his dream aroused in him an odd feeling of reluctance. He rationalized this by telling himself that, after all, Wilbye was a scientist. What would he say to the suggestion that they should take soundings in Windy

Gap simply because of a dream? Finally, my grandfather decided to keep it to himself.

The next day, December 26, they returned to the base camp. There was no time for a Christmas holiday; they only had twelve weeks before the spring equinox, when Antarctica would return to darkness.

As the helicopter descended toward the foot of Mount Holyoake, my grandfather pointed to Windy Gap, and shouted above the noise of the engine, "Why don't we take some soundings there?"

Wilbye shrugged. "Why not?"

That "night" there was a storm. But when they woke up the next day, the sky was clear and bright, and the wind had dropped. By ten o'clock, they were taking their first sounding in Windy Gap. By midday, they had established that the river at this point had once been about two hundred yards wide and about twice that depth.

At five o'clock that afternoon, they were taking their eighth sounding, about a mile down the valley. This, my grandfather was convinced, was roughly where the "city" of his dream was situated. He describes in the journal how he found it hard to maintain his air of casualness as Jim Peavey, the technician in charge of the sonar equipment, took another sounding. He watched intently as the pen traced a graph line on the paper tape.

My grandfather said, "Anything interesting?" Peavey—a phlegmatic southerner—did not even bother to reply; he merely shook his head.

"Let's try further on."

They loaded the equipment on to the dog sled and moved on. Wilbye said, "I think we'll make this the last of the day." My grandfather said nothing. He had no doubt that they were now above the city of his dream.

Half an hour later, Peavey again activated the echo, then rotated the equipment to cover an area of a few hundred yards. As he studied the paper tape, his face remained impassive. My grandfather experienced a leaden sense of disappointment.

"Nothing?"

"Nope."

Then my grandfather was struck by a sudden thought. A river cuts down into the earth, deepening its valley. Suppose the city of his dream was very old—more than ten thousand years old? If the ice had returned to Antarctica five thousand years later, the river would have had a chance to cut far deeper than when the city was built. In that case, the remains of the city would now be above the floor of the valley, against the side of the mountain.

"Can you direct it over there?" He pointed toward the slope of the mountain.

"O.K."

My grandfather was aware that Wilbye was looking at him curiously. He went across to Peavey and watched as the tape came out of the side of the equipment. As he looked at the graph curve, his heart began to beat painfully. The pulse was being reflected back off large and irregular objects.

Peavey said with sudden excitement, "Yeah, there's somethin' there all right."

Wilbye studied the tape for a long time, then looked up at the mountain. "It's debris from a landslide. Look."

My grandfather could see what he meant. In the side of the mountain, a path about a quarter of a mile wide had been scooped in the gray rock. It was so smooth that no snow had settled on it.

He pointed to the steep curves on the tape. "These are big rocks. Do you mind if we take a closer look?"

They moved five hundred yards closer to the mountain side. Five minutes later, Peavey said, "Yeah, there's somethin' there all right."

Wilbye was studying the tape. "Big rocks, some of them bigger than houses."

Peavey looked doubtful. My grandfather said, "What do you think, Jim?"

Peavey said, "I'd say it's some kind of natural formation—like weathered volcanic lava."

My grandfather knew what he had in mind—he had seen photographs of the forty-foot hexagonal columns of basalt in Fingal's Cave.

"But I think it's too big to be basaltic lava."

Wilbye said, "You could be right. We'll come back tomorrow."

"Why can't we do a few more soundings now?"

"Because the wind's springing up again. Besides, we'll be late for dinner."

They were back again early the next morning—Wilbye admitted that he had been unable to sleep, wondering about the massive shapes. This time the sonar was set up close to the mountain face. During the next few hours it was moved a dozen times to try to achieve greater definition—at a depth of more than half a mile, the outline of the "rocks" was blurred.

While Peavey was pinning the paper tapes on a sheet of hardboard, Wilbye said casually, "Let's go and get some coffee."

They went to the sled and poured coffee from a flask. When Wilbye was sure Peavey was out of earshot, he said, "How did you know there was something there?"

"Educated guesswork."

Wilbye said, "And what else?"

My grandfather decided to tell the truth. "All right, but you'll think I'm mad. I had a dream."

"A dream of what?"

"A city. Here in Windy Gap."

"What kind of a city?"

My grandfather did his best to describe it. When he had finished, Wilby said, "Will you do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Don't mention this to anyone else."

"My dream? Of course I wouldn't. They might want to lock me up."

"Not just your dream. Don't mention the city."

My grandfather was astonished. "Why not?"

Wilby said patiently, "Because it doesn't look like the remains of a city. It looks like the remains of a landslide." He pointed up at the mountain. "And the evidence is there."

My grandfather said, "There's an easy way to find out. Move the sonar to the other side of the valley. The city was on both sides of the river. What do you bet that we find the same thing on the other side?"

Wilby said urgently, "Keep your voice down." He glanced toward Peavey, who was looking across at them.

My grandfather was baffled, and beginning to feel rather indignant. "I simply don't understand. If I'm right, it could be the greatest discovery of the century."

Wilby said patiently, "You're not thinking this through, Dan. Think what will happen if we go back to Byrd and say we've found the remains of a city. It will be on the front page of the *New York Times* the next day, and in every newspaper in the world the day after that. And if you even breathe the word Atlantis, you'd be a laughing stock."

"For heaven's sake, I'm not that crazy. But you've got to look at the evidence. All right, there was a landslide, and it's covered some of the evidence. But look at those tapes. There's more than a landslide there. And all we have to do to prove it is move the sonar to the other side of the valley."

"That's just what we shouldn't do. For the moment, we've got to keep this to ourselves. Look out—"

Peavey came and joined them. He was carrying the hardboard under his arm.

"I don't understand this. If it's a landslide, it's not like any I've ever seen. Just look at the size of this." He pointed to a curve. "That must be a fifty-foot block." He looked up at the mountain. "And I just can't see where it came from."

Wilby said, "We'd have to climb Mount Holyoake to find out."

Peavey was obviously intrigued by the problem. He walked away across the valley, taking the binoculars so he could get a view of the higher reaches of the mountain.

When they were alone, my grandfather said, "I agree with you about scientific caution. But this is suppressing information."

Wilbye said, "Have you ever heard of Don Marcelino de Sautuola?"

"No."

"He was a Spanish nobleman who found an underground cave on his property. When he looked inside it, he found pictures of bulls on the walls—bulls drawn by Cro-Magnon men. But the pigment was still wet, and when he announced his discovery, the experts denounced him as a fraud. He fought for years to clear his name—he pointed out that he had no reason to forge the paintings, but no one believed him. Then they began to discover more paintings, in caves in the Vezere Valley, with the pigment still wet, and they realized that Don Marcelino had been telling the truth all along. But it was too late to apologize—he was already dead. The experts had made the rest of his life a misery with their accusations. So Don Marcelino never lived to see Altamira become one of the most famous caves in the world. Now tell me—if he'd been able to foresee what would happen, do you think he would have announced his discovery?"

My grandfather had to admit that this was unanswerable. He knew enough about the academic world to know that a professor who becomes an object of ridicule is a liability to his university.

He said, "But suppose we had evidence—evidence of massive structures that couldn't be natural features?"

"If we had real evidence, we'd be obliged to announce it. But we don't have evidence yet."

"Then let's look on the other side of the valley!"

"All right. But not now. Let's wait for an opportunity when there's just the two of us."

That evening, when they were alone, they renewed the conversation. This is what my grandfather said in his journal: "I have to admire Wilbye's cool head. Without him, I would have told Peavey that I think it's the remains of a city, and Peavey would have told the rest of the team (in fact, they're away mapping Erebus at the moment), and someone would have passed it back to Byrd, and it would be unstoppable. But Wilbye's obviously right. With something as big as this, it's best not to go off at half-cock. Now we have to wait for an opportunity to try the north side of the valley."

Four days later, after a New Year's Eve celebration, Peavey stayed behind with an upset stomach, and the conspirators had their opportunity. It was an icy-cold day, with the temperature below zero and a strong wind blowing down the valley, but this did not deter them. By ten in the morning they were back at the site of their previous soundings, then turned across the valley at ninety degrees—they were so anxious to get it right that

they preferred to do this rather than travel down the far side of the valley and risk missing the spot by a hundred yards.

My grandfather told me that as they unloaded and set up the sonar, he felt like a burglar, afraid that they'd be interrupted. For this first probe they set up within a few hundred yards of the side the valley, which was less steep than on the south side.

As the paper tape came out of its slot, Wilbye glanced at it and said, "It looks as if you could be right."

My grandfather's hands were shaking as he reached out for the tape. The shape of the graph curve left no doubt that there was something down there under the ice—something big.

My grandfather pointed up the mountain.

"You see—no sign of a landslide here."

Wilbye studied the tape. "True. But this doesn't look like buildings either. It's not regular enough."

"For God's sake, George. Neither are the ruins of ancient Rome."

Over the next two hours they moved the sonar a dozen times. The results were exciting and at the same time frustrating. The "ruins" extended along a slope several hundred yards above the valley floor. To my grandfather, what had happened was obvious. The city he had seen had been undermined by erosion, so that most of it had collapsed into the deepening valley carved by the river. What remained clung to the hillsides on either side of the valley. But the ice in the valley was, in effect, a gigantic, slow-moving river, and the remains of the city were ground like rocks into the bed of a torrent. The clear, rectangular shapes that my grandfather had glimpsed in his dream had been eroded into irregular masses that could be mistaken for gigantic boulders. It was true that many of these "boulders" looked oddly like the work of man. But to the eye of the skeptic, they were merely impressive natural features.

By one o'clock, when they broke off for a lunch of sandwiches and coffee—huddled under blankets in the sled—my grandfather knew that Wilbye had been right. With evidence as ambiguous as this, it would have been a disaster even to hint at man-made structures.

Which is why, when reports of their findings appeared in the publications of the International Geophysical Year, the "ruins" were described as "puzzling and undetermined natural features under the ice, which spread along both sides of the valley for a distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile."

When my grandfather returned home in the third week of March, he could hardly wait to tell Hapgood what he had found. Yet their meeting also turned out to be something of a disappointment. Hapgood was deeply interested, of course, but my grandfather's hints over the telephone had led him to expect something more definite than huge blocks that might be nat-

ural features—he later told my father that he had been hoping for evidence of a port, or some similar discovery, where the ice shelf joined the land.

When my grandfather asked him what he had meant about Atlantis, Hapgood explained that he had merely intended to point out that, if Plato was right, a pre-Ice Age civilization could have created buildings as massive as the temples of Egypt. But then, he added, Atlantis was probably a myth created by Plato. My grandfather felt that Hapgood was being less than candid—after all, why bother to mention Atlantis at all if he felt it to be a myth? So the afternoon he spent with Hapgood, although friendly enough, lacked the warmth and excitement of their previous meetings. Between March 1958 and the publication of Hapgood's *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings: Evidence of Advanced Civilization in the Ice Age* in 1966, they met on only three occasions. The third of these was the book's launching party in Philadelphia—it was brought out by a Philadelphia publisher—when my grandfather and grandmother drank to his fame and success.

Of course, nothing of the sort happened. The reviews were mostly favorable, and Hapgood made a number of appearances on radio and television. Naturally, the academics ignored it completely. Within six months, the book had been more or less forgotten.

How could this happen to a work as important as *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings*? The answer, unfortunately, is that Hapgood had been anticipated. In 1960 a book called *Le Matin des Magiciens*—"The Morning of the Magicians"—had been published in Paris; the authors were a journalist called Louis Pauwels and a student of alchemy named Jacques Bergier. It is a strange mishmash of occultism, prophecy, flying saucers, the Great Pyramid, and Hitler's astrologers, and it became an immediate bestseller. Translated into a dozen languages, it launched the "occult revival" of the late 20th century.

In the midst of a discussion of lost civilizations, it explains that "in the middle of the 19th century, a Turkish naval officer, Piri Reis, presented the Library of Congress with a set of maps he had discovered in the East." All this, of course, is absurdly inaccurate. The authors ask, "Had (these maps) been traced from observations made on board a flying machine or space ship of some kind? Notes taken by visitors from Beyond?" So the mediaeval portolans achieved worldwide notoriety as proof that Earth had been visited in the remote past by visitors from outer space. *The Morning of the Magicians* appeared in America in 1963 and became a bestseller there too. So the critics can hardly be blamed for failing to distinguish between Hapgood's sober and serious study of ancient maps and this lurid "occult" journalism.

Worse was to come. In 1967, a Swiss writer named Erich von Däniken produced a book called *Chariots of the Gods*, which was advertised under the rubric, "Did God drive a flying saucer?" It sold a million copies, and,

since it contained even more absurdities and inaccuracies than *The Morning of the Magicians*, aroused the same fury in serious reviewers. “The latest studies of Professor Charles H. Hapgood,” declares von Däniken, “give us some more shattering information. Comparison with modern photographs of our globe taken from satellites showed that the originals of Piri Reis’ maps must have been aerial photographs taken from a very great height. How can that be explained?”

It can be explained, of course, by recognizing that von Däniken is talking nonsense. Hapgood never mentioned aerial photographs taken from a very great height. But everyone who read *Chariots of the Gods* assumed that Hapgood believed that Antarctica had been photographed from a flying saucer in the days before it was covered with ice. There was no way he could escape being tarred with the same brush as von Däniken and the authors of *The Morning of the Magicians*. Hapgood succeeded in getting his book republished in 1979, not long before his death, but by then the damage had been done. A book that should have been as epoch-making as Darwin’s *Origin of Species* continued to be ignored.

And how did I come to be involved in this bizarre and complicated story?

It started when I was thirteen, and was spending the weekend in Rye Beach, a small sea town in New Hampshire, where my grandfather had retired when he left the university.

My father, Richard Willoughby, had inherited none of my grandfather’s interest in science and mathematics—in fact, he hated them both. As a teenager, he came upon a book by Jung and decided he wanted to be a psychiatrist. He studied medicine at Johns Hopkins, became a consultant psychiatrist in the mid-1980’s, and achieved celebrity with his book *Shadows in the Mind* in 1989. We lived in Riverside Drive, New York, and I went to school in Morris Heights.

My grandfather said very little about his son’s chosen profession, but I had a feeling that he regarded psychology as a pseudoscience.

I took after my grandfather, and from the time he gave me a kind of cartoon picture book called *Frontiers of Science* when I was ten, dreamed of becoming a scientist. Our family often went to visit with my grandfather on weekends. But when I was thirteen, I spent most of the summer holidays at Rye Beach.

My grandfather was at that time seventy-three, a tall man with a nose like an eagle and a pointed chin. We used to take long walks, and he first introduced me to the ideas of Einstein, Planck, and Godel. Both his sons had been something of a disappointment to him, for neither showed any aptitude for mathematics—my Uncle Carl became an actor. So he was delighted to find that I wanted to follow in his footsteps.

I was given a free run of his library, and it was there that I discovered his signed copy of *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings*. It seemed an unusual kind of book to find on his shelf, among books on bridge-building and chaos theory, and I took it off to the beach. As soon as I read the opening sentence, "This book is the story of the discovery of the first evidence that advanced peoples preceded all the peoples now known to history," I was hooked. All this talk about the sea kings of ancient Crete and the great library of Alexandria made my hair tingle with excitement. I found it so exciting that before the afternoon was over, I had turned to the last chapter, "A Civilization That Vanished", and read it while I was only halfway through the book.

As soon as I got back, I asked my grandfather about it, and why Hapgood had dedicated the book "To my old friend and supporter." My grandfather was drinking the martini he always poured himself at half past five, and was feeling relaxed and expansive. He told me to sit down in the other armchair, poured me a glass of sweet sherry, and then told me the whole story, from the time he went on the radio with Mallery to the fiasco of the publication of Hapgood's book. By the time we went out to dinner at the seafood restaurant across the road, I was as excited as my grandfather had been when he overheard his father talking about the great hole in the South Pole. It seemed to me incredible that Hapgood had proved that an ancient civilization existed in Antarctica thousands of years before ancient Egypt, and that his findings had been ignored. I was also excited by his hint about Atlantis. My grandfather told me that when he pressed Hapgood to tell him whether he thought these inhabitants of the South Pole came from Atlantis, Hapgood privately admitted that he thought it highly probable. I wanted to know why Hapgood had not said so in his book, and my grandfather explained that this would have been disastrous for his academic reputation.

I still found it impossible to understand why my grandfather had not continued to pursue this fascinating question; after all, if an ancient civilization did exist under the ice of the Antarctic, it would change our whole vision of human history. And the man who first proved it was true would achieve everlasting fame.

My grandfather smiled ironically, and said he had once thought the same thing.

At this point, my grandmother intervened. She was a quiet woman who seldom spoke, but now she said that she had often wished that he had pursued the question of the lost civilization. He had often talked of writing a book about it. Why not start now?

He shook his head. "Wilbye was right. There's just not enough evidence. I fed those paper tapes into a computer, and they show immense blocks. But if there was a city down there, it's been pulverized by the glacier."

I didn't understand this. "But you told me that there were huge blocks of stone on either side of Windy Gap."

"And if there was some easy way of getting down to them, I'd be trying to form an expedition myself. But there's no conceivable way of cutting down through three thousand feet of ice."

"How about an oil drill?"

"That would do it, of course. But what would we do then? Send someone down in a bucket with a candle?"

"But there must be some way? Isn't there any drill that could make a wide tunnel—the kind of drills they use to make railway tunnels under mountains?"

"I've thought of that too. It would cost millions of dollars to transport such a drill to the Antarctic. And what would happen when you got down there? You'd find yourself looking at a rock as big as a house. What do you do then? Take a pick and shovel?"

My grandmother said, "But perhaps it wouldn't be a rock. Perhaps it would be a house."

"True. That would settle it once and for all. But it wouldn't be worth spending a million dollars unless you were fairly certain it was going to be a house. You see, the truth is that what we really need is for all the ice in that valley to melt away, so we could see exactly what's underneath it. Then, I'm sure, we'd find all the evidence we need about a city—if it exists."

I asked, "Do you think it exists?"

"I honestly can't say. I believe there's evidence of an ancient civilization somewhere under that ice. But whether it's in Windy Gap I don't know. I just had a dream, that's all."

My grandmother said, "And your dreams often come true. You remember about Mary Dexter's wedding—"

My grandfather began to laugh. "You're the kind of wife who ruins her husband's reputation . . ."

At that point the food arrived, and the subject was abandoned. But the conversation—aided possibly by the lobster claws—had inflamed my imagination to such an extent that I spent half the night dreaming about Atlantis and vast underground cities.

Back at home, I told the whole story to my father, and was gratified when he seemed fascinated. Intellectually speaking, he and my grandfather had never been close, since my father's interests had always been literary rather than scientific. But this strange tale of a lost civilization touched his imagination, and he borrowed *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* from the New

York Public Library. He was as impressed as I was, and next time my grandfather came to visit, I listened in while they had a discussion about how the ice could be penetrated. Like me, he suggested tunneling equipment; my grandfather pointed out that when a tunnel is driven through a mountain, they build a railway track to remove the earth in trucks. Such a track would have to be built in Windy Gap to remove millions of tons of ice. The cost would be prohibitive.

I asked, "What about some machine that breathed fire, like that thing you have for burning weeds in the garden?"

My grandfather laughed. "It would fill the shaft with water."

"But you could pump it out."

"Yes ... I suppose you could."

I had an idea. "Couldn't you make some kind of machine like a rocket, with a red-hot point, that would cut down through the ice? Then you could travel down through the ice as if you were in a diving bell."

My grandfather nodded. "Yes, that might work."

During the next weeks I devoted a great deal of intellectual energy to the problem of how to penetrate half a mile of ice. It seemed amazing that such a simple-looking problem could be so baffling.

It goes without saying that I told everybody who would listen—all my friends, the science master, the bosomy lady who taught us literature, two uncles, and, on one occasion, a total stranger who was sitting next to me on the subway and reading an article about Antarctica in *The Scientific American*. All of them were interested. But they all admitted that they had no idea of how to solve the problem of how to tunnel down through half a mile of ice. As far as I could see, the simplest and most obvious solution was to use an oil drill, which would have no difficulty in sinking a well into the ice.

I suggested this to Dr. Wilbye, the first time I met him at my grandfather's house, and he pointed out that the cost of transporting a drilling rig four hundred miles inland from the Ross Sea (where Shell was then making some test drills) would be enormous.

I refused to give up. During the next year or so, I suggested at least six more ideas that had real possibilities. The most practical of these, I believe, was using superheated steam to vaporize the ice, which would rise into the air and descend elsewhere as rain. My grandfather objected that this would merely convert most of the ice into water, and leave us with a vast lake that would freeze up again the same night. I didn't agree, but had no way of proving my point without putting it to the practical test.

The solution came through a series of chance events. The first was my meeting with Gordon Trask.

At that time, no one had heard of Trask. In spite of the fact that he had almost as many patents to his name as Edison or Tesla, he had never aroused the interest of the popular press. So when, in my second year at Columbia, I heard that he was lecturing to the Science Club on the future of science, I had to ask my roommate who he was. "Oh, I don't know—some kind of inventor." Even that failed to arouse my interest—I planned to take a girl named Coral to a meeting of the European Film Society. I had known her a week and was convinced I was in love. So when, at the last moment, she told me that she had to go out to dinner with a visiting relative, I suspected infidelity and thought of going out to get drunk. Then I realized that I only had five dollars in my wallet, and decided to go home instead. Yet just as I was about to walk to the bus stop, I felt an odd compulsion to go back on campus. I went to the notice board to see what was happening that evening, decided against the meeting of the Charles Ives Society, and somehow found myself in Trask's lecture.

There were not more than twenty people in the room, and Trask had already started when I arrived. He was talking about the psychology of invention, and some of his examples were—to put it mildly—rather abstruse, so that half the audience looked baffled.

Trask was not a good speaker—a small, thin man with a high, domed forehead, piercing blue eyes, a big, curved nose, and a slightly nasal voice. He had an odd habit of ceasing to speak, and staring intently at the table as if he had seen some amazing and rare beetle. Then he opened and closed the fingers of his right hand in an abrupt, jerky way, and launched into some explanation about computers that seemed to have no relation to what he had been saying earlier. Occasionally, his face would break into a sudden bright smile, as if he had just said something astounding, but what followed was as incomprehensible as the rest. His intellectual enthusiasm would have been infectious if we had been able to understand what he was talking about. He made me think of a kind of disconnected Sherlock Holmes.

In a sense, what he was saying was quite simple—that there is a fundamental difference between computers and the human brain—and he was criticizing computer experts who one day hoped to create a "living" computer. The problem was that he assumed we knew as much as he did, so that most of what he said was above our heads.

At the end of his talk, Bob Scarsby, the chairman, made a short speech about the "fascinating lecture", and most of the audience stampeded for the bar.

I was about to do the same thing when, for the second time that evening, I found myself doing something I had not intended—I went forward to the lectern to speak to him.

Our visiting celebrities usually ended up with a crowd around them, but on this occasion I was the only one. Which is how, half an hour later, I found myself sitting in a cheap Italian restaurant with Bob Scarsby and Gordon Trask, eating pasta at the expense of the Science Club.

When Bob invited me to join them, I had been a little worried at the prospect of dining with someone whose mind seemed to operate on such an incredible level of abstraction. But once I noticed the way that he spilled tomato sauce on his bowtie and started to put salt in his coffee before Bob stopped him, I began to feel more at ease. He was obviously a genuine example of the absent-minded genius.

While we were waiting for the food, Bob made the mistake of asking him about pesticides, which led to a baffling discourse on molecular biology. I decided to try to get some sense out of him by asking my favorite question.

"If you were an archaeologist, and you had to penetrate half a mile of ice, how would you do it?"

He thought for a moment, then said, "With a giant mechanical digger—the kind they use in open-cast mines."

"And suppose it was in the middle of the Antarctic, so the cost would be prohibitive?"

"I'd begin to think in terms of laser technology."

I experienced a bubble of rising excitement. "Could you explain, sir?"

I saw Bob wince, preparing for another barrage of impenetrable computerese. Instead, Trask smiled and said, "And what would be the purpose of this exercise?"

"Have you heard of Charles Hapgood?"

"No. Who is he?"

I launched into my well prepared presentation of the theory of pre-Ice Age civilization. Within a few minutes, I could see I had them both hooked. Whenever I felt ashamed of monopolizing the conversation, they both begged me to go on. I told them about my grandfather's visit to Antarctica during the IGY and about the great stone blocks buried under the glacier.

Trask interrupted me. "Has he had the data analyzed by computer?"

"I think so."

"With what result?"

"I couldn't tell you. But it wasn't as exciting as he expected. Don't forget their sonar was an early model—1957."

"Then what makes him so certain that it wasn't merely a landslide?"

"The fact that it was on both sides of the valley, just as he expected."

Bob said, "Haven't they been back since?"

"No. My grandfather seemed to lose heart. Nobody seemed interested." And I explained how Hapgood had suffered from ancient astronaut theorists like von Däniken.

Trask said, "If you'd like to ask him to send his data to my laboratory, we'll do a computer analysis."

I did my best not to show just how delighted I felt by asking, "Could a laser cut through half a mile of ice?"

"Oh, certainly. But that isn't the problem. A laser can cut through anything by focusing its energy down to a point. But of course, that would cut a hole the width of a needle, which wouldn't be of much use. The real problem is that even the most powerful lasers are about ninety-five percent inefficient. Chemical lasers are about twelve percent efficient. Even my new zirconium laser is only fifteen percent. The best solution would be a free electron laser—they can be tuned to microwave frequencies."

I knew enough about microwaves to know that they produce heat.

"You mean you could create a kind of heat ray—like Wells' Martians?"

"In theory, yes." And once again he launched into explanations that went way above our heads. But this time I was determined to understand, so I interrupted him with questions. It soon dawned on me that he wasn't really an absent-minded professor, incapable of explaining himself in simple words. The trouble was that he knew so much that he couldn't really grasp that other people knew so little. Once he knew what you didn't know, he could explain something with amazing simplicity.

I knew a little about lasers, but Bob—whose subject was sociology—knew nothing at all. So Trask began from the beginning. I was so fascinated that I can repeat it virtually word for word.

When a poker is heated, he explained, its atoms and molecules become more and more excited—like a lot of people jumping up and down—until the poker gets red-hot and gives off light. But the light it gives off is of many different wavelengths—and therefore colors. When a poker is white-hot, it is giving off all the colors of the spectrum. At this point, the "people" are running about all over the place.

There is a way of influencing the excited molecule or atom so it gives off energy—by firing energy of a certain wavelength at it. For example, if you fire a microwave pulse at an ammonia molecule, the molecule gives off another microwave pulse. Then those two microwave pulses hit two more molecules, and they give off two more pulses. In a short time you've got an avalanche of pulses—as in a microwave oven. The principle is called a maser.

You can do the same thing with light. If you fire a pulse of light at a certain kind of atom, it gives off light of the same wavelength. If this light hits another excited atom, that one does the same. So now, instead of a crowd running madly all over the place, you have them marching in step, like an army.

A laser is made of light beams of the same color all marching in step. So when they are focused and aimed at a piece of metal—or ice—they punch a hole straight through it.

The problem, as Trask said, is that the process is so inefficient. It takes a vast amount of energy to make a laser work, and 95% of this is wasted. In principle, a laser or maser should give off an explosion of energy comparable to an atom bomb.

The free-electron laser that Trask mentioned is more efficient. This takes a beam of electrons produced by a particle accelerator and bends it into a spiral by an array of electromagnets. This is the type of laser that President Reagan had in mind to knock out IBM's in his Star Wars proposal.

Which explains why Trask thought that laser beams might be the answer to the problem of Windy Gap. Most scientists would consider such an approach a waste of time—like using a surgical scalpel to cut down a tree. But Trask was convinced that the free-electron laser could be made to generate the same kind of power as a chainsaw. His laboratory had been working on the idea for the past year.

I asked, "And how far have you got?"

"Quite a way. But I have to admit there's still a long way to go."

I was so excited by all this that as soon as I got home, I telephoned my grandfather. He was in bed at the time, but not yet asleep. When I mentioned Trask, he was impressed.

"There was an article about him in *Science Monthly*. They compared him to Edison."

"He wants you to send him your sonar data, and he'll try computer enhancement." "We've already tried that."

"But that was years ago. His equipment is state of the art."

"All right. It can't do any harm to see what happens."

As I climbed into bed that night, I was fairly certain that I was not going to sleep. It made me wish I'd had more to drink in the restaurant—since Trask was a teetotaler, Bob and I had confined ourselves to a single glass of the house wine. I could not have been more mistaken. As soon as my head touched the pillow, I fell into a deep and peaceful sleep. When I woke up in the early hours of the morning, I had a curious sense of contentment and well-being. Then, toward dawn, I had a marvelous dream of Antarctica. I was in Windy Gap, with a crew of scientists and technicians, and we were about to start blasting a hole in the ice with a laser that looked like a giant telescope. It was all so clear and real that I believed I was actually there. I was wearing fur-lined boots and when I stamped my feet, I could feel the snow crunching underfoot.

At this point, one of the team got down on all fours and peered through the ice. He seemed so excited that I did the same, brushing aside the snow

with my gloved hand. I was astonished to find that the ice was as clear as glass, and that I could see down through it. Far below, at a depth of about a hundred feet, I could see people walking around. Then one of them looked up and pointed. They all stared up toward us, and one of them waved.

I felt myself waking up and struggled against it. I wanted to see what happened next. Finally I gave up the struggle and opened my eyes. The sky was turning light, and I felt that I had been through a strange and wonderful experience. I lay there for perhaps five minutes, feeling oddly contented, as if it were Christmas morning and I was a child again.

From then on, I had an odd feeling of certainty that I was destined to play a central role in solving this problem of Hapgood's "pre-Ice Age civilization." Whenever I thought about Antarctica, I experienced a sense of warmth around the heart, as if I had entered into some kind of agreement with fate.

From that point, everything seemed to go right. Up to that point I had been like any normal teenager—expecting things to go wrong, missing buses, saying the wrong thing, tripping as I left the room. Now I would flip open a telephone directory and find that I was looking at the right page. I would arrive in a full parking lot just as someone was vacating a space. I would stumble upon some important piece of information just before it was raised in class, giving me a spurious air of being well informed.

Just as a test, I began trying to guess what bus would be along next, and found that I had an amazingly high score. Even my love life suddenly improved. I had become accustomed to a fairly high level of frustration and failure—often due to clumsiness or tactlessness. Now I seemed incapable of saying or doing the wrong thing. It turned out, for example, that I had been correct in suspecting that Coral had been lying when she said she had to go out with visiting relatives; she was actually going to the theater with a football player named Josh Rubin. But two days later they quarreled, and when she bumped into me in Washington Square, she invited me to dinner in the apartment she shared with two other girls. I spent the evening telling them about Hapgood and my grandfather, and had the satisfaction of seeing them hang on every word I spoke. As she walked me to the subway, Coral was already hinting about getting engaged.

That following weekend, my grandparents came to stay, and Trask was invited to dinner. He arrived an hour late, looking untidier than ever, and with the tomato sauce stains still on his bow tie. At first, he seemed shy and absent-minded—I discovered later that he hated social engagements. But when my grandfather produced copies of the sonar tapes from his briefcase, his abstraction disappeared. He seemed to be able to read them as a musician can read music.

He asked, "Can I use your fax machine? I'd like to send these to my laboratory."

My mother asked, "Will there be anybody there at this time?"

"Of course. My chief assistant Bill Ruggles usually stays till midnight."

Within two hours—while we were still sitting at the dinner table—there was a ring at the doorbell. It was Bill Ruggles—a chunkily built man only a few years older than myself—with the computer enhancements. As soon as I looked at the first one, my heart began to pound. It looked, quite simply, like a giant building block. And I knew, from the earlier computer enhancement, that it had to be as at least as big as the room we were sitting in. There were about two dozen of these enhancements, and—unlike the earlier set, which were merely line drawings—the computer had turned these into something like black and white photographs. Those from the south side of the valley were particularly clear. There could be no reasonable doubt that what we were looking at were the remains of collapsed buildings—buildings that, at a guess, had originally been a hundred feet tall.

We all felt stunned. My mother was the only one to behave normally—she offered Bill Ruggles some food, which he accepted enthusiastically, and went off to carve the remains of the roast beef.

Trask handed my grandfather the sonar reproductions.

"Well, it seems we have to congratulate you."

My grandfather shook his head as if he was dazed. "I find it hard to take in—after forty years."

My father said, "It looks as if you were right about Atlantis."

Trask echoed, "Atlantis?"

My grandfather looked as if somebody had stepped on his corn. "Oh, for heaven's sake, Dick!"

My father said, "Why not tell them? Somebody's going to have to."

My grandfather said desperately, "Because it's just a crazy idea."

Trask said, "I enjoy crazy ideas. Please go ahead."

In the end I had to explain—my grandfather's academic caution reduced him to incoherence. I described how Hapgood had been the first to mention Atlantis, and how he'd refused to elaborate. But the evidence of the blocks made it look as if he'd been right after all. If Antarctica had been inhabited, the people had to come from somewhere. And Plato's Atlantis seemed as good a guess as any—after all, where else was there around 7000 B.C.?

Bill Ruggles—who had by now cleared his plate—interrupted to say that he'd seen a television program that argued that ancient Egypt was peopled by survivors from Atlantis, and that the Egyptians also built their early temples with gigantic building blocks—some of them weighing two hun-

dred tons. When Trask said he'd also heard something about the theory, my grandfather looked relieved to realize they didn't think he was mad after all.

The following day, I paid my first visit to Trask's laboratory, a few blocks from Columbia, near Marcus Garvey Park. Although it was a Sunday, the place was as active as a beehive; Bill Ruggles—who showed me around—explained that nobody had to work Sundays, but that most of them couldn't be kept away. The place was enormous—a whole floor of the building—and the number of projects staggering. Bill Ruggles, working on the free-electron laser, had a whole room to himself, but in the main lab, there were at least a dozen major projects, including “permanent paper” that would never deteriorate, the instant freezer (which could reduce a glass of water to ice in thirty seconds), a portable voice computer for translating instantaneously from one language to another, a glue that would seal broken glass without a sign of a crack, a hearing aid so tiny it could be implanted below the skin of the inner ear, and a long-life atomic battery that would last for twenty-five years. (Trask had already patented his own two-year atomic battery.) In the drugs research unit, they were investigating the properties of the “butterfly flower” from central New Guinea, which has now been developed into the most powerful schizophrenia drug so far, while in the general medical unit, the “limbless genius” Brian Zworkin (who had lost both arms and legs as a result of an auto crash) was synthesizing zworkonin, which—as everyone knows—will knit broken bones in less than an hour.

I suspect that most of the people I met assumed that Trask had selected me as a future recruit, and they treated me as a colleague. A week earlier, I would have found it overwhelming to be given free access to the secrets of Trask's “creation factory” (as one journalist labeled it.) Now I took it in my stride. After all, I had been responsible for bringing Trask and my grandfather together. And if Hapgood's “lost civilization” was discovered beneath the Antarctic ice, I felt I would deserve a great deal of the credit.

What happened next confirmed my feeling that I was somehow on a winning streak.

Bill Ruggles knocked on a glass-plated door at the end of the corridor. When someone called, “Come in,” he opened it, then said, “I'm sorry, Anton. I thought you were alone.”

“That's O.K. I'd finished. Come on in.”

I was introduced to Anton Voronski, a psychologist from the Manhattan Psychiatric Clinic, who in turn introduced us to a young, dark-haired girl who looked about fifteen, and whose name was Inga—I didn't catch her surname. She said, “How do you do?” with a charming foreign accent. Voronski—a slight, gray-haired man with rimless glasses—explained that he had just been testing her for extrasensory perception and

that her score had been just below a hundred percent. He was obviously delighted, and insisted on demonstrating her prowess. He made her turn her back, then asked us to give him something out of our pockets. Ruggles produced a ball bearing and I produced an eraser. Voronski went to a series of inverted plastic cups on the table, and placed the ball bearing and the eraser below two of them chosen at random. Inga was standing in a corner with a hat stand in front of her.

Voronski said, "All right, Inga."

She crossed to the table, stared intently at the row of cups—twelve of them—then unhesitatingly reached out and pointed to the two that Voronski had chosen.

He said, "Any idea what they are?"

She said, "This is a ball bearing. The other" She hesitated and frowned. "It is some kind of cube ... but it is made of rubber."

Voronski lifted the cups with an air of triumph. "She's been doing that all morning. And when I threw a die, she got twelve out of twelve. In the second test I threw the die while taking care not to see the result—in case she was reading my mind. And she still got twelve out of twelve."

Even I knew that was impressive. I looked with awe at this slender girl—who looked as if she weighed less than a hundred pounds—and wondered what my father would say when I told him I had met a witch. She even looked a little like a witch—her face would have been pretty if her lips had not been so pale and her eyes so large.

Bill and I had finished our tour, and he had to get back to work. I had seen the free-electron laser in operation, and watched it drill a two-inch hole in a sheet of copper—he explained that this was an important advance, since most lasers had to be focused down to a point. It struck me that it would take a lot of two-inch holes to make a sizable tunnel down through the ice. His last words to me at the door were, "In six months, I'm hoping to make it a six-inch hole."

On the pavement at 125th Street I saw Inga waiting for the light to change. I said hello and asked her which way she was walking. When she said she was headed to 138th Street, I offered to walk with her, since it was on my way home. It was a beautiful day, just cool enough to make it comfortable walking. We walked two blocks to Roosevelt Square, then north up Convent.

When I asked her if she was at school, she amazed me by telling me she was twenty-two, and that she worked with her brothers and sisters in a group called the Vassilievskys. In Russia they had been a circus act, and she had trained as a tightrope walker and a bareback rider. Her elder brother Pavel was the greatest juggler in the world. But they all had "psychic

powers." An impresario called Boris Belmont had brought them to America, but he was a crook, and now they were on their own.

She asked me about myself, and when I mentioned that my father was a psychiatrist named Richard Willoughby, looked interested.

"Is he not a friend of Professor Hallam?"—naming one of my father's colleagues. It seemed that Hallam had suggested that my father ought to meet the Vassilievskys.

"Why don't you come home and meet him now? We'll just be in time for lunch."

She thought about it for a moment, then gave a wonderful, bright smile that made my heart turn a somersault.

"All right."

In fact, my father had already asked Hallam to arrange an introduction, and was delighted to meet her. It seemed that she—and her two brothers and younger sister—were the rising stars of paranormal research. On Hallam's advice, they had turned down an offer to appear on a popular television program; he wanted them to go through rigorous scientific tests before they exposed themselves to the media circus. As a Jungian, my father was sympathetic to the claims of paranormal research—although he had never been involved in testing "psychics"—and Hallam felt he would be the ideal person to form a preliminary assessment.

At lunch, Inga confined herself to vegetables and bottled water. As soon as she overcame her shyness, she talked freely about her life in Russia, her early years in Smolensk, her training as an acrobat, and her years in a circus.

I described how she had located the ball bearing and the eraser under the cups, and my father asked, "Can you do it now?"

My mother started to protest, but Inga said promptly and without hesitation, "Of course."

She went and leaned out of the open window, and my father inverted six coffee cups on the table. My grandfather took from his coat pocket a tiny portable toothbrush, of the kind they issue on airplanes. I knew what it was, because I had one myself, but to anyone who had never seen one, it looked like a green plastic tube.

My grandfather placed this under one of the cups. Then Inga was told she could turn around.

She glanced at the cups, and without hesitation placed her finger on the right one.

My father asked, "Can you tell what it is?"

"A little brush." She had not only seen through the cup, but through the plastic tube that held the brush.

We were all astonished. After that, no one had any doubt of her paranormal powers. Pleased with our admiration, she said, "Would you like me to do something else?" We nodded enthusiastically.

She said, "I will try to make that cloud go away." She pointed out of the open window. It was a clear, still day, with hardly any breeze, and a small white cloud was hanging over the river in the blue sky.

She said, "I am not quite sure I can do it. Usually my brothers and sister help me. But I will try."

We all stood up to watch her. She crossed to the window and stared at the cloud. For perhaps half a minute nothing happened; then the cloud seemed to drift apart. In less than a minute, it was gone.

We all applauded. There was simply no possibility of trickery.

Inga came and sat down. I noticed that there was a film of sweat on her forehead, and she was breathing deeply, as if the effort had wearied her. I said, "Was it tiring?"

She wrinkled her nose and shook her head. "Not very, but I was nervous."

I saw my father glance out of the corner of his eye at my grandfather. One of their main points of disagreement, dating back many years, was Jung's interest in the paranormal. My grandfather thought Jung was an old fraud, and that ghosts, poltergeists, extrasensory perception, and the rest were simply a silly superstition. Yet he had just seen Inga perform two "supernatural" feats that were self-evidently genuine. A skeptic might cavil, "Are you sure she wasn't peering while you put the toothbrush under the cup? Are you sure the cloud wouldn't have dissolved anyway?" But no one who was in that room could doubt for a moment that there was no trickery.

When we had finished eating, she performed several more impressive feats. She asked me to take a book off the shelf, open it, and read a page. The book was one of a set of Lafcadio Hearn, and I opened it at random—as she told me to—and read a page. She was sitting opposite me in an armchair. Before I had finished the page she said, "I see three men—Chinamen—sitting on cane chairs and drinking tea. Now they are ... looking at something ... looking at bowls. And another man has come in to join them."

I read the page aloud—describing a visit to a Zen temple, in which Hearn sits drinking green tea with two priests. One of them offers to show him some rare bowls, and as they go in to see them, they are joined by another priest. Inga was exactly right—except for mistaking the Japanese priests for Chinamen.

She went on to read everyone's mind in turn. My grandmother simply tried envisaging a scene from her childhood, with her sister in a red swing under a lilac tree, and Inga described everything, including the lilac tree.

Finally, she demonstrated her ability to snap metal. My mother sealed a darning needle in a tube used for effervescent Vitamin C tablets. Inga took

the tube, held it in her hands for a moment, then handed it back. When my mother unsealed the cap, the needle was snapped into two pieces.

My grandmother said nervously, "Can you read our minds all the time?"

"Oh, no. You have to create an image in your mind, and hold it like a picture. Then I can tune into your picture."

It was after four o'clock, and Inga said she had to get back. I was suddenly stricken with guilt.

"Of course! Your family doesn't know where you are."

She said, "Oh, no. I told my brother Rodion."

"You rang him?"

"No, I sent him a message."

My father was fascinated. "How?"

"I can't explain how. My mind spoke to his."

My father—being a scientist—wanted to check. Inga gave him the number of her hotel. My father rang and asked if he could speak to Rodion Vassilievsky. A moment later, I heard him ask, "Do you know where your sister is?" Then he smiled at us and said, "He said she is standing right at the side of me." Which was true.

I walked her back to the hotel, only four blocks away, and she invited me up to meet her family. It was a fairly inexpensive hotel, and all four were sharing a single large room with two double beds. Apparently they were quite used to this kind of overcrowding.

Pavel was big, powerfully built, with a very Russian face and short cropped hair. Rodion, who was eighteen, was slim, with dark hair and dark eyes, and a quiet manner. Natalia, the youngest, had short cropped blond hair, blue eyes, and a kind of bubbling vitality and charm that instantly made her the center of attention. If she had been ten years older, I would have fallen in love with her.

They gave me tea and a cookie the size of a saucer with a cherry on top, then listened while Inga described the afternoon. Rodion verified that they had not been anxious about Inga because they had been "in touch" while Inga was eating lunch. After this, the boys announced that they were hungry, and wanted to go out for a cheeseburger. (They loved American food, particularly junk food.) I walked downstairs with them, and across St. Nicholas Park. In the park, Pavel surprised me by asking if I wanted to see some of their act. Wondering what I was letting myself in for, I said yes. At this, Rodion bent down, and Natalia ran at him, sailed over his back, and was caught by Pavel, who tossed her into the air and made her turn a double somersault. She landed on her hands in Inga's hands, and the two stood upright, with Natalia upside down in the air.

Then they did the most amazing thing I have ever seen. Inga leapt as Natalia fell, Natalia sprang upright, and somehow they were reversed, with

Natalia holding Inga above her in the air as straight and still as a ramrod. They seemed to defy the force of gravity.

For the next five minutes I stood and gaped at the amazing flying bodies, hardly able to believe that human beings could be so graceful. At one point, Pavel acted as a kind of ringmaster, standing with his feet apart and one arm outstretched while Natalia, bent into a circle, whirled around his hand like a hula hoop.

By this time a crowd had gathered, and we moved on—to the obvious disappointment of the students from City College. They were in high spirits, and we walked down 135th Street toward the river. Inga pointed to a cloud and said, “Now we show you.” All four stood and focused on it—and in a matter of seconds it was gone.

I said, “But how do you do it?”

Pavel said, “Easy. Anybody can do it. You can do it too.” He pointed to another cloud, like a little fluffy ball of cotton wool. “Make that disappear.”
“How?”

“You just look at it and do this.” He twisted up his face as if scowling.

Infected by their high spirits, I did as he said. I stared at the cloud, concentrated hard—and watched it dissolve. I looked at them accusingly.

“Did you help me?”

“No. It wasn’t necessary. You can do it. Look, try that one.” He pointed at a bigger cloud.

This time I took my time. I stared at it, and, as I focused my attention, experienced an odd feeling that I can only describe as “strength behind the eyes.” I felt as if I were launching a javelin at it. After a few seconds—perhaps half a minute—it began to break apart, then dissolved.

Now I knew that I was doing it, without any help. I could feel a kind of momentary resistance from the cloud before it dissolved.

Pavel said, “You see, anybody can do it.”

We walked on to a MacDonald’s on the corner of Broadway. When they asked me to join them, I refused, saying that I had to get back. They were obviously disappointed—and so, in a sense, was I. But I had to be alone to think about what had happened. And as I said good-bye to Inga—shaking hands in a formal continental manner—I knew she understood precisely why I was going. She could read my mind. And I didn’t care in the least. It was pleasant to feel that someone understood what was going on inside me.

There were not all that many clouds around that day, but on the way home I dissolved two more. After the second, I began to feel a kind of tiredness behind the eyes, which convinced me more than anything that this was real.

Then it suddenly struck me: I was using my mind like a laser. I was focusing its powers down to a point, like focusing sunlight through a magnifying glass, then using that point to dissolve clouds, just as I could use a magnifying glass to light a match or cause a piece of wood to smolder. At that moment, I realized that I knew something that the rest of the human race didn't know. Even the Vassilievskys didn't know it, for they did it without seeing its implications—it came as naturally to them as breathing. But I could see the implications. Perception isn't just looking, like seeing things reflected in a mirror. It is more like directing a firehose at what you are looking at, and seeing the water bounce off it in a spray. This spray is what we call perception.

Another point struck me. Trask had said that a laser was only about 5% efficient. The same was true of the human mind. Human beings had simply not learned to focus the powers inside their own heads. And I was just beginning to learn.

It was a strange evening. I watched television and did some preparation for my classes the next day. But inside, there was the certainty that everything had changed. No matter what happened, no matter whether we uncovered the pre-Ice Age civilization of Antarctica or not, nothing would ever be the same again.

That night I made an equally important discovery. I was very tired when I went to bed, yet too excited to fall asleep immediately. So I lay there, deeply relaxed, feeling as I used to feel as a child—that marvelous, comfortable sensation of pure happiness, as if setting out on a voyage to wonderland. Some time during the night I woke up having an absurd dream. I was standing near a hedge, talking to another man, perhaps a farmer. There were some tall weeds around us, and they seemed to have pods on them. The other man was eating something, and as the crumbs fell, the weeds were trying to catch them in their mouths—I seem to recall the pods opened like beaks. This didn't worry me—it seemed quite natural. As I walked a few steps, one of the weeds followed me, pressing against my leg, almost tripping me up, hoping for food. I remember being mildly surprised that it could walk. I returned to the place where I had been standing, and the weed subsided.

I woke up, and thought: Of course, plants are alive, just like us. It struck me that I ought to suggest to my father that he should test Inga to see whether she could communicate with plants.

I continued to feel oddly relaxed and happy, as it struck me that the dream had been trying to tell me something. It was an interesting thought: that my dreams were not merely the confused leftovers of consciousness, but had a life of their own, like the walking plant. They were trying to instruct and entertain me. If I trusted them, and allowed them to speak, they had a

great deal to communicate to me. And I drifted back into sleep as if plunging into a warm sea. Strange and pleasant dreams continued all night. And as I woke up in the morning, the phrase Dream Force floated into my head. In its way, this was just as interesting as the discovery that I could make clouds disintegrate.

My father liked the idea of testing Inga for ESP with plants, and when he started his tests with her, this was the first thing he tried. The results (published in the *American Journal for Psychical Research*) are impressive—on one occasion, she caused a tulip to grow from a bulb in less than nineteen hours—and leave no doubt that she could communicate with plants as easily as with her brothers.

These tests took place in Trask's laboratory—at his invitation—between 8 and 10 in the morning, when her powers were still fresh. From the beginning, the results were even more remarkable than those obtained by Voronski. This was because he had restricted himself to the standard tests for ESP—zena cards and so on. My father wanted to find out what else she could do. One day, after reading about a Russian psychic who could make a matchbox hang suspended in the air, he got her to try it; she succeeded in making a glass of water hang suspended between her open palms for more than a minute before it fell to the floor.

The next day, when my father was late getting to the laboratory, he found her handling a large ruby crystal—a foot-long cylinder of ruby weighing about five hundred grams. She seemed to be fascinated by it, and asked him what it was. He explained that it was probably a ruby used in a laser.

“What is a laser?”

Since he was no expert, he tried to explain in nontechnical language. She listened carefully, without taking her eyes off the crystal. When my father had finished, she held it between her palms, then carefully separated them. The ruby continued to hang suspended in the air. My father watched with increasing amazement as Inga continued to stare at the crystal, as if ordering it to stay where it was. Drops of perspiration ran down her forehead. My father had glanced at his watch when she separated her hands. Five minutes later, the ruby was still hanging there in the air. Then she gave a gasp, as if she had been holding her breath, and the ruby fell to the floor.

My father was furious with himself for failing to record it on videotape, and asked her if she could do it again. She shook her head. “Not today. I am too tired.”

“Can you do that with other things—for example, this umbrella?”

“No. It was something about that ruby. I felt it as soon as I touched it. It is on the same wavelength as my mind.”

At that moment Bill Ruggles came in and asked if he could have his ruby. Ten minutes later, he was back. “What did she do to that ruby?”

"Why? Is there something wrong?"

"Not wrong! Come and look." They followed him into his own room, where the laser was standing on a bench. It was a big metal cylinder, six inches in diameter and four feet long, rather like a large electric torch. The ruby crystal was inside it. Ruggles said, "Watch this."

He placed a six-inch cube of some copper alloy on a pad of asbestos at the far end of the bench, and another heavy sheet of metal-bound asbestos behind it. Then he switched on the laser. The pure red beam shot across the bench and struck the alloy. It should have bitten into it slowly, like a drill. Instead, there was a blinding shower of sparks that made them all jump, and the beam shot out of the other side of the block. There was another searing noise as it penetrated the asbestos shield. When Ruggles leapt forward and switched it off, the beam was already cutting a hole in the wall at the end of the bench. Ruggles said, "What in hell did she do to it?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. But as soon as I touched it, I knew I could do something."

Ruggles went and fetched Trask, who examined the block of alloy. The hole through it was an inch wide. Then he watched as Ruggles repeated the experiment—with the same astonishing results. This time Ruggles switched off the laser before it blasted a hole in the wall.

Trask removed the ruby from the laser and examined it carefully. When he asked Inga if she knew what she had done to it, she shook her head. Trask handed it to Ruggles.

"Do a spectroscopic analysis and see if you can find what she's done."

Inga asked, "Could I take it home with me?"

Trask looked surprised.

"Of course. But why?"

"I'd like my brothers to see what they can do with it."

"By all means. But I doubt whether they can do any more. I'd guess that, whatever you did, it's now operating at a hundred percent efficiency."

In fact, Inga took another ruby crystal home—Trask was anxious not to let go of this one until they knew what had happened to it.

The next day, when she returned the crystal, she was wearing an odd smile. Trask asked her, "What happened?"

Instead of replying, she took it back from him, suspended it between her hands, and then—without any kind of effort—opened her palms and left it suspended in the air. Trask and my father observed this for perhaps five minutes. My father noticed that she showed no sign of effort, none of the strain of the previous day. Then, instead of allowing the crystal to fall to the floor, Inga closed both hands on it, and placed it on the bench.

She said, "You see. I knew I could do more with it."

My father asked, "But what did you do?"

She smiled. "I don't know. But this time it is very strong. You must be careful with it."

So Trask and Bill Ruggles spent half an hour setting up the experiment. They procured an even larger cube of copper alloy—I am told it cost a fortune—and clamped it so it could not move. Behind it there was almost two feet of soft asbestos—soft because a laser cuts into the material by causing the atoms to vibrate, and a softer material is more resistant—on the same principle as firing a bullet into cotton wool.

This time, the cube exploded into sparks, and the laser punched its way through the asbestos and the wall behind it. If Bill Ruggles had not been poised to switch off the current, it would have knocked a hole in the outer wall of the building.

When they had recovered from the shock, Trask told my father, "You can tell Matthew we've solved the problem of cutting through half a mile of ice."

It proved not to be as simple as that. When they looked at the ruby crystal, it had shattered into a dozen fragments.

In spite of which, Trask was sufficiently confident to phone me that evening and ask me if I would like to accompany an expedition to Antarctica in three months' time.

What exactly did the Vassilievskys do to the ruby crystal? I have to admit that we are still not certain. Trask believes that they were somehow able to affect its molecular structure. In the 1970's, Trask had been present at the Inserm Telemetry Laboratories in the Foch Hospital in Suresnes, France, when they were testing the "psychic" Uri Geller. One of the experiments involved a strange alloy called nitinol, which has a "molecular memory." A nitinol wire can be squashed into any shape, but if subjected to heat or cold will instantly straighten out again. Trask held a piece of nitinol wire stretched tight between both hands while Geller stroked it. When Geller removed his hand, the wire now had a kink in it. Trask then dropped the wire into boiling water—expecting it to spring back into shape. In fact, it bent at a right angle, and all Trask's later efforts failed to straighten it out. Geller had somehow affected its molecular memory. Even melting the wire in a furnace failed to straighten it out.

Trask believed that the Vassilievskys had done something of the sort to the ruby. His own explanation went roughly like this:

The color of precious stones—like ruby, sapphire, emerald—is due to impurities in the crystal. Ruby is made from a crystal of aluminum oxide, or corundum, which is as transparent as water. But it has an impurity—a few chromium atoms—which absorb all colors but red.

It is these impurities which enable rubies to act as lasers. When a ruby is bathed in ultraviolet light (which is invisible), it soon begins to glow as

the chromium atoms store up energy, which they quickly release in the form of red light—rather like a compressed spring being released. The waves of this red light are all “marching in step”, so when the beam is amplified through mirrors at either end of the cylinder and then focused to a small spot, it is a million times as strong as ordinary light, and has the power to cut through metal.

Whatever Inga had done had somehow altered the structure of the molecules in the crystal, causing its atoms to store far more energy than usual. So instead of operating at 5% efficiency, it operated at something closer to 100%.

I lacked the scientific knowledge to dispute this view. But even then, it seemed to me too simple. To begin with, even if the laser now operated at 100% efficiency, it would only be twenty times as powerful as when it operated at 5%. And I know—from having seen it in action—that the Vassilievskys had amplified the power of the laser more than twenty times.

So what is my own view? It is based on the simple fact that if you keep on doubling a number, it soon reaches an astronomical size. There is a story of a Chinese emperor who wished to persuade a philosopher to take up residence in his court, and asked him to name his own price. The philosopher replied, “Please pay me in corn. Ask your treasurer to take a chessboard, and place on its first square one grain of corn, on the second, two grains, on the third, four grains, on the fourth, eight grains, and so on, doubling the number of grains each time.” The emperor’s first reaction was to say, “But surely you deserve more than that!”—until he began to work it out, and realized that by the time he had doubled one grain of corn sixty-four times, the total would be more than all the grain in his kingdom.

Now the simplest maser, you may recall, consists of ammonia gas, and every time a microwave hits a molecule, it gives off another microwave. Then the two microwaves hit two more molecules, and produce four microwaves. And so it goes on, doubling each time. In theory, an ordinary maser ought to produce more power than a hydrogen bomb. Of course, this does not happen, due to the inefficiency of the process.

In my view, whatever the Vassilievskys did to the ruby crystal changed its structure so that it began to double its power output over and over again. They may have changed the structure of the chromium molecule so that the photon was deflected from one to another, enabling it to create the “doubling effect.” Or they may, of course, have introduced some new principle into the process, perhaps some vital energy that science fails to recognize.

All this was another example of the extraordinary synchronicities that had been pursuing me since I had met Trask at the Science Club. It was my chance meeting with Inga in Trask’s laboratory that had led to the solution of the laser problem—my father admitted to me that he was not interested

in testing psychics, and only changed his mind as a result of meeting Inga when I brought her back.

My decision to skip a semester and go to Antarctica led to my break-up with Coral. She had planned our wedding for the week after I graduated, and persuaded her favorite uncle to offer me a job in advertising. When I went to tell her that Trask had offered me a place on the expedition, I expected her to be as excited as I was. Instead, she looked at me in a stunned sort of way, and asked if I realized that this would delay our marriage by at least a year. I said this wasn't true; we could get married whenever we liked—even before I set out. She simply didn't see my point. As far as she was concerned, I was throwing away my career for a romantic daydream.

What amazed me was that she even bothered to try to influence me. It made me suddenly aware how little we had in common. Up until that point, I had believed I was in love with her—I certainly had felt she was one of the most attractive girls I'd ever met. But the moment she tried to persuade me not to go to Antarctica, I fell out of love. When she said, "If you go, we're through," I said "O.K., we're through", and as I walked out of the room, was amazed that I didn't feel the least pang of regret. I think that if Trask had not invited me to join the expedition, I would have made my way to Antarctica on foot.

In effect, Trask had invited me along as the office boy or gopher. When my grandmother asked me what I was supposed to do, I said I didn't know. In fact, I have never worked harder than in those three months between July and early October when our plane took off for Little America. I used to arrive at Trask's apartment—at the top of the building above the lab—at eight in the morning, and find him dictating to his secretary a list of all the things I had to attend to.

The secretary, Charles Schmidt, had been with him for fifteen years—ever since a female secretary had been indiscreet about one of his inventions, with a new boyfriend who turned out to be a private detective hired as an industrial spy. Trask was determined never to let it happen again. I was sworn to secrecy about the real purpose of the expedition. As far as the press was concerned, our purpose was oil exploration. Even his friend Colonel Leroy of the U.S. Air Force, who obtained the permission to use Little America as a base, was not told the true reason. Trask knew that if the press found out, we'd be pursued by a planeload of reporters.

He also told everybody who knew about the laser experiment to refer to it simply as "the supercharged laser." Under no circumstances was anyone to breathe a word that we were using the Vassilievskys.

The Vassilievskys, of course, had to be told, since they were—to put it mildly—a crucial part of the operation. Although the second ruby crystal had shattered, the first one was still working. But it was obviously less than

half as powerful as the one that the whole family had “charged”, and now Trask had them working on rubies seven days a week. For this he paid them far more than they had ever earned as an acrobatic team; he also moved them to a suite in the Waldorf-Astoria.

One of my tasks was collecting the cylinders, and I often had the opportunity to see how the family worked. They sat in a darkened room, the ruby on a small round table, nesting in the middle of a piece of green velvet that was one of Natalia’s old ballet costumes. All four sat around it, placing their fingertips on the crystal and staring intently. The room became totally silent. Then—it seemed to me—the ruby became brighter. When that happened, they all simultaneously released their breath and relaxed. And the ruby was ready to be taken back to the laboratory.

On my third day there, Pavel said, “Why don’t you come and help?”

I thought at first that he was joking, until he drew up another chair. I said, “Are you sure that’s a good idea?”, but he merely gestured at the chair.

So I sat down and joined in. I frowned at the ruby, and tried to summon the same sense of “power behind the eyes” that could make clouds dissolve. Looking into the ruby was a strange experience, for after a few seconds I seemed to be somehow drawn into it, until it filled my consciousness. Moreover there was a strange sense of resistance—I can only compare it to wading through water. Then the red glow became brighter, and I felt the resistance disappear. When I released my breath and relaxed, I felt as tired as if I had climbed a dozen flights of stairs. It was far harder work than dissolving clouds.

On the first day I did this, Bill Ruggles tested the ruby, then shook his head. “It seems weaker today.” Instead of punching a hole through a block of metal, it took about ten seconds to drill through it, making a faint sputtering noise. Naturally, I wondered if I was responsible. But after several more attempts, I realized this was untrue. Some days, the force exerted by the Vassilievskys was so powerful that it took only a minute or so to “change” the ruby; on other days, it might take ten minutes or so. I also noticed that the quicker it took, the more spectacular the results, and the more likely the ruby was to fly apart.

I should add that I never told Trask, or Bill, or even my father, what I was doing. I had a feeling that this should be my secret.

So were the dreams.

Most nights I came back to our apartment late—I quickly fell into the habit of all Trask’s employees, and began working around the clock. Usually, I fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow. But usually I woke up at three or four in the morning, and lay there on my back, experiencing a pleasant, peaceful sensation, like lying in a boat on a slow river on a summer day. Then, as I drifted back into sleep, I began to experience the “dream

force”, a glow of expectation, like sitting in a theater, waiting for the curtain to go up. Then I plunged into a world of dreams, sometimes delightful, sometimes strange, sometimes weird, sometimes even frightening—yet always fascinating. Even the frightening dreams were not nightmares, for I experienced no real sensation of fear—except once when I dreamed I was in a world of intelligent snakes, for whom human beings were a special delicacy. The dreams were like a form of entertainment, organized by some dream master with an endless stock of incredible tales.

Naturally, I dreamed again and again of Antarctica and Windy Gap. The dreams were always the same. The snow was bright and sparkling, like the snow on Christmas cards, and the place was magical, like a scene out of some fairy tale about the Snow Queen. The sky was always beautiful—sometimes green, sometimes blue, sometimes pink. Somewhere over to the east there was the giant crater that Admiral Byrd had flown over, but I never saw it; it was merely there in the background, a part of the mythology of this wonderful place. Some of these dreams were so real that there was a sense of coming home, as if I were returning to the scene of a previous life.

I had a feeling that, in some strange way, I had inherited my grandfather’s dream about the future. What puzzled me was that it had only happened after I had become fascinated by Antarctica.

The day we set out was bright and clear. We were flying from an airfield near Poughkeepsie, in a transport plane that belonged to the U.S. Air Force—so great was Trask’s influence with the present administration. Poughkeepsie had been chosen for the sake of avoiding publicity—no editor in America could suspect that anything important could be happening around Poughkeepsie.

From the moment I woke up that morning, I had that happy, bubbling feeling that I used to feel as a child when my father loaded up the car and we prepared to set out for Florida. Of course, everyone has experienced this sense of “holiday euphoria”, and we make the natural assumption that it is simply a feeling of pleasant anticipation. Now I could see that this was a mistake. The “holiday feeling” was a sense of freedom, and this freedom was somehow far more important than a mere holiday. It was the feeling that life is infinitely more interesting and exciting than we realize. And as we traveled on the hired bus from New York to Poughkeepsie, I could see that this was no illusion. It was like a glimpse of the truth, like finding the key to a problem that has troubled you for a long time, and that you now suddenly know how to solve. It was far bigger than mere “happiness”, which seems trivial by comparison.

During most of the ten-thousand-mile flight to the other side of Antarctica—which lasted for almost twenty hours—the feeling stayed with me. There were moments when it seemed too good to be true; but I only

had to concentrate my attention, and experience the curious sense of power behind the eyes, to know that this was no illusion. The next morning, as we flew over that endless white landscape between the Weddell Sea and the Ross Ice Shelf, the excitement was almost intolerable. It seemed incredible to be looking down on the land that may have been the cradle of civilization. But I knew that whether or not we found Hapgood's pre-Ice Age civilization was unimportant. What was important was what I had learned in the process of looking for it.

My first sight of Little America was a disappointment. Standing in the icy west wind, I looked around at this endless flat white landscape, illuminated by an enormous red sun resting near the horizon, and thought, "My God, is this all?" Then I had to galvanize myself into activity. Anyone but Trask would have allowed us to retire to bed after a twenty-hour flight. But he was a demon of energy, and he expected everybody else to be the same. Our team of eight, which had spent five hours loading the plane, now had to unload it (with some help from the servicemen). We were not finished until late that afternoon—when, of course, the sun was still hovering near the horizon, and everything looked exactly the same as when we landed—except, of course, that it was now on the opposite horizon.

I had no complaints about the warmth of our welcome, or the hospitality of Colonel Leonard ("Lefty") Leroy. And I suspected that the personnel were so glad to see strange faces they would have welcomed us if we had been one-eyed cannibals with filed teeth. The party went on until after midnight, and even Trask was persuaded to drink a glass of brandy and water. But when the meal was over, I noticed Trask and Leroy seated in a corner, talking seriously, and knew immediately that Trask was finally telling him the truth about why we were there. It was only a few moments later that I noticed that I had known, with total certainty, what they were talking about.

We were up after a few hours' sleep, for there was a great deal to be done. The materials for our living quarters had been sent on ahead by helicopter, but only the storage shed had been erected; we had to do the rest ourselves—assuming the weather permitted. After an uncomfortable six-hour flight in transport helicopters, we landed at the foot of Mount Holyoake at four in the afternoon. The temperature was several degrees below zero, and the sky had turned gray. Even with the help of the team Leroy had lent us, it took seven or eight hours to erect the huts. Trask worked as hard as anyone, although he had chosen two of the team—Chet Morison and Elmo Jarnefelt—for their sheer size and strength, and our cook, Dave Eng—who worked in the laboratory as a kind of unofficial security guard and caretaker—was bigger than either of them. We ate dinner at two o'clock in the morning—although it might as well have been midday as far as the sun was concerned. My own small, bare hut contained nothing

but a camp bed, a chair, and my unpacked luggage, although the fan heater—powered by atomic batteries developed by Trask—kept the place agreeably warm.

A few hours later, I woke up suddenly with a strange sense that I was not alone. But the daylight in the room made it clear that I was mistaken. I closed my eyes, and again experienced the feeling that I was not alone. I sat up on my bed and peered out of the window; as far as I could see through the ice crystals, there was no one out there.

There were still three hours to breakfast, so I decided to go back to sleep. But as I lay there in that deep silence, broken only by the almost inaudible sound of the fan heater, I became aware of something that made me turn on my back and open my eyes.

I had suddenly—and with total certainty—become aware that I was not there by chance.

I knew, of course, that a certain chain of events had brought me there—a chain that began with the visit of Admiral Byrd to the Winchester Geographical Society in 1930, and that included my grandfather's visit to this place where I was now lying in bed. But I was not there through some complex logic of events. I knew now that I was there because I had been summoned there.

Now whoever—or whatever—had summoned me was establishing contact.

I lay there for perhaps half an hour, waiting for something to happen. During all this time, I continued to feel that I was not alone. A Scottish aunt of mine had once told me how she had slept in a haunted room, and awakened with the feeling that there was someone in the room. She had said that the room was freezing cold, and that she had had a feeling that there was a "presence" watching her from the end of the bed. She had rushed out and spent the night in an armchair downstairs. But my room was warm, and I felt no sense of alarm—just the undeniable certainty that I was not alone.

Then I relaxed, and as I drifted into sleep, I felt the dream force take over.

This was not a lucid dream, so I cannot remember its exact details. All I can remember is that urgent sense of someone communicating with me, but failing to make me understand. In a sense, it was rather like Trask's lecture—simply above my head. Something—someone—was trying to tell me something about traveling through space, but it made no sense. As far as I could understand, it was space itself that was moving, in a kind of stream. When the stream encountered something solid, like a meteor, it flowed into eddies around it, and turned into waving tentacles, like water flowing over a stone.

This force had encountered our Earth, and had been attracted by its living aura. The Earth itself was alive, but in a dull, unconscious way, like

someone deeply asleep. But the mountains, standing out above the Earth, were more alive than the rest. So this space-force entered into the mountains, making them more alive.

At this point, I began to dimly understand. Mountains, of course, were the “primal beings.” It seemed perfectly obvious. Mountains were attached to the earth from which they sprang, so they could draw upon its vitality. This is why the most primitive religion was the worship of mountains, for ancient man sensed that the mountains were alive. It is no figure of speech to talk about the “roots of the mountains.” They have roots, like trees or plants, and the roots draw upon the living force of the soil.

All this brought with it a most wonderful sense of awe and happiness. It was like great music or great poetry; I was being told something that made sense of life and of the universe. And in my dream, it all seemed perfectly clear and obvious—for example, this was why hermits lived in caves on the mountains: They drew strength from the vital aura of the mountain. Why should we be trapped inside our bodies and our minds, like prisoners in a cramped cell, when we could share the life of the mountains?

At this point something woke me up—I think it was somebody slamming the door of the storeroom, which we had converted into a kitchen and dining room. But I didn’t want to wake up. I wanted to go on dreaming. Within a few seconds I was asleep again. The “communication” continued, confirming my certainty that this was not a dream.

I was seeing the primitive Earth as it had been before the simplest living organisms made their appearance. The seas were hot, and covered with thick mist. Every valley was full of mist—only the mountains stood out above it. But the water could also absorb the living force, and as the seas cooled and the mist vanished, they began to absorb sunlight, and to swarm with tiny green creatures, like the algae on a pond.

Now the mountains began to mold this life into more complex forms. They literally began to create living creatures—tiny wriggling groups of cells. And the larger groups of cells absorbed the smaller ones, making themselves bigger, to become the first predators.

Of course, these tiny organisms were not in charge of their own life force; they could easily be destroyed. Only the mountains were independent, indestructible.

Millions of years passed, and the soil in the valleys absorbed the sunlight, and began to produce bright green moss. The mountains guided the development of this moss, so that it put down roots, and began to grow into more complex forms, like grass and ferns.

It was at this point that the mountains began to understand the disadvantages of being rooted to the same spot. The earth and the seas were now teeming with life. Only they were unable to move. So now they developed

the power to concentrate their life into “eddies”, and then to mold the crude matter around them into organic forms. The simplest of these forms was the limpet that sticks on rocks by the seashore. This is made of a tough, durable flesh, with a consistency not unlike leather, protected by a rocklike shell. The first embodiment of independent life on Earth—life that has no fear of destruction—was a giant limpet that could move about on its retractable base.

I was awakened by the gong summoning us to food. I could see from the window that the sun had moved westward along the horizon. As I dressed, I found the room oppressively hot—and then realized that this was because my body was so cold. I had to plunge my hands into hot water to warm them.

I wondered if I should tell Trask or Bill Ruggles what I had “seen.” The answer came back immediately, almost as if a voice had spoken in my head, and the answer was no. Thinking about this, I saw it was common sense. What could I tell them?—that I had been dreaming about the origin of life on Earth? They would wonder why I thought it so important.

Outside, I was startled by the cold. During the “night”, the temperature had dropped by about ten degrees, and before I reached the dining room, my face and fingertips felt frozen.

We ate a large breakfast of bacon, eggs, tomatoes, and hash brown potatoes, with orange juice and coffee. Trask was in brilliant form, talking with marvelous fire and enthusiasm. He was often silent and withdrawn, almost morose, but this morning he was obviously full of excitement, and he made the rest of us feel it.

We set out about eleven o'clock. Unlike the IGY expedition, we had no dog sleds—only one huge snow tractor with a trailer, that had been brought from Little America. This carried the sonar equipment and two “laser guns”, which looked less like guns than cannons. I walked behind with Trask, Bill Ruggles, and Elmo Jarnefelt; we were all wrapped in furs until we looked like polar bears. Under this we were wearing electrically heated track suits, designed by Trask. But the heating did not extend to our boots, and soon my feet were freezing. The ground underfoot was solid ice, and we had to tread cautiously.

The scenery was magnificent, with Mount Holyoake towering above us, the Robertson Plain stretching eastward to Mount Faure, which was clearly visible in the transparent air, and the Rockefeller range glittering against the sky in the northwest. The sky overhead was dark blue.

The head of Windy Gap was a mile away, to begin with partly hidden behind the 45 degree slope of Mount Holyoake. What surprised me was my sense of familiarity. Usually a place is quite different from your imagination of it, but this looked exactly as I had imagined it. And when finally we

rounded the slope and looked southwest along Windy Gap, it looked exactly as it had in my dreams. I was not surprised. I now knew beyond all doubt that I was not there by accident. This feeling—that destiny was working in my favor—filled me with a glow of confidence and certainty—the total conviction that we were on the point of some major breakthrough. I could sense intuitively that everyone felt exactly as I did.

The snow tractor had halted about a mile along Windy Gap, in precisely the place I had expected, just as I had known it would. This, I knew, was the place where, in his dream, my grandfather had seen the “cyclopean” city. Chet Morison was already working with the sonar, while Bill Ruggles was setting up the laser in the back of the trailer; at this distance it resembled an astronomical telescope. Trask, wearing a tartan scarf and a baseball cap, looked not unlike a coach in charge of an ice hockey team.

The most important part of our equipment was the atomic energy source; Trask was the first person to create a portable atomic energy generator, and even so, it weighed a quarter of a ton, and took two men to handle it.

As we arrived, Chet Morison, without speaking, handed Trask the computer simulations. Trask studied them, handed them back, then said, “O.K., let’s get started.”

We all moved to the rear of the snow tractor. The atomic motor was humming softly, almost silent—although it could produce enough current to light a small city. At the last moment, Elmo Jarnefelt, who was going to film all this, called, “Wait a moment. This thing is affected by the cold.”

We waited in silence for perhaps five minutes. Nobody spoke. At that point, there was nothing to say. Then Jarnefelt said, “It’s rolling.”

Bill Ruggles said, “I’ll try her on half.” That meant fifty percent of the possible energy output.

Almost instantly, the intense ruby beam, three inches wide, knifed out of the laser gun like a bar of red-hot steel and struck the ice. There was a violent hissing that made us all jump backward, and suddenly we were engulfed in steam. Then there was an explosion, and even more steam. Trask shouted, “Turn it off.”

As the steam cleared, we all ran forward to look. What we saw was an anticlimax. At first, there was no sign that anything had happened. Then, at the point where the laser had struck the ice, we saw the small hole, still steaming like a geyser. Somebody said, “What was that explosion?”

“The steam trying to escape. It forms pockets—like trying to cook an egg in a microwave oven.”

It was disappointing. That enormous volume of steam and the noise that went with it had merely produced a three-inch hole, which was slowly widening as steam continued to hiss out of it.

Jarnefelt, walking a few yards beyond the hole, said, "Look, the ice is cracked here. The explosion did that."

Bill said, "Thank God I didn't try it on full power. It would have blown us sky high."

Now, suddenly, we could all see the problem. The laser would cut through the ice to any depth we liked, but it would convert it into high-pressure steam. Even now, this was falling back on us in the form of freezing rain. And we would still be left with only a three-inch hole.

Trask, never one to be discouraged, said, "Let's try one more, and see what happens. And move the beam around like a water jet."

This time we stood well back. Again there was a deafening hiss, and we were enveloped in a cloud that soon became as thick as pea soup fog. Because it was a windless day, the mist simply surrounded us. We were quickly soaked by the condensing droplets. There were several explosions, one so violent that Bill jumped backward and fell off the trailer. The steam roared out of the hole in the ice like the jet from a fire hose.

The result, when we finally examined it, was more satisfying than before—the hot steam had enlarge the mouth of the hole to more than two feet. But as we stood looking, the partially melted ice collapsed inward like soft snow. In effect, cutting a hole through ice was like trying to cut a hole through water—the heat would cause the surrounding ice to collapse inward.

It seems absurd that none of us had foreseen this. But I think we all had had the same attitude—let's try it and see what happens.

We were all soaked to the skin, and it was obvious that we had to get back and change before we froze to death. We all piled into the trailer, and Chet drove us back at thirty miles an hour, bumping violently up and down like peas on a drum, but too cold to care.

I struggled out of my clothes, which were now like stiff canvas, and turned up the heater. Dave Eng brought me hot soup, which soon restored me to normal. After that, I dressed in dry clothes, and—since my room was filling up with steam as the wet clothes dried out—went across to the dining room.

Trask was sitting alone at the table, drinking orange juice—he never took stimulants like tea or coffee. To my surprise he looked cheerful.

"Well, Matthew, what do you think?"

"That we have to wait for a windy day."

"Right. The wind will solve the problem of the steam. Second, we have to stick to the surface, and cut down at an angle against the face of the mountain. I calculate it should take us about a week to reach those blocks."

He had worked out on a sheet of paper the number of calories it would take to dissolve ten million tons of ice, and decided that, at full strength, the laser could evaporate more than a hundred thousand tons a day. Having

seen the amount of steam generated in less than half a minute, I could believe it.

His optimism was infectious. And what he said was obviously true. Since there was no point in drilling down into the ice, we had to concentrate on evaporating its surface over a fairly small area. If the wind carried away the steam, there was no reason to anticipate any further problems.

That afternoon, the wind sprang up. This time, only Trask, Bill Ruggles, and myself went to Windy Gap, leaving the others to work on the huts—electric light still had to be installed, and the hot showers. The wind chill factor sent the temperature down to ten below, and all three of us kept to the shelter of the trailer, whose high sides made it windproof.

Bill directed the beam at the surface, at an angle of no more than a few degrees. The result was spectacular—there was a hiss, and the surface of the ice turned into clouds of white vapor, to be carried away by the wind, which must have been blowing at fifty miles an hour. It was very satisfying to see the great clouds carried away until they turned to water droplets and disappeared. We went to survey the result at close quarters, and were impressed. Because the angle was so small, the superheated steam had dissolved the ice above it, so there was a trench about a foot wide and up to two feet deep up to the point where it vanished from sight. The power of the laser was awe-inspiring—it felt rather like unleashing a small atom bomb.

Next Bill turned the trailer at an angle and fired toward the mountainside. Again, it gouged out a foot-wide trench that went on into the rock for ten feet. By the time we had made half a dozen similar trenches, our progress was obvious. The laser had also made a ten-foot deep cavern in the rock, but by using the laser in short bursts of ten seconds, Bill prevented it from cutting deeper. We had no desire to cause the side of the mountain to collapse.

It was an oddly exhausting activity—releasing such savage and destructive bursts of energy. I was almost deaf from the explosive hiss. The same thought occurred to all three of us—that used as a weapon of war, the supercharged laser would make ground attack obsolete.

Bill began to move the beam back and forward like a fire hose, and the result was even more satisfying—the ice simply dissolved away. Soon we had a hole fifty feet deep and a hundred yards wide, with several feet of water in the bottom. But as we paused to drink hot soup, we could see the problem. The hole looked enormous, big enough to hold a dozen buildings. But fifty feet was only a fiftieth part of half a mile. If we were going fifty times as deep, then we would have to keep moving back until we were on the far side of the valley. To dissolve this much ice, even with a supercharged laser, was like trying to drain a lake with a bucket.

The alternative, of course, would be to cut a wide tunnel down into the ice, at an angle of perhaps thirty degrees. But that would obviously be dangerous, for the explosions of steam would crack the ice, and the whole tunnel might simply collapse—with us inside it. And at an angle of thirty degrees, a tunnel that reached a depth of half a mile would have to be several miles long. It would take months.

Trask had another suggestion. If we simply concentrated on cutting a hole straight down into the ice, and an angle of sixty degrees or even more, we could probably reach a depth of half a mile within days. It would be necessary to make sure that the hole was at the side of the blocks we were looking for—otherwise we might destroy them. Then, once we had our hole, the laser could be taken down to the bottom, and could begin to cut sideways into the ice. It would be dangerous, but workable.

Another problem, of course, would be that steam rising from a depth of half a mile would not necessarily reach the surface—much of it would turn to water and run back into the pit. And if we vaporized the water with the laser, it would simply do the same thing all over again.

I must admit that when we returned to camp at six o'clock, my optimism had started to evaporate, and even Trask looked grim. The amount of work we had done was tremendous. (When the others walked down to look at it, they were amazed.) But compared to what remained to be done, it was absurdly small.

Later that evening, Bill brought more bad news. Toward the end of the afternoon, even I had noticed that the results were growing less spectacular—it seemed to take longer bursts to achieve the same amount of evaporation. I had assumed that this was because my senses were becoming accustomed to the explosions of steam. But checking with the laser's built-in computer, Bill verified that it had been working on less than fifty percent of its power. For some reason, the ruby crystal was losing its strength.

This was not as serious as it might have been. To begin with, Bill had been using the laser at less than half its power. Second, we still had nine more ruby cylinders. Even using them up at a rate of one a day, they should cut through half a mile of ice.

That night I slept normally and deeply—so deeply that I cannot remember any dreams. But when I woke up I was once again full of energy and optimism.

That day there was again a strong wind, and the temperature was lower than ever. Again, only the three of us went to Windy Gap, while the others worked back at camp.

We moved the tractor back another fifty feet, and continued to deepen the hole. It was slow work—now the hole was so large it was harder to see

results. Moreover, the laser was fast losing its strength, and an hour later it shattered into a dozen pieces. Bill simply replaced it and continued.

At one o'clock we were tired and cold, and decided to let the others take a turn. Back at camp, Trask was half an hour late for lunch. When he finally came in, he told me that he had been speaking to Leroy in Little America. He had asked Leroy to telephone the Vassilievskys and ask them to fly out to join us. In that way, we could manufacture more supercharged crystals on the spot. Leroy had said, "What if they refuse to come?"

Trask, with his usual confidence, had replied, "They can't refuse. There's too much at stake."

Trask proved to be wrong; an hour later Leroy radioed to say they had refused. Rodion had told him they were happy in New York, had started a job in the Copacabana, and didn't want to fly to Antarctica. Rodion, I had often noticed, was stronger-minded and less obliging than the others.

Trask said, "Get him back on the phone and let me talk to him."

While we waited, he said, "Come to think of it, you know them better than I do. You talk to him."

But it was Inga who came through on the crackly line. When I explained the problem, she said, "But I don't understand. You must have more than a dozen."

"No, we have nine."

"Is that not enough?"

"It might be. It might not. Can't you persuade them to come?"

"I don't think so. We have just started work, and the act is a great success. We don't want to let down the management."

With Trask's eye on me, I did everything to persuade her. It made me unhappy, for I could understand why she hated the idea—why should she want to change New York for Antarctica, which, I could now see, would strike her as the most boring place in the world?

She promised to try, and I said we would contact her that evening.

When I talked to her again a few hours later, she told me that her brothers refused to come. But the act could do without her for a few weeks, and if it would help, she would come alone.

As she said this, I wished she were in the room, so I could hug and kiss her. There was something very gentle and kind about Inga. I began to suspect I might be in love with her.

Trask was nodding enthusiastically, so I told Inga we would arrange her transport right away—Trask had a friend, the head of a business corporation, who owned two private jets, and owed him a favor.

A few hours later, when the team returned from Windy Gap, we learned that the second laser crystal had shattered, and that they were now on the third.

That evening, before I went to bed, I began to experience a curiously relaxed and dreamy feeling. I knew what this meant; soon after supper I excused myself and went to my room. As soon as I closed my eyes, I experienced the sense that I was not alone. It was so clear that I could feel a presence that pervaded the whole room. There was a strong sense of peace and serenity; yet I felt no desire to sleep. I simply lay on my back with my eyes open and waited for something to happen. It felt exactly like waiting for someone to speak.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour, nothing happened; but I felt myself relaxing into a more and more deeply receptive state. Finally I was so relaxed that I could hardly feel the beating of my heart.

Next came a sense of great warmth and happiness which seemed to be flowing into me, not originating inside me. I interpreted this as an expression of gratitude for what I had done. It was a delightful sensation, yet I experienced a certain impatience. What I now wanted to know was precisely what I was supposed to have done to deserve gratitude.

Another ten minutes or so went past. I began to feel sleepy, and closed my eyes. I immediately experienced a sense of approval, as if this is what the invisible “communicator” wanted. I relaxed still more deeply, and began to experience the pleasant glow as the “dream force” invaded my consciousness.

What followed was quite unlike my “dream” of two nights before. This was not a dream, but a series of insights, exactly as if someone was speaking to me without words.

I must emphasize that the communicator did not “tell” me what I am now going to explain, except in the sense that a book “tells” you something you want to know. It was already there, laid out for me, like the maps of the ancient sea kings the Library of Congress laid out for Hapgood. All I had to do was to choose what I wanted to know.

Within seconds, everything that had happened made sense. The “communicators” were not ghosts from Plato’s Atlantis. They were creatures like ourselves—except that they were far more intelligent, and possessed far greater powers than human beings. Moreover, they had been on Earth for millions of years—so long that their name for themselves was “the First Ones.”

Then what had happened to them? What were they doing under the Antarctic ice? It was clear that they themselves did not know the answer to this question. They had been struck by a cold so extreme that there was no question of escape. Even the Antarctic, where the temperature is often fifty degrees below zero, had never known such cold.

Strangely enough, I was in a better position to understand it than they were. In *Earth’s Shifting Crust*, Hapgood had discussed the mystery of the Beresovka mammoth, discovered in the frozen bank of the Beresovka River in Siberia in 1901. It was removed by building huge fires to thaw the

ground. Examination of its stomach revealed fresh buttercups that had not had time to digest. The mammoth had somehow been frozen instantaneously. Hapgood had approached the Birdseye frozen food company to ask how they would freeze a mammoth so that even its stomach was frozen solid, and they admitted that they would find it almost impossible, for there is no known method of freezing it that quickly. Even in the coldest deep freeze, it would take days.

Hapgood describes how the winter in northern Canada can arrive so suddenly that a lake in which he has just been swimming can freeze over in hours. But even that could not explain how intelligent creatures could be caught so unprepared that they were unable to escape.

My own conviction is that there is only one way to explain how mammoths could freeze within minutes, or even seconds. Only the cold of outer space could produce this effect. For example, a tremendous volcanic explosion could eject gas and magma far out into space. When pulled back to Earth by gravity, it would be an icy gas whose temperature was close to absolute zero.

The truth is that scientists still know nothing about what causes the great ice ages; every theory so far has proved inadequate. All we know is that they can arrive so suddenly that gigantic animals can be frozen solid so quickly that their meat remains edible when they are unfrozen thousands of years later.

This, apparently, is what had happened to the First Ones. And it was the fact that they had a high resistance to cold that made them vulnerable. Their giant city had no form of artificial heating, for they were perfectly happy at temperatures well below zero. If the temperature dropped below that level, they simply induced certain biochemical reactions—not unlike our human ability to generate heat by shivering—which prevented them from freezing. The great cold that plunged their city close to absolute zero took them completely by surprise. Before they understood what had happened, their bodies had frozen solid. And still the temperature went on plunging.

It would, of course, have killed a warm-blooded animal instantly. But the First Ones were not warm blooded—they were a kind of giant limpet. There is another factor that must be taken into account: Far back in the remote past, they had chosen their bodies. If they had wanted to, they could have vacated their bodies and created new ones. But this would have involved a tremendous effort of creation, and there was no time for this. So the First Ones were trapped in a tomb of ice.

There was nothing they could do but wait. One day, the great Ice Age would come to an end, and they would be free again. It came to an end, of course, some 14,000 years ago. But by this time they were buried underneath a mile of ice in Antarctica. And since the beginning of the last Ice

Age, about 100,000 years ago, Antarctica had moved further south—it had originally been three thousand miles closer to the equator. The Antarctic ice sheet vanished, and the coastal regions were populated by human beings who built ports.

But for the First Ones, the thaw never came. Windy Gap was then, as it is today, one of the coldest places in Antarctica. And it remained—like other inland areas exposed to the west winds—frozen solid, although the ice sheet melted away until it was only a quarter of a mile thick. It must have seemed to them an appalling irony when the thaw stopped, and the new mini Ice Age began in Antarctica about 5000 B.C.

When men began to visit Antarctica in the 20th century, their optimism rose—now it could only be a matter of time. You might say that the First Ones possessed a kind of broadcasting system: That is, their minds could reach out to other minds, particularly in a state of sleep. When my grandfather came with the IGY team in 1957, they saw him as the savior they had been waiting for. It was they who sent him dreams of a civilization below the ice, and filled him with that sense of urgency and expectancy that I knew so well. When the sonar located the remains of their observatory, they had no doubt that their troubles were over. But they had reckoned without the caution of the academic temperament. (Their own minds worked on a principle of supralogic which made this wariness quite incomprehensible.)

But they knew that their long wait was coming to an end. When I discovered Hapgood in my grandfather's library, and began talking about it to everyone who would listen, they saw me as their best hope so far, and began to concentrate on influencing me. That was why I woke every morning with this bubbling sense of optimism. The First Ones were "subsidizing" my vital energies.

When Trask came to lecture at Columbia, they saw their opportunity. That was why, in spite of my intention of going home, I found myself going back on campus. That was why, instead of rushing to the bar with the others, I went forward to speak to the lecturer who had—to be honest—left me slightly bemused and bored.

They knew that the moment Trask became intrigued by the problem of how to penetrate down through half a mile of ice, nothing would stop him until he had solved it.

At this point, I felt that my brain had absorbed as much as it could take. As soon as this thought entered my head, I fell into a peaceful sleep. When I woke up, it was already eight o'clock.

As I showered and shaved, I was surprised by my own calmness. For there could be no doubt that, when I considered the situation coolly and logically, it pointed to one absurd yet inescapable conclusion: that I was the most important member of the human race who had existed so far.

After all, I was the first to learn of the existence of this age-old tragedy. Without me, this expedition would never have happened. And there could be little doubt that, when the First Ones were freed from their icy tomb, the history of the human race would enter a new phase—its most important so far. As a child I had often fantasized about what would happen if Martians, or some infinitely wise race from the stars, landed on Earth and took over its leadership—how war and crime would vanish overnight, and how men would finally learn the secret of happiness. Now, incredibly, it was about to happen—and I had been chosen to play a decisive role in this transition to a new future.

As I ate breakfast, and watched Trask drinking his decaffeinated coffee, I was surprised by the sensation of affection and loyalty that I suddenly experienced. Trask was not the kind of person who inspired obvious affection—there was something oddly detached about him, something slightly inhuman. Yet now that I was aware that his name and mine would be linked in all future history, I began to feel that we were as closely linked as family members.

Of course, there was no question of telling him what I had learned—he would probably think that my mind had collapsed. Sooner or later, he would learn what I had learned. Then would be the time to tell him . . .

That morning, I returned to the site of the excavation, and was impressed by what had been achieved in twenty-four hours. Recognizing that the laser would have to be moved down into the ice as the hole deepened, Chet Morison's team had started to cut a trench across the valley, with a gradually sloping ramp on one side. This meant that there was a wall of ice on the far side—already more than fifty feet tall. It also meant that the snow tractor could descend to the bottom of the ramp, and continue deepening the hole above what I now knew to be the remains of an observatory.

This also had the advantage of sheltering us from the wind, which blew that day in gusts of up to sixty miles an hour. The steam rose straight into the air, and was blown away before it could even begin to condense.

By the time we returned in the early afternoon, the hole was nearly two hundred feet deep—two hundred and fifty feet below the original ice level. That was about a tenth of the total distance to the valley floor, and an eighth of the distance to the observatory ruins. Chet Morison's team would deepen the ramp by at least another fifty feet. At this rate, we might achieve our objective within two—possibly three—weeks.

At six o'clock that evening Bill Ruggles told me that Inga had landed at Little America an hour ago, and was already on her way by helicopter. At half past seven, Chet Morison's team returned an hour later than expected—the work had gone so well that they had stayed on. The ruby showed no sign of losing its strength. They had only given up because the wind had

dropped and was no longer carrying away the steam. As they sat drinking coffee, I was struck by their air of immense optimism—and realized that, like me, they were being “subsidized.”

Soon after nine, the clattering of the helicopter sent me rushing outside. I hardly recognized Inga as she climbed down the steps swathed in furs, her face peering out of a white fur hood, looking rather like a Russian doll. I had forgotten how small she was. When I bent to kiss her, she shyly turned her cheek, then said with concern, “But you are cold.” The pilot also delivered a dozen ruby cylinders. Dave Eng had cooked Inga a meal, but she said she was not hungry. I sat by her and watched her toy with it, and helped her by eating two sausages. The others occasionally glanced across at her with obvious curiosity—with the exception of Bill Ruggles, no one had any idea who she was or why she was there, although they had all seen her back at the laboratory. Trask had not appeared—he was in his room, working on a calculation, and no one wanted to take the responsibility of disturbing him.

When she had eaten, and settled in her room—Elmo Jarnefelt had moved in with Dave Eng to make room for her—I asked her if she was tired; when she said no, I suggested going for a walk. As we tramped across the hard-packed snow, I asked her what she thought of it.

She said, “It is very beautiful—like Siberia. But I don’t like such places.”

We walked on in silence to the end of Windy Gap. The sun, on its circular path around the horizon, had reached its westward limit, and lay there framed between the mountains, making them look bleak but very beautiful.

We stopped, and I looked down at her face. She seemed preoccupied.

I asked, “What is it?”

She shook her head, and her face became troubled. “I don’t know.”

“Would you like to walk further?”

“If you like.”

But half a mile down the valley, she stopped. “I would like to go back now.”

“Are you tired?”

“No.”

I did not press her to explain, and we walked back in silence. It was quite different from the meeting I had envisaged, in which I had intended to tell her about the First Ones, and ask her advice on when I should tell Trask. Now, for some odd reason, there seemed to be a barrier between us, and the mere thought of telling her aroused a strange feeling of resistance inside me, as if this was somehow the wrong time and the wrong place.

Back in the dining room, Trask had emerged from his seclusion—typically, he had not even noticed the sound of the helicopter. When he learned that I had not explained the progress we had made, he immediately swept

her off into a corner of the room to bring her up to date. I saw my presence was unnecessary, and went back to my room.

I felt jumpy and tense, unable to relax. I lay down on the bed and began to place myself in a state of relaxation. It took nearly half an hour, confirming my feeling that there was something wrong—some kind of obstruction. But as soon as I felt the onset of the dream force, I knew that nothing had changed. The First Ones were still there, still glad to communicate. Yet I could sense a mood of caution. They had waited so long for this moment. Now it was so close, they were afraid that there would be something to prevent it.

A knock at my door made me jump as if a bomb had exploded—this is one of the dangers of sinking into a near-trance state. With my heart thundering in my ears, I hastened to open it. It was Inga, still dressed in the fur uniform that made her look like something out of a Russian fairy tale.

She was holding a slim brown paper parcel—obviously a book.

“I am sorry. Your father asked me to give this to you.”

“Ah, thank you.” As she turned away, I said, “Won’t you come in?”

“Are you sure I am not disturbing you?” She sounded very formal.

“No. Please come in.”

As she stepped inside she said, “Ah, it is very cold in here,” and I suddenly realized I had forgotten to switch on the heating. Oddly enough, I had not even noticed the cold in the room. Now I hastened to turn on the fan heater, then smoothed out the bed, and asked her to sit down—the room, of course, was very bare, with only the bed, one chair, and the trestle table. “Did you not notice the cold?”

“No.” It seemed strange that she should pursue something so unimportant. “Why?”

She looked at me strangely for a moment, then seemed to make up her mind. She said in a firm voice, “There is something about this place that I do not like. I cannot stay.”

“You can’t stay!” I was aghast.

“No, I must leave. And you should leave too.”

“But why?”

“There is something bad. That is why I could not walk down the valley. Here it is better because of the mountain.” She gestured out of the window.

“But what’s wrong?”

“I don’t know. But I noticed it as soon as I stepped out of the plane. There is something very bad here, something dangerous.”

I looked at her closely. “What do you know about this?”

“Only what I feel. And I feel frightened.”

I stood up and walked up and down the room. The situation seemed absurd—worse than that, insane. I sat down and pulled my chair closer to her. “Look, I have a lot to tell you. Please listen to what I have to say. Then make up your mind.”

She gazed into my eyes quietly, without speaking. As she did so, I experienced again that feeling I had known ever since meeting her—an odd kind of intimacy, almost as if we were brother and sister. In that sense of intimacy, the odd feeling of reluctance I had been feeling seemed to evaporate.

If I had been trying to explain to Trask, or even my grandfather, I would have had to start with assurances that I was not insane or on drugs. With Inga it was unnecessary. She knew I would only speak the truth.

I began by telling her about that feeling of electrical excitement I had experienced the day I found Hapgood’s book in my grandfather’s library, and about how I felt it incredible that something so important could have been ignored. As I told her about my dream on the night I had met Trask, and my certainty that I was going to play a major part in rediscovering the lost civilization, I found myself wondering why it had taken me so long to realize that all this was being engineered by alien and yet benevolent forces.

Then I went on to tell her about what I had learned since I had arrived in Antarctica—how I had been in communication with the First Ones, and learned about the strange catastrophe that had buried them below half a mile of ice. As I described all this, I was certain that she would now understand and sympathize with these creatures who had been entombed for perhaps a hundred thousand years, like miners trapped in a tunnel under a mountain, trying to attract the attention of the outside world.

Yet when I had finished, she sat silent, staring at the floor. I said finally, “Well?”

She said, “I understand what you feel.”

Her reaction baffled me. “Yes, but what do you think about it?”

“But I think you are wrong. There is something ... bad about this. There is something wrong.”

I almost exploded in exasperation. “Why? What do you mean?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know. I just feel it.”

“But what could there be wrong? These poor devils have been down there for thousands of years. Are you saying we should leave them there?”

She shook her head, obviously miserable.

I said, “Try to give me some idea of why you think they’re bad.”

“I am not saying they are bad. I can only tell you what I feel.”

“Please try to explain.”

Inga was not an articulate person, but she made an effort.

"You say they are like miners who have been trapped. But have you read the story in the Arabian Nights about a fisherman who finds a genie in a bottle, and lets it out?"

That stopped me short. What she said certainly made sense. I had seen a movie as a child in which someone opens the bottle he finds on a beach, and a wisp of smoke comes out, then gets bigger and bigger until it turns into a man a hundred feet tall, towering above him as a human being towers above a mouse. Her comment made me aware of something that I had not thought about before—that the First Ones would certainly have all the magical powers of the genie in the Arabian Nights. Once they were out, there would be no going back. Human history would be changed forever.

But would that be such a bad thing? Throughout recorded history, human beings have been doing terrible things to one another. Even now, living in a world whose technology could provide for the needs of the whole human race and ensure prosperity for everyone, they are still more concerned with killing than with peace and happiness. The Old Ones might stop them murdering and tormenting one another.

I was deeply troubled. It seemed impossible to imagine what harm could come from releasing the First Ones from their prison.

I said, "I'll have to think about it. You probably need some sleep."

She smiled palely. "Yes, I am very tired. You want me to go?"

"No, not unless you do—"

She said, "Can I stay here?"

"Stay here?" I stared in astonishment.

"I don't want to be alone."

I made an attempt to reassure her. "But you have nothing to be afraid of."

"I would like to stay here." She said it politely but stubbornly.

"Well ... all right. You can have the bed."

"No. I will sleep on the floor."

We argued it out. Finally it was agreed that I would fetch her eider-down and pillow, and sleep on the floor. Luckily, no one saw me staggering along with an armful of bedding.

When I got back, she was already in bed, her furs on the floor. I made up my own bed, closed the curtains, and lay down on the floor. When I said goodnight there was no reply—she was already asleep.

But I had no desire to go to sleep. There was too much that I needed to understand.

To begin with, why did Inga want to sleep in my room? She was not likely to be physically attacked. Was it simply a child's desire for safety and reassurance? That seemed unlikely. In the few months I had known her, she had always struck me as a self-controlled and adult personality.

Second, what was she afraid of? When I told her about the First Ones, I had expected her to understand immediately, to realize that she had merely sensed their presence below the ice, and that she had nothing to fear. Yet whatever was troubling her was clearly as strong as ever.

At this point, I realized that Inga was having a bad dream—she was moving in her sleep and making faint noises in her throat—it made me think of my grandfather's dog chasing rabbits in its sleep. I got up quietly, stood by her, and placed a hand on her forehead. It was very cold. I expected her to wake up, but she remained fast asleep. But as I stood there with my hand on her forehead, she slowly relaxed. When she was breathing normally again, I shook her gently, but she continued to sleep. Either she was very tired, or she was in some kind of a trance.

Back in my own bed, I decided that the most sensible thing to do was to try to make contact with the First Ones. Perhaps they could make me understand what was troubling Inga. I lay on my back and spent ten minutes relaxing deeply. But this time the dream force refused to come. It was like dialing a telephone number and getting no reply.

At this point, Inga's breathing became irregular again. Again I stood by her and placed my hand on her forehead—again surprised by its cold. This time it took longer. I made myself relax deeply, and tried to transmit a sense of reassurance, and finally her breathing became even. I noticed that her forehead also became warmer.

I dozed for an hour or so. Toward morning the wind sprang up from the southeast. Our camp was sheltered from the west winds by the mountain, but these were blowing from the Ross Ice Sheet and made the windows rattle, while a draught made it apparent that the hut had not been bolted together tightly enough. The noise made it impossible to hear Inga's breathing. At about five o'clock, just as I was beginning to doze, I was jerked awake by a sudden sense that something was wrong. I went to look at Inga, and found that she was hardly able to breathe. Her breath came in gasps, and her face was gray. I pulled my chair across to the bed and laid my hands on her forehead; it was like ice. My attempts to soothe her had no effect—ten minutes later, she was still breathing as if she had pneumonia. Finally, I pulled back the bedclothes, climbed in beside her, and held her tightly against me, pressing my cheek against her face until my own felt numb. She was fully dressed, and her body felt very thin. I had the feeling that if I could convey some of my warmth to her, I could awaken her from the nightmare that seemed to be convulsing her. It took a long time—it seemed an hour—but at last I had a feeling that she was aware of me, in some dim, unconscious way. Her breathing slowly became calmer, then returned to normal and her face became warm again.

At the same time, the wind dropped, and the morning became very still. I went back to my own bed, and lay there on my back. Although I remained alert, I had a feeling that her nightmares were over.

Once again I tried to relax and contact the First Ones, but it was still impossible. At that point I decided to try another method. I stretched my body until all the muscles were tense, and tried concentrating hard. The effect was interesting. I began to feel the same odd sensation of power behind the eyes that I had experienced after dispersing clouds.

It was so strong that I went to the door and looked outside. From horizon to horizon, the sky was gray. Now that the wind had dropped, everything was still. I selected an area of cloud, focused my attention on it, and then concentrated hard. There was an odd sensation of force behind my eyes—rather like the sensation we experience when pushing against a stalled car to get it into motion. In spite of this, nothing seemed to be happening to the cloud. But the sensation was so satisfying that I went on trying. Then I noticed a swirl of cloud at the spot where I was concentrating. Suddenly, it parted, and I could see the blue sky beyond. A few seconds later, the hole had filled again. But now I know why it had taken so much effort. This was not a single cloud I was trying to disperse, but a whole bank of them, perhaps a quarter of a mile thick.

It brought a surge of deep and intense satisfaction. I had realized that I didn't need the First Ones to "subsidize" my vital energies. I could do it myself, by the use of the right kind of concentration.

There was a sound behind me, and Inga was looking out of the door. I said, "How are you feeling?"

"Well, thank you."

"Did you sleep well?"

"I think so." She yawned. "Now I must go back to my room."

I carried her bedding back to her own hut. Fortunately, there was still no one around.

As I left her—making herself coffee—I said, "Do you still want to leave?"

She wrinkled her nose. "Perhaps. I hate it here. Will you come too?"

"No. I have to stay until the job is finished."

She thought for a moment, then said, "Very well. I will stay too."

After the vehemence of the previous night, her casualness puzzled me. But I was too glad she had changed her mind to press her about it.

Back in my own hut, I made coffee, then lay down on the bed. It was strange that, after a night with so little sleep, I felt so wide awake.

I noticed the brown paper parcel sent by my father and tore it open. It contained a fairly bulky paperback called *H. P. Lovecraft: A Centenary Appreciation*, published by Brown University Press. My father had scrawled in the front of it, "This might amuse you." I had heard vaguely of Lovecraft,

but had never actually read him—I had an idea he wrote horror stories, and these have never appealed to me. This book consisted of a number of critical articles on Lovecraft and a selection of his fiction. My father had also added a parenthesis: “See p. 347.”

Page 347 proved to be a story called “At the Mountains of Madness.” Then I saw why my father thought it might amuse me: It was set in Antarctica. The opening sentence read:

“I am forced into speech because men of science have refused to follow my advice without knowing why. It is altogether against my will that I tell my reasons for opposing this contemplated invasion of the Antarctic”

The narrator was a scientist from “Miskatonic University”, who had taken part in a recent Antarctic expedition—he seemed to have the Byrd 1929 expedition in mind. The author of the story had obviously gone to a great deal of trouble to learn all about Antarctica.

In Lovecraft’s story, a polar expedition finds a range of mountains higher than the Himalayas. An advance party discovers a cave containing barrel-shaped, leathery beings with tentacles and membranous wings, frozen solid. At this point, the advance party loses radio contact with the base. The narrator leads an expedition to find out what has become of them. They locate the camp, but everyone is dead, “torn and mangled in fiendish and altogether inexplicable ways.” There is no sign of the barrel-shaped creatures with wings and tentacles.

The camp lies in the shadow of mountains whose “witchlike cones and pinnacles” remind them of a “Cyclopean city of no architecture known to man.” The narrator and his party investigate, and discover that it is a ruined city. On the walls of one of its immense buildings, they discover sculptured reliefs that tell them the story of its builders: how the barrel-like beings—the Old Ones—came from a remote star system in pre-Cambrian times and colonized the Earth, creating human beings and animals as food

The slaughter at the camp, they learn, occurred when the “Old Ones” were attacked by the sled dogs and defended themselves. In the confusion that followed, all the men and dogs were killed. The narrator concludes, “Poor devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being. ... That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch—perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defense against them and the equally frantic white simians ... poor Old Ones!”

I began reading with a kind of amusement which soon turned into an odd sense of unreality, as if someone were playing an absurd practical joke. What I was reading seemed a kind of grotesque parody of the story of the First Ones, but written in the style of 1930’s pulp fiction.

The knowledge of Antarctica seemed so precise that I wondered for a moment whether H. P. Lovecraft might be the pseudonym of somebody who had accompanied Byrd on that expedition. A glance at the Introduction soon convinced me this was not so—Lovecraft was a shy recluse who had spent most of his life in Providence, Rhode Island, wrestling with poverty, detesting the modern world, and writing horror stories as a kind of defiant escapism. He died of cancer in 1937, at the age of forty-six, and his stories were kept in print by his friend August Derleth, who ran a small press in Wisconsin.

The first essay in the book was by Derleth. On the very first page, I was electrified by this comment:

“From his earliest childhood, Lovecraft experienced incredibly vivid dreams—in his own words, Ôstrange cities, weird landscapes, unknown monsters, hideous ceremonies, Oriental and Egyptian gorgeousness, and indefinable mysteries of life, death and torment.’ Many of these he introduced direct into his stories”

Now, suddenly, I felt I understood. That was why Lovecraft’s story sounded like—as he would have put it—“a grotesque and blasphemous parody” of the history of the First Ones. His was one of the minds they had reached in their attempt to make the world aware of their predicament.

I went on reading, now fascinated. Another story, called “The Shadow Out of Time”, is about a professor—naturally, from Miskatonic University—who falls into a trance that lasts for years, although as far as his colleagues are concerned, he has merely become an unpredictable eccentric. His alter ego studies magical works like the *Necronomicon* in the university library. Then, five years later, he awakens from a deep sleep and is once again his former self. But he suffers from nightmares in which he sees a strange city, of “dark cylindrical towers . . . built of a bizarre type of square-cut basalt masonry and tapered slightly toward their rounded tops. Nowhere in any of them could the least traces of windows or other apertures save huge doors be found.”

As I read this, my scalp tingled. It all sounded uncomfortably like the city of my grandfather’s dream.

A few paragraphs further on he speaks about dreams of a place where “the skies were almost always moist and cloudy. . . . The far horizon was always steamy and indistinct, but I could see that great jungles of unknown trees and ferns . . . lay outside the city.” Again I was reminded of my grandfather’s dreams. The professor also begins to study “forbidden” books, like the *Necronomicon* and von Juntz’s *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, and learns that according to ancient knowledge, mankind is not the first intelligent race on Earth. “Things of inconceivable shape . . . had reared towers to the sky and

delved into every secret of nature before the first amphibian forebear of man had crawled out of the hot sea three hundred million years ago.”

Only fifty million years before the advent of man, there had been a Great Race, “in whose vast libraries were volumes of text and pictures holding the whole of Earth’s annals.” These creatures, he learns, can travel mentally into the future, enter the mind of some other being, and displace it, while the “displaced mind” is sent back to dwell in the past. By this time, it is obvious to the reader that this is what has happened to the unfortunate professor.

The members of the Great Race are immense cones “ten feet high and with the head and other organisms attached to foot-thick distensible limbs.” They moved around like huge limpets, by expanding and contracting their bases.

Years later, the professor is invited on an archaeological dig in the Western Desert of Australia, where are vast ruins of square-cut blocks. Wandering among the ruins, he finds the entrance to a tunnel, which leads to an underground city which seems strangely familiar. He finds himself in a library, whose “hieroglyphed shelves” he recognizes. He takes down a book, and in the light of his torch sees “queerly pigmented letters” written in English in his own handwriting. This is where he had spent his “missing years.”

“The Shadow Out of Time” had been Lovecraft’s last story, written in 1935, shortly before he died of cancer. Here, as in “At the Mountains of Madness”, it is obvious that he feels considerable sympathy for the “Old Ones.” These are not horror stories—in fact, there is an obvious conflict between the horror-story framework and the actual content of the story, which is closer to science fiction. I am not surprised that Lovecraft died when he did. He must have known that he had outgrown the feelings out of which he had created his life’s work.

What fascinated me most was this mythology of the “Old Ones.” It was obvious that Lovecraft had received insights very like my own, and in some ways even more detailed. Here, I felt, I might find a clue to what was puzzling me about these beings under the ice.

But there was no time now—I had to find out what Trask wanted me to do today.

He was sitting in the corner of the dining room, talking to Inga. As I took my breakfast and went and joined them, he flashed me a welcoming smile, then went on talking to Inga—he was explaining how, when we all got back to New York, he wanted her to cooperate on a series of tests to try to determine what she had done to the ruby laser crystal. Inga was nodding, her eyes lowered, but I could sense that she was less than enthusiastic—in fact, that the whole idea bored her.

Trask, on the other hand, looked happier than I had ever seen him. A naturally introverted man, he was never a great communicator. But this

morning he was full of excitement and optimism. I suspected that I knew the reason.

When he paused for breath, I asked him what he wanted me to do that morning. He said he would like me to stay behind with Inga, while she tried her transformative techniques on another ruby. This was what I had hoped he would say.

After breakfast, I returned with him to his room and collected two of the ruby cylinders the New York laboratory had sent the previous day. Half an hour later, as Trask was leaving on the snow tractor, I took these—and my only chair—to Inga's room.

She was already sitting at the table. She hardly glanced at me as I sat down opposite. When I asked her how she felt, she gave a very faint smile, and made a movement of her shoulders.

The table was covered with a dark blanket. I laid one of the cylinders on this, then drew the curtain so the room was in half-darkness.

"Ready?"

She sighed. "Yes."

She placed both hands on the ends of the ruby, and I placed mine over hers.

After a few seconds, there was the familiar sense of being drawn into it, as into a bright red universe. Within moments, it had filled my consciousness. Once again there was that strange sense of resistance, like wading through water.

Now my mind and hers were united together in the joint effort. If Pavel, Rodion, and Natalia had been there, it would have taken only a few minutes. But there was obviously something wrong. Although my own powers seemed exceptionally strong, hers were obviously weak. When we took a break, at the end of five minutes, she was obviously tired. We made coffee, and she told me about their engagement in a New York nightclub, and how they had made more money in a week than they made in a year as a circus act in Russia.

We decided to have another try. But something was puzzling me. Last night, she had been so vehement that there was "something wrong." Now it was as if she had totally forgotten about it.

As we gazed into the crystal, and our minds were joined in concentration, I did something that I knew to be wrong: I deliberately probed her mind to find out what she was feeling. It was wrong because I was ignoring her right to privacy. She recoiled instantly. "No."

I said, "What are you hiding from me?"

"Nothing."

"Then let me see."

She said, "There is nothing to see."

"Then why not let me see?"

"There is nothing to see."

But when I took her hands and placed them on the ends of the crystal, she made no resistance. I placed my hands over them and gazed into the red universe. Then, we concentrated together, I did again what I had done before. She flinched, but made no attempt to resist.

Then, quite suddenly, I was behind her eyes. I had ceased to be myself, and was looking at the world from inside her body. If I had looked up, I would have stared into my own eyes, as if looking at myself in a mirror.

Now I knew she was telling the truth. She was hiding nothing from me. But that did not mean there was nothing to hide. When I thought about the First Ones, there was a strange feeling of resistance.

I withdrew my mind, and looked into her eyes. She said, "Well?"

"You are right. There is nothing to see."

We sat there quietly for a few minutes. She said, "Shall we continue?"

I said, "No. I don't want to do any more at the moment. I'll tell Trask you were tired after your long journey."

She nodded gratefully, glad of the chance to escape further effort.

I stood up.

"If you need me, I'll be in my room. Why don't you rest?"

"Thank you."

But it was not her tiredness that made me decide to stop working on the crystal. As our minds joined together in concentration, it would have been impossible to conceal from her what I suspected. And that was the last thing I wanted.

The first time I had probed her mind she had resisted—naturally, for we all wish to preserve our inner privacy. But the second time, she had allowed me inside her mind. Although she had ceased to resist, I was still aware of resistance.

That resistance was connected with my attempt to probe her feelings about the First Ones. Like some traumatized child, she had induced a kind of amnesia about something that had terrified her. If I allowed her to suspect this, I would only be plunging her into even deeper anxiety.

As I returned to my own hut, I had no doubt in my mind what had happened. While she had been asleep in the night, something had invaded her mind. I say "something" because at this stage I had no idea of what it was. But I found it impossible to believe that the First Ones were responsible.

All I could know for certain was that her mind had been seized and taken over. This is why her face had become so icy cold; "something" had plunged her into a deep trance state. My presence there had made it more difficult for them, for—as I now realized—I had instinctively sensed that something strange was going on.

That is why Inga had insisted on staying in my room. She sensed instinctively that she was in some kind of danger. Inga had been born into Soviet Russia in the Brezhnev era, and life had been hard. Her father—whom she had worshipped—had died after a long and painful illness, and her mother's death had been hastened by lack of food. There were many things Inga preferred to forget, many memories that she refused to allow into consciousness. So it was not difficult to manipulate her mind when she was in trance. In effect, she had been hypnotized, brainwashed. For the moment, I felt it was safer to leave her that way.

Back in my own room, I decided to make another attempt to establish contact with the First Ones. I lay on my bed, and allowed myself to sink into a deeper and deeper state of relaxation. Yet no matter how much I relaxed, nothing happened. Again I felt that something was obstructing me.

After a quarter of an hour or so, I gave up and picked up the Lovecraft book. I had a feeling that he might be able to offer me a clue.

The longest piece in the book was an essay by Fritz Leiber called "Lovecraft and Speculative Fiction." It was here that I found what I was hoping for: an account of Lovecraft's mythology of the "Old Ones."

According to Lovecraft, the Old Ones came to Earth before the continents began to form, more than a thousand million years ago. They were barrel-shaped and had five membranous wings. They had created cities on Earth and under the sea, and created life for food.

They also, says Leiber, created hypnotically controlled protoplasmic masses called shoggoths, who were their servants. These shoggoths eventually evolved mental powers that made them extremely dangerous to their creators. Lovecraft, says Leiber, is obviously against the shoggoths and in favor of the Old Ones.

The next arrivals on Earth were cone-shaped beings, half animal and half vegetable, like the Old Ones.

Next came a "half-polypus race" called the Blind Beings. It was these Blind Beings who built "windowless basalt cities" and who preyed on the cone-shaped beings.

Then the Great Race came from space, "from transgalactic Yith", took over the bodies of the cone-shaped beings, and drove the Blind Beings into caves under the earth.

After this, during the Carboniferous era, there was a "serpent race" called the Volusians.

Then, about a hundred and fifty million years ago, there was a great revolt of the shoggoths against their masters, which the Old Ones eventually won.

The glacial ages of the Cenozoic era—our own era of mammals and human beings—“worked great hardship on the Old Ones, who were driven out of their cities by the shoggoths.”

After this, Leiber speaks about Lovecraft’s “future history”, which is typically pessimistic, and obviously irrelevant to my inquiry.

What was I to make of this tangled tale? Back in New York, I would have dismissed the whole thing as the fabrication of a neurotic romantic. Under the circumstances, this was impossible.

Lovecraft knew more than he had suspected. He had obtained much of his material from dreams, and obviously made any changes that he felt increased the dramatic effect. But he knew about the First Ones, even though he added the absurdity of membranous wings (why should anyone need wings to fly through empty space?), and he knew about the great “windowless cities”—which he says were built by the Blind Beings. The “serpent-like Volusians”, I noted, were a reference to creatures created by his friend Robert E. Howard. So they could be dismissed. But how much of the rest of Lovecraft’s “mythology” was true?

I was struck by the number of references to the shoggoths. To me, these “hypnotically controlled protoplasmic masses” sounded authentic. When a race is the master of the Earth, it needs servants. Robots made of protoplasm would be ideal. I imagined them looking a little like jellyfishes, except that they would be almost shapeless.

But why should the shoggoths rebel against their creators?

It seemed to me that I could make a good guess. A mass of crawling protoplasm would not make a particularly good servant, no matter how obedient. If it was to be truly useful—for example, in building cities—then it would have to be turned into something with arms and legs, something that could move things and lift them. It would need to be given a brain that could make intelligent decisions. In fact, it would need to be given some degree of freedom. In effect, the Old Ones would have to build Frankenstein monsters.

And I already knew the next step—from my own experience. An ordinary animal is basically a robot; it reacts to stimuli like a penny-in-the-slot machine. It accepts the fact that it is made of matter, and that this matter is subject to illness and death. In fact, it accepts its own limitations.

Human matter differs from animal matter in one basic respect. Human beings have always had strange and inexplicable ideas about “spirit” and “God” and “eternity”—some timeless realm of being beyond the material world. They believe that they are something more than the matter. These strangely potent convictions have driven them to create monasteries and cathedrals, and religions in which men can strive to free the spirit from its bondage to matter.

I had discovered, by an accident, that I could make clouds dissolve. I had learned that, after making them dissolve away, I experienced a peculiar feeling of power behind the eyes. My introduction to laser technology had made me aware that the mind itself is a laser. When its powers are brought into focus, and made to march in step like a platoon of soldiers, they prove to be far greater than we could imagine. I had caught only a glimpse of these possibilities. But it had taught me to recognize that human beings are quite mistaken to think of themselves as animals. The unknown powers of the mind mean that they are potentially gods.

What had happened, I was fairly certain, is that, like me, the shoggoths had also reached a point where they discovered the powers of their own minds. At that point, they rebelled against their creators. These placid Old Ones, half animal and half vegetable, moving slowly on their retractable bases, rather like giant snails, must have struck their servants as boring and old-fashioned relics of the past, like slow-witted old men. The shoggoths dreamed of freedom.

What I found hard to understand is why the Old Ones did not simply offer the shoggoths their freedom and allow them to go their own way. Perhaps by that time, the bitterness of the shoggoths was too great. Or perhaps they didn't give the Old Ones a chance—perhaps they simply attacked

All this came to me as I lay on the bed reading Leiber's essay. Yet it was not mere speculation. I had an odd feeling of knowing it.

It also seemed to me that I now knew the truth about what lay under the ice. I had been assuming that only the Old Ones were waiting for their freedom. Now I was certain I was mistaken. Leiber—quoting Lovecraft—had said, "The glacial ages of the later Cenozoic worked great hardship on the Old Ones, who were driven from their terrestrial cities by the shoggoths." My grandfather had seen one of these cities in a dream—a city of windowless towers. It was almost certainly one of the cities that had fallen to the shoggoths.

Of course, the shoggoths may have been destroyed by the catastrophe that had trapped the Old Ones in a frozen tomb. In that case, what had terrified Inga so much? What was now "obstructing" my attempts to establish contact with the Old Ones? The shoggoths had to be the answer.

What were they trying to achieve? That was also obvious. Until yesterday, they had had nothing to fear. All they had to do was wait until help arrived. Sooner or later, their freedom was inevitable.

Now that Inga had arrived, all that had changed. She had to be silenced.

And what about me? Since I knew the truth, I was the greatest threat of all

I must admit that for a few minutes that thought made my heart beat unpleasantly fast. To calm myself, I went to the door and looked out across the white, flat landscape, at the sun hanging above the horizon. It all looked pleasantly normal. From the kitchen, I could hear the sound of pots and pans as Dave Eng prepared lunch. From the end of Windy Gap, great clouds of steam billowed on the wind, then turned into hail that lashed down on the ice. It was obvious that the rescue operation was going according to plan.

That thought filled me with a sense of urgency. Somehow, this operation had to be stopped—at least until we had time to assess the situation. But how? What would Trask say if I told him I had something important to tell him, and then warned him that he might be letting a genie out of a bottle? He would think I had gone insane—particularly if I explained that the genie was out of an H. P. Lovecraft horror story.

The thought made me smile—and made me aware that, in spite of everything, I was still feeling curiously optimistic. I could simply not believe that our expedition constituted a serious threat to the future of the human race. Ever since I had met Trask, I had experienced a sense of buoyant optimism, a feeling that something marvelous was going to happen. I found it impossible to believe that it was all some delusion. Now, as I looked at the reflection of the sun on the ice, I still had a deep inner certainty that all was well.

Half an hour later, the snow tractor returned. As Trask jumped off the back, I went to meet him.

“How’s it going, sir?”

“Very well, Matthew—excellent. We’ve gone down another fifty feet. What about you?”

“Not so good. Inga’s too tired to do anything.” He looked concerned.

“That’s too bad. She needs time to recover. Tell her to rest as long as it takes.”

As he started to go toward the dining room I said, “There’s something else—”

He turned back. “What else?”

“It’s not just that she’s tired. You’re going to think this sounds absurd ... but she feels that what we’re doing is dangerous.”

“Dangerous?” He looked at me with total bafflement. “What do you mean, dangerous?”

I said, “She thinks there’s something down there.”

He shrugged impatiently. “Of course there’s something down there—the remains of the oldest civilization on Earth. Haven’t you explained?”

“Yes, she understands that.”

“Then what’s worrying her?”

“She says she has a feeling of ... evil.”

“Evil?” He stared at me blankly, and I realized that he didn’t even begin to understand.

I tried another approach.

“She says that if we go ahead, we’ll be releasing a kind of genie from a bottle.”

I saw immediately that I’d said the right thing. As a scientist, he knew all about releasing genies from bottles—the atomic bomb, atmospheric pollution, destruction of the ozone layer. He thought for a moment, then said, “Do you know what she means?”

I decided to duck that question. There was no point, at this stage, in trying to tell him the truth.

“No, sir.”

“All right. Bring her to lunch and I’ll ask her myself.”

But when I told Inga, she shook her head.

“I don’t want to go.”

I knew there was no point in trying to persuade her—I could sense that the thought of talking about it filled her with anxiety and insecurity. I said, “I’ll tell him you’re asleep.”

To my relief, there was no need to lie. When I joined Trask in the dining room, he was looking unexpectedly buoyant, and when I told him Inga didn’t feel hungry, he merely nodded. It was obvious that his incorrigibly active mind had already moved on to other things.

As soon as I sat down opposite him—with my frankfurters and chips—he said, “I’ve been a fool. We should have brought that girl with us in the first place.”

“Yes?” I wondered what he was talking about.

“She could have told us where to start. She can sense what’s under the ice.”

Now I understood. Trask had seen her locate coins hidden under cups, and perform various others feats of extrasensory perception. He now went on to tell me how a dowser had led him to the site of one of the biggest oil finds in the Midwest. It was still financing his researches.

Windy Gap was basically a glacier—a slow-moving torrent of ice. The parts of a glacier move at different velocities, the center moving fastest. If there was a city under the ice, then it had probably been torn apart. We might spend another three weeks getting down to the floor of the valley, and then find nothing. What Trask was hoping was that Inga could tell us if we were wasting our time.

“Do you think she’ll feel well enough to come along this afternoon?”

The thought made my heart sink, but I said, “I’ll go and see how she’s feeling.”

Inga was asleep when I got back. As I peeped in the door, she woke up, then sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes, and looking so pale that I hardly had the heart to tell her why I'd come. But as I sat by her bed, wondering how to begin, she said, "I know. Dr. Trask wants me to come."

I had forgotten she had flashes of telepathy. "How do you feel about it?"

She gave a faint shrug.

"Since he has brought me all this way, I cannot refuse."

I had an idea. "Why don't you and I go ahead and take a look at the place? I'll see if I can borrow the Snobile."

The Snobile was a cross between a sled and a miniature tractor, used for carrying small loads around the camp. Dave Eng was using it to move frozen food when I located it, but he let me take it.

I had never driven it before, but it was simple enough. Wheels with snow tires projected only a few inches below sled runners, so that if the snow was unexpectedly deep it could not sink in. It worked off long-life batteries and made a high, whining noise.

Both wrapped up to the eyebrows, we set out at twelve miles an hour—about the speed of a bicycle—following the tracks of the snow tractor. The vehicle bumped and rolled, throwing us both from side to side, but it didn't bother me. I had a watery feeling of foreboding in the pit of my stomach, and the bumps were a welcome distraction.

It was a calm, bright afternoon with a clear sky, and the wind had dropped. I braked the Snobile within a few feet of the edge of the trench. This now extended about halfway across the valley, being roughly three hundred feet deep at the north cliff face. At the far end, it was merely a ramp sloping down into the trench. The chief danger, obviously, was that the snow tractor would slide down the ramp and end up at the bottom of the hole, so the slope had been made very gentle. I anticipated that, by the time the hole was half a mile deep, the trench would have to extend right across the valley.

We walked across and looked down into the hole—a terrifying sight. The thought of what it would look like when it was six times as deep made me feel dizzy. I looked at Inga and was shocked by her paleness. "Are you all right?"

"I would like to sit down."

We went back to the Snobile, and she almost collapsed into the passenger seat. She sat with her eyes closed, looking very ill.

"Shall I take you back?"

She shook her head, then rested it on the back of the seat. I sat beside her, afraid to speak. Finally she opened her eyes.

"What is it?"

She said, "This place tastes of death."

“Death?” That startled me.

“Can you not feel it?”

I looked at the white snow, glittering in the sun that lay behind us, and shook my head. To me it looked bleak but rather beautiful. She said, “Take off your gloves.”

Wondering what it was all about, I did as she said. She slipped off her own fur gloves, then made me turn toward her, and took both my hands.

Suddenly, I understood.

I had been making the obvious mistake—looking at the landscape and trying to imagine what lay below it. I should have been looking inside myself.

As soon as she took my hands, the watery feeling in my stomach increased and turned into something like nausea. At the same time I became aware of something like a very unpleasant smell—the most horrible smell that I have ever encountered in my life.

I say “something like” because I was perfectly aware that it existed only in my own mind. I knew that, physically speaking, I was breathing in the new-leather smell of the Snobile, and the joint of smoked bacon that Dave Eng had been carrying in the passenger seat when I had borrowed the vehicle. The “other” smell was somehow inside me, like an unpleasant memory that was so clear that merely thinking about it made it come back.

It was like rotting flesh, but far more nauseating—so nauseating that I knew that if I gave way to the temptation to cough, I would end up being sick.

Then I began to understand what Inga meant about the taste of death. This whole valley seemed to be full of it—an appalling sensation of cruelty and evil. Something horrible had taken place here—not once, but many times.

The sensation became so sickening that I had to let go of her hands. It was rather like turning your face away from an accident with a gruesomely mutilated corpse. Even then, it persisted for perhaps half a minute before it slowly faded.

Now I understood why Inga looked so pale. She had been aware of this ever since she had arrived.

There was no point in turning away from it. I wanted to understand it. So I suppressed the queasiness in my stomach, and reached out and took her hands again.

Now it was not merely the smell that I was aware of, but the cruelty. This is what was so frightening. It brought back an afternoon when I was in fifth grade, when we had been studying Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*, and I had been sufficiently curious to go and look him up in the library. Tamburlaine had been a Mongol, a descendant of Genghis Khan, and he was an insane sadist. On one occasion he had had two thousand pris-

oners bricked alive into a living mound; on another he had had three thousand beheaded, and their heads built into a pyramid. The book gave me nightmares for weeks afterward. Now the nightmare seemed to come back, but amplified to a point that made me feel physically drained.

Inga took her hands out of mine, but this time the nightmare refused to go away. I had “tuned in” to it, and it was inescapable.

I climbed out of the Snobile to get some fresh air, knowing that for the rest of my life the smell of smoked bacon and new leather would bring back this nauseating odor of death. Now that I had braced myself against it, it was slightly more bearable, like looking at the remains of someone who has been torn apart in an accident and realizing that, after all, this is only dead flesh. But the stench remained appalling. I cannot describe this, but it might convey some idea if I say that it was like a combination of meat that has been allowed to go rotten, a public toilet that had not been cleaned for years, and an oddly sweet burning smell, like some kind of plastic. It now seemed incredible to me that I had ever been unable to smell it.

I longed to get away from the place, but knew this was impossible. We had to wait for the snow tractor. So I began to walk across the valley toward its south side. This only made it worse. I tried walking back toward the camp, and this improved it slightly. The further I got from this place, the better it seemed to be.

I was amused at the thought of how Lovecraft would have described all this. He would have said something like, “My mind reeled into an abyss of blasphemous horror.” In fact, it was not at all like that. What was so unpleasant about this place was not blasphemous horror, but just sheer nastiness. As my mind recovered its balance, I realized that there was no point in being sickened by it. In the long history of mankind, the Earth has seen some appalling cruelty. Yet man remains basically decent, and civilization goes on. We have to face it and move on from there.

Inga came and joined me. The cold had brought a little color to her cheeks.

I said, “Well, what do you think of it?”

“Of what?”

“Are they digging in the right place?”

She looked down at the trench and said dryly, “They will find what they are looking for.”

It was odd that she could tell what lay under the ice. I asked, “What’s down there?”

“The remains of a city. And a graveyard under the city. But I think it contains more than graves.”

There was no need to ask what she meant. As she spoke, even I could feel it. There was something down there, and it was aware of our presence.

It would have been pointless to ask whether it was benevolent or otherwise. Is an octopus lurking in an underwater cave benevolent, or a python lying along the branch of a tree? I suppose your attitude will depend on whether you happen to be something it likes for dinner.

I pointed at the hole. "What will they find down there?"

She frowned, and lowered her eyes.

"It is ... some kind of science laboratory—"

"An observatory?"

She looked at me with surprise. "Yes, an observatory."

I pointed across the valley. "Why does it feel worse over there?"

She frowned and shook her head. "I don't know."

"Come and see."

Walking toward the south side of the valley cost me an effort; I was soon reeling from the stench and tempted to hold my breath, although I knew this would make no difference. Finally I could go no further and was forced to stand still.

"Well?"

Her face was also wrinkled with disgust.

"Yes, it is very bad. It is ... a place of torment."

"Torment?" But she seemed unable, or unwilling, to elaborate. "I mean, is it dangerous?"

To my surprise, she shook her head. "No. I do not feel it is dangerous."

"And where is it?"

"Where?" At first she did not seem to understand me.

"Is it under our feet?"

"No, no." She pointed. "It is down there, in the side of the mountain."

She was indicating a place slightly to the north of where the landslide had happened.

"How far down?"

She considered, then said, "Perhaps a hundred feet."

"No more?"

"No."

Even now, it was obvious that she had not grasped the significance of what she had said.

I heard the sound of the snow tractor coming toward us. It was late—the time was now about half past three. I said, "Will you tell him that?"

"Yes." But she was obviously puzzled.

A few moments later the tractor arrived, and Trask jumped down, wearing his tartan scarf and baseball cap. He explained they had been delayed while he contacted Little America via satellite. "Anything happening?"

I said, "Inga's found something."

"Good. What?"

“She thinks we’ve started in the wrong place.”

I left her to do the explaining. She pointed across the valley.

“You should have started there.”

Trask said, “Why, what’s there?”

“There is something about a hundred feet down.”

I felt almost guilty at the look of delight that crossed his face. “A hundred feet. What is it?”

“I don’t know. I can’t tell. Some kind of a cave in the face of the cliff.”

Trask beamed at her, then at me. Then he turned to Bill Ruggles. “Get that thing over there.”

Bill, who had not been close enough to hear the conversation, looked dismayed. “Over there? You’re going to start all over again?”

Trask nodded. “That’s right.”

Bill knew him well enough not to argue.

Inga and I climbed into the Snobile and followed the tractor. The center of the valley had less compacted snow than the sides—the wind carried it away as soon as it settled—but the Snobile was inclined to skid on the ice.

The tractor stopped. Trask came back to the Snobile.

“Tell us where it is.”

She got out and pointed. “Somewhere down there.”

They turned the tractor and positioned it with the laser pointing at the face of the mountain, which at this point was almost vertical.

While Inga and I watched from inside the Snobile, Trask got into the trailer and helped Bill and Elmo adjust the angle of the laser. She stared with a kind of horrified fascination as the ruby beam stabbed into the ice like a spear, and steam hissed into the air. The breeze carried it away up the valley. But now there was far less steam, for Trask was directing the beam at an angle of about forty-five degrees, so it cut down through the ice, which then collapsed on top of it, and was in turn dissolved away. The method was sensible. The superheated steam melted the ice above it, which in turn reduced the amount of steam. Instead of wasting the heat in the steam, Trask was putting it to practical use. The violent explosions of trapped steam hastened the process.

It was good for me to concentrate on the laser; I noticed that it seemed to diminish the stench. After a few minutes, I worked out why this was. If I concentrated hard, narrowing my senses, it somehow decreased my sensitivity. Inga had made me “open up” to the psychic atmosphere of Windy Gap, and if I wanted, I could close my mind again, by focusing my senses and exerting my will. This produced exactly the same effect as dissolving clouds—a sense of power behind the eyes.

Inga's psychic powers were, of course, far greater than mine. But they had the disadvantage of being beyond her control. She could not close her mind as I could.

At the same time, I could not open my mind as she could. When I tried it as I sat beside her, doing my best to relax into a state of receptivity, my mind seemed to jam like a door that refuses to open.

This brought me an interesting insight. Ever since the Vassilievskys had taught me that I could dissolve clouds, I had experienced a wonderful sense of optimism and strength—the feeling that I had discovered a secret of which the rest of the human race is unaware: the secret that we can make things happen.

What I could not understand was why the Vassilievskys were unaware of it—after all, they had taught me. Now, sitting next to Inga, I saw the answer. Their powers were natural—they were born with them. So they took them for granted. I had discovered mine by accident. I was like a poor man who inherits a fortune, and who therefore feels far richer than a person who has been born rich.

As I looked at Trask, supervising the operation in his baseball cap and tartan scarf, I saw that he was also in the position of someone who has been “born rich.” With his terrific energy and vitality and purpose, he used his “secret” powers quite automatically, without ever being aware that he was making things happen. Trask could have dissolved clouds if he wanted. Even then, I doubt whether he would have understood the secret. He would have thought it was some natural power that we happen to possess, and would probably have thought it was far less interesting than inventing a new kind of transistor. He would not have understood that it is the most important discovery that human beings can possibly make: a discovery that can enable them to take charge of their fate and become masters of reality.

I had talked to Anton Voronski—the man who had been testing Inga when I met her—about some of his experiments with “psychic powers.” I had remarked that it seemed to me amazing that most scientists refuse to accept the existence of psychic powers—like extrasensory perception and psychokinesis—when the laboratory evidence is overwhelming. Voronski replied, “That is because it is not strong enough. You see, most people only possess about two percent of psychic powers.”

I asked him to elaborate.

“Look, if I put two cards face downward on the table, and ask you to guess which one is the ace of spades, you will stand a fifty percent chance of guessing correctly. If I repeat the experiment a thousand times, you will guess correctly exactly five hundred times. So if you make five hundred and twenty correct guesses, that proves that you possess ESP. But that is not going to convince the skeptics—they will find some reason to dismiss it.

Now, it is my experience that two percent is the average level of ESP. Most people have thought about their Aunt Mildred on the morning they receive a letter from her—but they assume this is chance. They fail to realize that they are using their natural ESP.

I now saw that Voronski had handed me the vital clue. When you do something in a mood of happiness and expectation, it nearly always turns out right. That is because you are putting that “extra two percent” into it. You somehow know it’s going to come out right. When a racing driver is in good form, he somehow knows he’s not going to have an accident. Yet he doesn’t realize that he is using his two percent of “secret powers”, the same powers I used to dissolve clouds.

As I thought about this, I began to feel a marvelous sense of happiness and optimism. I saw that I had stumbled on the answer to the most important problems of human existence. People don’t realize they possess “hidden powers”, just as a few centuries ago they didn’t realize that the blood circulates around the body. When we are “accident prone” and things keep going wrong, we don’t realize that we are making them go wrong, by making negative use of “hidden powers.”

If the whole human race understood about these hidden powers, man would become a completely different kind of creature—a kind of superman.

At this point I was brought back to the present by a billowing cloud of steam that surrounded us and plunged us into a kind of white darkness. When it cleared, I saw the laser had stopped working. I walked over to the trailer to see what was happening and—as I expected—found that the crystal had shattered. For some reason, its power always increased before it burned out—rather like a faulty fuse.

I also took the opportunity to look down into the hole. It was only about twenty feet wide, but already more than sixty feet deep. The rock of the cliff face had fused into a shiny blue color where the laser had struck it. The ice sloped down to the cliff face at an angle of about thirty degrees, and the bottom of the wedge-shaped hole was full of steaming water.

I spoke to Trask, but he didn’t even hear me; he was so absorbed in what he was doing that he was totally oblivious to the outside world. I sensed that nothing would distract him until he had found what he was looking for.

Back in the Snobile, the heater made it oppressively warm. I asked Inga, “Would you like to go back?”

She shook her head. “No. I want to see what they find.”

“It may be hours—or perhaps even tomorrow ...” But I knew it wouldn’t be tomorrow. When Trask got the bit between his teeth, he didn’t give up until he got what he wanted.

The new ruby cylinder was unusually powerful; once again, we were enveloped in a cloud of steam that left the windshield covered in drops.

“What do you think they’re going to find?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know.”

I reached out and took both her hands in mine. This immediately brought back the sickening stench—I found it hard to understand how she could stand it. The sense of evil and cruelty was overpowering—it felt like being trapped in a nightmare. I asked her, “Have you ever known anything like this before?”

“Yes. I once visited Babi Yar where the Jews were murdered in the war. That was a little like this. But not as bad.”

“Was there the same smell?”

“No. Just the smell of fear and misery.”

What was troubling me was who had died. The Old Ones? Or the shoggoths? Or both? Whichever it was, I could sense great hatred as well as cruelty. This battle had been long and bitter. Yet I found it impossible to believe that the Old Ones were capable of cruelty . . .

To try to escape this sense of struggling in a nightmare, I let go of her hands and concentrated my mind until—as abruptly as a bursting bubble—the feeling of helplessness suddenly vanished.

The relief was enormous. Able to think clearly once again, I began to reflect on the problem. If I had been in a bottle for a long time, what would I want to do when I got out? I would begin by thanking those who had released me, and find out what I could do for them. I would want to try and understand them and make them understand me . . .

Or would I? I recalled my image of a human being towering above a mouse. How would I feel in a world of intelligent mice? The answer, I had to admit, was: probably rather bored. Grateful and benevolent, perhaps, but bored.

That was a disturbing thought. The next one was even more so. It struck me that whenever civilized man has discovered a simpler, more primitive society, he has destroyed it. I am not now speaking about the Spaniards who invaded Mexico and enslaved the Aztecs, or the Americans who drove the Indians off their ancestral lands, but even the modern students of anthropology who have discovered unknown tribes in the heart of Borneo or Sumatra. For all their good intentions, all their determination not to impose their “civilized” values on the natives, they have always devastated the culture they were trying to preserve, just as surely as the early European explorers decimated the Maoris of New Zealand by bringing smallpox.

The Old Ones might be entirely benevolent. But could they avoid bringing disasters on the human race, merely by being more powerful and

intelligent? With a sinking feeling, I suddenly realized that that reflection changed the whole perspective of what we were doing.

To shake off these doubts and perplexities, I went to see how the work was progressing. They had pulled back the tractor to cut into the ice at a less steep angle, but even so, it was now at least forty-five degrees. Elmo—who was now controlling the laser—would point it at the bottom of the slope, releasing a hissing cloud of steam and a shower of sparks as it struck the cliff face. Then, when the hole had been deepened by ten feet or so, he would concentrate on the ice of the slope, cutting away its surface until it ran straight and level up to the cliff face. Then he would lower the angle of the laser and cut another ten-foot hole.

The problem, I could see, was that the slope would soon be approaching sixty degrees. When that happened, they would have to pull back again, and evaporate thousands of tons of ice in order to make it less steep. It was now nearly seven o'clock in the evening. At this rate, it would take until midnight.

I was about to turn back to the Snobile when Elmo lowered the angle of the laser and plunged us into an exceptionally choking cloud of fog. I paused, waiting for the sharp hiss and the shower of sparks as the beam struck the cliff. But this time there were no sparks, yet from where I was standing, at the eastern edge of the hole, the steam seemed to be thicker than ever. I called out to Elmo to hold on. He switched off the beam, and as the vapor cleared I saw that the laser had gouged deep into the cliff face, creating a cavity that looked as if it had been made by a huge dentist's drill.

I ran back to the Snobile, where Inga had fallen into a doze, and shook her. "Come and look." I took her by the hand and led her to the edge of the hole.

Trask asked her, "Is this what you meant?"

She shook her head, still dazed with sleep. "I don't know. I think so."

Elmo said, "Shall I go down there?"

Even I could see that he would break his neck on the sheer slope of ice.

Trask said, "No. We'll have to get ropes."

But Bill Ruggles had a better idea.

"If we move the laser to one side, we can cut grooves in the ice."

This is what we did. The laser was taken to the eastern edge of the hole, so it pointed across the slope. Then it was turned down to a tenth of its power, and a series of parallel grooves were cut across the ice. It took half an hour, but finally we had a series of shallow trenches, between six inches to a foot deep, at intervals of a few yards.

Trask was the first to lower himself over the edge; Elmo and Bill Ruggles followed. I saw that Inga was hesitating.

"Don't you want to see?"

She shook her head. I was too excited to stay with her, and followed the others.

We should have spent more time cutting the grooves; although they prevented us from sliding like a toboggan to the bottom—and probably breaking both legs against the cliff—they were themselves as smooth as an ice rink, while the width of the ice in between them meant we landed in each one with a jarring crash that knocked the breath out of us. By the time I reached the bottom, my face was scratched and I had lost both gloves.

The others were peering into the hole, which was six feet wide and perhaps ten feet deep. It was difficult to tell whether it was a cave, or merely a kind of hollow in the cliff face. Trask finally gave orders to return to the top, a scramble that was worse than the one coming down. At least I recovered my gloves on the way.

Trask told Elmo to deepen the hollow with a low power beam, and to widen it at the same time. Ten minutes later the steam cleared to reveal a projecting ledge, and we knew that we had found a cave.

I must admit that I was tired—my lack of sleep was catching up with me. Inga seemed oddly listless and indifferent. But Trask was obviously driven like a demon by a tremendous suppressed excitement—if we had all insisted on returning to camp, he would have continued alone.

Once again we scrambled down the slope—Bill Ruggles made this part of the task easier by producing ice axes with spikes on the back that bit into the ice. The last twenty feet or so were the most dangerous, since it involved dropping down on to the ledge. It would have been safer to leave it until morning—we were all too tired to pay proper attention to safety—but no one would have dared to suggest it.

Finally, we all stood in the cave entrance. The roof stretched high above us—about twenty-five feet—and the ice had been melted to a depth of perhaps a dozen yards. It was extremely dark—since we were at the bottom of a hole—and a downward-sloping wall of ice still blocked the cave.

We all had the same thought—that perhaps, after all this effort, we had merely found an empty cave that had filled up with water and then frozen. Then Elmo gave a shout. He was shining his torch in the ice to the right of the cave, and embedded in it, at a depth of a few feet, there was an object that looked like some kind of artifact. Task shone his powerful light on it—the ice was as clear as glass—and gave a chuckle of satisfaction. What we were looking at was an axe head—an enormous axe head, about three feet across. Bill and Elmo used their ice axes to chop their way into it. When it had been freed and dragged into the cave entrance, we could see that it was big enough to pole-axe a mammoth. The surface was blackened, so it was impossible to tell what kind of metal it was made from, but its sheer weight suggested iron or bronze. Moreover, on the far side of the hole that had once

held the haft, there was a broken surface, as if this had once been a double-headed axe, like the ones found at the Palace of Minos in Crete.

As we looked down on it, we all recognized that we had made one of the major archaeological discoveries of the century. It was one of those moments when a shared emotion seems to unite a group with a kind of telepathy.

Bill said, "Congratulations, Dr. Trask. You've done it again."

Trask smiled modestly. "Only with your help." He looked around him. "I think this deserves to be called the Cave of the Giants."

While Bill took a photograph of Trask and Elmo with the axe head propped up between them, I picked up Trask's torch and went to investigate. Since the laser had cut down at an angle, the face of the ice sloped backward, forming a miniature cave about eight feet deep. I crawled into this and shone the torch into the clear ice. Although it was difficult to be sure, I had the impression that I was looking through a wall of ice—when the torch was moved, the light seemed to be reflected off another surface a few feet away. I called Trask and handed him the torch. He shone it through the ice, and confirmed my impression that only a few feet of ice divided us from the inside of the cave.

The simplest method of gaining access would have been the laser, but unfortunately, it had already reached its limit—we were going to have to lower it by several feet to enable it to reach deeper into the cave. To do this we would need more manpower, and Trask called the camp on his radio to tell Chet Morison to join us. Meanwhile, Elmo began cautiously hacking into the ice just above floor level—in case he caused the ice above to collapse. (If it had, it would have squashed him like a fly.) Bill and I removed the chunks of fallen ice by hand. When it became clear that the ice was stable, Bill and I joined in. Up above us, Trask and Chet Morison were using the laser to create a slope leading down to the ramp, but it was going to be a long, slow business.

Then, as all three of us hacked into the ice, it began to look as if the laser would be unnecessary. We had created a tunnel about six feet high (at its entrance) and six feet wide—some of the chunks of ice we brought down weighed more than a hundredweight.

Our blows had made the ice opaque, so we could no longer calculate how far we had to go. But we all knew it could not be far, and chopped away with increasing energy, each hoping to be the first to break through. In fact, it was Elmo. A tremendous underhand blow caused a hole to appear just above the height of the floor. We all began to cheer and laugh aloud.

Trask called down to ask what had happened, and when we told him, came scrambling down at a dangerous pace. By that time, a few more blows had enlarged the opening until it was three feet across.

Bill leaned in and shone his torch—then came staggering back. “God, it stinks!”

As the nauseating stench came filtering out, we all fell back to the mouth of the cave, where there was clean air. Chet Morison began to retch.

I was the first to recover. Since I had been smelling it most of the afternoon, I was already more or less accustomed to it. Besides, this stench was by no means as foul as it had been when Inga had first held my hands—this might have been nothing worse than an unclean butcher’s shop in which the blood had turned putrescent.

I picked up Elmo’s torch, went back to the hole, and shone it through. The powerful beam shone on the rear wall of the cave, about fifty yards away, then on something that looked like animal carcasses piled against it. I stayed there for several minutes, playing the torch around the cave’s interior, then decided it was safe to climb in through the hole. Controlling my nausea by concentrating, I took a few steps across the level floor.

Trask’s voice said, “My God, what are they?” His own light shone over the carcasses.

I already knew the answer to his question.

“I think they’re called shoggoths.” He climbed in through the hole.

“How do you know?”

“Lovecraft wrote about them.”

“Lovecraft?” He had obviously never heard the name. “Who is he?”

“A writer who had nightmares.”

Trask was advancing across the floor, and I admired his courage. These things filled me with the same sense of nastiness that I had experienced earlier in the day, and I felt no desire to approach any closer. Finally, shame led me to suppress my revulsion and follow Trask. He asked, “But what are they?”

“Frankenstein’s monsters.”

“Oh, nonsense . . .” Then his voice trailed away.

He was looking down at one of the carcasses that lay halfway across the floor. It was headless, and one of its upper limbs was missing—the limb was lying nearby on the floor.

A shoggoth is almost impossible to describe, since it lacks the symmetry of a human body. They are big, and even without a head, this one was twelve feet tall. It has six limbs, the lower ones squat and powerful, like a caricature of an ape, the upper ones long and sinuous, more like tentacles. But the “tentacles” also had smaller tentacles, giving them the appearance of some kind of root. The whole body has a disorganized lumpy appearance, like some grotesque potato that bears only a freak resemblance to a human being.

I bent down and touched the gray-green flesh. I expected it to be frozen solid, like a carcass in a butcher’s freezer, but it yielded slightly under my

finger, like some kind of leather or plastic. This was clearly quite unlike human or animal flesh, and I recalled Leiber's comment that the shoggoths were made of a mixture of animal and vegetable matter. The substance that had leaked out of the severed neck looked like yellow pus. Elmo startled us by shouting, "You'd better come out—this ice is cracking."

But before we could even start to move, it had happened—the immense block of ice above the cave entrance came crashing down, shaking the whole cave. Our blows had weakened its hold on the roof above, and we were lucky it had not collapsed at the time.

As far as Trask and I were concerned, this made no real difference—we were in no danger. No doubt we could have clambered up over the ice and crawled through the gap at the top. But that would have been both dangerous and pointless, since we merely had to wait for the laser to free us in due course.

Bill Ruggles shouted to ask if we were all right. Trask called, "We're fine—just get us out when you're ready." Then he turned his attention back to the corpse.

"What is it—a kind of Abominable Snowman?"

"As far as I know, it's a kind of artifact. You could say it's a robot."

"You mean it was never alive?"

I had to admit, "I'm afraid I just don't know the answer to that."

Trask was advancing to the back of the cave. We passed what looked like two more bodies, then realized it was one body that had been torn in half. This shoggoth was immense—it must have originally been twenty feet tall. It had a head—a kind of bulbous mound rising out of humped shoulders—and it also had eyes—a series of yellowish globes that ran around the midpart of the head. These seemed to have eyelids both at the bottom and the top, and most of them were closed. As far as I could tell, there was no mouth, and the only thing that looked like a nose was a hole just below the eyes. Strange entrails, like bunches of blue rope, projected from its upper half, and the lower half was correspondingly hollow. I found myself wondering what force could have torn such a huge creature in two like a rag doll.

Against the rear wall of the cave, there were at least two dozen carcasses. They lay in a tangle of limbs, as if they had been driven like leaves in some tremendous gale. It reminded me of a photograph I had once seen of a pile of corpses in a German concentration camp at the end of World War II.

Trask, his voice sounding incongruously brisk and businesslike, said, "But if these were robots, who made them?"

"According to Lovecraft, the original inhabitants of the Earth—the Old Ones."

I was aware that it sounded absurd, and that under normal circumstances Trask would have wondered about my sanity. But faced with these grotesque carcasses, I could see that he would have believed me if I had told him they were Martians.

The strangest thing about the shoggoths was that they were all unlike. Every one of them was in some way different from the others. Some had barrel-shaped bodies, with the middle limbs growing out of the sides. Some were broad and flat, and had eyes like rectangular slits. One even had two heads. I felt that they resembled vegetables rather than animals—some kind of root vegetable, like a potato or rutabaga, or even a Jerusalem artichoke, with its knobbly and unpredictable appearance. In some, the lower limbs even looked like roots, tapering to a point. I had the impression that these things had been created almost arbitrarily, like Play-Doh figures molded by a child.

Trask asked, "How do you think they died?"

To me the answer seemed obvious. "I think they were killed by the Old Ones."

"Any idea why?"

I had the feeling that he felt compelled to go on asking me questions, even though he knew I could only guess at the answers. In this case, though, I knew the answer. "Because they were in revolt."

"And where are these Old Ones now?"

I pointed downward. "Somewhere down there, under half a mile of ice."

It took him some time to absorb this. I could see he was stunned, and could imagine what he was feeling. He had expected to discover the remains of a maritime civilization dating from about 7000 B.C. Instead, he was looking at the remains of a tragedy that had taken place before *Homo sapiens* appeared on Earth.

He asked finally, "How long have you known about all this?"

"The Old Ones? Ever since we came here."

"How did you know?"

This was no time or place to explain, so I said, "I just felt their presence."

"And Inga?"

"Yes. She can also feel them."

Again he was silent. He said finally, "How do you think these 'Old Ones' died?"

It seemed pointless not to be honest with him. "I don't believe they are dead."

"Not dead?" He was not as startled as I expected. Or perhaps he simply had more self-control. "How can that be?"

"Don't forget these things are not human." I pointed at the carcasses. "Like these things."

"Yes, but nothing could remain alive under half a mile of ice."

"Some fishes do."

"That's merely for the winter. Nothing could live for thousands of years. It contradicts all the laws of nature."

I nodded at the carcasses. "But so do these."

He shook his head. "That simply does not follow. What you say is not logical."

I observed a tone of irritability, and decided not to contradict him. Instead I tried to turn it into a joke.

"I think I'm going to freeze if I stay in here much longer."

The cave was like a refrigerator. It had been cold outside, but the sun, and the steam from the ice, had kept the temperature around freezing point. In here it must have been twenty below. And we had already been trapped there for about half an hour. Trask went to the debris of fallen ice that blocked the entrance and called, "Anything happening there?"

Elmo's voice came back. "They're nearly ready. You'd better stand well back."

We retreated to the rear of the cave and stood against the wall. One of the creatures, which had lost two of its limbs, lay a few feet away from us, the yellow puslike substance forming a pool around its body like a melted ice cream. I noted between its lower limbs—which were sprawled apart—a gaping hole that seemed to be surrounded by thicker flesh, like a mouth, while inside there were a few elongated white spines that looked as if they might be teeth. I pointed it out to Trask, who knelt beside it and shone his torch into it.

"Yes, it seems to be some kind of mouth. I wonder if these things gave rise to the legend of troglodytes"

It struck me as ironic that, after half an hour, we were both taking these creatures for granted, when the first sight of them had been such a shock.

As I stood there in the semidarkness, one thing suddenly became clear to me. These twisted carcasses explained the sense of evil that Inga had felt as soon as she arrived. I could imagine the same kind of butchery taking place all over the valley—shoggoths being slaughtered like cattle, but with a deliberate cruelty that sprang from rage and vindictiveness.

In that moment of insight, I was also forced to face the truth that I had been trying to ignore since Inga had taken my hands: that the Old Ones were not the wise, benevolent creatures I had assumed—and that Lovecraft had come to believe they were. They were capable of the same kind of brutal ferocity and sadism that had shocked me when I had read about Tamburlaine. Perhaps, of course, it had been justified. Perhaps the shoggoths had treated them in the same way. But looking at these horribly mutilated corpses, one thing was clear: that the Old Ones were monsters.

A hissing sound told us that the laser had been activated. They must have been using it on low power—otherwise the beam would have cut straight through the ice. What happened now was that the ice was suddenly illuminated from inside, as if by a red sunset, then began to collapse. At that point, the cave filled with steam. We both began to cough. Then the laser turned off. Elmo's voice called, "Are you O.K.?"

We both shouted yes. Moments later, the ice reddened again, and more steam surged around us. It was by no means an unpleasant sensation, for we had both been frozen to the bone, and the steam turned the cave into something like a sauna. I noticed water flowing across the floor, then my feet began to feel warm. I knelt and put my finger in it, then snatched it away—the water was near boiling point.

I looked around for something to stand on, but there were no ledges or fallen rocks. Reluctantly, I clambered on to the nearest body, and felt rubbery flesh yielding under my boots. I almost fell, and had to lean back against the wall of the cave. The steam made it impossible to see what Trask was doing.

Elmo shouted, "Are you all right?"

Trask's voice called, "Yes."

"Just once more."

I noticed that the stench of rotting flesh had suddenly increased, and I felt my boots sink into the body underneath me. At that point I realized that it had no bones. The shoggoths, like the Old Ones, were a kind of mollusk.

Again the cave filled with hissing steam—this time far more of it. Another wave of hot water flooded across the floor. Then Elmo's voice—suddenly clear—shouted, "Where are you?" We heard his footsteps splashing through the water.

I shouted, "Be careful." It had suddenly struck me that he might stumble into one of the shoggoths, and that it would be an extremely unpleasant shock. A moment later I knew it had happened—Elmo gave one of the most appalling screams I had ever heard.

To my right, Trask sounded as if he were choking. I called, "Dr. Trask," but there was no reply. I decided I had better go and see what was happening. But, as I tried to climb off the shoggoth, I felt something grip my ankle. I looked down and saw that a tentacle was winding around my leg, and that the yellow eyes of the creature I had been standing on were staring up at me.

At that point I also began to scream, and to kick out frantically. I yelled even louder as another tentacle wound around the other leg, gripping with frightening strength. I bent down and struck out with the torch at one of the yellow eyes. It squelched like jelly, and as one tentacle released me, I fell sideways, tearing my other leg free, and ran for the door. In my panic I can-

noned into somebody—perhaps Elmo—and kept on running, until I tripped and fell heavily onto the ice outside the cave. I was scrambling to my feet when I realized that Bill Ruggles was blocking my path. When he asked, “Where’s Dr. Trask?” I pointed frantically behind me.

As Bill ran into the cave, shouting Trask’s name, I was suddenly ashamed of my panic and went after him. Then I saw why Trask was not answering. He was being gripped by a tentacle that had wound around his neck, and his face was purple. All around him, the mass of shoggoths was heaving and struggling like a giant heap of maggots, as if those underneath were trying to push their way out. Even the shoggoth that had been torn into two halves seemed to be moving, and the headless one was crawling on all fours. Incredibly, the severed limb was writhing like a blind snake.

I saw Bill slash with his ice axe at a tentacle that wound itself around his ankle, then drop the axe to grab the tentacle around Trask’s throat with both hands. I ran forward to help him, seizing the fallen axe and hacking at a tentacle that had wound around his waist, and another that seized my leg. For a despairing moment, I had a sudden conviction that we were all going to die. Then Bill was dragging Trask across the floor toward the cave mouth, and somebody was helping him, and I tore myself free, leaving a boot behind, and ran for the door, and sprinted up the slope toward the tractor as if I were running downhill.

Bill and Chet Morison arrived moments later, dragging Trask under the armpits. In the confusion that followed, it was difficult to tell what was happening, except that Inga flung her arms around me, and then quickly let go as she realized that I was covered from head to foot with a kind of yellow slime.

The flash of the laser almost blinded me—I was standing within six inches of the end of the barrel—and another great cloud of steam hissed up to the sky. Elmo was pointing it toward the cave, and from the shower of sparks, he must have turned up the beam to maximum strength.

I sat down on the ground, my teeth chattering, suddenly feeling very weak. Inga was trying to pull me by the arm, shouting in my ear, “You must come back!” but I shook my head. I just wanted to be left alone.

It was impossible to see through the billowing steam, but I thought I saw one of the shoggoths trying to climb up the slope, then dissolving like melting wax as the laser hit it. Then, to my bewilderment, Elmo raised the beam so it pointed up the mountain. I understood the reason only when an avalanche of snow and ice began to crash down into the valley. A piece of flying ice cut my cheek, and I suddenly accepted the wisdom of returning to the Snobile.

I tried to climb into the driver's seat, but Inga refused to let me, and took the wheel. Then, bumping and lurching, we drove up Windy Gap at a speed that made my head bang against the canvas roof.

I was still shivering violently, and the foul smell of the slime was so disgusting in the restricted space that I had to fight against being sick. As soon as we stopped in front of my hut, I crawled out on all fours and vomited on the ice. Then I went and lay down on the floor of my hut, refusing all Inga's attempts to make me undress and climb into bed, and fell asleep. When I woke up, she had covered me with the eiderdown, and had placed a pillow under my cheek. My head was splitting apart, and I felt as if I had the worst hangover of my life.

When I looked at my watch, I was amazed to see that it was eleven o'clock in the morning. The room was full of the horrible stench of the slime, and I pulled off my clothes and threw them outside the door. Everything in the camp seemed quiet, and there was no one around. I took a shower, scrubbing my hands and face to remove the slime, which had set into a kind of gelatin—it clogged up the shower outlet. Then I threw the pillow and eiderdown back on the bed, climbed in, and fell asleep again.

Inga woke me up at five in the afternoon with some coffee. I still felt oddly weak, as if I had been poisoned, but I succeeded in drinking the coffee. At least the stench had decreased. I asked her, "What's happening?"

"Nothing. But Dr. Trask is in bed."

"Is he all right?"

"Yes, but he cannot speak."

Trask, it seemed, had been vomiting all night, and was now asleep. It looked as if Bill Ruggles had been just in time—Trask had been unconscious when they dragged him out of the cave, and Chet had had to apply some kind of heart massage before he began to breathe normally. I said, "What about the cave?"

"It is sealed up."

"Did you see the things inside it?"

"No. But I heard about them. Were they the Old Ones?"

I stared at her in amazement. "The Old Ones? Of course not. They were their servants, the shoggoths." Then I realized that she knew nothing about Lovecraft or the shoggoths, and had to explain.

It was as I explained that I suddenly began to understand. So far, I had had no time to think what it all meant. Now I found myself asking myself questions that had not struck me at the time—and realizing that the answers were even worse than I had suspected.

I had not asked myself, for example, what the shoggoths were doing in a cave nearly half a mile above the valley floor. Now I realized that it was a prison—a virtually inaccessible prison, with a sheer drop below and a sheer

cliff face above. It could be reached by the Old Ones, because they possessed a kind of limpetlike base that was intended for clinging to rocks. But for the shoggoths, it was escape-proof.

Why should the Old Ones want to torture them? That answer only came to me later—as I lay awake in the middle of the night. The shoggoths were virtually unkillable. Like worms and lizards and other primitive organisms, they could simply regrow damaged limbs or amputated parts. I now recalled that the shoggoth who had been torn in half was taller than the others—it had obviously continued to grow even after it was too badly damaged to repair itself.

How could “unkillable” creatures be kept in a state of subjection and, if necessary, punished? There was only one answer: by sheer cruelty, by inflicting hideous damage. I could not forget that, even after its head had been torn off, one shoggoth remained alive. In that case, was it really cruelty? On reflection, I could not doubt it. These things must have had some ability to feel pain, since pain is a safety mechanism without which a living creature would perish. To subdue their virtually indestructible creations, their masters had turned cruelty into a science.

There was a price to pay. It is impossible to become an expert in inflicting pain without turning into a sadist. This is what had happened to the Old Ones. In their ruthless Darwinian world, there was no room for benevolence. The Old Ones slaughtered and tortured the shoggoths, and the shoggoths—when they got the opportunity—probably slaughtered and tortured the Old Ones. That was why the valley reeked of cruelty.

That was also why the human race could never afford to release them. Nature had sealed them in a tomb of ice, and there they had to stay. If, at some future date, the polar ice caps show signs of melting away, then our descendants will have to face the problem, and make up their minds about whether to destroy them or establish some kind of cooperation. But the latest long-term projections suggest that the polar ice caps will remain frozen for at least another hundred thousand years. Perhaps by that time the Old Ones will no longer be the most intelligent creatures on Earth.

Later that evening, I felt well enough to go to the dining room and eat a bowl of soup. After that, I went in to see Trask. He was sitting up in bed, and his face was covered with petechial hemorrhages. His voice was weak and hoarse, but I soon sensed that he was more vigorous than he looked.

He began by reaching out and shaking my hand. “I want to say thank you.”

“For what?” I was astonished—I was still feeling guilty about leaving him behind in the cave.

“You were right and I was wrong.”

I said awkwardly, "It's nice of you to say so." But I felt this was all a misunderstanding.

Trask said, "Tomorrow we're all going back to Little America."

"Are you sure you're well enough?"

He shrugged impatiently. "Of course. And I don't want to stay in this place an hour longer than I have to. But before we go, I'm going to have to ask you to promise you'll keep silent."

"Of course."

"I mean really silent. With your father, your mother, your grandfather. You understand why?"

He went into a paroxysm of coughing, and I had to persuade him to stop talking. In any case, it was unnecessary for him to explain. I knew exactly what he meant to say: that if this leaked out, it would mean worldwide publicity and worldwide curiosity. Within a year or two, perhaps sooner than that, there would be another expedition to Windy Gap. And this time they might let the genie out of the bottle.

That, thank God, has not happened. Now, forty years later, Trask is dead, Elmo Jarnefelt has just died in Finland, Bill Ruggles is a retired multimillionaire, Dave Eng has bought a farm in Ohio, and Chet Morison owns a fishing fleet in San Diego. And for the past ten years, Inga and I have lived in the apartment above the laboratory that used to belong to Trask before he married.

Why do I tell this story when it might be best to keep silent? Because I need to explain how I could leave Windy Gap with a clear conscience. When, on that plane journey back to America, I told Trask about the Old Ones, he was appalled at the thought of leaving intelligent creatures trapped beneath the ice—perhaps for another million years. Yet when I had told him the whole story, he agreed that there is no alternative.

The truth is that we had no right to make the decision to release them without first consulting the best minds, the keenest intelligences, of our own race. And when they had considered the problem objectively, I believe that they would agree we made the right decision.

For let us suppose for a moment that the Old Ones are the benevolent, trustworthy, kindly creatures I had assumed, and that we could trust them not to use their power and intelligence to enslave mankind.

Try to imagine what would happen if we had released them, and they had indeed proved to be as wise and humane as I thought. By the law of superior vitality and dominance, they would soon have become the trusted advisers of mankind, and, in a short time, our rulers. We, of course, would be delighted to leave our worst social problems in their hands. All human beings long for a father figure, someone to advise and protect and look after

them. There would be no more wars, crime would vanish, and the wealth of the Earth would be distributed wisely and justly

But mankind would also have lost the gains of ten thousand years of evolution at a stroke. For evolution consists of the power to control ourselves, to govern ourselves, to take the consequences of our own actions. The aim of human evolution is for every individual to achieve a high degree of self-mastery.

At present we are children, and our purpose is to grow up. This can only be done by taking responsibility, and, above all, by learning to concentrate. Dr. Johnson once remarked, "The knowledge that he is to be hanged in a fortnight concentrates a man's mind wonderfully." I had learned that man possesses an "unknown power", and that the key to unlocking this unknown power lies in concentration.

You may reply that placing our practical problems in the hands of benevolent father-figures would give us even more time to learn to concentrate. Unfortunately, this is not the way evolution operates. Human history has been virtually a nonstop crisis—ice ages, floods, earthquakes, predators, wars—and he has achieved his present level of consciousness by continuous struggle. Without struggle and effort, man tends to slip into laziness and mediocrity.

I am totally convinced that we are now on the point of an evolutionary leap to a higher phase—a phase in which we shall recognize that the power to control our own destiny lies in the mind itself. And the key to the "unknown power" lies literally behind our eyes.

So even assuming the best possible scenario, in which the Old Ones prove to be benevolent and trustworthy, their introduction into the human story at this point would be a disaster. In effect, human kind would be back in the nursery.

But having thought endlessly about those events of those last twenty-four hours in Windy Gap, I cannot believe that we would have been confronting this "best possible scenario." In retrospect, it is clear that the Old Ones deceived me. They set out to convince me that they were kindly and benevolent creatures, far too intelligent to be capable of brutality or ruthlessness. The cave of the shoggoths taught me otherwise—that they are as impatient and ruthless as any tyrant in human history, and that they react just as badly to any attempt to thwart their will. I believe that the human race would have come to hate the Old Ones just as much as the shoggoths did.

I also believe that the Old Ones sensed the coming change in human consciousness, and that it increased their sense of urgency. They wanted to escape before mankind grew beyond their control. Only chance—and the arrival of Inga—thwarted them. I believe—and Trask agreed with me—that the human race would be stupid to consider taking that risk again.

We returned to find New York in the grip of the worst winter for twenty years. Yet in comparison with the South Pole, it seemed pleasantly mild. Strangely enough, no one ever showed the slightest curiosity about what had happened in Antarctica. Colonel Leroy accepted Trask's word that it had been a waste of time. Trask's shareholders accepted that he had failed to find oil. And the press did not even bother to try to interview us.

The only loser, in retrospect, is Hapgood. His lost civilization still lies under the ice of Antarctica, and since his book has been out of print for over half a century, it seems unlikely that it will ever be found.

About “At the Mountains of Murkiness”

Arthur C. Clarke was once a mere fan like you and me. He enjoyed the greats, too, before becoming one. One way he enjoyed them was by poking fun at them. The present piece, “At the Mountains of Murkiness”, proves that. It is one of the classic Lovecraft spoofs. As one would expect from Clarke, it is well written and effective, given the effect it aims at. One must admit it is characteristic of fannish humor, then and now, relying chiefly on the “Mad-Libs” method of jokesting: Take the familiar outline of, in this case, a Lovecraftian story, then plug in some silly words at pivotal points.

But this is far from the only “Lovecraftian” piece in Clarke’s canon. Haven’t you noticed how *2001: A Space Odyssey* mirrors Lovecraftian themes? In it, excavators discover a piece of cyclopean masonry in a far-flung locale (no less than the Moon), and its discovery, deemed too shattering in import to be made public, gradually leads to the discovery of the origin of the human race as the result of tinkering by an advanced alien race, those who left the Monolith(s) as their calling card.



At the Mountains of Murkiness

or, From Lovecraft to Leacock

by Arthur C. Clarke

With the recent death of Professor Nutty in the Scraggem Mental Hospital I am left the only survivor of the ill-fated expedition he led to the Antarctic barely five years ago. The true history of that expedition has never until now been related, and only the report that another attempt is being made to investigate the unholy mysteries of Mount Morgue has prompted me to write this warning, even at the risk of shattering such sanity as I still possess.

It was in the early summer of 1940 that our expedition, which had been sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Potato Peelers, of Murphy Mansions, in the City of London, arrived at the desolate shores of Limburger Land. We were equipped with planes, radio, motor sleighs, and everything necessary for our work and comfort, and every one of us felt eager to begin our work at once—even Dr. Slump, the Professor of Contagious Neuroses.

I vividly recollect the day we set out toward the mountains. The polar sun was shining low over the ice fields when our line of tractor-sleighs started off inland. Soon we had lost sight of the sea, though we were still in radio communication with our base, and before long were passing over regions which no man had ever visited, nor, I trust, will ever visit again. The coast had seemed desolate and dreary enough, but the wilderness of snow and ice through which we were passing was a nightmare of jagged, frozen spires and bottomless crevasses. As we pressed onward a vague malaise crept over every one of us. A feeling of uneasiness, of strange disquiet, began to make itself felt, apparently radiating from the very rocks and crags that lay buried beneath their immemorial covering of ice. It was such a sensation as one might have felt on entering a deserted building where some all-but-forgotten horror had long ago occurred.

On the fourth day we sighted the mountains, still many miles away. When we pitched our camp at the end of the day there were only twenty miles between us and the nearer summits, and more than once in the night we were awakened by sudden tremors in the ground and the distant thunder of mighty explosions from still-active volcanoes.

It took us two days to cover the remaining twenty miles, for the terrain was contorted into a frightful series of chasms and beetling crags, resembling the more contorted regions of the Moon rather than any portion of this Earth. Presently, however, the ground became less convulsed, and we pushed on with renewed vigor. Before long we found ourselves in a narrow valley running straight toward the mountains, now only four or five miles away. I was hurrying along at the head of the party when suddenly there was a sharp crackling noise together with a violent tremor of the Earth, and the ground just ahead of me dropped out of sight. To my horror, I found myself standing on the edge of a frightful precipice looking down into a chasm thousands of feet deep, filled with the steam and smoke of a hundred geysers and bubbling lava pools. Surely, I thought, the mad Arab, Abdul Hashish, must have had such a spot in mind when he wrote of the hellish valley of Oopadoop in that frightful book the forbidden *Penttechnicon*.

We did not remain long at the edge of the valley, for at any instant the treacherous ground might subside once more. The next day one of the planes arrived and landed on the snows nearby. A small party was chosen to make the first flight, and we took off toward the mountains. My companions were Dr. Slump, Professor Palsy, and Major McTwirp, who was piloting the machine.

We soon reached the chasm, and flew along its length for many miles. Here and there in the depths were suggestive formations, partly veiled by steam, that puzzled us greatly, but the treacherous winds made it impossible to descend into the valley. I am certain, however, that once I saw something moving down in those hellish depths—something large and black, that disappeared before I could focus my glasses on it.

Shortly afterward we landed on a vast field of snow at the foot of Mount Morgue itself. As we shut off the engines an uncanny silence descended upon us. The only sound was the crashing of avalanches, the hissing of gigantic geysers in the valley, and the distant concussions of erupting volcanoes.

We descended from the plane and surveyed the desolate scene. The mountains towered before us, and a mile further up the slopes the ground was strangely bare of snow. It seemed, moreover, that the tumbled shapes had more than a suggestion of order about them, and suddenly we realized that we were looking at the ruins our expedition had come so many thousands of miles to investigate. In half an hour we had reached the nearest of

them, and saw what some of us had already surmised, that this architecture was not the work of any race of men

We paused for a moment at the all but ruined entrance and the sight of those hideous carvings on the fallen lintel all but drove us back. Low bas-reliefs, they reminded us of some nightmare surrealist creation of Dali or Dobbi—save that they gave the impression that they were not the representations of dreams but of horrible reality.

After a few steps, the feeble Antarctic light had dimmed to absolute darkness, and we switched on our torches hastily. We had gone at least a mile from the entrance when we decided that we had better return. We had taken the precaution of blazing our trail by means of chalk marks on the walls, so that we had no doubt that (if nothing stopped us) we could find our way back to the surface. However, Dr. Slump was adamant.

"I insist," he cackled, "that we progress at least another mile. After all, we have a plentiful supply of torches, and we have not yet discovered anything of exceptional archaeological importance—though I, personally, am finding your reactions of the greatest interest. Poor McTwirp here has become positively green about the gills in the last ten minutes. Do you mind if I measure your pulse? Oh, well, you needn't be rude about it. I am also amused by the way Palsy and Firkin keep looking over their shoulders and shining their torches into corners. Really, for a group of distinguished scientists you are behaving in a most primitive manner! Your reactions under these unusual but by no means unprecedented conditions will certainly be included in the appendix to my forthcoming 'Hysteria and its Pathological Manifestations.' I wonder what you would do if I were to—"

At this point, Dr. Slump let rip with the most piercing scream it has been my misfortune to hear since the last revival of *King Kong*. It echoed from wall to wall, left the chamber through the holes in the floor, and wandered for minutes through subterranean passages far below. When it finally returned, with a monstrous progeny of echoes, Professor Palsy was lying in a coma on the floor and Major McTwirp had disguised himself as a bas-relief and was propped up in one corner.

"You blithering idiot!" I cried, when the infernal row had screeched out of the chamber for the second time. But Dr. Slump was too busy taking notes to answer me.

At last silence, and a few bits of ceiling, fell. Slowly the other two revived and with difficulty I restrained them from slaughtering the doctor. Finally, Professor Palsy started the return to the surface, with the rest of us following close behind. We had gone a few hundred yards when from far away came a sound, faint but clear. It was a slimy, slithering noise that froze us to the marrow—and it came from ahead. With a low moan, Dr. Slump sagged to the ground like a desiccated jellyfish.

"Wh-what is it?" whispered McTwirp.

"Ss-sshush!" replied Palsy, giving creditable imitation of the Death of St. Vitus. "It may hear you!"

"Get into a side passage, quickly!" I whispered.

"There isn't one!" quavered the Major.

Dragging Dr. Slump in after us, for it would have revealed our presence had we left him behind, we crept out of the chamber, extinguishing our torches. The crevice McTwirp had scratched hastily, at the cost of two fingernails, in the solid rock, was rather small for the four of us, but it was our only hope.

Nearer and nearer came the awful sound until at last it reached the chamber. We crouched in the darkness hardly daring to breathe. There was a long silence; then, after an eternity of waiting, we heard the sound of a heavy, sluggish body being dragged across the ground and out into the corridor. For a moment we waited until the horror had passed out of hearing; then we fled.

That we fled the wrong way was, under the circumstances, nobody's fault. So great had the shock been that we had completely lost our sense of direction, and before we realized what had happened we suddenly found ourselves confronted by the Thing from which we had been trying to escape.

I cannot describe it: featureless, amorphous, and utterly evil, it lay across our path, seeming to watch us balefully. For a moment we stood there in paralyzed fright, unable to move a muscle. Then, out of nothingness, echoed a mournful voice.

"Hello, where did you come from?"

"Llllllllll———", quavered Palsy.

"Talk sense. There's no such place."

"He means London," I said taking charge of the conversation, as none of my colleagues seemed capable of dealing with it. "What are you, if it isn't a rude question? You know you gave us quite a start."

"Gave you a start! I like that! Who was responsible for that excruciating cacophony that came from this direction five minutes ago? It nearly gave the Elder Ones heart failure and took at least a million years off their lives."

"Er—I think Dr. Slump can explain that," I said, indicating the still semicomatose psychologist. "He was trying to sing 'Softly Awakes My Heart' but we put a stop to it."

"It sounded more like Mossolow's 'Sabotage in the Steel Foundry'," said the Thing, sarcastically, "but whatever it was, we don't like it. You had better come and explain yourselves to their Inscrutable Intelligences, and the Ancient Ones—if they've come round yet," it added, *sotto voce*. "Step this way."

With a strange, flowing motion it set off through the passageway, covering what seemed miles until the tunnel opened out into an immense hall,

and we were face to face with the rulers of this ancient world. I say face to face, but actually we were the only ones with faces. Even more incredible and appalling than the Thing we had first encountered were the shapes which met our horrified eyes as we entered that vast chamber. The spawn of alien galaxies, outlawed nightmares from worlds beyond space and time, entities that had filtered down from the stars when the Earth was young—all these crowded upon our vision.

At the sight my mind reeled. Dazedly, I found myself answering questions put to me by some vast creature who must have been the leader of that congress of titans.

“How did you get in?” I was asked.

“Through the ruins on the mountain slope,” I answered.

“Ruins! Where is Slog-Wallop?”

“Here,” said a plaintive voice, and a mouselike creature with a walrus mustache drooped into view.

“When did you last inspect the main entrance?” said the Supreme Mind sternly.

“Not more than thirty thousand years ago last pancake Tuesday.”

“Well, have it seen to at once. As Inspector of Outhouses and Public Conveniences it is your duty to see that the premises are kept in good repair. Now that the matter has been brought up, I distinctly recollect that during the last Ice Age but two a distinguished extragalactic visitor was severely damaged by the collapse of the ceiling directly he entered our establishment. Really, this sort of thing will not improve our reputation for hospitality, nor is it at all dignified. Don’t let it happen again.”

“I can’t say I liked the decorations, either,” I ventured.

“The same visitor complained about those, now you mention it. I will see that they are replaced by something more appropriate, such as a few stills from *Snow White*.” Here the Mind gave Slog-Wallop such a glare that the poor little creature was bowled clean out of the hall.

It turned to me again.

“These things will happen in the best ordered communities,” it said apologetically. “Now perhaps you’ll be good enough to tell us how you got here?”

So I described the expedition, from its departure to our arrival in the caverns, omitting such portions of the story as I considered fit.

“Very interesting,” said the Mind when I had finished. “We so seldom get visitors these days. The last one was—let—me—think—oh, yes, that Arab fellow, Abdul Hashish.”

“The author of the *Pentechnicon*?”

“Yes. We were rather annoyed about that—these reporters always overdo things. Nobody believed a word he wrote, and when we read the

review copy he sent us we weren't surprised. It was very bad publicity and ruined our tourist trade, such as it was. I hope you will show a better sense of proportion."

"I can assure you that our report will be quite unbiased and entirely scientific," I said hastily. "But may I ask how it is you seem to know our language so well?"

"Oh, we have many ways of studying the outside world. I myself toured the Middle West of America some years ago in a circus sideshow and it is only very recently that I eradicated the accent I acquired on that occasion. Nowadays, too, radio makes it possible to avoid you. You would be surprised to know the number of swing fans we have here—though I regret to say that the television revues from Paris have even greater popularity. But the less said about them the better."

"You amaze me," I said truthfully. "What surprises me the most, however, is that you have so many outside contacts."

"That was simply arranged. We started writing stories about ourselves, and later we subsidized authors, particularly in America, to do the same. The result was that everyone read all about us in various magazines such as *Weird Tales* (of which incidentally I hold 50 percent of the preference shares) and simply didn't believe a word of it. So we were quite safe."

"Incredible! The conception of a supermind!"

"Thank you," said my interlocutor, a smug expression spreading over where its face would have been had it possessed one. "Now, however, we have no objection to everyone knowing that we really exist. In fact, we were planning an extensive publicity campaign, in which your help would be very useful. But I'll tell you about that later; now perhaps you would like to go and rest in our guest chambers? I've had them cleaned—it's surprising how much dust can accumulate in forty thousand years."

We were escorted to a vast room—little smaller than the one we had just quitted—where we could recline on oddly shaped but comfortable couches.

"How completely incredible!" gasped Dr. Slump as we settled down to discuss the position.

"Nice chap, wasn't it?" I said referring to our host.

"I don't trust it! Something tells me mischief's brewing. It is our duty to keep this knowledge from the world!"

"What, do you hold the rest of those *Weird Tales* shares?" asked Palsy sarcastically.

"Not at all, but such a revelation would mean universal madness and I fear that the forces at their command of these Elder Ones would soon enslave mankind."

"Do you really think—" I began, when McTwirp interrupted me.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing to something on the ground. I bent down and picked it up. It was piece of paper, on which some writing was scrawled. With difficulty, I interpreted the curious characters.

"Get Slog-Wallop to see about the drains," I read. Then underneath, "Duke Ellington, 3:15, Washington."

Harmless enough—then I turned it over and saw words which sent shudders of fear down my spine.

"Destroy human race by plague of flying jellyfish (?Sent through post in unsealed envelopes?). No good for *Unknown*—try Gillings."

"You were right, Slump!" I gasped. "What a hideous plot! I suppose this Gillings must be some poor devil these fiends experimented on. We must escape at once!"

"But how? We don't know the way!"

"Leave that to me," I said, going to the door. Outside it was a strange, flabby creature resembling a doormat in the last stage of decomposition.

"Would you mind guiding us to the upper corridors?" I asked politely. "One of my friends has lost a valuable wallet, and if a search party comes along it may be found and sent home to his wife. Incidentally," I added in an easy, conversational tone, "we should be awfully obliged if someone would make us some cups of tea while we're gone. Two lumps each."

This last masterstroke dispelled any suspicions the being might have had.

"Right-ho," it said. "I hope you like China tea; it's all we've got; Abdul finished off the rest."

It scuttled away, and shortly returned. "Now follow me."

Of our journey back through those awful caves I prefer to say as little as possible. In any case, it closely resembled the journey downward. At last, after an eternity, we saw the exit into the outer world far ahead. And none too soon, for our guide was getting suspicious.

"Are you sure you had it with you?" it asked out of breath. "You may have left it behind."

"Not likely," said McTwirp. "I think it was about here."

So we pressed on, our goal now only a few hundred yards away. Suddenly, to our horror, we heard sounds of pursuit far behind. Pretense was useless. "Run for your lives!" I shouted.

Luckily our guide was so taken by surprise that before it could recover itself we had a considerable start. In a matter of seconds, it seemed, we had reached the exit and were out in the clean light of day. Emboldened by the thought of safety, I glanced back.

The guide was far behind, stupefied still by surprise. But racing toward us at an incredible speed was something so hideous that no words of mine can begin to describe it As I turned to flee, I heard it cry out with a gasping, high-pitched voice:

“Do you—puff—mind condensed milk?”

I heard no more, for at that moment the shattered bas-reliefs of the entrance collapsed about me in complete and final ruin. When I recovered, we were already in the air, flying toward safety and civilization, away from the brooding nightmare horrors which had beset us so long and from whose unthinkable clutches we had so narrowly escaped.

About “The Thing from Another World”

John W. Campbell's (1910–1971) editorial tenure at *Astounding Science Fiction* (1937–1971) marked the beginning of the so-called Golden Age of science fiction, though that judgment entails a matter of taste we will not debate here. (However, just look at the size of Asimov's anthology *Before the Golden Age* and ask yourself whether that early period must not have been pretty darn golden in its own right!) Before assuming editorial chores he had been a rather prolific writer. Of his many works, the best known must be the present story (published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1938 under the pseudonym Don Stuart and retitled “Who Goes There?”), largely because of its two movie adaptations. The first, *The Thing* (1951), is a nostalgia favorite and has much to commend it, not least its bequest of two memorable lines, one electrifying (“Keep watching the skies!”—*cf.* Stephen King's comments on it in *Danse Macabre*), the other hilarious (“An intellectual carrot! The mind boggles!”). The movie's great power resided in its shell game of monsters. The awakened alien (played by a masked James Arness) was hardly horrific. Indeed, in light of his appearance and the line just quoted, one can hardly see the Arness monster without thinking of Bob Burden's comic character Flaming Carrot! The real actantial role of “monster” was divided neatly between the Air Force colonel whose “if it moves kill it” attitude is only a notch removed from that of the bonehead army in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, and the aloof scientist, whose too-clinical desire to save the alien at any human cost paints him as a Hammer Films-type Dr. Frankenstein analog. But in all this we see little resemblance to Campbell's original story. If we want to see a more faithful adaptation (and a much more powerful movie, I would submit) we have to turn to 1982's *The Thing* starring Kurt Russell. Here the age-old monster has become almost a contagious disease, making once-trusted colleagues and friends suspected plague-carriers as well as potential double agents for the monster.

“The Thing from Another World” shares obvious themes with Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and may well have been inspired by it. It in turn inspired at least one episode of *The X-Files*, as well as the spin-off movie *Fight the Future*.



The Thing from Another World

by John W. Campbell, Jr.

Chapter I

The place stank. A queer, mingled stench that only the ice-buried cabins of an Antarctic camp know, compounded of reeking human sweat and the heavy, fish-oil stench of melted seal blubber. An overtone of liniment combated the musty smell of sweat- and snow-drenched furs. The acrid odor of burnt cooking fat, and the animal, not-unpleasant smell of dogs, diluted by time, hung in the air.

Lingering odors of machine oil contrasted sharply with the taint of harness dressing and leather. Yet, somehow, through all that reek of human beings and their associates—dogs, machines and cooking—came another taint. It was a queer, neck-ruffling thing, a faintest suggestion of an odor alien among the smells of industry and life. And it was a life smell. But it came from the thing that lay bound with cord and tarpaulin on the table, dripping slowly, methodically onto the heavy planks, dank and gaunt under the unshielded glare of the electric light.

Blair, the little bald-pated biologist of the expedition, twitched nervously at the wrappings, exposing clear, dark ice beneath and then pulling the tarpaulin back into place restlessly. His little birdlike motions of suppressed eagerness danced his shadow across the fringe of dingy gray underwear hanging from the low ceiling, the equatorial fringe of stiff, graying hair around his naked skull a comical halo about the shadow's head.

Commander Garry brushed aside the lax legs of a suit of underwear and stepped toward the table. Slowly his eyes traced around the rings of men

sardined into the Administration Building. His tall, stiff body straightened finally, and he nodded. "Thirty-seven. All here." His voice was low, yet carried the clear authority of the commander by nature, as well as by title.

"You know the outline of the story back of that find of the Secondary Pole Expedition. I have been conferring with Second-in-Command McReady, and Norris, as well as Blair and Dr. Copper. There is a difference of opinion, and because it involves the entire group, it is only just that the entire Expedition personnel act on it.

"I am going to ask McReady to give you the details of the story, because each of you has been too busy with his own work to follow closely the endeavors of the others. McReady?"

Moving from the smoke-blued background, McReady was a figure from some forgotten myth, a looming, bronze statue that held life and walked. Six feet four inches he stood as he halted beside the table, and, with a characteristic glance upward to assure himself of room under the low ceiling beams, straightened. His rough, clashingly orange windproof jacket he still had on, yet on his huge frame it did not seem misplaced. Even here, four feet beneath the drift-wind that droned across the Antarctic waste above the ceiling, the cold of the frozen continent leaked in and gave meaning to the harshness of the man. And he was bronze—his great red-bronze beard, the heavy hair that matched it. The gnarled, corded hands gripping, relaxing, gripping and relaxing on the table planks were bronze. Even the deep-sunken eyes beneath heavy brows were bronze.

Age-resisting endurance of the metal spoke in the cragged heavy outlines of his face, and the mellow tones of the heavy voice. "Norris and Blair agree on one thing; that animal we found was not—terrestrial in origin. Norris fears there may be danger in that; Blair says there is none.

"But I'll go back to how, and why, we found it. To all that was known before we came here, it appeared that this point was exactly over the South Magnetic Pole of Earth. The compass does point straight down here, as you all know. The more delicate instruments of the physicists, instruments especially designed for this expedition and its study of the magnetic pole, detected a secondary effect, a secondary, less powerful magnetic influence about 80 miles southwest of here.

"The Secondary Magnetic Expedition went out to investigate it. There is no need for details. We found it, but it was not the huge meteorite or magnetic mountain Norris had expected to find. Iron ore is magnetic, of course, iron more so—and certain special steels even more magnetic. From the surface indications, the secondary pole we found was small, so small that the magnetic effect it had was preposterous. No magnetic material conceivable could have that effect. Soundings through the ice indicated it was within one hundred feet of the glacier surface.

"I think you should know the structure of the place. There is a broad plateau, a level sweep that runs more than 150 miles due south from the Secondary station, Van Wall says. He didn't have time or fuel to fly farther, but it was running smoothly due south then. Right there, where that buried thing was, there is an ice-drowned mountain ridge, a granite wall of unshakable strength that has dammed back the ice creeping from the south.

"And four hundred miles due south is the South Polar Plateau. You have asked me at various times why it gets warmer here when the wind rises, and most of you know. As a meteorologist I'd have staked my word that no wind could blow at -70 degrees—that no more than a five-mile wind could blow at -50 —without causing warming due to friction with ground, snow, and ice, and the air itself.

"We camped there on the lip of that ice-drowned mountain range for twelve days. We dug our camp into the blue ice that formed the surface, and escaped most of it. But for twelve consecutive days the wind blew at 45 miles an hour. It went as high as 48, and fell to 41 at times. The temperature was -63 degrees. It rose to -60 and fell to -68 . It was meteorologically impossible, and it went on uninterruptedly for twelve days and twelve nights.

"Somewhere to the south, the frozen air of the South Polar Plateau slides down from that 18,000-foot bowl, down a mountain pass, over a glacier, and starts north. There must be a funneling mountain chain that directs it and sweeps it away for four hundred miles to hit that bald plateau where we found the secondary pole, and 350 miles farther north reaches the Antarctic Ocean.

"It's been frozen there since Antarctica froze twenty million years ago. There never has been a thaw there.

"Twenty million years ago Antarctica was beginning to freeze. We've investigated, thought and built speculations. What we believe happened was about like this.

"Something came down out of space, a ship. We saw it there in the blue ice, a thing like a submarine without a conning tower or directive vanes, 280 feet long and 45 feet in diameter at its thickest.

"Eh, Van Wall? Space? Yes, but I'll explain that better later." McReady's steady voice went on.

"It came down from space, driven and lifted by forces men haven't discovered yet, and somehow perhaps something went wrong then—it tangled with Earth's magnetic field. It came south here, out of control probably, circling the magnetic pole. That's a savage country there, but when Antarctica was still freezing it must have been a thousand times more savage. There must have been blizzard snow, as well as drift, new snow falling as the continent glaciated. The swirl there must have been particularly bad, the wind hurling a solid blanket of white over the lip of that now-buried mountain.

“The ship struck solid granite head-on, and cracked up. Not every one of the passengers in it was killed, but the ship must have been ruined, her driving mechanism locked. It tangled with Earth’s field, Norris believes. No thing made by intelligent beings can tangle with the dead immensity of a planet’s natural forces and survive.

“One of its passengers stepped out. The wind we saw there never fell below 41, and the temperature never rose above –60. Then—the wind must have been stronger. And there was drift falling in a solid sheet. The *thing* was lost completely in ten paces.” He paused for a moment, the deep, steady voice giving way to the drone of the wind overhead and the uneasy, malicious gurgling in the pipe of the galley stove.

Drift—a drift-wind was sweeping by overhead. Right now the snow picked up by the mumbling wind fled in level, blinding lines across the face of the buried camp. If a man stepped out of the tunnels that connected each of the camp buildings beneath the surface, he’d be lost in ten paces. Out there, the slim, black finger of the radio mast lifted 300 feet into the air, and at its peak was the clear night sky. A sky of thin, whining wind rushing steadily from beyond to another beyond under the licking, curling mantle of the aurora. And off north, the horizon flamed with queer, angry colors of the midnight twilight. That was spring 300 feet above Antarctica.

At the surface—it was white death. Death of a needle-fingered cold driven before the wind, sucking heat from any warm thing. Cold—and white mist of endless, everlasting drift, the fine, fine particles of licking snow that obscured all things.

Kinner, the little, scar-faced cook, winced. Five days ago he had stepped out to the surface to reach a cache of frozen beef. He had reached it, started back—and the drift-wind leapt out of the south. Cold, white death that streamed across the ground blinded him in twenty seconds. He stumbled on wildly in circles. It was half an hour before rope-guided men from below found him in the impenetrable murk.

It was easy for man—or *thing*—to get lost in ten paces.

“And the drift-wind then was probably more impenetrable than we know.” McReady’s voice snapped Kinner’s mind back. Back to the welcome, dank warmth of the Ad Building. “The passenger of the ship wasn’t prepared either, it appears. It froze within ten feet of the ship.

“We dug down to find the ship, and our tunnel happened to find the frozen—animal. Barclay’s ice-ax struck its skull.

“When we saw what it was, Barclay went back to the tractor, started the fire up, and when the steam pressure built sent a call for Blair and Dr. Copper. Barclay himself was sick then. Stayed sick for three days, as a matter of fact.

“When Blair and Copper came, we cut out the animal in a block of ice, as you see, wrapped it, and loaded it on the tractor for return here. We wanted to get into that ship.

“We reached the side and found the metal was something we didn’t know. Our beryllium bronze, nonmagnetic tools wouldn’t touch it. Barclay had some tool-steel on the tractor, and that wouldn’t scratch it either. We made reasonable tests—even tried some acid from the batteries with no results.

“They must have had a passivating process to make magnesium metal resist acid that way, and the alloy must have been at least 95 percent magnesium. But we had no way of guessing that, so when we spotted the barely opened lock door, we cut around it. There was clear, hard ice inside the lock, where we couldn’t reach it. Through the little crack we could look in and see that only metal and tools were in there, so we decided to loosen the ice with a bomb.

“We had decanite bombs and thermite. Thermite is the ice-softener; decanite might have shattered valuable things, where the thermite’s heat would just loosen the ice. Dr. Copper, Norris, and I placed a 25-pound thermite bomb, wired it, and took the connector up the tunnel to the surface, where Blair had the steam tractor waiting. A hundred yards the other side of that granite wall we set off the thermite bomb.

“The magnesium metal of the ship caught, of course. The glow of the bomb flared and died, then it began to flare again. We ran back to the tractor, and gradually the glare built up. From where we were we could see the whole ice-field illuminated from beneath with an unbearable light; the ship’s shadow was a great, dark cone reaching off toward the north, where the twilight was just about gone. For a moment it lasted, and we counted three other shadow-things that might have been other—passengers—frozen there. Then the ice was crashing down and against the ship.

“That’s why I told you about that place. The wind sweeping down from the Pole was at our backs. Steam and hydrogen flame were torn away in white ice-fog; the flaming heat under the ice there was yanked away toward the Antarctic Ocean before it touched us. Otherwise we wouldn’t have come back, even with the shelter of that granite ridge that stopped the light.

“Somehow in the blinding inferno we could see great hunched things, black bulks glowing, even so. They shed even the furious incandescence of the magnesium for a time. Those must have been the engines, we knew. Secrets going in blazing glory—secrets that might have given Man the planets. Mysterious things that could lift and hurl that ship—and had soaked in the force of the Earth’s magnetic field. I saw Norris’ mouth move, and ducked. I couldn’t hear him.

“Insulation—something—gave way. All Earth’s field they’d soaked up twenty million years before broke loose. The aurora in the sky above licked

down, and the whole plateau there was bathed in cold fire that blanketed vision. The ice-ax in my hand got red hot and hissed on the ice. Metal buttons on my clothes burned into me. And a flash of electric blue seared upward from beyond the granite wall.

“Then the walls of ice crashed down on it. For an instant it squealed the way dry ice does when it’s pressed between metal.

“We were blind and groping in the dark for hours while our eyes recovered. We found every coil within a mile was fused rubbish, the dynamo and every radio set, the earphones and speakers. If we hadn’t had the steam tractor, we wouldn’t have gotten over to the Secondary Camp.

“Van Wall flew it from Big Magnet at sun-up, as you know. We came home as soon as possible. That is the history of—that.” McReady’s great bronze beard gestured toward the thing on the table.

Chapter II

Blair stirred uneasily, his little, bony fingers wriggling under the harsh light. Little brown freckles on his knuckles slid back and forth as the tendons under the skin twitched. He pulled aside a bit of the tarpaulin and looked impatiently at the dark ice-bound thing inside.

McReady’s big body straightened somewhat. He’d ridden the rocking, jarring steam tractor forty miles that day, pushing on to Big Magnet here. Even his calm will had been pressed by the anxiety to mix again with humans. It was lone and quiet out there in Secondary Camp, where a wolf-wind howled down from the Pole. Wolf-wind howling in his sleep—winds droning and the evil, unspeakable face of that monster leering up as he’d first seen it through clear, blue ice, with a bronze ice-ax buried in its skull.

The giant meteorologist spoke again. “The problem is this. Blair wants to examine the thing. Thaw it out and make micro slides of its tissues and so forth. Norris doesn’t believe that is safe, and Blair does. Dr. Copper agrees pretty much with Blair. Norris is a physicist, of course, not a biologist. But he makes a point I think we should all hear. Blair has described the microscopic lifeforms biologists find living, even in this cold and inhospitable place. They freeze every winter, and thaw every summer—for three months—and live.

“The point Norris makes is—they thaw, and live again. There must have been microscopic life associated with this creature. There is with every living thing we know. And Norris is afraid that we may release a plague—some germ disease unknown to Earth—if we thaw those microscopic things that have been frozen there for twenty million years.

“Blair admits that such microlife might retain the power of living. Such unorganized things as individual cells can retain life for unknown periods, when solidly frozen. The beast itself is as dead as those frozen mammoths they find in Siberia. Organized, highly developed lifeforms can’t stand that treatment.

“But microlife could. Norris suggests that we may release some disease form that man, never having met it before, will be utterly defenseless against.

“Blair’s answer is that there may be such still-living germs, but that Norris has the case reversed. They are utterly nonimmune to man. Our life chemistry probably—”

“Probably!” The little biologist’s head lifted in a quick, birdlike motion. The halo of gray hair about his bald head ruffled as though angry. “Heh. One look—”

“I know,” McReady acknowledged. “The thing is not Earthly. It does not seem likely that it can have a life chemistry sufficiently like ours to make cross-infection remotely possible. I would say that there is no danger.”

McReady looked toward Dr. Copper. The physician shook his head slowly. “None whatever,” he asserted confidently. “Man cannot infect or be infected by germs that live in such comparatively close relatives as the snakes. And they are, I assure you,” his clean-shaven face grimaced uneasily, “*much* nearer to us than—*that*.”

Vance Norris moved angrily. He was comparatively short in this gathering of big men, some five feet eight, and his stocky, powerful build tended to make him seem shorter. His black hair was crisp and hard, like short, steel wires, and his eyes were the gray of fractured steel. If McReady was a man of bronze, Norris was all steel. His movements, his thoughts, his whole bearing had the quick, hard impulse of steel spring. His nerves were steel—hard, quick-acting—swift-corroding.

He was decided on his point now, and he lashed out in its defense with a characteristic quick, clipped flow of words. “Different chemistry be damned. That thing may be dead—or, by God, it may not—but I don’t like it. Damn it, Blair, let them see the monstrosity you are petting over there. Let them see the foul thing and decide for themselves whether they want that thing thawed out in this camp.

“Thawed out, by the way. That’s got to be thawed out in one of the shacks tonight, if it is thawed out. Somebody—who’s watchman tonight? Magnetic—oh, Connant. Cosmic rays tonight. Well, you get to sit up with that twenty-million-year-old mummy of his.

“Unwrap it, Blair. How the hell can they tell what they are buying if they can’t see it? It may have a different chemistry. I don’t know what else it has, but I know it has something I don’t want. If you can judge by the look on its face—it isn’t human so maybe you can’t—it was annoyed when

it froze. Annoyed, in fact, is just about as close an approximation of the way it felt as crazy, mad, insane hatred. Neither one touches the subject.

"How the hell can these birds tell what they are voting on? They haven't seen those three red eyes, and that blue hair like crawling worms. Crawling—damn, it's crawling there in the ice right now!

"Nothing Earth ever spawned had the unutterable sublimation of devastating wrath that thing let loose in its face when it looked around this frozen desolation twenty million years ago. Mad? It was mad clear through—searing, blistering mad!

"Hell, I've had bad dreams ever since I looked at those three red eyes. Nightmares. Dreaming the thing thawed out and came to life—that it wasn't dead, or even wholly unconscious all those twenty million years, but just slowed, waiting—waiting. You'll dream, too, while that damned thing that Earth wouldn't own is dripping, dripping in the Cosmos House tonight.

"And Connant," Norris whipped toward the cosmic ray specialist, "won't you have fun sitting up all night in the quiet. Wind whining above—and that thing dripping—" He stopped for a moment and looked around.

"I know. That's not science. But this is, it's psychology. You'll have nightmares for a year to come. Every night since I looked at that thing I've had 'em. That's why I hate it—sure I do—and don't want it around. Put it back where it came from and let it freeze for another twenty million years. I had some swell nightmares—that it wasn't made like we are—which is obvious—but of a different kind of flesh that it can really control. That it can change its shape, and look like a man—and wait to kill and eat—

"That's not a logical argument. I know it isn't. The thing isn't Earth-logic anyway.

"Maybe it has an alien body chemistry, and maybe its bugs do have a different body chemistry. A germ might not stand that, but Blair and Copper, how about a virus? That's just an enzyme molecule, you've said. That wouldn't need anything but a protein molecule of any body to work on.

"And how are you so sure that, of the million varieties of microscopic life it may have, none of them are dangerous? How about diseases like hydrophobia—rabies—that attack any warm-blooded creature, whatever its body chemistry may be? And parrot fever? Have you a body like a parrot, Blair? And plain rot—gangrene—necrosis, do you want? *That* isn't choosy about body chemistry!"

Blair looked up from his puttering long enough to meet Norris' angry, gray eyes for an instant. "So far the only thing you have said this thing gave off that was catching was dreams. I'll go so far as to admit that." An impish, slightly malignant grin crossed the little man's seamed face. "I had some, too. So. It's dream-infectious. No doubt an exceedingly dangerous malady.

"So far as your other things go, you have a badly mistaken idea about viruses. In the first place, nobody has shown that the enzyme-molecule theory, and that alone, explains them. And in the second place, when you catch tobacco mosaic or wheat rust, let me know. A wheat plant is a lot nearer your body chemistry than this other-world creature is.

"And your rabies is limited, strictly limited. You can't get it from, nor give it to, a wheat plant or a fish which is a collateral descendant of a common ancestor of yours. Which this, Norris, is not." Blair nodded pleasantly toward the tarpaulined bulk on the table.

"Well, thaw the damned thing in a tub of formalin if you must thaw it. I've suggested that—"

"And I've said there would be no sense in it. You can't compromise. Why did you and Commander Garry come down here to study magnetism? Why weren't you content to stay at home? There's magnetic force enough in New York. I could no more study the life this thing once had from a formalin-pickled sample than you could get the information you wanted back in New York. And—if this one is so treated, *never in all time to come can there be a duplicate!* The race it came from must have passed away in the twenty million years it lay frozen, so that even if it came from Mars then, we'd never find its like. And—the ship is gone.

"There's only one way to do this—and that is the best possible way. It must be thawed slowly, carefully, and not in formalin."

Commander Garry stood forward again, and Norris stepped back muttering angrily. "I think Blair is right, gentleman. What do you say?"

Connant grunted. "It sounds right to us, I think—only perhaps he ought to stand watch over it while it's thawing." He grinned ruefully, brushing a stray lock of ripe-cherry hair back from his forehead. "Swell idea, in fact—if he sits up with his jolly little corpse."

Garry smiled slightly. A general chuckle of agreement rippled over the group. "I should think any ghost it may have had would have starved to death if it hung around here that long, Connant," Garry suggested. "And you look capable of taking care of it. 'Ironman' Connant ought to be able to take out any opposing players, still."

Connant shook himself uneasily. "I'm not worrying about ghosts. Let's see that thing. I—"

Eagerly Blair was stripping back the ropes. A single throw of the tarpaulin revealed the thing. The ice had melted somewhat in the heat of the room, and it was clear and blue as thick, good glass. It shone wet and sleek under the harsh light of the unshielded globe above.

The room stiffened abruptly. It was face-up there on the plain, greasy planks of the table. The broken half of the bronze ice-ax was still buried in the queer skull. Three mad, hate-filled eyes blazed up with a living fire,

bright as fresh-spilled blood, from a face ringed with a writhing, loathsome nest of worms, blue, mobile worms that crawled where hair should grow—

Van Wall, six feet and 200 pounds of ice-nerve pilot, gave a queer, strangled gasp and butted, stumbled his way out to the corridor. Half the company broke for the doors. The others stumbled away from the table.

McReady stood at one end of the table watching them, his great body planted solidly on his powerful legs. Norris from the opposite end glowered at the thing with smoldering hate. Outside the door, Garry was talking with half a dozen of the men at once.

Blair had a tack hammer. The ice that cased that thing *schluffed* crisply under its steel claw as it peeled from the thing it had cased for twenty thousand years—

Chapter III

I know you don't like the thing, Connant, but it just has to be thawed out right. You say leave it as it is till we get back to civilization. All right, I'll admit your argument that we could do a better and more complete job there is sound. But—how are we going to get this across the Line? We have to take this through one temperate zone, the equatorial zone, and halfway through the other temperate zone before we get it to New York. You don't want to sit with it one night, but you suggest, then, that I hang its corpse in the freezer with the beef?" Blair looked up from his cautious chipping, his bald, freckled skull nodding triumphantly.

Kinner, the stocky, scar-faced cook, saved Connant the trouble of answering. "Hey, you listen, mister. You put that thing in the box with the meat, and by all the gods there ever were, I'll put you in to keep it company. You birds have brought everything movable in this camp onto my mess tables here already, and I had to stand for that. But you go putting things like that in my meat box or even my meat cache here, and you cook your own damn grub."

"But, Kinner, this is the only table in Big Magnet that's big enough to work on," Blair objected. "Everybody's explained that."

"Yeah, and everybody's brought everything in here. Clark brings his dogs every time there's a fight and sews them up on that table. Ralsen brings in his sledges. Hell, the only thing you haven't had on that table is the Boeing. And you'da had that in if you coulda figured a way to get it through the tunnels."

Commander Garry chuckled and grinned at Van Wall, the huge Chief Pilot. Van Wall's great blond beard twitched suspiciously as he nodded

gravely to Kinner. "You're right, Kinner. The aviation department is the only one that treats you right."

"It does get crowded, Kinner," Garry acknowledged. "But I'm afraid we all find it that way at times. Not much privacy in an Antarctic camp."

"Privacy? What the hell's that? You know, the thing that really made me weep, was when I saw Barclay marchin' through here chantin' 'The last lumber in the camp! The last lumber in the camp!' and carryin' it out to build that house on his tractor. Damn it, I missed that moon cut in the door he carried out more'n I missed the sun when it set. That wasn't just the last lumber Barclay was walkin' off with. He was carryin' off the last bit of privacy in this blasted place."

A grin rode even on Connant's heavy face as Kinner's perennial good-natured grouch came up again. But it died away quickly as his dark, deep-set eyes turned again to the red-eyed thing Blair was chipping from its cocoon of ice. A big hand ruffed his shoulder-length hair, and tugged at a twisted lock that fell behind his ear in a familiar gesture. "I know that cosmic ray shack's going to be too crowded if I have to sit up with that thing," he growled. "Why can't you go on chipping the ice away from around it—you can do that without anybody butting in, I assure you—and then hang the thing up over the power plant boiler? That's warm enough. It'll thaw out a chicken, even a whole side of beef, in a few hours."

"I know," Blair protested, dropping the tack hammer to gesture more effectively with his bony, freckled fingers, his small body tense with eagerness, "but this is too important to take any chances. There never was a find like this; there never can be again. It's the only chance men will ever have, and it has to be done exactly right."

"Look, you know how the fish we caught down near the Ross Sea would freeze almost as soon as we got them on deck, and come to life again if we thawed them gently? Low forms of life aren't killed by quick freezing and slow thawing. We have—"

"Hey, for the love of Heaven—you mean that damned thing will come to life!" Connant yelled. "You get the damned thing—let me at it! That's going to be in so many pieces—"

"NO! No, you fool—" Blair jumped in front of Connant to protect his precious find. "No. Just low forms of life. For Pete's sake let me finish. You can't thaw higher forms of life and have them come to. Wait a moment now—hold it! A fish can come to after freezing because it's so low a form of life that the individual cells of its body can revive, and that alone is enough to reestablish life. Any higher forms thawed out that way are dead. Though the individual cells revive, they die because there must be organization and cooperative effort to live. That cooperation cannot be reestablished. There is a sort of potential life in any uninjured, quick-frozen animal. But it can't—"

can't under any circumstances—become active life in higher animals. The higher animals are too complex, too delicate. This is an intelligent creature as high in its evolution as we are in ours. Perhaps higher. It is as dead as a frozen man would be."

"How do you know?" demanded Connant, hefting the ice-ax he had seized a moment before.

Commander Garry laid a restraining hand on his heavy shoulder. "Wait a minute, Connant. I want to get this straight. I agree that there is going to be no thawing of this thing if there is the remotest chance of its revival. I quite agree it is much too unpleasant to have alive, but I had no idea there was the remotest possibility."

Dr. Copper pulled his pipe from between his teeth and heaved his stocky, dark body from the bunk he had been sitting in. "Blair's being technical. That's dead. As dead as the mammoths they find frozen in Siberia. Potential life is like atomic energy—there, but nobody can get it out, and it certainly won't release itself except in rare cases, as rare as radium in the chemical analogy. We have all sorts of proof that things don't live after being frozen—not even fish, generally speaking—and no proof that higher animal life can under any circumstances. What's the point, Blair?"

The little biologist shook himself. The little ruff of hair standing out around his bald pate waved in righteous anger. "The point is," he said in an injured tone, "that the individual cells might show the characteristics they had in life, if it is properly thawed. A man's muscle cells live many hours after he has died. Just because they live, and a few things like hair and fingernail cells still live, you wouldn't accuse a corpse of being a Zombie, or something.

"Now if I thaw this right, I may have a chance to determine what sort of world it's native to. We don't, and can't know by any other means, whether it came from Earth or Mars or Venus or from beyond the stars.

"And just because it looks unlike men, you don't have to accuse it of being evil, or vicious or something. Maybe that expression on its face is its equivalent to a resignation to fate. White is the color of mourning to the Chinese. If men can have different customs, why can't a so-different race have different understandings of facial expressions?"

Connant laughed softly, mirthlessly. "Peaceful resignation! If that is the best it could do in the way of resignation, I should exceedingly dislike seeing it when it was looking mad. That face was never designed to express peace. It just didn't have any philosophical thoughts like peace in its make-up.

"I know it's your pet—but be sane about it. That thing grew up on evil, adolesced slowly roasting alive the local equivalent of kittens, and amused itself through maturity on new and ingenious torture."

"You haven't the slightest right to say that," snapped Blair. "How do you know the first thing about the meaning of a facial expression inherently inhuman? It may well have no human equivalent whatever. That is just a different development of Nature, another example of Nature's wonderful adaptability. Growing on another, perhaps harsher world, it has different form and features. But it is just as much a legitimate child of Nature as you are. You are displaying the childish human weakness of hating the different. On its own world it would probably class you as a fish-bellied, white monstrosity with an insufficient number of eyes and a fungoid body pale and bloated with gas.

"Just because its nature is different, you haven't any right to say it's necessarily evil."

Norris burst out a single, explosive, "Haw!" He looked down at the thing. "May be that things from other worlds don't *have* to be evil just because they're different. But that thing was! Child of Nature, eh? Well, it was a hell of an evil Nature—"

"Aw, will you mugs cut crabbing at each other and get the damned thing off my table?" Kinner growled. "And put a canvas over it. It looks indecent."

"Kinner's gone modest," jeered Connant.

Kinner slanted his eyes up to the big physicist. The scarred cheek twisted to join the line of his tight lips in a twisted grin. "All right, big boy, and what were you grousing about a minute ago? We can set the thing in a chair next to you tonight, if you want."

"I'm not afraid of its face," Connant snapped. "I don't like keeping a wake over its corpse particularly, but I'm going to do it."

Kinner's grin spread. "Uh-huh." He went off to the galley stove and shook down ashes vigorously, drowning the brittle chipping of the ice as Blair fell to work again.

Chapter IV

Cluck," reported the cosmic ray counter, "*cluck-brrrrp-cluck.*" Connant started and dropped his pencil.

"Damnation." The physicist looked toward the far corner, back at the Geiger counter on the table near that corner, and crawled under the desk at which he had been working to retrieve the pencil. He sat down at his work again, trying to make his writing more even. It tended to have jerks and quavers in it, in time with the abrupt proud-hen noises of the Geiger counter. The muted whoosh of the pressure lamp he was using for illumination, the mingled gargles and bugle calls of a dozen men sleeping down the corridor in Paradise House formed the background sounds for the irreg-

ular, clucking noises of the counter, the occasional rustle of falling coal in the copper-bellied stove. And a soft, steady *drip-drip-drip* from the thing in the corner

Connant jerked a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, snapped it so that a cigarette protruded, and jabbed the cylinder into his mouth. The lighter failed to function, and he pawed angrily through the pile of papers in search of a match. He scratched the wheel of the lighter several times, dropped it with a curse, and got up to pluck a hot coal from the stove with the coal tongs.

The lighter functioned instantly when he tried it on returning to the desk. The counter ripped out a series of clucking guffaws as a burst of cosmic rays struck through to it. Connant turned to glower at it and tried to concentrate on the interpretation of data collected during the past week. The weekly summary—

He gave up and yielded to curiosity, or nervousness. He lifted the pressure lamp from the desk and carried it over to the table in the corner. Then he returned to the stove and picked up the coal tongs. The beast had been thawing for nearly eighteen hours now. He poked at it with an unconscious caution; the flesh was no longer hard as armor plate, but had assumed a rubbery texture. It looked like wet, blue rubber glistening under droplets of water like little round jewels in the glare of the gasoline pressure lantern. Connant felt an unreasoning desire to pour the contents of the lamp's reservoir over the thing in its box and drop the cigarette into it. The three red eyes glared up at him sightlessly, the ruby eyeballs reflecting murky, smoky rays of light.

He realized vaguely that he had been looking at them for a very long time, even vaguely understood that they were no longer sightless. But it did not seem of importance, of no more importance than the labored, slow motion of the tentacular things that sprouted from the base of the scrawny, slowly pulsing neck.

Connant picked up the pressure lamp and returned to his chair. He sat down, staring at the pages of mathematics before him. The clucking of the counter was strangely less disturbing, the rustle of the coals in the stove no longer distracting.

The creak of the floorboards behind him didn't interrupt his thoughts as he went about his weekly report in an automatic manner, filling in columns of data and making brief, summarizing notes.

The creak of the floorboards sounded nearer.

Chapter V

Blair came up from the nightmare-haunted depths of sleep abruptly. Connant's face floated vaguely above him; for a moment it seemed a continuance of the wild horror of the dream. But Connant's face was angry, and a little frightened. "Blair—Blair you damned log, wake up."

"Uh—eh?" The little biologist rubbed his eyes, his bony, freckled fingers crooked to mutilated child-fists. From surrounding bunks other faces lifted to stare down at them.

Connant straightened up. "Get up—and get a lift on. Your damned animal's escaped."

"Escaped—what! " Chief Pilot Van Wall's bull voice roared out with a volume that shook the walls. Down the communication tunnels other voices yelled suddenly. The dozen inhabitants of Paradise House tumbled in abruptly, Barclay, stocky and bulbous in long woolen underwear, carrying a fire extinguisher.

"What the hell's the matter?" Barclay demanded.

"Your damned beast got loose. I fell asleep about twenty minutes ago, and when I woke up, the thing was gone. Hey Doc, the hell you say those things can't come to life. Blair's blasted potential life developed a hell of a lot of potential and walked out on us."

Conner stared blankly. "It wasn't—Earthly," he sighed suddenly. "I—I guess Earthly laws don't apply."

"Well, it applied for leave of absence and took it. We've got to find it and capture it somehow." Connant swore bitterly, his deep-set black eyes sullen and angry "It's a wonder the hellish creature didn't eat me in my sleep."

Blair stared back, his pale eyes suddenly fear-struck. "Maybe it di—er—uh—we'll have to find it."

"You find it. It's your pet. I've had all I want to do with it, sitting there for seven hours with the counter clucking every few seconds, and you birds in here singing night-music. It's a wonder I got to sleep. I'm going through to the Ad Building."

Commander Garry ducked through the doorway, pulling his belt tight. "You won't have to. Van's roar sounded like the Boeing taking off down wind. So it wasn't dead?"

"I didn't carry it off in my arms, I assure you," Connant snapped. "The last I saw, that split skull was oozing green goo, like a squashed caterpillar. Doc just said our laws don't work—it's unearthly. Well, it's an unearthly monster, with an unearthly disposition, judging by the face, wandering around with a split skull and brains oozing out."

Norris and McReady appeared in the doorway, a doorway filling with other shivering men. "Has anybody seen it coming over here?" Norris asked

innocently. "About four feet tall—three red eyes—brains oozing—hey, has anybody checked to make sure this isn't a cracked idea of humor? If it is, I think we'll unite in tying Blair's pet around Connant's neck like the Ancient Mariner's albatross."

"It's no humor," Connant shivered. "Lord, I wish it were. I'd rather wear—" He stopped. A wild, weird howl shrieked through the corridors. The men stiffened abruptly and half turned.

"I think it's been located," Connant finished. His dark eyes shifted with a queer unease. He darted back to his bunk in Paradise House, to return almost immediately with a heavy .45 revolver and an ice-ax. He hefted both gently as he started for the corridor toward Dogtown. "It blundered down the wrong corridor—and landed among the huskies. Listen—the dogs have broken their chains—"

The half-terrorized howl of the dog pack changed to a wild hunting melee. The voices of the dogs thundered in the narrow corridors, and through them came a low rippling snarl of distilled hate. A shrill of pain, a dozen snarling yelps.

Connant broke for the door. Close behind him, McReady, then Barclay and Commander Garry came. Other men broke for the Ad Building, and weapons—the sledge house. Pomroy, in charge of Big Magnet's five cows, started down the corridor in the opposite direction—he had a six-foot-handled, long-tined pitchfork in mind.

Barclay slid to a halt, as McReady's giant bulk turned abruptly away from the tunnel leading to Dogtown and vanished off at an angle. Uncertainly, the mechanic wavered a moment, the fire extinguisher in his hands, hesitating from one side to the other. Then he was racing after Connant's broad back. Whatever McReady had in mind, he could be trusted to make it work.

Connant stopped at the bend in the corridor. His breath hissed suddenly through his throat. "Great God—" The revolver exploded thunderously; three numbing, palpable waves of sound crashed through the confined corridors. Two more. The revolver dropped to the hard-packed snow of the trail, and Barclay saw the ice-ax shift into defensive position. Connant's powerful body blocked his vision, but beyond he heard something mewing and, insanely, chuckling. The dogs were quieter; there was a deadly seriousness in their low snarls. Taloned feet scratched at hard-packed snow; broken chains were clinking and tangling.

Connant shifted abruptly, and Barclay could see what lay beyond. For a second he stood frozen, then his breath went out in a gusty curse. The Thing launched itself at Connant; the powerful arms of the man swung the ice-ax flat side first at what might have been a hand. It scrunched horribly, and the tattered flesh, ripped by a half-dozen savage huskies, leapt to its feet

again. The red eyes blazed with an unearthly hatred, an unearthly, unkillable vitality.

Barclay turned the fire extinguisher on it; the blinding, blistering stream of chemical spray confused it, baffled it. Together with the savage attacks of the huskies, not for long afraid of anything that did, or could, live, it held it at bay.

McReady wedged men out of his way and drove down the narrow corridor packed with men unable to reach the scene. There was a sure fore-planned drive to McReady's attack. One of the giant blowtorches used in warming the plane's engines was in his bronzed hands. It roared gustily as he turned the corner and opened the valve. The mad mewing hissed louder. The dogs scrambled back from the three-foot lance of blue-hot flame

"Bar, get a power cable, run it in somehow. And a handle. We can electrocute this—monster, if I don't incinerate it." McReady spoke with an authority of planned action. Barclay turned down the long corridor to the power plant, but already before him Norris and Van Wall were racing down.

Barclay found the cable in the electrical cache in the tunnel wall. In a half-minute he was hacking at it, walking back. Van Wall's voice rang out in a warning shout of "Power!" as the emergency gasoline-powered dynamo thudded into action. Half a dozen other men were down there now; the coal kindling was going into the firebox of the steam power plant. Norris, cursing in a low, deadly monotone, was working with quick, sure fingers on the other end of Barclay's cable, splicing in a contactor in one of the power leads.

The dogs had fallen back when Barclay reached the corridor bend, fallen back before a furious monstrosity that glared from baleful red eyes, mewing in trapped hatred. The dogs were a semicircle of red-dipped muzzles with a fringe of glistening white teeth, whining with a vicious eagerness that near matched the fury of the red eyes. McReady stood confidently alert at the corridor bend, the gustily muttering torch held loose and ready for action in his hands. He stepped aside without moving his eyes from the beast as Barclay came up. There was a slight, tight smile on his lean, bronzed face.

Norris' voice called down the corridor, and Barclay stepped forward. The cable was taped to the long handle of a snow shovel, the two conductors split and held 18 inches apart by a scrap of lumber lashed at right angles across the far end of the handle. Bare copper conductors, charged with 220 volts, glinted in the light of pressure lamps. The Thing mewed and halted and dodged. McReady advanced to Barclay's side. The dogs beyond sensed the plan with the almost-telepathic intelligence of trained huskies. Their whimpering grew shriller, softer; their mincing steps carried them nearer. Abruptly a huge, night-black Alaskan leapt onto the trapped thing. It turned squalling, saber-clawed feet slashing.

Barclay leapt forward and jabbed. A weird, shrill scream rose and choked out. The smell of burnt flesh in the corridor intensified; greasy smoke curled up. The echoing pound of the gas-electric dynamo down the corridor became a slogging thud.

The red eyes clouded over in a stiffening, jerking travesty of a face. Armlike, leglike members quivered and jerked. The dogs leapt forward, and Barclay yanked back his shovel-handled weapon. The thing on the snow did not move as gleaming teeth ripped it open.

Chapter VI

Garry looked about the crowded room. Thirty-two men, some tensed nervously standing against the wall, some uneasily relaxed, some sitting, most perforce standing, as intimate as sardines. Thirty-two, plus the five engaged in sewing up wounded dogs, made thirty-seven, the total personnel.

Garry started speaking. "All right, I guess we're here. Some of you—three or four at most—saw what happened. All of you have seen that thing on the table, and can get a general idea. Anyone hasn't, I'll lift—" His hand strayed to the tarpaulin bulking over the thing on the table. There was an acrid odor of singed flesh seeping out of it. The men stirred restlessly, hasty denials.

"It looks rather as though Charnauk isn't going to lead any more teams," Garry went on. "Blair wants to get at this thing and make some more detailed examination. We want to know what happened, and make sure right now that this is permanently, totally dead. Right?"

Connant grinned. "Anybody that doesn't agree can sit up with it tonight."

"All right, then, Blair, what can you say about it? What was it?" Garry turned to the little biologist.

"I wonder if we ever saw its natural form." Blair looked at the covered mass. "It may have been imitating the beings that built that ship—but I don't think it was. I think that was its true form. Those of us who were up near the bend saw the thing in action; the thing on the table is the result. When it got loose, apparently, it started looking around. Antarctic still frozen as it was ages ago when the creature first saw it and froze. From my observations while it was thawing out, and the bits of tissue I cut and hardened then, I think it was native to a hotter planet than Earth. It couldn't, in its natural form, stand the temperature. There is no lifeform on Earth that can live in Antarctica during the winter, but the best compromise is the dog. It found the dogs, and somehow got near enough to Charnauk to get him. The others smelled it—heard it—I don't know—anyway they went wild, and broke chains, and attacked it before it was finished. The thing we

found was part Charnauk, queerly only half-dead, part Charnauk half-digested by the jellylike protoplasm of that creature, and part the remains of the thing we originally found, sort of melted down to the basic protoplasm.

"When the dogs attacked it, it turned into the best fighting thing it could think of. Some other-world beast apparently."

"Turned," snapped Garry. "How?"

"Every living thing is made up of jelly—protoplasm and minute, sub-microscopic things called nuclei, which control the bulk, the protoplasm. This thing was just a modification of that same worldwide plan of Nature: cells made up of protoplasm, controlled by infinitely tinier nuclei. You physicists might compare it to an individual cell of any living thing—with an atom; the bulk of the atom, the space-filling part, is made up of the electron orbits, but the character of the thing is determined by the atomic nucleus.

"This isn't wildly beyond what we already know. It's just a modification we haven't seen before. It's as natural, as logical, as any other manifestation of life. It obeys exactly the same laws. The cells are made of protoplasm, their character determined by the nucleus.

"Only in this creature, the cell nuclei can control those cells at *will*. It digested Charnauk, and, as it digested, studied every cell of his tissue, and shaped its own cells to imitate them exactly. Parts of it—parts that had time to finish changing—are dog cells. But they don't have dog-cell nuclei." Blair lifted a fraction of the tarpaulin. A torn dog's leg with stiff gray fur protruded. "That, for instance, isn't dog at all; it's imitation. Some parts I'm uncertain about; the nucleus was hiding itself, covering up with dog-cell imitation nucleus. In time, not even a microscope would have shown the difference."

"Suppose," asked Norris bitterly, "it had had lots of time?"

"Then it would have been a dog. The other dogs would have accepted it. We would have accepted it. I don't think anything would have distinguished it, not microscope, nor X-ray, nor any other means. This is a member of a supremely intelligent race, a race that has learned the deepest secrets of biology, and turned them to its use."

"What was it planning to do?" Barclay looked at the humped tarpaulin.

Blair grinned unpleasantly. The wavering halo of thin hair round his bald pate wavered in the stir of air. "Take over the world, I imagine."

"Take over the world! Just it, all by itself?" Connant gasped. "Set itself up as a lone dictator?"

"No," Blair shook his head. The scalpel he had been fumbling in his bony fingers dropped; he bent to pick it up, so that his face was hidden as he spoke. "It would become the population of the world."

"Become—populate the world? Does it reproduce asexually?"

Blair shook his head and gulped. "It's—it doesn't have to. It weighed 85 pounds. Charnauk weighed about 90. It would have become Charnauk, and had 85 pounds left, to become—oh, Jack for instance, or Chinook. It can imitate anything—that is, become anything. If it had reached the Antarctic Sea, it would have become a seal, maybe two seals. They might have attacked a killer whale, and become either killers, or a herd of seals. Or maybe it would have caught an albatross, or a skua gull, and flown to South America."

Norris cursed softly. "And every time it digested something, and imitated it—"

"It would have had its original bulk left, to start again," Blair finished. "Nothing would kill it. It has no natural enemies, because it becomes whatever it wants to. If a killer whale attacked it, it would become a killer whale. If it was an albatross, and an eagle attacked it, it would become an eagle. Lord, it might become a female eagle. Go back—build a nest and lay eggs!"

"Are you sure that thing from hell is dead?" Dr. Copper asked softly.

"Yes, thank Heaven," the little biologist gasped. "After they drove the dogs off, I stood there poking Bar's electrocution thing into it for five minutes. It's dead and—cooked."

"Then we can only give thanks that this is Antarctica, where there is not one, single, solitary, living thing for it to imitate, except these animals in camp."

"Us," Blair giggled. "It can imitate us. Dogs can't make four hundred miles to the sea; there's no food. There aren't any skua gulls to imitate at this season. There aren't any penguins this far inland. There's nothing that can reach the sea from this point—except us. We've got brains. We can do it. Don't you see—*it's got to imitate us—it's got to be one of us—that's the only way it can fly an airplane—fly a plane for two hours, and rule—be—all Earth's inhabitants. A world for the taking—if it imitates us!*

"It didn't know yet. It hadn't had a chance to learn. It was rushed—hurried—took the thing nearest its own size. Look—I'm Pandora! I opened the box! And the only hope that can come out is—that nothing can come out. You didn't see me. I did it. I fixed it. I smashed every magneto. Not a plane can fly. Nothing can fly." Blair giggled and lay down on the floor crying.

Chief Pilot Van Wall made a dive for the door. His feet were fading echoes in the corridors as Dr. Copper bent unhurriedly over the little man on the floor. From his office at the end of the room he brought something and injected a solution into Blair's arm. "He might come out of it when he wakes up," he sighed, rising. McReady helped him lift the biologist onto a nearby bunk. "It all depends on whether we can convince him that thing is dead."

Van Wall ducked into the shack brushing his heavy blond beard absently. "I didn't think a biologist would do a thing like that up thoroughly. He missed the spares in the second cache. It's all right. I smashed them."

Commander Garry nodded. "I was wondering about the radio."

Dr. Copper snorted. "You don't think it can leak out on a radio wave, do you? You'd have five rescue attempts in the next three months if you stop the broadcasts. The thing to do is talk loud and not make a sound. Now I wonder—"

McReady looked speculatively at the doctor. "It might be like an infectious disease. Everything that drank any of its blood—"

Copper shook his head. "Blair missed something. Imitate it may, but it has, to a certain extent, its own body chemistry, its own metabolism. If it didn't, it would become a dog—and be a dog and nothing more. It has to be an imitation dog. Therefore you can detect it by serum tests. And its chemistry, since it comes from another world, must be so wholly, radically different that a few cells, such as gained by drops of blood, would be treated as disease germs by the dog, or human body."

"Blood—would one of those imitations bleed?" Norris demanded.

"Surely. Nothing mystic about blood. Muscle is about 90 percent water; blood differs only in having a couple percent more water, and less connective tissue. They'd bleed all right," Copper assured him.

Blair sat up in his bunk suddenly. "Connant—where's Connant?"

The physicist moved toward the little biologist. "Here I am. What do you want?"

"Are you?" giggled Blair. He lapsed back into the bunk contorted with silent laughter. Connant looked at him blankly. "Huh? Am I what?"

"Are you there?" Blair burst into gales of laughter. "Are you Connant? The beast wanted to be a *man*—not a dog—"

Chapter VII

Dr. Copper rose wearily from the bunk and washed the hypodermic carefully. The little tinkles it made seemed loud in the packed room, now that Blair's gurgling laughter had finally quieted. Copper looked toward Garry and shook his head slowly. "Hopeless, I'm afraid. I don't think we can ever convince him the thing is dead now."

Norris laughed uncertainly. "I'm not sure you can convince me. Oh, damn you, McReady."

"McReady?" Commander Garry turned to look from Norris to McReady curiously.

"The nightmares," Norris explained. "He had a theory about the nightmares we had at the Secondary Station after finding that thing."

"And that was?" Garry looked at McReady levelly.

Norris answered for him, jerkily, uneasily. "That the creature wasn't dead, had a sort of enormously slowed existence, an existence that permitted it, nonetheless, to be vaguely aware of the passing of time, of our coming, after endless years. I had a dream it could imitate things."

"Well," Copper grunted, "it can."

"Don't be an ass," Norris snapped. "That's not what's bothering me. In the dream it could read minds, read thoughts and ideas and mannerisms."

"What's so bad about that? It seems to be worrying you more than the thought of the joy we're going to have with a madman in an Antarctic camp." Copper nodded toward Blair's sleeping form.

McReady shook his great head slowly. "You know that Connant is Connant, because he not merely looks like Connant—which we're beginning to believe that beast might be able to do—but he thinks like Connant, talks like Connant, moves himself around as Connant does. That takes more than merely a body that looks like him; that takes Connant's own mind, and thoughts and mannerisms. Therefore, though you know that the thing might make itself *look* like Connant, you aren't much bothered, because you know it has a mind from another world, a totally unhuman mind, that couldn't possibly react and think and talk like a man we know, and do it so well as to fool us for a moment. The idea of the creature imitating one of us is fascinating, but unreal because it is too completely unhuman to deceive us. It doesn't have a human mind."

"As I said before," Norris repeated, looking steadily at McReady, "you can say the damndest things at the damndest times. Will you be so good as to finish that thought—one way or the other?"

Kinner, the scar-faced expedition cook, had been standing near Connant. Suddenly he moved down the length of the crowded room toward his familiar galley. He shook the ashes from the galley stove noisily.

"It would do it no good," said Dr. Copper, softly, as though thinking out loud, "to merely look like something it was trying to imitate; it would have to understand its feelings, its reaction. It is unhuman; it has powers of imitation beyond any conception of man. A good actor, by training himself, can imitate another man, another man's mannerisms, well enough to fool most people. Of course no actor could imitate so perfectly as to deceive men who had been living with the imitated one in the complete lack of privacy of an Antarctic camp. That would take a superhuman skill."

"Oh, you've got the bug too?" Norris cursed softly.

Connant, standing alone at one end of the room, looked about him wildly, his face white. A gentle eddying of the men had crowded them slow-

ly down toward the other end of the room, so that he stood quite alone. "My God, will you two Jeremiahs shut up?" Connant's voice shook. "What am I? Some kind of a microscopic specimen you're dissecting? Some unpleasant worm you're discussing in the third person?"

McReady looked up at him, his slowly twisting hands stopped for a moment. "Having a lovely time. Wish you were here. Signed: Everybody.

"Connant, if you think you're having a hell of a time, just move over on the this end for a while. You've got one thing we haven't; you know what the answer is. I'll tell you this, right now you're the most feared and respected man in Big Magnet."

"Lord, I wish you could see your eyes," Connant gasped. "Stop staring, will you! What the hell are you going to do?"

"Have you any suggestions, Dr. Conner?" Commander Garry asked steadily. "The present situation is impossible."

"Oh, is it?" Connant snapped. "Come over here and look at that crowd. By Heaven, they look exactly like that gang of huskies around the corridor bend. Benning, will you stop hefting that damned ice-ax—"

The coppery blade rang on the floor as the aviation mechanic nervously dropped it. He bent over and picked it up instantly, hefting it slowly, turning it in his hands, his brown eyes moving jerkily about the room.

Copper sat down on the bunk beside Blair. The wood creaked noisily in the room. Far down a corridor, a dog yelped in pain, and the dog-drivers' tense voices floated softly back. "Microscopic examination," said the doctor thoughtfully, "would be useless, as Blair pointed out. Considerable time has passed. However, serum tests would be definitive."

"Serum tests? What do you mean exactly?" Commander Garry asked.

"If I had a rabbit that had been injected with human blood—a poison to rabbits, of course, as is the blood of any animal save that of another rabbit—and the injections continued in increasing doses for some time, the rabbit would be human-immune. If a small quantity of its blood were drawn off, allowed to separate in a test-tube, and to the clear serum a bit of human blood were added, there would be a visible reaction, proving the blood was human. If cow or dog blood were added—or any protein material other than that one thing, human blood—no reaction would take place. That would prove definitely."

"Can you suggest where I might catch a rabbit for you, Doc?" Norris asked. "That is, nearer than Australia; we don't want to waste time going that far."

"I know there aren't any rabbits in Antarctica," Copper nodded, "but that is simply the usual animal. Any animal except man will do. A dog for instance. But it will take several days, and due to the greater size of the animal, considerable blood. Two of us will have to contribute."

"Would I do?" Garry asked.

"That will make two," Copper nodded. "I'll get to work on it right away."

"What about Connant in the meantime?" Kinner demanded. "I'm going out that door and head off for the Ross Sea before I cook for him."

"He may be human—" Copper started.

Connant burst out in a flood of curses. "Human! May be human, you damned saw-bones! What in hell do you think I am?"

"A monster," Copper snapped sharply. "Now shut up and listen." Connant's face drained of color and he sat down heavily as the indictment was put in words. "Until we know—you know as well as we do that we have reason to question the fact, and only you know how that question is to be answered—we may reasonably be expected to lock you up. If you are—unhuman—you're a lot more dangerous than poor Blair there, and I'm going to see that he's locked up thoroughly. I expect that his next stage will be a violent desire to kill you, all the dogs, and probably all of us. When he wakes, he will be convinced we're all unhuman, and nothing on the planet will ever change his conviction. It would be kinder to let him die, but we can't do that, of course. He's going in one shack, and you can stay in Cosmos House with your cosmic ray apparatus. Which is about what you'd do anyway. I've got to fix up a couple of dogs."

Connant nodded bitterly. "I'm human. Hurry that test. Your eyes—Lord, I wish you could see your eyes staring—"

Commander Garry watched anxiously as Clark, the dog-handler, held the big brown Alaskan husky while Copper began the injection treatment. The dog was not anxious to cooperate; the needle was painful, and already he'd experienced considerable needle work that morning. Five stitches held closed a slash that ran from his shoulder across the ribs halfway down his body. One long fang was broken off short; the missing part was to be found half-buried in the shoulder bone of the monstrous thing on the table in the Ad Building.

"How long will that take?" Garry asked, pressing his arm gently. It was sore from the prick of the needle Dr. Copper had used to withdraw the blood.

Copper shrugged. "I don't know, to be frank. I know the general method, I've used it on rabbits. But I haven't experimented with dogs. They're big, clumsy animals to work with; naturally rabbits are preferable, and serve ordinarily. In civilized places you can buy a stock of human-immune rabbits from suppliers, and not many investigators take the trouble to prepare their own."

"What do they want with them back there?" Clark asked.

"Criminology is one large field. A says he didn't murder B, but that the blood on his shirt came from killing a chicken. The State makes a test, then

it's up to A to explain how it is the blood reacts on human-immune rabbits, but not on chicken-immunes."

"What are we going to do with Blair in the meantime?" Garry asked wearily. "It's all right to let him sleep where he is for a while, but when he wakes up—"

"Barclay and Benning are fitting some bolts on the door of Cosmos House," Copper replied grimly. "Connant's acting like a gentleman. I think perhaps the way the other men look at him makes him rather want privacy. Lord knows, heretofore we've all of us individually prayed for a little privacy."

Clark laughed bitterly. "Not anymore, thank you. The more the merrier."

"Blair," Copper went on, "will also have to have privacy—and locks. He's going to have a pretty definite plan in mind when he wakes up. Ever hear the old story of how to stop hoof-and-mouth disease in cattle?"

"If there isn't any hoof-and-mouth disease, there won't be any hoof-and-mouth disease," Copper explained. "You get rid of it by killing every animal that exhibits it, and every animal that's been near the diseased animal. Blair's a biologist and knows that story. He's afraid of this thing we loosed. The answer is probably pretty clear in his mind now. Kill everybody and everything in this camp before a skua gull or a wandering albatross coming in with the spring chances out this way and—catches the disease."

Clark's lips curled in a twisted grin. "Sounds logical to me. If things get too bad—maybe we'd better let Blair get loose. It would save us committing suicide. We might also make something of a vow that if things get bad, we see that that does happen."

Copper laughed softly. "The last man alive in Big Magnet—wouldn't be a man," he pointed out. "Somebody's got to kill those—creatures that don't desire to kill themselves, you know. We don't have enough thermite to do it all at once, and the decanite explosive wouldn't help much. I have an idea that even small pieces of one of those beings would be self-sufficient."

"If," said Garry thoughtfully, "they can modify their protoplasm at will, won't they simply modify themselves to birds and fly away? They can read all about birds, and imitate their structure without even meeting them. Or imitate, perhaps, birds of their home planet."

Copper shook his head, and helped Clark to free the dog. "Man studied birds for centuries, trying to learn how to make a machine to fly like them. He never did do the trick; his final success came when he broke away entirely and tried new methods. Knowing the general idea, and knowing the detailed structure of wing and bone and nerve tissue is something far, far different. And as for other-world birds, perhaps, in fact very probably, the atmospheric conditions here are so vastly different that their birds couldn't fly. Perhaps, even, the being came from a planet like Mars with such a thin atmosphere that there were no birds."

Barclay came into the building, trailing a length of airplane control cable. "It's finished, Doc. Cosmos House can't be opened from the inside. Now where do we put Blair?"

Copper looked toward Garry. "There wasn't any biology building. I don't know where we can isolate him."

"How about East Cache?" Garry said after a moment's thought. "Will Blair be able to look after himself or need attention?"

"He'll be capable enough. We'll be the ones to watch out," Copper assured him grimly.

"Take a stove, a couple of bags of coal, necessary supplies, and a few tools to fix it up. Nobody's been out there since last fall, have they?"

Garry shook his head. "If he gets noisy—I thought that might be a good idea."

Barclay hefted the tools he was carrying and looked up at Garry. "If the muttering he's doing now is any sign, he's going to sing away the night hours. And we won't like his song."

"What's he saying?" Copper asked.

Barclay shook his head. "I didn't care to listen much. You can if you want to. But I gathered that the blasted idiot had all the dreams McReady had, and a few more. He slept beside the thing when we stopped on the trail coming in from Secondary Magnetic, remember. He dreamt the thing was alive, and dreamt more details. And—damn his soul—knew it wasn't all dream, or had reason to. He knew it had telepathic powers that were stirring vaguely, and that it could not only read minds, but project thoughts. They weren't dreams, you see. They were stray thoughts that thing was broadcasting, the way Blair's broadcasting his thoughts now, a sort of telepathic muttering in its sleep. That's why he knew so much about its powers. I guess you and I, Doc, weren't so sensitive—if you want to believe in telepathy."

"I have to," Copper sighed. "Dr. Rhine of Duke University has shown that it exists, shown that some are much more sensitive than others."

"Well, if you want to learn a lot of details, go listen in on Blair's broadcast. He's driven most of the boys out of the Ad Building; Kinner's rattling pans like coal going down a chute. When he can't rattle a pan, he shakes ashes."

"By the way, Commander, what are we going to do this spring, now the planes are out of it?"

Garry sighed. "I'm afraid our expedition is going to be a loss. We cannot divide our strength now."

"It won't be a loss—if we continue to live, and come out of this," Copper promised him. "The find we've made, if we can get it under control, is important enough. The cosmic ray data, magnetic work, and atmospheric work won't be greatly hindered."

Garry laughed mirthlessly. "I was just thinking of the radio broadcasts. Telling half the world about the wonderful results of our exploration flights, trying to fool men like Byrd and Ellsworth back home there that we're doing something."

Copper nodded gravely. "They'll know something's wrong. But men like that have judgment enough to know we wouldn't do tricks without some sort of reason, and will wait for our return to judge us. I think it comes to this: Men who know enough to recognize our deception will wait for our return. Men who haven't discretion and faith enough to wait will not have the experience to detect any fraud. We know enough of the conditions here to put through a good bluff."

"Just so they don't send 'rescue' expeditions," Garry prayed. "When—if—we're ever ready to come out, we'll have to send word to Captain Forsythe to bring a stock of magnetos with him when he comes down. But never mind that."

"You mean if we don't come out?" asked Barclay. "I was wondering if a nice running account of an eruption or an earthquake via radio—with a swell wind-up by using a stick of decanite under the microphone would help. Nothing, of course, will entirely keep people out. One of those swell, melodramatic 'last-man-alive scenes' might make 'em go easy, though."

Garry smiled with genuine humor. "Is everybody in camp trying to figure that out too?"

Copper laughed. "What do you think, Garry? We're confident we can win out. But not too easy about it, I guess."

Clark grinned up from the dog he was petting into calmness. "Confident, did you say, Doc?"

Chapter VIII

Blair moved restlessly around the small shack. His eyes jerked and quivered in vague, fleeting glances at the four men with him: Barclay, six feet tall and weighing over 190 pounds; McReady, a bronze giant of a man; Dr. Copper, short, squat, powerful; and Benning, five feet ten of wiry strength.

Blair was huddled up against the far wall of the East Cache cabin, his gear piled in the middle of the floor beside the heating stove, forming an island between him and the four men. His bony hands clenched and fluttered, terrified. His pale eyes wavered uneasily as his bald, freckled head darted about in birdlike motion.

"I don't want anybody coming here. I'll cook my own food," he snapped nervously. "Kinner may be human now, but I don't believe it. I'm

going to get out of here, but I'm not going to eat any food you send me. I want cans. Sealed cans."

"O.K., Blair, we'll bring 'em tonight," Barclay promised. "You've got coal, and the fire's started. I'll make a last—" Barclay started forward.

Blair instantly scurried to the farthest corner. "Get out! Keep away from me, you monster!" the little biologist shrieked, and tried to claw his way through the wall of the shack. "Keep away from me—keep away—I won't be absorbed—I won't be—"

Barclay relaxed and moved back. Dr. Copper shook his head. "Leave him alone, Bar. It's easier for him to fix the thing himself. We'll have to fix the door, I think—"

The four men let themselves out. Efficiently, Benning and Barclay fell to work. There were no locks in Antarctica; there wasn't enough privacy to make them needed. But powerful screws had been driven in each side of the door frame, and the spare aviation control cable, immensely strong, woven steel wire, was rapidly caught between them and drawn taut. Barclay went to work with a drill and a keyhole saw. Presently he had a trap cut in the door through which goods could be passed without unlashng the entrance. Three powerful hinges from a stock-crate, two hasps, and a pair of three-inch cotter pins made it proof against opening from the other side.

Blair moved about restlessly inside. He was dragging something over to the door with panting gasps and muttering, frantic curses. Barclay opened the hatch and glanced in, Dr. Copper peering over his shoulder. Blair had moved the heavy bunk against the door. It could not be opened without his cooperation now.

"Don't know but what the poor man's right at that," McReady sighed. "If he gets loose, it is his avowed intention to kill each and all of us as quickly as possible, which is something we don't agree with. But we've something on our side of that door that is worse than a homicidal maniac. If one or the other has to get loose, I think I'll come up and undo those lashings here."

Barclay grinned. "You let me know, and I'll show you how to get these off fast. Let's go back."

The sun was painting the northern horizon in multicolored rainbows still, though it was two hours below the horizon. The field of drift swept off to the north, sparkling under its flaming colors in a million reflected glories. Low mounds of rounded white on the northern horizon showed the Magnet Range was barely awash above the sweeping drift. Little eddies of wind-lifted snow swirled away from their skies as they set out toward the main encampment two miles away. The spidery finger of the broadcast radiator lifted a gaunt black needle against the white of the Antarctic continent. The snow under their skis was like fine sand, hard and gritty.

"Spring," said Benning bitterly, "is come. Ain't we got fun! I've been looking forward to getting away from this blasted hole in the ice."

"I wouldn't try it now, if I were you." Barclay grunted. "Guys that set out from here in the next few days are going to be marvelously unpopular."

"How is your dog getting along, Dr. Copper?" McReady asked. "Any results yet?"

"In thirty hours? I wish there were. I gave him an injection of my blood today. But I imagine another five days will be needed. I don't know certainly enough to stop sooner."

"I've been wondering—if Connant were—changed, would he have warned us so soon after the animal escaped? Wouldn't he have waited long enough for it to have a real chance to fix itself? Until we woke up naturally?" McReady asked slowly.

"The thing is selfish. You didn't think it looked as though it were possessed of a store of the higher justices, did you?" Dr. Copper pointed out. "Every part of it, every part of it is all for itself, I imagine. If Connant were changed, to save his skin, he'd have to—but Connant's feelings aren't changed; they're imitated perfectly, or they're his own. Naturally, the imitation, imitating perfectly Connant's feelings, would do exactly what Connant would do."

"Say, couldn't Norris or Van give Connant some kind of test? If the thing is brighter than men, it might know more physics than Connant should, and they'd catch it out," Barclay suggested.

Copper shook his head wearily. "Not if it reads minds. You can't plan a trap for it. Van suggested that last night. He hoped it would answer some of the questions of physics he'd like to know answers to."

"This expedition-of-four idea is going to make life happy." Benning looked at this companions. "Each of us with an eye on the others to make sure he doesn't do something—peculiar. Man, aren't we going to be a trusting bunch! Each man eyeing his neighbors with the grandest exhibition of faith and trust—I'm beginning to know what Connant meant by 'I wish you could see your eyes.' Every now and then we all have it, I guess. One of you looks around with a sort of 'I-wonder-if-the-other-three-are look.' Incidentally, I'm not excepting myself."

"So far as we know, the animal is dead, with a slight question as to Connant. No other is suspected," McReady stated slowly. "The 'always four' order is merely a precautionary measure."

"I'm waiting for Garry to make it four-in-a-bunk," Barclay sighed. "I thought I didn't have any privacy before, but since that order—"

None watched more tensely than Connant. A little sterile glass test-tube, half-filled with straw-colored fluid. One—two—three—four—five drops of the clear solution Dr. Copper had prepared from the drops of

blood from Connant's arm. The tube was shaken carefully, then set in a beaker of clear, warm water. The thermometer read blood heat, a little thermostat clicked noisily, and the electric hotplate began to glow as the lights flickered slightly.

Then—little white flecks of precipitation were forming, snowing down in the clear straw-colored fluid. "Lord," said Connant. He dropped heavily into a bunk, crying like a baby. "Six days," Connant sobbed, "six days in there—wondering if that damned test would lie—"

Garry moved over silently and slipped his arm across the physicist's back.

"It couldn't lie," Dr. Copper said. "The dog was human-immune—and the serum reacted."

"He's—all right?" Norris gasped. "Then—the animal is dead—dead forever?"

"He is human," Copper spoke definitely, "and the animal is dead."

Kinner burst out laughing, laughing hysterically. McReady turned toward him and slapped his face with a methodical one-two, one-two action. The cook laughed, gulped, cried a moment, and sat up rubbing his cheeks, mumbling his thanks vaguely. "I was scared. Lord, I was scared "

Norris laughed brittlely. "You think we weren't, you ape? You think maybe Connant wasn't?"

The Ad Building stirred with a sudden rejuvenation. Voices laughed, the men clustering around Connant spoke with unnecessarily loud voices, jittery, nervous voices relievedly friendly again. Somebody called out a suggestion, and a dozen started for their skis. Blair. Blair might recover—Dr. Copper fussed with his test-tubes in nervous relief, trying solutions. The party of relief for Blair's shack started out the door, skis clapping noisily. Down the corridor, the dogs set up a quick yelping howl as the air of excited relief reached them.

Dr. Copper fussed with his tubes. McReady noticed him first, sitting on the edge of the bunk, with two precipitin-whitened test-tubes of straw-colored fluid, his face whiter than the stuff in the tubes, silent tears slipping down from horror-widened eyes.

McReady felt a cold knife of fear pierce through his heart and freeze in his breast. Dr. Copper looked up.

"Garry," he called hoarsely. "Garry, for God's sake, come here."

Commander Garry walked toward him sharply. Silence clapped down on the Ad Building. Connant looked up, rose stiffly from his seat.

"Garry—tissue from the monster—precipitates too. It proves nothing. Nothing but—but the dog was monster-immune too. That one of the two contributing blood—one of us two, you and I, Garry—*one of us is a monster.*"

Chapter IX

Bar, call back those men before they tell Blair," McReady said quietly. Barclay went to the door; faintly his shouts came back to the tensely silent men in the room. Then he was back.

"They're coming," he said. "I didn't tell them why, just that Dr. Copper said not to go."

"McReady," Garry sighed, "you're in command now. May God help you. I cannot."

The bronzed giant nodded slowly, his deep eyes on Commander Garry.

"I may be the one," Garry added. "I know I'm not, but I cannot prove it to you in any way. Dr. Copper's test has broken down. The fact that he showed it was useless, when it was to the advantage of the monster to have that uselessness not known, would seem to prove he was human."

Copper rocked back and forth slowly on the bunk. "I know I'm human. I can't prove it either. One of us two is a liar, for that test cannot lie, and it says one of us is. I gave proof that the test was wrong, which seems to prove I'm human, and now Garry has given that argument which proves me human—which he, as the monster, should not do. Round and round and round and round and—"

Dr. Copper's head, then his neck and shoulders, began circling slowly in time to the words. Suddenly he was lying back on the bunk, roaring with laughter. "It doesn't have to prove one of us is a monster! It doesn't have to prove that at all! Ho-ho. If we're all monsters it works the same! We're all monsters—all of us—Connant and Garry and I—and all of you."

"McReady," Van Wall, the blond-bearded chief pilot, called softly, "you were on the way to an M.D. when you took up meteorology, weren't you? Can you make some kind of test?"

McReady went over to Copper slowly, took the hypodermic from his hand, and washed it carefully in 95 percent alcohol. Garry sat on the bunk edge with a wooden face, watching Copper and McReady expressionlessly. "What Copper said is possible," McReady sighed. "Van, will you help here? Thanks." The filled needle jabbed into Copper's thigh. The man's laughter did not stop, but slowly faded into sobs, then sound sleep as the morphia took hold.

McReady turned again. The men who had started for Blair stood at the far end of the room, skis dripping snow, their faces as white as their skis. Connant had a lighted cigarette in each hand; one he was puffing absently, and staring at the floor. The heat of the one in his left hand attracted him and he stared at it, and the one in the other hand, stupidly for a moment. He dropped one and crushed it under his heel slowly.

"Dr. Copper," McReady repeated, "could be right. I know I'm human—but of course can't prove it. I'll repeat the test for my own information. Any of you others who wish to may do the same."

Two minutes later, McReady held a test-tube with white precipitin settling slowly from straw-colored serum. "It reacts to human blood, too, so they aren't both monsters."

"I didn't think they were," Van Wall sighed. "That wouldn't suit the monster either; we could have destroyed them if we knew. Why hasn't the monster destroyed us, do you suppose? It seems to be loose."

McReady snorted. Then laughed softly. "Elementary, my dear Watson. The monster wants to have lifeforms available. It cannot animate a dead body, apparently. It is just waiting—waiting until the best opportunities come. We who remain human, it is holding in reserve."

Kinner shuddered violently. "Hey. Hey, Mac. Mac, would I know if I was a monster? Would I know if the monster had already got me? Oh Lord, I may be a monster already."

"You'd know," McReady answered.

"But we wouldn't," Norris laughed shortly, half-hysterically.

McReady looked at the vial of serum remaining. "There's one thing this damned stuff is good for, at that," he said thoughtfully. "Clark, will you and Van help me? The rest of the gang better stick together here. Keep an eye on each other," he said bitterly. "See that you don't get into mischief, shall we say?"

McReady started down the tunnel toward Dogtown with Clark and Van Wall behind him. "You need more serum?" Clark asked.

McReady shook his head. "Tests. There's four cows and a bull and nearly seventy dogs down there. This stuff reacts only to human blood and monsters."

McReady came back to the Ad Building and went silently to the washstand. Clark and Van Wall joined him a moment later. Clark's lips had developed a tic, jerking into sudden unexpected sneers.

"What did you do?" Connant exploded suddenly. "More immunizing?"

Clark snickered, and stopped with a hiccup. "Immunizing. Haw! Immune all right."

"That monster," said Van Wall steadily, "is quite logical. Our immune dog was quite all right, and we drew a little more serum for the test. But we won't make any more."

"Can't—can't you use one man's blood on another dog—" Norris began.

"There aren't," said McReady softly, "any more dogs. Nor cattle, I might add."

"No more dogs?" Benning sat down slowly.

"They're very nasty when they start changing," Van Wall said precisely, "but slow. That electrocution iron you made up, Barclay, is very fast. There is only one dog left—our immune. The monster left that for us, so we could play with our little test. The rest—" He shrugged and dried his hands.

"The cattle—" gulped Kinner.

"Also. Reacted very nicely. They look funny as hell when they start melting. The beast hasn't any quick escape when it's tied in dog chains, or halters, and it had to be to imitate."

Kinner stood up slowly. His eyes darted around the room, and came to rest horribly quivering on a tin bucket in the galley. Slowly, step by step, he retreated toward the door, his mouth opening and closing silently, like a fish out of water.

"The milk," he gasped. "I milked 'em an hour ago—" His voice broke into a scream as he dived through the door. He was out on the ice cap without windproof or heavy clothing.

Van Wall looked after him for a moment thoughtfully. "He's probably hopelessly mad," he said at length, "but he might be a monster escaping. He hasn't skis. Take a blowtorch—in case."

The physical motion of the chase helped them: something that needed doing. Three of the other men were quietly being sick. Norris was lying flat on his back, his face greenish, looking steadily at the bottom of the bunk above him.

"Mac, how long have the—cows been not—cows—"

McReady shrugged his shoulders hopelessly. He went over to the milk bucket, and with his little tube of serum went to work on it. The milk clouded it, making certainty difficult. Finally he dropped the test-tube in the stand and shook his head. "It tests negatively. Which means either they were cows then, or that, being perfect imitations, they gave perfectly good milk."

Copper stirred restlessly in his sleep and gave a gurgling cross between a snore and a laugh. Silent eyes fastened on him.

"Would morphia—a monster—" somebody started to ask.

"Lord knows," McReady shrugged. "It affects every Earthly animal I know of."

Connant suddenly raised his head. "Mac! The dogs must have swallowed pieces of the monster, and the pieces destroyed them! The dogs were where the monster resided. I was locked up. Doesn't that prove—"

Van Wall shook his head. "Sorry. Proves nothing about what you are, only proves what you didn't do."

"It doesn't do that," McReady sighed. "We are helpless. Because we don't know enough, and so jittery we don't think straight. Locked up! Ever

watch a white corpuscle of the blood go through the wall of a blood vessel? No? It sticks out a pseudopod. And there it is—on the far side of the wall.”

“Oh,” said Van Wall unhappily. “The cattle tried to melt down, didn’t they? They could have melted down—become just a thread of stuff and leaked under a door to recollect on the other side. Ropes—no—no, that wouldn’t do it. They couldn’t live in a sealed tank or—”

“If,” said McReady, “you shoot it through the heart, and it doesn’t die, it’s a monster. That’s the best test I can think of, offhand.”

“No dogs,” said Garry quietly, “and no cattle. It has to imitate men now. And locking up doesn’t do any good. Your test might work, Mac, but I’m afraid it would be hard on the men.”

Chapter X

Clark looked up from the galley stove as Van Wall, Barclay, McReady, and Benning came in, brushing the drift from their clothes. The other men jammed into the Ad Building continued studiously to do as they were doing, playing chess, poker, reading. Ralsen was fixing a sledge on the table; Van and Norris had their heads together over magnetic data, while Harvey read tables in a low voice.

Dr. Copper snored softly on the bunk. Garry was working with Dutton over a sheaf of radio messages on the corner of Dutton’s bunk and a small fraction of the radio table. Connant was using most of the table for cosmic ray sheets.

Quite plainly through the corridor, despite two closed doors, they could hear Kinner’s voice. Clark banged a kettle onto the galley stove and beckoned McReady silently. The meteorologist went over to him.

“I don’t mind the cooking so damn much,” Clark said nervously, “but isn’t there some way to stop that bird? We all agreed that it would be safe to move him into Cosmos House.”

“Kinner?” McReady nodded toward the door. “I’m afraid not. I can dope him, I suppose, but we don’t have an unlimited supply of morphia, and he’s not in danger of losing his mind. Just hysterical.”

“Well, we’re in danger of losing ours. You’ve been out for an hour and a half. That’s been going on steadily ever since, and it was going for two hours before. There’s a limit, you know.”

Garry wandered over slowly, apologetically. For an instant, McReady caught the feral spark of fear—horror—in Clark’s eyes, and knew at the same instant it was in his own. Garry—Garry or Copper—was certainly a monster.

"If you could stop that, I think it would be a sound policy, Mac," Garry spoke quietly. "There are tensions enough in this room. We agreed that it would be safe for Kinner in there, because everyone else in camp is under constant eyeing." Garry shivered slightly. "And try, try in God's name, to find some test that will work."

McReady sighed. "Watched or unwatched, everyone's tense. Blair's jammed the trap so it won't open now. Says he's got food enough, and keeps screaming, 'Go away, go away—you're monsters. I won't be absorbed. I won't. I'll tell men when they come. Go away.' So—we went away."

"There's no other test?" Garry pleaded.

McReady shrugged his shoulders. "Copper was perfectly right. The serum test could be absolutely definitive if it hadn't been—contaminated. But that's the only dog left, and he's fixed now."

"Chemicals? Chemical tests?"

McReady shook his head. "Our chemistry isn't that good. I tried the microscope, you know."

Garry nodded. "Monster-dog and real dog were identical. But—you've got to go on. What are we going to do after dinner?"

Van Wall had joined them quietly. "Rotation sleeping. Half the crowd asleep; half awake. I wonder how many of us are monsters? All the dogs were. We thought we were safe, but somehow it got Copper—or you." Van Wall's eyes flashed uneasily. "It may have gotten every one of you—all of you but myself may be wondering, looking. No, that's not possible. You'd just spring then. I'd be helpless. We humans must somehow have the greater numbers now. But—" he stopped.

McReady laughed shortly. "You're doing what Norris complained of in me. Leaving it hanging. 'But if one more is changed—that may shift the balance of power.' It doesn't fight. I don't think it ever fights. It must be a peaceable thing, in its own—inimitable—way. It never had to, because it always gained its end otherwise."

Van Wall's mouth twisted in a sickly grin. "You're suggesting, then, that perhaps it already has the greater numbers, but is just waiting—waiting, all of them—all of you, for all I know—waiting till I, the last human, drop my wariness in sleep. Mac, did you notice their eyes, all looking at us?"

Garry sighed. "You haven't been sitting here for four straight hours, while all their eyes silently weighed the information that one of us two, Copper or I, is a monster certainly—perhaps both of us."

Clark repeated his request. "Will you stop that bird's noise? He's driving me nuts. Make him tone down, anyway."

"Still praying?" McReady asked.

“Still praying,” Clark groaned. “He hasn’t stopped for a second. I don’t mind his praying if it relieves him, but he yells, he sings psalms and hymns and shouts prayers. He thinks God can’t hear well way down here.”

“Maybe He can’t,” Barclay grunted. “Or He’d have done something about this thing loosed from hell.”

“Somebody’s going to try that test you mentioned, if you don’t stop him,” Clark stated grimly. “I think a cleaver in the head would be as positive a test as a bullet in the heart.”

“Go ahead with the food. I’ll see what I can do. There may be something in the cabinets.” McReady moved wearily toward the corner Copper had used as his dispensary. Three tall cabinets of rough boards, two locked, were the repositories of the camp’s medical supplies. Twelve years ago McReady had graduated, had started for an internship, and been diverted to meteorology. Copper was a picked man, a man who knew his profession thoroughly and modernly. More than half the drugs available were totally unfamiliar to McReady; many of the others he had forgotten. There was no huge medical library here, no series of journals available to learn the things he had forgotten, the elementary, simple things to Copper, things that did not merit inclusion in the small library he had been forced to content himself with. Books are heavy, and every ounce of supplies had been freighted in by air.

McReady picked a barbiturate hopefully. Barclay and Van Wall went with him. One man never went anywhere alone in Big Magnet.

Ralsen had his sledge put away, and the physicists had moved off the table, the poker game broken up when they got back. Clark was putting out the food. The click of spoons and the muffled sounds of eating were the only sign of life in the room. There were no words spoken as the three returned; simply all eyes focused on them questioningly, while the jaws moved methodically.

McReady stiffened suddenly. Kinner was screeching out a hymn in a hoarse, cracked voice. He looked wearily at Van Wall with a twisted grin and shook his head. “Hu-uh.”

Van Wall cursed bitterly and sat down at the table. “We’ll just plumb have to take that till his voice wears out. He can’t yell like that forever.”

“He’s got a brass throat and a cast-iron larynx,” Norris declared savagely. “Then we could be hopeful, and suggest he’s one of our friends. In that case he could go on renewing his throat till doomsday.”

Silence clamped down. For twenty minutes they ate without a word. Then Connant jumped up with an angry violence. “You sit as still as a bunch of graven images. You don’t say a word, but oh, Lord, what expressive eyes you’ve got. They roll around like a bunch of glass marbles spilling down a

table. They wink and blink and stare—and whisper things. Can you guys look somewhere else for a change, please?

“Listen, Mac, you’re in charge here. Let’s run movies for the rest of the night. We’ve been saving those reels to make ‘em last. Last for what? Who is it’s going to see those last reels, eh? Let’s see ‘em while we can, and look at something other than each other.”

“Sound idea, Connant. I, for one, am quite willing to change this in any way I can.”

“Turn the sound up loud, Dutton. Maybe you can drown out the hymns,” Clark suggested.

“But don’t,” Norris said softly, “don’t turn off the lights altogether.”

“The lights will be out.” McReady shook his head. “We’ll show all the cartoon movies we have. You won’t mind seeing the old cartoons, will you?”

“Goody goody—a moom pitcher show. I’m just in the mood.” McReady turned to look at the speaker, a lean, lanky New Englander by the name of Caldwell. Caldwell was stuffing his pipe slowly, a sour eye cocked up to McReady.

The bronze giant was forced to laugh. “O.K., Bart, you win. Maybe we aren’t quite in the mood for Popeye and trick ducks, but it’s something.”

“Let’s play Classifications,” Caldwell suggested slowly. “Or maybe you call it Guggenheim. You draw lines on a piece of paper, and put down classes of things—like animals, you know. One for ‘H’ and one for ‘U’ and so on. Like ‘Human’ and ‘Unknown’, for instance. I think that would be a hell of a lot better game. Classification, I sort of figure, is what we need right now a lot more than movies. Maybe somebody’s get a pencil that he can draw lines with, draw lines between the ‘U’ animals and the ‘H’ animals for instance.”

“McReady’s trying to find that kind of a pencil,” Van Wall answered quietly, “but we’ve got three kinds of animals here, you know. One that begins with ‘M.’ We don’t want any more.

“Mad ones, you mean. Uh-huh. Clark, I’ll help you with those pans so we can get our little peep-show going.” Caldwell got up slowly.

Dutton and Barclay and Benning, in charge of the projector and sound mechanism arrangements, went about their job silently, while the Ad Building was cleared and the dishes and pans disposed of. McReady drifted over toward Van Wall slowly, and leaned back in the bunk beside him. “I’ve been wondering, Van,” he said with a wry grin, “whether or not to report my ideas in advance. I forgot the ‘U animals’, as Caldwell named it, could read minds. I’ve a vague idea of something that might work. It’s too vague to bother with, though. Go ahead with your show, while I try to figure out the logic of the thing. I’ll take this bunk.”

Van Wall glanced up and nodded. The movie screen would be practically on a line with his bunk, hence making the pictures least distracting here, because least intelligible. "Perhaps you should tell us what you have in mind. As it is, only the unknown know what you plan. You might be—unknown before you got it into operation."

"Won't take long, if I get it figured out right. But I don't want anymore all-but-the-test-dog-monsters things. We better move Copper into this bunk directly above me. He won't be watching the screen either." McReady nodded toward Copper's gently snoring bulk. Garry helped them lift and move the doctor.

McReady leaned back against the bunk and sank into a trance, almost, of concentration, trying to calculate chances, operations, methods. He was scarcely aware as the others distributed themselves silently and the screen lit up. Vaguely Kinner's hectic, shouted prayers and his rasping hymn-singing annoyed him till the sound accompaniment started. The lights were turned out, but the large, light-colored areas of the screen reflected enough light for ready visibility. It made men's eyes sparkle as they moved restlessly. Kinner was still praying, shouting, his voice a raucous accompaniment to the mechanical sound. Dutton stepped up the amplification.

So lone had the voice been going on, that only vaguely at first was McReady aware that something seemed missing. Lying as he was, just across the narrow room from the corridor leading to Cosmos House, Kinner's voice had reached him fairly clearly, despite the sound accompaniment of the pictures. It struck him abruptly that it had stopped.

"Dutton, cut that sound," McReady called as he sat up abruptly. The pictures flickered a moment, soundless and strangely futile in the sudden, deep silence. The rising wind on the surface above bubbled melancholy tears of sound down the stove pipes. "Kinner's stopped," McReady said softly.

"For God's sake, start that sound then, he may have stopped to listen," Norris snapped.

McReady rose and went down the corridor. Barclay and Van Wall left their places at the far end of the room to follow him. The flickers bulged and twisted on the back of Barclay's gray underwear as he crossed the still-functioning beam of the projector. Dutton snapped on the lights, and the pictures vanished.

Norris stood at the door as McReady had asked. Garry sat down quietly in the bunk nearest the door, forcing Clark to make room for him. Most of the others had stayed exactly where they were. Only Connant walked slowly up and down the room, in steady, unvarying rhythm.

"If you're going to do that, Connant," Clark spat, "we can get along without you altogether, whether you're human or not. Will you stop that damned rhythm?"

“Sorry.” The physicist sat down in a bunk and watched his toes thoughtfully. It was almost five minutes, five ages while the wind made the only sound, before McReady appeared at the door.

“We,” he announced, “haven’t got enough grief here already. Somebody’s tried to help us out. Kinner has a knife in his throat, which was why he stopped singing, probably. We’ve got monsters, madmen, and murderers. Any more ‘M’s you can think of, Caldwell? If there are, we’ll probably have ‘em before long.”

Chapter XI

“Is Blair loose?” someone asked.

“Blair is not loose. Or he flew in. If there’s any doubt about where our gentle helper came from—this may clear it up.” Van Wall held a foot-long, thin-bladed knife in a cloth. The wooden handle was half-burnt, charred with the peculiar pattern of the top of the galley stove.

Clark stared at it. “I did that this afternoon. I forgot the damn thing and left it on the stove.”

Van Wall nodded. “I smelled it, if you remember. I knew the knife came from the galley.”

“I wonder,” said Benning, looking around at the party warily, “how many more monsters have we? If somebody could slip out of his place, go back of the screen to the galley, and then down to the Cosmos House and back—he did come back, didn’t he? Yes—everybody’s here. Well, if one of the gang could do all that—”

“Maybe a monster did it,” Garry suggested quietly. “There’s that possibility.”

“The monster, as you pointed out today, has only men left to imitate. Would he decrease his—supply, shall we say?” Van Wall pointed out. “No, we just have a plain, ordinary louse, a murderer to deal with. Ordinarily we’d call him an ‘inhuman murderer’, I suppose, but we have to distinguish now. We have inhuman murderers, and now we have human murderers. Or one at least.”

“There’s one less human,” Norris said softly. “Maybe the monsters have the balance of power now.”

“Never mind that,” McReady sighed and turned to Barclay. “Bar, will you get your electric gadget? I’m going to make certain—”

Barclay turned down the corridor to get the pronged electrocutter, while McReady and Van Wall went back toward Cosmos House. Barclay followed them in some thirty seconds.

The corridor to Cosmos House twisted, as did nearly all corridors in Big Magnet, and Norris stood at the entrance again. But they heard, rather muffled, McReady's sudden shout. There was a savage scurry of blows, dull *cb-thunk*, *shluff* sounds. "Bar—Bar—" And a curious, savage, mewing scream, silenced before even quick-moving Norris had reached the bend.

Kinner—or what had been Kinner—lay on the floor, cut half in two by the great knife McReady had had. The meteorologist stood against the wall, the knife dripping red in his hand. Van Wall was stirring vaguely on the floor, moaning, his hand half-consciously rubbing at his jaw. Barclay, an unutterably savage gleam in his eyes, was methodically leaning on the pronged weapon in his hand, jabbing—jabbing, jabbing.

Kinner's arms had developed a queer, scaly fur, and the flesh had twisted. The fingers had shortened, the hand rounded, the fingernails become three-inch-long things of dull red horn, keened to steel-hard razor-sharp talons.

McReady raised his head, looked at the knife in his hand and dropped it. "Well, whoever did it can speak up now. He was an inhuman murderer at that—in that he murdered an inhuman. I swear by all that's holy, Kinner was a lifeless corpse on the floor here when we arrived. But when It found we were going to jab it with the power—It changed."

Norris started unsteadily. "Oh, Lord those things can act. Ye gods—sitting in here for hours, mouthing prayers to a God it hated! Shouting hymns in a cracked voice—hymns about a Church it never knew. Driving us mad with its ceaseless howling—"

"Well. Speak up, whoever did it. You didn't know it, but you did the camp a favor. And I want to know how in blazes you got out of that room without anyone seeing you. It might help in guarding ourselves."

"His screaming—his singing. Even the sound projector couldn't drown it." Clark shivered. "It was a monster."

"Oh," said Van Wall in sudden comprehension. "You were sitting right next to the door, weren't you! And almost behind the projection screen already."

Clark nodded dumbly. "He—it's quiet now. It's dead—Mac, your test's no damn good. It was dead anyway, monster or man, it was dead."

McReady chuckled softly. "Boys, meet Clark, the only one we know is human! Meet Clark, the one who proves he's human by trying to commit murder—and failing. Will the rest of you please refrain from trying to prove you're human for a while? I think we may have another test."

"A test!" Connant snapped joyfully, then his face sagged in disappointment. "I suppose it's another either-way-you-want it."

"No," said McReady steadily. "Look sharp and be careful. Come into the Ad Building. Barclay, bring your electrocutor. And somebody—Dutton—stand with Barclay to make sure he does it. Watch every neigh-

bor, for by the Hell these monsters came from, I've got something, and they know it. They're going to get dangerous!"

The group tensed abruptly. An air of crushing menace entered into every man's body; sharply they looked at each other. More keenly than ever before—*is that man next to me an inhuman monster?*

"What is it?" Garry asked, as they stood again in the main room. "How long will it take?"

"I don't know, exactly," said McReady, his voice brittle with angry determination. "But I *know* it will work, and no two ways about it. It depends on a basic quality of the *monsters*, not on us. 'Kinner' just convinced me." He stood heavy and solid in bronzed immobility, completely sure of himself again at last.

"This," said Barclay, hefting the wooden-handled weapon, tipped with its two sharp-pointed, charged conductors, "is going to be rather necessary, I take it. Is the power plant assured?"

Dutton nodded sharply. "The automatic stoker bin is full. The gas power plant is on standby. Van Wall and I set it for the movie operation and—we've checked it over rather carefully several times, you know. Anything those wires touch, dies," he assured them grimly. "I know that."

Dr. Copper stirred vaguely in his bunk, rubbed his eyes with a fumbling hand. He sat up slowly, blinked his eyes blurred with sleep and drugs, widened with an unutterable horror of drug-ridden nightmares. "Garry," he mumbled, "Garry—listen. Selfish—from hell they came, and hellish shellfish—I mean self—do I? What do I mean?" He sank back in his bunk and snored softly.

McReady looked at him thoughtfully. "We'll know presently," he nodded slowly. "But selfish is what you mean all right. You may have thought of that, half-sleeping, dreaming there. I didn't stop to think what dreams you might be having. But that's all right. Selfish is the word. They must be, you see." He turned to the men in the cabin, tense, silent men staring with wolfish eyes each at his neighbor. "Selfish, and as Dr. Copper said, *every part is a whole*. Every piece is self-sufficient, an animal in itself.

"That, and one other thing, tell the story. There's nothing mysterious about blood; it's just as normal a body tissue as a piece of muscle, or a piece of liver. But it hasn't so much connective tissue, though it has millions, billions of life cells."

McReady's great bronze beard ruffled in a grim smile. "This is satisfying, in a way. I'm pretty sure we humans still outnumber you—others. Others standing here. And we have what you, your other-world race, evidently doesn't. Not an imitated, but a bred-in-the-bone instinct, a driving, unquenchable fire that's genuine. We'll fight, fight with a ferocity you may

attempt to imitate, but you'll never equal! We're human. We're real. You're imitations, false to the core of your every cell.

"All right. It's showdown now. You know. You, with your mind reading. You've lifted the idea from my brain. You can't do a thing about it.

"Standing here—"

"Let it pass. Blood is tissue. They have to bleed, if they don't bleed when cut, they, by Heaven, they're phony! Phony from hell! If they bleed—then that blood, separated from them, is an individual—a *newly formed individual in its own right, just as they, split, all of them, from one original, are individuals!*

"Get it, Van? See the answer, Bar?"

Van Wall laughed very softly. "The blood—the blood will not obey. It's a new individual, with all the desire to protect its own life that the original—the main mass from which it was split—has. The *blood* will live—and try to crawl away from a hot needle, say!"

McReady picked up the scalpel from the table. From the cabinet, he took a rack of test-tubes, a tiny alcohol lamp, and a length of platinum wire set in a little glass rod. A smile of grim satisfaction rode his lips. For a moment he glanced up at those around him. Barclay and Dutton moved toward him slowly, the wooden-handled electric instrument alert.

"Dutton," said McReady, "suppose you stand over by the splice there where you've connected that in. Just make sure no—thing pulls it loose."

Dutton moved away. "Now, Van, suppose you be first on this."

White-faced, Van Wall stepped forward. With a delicate precision, McReady cut a vein in the base of his thumb. Van Wall winced slightly, then held steady as a half inch of bright blood collected in the tube. McReady put the tube in the rack, gave Van Wall a bit of alum and indicated the iodine bottle.

Van Wall stood motionlessly watching. McReady heated the platinum wire in the alcohol lamp flame, then dipped it into the tube. It hissed softly. Five times he repeated the test. "Human, I'd say." McReady sighed, and straightened. "As yet, my theory hasn't been actually proven—but I have hopes. I have hopes.

"Don't, by the way, get too interested in this. We have with us some unwelcome ones, no doubt. Van, will you relieve Barclay at the switch? Thanks. O.K., Barclay, and may I say I hope you stay with us? You're a damned good guy."

Barclay grinned uncertainly; winced under the keen edge of the scalpel. Presently, smiling widely, he retrieved his long-handled weapon.

"Mr. Samuel Dutt—*Bar!*"

The tension was released in that second. Whatever of hell the monsters may have had within them, the men in the instant matched it. Barclay had no chance to move his weapon as a score of men poured down on that thing that had seemed Dutton. It mewed, and spat, and tried to grow fangs—and was a hundred broken, torn pieces. Without knives, or any weapon save the brute-given strength of a staff of picked men, the thing was crushed, rent.

Slowly they picked themselves up, their eyes smoldering, very quiet in their emotions. A curious wrinkling of their lips betrayed a species of nervousness.

Barclay went over with the electric weapon. Things smoldered and stank. The caustic acid Van Wall dropped on each spilled drop of blood gave off tickling, cough-provoking fumes.

McReady grinned, his deep-set eyes alight and dancing. “Maybe,” he said softly, “I underrated man’s abilities when I said nothing human could have the ferocity in the eyes of that thing we found. I wish we could have the opportunity to treat in a more befitting manner these things. Something with boiling oil, or melted lead in it, or maybe slow roasting in the power boiler. When I think what a man Dutton was—

“Never mind. My theory is confirmed by—by one who knew? Well, Van Wall and Barclay are proven. I think, then, that I’ll try to show you what I already know. That I too am human.” McReady swished the scalpel in absolute alcohol, burned it off the metal blade, and cut the base of his thumb expertly.

Twenty seconds later he looked up from the desk at the waiting men. There were more grins out there now, friendly grins, yet withal, something else in the eyes.

“Connant,” McReady laughed softly, “was right. The huskies watching that thing in the corridor bend had nothing on you. Wonder why we think only the wolf blood has the right to ferocity? Maybe on spontaneous viciousness a wolf takes tops, but after these seven days—abandon all hope, ye wolves who enter here!

“Maybe we can save time. Connant, would you step for—”

Again Barclay was too slow. There were more grins, less tension still, when Barclay and Van Wall finished their work.

Garry spoke in a low, bitter voice. “Connant was one of the finest men we had here—and five minutes ago I’d have sworn he was a man. Those damnable things are more than imitation.”

Garry shuddered and sat back in his bunk.

And thirty seconds later, Garry’s blood shrank from the hot platinum wire, and struggled to escape the tube, struggled as frantically as a suddenly feral, red-eyed, dissolving imitation of Garry struggled to dodge the snake-tongue weapon Barclay advanced at him, white-faced and sweating.

The Thing in the test-tube screamed with a tiny, tiny voice as McReady dropped it into the glowing coal of the galley stove.

Chapter XII

The last of it?" Dr. Copper looked down from his bunk with bloodshot, saddened eyes. "Fourteen of them—"

McReady nodded shortly. "In some ways—if only we could have permanently prevented their spreading—I'd like to have even the imitations back. Commander Garry—Connant—Dutton—Clark—"

"Where are they taking those things?" Copper nodded to the stretcher Barclay and Norris were carrying out.

"Outside. Outside on the ice, where they've got fifteen smashed crates, half a ton of coal, and presently will add ten gallons of kerosene. We've dumped acid on every spilled drop, every torn fragment. We're going to incinerate those."

"Sounds like a good plan." Copper nodded wearily. "I wonder, you haven't said whether Blair—"

McReady started. "We forgot him! We had so much else! I wonder—do you suppose we can cure him now?"

"If—" began Dr. Copper, and stopped meaningfully.

McReady started a second time. "Even a madman. It imitated Kinner and his praying hysteria—" McReady turned toward Van Wall at the long table. "Van, we've got to make an expedition to Blair's shack."

Van looked up sharply, the frown of worry faded for an instant in surprise remembrance.

Then he rose, nodded. "Barclay better go along. He applied the lashings and may figure how to get in without frightening Blair too much."

Three quarters of an hour, through -37° cold, they hiked while the aurora curtain bellied overhead. The twilight was nearly twelve hours long, flaming in the north on snow like white, crystalline sand under their skis. A five-mile wind piled it in drift lines pointing off to the northwest. Three quarters of an hour to reach the snow-buried shack. No smoke came from the little shack and the men hastened

"Blair!" Barclay roared into the wind when he was still a hundred yards away. "Blair!"

"Shut up," said McReady softly. "And hurry. He may be trying a long hike. If we have to go after him—no planes, the tractors disabled—"

"Would a monster have the stamina a man has?"

"A broken leg wouldn't stop it for more than a minute," McReady pointed out.

Barclay gasped suddenly and pointed aloft. Dim in the twilit sky, a winged thing circled in curves of indescribable grace and ease. Great white wings tipped gently, and the bird swept over them in silent curiosity. "Albatross," Barclay said softly. "First of the season, and wandering way inland for some reason. If a monster's loose—"

Norris bent down on the ice and tore hurriedly at his heavy clothing. He straightened, his coat flapping open, a grim blue-metaled weapon in his hand. It roared a challenge to the white silence of Antarctica.

The thing in the air screamed hoarsely. Its great wings worked frantically as a dozen feathers floated down from its tail. Norris fired again. The bird was moving swiftly now, but in an almost straight line of retreat. It screamed again, more feathers dropped, and with beating wings it soared behind a ridge of pressure ice, to vanish.

Norris hurried after the others. "It won't come back," he panted.

Barclay cautioned him to silence, pointing. A curiously, fiercely blue light beat out from the cracks of the shack's door. A very low, soft humming sounded inside, a low, soft humming and a clink and clank of tools, the very sounds somehow bearing a message of frantic haste.

McReady's face paled. "Lord help us if that thing has—" He grabbed Barclay's shoulder and made snipping motions with his fingers, pointing toward the lacing of control cables that held the door.

Barclay drew the wire-cutters from his pocket and knelt soundlessly at the door. The snap and twang of cut wires made an unbearable racket in the utter quiet of the Antarctic hush. There was only that strange, sweetly soft hum from within the shack, and the queerly, hectically clipped clicking and rattling of tools to drown their noises.

McReady peered through a crack in the door. His breath sucked in huskily and his great fingers clamped cruelly on Barclay's shoulder. The meteorologist backed down. "It isn't," he explained very softly, "Blair. It's kneeling on something on the bunk—something that keeps lifting. Whatever it's working on is a thing like a knapsack—and it lifts."

"All at once," Barclay said grimly. "No. Norris, hang back, and get that iron of yours out. It may have weapons."

Together, Barclay's powerful body and McReady's giant strength struck the door. Inside, the bunk jammed against the door screeched madly and crackled into kindling. The door flung down from broken hinges, the patched lumber of the doorpost dropping inward.

Like a blue-rubber ball, a Thing bounced up. One of its four tentacle-like arms looped out like a striking snake. In a seven-tentacled hand a six-inch pencil of winking, shining metal glinted and swung upward to face them. Its line-thin lips twitched back from snake fangs in a grin of hate, red eyes blazing.

Norris' revolver thundered in the confined space. The hate-washed face twitched in agony; the looping tentacle snatched back. The silvery thing in its hand a smashed ruin of metal, the seven-tentacled hand became a mass of mangled flesh oozing greenish-yellow ichor. The revolver thundered three times more. Dark holes drilled each of the three eyes before Norris hurled the empty weapon against its face.

The Thing screamed in feral hate, a lashing tentacle wiping at blinded eyes. For a moment it crawled on the floor, savage tentacles lashing out, the body twitching. Then it staggered up again, blinded eyes working, boiling hideously, the crushed flesh sloughing away in sodden gobbets.

Barclay lurched to his feet and drove forward with an ice-ax. The flat of the weighty thing crushed against the side of the head. Again the unkillable monster went down. The tentacles lashed out, and suddenly Barclay fell to his feet in the grip of a living, livid rope. The Thing dissolved as he held it, a white-hot band that ate into the flesh of his hands like living fire. Frantically he tore the stuff from him, held his hands where they could not be reached. The blind Thing felt and ripped at the tough heavy, windproof cloth, seeking flesh—flesh it could convert.

The huge blowtorch McReady had brought coughed solemnly. Abruptly it rumbled disapproval throatily. Then it laughed gurglingly and thrust out a blue-white, three-foot tongue. The Thing on the floor shrieked, flailed out blindly with tentacles that writhed and withered in the bubbling wrath of the blowtorch. It crawled and turned on the floor, it shrieked and hobbled madly, but always McReady held the blowtorch on the face, the dead eyes burning and bubbling uselessly. Frantically The Thing crawled and howled.

A tentacle sprouted a savage talon—and crisped in the flame. Steadily McReady moved with a planned, grim campaign. Helpless, maddened, the Thing retreated from the grunting torch, the caressing, licking tongue. For a moment it rebelled, squalling in inhuman hatred at the touch of icy snow. Then it fell back before the charring breath of the torch, the stench of its flesh bathing it. Hopelessly it retreated—on and on across the Antarctic snow. The bitter wind swept over it, twisting the torch-tongue; vainly it flopped, a trail of oily, stinking smoke bubbling away from it.

McReady walked back toward the shack silently. Barclay met him at the door. "No more?" the giant meteorologist asked grimly.

Barclay shook his head. "No more. It didn't split?"

"It had other things to think about," McReady assured him. "When I left it, it was a glowing coal. What was it doing?"

Norris laughed shortly. "Wise boys, we are. Smash magnetos, so planes won't work. Rip the boiler tubing out of the tractors. And leave that Thing alone for a week in this shack. Alone and undisturbed."

McReady looked in at the shack more carefully. The air, despite the ripped door, was hot and humid. On a table at the far end of the room rested a thing of coiled wires and small magnets, glass tubing and radio tubes. At the center a block of rough stone rested. From the center of the block came the light that flooded the place, the fiercely blue light bluer than the glare of an electric arc, and from it came the sweetly soft hum. Off to one side was another mechanism of crystal glass, blown with an incredible neatness and delicacy, metal plates and a queer, shimmery sphere of insubstantiality.

"What is that?" McReady moved nearer.

Norris grunted. "Leave it for investigation. But I can guess pretty well. That's atomic power. That stuff to the left—that's a neat little thing for doing what men have been trying to do with 100-ton cyclotrons and so forth. It separates neutrons from heavy water, which he was getting from the surrounding ice."

"Where did he get all—oh. Of course. A monster couldn't be locked in—or out. He's been through the apparatus caches." McReady stared at the apparatus. "Lord, what minds that race must have—"

"The shimmery sphere—I think it's a sphere of pure force. Neutrons can pass through any matter, and he wanted a supply reservoir of neutrons. Just project neutrons against silica—calcium—beryllium—almost anything, and the atomic energy is released. That thing is the atomic generator."

McReady plucked a thermometer from his coat. "It's 120° in here, despite the open door. Our clothes have kept the heat out to an extent, but I'm sweating now."

Norris nodded. "The light's cold. I found that. But it gives off heat to warm the place through that coil. He had all the power in the world. He could keep it warm and pleasant, as his race thought of warmth and pleasantness. Did you notice the light, the color of it?"

McReady nodded. "Beyond the stars is the answer. From beyond the stars. From a hotter planet that circled a brighter, bluer sun they came."

McReady glanced out the door toward the blasted, smoke-stained trail that flopped and wandered blindly off across the drift. "There won't be any more coming, I guess. Sheer accident it landed here, and that was twenty million years ago. What did it do all that for?" He nodded toward the apparatus.

Barclay laughed softly. "Did you notice what it was working on when we came? Look." He pointed toward the ceiling of the shack.

Like a knapsack made of flattened coffee tins, with dangling cloth straps and leather belts, the mechanism clung to the ceiling. A tiny, glaring heart of supernal flame burned in it, yet burned through the ceiling's wood without scorching it. Barclay walked over to it, grasped two of the dangling straps in his hands, and pulled it down with an effort. He strapped it about his body. A slight jump carried him in a weirdly slow arc across the room.

"Antigravity," said McReady softly.

"Antigravity," Norris nodded. "Yes, we had 'em stopped, with no planes, and no birds. The birds hadn't come—but they had coffee tins and radio parts, and glass and the machine shop at night. And a week—a whole week—all to itself. America in a single jump—with antigravity powered by the atomic energy of matter.

"We had 'em stopped. Another half hour—it was just tightening these straps on the device so it could wear it—and we'd have stayed in Antarctica, and shot down any moving thing that came from the rest of the world."

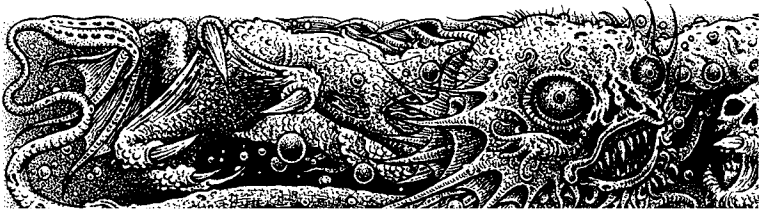
"The albatross—" McReady said softly. "Do you suppose—"

"With this thing almost finished? With that death weapon it held in its hand?"

"No, by the grace of God, who evidently does hear very well, even down here, and the margin of half an hour, we keep our world, and the planets of the system too. Antigravity, you know, and atomic power. Because *They* came from another sun, a star beyond the stars. *They* came from a world with a bluer sun."

About “The Brooding City”

John S. Glasby’s “The Brooding City” first appeared in 1990, in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #71, but Glasby had penned it many years before. Glasby, a professional astronomer and mathematician, had written hundreds of horror, fantasy, and scientific tales for the British publisher Badger, most for their magazine *Supernatural Stories*. A few of these involved elements of the Lovecraft Mythos (I reprinted some in my Fedogan & Bremer anthologies *The New Lovecraft Circle* and *Acolytes of Cthulhu*). Shortly before the death of August Derleth, Glasby sent him a sheaf of new Lovecraftian stories, hoping Arkham House would publish them as a book. They were certainly the stuff classic Arkham House volumes were made of, a combination of the familiar and the innovative. Derleth thought so, too. He agreed to publish a Glasby collection, and he wanted to name it after the present tale, thus *The Brooding City*. But the name was something of a curse, as it turned out. Just as the city in the story sleeps in obscurity for century upon century, guarded by the naive ignorance of the outside world, so did this book wind up snoozing away the years, because after Derleth’s tragic passing a new pharaoh arose who knew not Glasby, and *The Brooding City* was among several books Arkham’s new rulers elected not to publish. Though that original collection is due for eventual publication by Fedogan & Bremer, much as Derleth and Glasby originally intended, I could not resist giving you a peek at the contents here.



The Brooding City

by John S. Glasby

I first read of the lost city in a strange book which I stumbled upon in a small bookshop in one of the many back streets of London. The heavy leather covers and rusty iron hasps were proof of its antiquity and authenticity. Furthermore, I knew a little of the author's history and doubted if there are more than a dozen copies still in existence today. Collectors of rare and bizarre literature such as myself are aware of the forbidden volumes, few of which survive from the Middle Ages.

One glance through the yellowed pages convinced me this was indeed the first edition of this nameless volume reputed to have been printed privately in Rome in 1639 shortly before Paulo Franchetti's inexplicable disappearance from his home. The wild rumors which were spread abroad at the time of curious triangular prints found in the snow outside his dwelling undoubtedly led to many copies being destroyed on the orders of the Church.

Franchetti spent much of his early years delving into ancient literature, a pastime which would certainly have had him burned at the stake if it had come to the notice of the papal authorities. Having been left a substantial inheritance by his paternal grandfather, he left Italy in 1629 with the avowed intention of discovering the ruins of Solomon's city, which he believed to lie deep within the interior of the African continent. Here, he felt certain, he would find the original grimoire which contained all of the secrets of a race much older than mankind. That he was aided in his search by knowledge gained from much older books was evident from his own writings, where he hinted at vague references to some long-lost city hidden deep within Africa.

Leaving Genoa he embarked for Alexandria and then traveled overland through Egypt and Sudan, trekking further and further south until he finally reached the fabled Mountains of the Moon, now identified with the Ruwenzori Mountains.

Much of what he wrote concerning this remote region appears to have been based upon ancient superstitions of the neighboring tribes which he encountered. But it was what he did not write that aroused uneasy suspicions in my mind, for it was clear there were many things he did not dare put on paper.

There were obscure references to the discovery of a vast ruin which he asserted was the remnant of a mighty civilization that predated the building of the pyramids by several thousand years, one about which many of the dark legends of the natives clustered. Even if one accepts these as mere supposition on his part, the contents of the book made me shudder. That there was something concealed in the trackless wastes of central Africa I did not doubt, but whether Franchetti's conjectures as to its real nature were correct I could not tell.

The implication of enormous antiquity surrounding his discovery which, as far as I could ascertain, had never been followed up and corroborated, excited my curiosity and interest. The pyramids at Meroe which are the tombs of the Kushite kings are well known, as are the ruins of Zimbabwe much further south and the former, at least, date back to the period of Ancient Egypt. What Franchetti was hinting at was of quite a different order—of a gray stone city which was as old as the mountains themselves.

The references he gave to the earlier writings were so obscure it was difficult for me to trace any of them. After some trouble I succeeded in locating a tattered and worm-eaten copy of Platonius' *Lost Cities of the Ancient World* published some fifty years before Franchetti's volume. I was disappointed to discover that Platonius referred to this incredibly old ruin even more briefly than Franchetti, contemptuously dismissing it as nothing more than hearsay based upon reports made by Portuguese seamen who had pioneered the sea route from Europe to India around the Cape of Good Hope. They made reference to various kingdoms such as that of Kongo around the great lakes of East Africa where they had picked up weird and spectral tales of a great city which had, in times immemorial, stood beside a lake at the foot of the Mountains of the Moon. According to these myths, those who had built the city had descended from the sky when the Earth was very young. They were not like men and they worshipped a great green-winged idol which they had brought with them from the dark spaces between the stars.

The last of these creatures had died long before the first men appeared, leaving behind only the titan stone blocks of the city, and even this had all but vanished beneath the earth. It was said that no travelers ever visited the place since there was something indefinably evil about it, and the oldest of legends spoke of strange lights seen around the stones and of a peculiar mist that occasionally covered the surface of the lake.

Had I kept these ancient revelations to myself I might now rest easy in my mind and not mortally dread every dark shadow I see silhouetted against the baleful moon or evilly winking stars, whether it be merely a passing cloud or something more substantial and fearful.

But I showed them to Carnforth who, like myself, was an avid reader of such bizarre writings and possessed several musty volumes which should have been burned long ago. He had spoken often of his belief that mankind was not the first civilization to have inhabited this planet and would not be the last. My interest in these old tales was purely academic, whereas his was far more practical. Here, he maintained, was proof that his beliefs were correct, that one had only to locate and excavate this terribly ancient city to find concrete evidence for his theories. Nothing would dissuade him from mounting an expedition and going to see for himself what really existed there.

I pointed out to him that the details of the Franchetti expedition of three centuries earlier were so vague it would be virtually impossible to find the site in so vast and desolate a region. Furthermore, Franchetti and his team had approached the Ruwenzori Mountains from the north, whereas the shortest and more practical route would be from the southeast. Nonetheless, since he was of independent means, he was determined to finance and equip an expedition to this remote area and discover for himself whether there was any truth in the old legends, maintaining that it would be the archaeological find of the century, surpassing even the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in scientific value.

Our initial approach to Professor Porton of the Archaeological Department of the university was naturally met with skepticism. While he agreed there were numerous puzzling myth cycles which originated in many parts of the world, none of these had so far stood up to scientific investigation. Carnforth, on the other hand, argued that behind all of these seemingly isolated legends there must exist some ancient race memory of real occurrences, possibly further back than our present knowledge of historical and prehistorical events. In spite of the undoubted controversial nature of the evidence we had, this merely spurred him to an even greater determination to make this trip and examine this site for himself, if it did indeed exist.

I must confess it took little effort on his part to persuade me to accompany him. By now my own curiosity had been aroused by all I had read, so much so that I was even prepared to acknowledge that such prehuman occupation of the Earth could conceivably have taken place long aeons before mankind rose above the level of the apes.

There were, of course, many preparations to be made. The sea journey around to the east coast of Africa presented few problems. Once there, the long overland trek would be difficult and arduous and, toward the end at

least, we would be pushing on into little-explored territory. We would require ample supplies and guides if we were to reach our objective successfully. Consequently it was two months later when we left Southampton and headed for the Cape.

There were five of us in the expedition, Carnforth and myself and three men from the university—Beringer, Professor Porton's chief assistant and an able archaeologist; Farrer of the Geology Department; and Kelrick, a mineralogist.

The journey into the interior took us the best part of a month through a variety of terrain: jungle, swamp, scrub, and desert. The four heavy-duty trucks, however, coped well with the country and early on the fourth week since leaving the coast we entered upon the last leg of our journey.

All of the party experienced a strange thrill of excitement on first beholding the great, lofty peaks of the Ruwenzori Mountains that dominated the skyline to the northwest. The mere sight of them stirred odd fancies in my mind. At last we were approaching that cryptic region spoken of by Paulo Franchetti all those centuries ago. Our final task now was to cross the barren stretch of desert and scrubland which lay between those tall ridges and ourselves.

Yet in spite of the intense excitement, there was something about this region which gave me a deep sense of unease, a feeling of stupendous age and hidden revelation. How long ago those mountains had been raised to their present height by some titanic convulsion of the Earth, I did not know. Nor could I be sure on what scientific evidence Franchetti had estimated the age of this long-dead city as being comparable with that of those mighty peaks. But I knew that if he was correct, something other than Man had visited these parts uncountable millennia ago and left its mark in titan blocks of gray stone beside a lake close to the foot of those mountains.

We made camp that night some ten miles inside the desert, pitching our tents among the low dunes. We ate our evening meal mostly in silence, for each of us seemed aware of the curious oppressiveness of our surroundings, and the growing restlessness of our three native guides only served to add to our unease. The temperature fell quickly and with the rising of the gibbous moon a wind sprang up from the north, piping and murmuring among the sandhills, adding a weird cacophony to the night. Both Carnforth and myself seemed to pick out queer cadences in its ceaseless whine among the gullies. I believe we had read too many strange things not to have been affected by our proximity to the place Franchetti had spoken of.

That night I found it difficult to sleep. The keening note of the wind as it piped up and down a saw-edged scale was acutely disturbing. When I did finally fall into an uneasy doze it was interspersed with nightmarish dreams about which I remembered little on waking—only unquiet recol-

lections of something hideous and formless which lay waiting in a labyrinth of vast stone walls deep beneath the sand.

Over the next two days we progressed steadily northward. The desert troubled us only moderately, the vehicles performing extremely well on the whole in spite of the treacherous sand and the excessive heat during the day. On the morning of the third day we reached the beginnings of the foothills and here we were forced to leave the trucks. The terrain ahead of us was now rocky with great boulders bulking out of the ground and we saw at once there were no trails into the mountains.

Farrer reasoned that if any lake existed in this region, it would lie at the lowest level unless it were in a natural basin formed higher up. Our first region of search, therefore, did not necessitate any formidable climbing.

Above us, the forbidding peaks, dark and ominous, rose high against the clear heavens and we were all conscious of their looming presence. Our three guides, in particular, eyed them with a mixture of fear and awe, informing us that there were odd stories about this place: that in times long past the gods had come down from the sky and made their home among these lofty pinnacles. When Carnforth and I questioned them more closely about these myths they became extremely reticent, merely stating that it was not good to venture too far into the rocks; that there were things here which, if they could not be entirely forgotten, were best left undisturbed.

Leaving two of the natives to keep watch on the trucks and equipment, the rest of us split up into three groups to carry out a preliminary search. Carnforth and I headed into the rocks directly ahead, leaving Farrer and Beringer to move to our left, while Kelrick and the third native went along the wide ridge to the right.

As we progressed deeper into the cluster of rough boulders, we both noticed curiously regular rock formations jutting out of the slopes. At first, they gave the impression of having been formed millions of years before by some strange crystallization process of the rock when it was first thrust above the Earth's surface and we paid little real attention to them. After a while we gained a wide ledge where we paused and surveyed them with binoculars, scanning the higher reaches in an effort to determine how far these structures extended upward. We were soon able to ascertain that although these cubes and, in places, triangular formations stretched for some distance above us and to either side, the odd effect was purely local. Beyond a distance of a few hundred feet in all directions, they were not visible. There, the rock appeared normal with rough, weathered pinnacles and chasms rearing up toward the topmost heights.

But the region we had first approached and which was, as near as we were able to estimate, very close to the position given by Franchetti, looked like the ruins of Zimbabwe although on a much vaster scale. In addition,

there were certain peculiarities which, although not immediately apparent, subsequently forced themselves upon our vision.

It is well known that igneous formations often tend to have a regular structure, such as the Giant's Causeway, but here the regularity appeared to consist of odd angles and intersecting lines which were non-Euclidean in their nature. While it was possible to view a very small section without too much trouble, when we attempted to look at the whole there was an eye-twisting appearance about it which we could not understand. I felt certain that all the natural laws of geometry and symmetry had been violated here in some indescribable manner. It came as a distinct relief to look away from the scene and stare out across the desert below.

Moving cautiously, we worked our way along the ledge with Carnforth in the lead. Thirty feet away, a huge cube of rock bulged out of the high wall of stone, leaving a space below only just high enough for a man to crawl beneath it. Carnforth paused as he came up to it and ran his hands over the smooth surface. Surprisingly, there was scarcely any indication of weathering in spite of the millions of years it must have been exposed to the elements. The edges were perfectly straight and yet, if it had been carved by some intelligence, there seemed no reason for it. Common sense told us it was nothing more than a natural formation. Yet there was some weird unearthly quality about it and the many others we could see above and below us which made us doubt our senses.

We had both brought cameras with us and after taking several photographs we crawled carefully beneath the overhang, coming out on the other side where the ledge broadened even further. Here we came upon a veritable maze of weird ultrageometrical boulders and huge facets of stone that had been cut at intervals in the rock face, or reared up from the wide basin which lay a little way below us. The sheer complexity of this panoramic view literally took our breath away and for several moments we stared at each other scarcely able to believe what we saw.

Certainly there was nothing here which possessed the degree of uniformity we would have anticipated from any artificial constructure similar to that made by any known faction of mankind from the earliest to the present day. Yet it seemed inconceivable that this array of stone shapes could have been haphazardly fashioned by natural causes. As we penetrated deeper into the region we noticed something more, something which made it impossible for us to cling to the sane belief that these rocks had been untouched by intelligence since their cataclysmic formation thousands of millions of years earlier. Here and there were strange markings etched deeply into the stone.

At first we came upon them abruptly when they appeared as deeply incised cuts in the rock forming apparently meaningless patterns that stretched for yards in all directions, intersecting in angles which were baffling.

fling in the extreme. It was only when we came upon a vast rearing wall of perpendicular rock more than a hundred feet high and twice as long that we saw how these lines joined to form weird pictographs hideously reminiscent of those depicted in the pages of the *Necronomicon* and attributed by ancient writers to still earlier figurings found in the fragmentary *Pnakotic Manuscripts*.

Whatever beings had chiseled these monstrous shapes into the solid rock we could not imagine. The giant stone figures of Easter Island are puny by comparison with the preternatural massiveness and utterly alien carvings which Carnforth and I saw around that great stone basin. Carnforth was certain they were not less than a million years old, but at the time I felt sure his estimate was colored by his desire to prove his theories concerning the presence of other great civilizations prior to the emergence of mankind. Subsequent events, however, were to prove just how right he was.

We spent more than two hours moving among the huge columns and slabs of gray stone, photographing them from every angle. Then, glancing at my watch, I realized we had overstepped the limit of the time I had set for rejoining the others and we reluctantly retraced our steps, finding the others waiting anxiously for our return by the trucks.

Kelrick and the guide had discovered little in their search along the rim of the desert where it encroached upon the foothills. They had, however, come across a narrow stream which trickled down from someplace higher up and this suggested that perhaps the lake we sought was situated close by in that direction. Beringer and Farrer had traced the curiously regular formations for some three miles to the west before entering a region devoid of any regularity. There the rock formations were of the natural kind, showing no evidence of any alteration since the mountain range had been formed.

We now had a rough idea of the extent of these odd formations. The sheer antiquity and appalling age of the place led us to the conclusion that Franchetti had not been mistaken in his interpretation of the site and that we were on the verge of a monumental archaeological discovery.

Our excitement was, of course, intense. Yet we knew better than to rush blindly ahead. The heady effect of this Cyclopean site urged us to continue our exploration, but already the sun was well past its zenith and in those latitudes there was very little twilight. Darkness fell swiftly and it would be dangerous moving among those rocks once night had fallen. Accordingly, we decided to check through all of the information we had managed to gather and make plans for searching for the city the following morning at first light.

So far, our luck had held. We had survived the long trek overland with only minor irritations and had stumbled upon this incredible site by sheer good fortune. It would have been senseless to push our luck beyond the limit.

It was also necessary to check our equipment thoroughly. In one of the trucks we had a case of dynamite and a number of detonators should it be necessary to blast through the rock. While Kelrick examined the dynamite for any sign of unstable sweating in the high temperature, Carnforth and I checked the rest of the equipment. We had brought along several powerful torches and climbing ropes, together with a couple of arc lights, each of which was fitted with more than half a mile of cable and capable of being run off the small generators in the trucks.

By the time we were finished it was completely dark and we settled down for the night. None of us, I suspect, got very much sleep that night. The stupendousness of even this initial discovery was against such a thing. We could not help wondering what fantastic revelations lay in wait for us among those ancient, grotesquely carved rocks. That this was no mere Meroe or Zimbabwe I felt certain. There was a frightening quality about those abnormally etched lines which spoke of a period so far removed from the present day as to be inconceivable. What monstrous creatures had this Earth witnessed when it was very young? What hideous beings had filtered down from the interstellar gulfs to make their abode here? Above all, how long had they lingered on Earth—and was it possible that some had still existed when the first men had trod this region, giving rise to the race memories which had, according to some researchers, been handed down to a special few in the form of dreams and vague hints in the most ancient of books?

We were all up at first light and ate a hasty meal before the sun rose. Our objective was to discover the ruins beside the lake and to this end the five of us followed Kelrick to where he had located the stream the previous day. It turned out to be little more than a narrow band of clear water that tumbled down through the boulder-strewn foothills and then disappeared in the desert where the sand avidly soaked it up. Reasoning that it was a small overflow from the lake which lay at a much higher level, we made our way into the rocks, following it toward its source.

The odd formations to our left were now clearly visible where the sunlight slanted obliquely over them, throwing them into sharp relief. It proved to be a hard and difficult climb. Much of the rock was sheer and devoid of footholds or handholds and we had to climb roped together. Toward the end the incline became less steep, but there were innumerable obstacles in our path ranging from patches of loose shale to huge boulders almost blocking the narrow route. Several times we were forced to halt while Farrer, who was in the lead, worked his way around needle-pointed spires, taking care that the rope did not become entangled in the process.

By the time we had climbed a thousand feet above the level of the desert we were all perspiring freely. The main peaks of the central range were still five or six miles to the north and the region we were traversing

appeared to be a wide segment of the southern foothills. Here the highest pinnacles were perhaps four thousand feet high, although most were much lower. Indeed, many were already below us.

After resting for a while we continued upward for a quarter of an hour before we heard Farrer suddenly utter an excited shout. Peering up, I could just make him out, standing in a narrow cleft between two gray monoliths. He was pointing toward something on the far side, urging us on with his other hand. Moving with all possible speed, we hauled ourselves up the treacherous slope until we were able to squeeze through the opening.

I don't know what I really expected to see. Certainly not the scene which confronted us as we stood beside Farrer and stared across the wide tableland that lay spread out before our startled gaze. There in the background, glinting in the sunlight, was the lake just as Franchetti had described. But it was what lay in the foreground which caught and held our breathless attention. In spite of the eye-twisting asymmetry of the curved stone towers and huge stone walls, there was a weird orderliness about the outlines which provided no chance of believing it to be anything but some vast prehuman city which had brooded here for more millennia than any of us could imagine.

The long geological ages of weathering seemed to have touched it hardly at all. It would have been easy to believe it to be no more than a few thousand years old. But the sheer alien character of the structures told us irrefutably that these massive stones had not been hewn and put in place by human hands. Huge as it was in extent, circling the lake on three sides, it was apparent that there was even more buried far below the ground. The mighty towers we saw rose perpendicularly from the sand and were clearly nothing more than the tips showing above the surface. How far down those sheer structures penetrated we could not visualize. The thought made us pause before going forward onto that vast plateau to examine the ruins more closely.

The great wall which encircled the city was roughly elliptical in delineation except where it intersected the shore of the lake. The stone blocks of which it was constructed were of such tremendous proportions it was incredible they could have been slotted together with such precision that Carnforth was unable to slide the blade of his knife between them. No mortar of any kind had been used in the building of the wall but in places we came across areas where the blocks had been fused together as if by the application of tremendous heat or pressure.

For the best part of an hour we moved along the perimeter, searching vainly for some means of entry, before finally deciding that if there were arches and openings in the wall these must lie far below the ground. What we were seeing were the topmost parapets and these reared more than thir-

ty feet above our heads at their lowest point. Then, just as we were despairing of ever gaining entry, Kelrick gave a sudden shout, and hurrying forward we found that here the ground had subsided, revealing the top of a smooth arch. There was only a small opening but glancing through we saw that the masonry was several feet thick. Fortunately, the topmost layer of the ground consisted primarily of soft sand, which we dug away with our shovels until the opening was large enough for us to crawl through in single file.

As the communally appointed leader, I pulled my way through first, thrusting myself to my feet and dusting the sand from my clothing as I stared about me. The scene was a mind-stultifying vista of crazily tilted structures which bore no similarity to any architectural design I had ever known. My eyes twisted horribly as I tried to make sense of what I saw. The fact that I was seeing only the smallest part of the city made it all seem like a dream fantasy, a chaotic disarray of impressions, of shapes and delineations which verged on utter madness.

I heard one or two of the others cry out as they tried to take it all in. This was something for which none of us had been prepared. Great spiraling stone steps led up to the topmost stories and down into the earth, extending for an unguessable depth into the sand.

Here and there some of the masonry had fallen and stone blocks lay canted at crazy angles between the buildings. In addition to the visual scene, a further disturbing factor soon intruded on our senses, this time an aural one. All sound seemed to have become oddly muffled, as if the air held a peculiar quality of absorbing it. Even when we shouted, we could barely make out the words. Gradually, however, this weird effect faded into the background as the sheer immensity of the ruined city overwhelmed all other senses.

The impressions which flooded our minds were so astounding and complex that it is impossible to give a detailed account of our wanderings among the rooftops of that aeon-dead city. In spite of the fact that Franchetti had been there three centuries before we had the unshakable feeling we were the first men ever to tread that region since the builders had vanished millions of years earlier. As it was, we took numerous photographs while Kelrick and Beringer enthused over the shapes and proportions of the ruins.

Uppermost in our minds was the desire to find some means of entering the lower, subterranean levels where we felt sure far more remained to be discovered. We eventually decided it might be necessary to use some of the dynamite Kelrick had brought with him in order to effect an entry into one of the buildings. However, as we neared the lake, we came upon one grotesquely domed building which had suffered more extensive structural

damage than the others we had seen. A great gaping hole yawned in the roof and, although the sunlight penetrated only a little way, we saw by the light of our torches a wide flight of steps which made sharp downward turns into an abyssal blackness far below.

Here was the entry for which we were searching and within minutes we had lowered ourselves over the ragged lip of the hole and were making our way into the nighted depths of the great tower. The great blocks of stone which had fallen from the domed roof had, fortunately for us, toppled into the gaping interior, otherwise the steps might have been choked with debris or completely destroyed.

How far into that stygian darkness we descended, it was impossible to tell. At times we paused to flash the light from our torches onto the walls, where we discovered that these were engraved with huge reliefs representing creatures which bore no resemblance to anything known to have existed on the Earth. Most were so similar we could not but believe them to be representations of the builders of this city, but the outlines were so hideous we could not repress a shudder as we viewed them in the torchlight. That such abhorrent monstrosities could ever have existed on this planet was beyond belief.

Beringer's description of tentacled, scaled armadillos was the most apt idea of their general appearance, but even this fell far short of conveying the true picture. Memories of the Old Ones mentioned by Lovecraft and others kept intruding into my mind as I followed my companions down that terrible stairway into the depths beneath the city.

For some strange reason, these recollections grew even more pronounced as we reached the bottom of that hellish shaft and stood looking about us at the detritus-littered stone floor, feeling the tremendous weight of the overlying stone which stretched away above our heads. We were in a prodigious circular space so far below the ground we could no longer discern the opening through which we had entered. The walls—what little we could see of them in the probing beams of our torches—were sculptured into monstrous stone effigies, disturbing cosmic figurings which were all the more alarming because of their truly alien character.

To one side, looming blackly amid these unearthly stone carvings, was something else. It was a huge arched tunnel whose smooth floor sloped steeply downward, evidently the entrance to even deeper levels. As we neared it we felt a steady current of cold air which streamed up from those unguessable depths, bearing a suffocating, fetid odor that caught at the back of our throats.

In retrospect, I believe we were all mad to venture down that awesome aperture which had seen no glimpse of daylight for perhaps twenty million years. Had we known what lay at the bottom I am sure we would all have

turned at that very moment and run blindly up that seemingly endless ramp to the surface and away from that aeon-cursed place.

But the compelling curiosity which had brought us there in the first place drove us on into a midnight blackness lit only by the pitiful light from our torches.

After about a mile the odious stench became even more accentuated and we now walked more slowly and with greater caution. It was well we did, for a few minutes later, Carnforth, who was a few yards in the lead, stopped abruptly and made a quick warning signal with his hand. Going forward, we crowded beside him. A couple of feet away, the tunnel floor disappeared and there was only blackness.

It was then that we became aware of a faint sound far below us, the first noise we had heard since entering the city apart from those we made ourselves. It was a curious rustling occasionally interrupted by an almost metallic clinking like a heavy chain being dragged at intervals across a floor. I doubt if anyone would name us cowards for waiting an appreciable time before making any further movement.

There was some perverse imp of burning compulsion within us which made us turn the light from our torches downward, down into that great abyss at our feet. The yawning gulf was perhaps a hundred yards across and so deep that we could only just make out the bottom. Yet, unfortunately for our sanity, the light was sufficient for us to pick out details of what lay below.

Roughly circular in shape, the massive chamber was bare of all ornamentation. The walls were pitted with great gashes as if chiseled from the rock by some giant's hand. Around them were a number of black openings while at the far side, facing us, was a prodigious door set in the wall. It was toward this that we directed the combined light of our torches, letting the beams play over the gleaming surface.

My first impression was that it was constructed of some strange, shiny metal with curious inlaid designs that shifted in the light. Then I saw that the movement was real and not some trick of the reflected light. The door was not made of metal but of some transparent material through which we were getting tantalizing glimpses of something beyond.

All the while, the rustling sound had been growing louder, but we had failed to notice it in our attentive concentration on the vast doorway. Now the penultimate horror of that long-dead city suddenly burst upon us.

Now we saw that the vast pit below us was no longer empty. Crawling out of the black tunnels around the perimeter, slithering up from some dark benighted region even deeper in the bowels of that accursed city, came the hideously living reality behind those alien images we had earlier seen carved upon the stone walls. They were fearful, indescribable things vaster than any creature now known on Earth and there was an evil gleam of greenish

phosphorescence about them which illumined the whole place with a ghastly glow, hiding nothing from our staring gaze.

Carnforth and I have only vague recollections of racing headlong back along that nightmarish tunnel and up the never-ending steps to the surface with our three companions pounding at our heels. Even as we ran I heard a thunderous detonation and felt the huge shudder beneath my feet and a blast of dust-laden air sweep past me from below. A little part of my mind, strangely detached from the whirling turmoil in my brain, told me that Kelrick, in a moment of lucidity, had somehow managed to detonate the dynamite he carried within that monstrous tunnel.

The brilliant sunlight sobered us all to a certain extent and for a moment we paused in our headlong flight even though the horror of what we had seen chilled our souls. Ashen-faced, we clustered beside that wide, irregular opening in the domed roof. Whether the dynamite had completely sealed that abhorrent tunnel we did not know, but my whirling mind persisted in visualizing those monstrous creatures crawling up that vast spiraling stairway of stone towards the top.

It was at that moment that we all noticed a highly singular fact. The lake, whose nearer shore now lay less than two hundred yards away, no longer shone placidly in the sunlight. There was a spiraling, thickening cloud of pallid vapor obscuring it and from within that congealing, leprous mist came the sound of huge bubbles breaking the oily surface.

I have said earlier that those hideous creatures we saw crawling forth from the abyssal blackness of the bottommost tunnel in that vast chamber were the penultimate horror. Now the ultimate horror suddenly burst upon us. We had all glanced back in the direction of the lake simultaneously, although there is little doubt the motion of one of us prompted the rest of us.

Something moved within the mist, something that rose like a shadowy mountain behind the curtain of achromatic fog. At first it had no shape, for the writhing mist mercifully hid most of it from us.

Then, aided either by the wind or some upward surging of noxious gas from below, the mist thinned. In that moment of sheer, undiluted horror, I knew what had been moving behind that vast transparent door far below. I knew the shocking, mind-revolting truth behind those most ancient of myths concerning this aeon-old city and its terrible cosmic inhabitants which had not, like the dinosaurs, become extinct millions of years ago.

Something hundreds of yards long, and several yards thick, came snaking sinuously from the fog. Within seconds, two more appeared: gigantic tentacles that seized Beringer, Farrer, and Kelrick around their waists before they could move, drawing them screaming into the air and back toward the lake.

How Carnforth and I succeeded in turning and running back through those silent domes and pinnacles, somehow finding that solitary gap in the perimeter wall of gray stone, we shall never know. Blind instinct alone must have guided us with the pitiless glare of the African sun mocking our every step.

In less than half an hour we had reached the trucks to find our three guides still awaiting us, fearful and apprehensive. Leaving one of the trucks behind, Carnforth and I took the other two, driving them as fast as we dared across the burning, treacherous scrubland, away from that accursed place in the foothills of the Mountains of the Moon. Neither of us can forget that single, mind-freezing glimpse we had of that final abomination which rose mountainlike and dripping from the lake, because we had already had a vague idea of it in our minds from our careful perusal of those forbidden volumes. The legends had been correct except in one vital point. They had spoken of an idol which the Old Ones had brought down from the interstellar gulfs all those millions of years ago, worshipping it within that gray stone city when it had first been built according to some weird geometrical design unknown on Earth.

But it had been no idol which had accompanied them from the vast deep. *That mountainous winged and tentacled thing which had seized our three companions and borne them to such a horrific death was one of the Old Gods, ancient beyond all memory, sleeping undisturbed beneath that brooding city until awakened by our intrusion into that blasphemous temple beside the lake!*

About “The Dreaming City”

Roger Johnson is, as many readers will know, one of those people that give rise to the belief that, while Lovecraft has many admirers and few successful emulators, M. R. James has many of both, often the same people. Roger is certainly one of these, along with Ron Weighell, David Rowlands, and a few others. Several of his effective James pastiches have appeared in that august periodical *Ghosts & Scholars*, while “The Dreaming City” was first published in a collection of Johnson’s tales, both Jamesian and Lovecraftian, in a Garrie Hall publication, *Deep Things Out of Darkness* (1987).

As for the eponymous city itself, Johnson unashamedly makes use of the age-old theme of a lost city, an iceberg-tip of an otherwise vanished world older than our own. The city is said to “dream” because it is for a long time without the consciousness of inhabitants. Of course, it “awakens” when interlopers, to their peril, breach the silent isolation of a city like R’lyeh or Johnson’s Ishtaol (whose original name, “Ib-steoll”, recalls Lovecraft’s Ib in “The Doom That Came to Sarnath”, as well as Brian Lumley’s deadly demon Yb-Tstll). It awakens because the newcomers read its secrets from statuary, inscriptions, scrolls, what have you. Then, as Wolfgang Iser (*The Act of Reading*) tells us, a miracle occurs: The thoughts of the writer are reawakened and reproduced in the mind of the reader who follows in his footsteps (or pen marks).

The knowledge there awakened may be a shocking discovery. Zechariah Sitchin, in his fascinating *The Twelfth Planet* (and others), does a marvelous job of recounting the history of Near Eastern archaeology, how one ancient, unsuspected world after another was gradually disclosed by the delving spade, each with astonishing secrets to reveal. Sitchin tries to decode the ancient mythic texts found in Sumer, Akkad, etc., to present ancient evidence for an extraterrestrial origin of the human race, bred as servitor stock for the aliens symbolized by the Mesopotamian gods. The case is futile, but it is a good allegory for the discoveries he cites and their subsequent impact. Among these finds were various myth texts closely parallel to the Book of Genesis, flood myths, creation myths, etc., and these did have the eventual result (though many fight against it still today) of showing the Bible’s wonderful stories to be equally mythical, unsettling the beliefs and values of Western civilization. Would it shake the foundations of our world if diggers brought to light revelations such as Lovecraft’s or Johnson’s do? It has already happened.



The Dreaming City

by Roger Johnson

Mordecai Howard was mad. That much is agreed, at least by those who attended him after his return from the East. The archaeologist must be a man of imagination, but surely only a madman would seek for the remains of a city with no more basis for his search than scraps of ancient magic and the vaguest of legend.

It was true that Howard had made some particularly important contributions to the scholarship of the monumental ruins at Great Zimbabwe, but his allusive references to “the ancient texts” and his suggestion of still-extant cults as a source for his thesis were merely passed over by the archaeological establishment. Only with the eventual publication of his journals for the Eastern Expedition did it become clear that this was no mere occultist aberration but the very basis of his scholarship. The result, of course, was to cast doubt upon all his work, which is unfortunate, both for his own reputation and for the advancement of knowledge in his field. I am certain that the Expedition did uncover something remarkable, though whether it was quite what Howard himself believed must be a matter for conjecture.

It began in 1924, with the return from Shanghai of Howard’s friend, Philip Wendigee, who in his day was an archaeologist of some repute, particularly in his native Holland. At this time, he was in his late sixties and employed in some unspecified capacity by the Dutch government. The latter fact is relevant only in that his journey to China had a semiofficial basis. The conversation between the two men that followed his return made no reference at all to international politics, a subject that held no interest for Mordecai Howard, but turned instead to the younger man’s conviction that the dry wastes of the Gobi hid some remnant of a city that predated by centuries—perhaps by millennia—the coming of the present nomadic inhabitants.

This notion had been acquired from his reading of certain obscure volumes of occult lore, books to which few reputable scholars attached any importance except as manifestations of the eccentricities of the human imagination. Nevertheless, Howard appeared to take them seriously. He had spent many hours in the British Museum, consulting Ludwig Prinn's *Mysteries of the Worm*, the *Necronomicon*, and even the notoriously fraudulent *Book of Eibon*. This latter, he informed the sceptical Wendigee, he regarded as particularly important, since it purported to date from almost the same inconceivably remote age as the hidden city itself. It was, indeed, from Eibon that he learned the name of the city: *Ishtaol*, translated as "The Mighty." Further details could be gleaned from the cryptic text of the poet Alhazred, whose *Necronomicon* refers to an immeasurably ancient and long-abandoned city in the Sandy Desert to which he gives the unexplained and alien name of *Sath'gon-Thargn*. That this was the same place was made apparent by allusion to the patron god or demon of the city: the name given by Alhazred to this being was *Ib-steoll*, which is clearly the same as Eibon's "Ishtaol."

At length, Howard had thought to consult an old book that had sat upon his own shelves for some months since he had acquired it at auction with the contents of a private collection. This was the 1843 edition of *De Potentiae Deorum Antiquorum*, written in the midtwelfth century by that elusive figure Sir Geoffrey de Lacy and translated (and considerably expanded) in the 1760's by one Thomas Dashwood Morley, who described himself as *Frater Mednamae*: a Brother of Medmenham. Since de Lacy's original is now lost, it is difficult to be sure how much of the present text is interpolation, and of course it is entirely possible that the references that Howard found to "Ishtaol" were derived by Morley from his own readings of Eibon's grimoire, with which he is known to have been familiar. Still, whether it were truth, legend, or fiction, the equivocal tale that Howard had read, of how old de Lacy had actually journeyed to the fastnesses of the great desert and there found the aeon-haunted ruins of the Mighty City, excited him strangely. It could not, he thought, be all the spawn of imagination, and even if the old man merely repeated legend—why, had not Homer done the same? And did not Homer's epic tale, so long dismissed as "only" myth, lead Heinrich Schliemann to discover the very walls of Ilium? Even while he disregarded de Lacy's circumstantial account of the spells and sacrifices employed to reveal to him the wonders of lost Ishtaol, preferring to rely on his own ability as a skilled and seasoned archaeologist, his inner eye saw him returning to England the discoverer of something as important as Schliemann's Troy and immeasurably more ancient. The truth of the elder texts would be confirmed, and the scholarship of history turned upside-down. All things would

be his for the asking. ... Dreams! Ah, dreams! The might of the Mighty City, the dreams of the Dreaming City

"The Dreaming City." That was what the unsavory Ludwig Prinn called it, deriving the name from the Arab's allusions to "Sath'gon-Thargn." Information from certain dubious occult sources had persuaded him that after many centuries of prosperity under the patronage of the god Ishtaol the human dwellers in the city (Prinn stressed their humanity in a curious way) had undergone a sudden and disturbing change. The Mighty God had died, by what means none could tell, and with him died the might of the Mighty City.

Prosperity faded, and in its place came illusion, madness, and dreams. Prinn's account, here as elsewhere in his *magnum opus*, is so cryptic that it is hard to be quite sure of his meaning, but Howard understood that at least a devastating mental disturbance came upon the citizens of Ishtaol; those who did not succumb utterly to madness fled, until only the stones, the riches, and the god, or his effigy, remained to mark the resting place of the countless tortured dead. Whether the exiles were absorbed into the other communities of that then-flourishing region, or whether they perished as shunned outcasts, is not made clear. It is certain, however, that the city itself was sedulously avoided, for experience proved that the plague of nightmare delusion still infested the abandoned metropolis. No longer the Mighty City, it became known and feared as "Sath'gon-Thargn": the Dreaming City.

Philip Wendigee listened to this tale with a skeptical amusement that rapidly lessened, for he had heard something of this before, and recently.

"Shortly before I left China," he said, "my business took me north to Tientsin. Here my host, knowing my personal interest in the exotic and bizarre, introduced me to another guest of his, a Mongolian merchant who dealt principally in the sturdy horses for which his country is famous. The social disorder following the recent death of the ruler, the Living Buddha of Urga, had made it inadvisable for this man to return immediately to Mongolia. Well, to be brief, my merchant responded most cheerfully to my questions about the legends and traditions of his land, telling a little that I already knew and much that I did not, but one thing he said puzzled me rather. He spoke of an area within the great Gobi that is shunned by the nomads of the desert, an area which they regard as sinister, because it 'affects their dreams.' That is what he said according to my host, who had to act as interpreter. You will understand that it was most frustrating for me not to be able to question the man directly, for even though he could tell me little of this bad place, what he did say was so vague and improbable that I thought at times that the translation must be at fault. He told me, for example, when I asked just where the shunned place was, that he could not be certain, for accounts differed strangely, and indeed one old fellow whom

he suspected of not being entirely *compos mentis* averred that the area of bad dreams actually moved, so that one man might stumble upon it in one location and another—well, elsewhere. A patent absurdity, of course, but curious nonetheless.”

“Curious and convincing,” said Howard. “It must surely be the place referred to in the ancient books. Why, man, this is the key! Did your merchant tell you if the bad place had a name?”

“Indeed he did. And this again is odd, for the name he gave it was *Tse-Quong T’anq* or *Tse-Quong Tao*, which seems Chinese rather than Mongolian. Despite the apparent reference to the eternal truths of Tao, however, I am assured that it has no meaning at all in either tongue. Mere nonsense, in fact. And yet—”

“And yet,” Howard concluded triumphantly, “this meaningless word bears a singular resemblance to the name given by Ludwig Prinn as ‘Sath’gon-Thargn’, which he translates as ‘The Dreaming City.’

“Assuredly, my friend, this is nothing less than a survival from the unthinkable ancient days before even the Mongol herdsmen came to the sandy dessert. Before, in fact, it was desert at all. Can you doubt now that something is there to be discovered?”

The Dutchman paused before replying. “No,” he said at length. “Something is there, to be sure, but I hesitate to suggest that anything material might have survived the ages. Should you carry this plan through, as it seems you are determined to do, then I fear that you will find only a lingering and malign psychic influence. You are prepared to credit the one aspect of the Mongolian legends; do not neglect the other!”

But the younger man’s enthusiasm had raised him beyond the reach of warnings. What he wanted now was help and advice, of a purely practical nature, and these at length he received from Wendigee. Together they studied the ancient texts, collating the information that appeared to be sound and rejecting the greater part that did not. Indeed, so many of Prinn’s and de Lacy’s references were ambiguous or merely vague that they felt justified in ignoring them utterly, while the tales attributed to Eibon of Mhu Thulan were so outrageous as to be clearly the products of a deranged imagination.

Wendigee offered to contact the Mongolian authorities, but the dearth of information he received merely confirmed his fears that the practical thinking of the newly established People’s Republic had no time to concern itself with anything so backward-looking as peasant superstition. Maps were obtained with great difficulty, bearings taken and routes plotted. Permission to enter the country was somehow gained, and at last, by the spring of 1926, Mordecai Howard felt himself justified in assembling a small team to accompany him on his expedition.

It must be said that this team did not meet his fullest hopes, for many of the most reputable members of his profession had refused to associate themselves with such a wild venture. Still, the two archaeologists who did agree to come had proved themselves to be both competent and enthusiastic, and Geoffrey Challenor, the elder of them, had gained some distinction by his participation in the first of Francis Luttrell's major earth-boring investigations in Western Australia. Less was known about the capability of his colleague Julian Hardwick, but certainly nothing could be said against him. The photographer, Ian Dakin, had accompanied two previous expeditions to exotic regions, and the work he had produced had been very well received, both by the cognoscenti and by the public at large.

Howard's journal describes very fully the difficulties encountered in his search for the ruins of Ishtaol, but there is no need to describe them here. There is a single note in the journal to the effect that calculations based upon the "Trone Tables" from *The Ethics of Y'qor* had been invaluable in enabling him at last to locate the forgotten city, but there is no further reference to this particular work. However, three days later, on the 15th of May, an entry triumphantly records that the city had indeed been found, in the form of gigantic blocks of a whitish stone whose regular shapes could be discerned beneath the all-covering sand. The camels were tethered, tents were pitched, and a small celebration was held—which is to say that a bottle of whisky was broken open and shared between the four men before they retired. The following morning's entry in the journal begins with the happy remark: "All slept soundly. No bad dreams at all. What price superstition, Wendigee?"

Howard had drawn up a conjectural plan of the city, based upon Geoffrey de Lacy's account of his own visit to the haunted spot, but he found great difficulty in relating it to the waste of monumental masonry that his little team was uncovering. Most of the great stones, although plainly artificial and still bearing vestiges of incised decoration, seemed to conform to no pattern that he could discern, and as the excavations proceeded he was disturbed to find he was becoming subject to rather curious optical phenomena. Angles seemed to behave wrongly. He would glance at an apparent vast jumble of separate and unrelated blocks from a distance and instantly see them connected in a clearly intentional way, yet when he approached he found the connection lost. The independent megaliths were now exactly that.

At first the journal tells only of Howard's own susceptibility to this disconcerting effect. Perhaps he did not speak of it to the others, not wishing to arouse suspicions in their minds. It becomes clear, however, that he was not the only one to suffer from these illusions, for on the 24th of the month Challenor and Hardwick reported a most singular occurrence. It had seemed to Hardwick that two great blocks, roughly cubic and measuring

some five feet by five by six, belonged together, since each bore a part of a representational bas-relief—severely eroded, to be sure, but still apparent. Making strict measurements, he drew each design to a scale of precisely one sixth and found that they fitted perfectly. This picture, representing a creature apparently ophidian but with a certain disturbingly humanoid overall semblance, he showed to Challenor, who suggested that the two of them should attempt to move the two stones together so that the theory might be confirmed. This was achieved, with some help from Dakin, the photographer, but to the astonishment of the two archaeologists the result was not at all what they had expected. When Hardwick had measured them the two blocks had appeared to be within a couple of inches of the same size; now it was clear that one was fully a foot smaller on all sides than the other, and the relationship that made the two sculpted designs into one was lost. Yet there remained Hardwick's drawing to show that to him, at least, it had existed.

Conversation inevitably arose about the disconcerting optical effects that were an evident property of this strange place, and it was now that Ian Dakin confessed that he too had been plagued by odd phenomena. He showed the archaeologists a number of photographs that he had taken, and made the singular remark that the photographs did not show precisely what he had seen. Where only a disconnected confusion of stones had been apparent to him, the pictures showed evident relationships between the stones. He had not liked to mention it before, because . . .

Strangely, perhaps, it was Dakin's photographs that proved to be the key that unlocked the mystery of Ishtaol. Howard and the others took to using the pictures as a guide, and found that the pattern observable in them matched very closely the plan that had been derived from old de Lacy's description. It was perhaps the most bizarre method of working that any of the archaeologists had encountered, but in the end it proved effective, and much was achieved. By digging at the points indicated, they were able to place precisely a number of the major buildings of the city. None of them was complete, of course, though two at least were in a quite astonishing state of preservation, and identification was as certain as it could be in the circumstances.

It is at this point in the journal that Howard mentions an extension of the disquieting visual effects. At various times all the members of the party, with the exception of Dakin, who seemed to be growing more withdrawn and uncommunicative, reported the strange impression of seeing one or more of their fellows in places where they were not. Frustratingly, these were never more than indistinct glimpses, though occasionally two of the men would seem to see a third—always in conditions that made it impossible to be certain of his identity. They would hail him, and be answered by a call

from a different direction. Once, Howard, Challenor, and Dakin were together when the two archaeologists caught a most disturbing half-sight of *two* other figures. Whether the photographer also saw them cannot be established, for he remained as taciturn as the others had come to expect. Needless to say, Hardwick was not even near the spot where the figures had appeared to be.

Two important discoveries now took place in quick succession. On the 17th of June, the lifting of what had appeared to be a large triangular stone slab revealed a similarly shaped space underneath, to which it had acted as a lid. In this space were two human bodies; they were no more than skeletons coated with skin, and over the next few hours they disintegrated in a manner which Howard, with restraint, merely describes as "unusual." Of the bodies themselves, he says that they were unmistakably those of a man and a woman, and that the shape of the skulls proved them to be of a quite different racial type from the native Mongolians. He adds further that they gave the curious appearance of being "elongated", amplifying this word only by the addendum: "not tall as we understand it, but stretched." His vagueness upon this point is typical of a regrettable lack of precision that becomes more and more evident in the journal.

The second discovery was even more momentous, and it led directly to an unexplained tragedy. The principal building of the city, from its earliest days, had been the temple of the god Ishtaol, and it was this that the party finally located, upon the 25th of June. "Building" is not actually the right word, for the temple, as de Lacy had made clear, was entirely subterranean. Howard's account again is not all that one could wish, but it is apparent that he himself, with the assistance of Dakin's photographs, identified the enormous block whose almost obliterated carven device of a single nonhuman eye proved it to be the doorway to the temple of Ishtaol.

The journal mentions here "the pit of the six thousand steps", but this appears not to be a reference to the temple itself, for a little later Howard gives the number of steps down to the great vault as precisely sixty-three. The relevance of "the pit", in fact, is left unexplained.

By means of some mechanism, unthinkable old but still functioning, the immense door could be swung open with surprisingly little effort. Howard says nothing about the quality of the air thus released, which suggests that it was not utterly stale, as one might have supposed. The hole revealed was a good twenty feet square, and the steps leading down into the blackness appeared to be in a state of perfect preservation. They were carved of the same whitish stone as everything else in the city, and were arranged in a rather curious fashion. There were three steps, about eighteen inches high, and then a level platform ran forward for fully twelve feet, after which three more steps led downward and so on to the bottom. The vertical faces

were carved with designs whose clarity of outline contrasted utterly with the all but eroded incisions and bas-reliefs of the stones upon the surface. Of the designs themselves, Howard says little beyond noting a slight occasional resemblance to the Babylonian. Generally they appear to have been utterly unrelated to anything that survives elsewhere.

At the bottom of the huge staircase, the floor ran forward for about twelve feet to an immense monolithic doorway some twenty feet high. The electric torches revealed that in contrast to the profuse decoration upon the steps this great entrance was totally plain, except that over it was repeated the symbol of the single eye. Within the huge vault beyond was the first touch of color that the men had seen in this ancient metropolis, for the floor was paved with mosaic tiles in somber greens and grays, laid in an apparently random fashion. This was not immediately noticed, however, for the thing that stood in the center of the floor took everyone's attention. It was nothing less than a statue of the god itself, and it was as totally alien as the carvings of its eye had suggested.

In shape, it resembled nothing so much as an immense lump of clay that had been allowed to settle into a rounded, bulbous cone, some ten yards across and six high. No individual features could be discerned, except for a dozen or so globular bulges freely arranged toward the summit. The material of which it was made appeared to be an immensely hard stone, differing from that elsewhere in the city in that it was pure white. Howard draws a comparison with a monstrously misshapen maggot—this may give a clue to his state of mind, since he is known to have had an unreasoning horror of maggots. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the idol is that the flashlights revealed no sign of joints anywhere; the thing appeared to have been carved from a single block.

Nothing is recorded of the size or shape of the sunken temple, nor of any mural decoration. This may mean that there was nothing of note to be seen, but it seems more probable that the three men were so awe-stricken by the vast blasphemy before them that they had no mind for anything else. They spent no longer than fifteen minutes in the vault before Hardwick, who was not noted for nervousness, abruptly turned and left. The others followed immediately.

At the top of the great staircase they were shaken to find that the great slab which formed the door had swung closed, though no sound had penetrated to the depths beneath. To their unspeakable relief, the door was opened as easily from the inside as from without, but its opening disclosed tragedy. Ian Dakin was dead, his head crushed to pulp. It seemed that he had been leaning over the edge of the pit, looking downward, when the mighty slab had descended. They could only hope that he had died instantly.

Hardwick, who seemed to have been the worst-affected by the exploration of the sunken temple, showed clear signs of a nervous breakdown now. He was of no practical help at all in the gruesome business of interring the body—for transporting it home to England was out of the question—and his behavior rapidly became distressingly erratic. Howard and Challenor had themselves been severely shaken by the death of their colleague, and now their equanimity was frequently disturbed by Hardwick's tendency to wander aimlessly among the cyclopean ruins, muttering scraps of verse from the metaphysical poets. As his behavior deteriorated, so did the nervous condition of his colleagues. Perhaps influenced by hints made by Hardwick—or perhaps not—Howard and Challenor separately became convinced that among the shadowy figures that occasionally appeared on the edge of their vision was one who strangely resembled Ian Dakin.

For the first time, too, Howard's journal mentions his dreams. Although he had so proudly recorded upon that first day that none of the party had been subject to nightmares, he now began to suspect that this had not always been so—that their conscious minds in fact had rebelled at remembering the dreams. It seemed to him at last that his own ego was losing its strength to resist, and that something or some force within the city was determined to prove the truth of his Dutch friend's warning.

The journal is frustratingly reticent concerning the content of Howard's dreams—there are equivocal references to “the dwellers in the wheel”, “the swimmer in darkness”, and “the silence of the dragon”—but of their quality there can be no doubt, and it was a quality that increased rapidly. Each morning he would find it less easy to awaken to full cognizance of his position. “My brain,” says one late entry, “is merely liquid, and its every motion can be felt.”

The entries become increasingly incoherent, except on the rare occasions when Howard makes an evident effort to analyze his own mental and physical condition. Even then, a strong vein of fantasy is apparent. Little more is said about Challenor, or even about Hardwick, until the final note. Toward the end, after a description of the unnatural and excessive wasting to which his body had become subject—a description that impresses the more because of its impersonal rationality—appear such entries as “Weather continues charming” and “Father must not know!”

The last entry is dated the 30th of August, though of course, it is impossible to gauge the accuracy of this date. I find something chilling in the very prosaic and orthodox nature of it, for it says simply: “Hardwick is dead. Challenor has gone to the temple. I think that I shall join him.”

On the 4th of September a group of nomadic herdsmen arrived at the camp, accompanying a minor government officer. It appears that one of his superiors had become aware of the permission so casually granted to

Howard's party to enter the country and had decided that it was not after all in the best interests of the Mongolian People's Republic. The deputy had been sent, therefore, to see that the foreigners left Mongolia without delay.

Possibly this man expected to find a group of capitalist spies; one cannot be sure. What he actually found were three corpses and one other, a man perilously close to physical death, and mentally dead. Mordecai Howard alone of his party had survived, reduced to a state that the horrified Mongolians assessed variously as lunacy and idiocy. At first they naturally ascribed the deaths of the others to the one living man, but closer examination of the corpses gave them reason to doubt this assumption. One man, whose head had been thoroughly crushed, as if by a great weight, was buried in a shallow depression, from which the wind had blown most of the covering sand. Certainly he had died by violence, though the wound could not be related to any weapon that could be found. The other two had apparently been stricken by some emaciating disease. The bodies were lying some hundreds of yards apart, but each showed identical symptoms; it was clear that they had not been dead long, and that the wasting had occurred before and not after death. Indeed, the same symptoms were already far advanced in the survivor. The report accompanying the madman on his eventual return to England described the dead men's frames as being unnaturally attenuated or stretched.

The government officer who drafted the report had evidently read Howard's journal, for he scornfully dismissed the notion of a ruined city in the great desert, describing it as "diseased fantasy", though he does mention the destruction by his junior of certain "shamefully fraudulent photographs."

If any reference was made by the nomads to *Tse-Quong T'ang*, the "bad place", the report does not acknowledge it. Perhaps the hint was taken.

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