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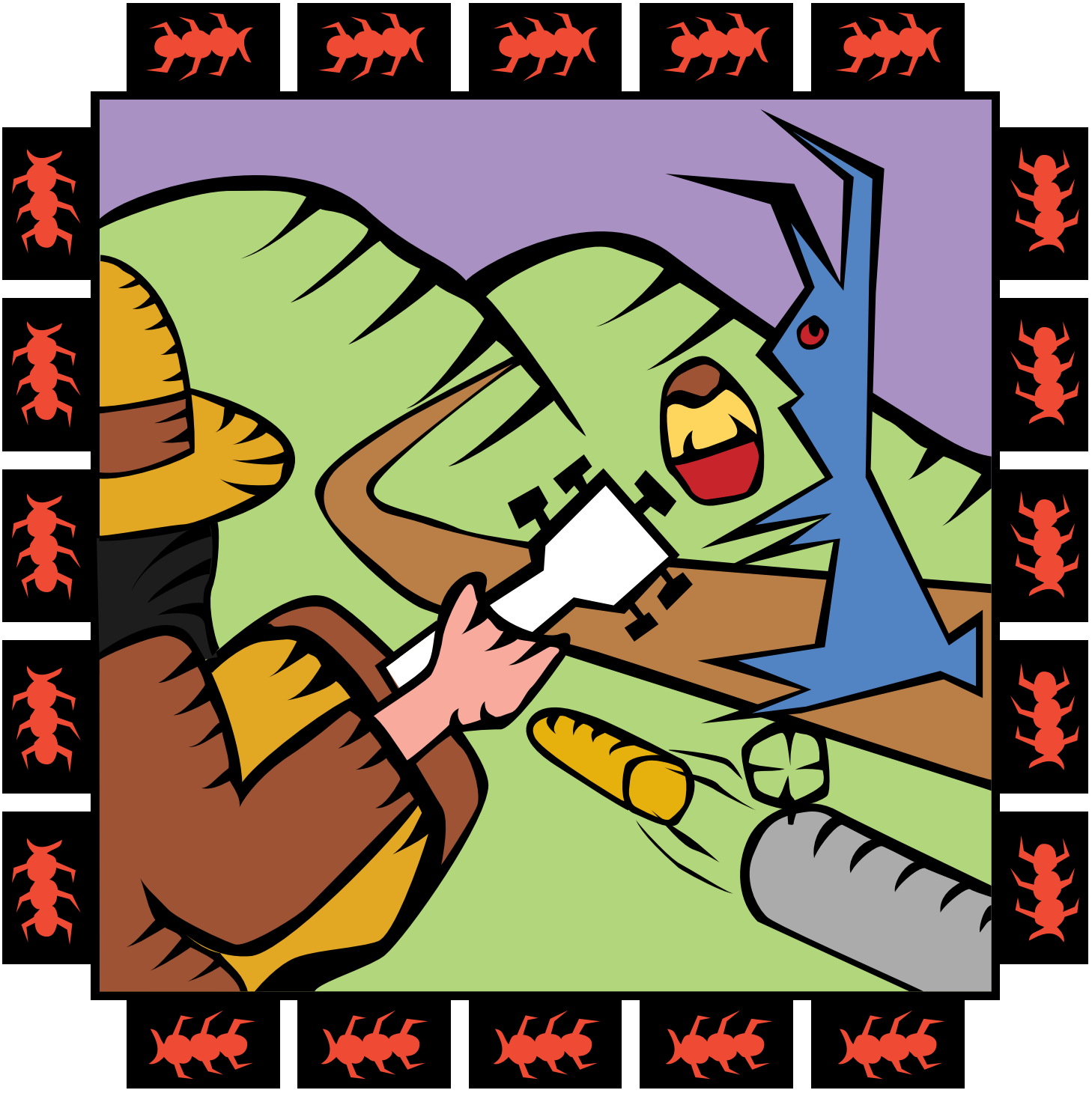

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In This Issue:

Serials

LOOKING AHEAD
Daniel K. Appelquist 2

TO TOUCH THE STARS (Part 1)
Nicole Gustas 3

THE HARRISON CHAPTERS (Chapter 14)
Jim Vassilakos 10

MICROCHIPS NEVER RUST (Part 1)
Eric Miller 23

Stories

DAYS IN THE MACHINE
Chaim Bertman 8

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF DOMINGO
A.Y. Tanaka 16

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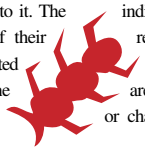

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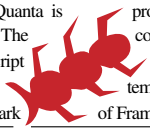

Looking Ahead

Daniel K. Appelquist

GOOD MORNING, EVERYBODY! I SAY GOOD morning because (much as with the former British Empire) the Sun never sets on the Quanta subscribership! It is always morning for some quanta subscriber somewhere. Hmm. What a ghastly thought! Well, it's been a while since out last issue, but I still hope to put our at least four issues this year.

Well, this issue is a bit short for Quanta, but it none–the–less is *packed* with great fiction (some of the best mat-erial yet published in Quanta, in my opinion). For instance? The enigmatic *Days in the Machine* from Chaim Bertman of Chicago, *Four Hundred Years of Domingo, from A.Y. Tanaka* of Hawaii. Apart from being wonderful pieces, these are the first two pieces published in Quanta which come from ourside the Net. Yes, these manuscripts were submitted in paper form, sent through our wonderful Postal system. As I related last issue, I've been receiving an enormous number of hard copy manuscripts recently. Great! You'll be seeing more of them in future issues.

I've actually been receiving a lot more manuscripts in the mail recently than in electronic mail! Remember, I'm always looking for new material and new writers. I highly encourage those of you who *are* on the net to submit material.

This issue also marks the start of two new serials. Nicole Gustas (who also contributed some great design ideas for this issue) gives us *To Touch the Stars* and Eric Miller gives us the first part of *Microchips Never Rust*. Nicole's story should be concluding next issue. Eric Miller's story will run for several issues.

John Zimmerman has once again come through with a brilliant piece of cover art, and last, but certainly not least, we have a most harrowing installment of *The Harrison Chapters*.

Any more excitement, and we'd be BANNED!

Seriously, I'm very happy about how this issue turned out. I wasn't as successful in orchestrating a Quanta get-together this past May. Oh well. I'll just have to try again some time in the future! If anyone out there in Quanta readership land is planning to attend any upcoming Science-Fiction conventions in the northeast, drop me a line and we'll try to arrange something.

Books! Books books books. I hope to make Books a regular part of this column, where I bore you by raving about the latest book I'm reading. This month, it's Steve Erickson's *Arc D'X* which is absolutely incredible. Roughly, it involves Thomas Jefferson's affair with a slave girl in Paris and how that interconnects with the life of another man living in a strange, religious oligarchy in the year 1999. It's a fascinating piece of fiction that defies pigeon-holing into any specific genre. It's kind of a fictional–historical–fantastical–futuristic thriller/noirish nightmare. With a heart. Anyway, check it out.

In other news, I've been seemingly encased in poison ivy for about 2 weeks. If you've ever experienced poison ivy (or any other kind of skin irritation: chicken pox, poison Larch, swimming in the Potomac etc), you know that it's just no fun constantly wanting to rip your own skin off. Other than that and having my car rear-ended recently, everything's going just great for me!

Well, rather than using this column as a forum for comlaining (which would, admittedly, be fun and satisfying for me) I think I'll leave off here. But before I go, let me just mention that after the last purge of defunct subscribers, the total number of readers still comes to around 2300. Also, more and more people are switching to the FTP notification list (where you receive a notice when a new issue comes out, informing you where you can get using anonymous FTP or Gopher). This is a very good trend. Please, if you do have access to FTP and are currently receiving Quanta through electronic mail, request that I switch you over to the FTP notification list. It's a lot easier for me to deal with, and it puts less strain on network mailers and distribution services. Thanks!□

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To Touch the Stars

Part 1: 'No Clemency'

Nicole Gustas

TAMSIN AND JAYSEN SAT IN A darkened corner of the bar, listening to the nervous man beg for help. Jaysen leaned back in his chair, fingers steepled, and focused his mind on the man. He left the conversation to his partner, who leaned forward intently, her long red hair hanging around her face.

"They're threatening to take my wife and daughter away now. I've done nothing wrong! I can't let them hurt my family because I don't agree with the way they're treating the Gifteds. I thought freedom of speech was protected!"

"It was," said Tamsin darkly, "until the coup three years ago."

"I'll give you twenty thousand Weltmarks to get me and my family off the planet. Just take us away to the nearest spaceport – we'll find our way from there."

"We'll get you out. We'll bring you to Maris. But you have to leave all your posessions behind except what you can carry in a shouldersac. Any more than that, and they'll know something's up," Tamsin said forcefully.

"Fine. Anything. Just so long as you take us with you. Where will we meet you?"

"*We'll* meet *you*. We'll give you three hour's notice. But it will be within the next week."

"Let me give you my address..."

Tamsin stopped him with a gesture. "We have it."

"How did you get it?" the man asked.

"We do our research. We had to make sure you weren't sent from the government to nail us." Jaysen could only see her hair, but he could imagine her expression, her green eyes turning to iron.

"They're threatening to take my wife and daughter away now. I've done nothing wrong! I can't let them hurt my family because I don't agree with the way they're treating the Gifteds. I thought freedom of speech was protected!"

"But I didn't give you my name!"

"We know how to find that out, too." The man looked shaken, and Tamsin's voice softened. "Don't worry, we'll get you out. But we have to be careful, too. Go home, make plans with your wife, and forget about us until we come."

The man left, murmuring expressions of gratitude. Tamsin and Jaysen departed five minutes later, playing the role of drunken shipmates, and staggered back to their ship at Arcadia spaceport. Tamsin dropped the act as soon as they were safely in their ship and turned to Jaysen, switching to the rapid urban patois of their youth, nearly unintelligable to outsiders. "Jayce, what do you think?"

He tried to let his mind relax. "What do *you* think?"

"I'm thick as a stone, remember? You're the one with the Gift. So what did you get from him?"

They entered the galley and Jaysen sat down in one of the cushioned chairs. "He was tense, but he seemed to be telling the truth – at least on the surface." He leaned back, brushed his hands over his face, and then massaged his temples, trying to forestall the oncoming headache. He was very nervous. Their organization, Ground Zero, officially a shipping consortium, provided a front for many dissident activities. Tamsin was depending on him to make sure the people they helped escape from the planet could be trusted. He couldn't afford to make a mistake on who they selected. He and Tamsin were the only pilots Ground Zero had, and if they were caught, it would put an end to any efforts Ground Zero could make on Narid. "Gods, Kalin chose a terrible time to be sick! She's the one with the potent Gift. She should have been doing the readings on this trip, not me. Just doing a surface scan on that guy is giving me a reaction headache."

"Hang on a minute." Tamsin went over to the kitchen area. Jaysen watched her muscles shift under the loose white blouse, black leather vest, leather breeches, and knee-high leather boots that both had adopted as Ground Zero's uniform. Even in someplace as unthreatening as their ship, whch she thought of as home, she moved like a cat, prepared to attack at the slightest sign of danger. She'd been like that ever since they were children. While Jaysen had managed to put aside their childhood the two friends had survived in Tiburon, one of the worst areas on Narid, Tamsin could never forget. She was still constantly on the alert for an attack, years after they'd escaped that metropolitan hellhole to go to university. The only concession she'd made to their relative safety was her hair. Long hair had been a disadvantage in streetfights, but she'd stopped shaving her head soon after they got to university, where there was no need, and she hadn't had it cut since.

She pulled a few bottles out and mixed various liquids together, then came back with a foamy, emerald-green drink that matched the color of her eyes. "Drink this – it should help your headache."

Jaysen looked at the drink suspiciously. "Alcohol will just make it worse, you know. Besides, I'm nauseous enough already."

Tamsin pushed the drink closer. "It's full of sugar, Jaysen – no alcohol. You feel sick because your blood sugar level has fallen down around your knees."

Jaysen took a sip. It was sweet, but not overly so, and had a pleasant taste of mint to it. "What is this?"

"An Orion Nebula. It'll settle your stomach; then we can get some food in you." She looked at him worriedly, then patted his arm. "I'm glad one of us paid attention to all Chas's lectures. You have to watch yourself when you use your Gift; it's as taxing as running a marathon. When you're done, you have to eat and rest, or else you'll collapse from exhaustion." She

moved behind him and began gently massaging his neck and shoulders. Her long fingers were equally skilled soothing a balky engine or a sore human body. "But the more you use your talent, the more you'll be able to use it. Remember what he says – 'when you're exhausted, it's good. It means you're building up your mind muscles'"

"I should have practiced more when we were in school," said Jaysen. His Gift was minimal, compared to many of his classmates, and he'd had no desire to train it at University. He'd spent his time in flight simulators. Tamsin insisted that it was that extra time he'd spent, while she was busy taking engineering classes, that had allowed him to surpass her in their piloting exams.

Tamsin dug into his tight muscles, and he gave himself up to her hands. "No one thought you'd need the training. Who could have guessed the government would start putting Gifteds in concentration camps? By avoiding the classes, you probably kept yourself from being arrested."

Jaysen shook his sandy hair out of his eyes. "Yeah, but if I had taken the classes, I might have a better chance of keeping us from being arrested now." He finished off his drink, and felt less nauseous, and a little less worried.

"Let's go," said Tamsin, patting him on the shoulder. As he got up to leave, she reminded him, "We'll be gone from here in three days. Next time, Kalin will be well enough to go with us. You're doing fine." She squeezed his hand quickly, then let go. "This is going to be another easy run for the Ground Zero shipping consortium and underground railroad. Just stop worrying, kid, or you'll give yourself an ulcer."

Three days later, everything went as planned prior to takeoff. Tamsin brought the refugees, fourteen in all, to the Arcadia spaceport, and ferried them into a refurbished cargo bay on the ship which had soundproof walls and chairs that would make the acceleration out of the planet's gravity well a little easier. After making sure the refugees were comfortable, she climbed up to the cockpit, where Jaysen was sitting back in his chair, playing with a small box wrapped in shiny paper.

"Another gift for Manda from her father?" asked Tamsin as she strapped herself in.

"Of course. Since she defected, we're the only way he can get anything to her." He secured the box in a storage cabinet above his head.

"You know, I never thought I'd be glad to have rich and powerful friends

"With rich and powerful parents?" replied Jaysen.

Tamsin smiled wryly. She had met Manda at university, where they had been roomates their first year. After Manda realized Tamsin wasn't going to kill her, and Tamsin realized Manda wasn't evil for being rich, they became close friends. Manda's father, Kerna N'tali, was one of the few opposition politicians who hadn't been wiped out by the new ruling junta, and he was rapidly becoming the focal point of dissident activities. He was Ground Zero's main contact to find out what was happening on their former home planet.

"He wished us luck," said Jaysen.

"Great. We're gonna need it." Tamsin was only nervous when they were about to leave Narid. She ran through her mental checklist five times. She'd taken care of everything, but she still worried something would go wrong. She looked over at her friend, who was smiling as he punched in the final commands before liftoff, his shaggy blond hair hanging in his gray eyes. She had always been jealous of the way he could lose himself in the mechanics of spaceflight; some part of her brain always seemed to be distracting her with the latest worry at times like this. He looked over at her and gently pressed on her nose, a habit from when they were children. "Stop worrying, or you'll give yourself an ulcer," he said with a grin.

She grimaced. "How can you be so calm?"

He turned back to his console. "We're at the point of no return. Nowhere to go but up. Besides, they can't board us now."

The videoscreen came to life, showing the face of a woman in the control tower. "Ground Zero, you are cleared to depart."

"Thanks, Freyja. And thanks for your hospitality yesterday," grinned Jaysen.

"My pleasure," smiled Freyja. "Hope you're not too tired. See you the next time you come to port?"

"Of course," said Jaysen.

"Good journey, Jaysen," she said, and winked out.

Tamsin raised one eyebrow. "So! I was wondering where you were last night. No wonder you're so relaxed."

Jaysen shrugged, and continued to grin. "It's always a good idea to make friends with people at the spaceport."

"Friends?" asked Tamsin.

"Well, you know. Just playing the role of the randy space pilot."

"Oh, and what a hardship it must be for you," said Tamsin sarcastically.

"You're just jealous."

"Maybe a little. She was pretty cute. I wouldn't kick her out of bed for eating crackers," replied Tamsin.

"I meant of her," shot back Jaysen.

"What, for sleeping with you?" Tamsin turned back to her controls, starting the final countdown. They'd teased each other like this for years. Its familiarity calmed her in these final seconds. "Sorry for her, maybe, but not jealous." She pressed one last button. "Takeoff in five – four – three – two – one..."

The thrusters roared beneath them, cutting off Jason's tart retort, and they were pressed back into their seats. After a few seconds, the pressure eased and artificial gravity stabilized at 1.2 Gs, approximately the same as Marisian gravity. Jaysen tapped his console. "Moving into standard orbit. Laying in a course for planet Maris at 41' 22" by 33'13" by 18'40". We will leave orbit at oh-five fourteen, ship's time. Estimated time of arrival at Maris main spaceport, twenty-six thirty-four Marisian time. Journey time, sixty eight hours, fifty minutes."

"All systems appear normal," replied Tamsin. "We're on our way home."

Jaysen unstrapped himself and made his way to the storage cabinets behind the cockpits. He pulled out a small rectangle, slightly longer than his hand and about four centimeters thick, and handed it to Tamsin. "Here. I figure it's time to celebrate."

Tamsin peeled the copper-colored paper from the package, and inhaled sharply in surprise when she saw the label inside. "It's real chocolate! Neuhaus! But that's from Terra!"

Jaysen grinned. "It helps to have powerful friends in high places."

Tamsin put her nose against the paper and smelled the rich, wonderful smell of real chocolate. Very few planets had biospheres that could support the cocoa bean, and as a result, chocolate was a pricy delicacy. It was also Tamsin's favorite food. She shut her eyes and immersed herself in

the glorious scent.

"Well, aren't you going to unwrap it?" asked Jaysen impatiently.

She shook her head, eyes still closed. "I'm saving it. I'm going to have one square a night, just before I go to bed, until it runs out."

Jaysen gave an annoyed sigh. Then he spoke, and she could hear the grin in her friend's voice. "You know, legend has it chocolate is an aphrodisiac."

Tamsin opened her eyes. "So?"

"So, do I get to tuck you in at night?" said Jaysen with a practiced leer.

Tamsin grabbed the wrapping paper off the floor and threw it at him as he laughed. "Not bloody likely, you…"

She stopped as a light began to flash on her console. "Signal's been initiated from below, directly down to the government compound." Her fingers danced over her computer pad. "I'm trying to block it – matching frequencies…"

She caught the signal as she set up interference. They could both hear the audio-only signal. "Attention, federal government of Narid! This ship holds fourteen Gifteds trying to escape criminal prosecution. It must not be allowed –"

Tamsin matched frequencies and blocked the signal. "Signal stopped. It came from cargo hold 3." She tried to turn on the surveillance cameras in the hold. "Cameras in the hold have been deactivated. This guy is good."

Jaysen looked over his sensor readings. "Signal's been detected. Five fighters coming up from the government compound. On their present course, they will intercept us in eleven minutes."

"Not if I have anything to say about it," snapped Tamsin. "Changing course. We are now on an elliptical heading to our system departure point. That should throw them off for a few minutes."

"They're recalibrating. Interception estimated in sixteen minutes."

Tamsin brought up the weapons commands on her computer screen, powering up the lasers. "Weapons warming up. Online in four minutes." She unstrapped herself from her seat. "We'll reach our departure point three minutes after they intercept. Hold them off that long, and we can warp out of the system without wiping out Narid in the process." Tamsin strapped a laser gun around her waist. "After that, there's no way they can catch up to us. I'm going below to find out what the hell's going on."

"I'll track you with the surveillance cameras."

"Yeah, like he hasn't gotten to them first." She grabbed a small silver cylinder from a locker and pinned it to her shirt. "I'm taking a comunit."

She raced out the cockpit and down the stairs, her red braid flying behind her. She made a quick survey of the mess and crew quarter levels, then continued quickly down to the cargo levels. "Tamsin, I can't see you," Jaysen said over the comunit.

"Yeah, now the fun begins." She surveyed the corridor. "He must have knocked out the video in this area."

"Do you know how?"

"Honey, the vidunits are as big as my smallest finger. I'd need a microscope to find the damage." She continued down toward Engineering, hurtling down the stairs. "I just want to make sure he doesn't wreck anything else."

Jaysen's voice came over her comunit, sounding anxious. "We're losing power!"

"I'm not surprised," she said, as she rushed toward the door of Engineering. "He had a real head start on us." The door slid open and she drew her gun. The gun was just a threat; one bad shot and she'd destroy the engine, and with it, the ship. Most people didn't know that, though.

She scanned the room. Shards sparkled on the floor, the remnants of a power receptor. Tamsin swore softly. Repairs would not be simple. "Jayce, he shattered at least one power receptor. He must have a laser cutter. The engines powered down as a safety precaution. I can juryrig something – run the power through the ones we have left – and that will give us enough power to get us a few parsecs out of the system, if it doesn't blow first. That'll take fifteen minutes."

"Tamsin, we don't have fifteen minutes. Interception time is now estimated at six minutes. We've got maneuvering jets, but we don't even have enough power to cook a turkey with our lasers."

"Distract them. Try tap dancing or something." She put Jaysen out of her mind as she tried to figure out where their saboteur was hiding. She couldn't see him in the room, but he couldn't have gotten past her on the ship's only staircase. Since the power had just gone down, it was logical that he'd be in Engineering. She threw open the storage cabinets one by one. The first five held tools. When she opened the sixth, a blur of yellow flew out at her. She fell back onto the floor, and the gun flew out of her hand and under a console. She rolled, narrowly avoiding a blow to the stomach, and sprang to her feet. Her wrists snapped back in a practiced gesture, and two organic blades shot out. She'd had them implanted when she was fourteen and living in Tiburon; it was the best way she could think of to protect herself from the streetgangs, as they couldn't be wrested away and used against her. She looked at the man across from her. He was the nervous man from the bar, but he wasn't looking nervous now, just bloodthirsty. He had a lasercutter in one hand, smaller than any she'd ever seen. The cutter was a great tool for any repair person, but with a few modifications, it was also a dangerous weapon.

"That's not one of ours," said Tamsin.

"No, I brought it with me. It fits well in a shouldersac."

Tamsin circled him, putting herself between him and the engine. "Deep cover?"

He shrugged. "Hypnotic blocks. All it takes is a few trigger words to bring out the hidden personality."

"So now your wife has a new husband."

"She's had one for months. A new cover even a Gifted couldn't detect. Amazing, huh?"

He moved toward her, powering up the cutter. Tamsin dropped and rolled, but not fast enough to avoid the beam, which grazed her left side. She decided she'd deal with the pain later. When she came out of her roll, she found herself almost directly under the man. She stabbed up, putting one knife deep into his thigh As he grasped at his leg, she withdrew the knife from his thigh and slashed at the arm which held the cutter. Blood ran from his arm, but he still held on. She could hear Jaysen's voice, asking her what was happening. In desperation, she threw herself against the man, pushing him against a console, and retracted the knives back into her arms so she could grab him. She slammed his arm frantically against the edge of the console once, twice. The third time, there was a dry snapping sound. His arm hung at a crazy angle, the radius and ulna shattered. The cutter flew against the wall and shattered, more shiny crystals on the floor.

Tamsin slammed the man's head against

the console once, and he fell unconscious. She threw him down on the floor; she'd tie him up later. "I've taken care of the guy. Now I'm going to get to work on the engines," she said.

"Are you hurt?" asked Jaysen.

"Just bruised," she said. She didn't want him to have anything else to worry about. She sat down at the main control panel and started rerouting the power through the remaining receptors. It was tricky – if she tried to put too much juice through one, it could backwash and burn out the whole engine. "Rerouting power now. He only blew out two power receptors; temporary repairs will be done in eight minutes."

"The ship will reach its departure point in ten. It's set to autopilot. Fightercraft departing docking bay in thirty seconds."

Tamsin got a cold feeling in her stomach. "Jayse, what are you doing?"

She could hear laughter in his voice. "Distracting them. Fightercraft departing in twenty seconds."

Her fingers continued to skip over the control panel, giving the computer commands. "There are five of them. I hadn't realized you were actively suicidal."

"I was tops in our class, remember?" he said lightheartedly. He was always euphoric during a launch, or during a fight. "These guys don't hold a candle to me. Launch in five – four – three – two – one –" The ship shuddered slightly as he left the docking bay. "I'll be back before you hit warp."

Tamsin tried to put him out of her mind as she worked to get the power rerouted.

Adrenalin thrilled through Jaysen's bloodstream as his fighter slipped out into the stars. He looped around the ship and darted above it, looking for his first target. A fighter hovered about two kilometers from the bow of the ship. The shots were coming from that 'craft; the other four were orienting themselves around the ship. As he moved toward the first fighter, which was the most immediate threat to the ship, he tried to place what seemed odd about the way the fighters were moving. He bore down on the first fighter from above at a crazy angle. The fighter didn't move; it just kept firing at the ship. "Cocky bastard," snarled Jaysen as he thumbed the trigger to his lasers. The moment he came into range, he fired twice. The enemy fighter exploded silently, pieces flying in all directions. In his quieter moments, Jaysen was always amazed a life could end so quietly, without fireworks and noise. He pulled up and set his sights on another fighter.

As he moved in on the second fighter, he realized what was so odd about the way the fighters were deployed. Rather than ranging all around the ship, they were arrayed on one plane, as if they were fighting on land. "Idiots!" he yelled as he saw the ships turn ponderously, trying to find the enemy. Like most military morons, he thought, they had no idea what three-dimensional fighting was like. The second 'craft managed to get off a few shots, all of which fell wide of the mark. He destroyed it quickly, ignoring for now thoughts of the pilot inside, and looped around, noting how the battle had drawn the other three fighters away from the starship.

The three fighters began to close around him, trying to surround him. He laughed. "You're still thinking in two dimensions." He pulled up and circled above the fighters, coming down behind them and destroying one before it had the chance to react. He immediately pulled into a steep turn, dodging the last two 'crafts.

One was limping. Apparently, the pilot had overstressed the engine. Jaysen discounted him. The other had followed him into the turn. Jaysen executed a series of fast maneuvers, designed to shake off another pilot. Tamsin had enhanced the speed and maneuverability of their fighter, making it a match for any Naridian craft. A tight turn brought Jaysen behind the 'craft, and he fired on it. His shot crippled the fighter, but didn't destroy it. He turned around, moving in for the kill.

The other 'craft moved behind him. Jaysen saw it and tried to dodge, turning quickly. As he turned, the fighter fired off a shot that grazed his 'craft.

The gravity controls were knocked out by the blast. Pressure inside the fighter reached 7 Gs. Jaysen was still stabbing at the controls as he blacked out.

Tamsin reached the bridge in time to see Jaysen's fighter take the hit. He didn't seem to be severely damaged, but his ship was drifting. "Jaysen, come in, please respond," she barked over the radio. No reply. She linked her computer to the one on Jaysen's fighter, firing shots at the two predator 'craft circling as she did so. When she saw the results, she swore. No gravity in his fighter, but it had briefly shot up to damn near eight Gs. He must have blacked out. She locked her computer in with the fighter's, and began giving it commands to bring it in.

One of the enemy fighters got lucky. He fired off a shot that knocked out her external communications unit, and she lost her link to the fighter. She slammed her hand against the console. "This isn't *fair*!"

Nothing to do but try another idea. The two craft were closing in on Jaysen's fighter, preparing to physically link to it and take it back to the planet. Tamsin readied a cable, one they occasionally used to grab asteroids loaded with precious metals. She laid out a string of commands, preparing to use it to drag Jaysen's fighter in. It was a long shot, but worth a try.

As she finished the macro, and shot a few more times to dissuade the enemy 'crafts, she heard the engines suddenly roar. Her blood ran cold. "No..."

Jaysen had programmed the autopilot perfectly. While she'd been working on getting his fighter back, the ship had drifted to its departure point. She looked up and saw the stars begin to blur. She tried to halt the command, but knew the engines were past the point where they could be stopped.

"No!" she shouted in horror. "Jaysen!"

The ship went into warp and left the system as the two Naridian fighters closed in on Jaysen's 'craft. Tamsin crumpled into a chair, despairing, finally feeling the pain of her wound, as the beauty of the stars streaked around her.

Interlude

Jaysen rose out of unconsciousness with great difficulty, fighting through thick waves of blackness. He felt woozy as he opened up his eyes. It took a few seconds for them to focus. When they did, he saw Tamsin sitting at his bedside, engrossed in a book.

"Tam?" he said, his voice harsh and raspy from disuse.

She started and looked at him with a smile, putting the book down on his bedtable. "You're finally awake. I was getting worried."

"What happened?" he asked, his memory still foggy. Nothing seemed quite right.

"The gravity control on your fighter went haywire. The high Gs knocked you out. When we hauled you in, we found

there was a problem with the oxygen mix, too. You're lucky we got you back."

"How long have I been out?" asked Jaysen, still disoriented.

"About three days." She took his hand. "I was worried about you."

He reached up the other hand to brush the copper hair out of her face. "Tam, I…I'm glad you were worried about me."

She held his hand against her cheek for a moment, with her eyes closed. "I didn't want to lose you," she said. She turned her head slightly and kissed the back of his hand.

Jaysen looked at her, stunned. That gentle kiss was the strongest affection she'd ever expressed toward him. Things were happening too fast. He brushed his free hand against her cheek. "Tam…"

"I was so afraid I'd lost you," she said, as she leaned over and kissed him.

He wrapped his arms around a dream come true. He kissed her back and traced her neck with his hand. He moved her shirt, reaching to trace the scar that ran down her shoulder.

His fingers found only silky, smooth skin. He pushed her away from him, confused. "What's wrong, Jaysen?" she asked, as he turned away from her.

His eyes fell on the spine of the book on the bedtable. It was a collection of twenty-third century deconstructivist poems, something Tamsin would never read. He turned back to the woman and searched her face. He could see small differences; she looked too young, almost like Tamsin did her last year in college. Her hair was too short, and her eyes were blue, not green. Her open shirt was askew, and he could see only smooth skin where there should be multiple scars. This wasn't Tamsin.

She mistook his look for desire. "Jaysen, come here," she said, reaching toward him.

He knocked her arm away, then backhanded her. "Who the hell are you?" he yelled as she fell to the floor. She backed into a corner and cowered. If he'd had any doubt about who she was, that proved it. Tamsin would already have torn him apart, especially in his present condition.

He kneeled over her and grabbed her by the hair. He wanted to kill her, but he needed information first. "Who are you? What's going on?"

He suddenly felt an overwhelming wave of dizziness and fell to the floor. All the pieces suddenly came together.

Drugs. They're giving me drugs.

He heard voices in the distance.

"What went wrong?"

"I don't know. The stats we have on her must be wrong in some way."

"We've touched a nerve somehow. We should use her again."

Jaysen remembered everything Chas had ever told them about government interrogation. "Don't think they can't break you, because they will. They'll use anything they can to get a hold on you. Start telling lies right away. That way, when you get to the truth, they won't believe you." As he fell back into unconsciousness, he kept repeating in his mind *Don't think they can't break you, because they will…*

And don't trust Tamsin. Don't trust Tamsin. Don't trust Tamsin... □

*Since her last story was published in Quanta (*Waiting for the Night Boat, *December 1992) Nicole has been laid off, unemployed, and finally got a new job as a graphic designer. She's still working at getting a body like Linda Hamilton's in her spare time. Please contact her if you know anyone who does psychic healings for automobiles. It can't be any more expensive than her recent car repairs have been. Nicole recently achieved her life-long goal of collecting all six* Jurassic Park *cups.*

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Days in the Machine

Chaim Bertman

I MOVED TO THE MACHINE BECAUSE I was moved by its animal assertion and ruthlessness, its conscienceless grace, and its mean, clever, stupid noise of being.

The machine has nerves and therefore disturbances; it has skin, hair, flesh, hunger, the other things; and its blood flows when it is cut. It sleeps and sometimes cries like an infant; it has a mother and a father; it has bones and it can break an arm; it has legs and kidneys, a liver, and all of the minor organs. The machine has a nice face, dark eyes with deep lines from grinning, a kind enough, pouty mouth, thick, clumsy, warm fingers, all of these kinds of things.

The machine has blood that pumps through its organs; it has a center, but no heart. And if one looks closely, it is clear that it has a mouth but no lips; it has a bladder and intestines, etc., but it can do away with any of these parts; it has animal calculations but not necessarily a mind; its skin and hair lie loosely on its surface, and like the damp moss coating coastal rocks, they are torn easily from the corpus; it respirates, but even its respirations are not vital. The machine emits a sweet, pungent smell particular to it. It is a moist amalgamation, made up of the skins and flesh of countless animals, insects, fish and birds. It has a center, but one that is arbitrary and ever-changing. It has center and a form, but no boundaries, as far as I can tell. I moved to the machine, because it was almost an animal, a beautiful, hilarious creature, cruel and fast. But whatever bestial in the machine caught sick and quickly died, and I soon found myself living in the droning, complaining machine of gears and work.

I moved to the machine because I guessed that the Tower of Babel was not a myth. I moved there to witness the end of days, to see and to know a different kind of dirt. I moved to the machine to see my country have a heart attack.

I moved to the machine because I guessed that the Tower of Babel was not a myth. I moved there to witness the end of days, to see and to know a different kind of dirt. I moved to the machine to see my country have a heart attack.

At first, things were lively and careless. We danced almost until dawn in basement bedrooms and music lofts; we gorged upon cheap clams on the boardwalk and sickened on them happily and without complaints. We often stayed up the night talking, my friends and I, in a tiny, poorly lit cafe with narrow walls and a floor as filthy as an ashtray. The machine was freewheeling and wild in those days. People were doing it on the trains after hours, there was constant, miserable, and abandoned lovemaking going on underneath the tracks, in the coal cellars, under the streetlamps' orange glow past midnight. There was revolution on everybody's mind, like water on the brain. It seemed to everyone that only the most elemental things were worth preserving. It meant nothing to see a man shot in the face outside the three-flat. We spoke about freedom and justice, then changed the subject quickly, ashamed of our own cynicism and tired, dour tongues.

Sometime during that first Winter, I found I hadn't moved for weeks. I had been sitting at the window, as the snow rose and the streets turned white, the cars no longer rolling by; sitting, without sleeping, for weeks, no eating, skin and bones. The lightening storms of December took on a man-made glow. Thunder roared indistinguishably from the rumbling and whistling tumbling of the trains, always trains outside. The machine was alive and electrified with death, ceaselessness, agony and lead poisoning. People began to say that Nero had come back to life, and he was ready to raze the machine to the ground, to twist and crack its springs and stop up its gears with torn up human flesh; that Nero came back again and he liked to play the electric guitar through a hundred amp machine.

Birds came to the machine, but only the thickest, most bloated, crawing scavengers stayed more than a hungry week or two. Starved rats and trashy back alley animals battled over crumbs. The ravaged, bug-eaten remains of cockroaches and beetles ended up on every counter and floor. Beneath the Earth, according to the Almanac, most of the animal life resided; and there, in the dark earth, confused and completely blind, these creatures lived short, nervous years; and many generations of creatures passed beneath the city in the lifetime of a single human being, generations knowing nothing but the ever-pounding and turning sounds of the machine above the Earth.

At the time, I myself lived in the basement of the Greyhound Bus Depot. I knew a man named Claytar who lived underneath the Police Station—and he hated cops. There were pigeons everywhere in these low dwellings; the floors flooded daily, and strangers tried to break in several times a month.

There was nothing going on at all. No one worked and we were all sick. The man named Claytar kept us alive with his beautiful voice and his songs about all of this. He never smiled and he made no promises. He had lost two fingers on his left hand, but despite this he had mastered the five string guitar. We sat at his feet and knew he knew something. He knew it and knew it and strummed it on the sidewalk:

"What did you have, my darling true, what did you have when you were there?
"We had nothing, and nothing, and nothing but rocks...
"You had rocks, my one true love? You had rocks? We dreamed of rocks...
"You had dreams? We murdered for dreams."

Claytar spoke about coming to the machine:

"I came to the machine with a guitar on my back. The minute I got off the train, 'started to walk; looking around to find out where I was, and a police car saw me and he slowed down. Now, I had no case to carry this guitar and I wasn't wearing nothing fancy to make it seem like I could own me such a fine instrument; 'cause this guitar was studded with rhinestone inlays, and the frets and knobs were fresh polished, shining like the belly of a rotted oyster. But come

on, man! They slowed down 'cause I was carrying a guitar? The car went around the corner and ditched me, me and my guitar, but they circled the block back around.

"There was two 'a them and the young one starts combing back his sandy brown curls. He rolls down the windows real cool and slumberly.

" 'Is that yer guitar?' he asks.

The other one is off staring straight ahead, like a dead herd of oxen.

" 'Yeah, sure is,' I said, though actually it's my brother's.

" 'You play it?'

" 'Of course...'

" 'Well, would ya play something for us then?'

"Now, at this point I was deeply offended.

" 'What?' I ask him, 'You think I stole it?'

" 'No, no,' said the young cop laughing, chewing and cracking gum, still combing back his sandy locks. 'I used to play the guitar in high school. I just wanna hear you.'

"I don't know if it was a request or a demand. But I played as badly as I could, just hitting the strings around, jumping up and down the frets, all out of order. I tried to make it as unclear as possible, whether or not I'd ever touched a guitar before. They've got to know that a guy doesn't legally have to know how to play the guitar that good.

"After banging around a few seconds, I stopped playing, saying, 'I don't write lyrics, you see, just melodies.' I went back to the atonal strumming. When I finished, the cop nodded his head, 'said, 'Tasty guy, tasty! Thanks...' He and his tombstone-faced partner shoved on up the street."

Claytar never ate and he didn't drink water, and in this way he escaped the poisons that have made cripples of the rest of us. Still, he did go blind in his left eye and he caught a wet cough that stuck with him and became part of him. He lost track of time; and he lost his balance, so he couldn't stand up. He spoke and we listened, but he began to speak only in generalities:

"Living in the machine is like losing your sense of humor. Not seasons, but the changing complaints mark time; time, the enemy. Living in the machine is like losing your mind. Ears are stuffed with human voices, mouths gorge on human nonsense, human forms, humans smelling humans—therefore, there is no escape from imitation. The machine is fully human inside. Humans living too close to humans, knowing nothing else, human upon human, they become cannibals or excrement-eaters or humanist critics. Photographs, automobiles, movie houses—ask a dying person if they want to be remembered that way, as a stereotype, as something that can be extracted, abstracted and duplicated, an Earthly spirit trapped as a fleshy gear in the works of the machine. The most complicated tragedy of fate is not recognized; just its utensils and paraphernalia are noted, its bottles in a paper bag, its criminal sneers and fake gestures, Oedipus at Colonus drunk, staggering in a dumpster-diving lunatic freakout. There is nothing unique in the sound of a human voice, as heard through the machine. Only higher volume and discord distinguish one instrument from another in this bastard orchestra. Living in the machine is like having your wallet stolen."

I started to write down Claytar's words in the Spring. He took it badly and screamed out something about the oral tradition, saying, "What about the death of the written word?"

"It'll come back," I said.

Claytar was shot in the head on Easter Sunday, and I lost my faith.

Claytar had screamed, "What about the raging libraries—for three hundred years, we could stand to stop writing and relearn to read."

"But what about medical technology," someone surfaced saying.

"Yeah, and what about the changing of the human head?"

Claytar mumbled something bitterly: "Soon the human race will have two stomachs and no heart. One day, the human creature will lose its hands. Then they shall invent history. The Tower was completed at Babel—what do you think this is?"

Palsied with anger, Claytar twisted and seemed ready to spit. I put down my pencil and he smiled. Let it permeate your bones, I told myself. Let Claytar be alive, and tell it when he ain't. Claytar stopped trembling long enough to tell us about Winter and love and about being alone in it, singing us a blue song:

Nobody ever tells you all the things you really want:
Hog jelly, a dusty rifle, rifling around for these things after its dark.

No Casanova, no monkey girl, will ever steal these things from my heart:
My motorcycle, my toothy dingo, the broken window in my cold three flat.

Nobody will ever sell you anything you really want...
No Spanish Honkey, no Mandingo, no nobody, ever tells you truely—to your face at least.

After Claytar was shot, there wasn't much to say. We all pretty much broke up. I spent the days, unemployed, cross-eyed, wandering through the machine. The machine buzzed along hovering above me, speaking to me softly; it tried to take me in, string me along, but I refused to listen. Women and men are born and die in the machine, the machine eats their lives and their labor. I wouldn't mind so much if it didn't hum so constantly, clear its throat disgustingly, whistle like a drunkard or a postman, and go on like that.

I entered the machine of my own volition, and it occurred to me finally to leave it that simply. So I took a walk, trying to find the edge of the machine. After many years of rambling, it occurred to me what could never be proven, merely intuited: That the machine was a globe without a center and without boundary; I found its parts, metal clutches and windings, wooden handles, concrete and glass floorboards; but I never found a single part without which it simply could not operate, and try as I might, I could not discover the whereabouts of its edges.

I began my exit. I left behind the city and towns, the farms, and eventually all traces of humanity, but the Machine continued. I encountered limitless forms within the machine, all suspended in a medium at times gaseous, at times liquid or solid, at times something quite different. I wept and punched my face and tore at my clothes—why did I ever come to the machine? I stamped the exasperated ground, secretly hoping that it would open up like a face and devour me. The machine proved more clever and heartless than I could have imagined. It has permeated me, undetectable to the eye, but so thoroughly that I too no longer have a heart, just a center; and my own blood and bones are temporary and almost useless; and I can be destroyed in part but not in whole, bent but not ruined, even under a surgeon's cold scalpel, even pinched by the thumb and forefinger of death, even mixed up with the acids of creation in the boundless stomach of God, even in the cruel, unceasing logic of the Machine. □

The Harrison Chapters

Chapter 14

Jim Vassilakos

MIKE WATCHED FROM THE platform deck as emergency crews advanced in teams, quenching the burning blaze. Magor had done a thorough job with his air strike, taking out not just one ship but two. That left fifteen unscathed; he'd probably get a medal for precision.

From the Louise they'd pulled out fragments of at least three bodies. Fortunately, the other craft had been empty with not so much as a goldfish on board, at least according to starport records. Despite its crew's luck, however, Mike was sure they'd have a few choice words for the General. He'd be a caldron of hot water, and so far, he had nothing to show for it.

Johanes was still busy chewing the bull with a pair of inspectors while Korina sat quietly beside a burnt piece of fuselage, her long, dark hair obscuring the left side of her face as her cheek and forehead glistened crimson against the fiery blaze. Mike walked over, doffing his helmet, his knees still wobbly from the senseless destruction. She stared directly at them, but didn't otherwise acknowledge his presence. Above, the stars seemed to fade as the billowing clouds of smoke settled amongst the black of night.

"You're trying to sense for Sule, aren't you?"

She blinked and looked up. Mike sat down beside her, the cold, damp air layering a blanket of chill along his jacks.

"And you're not finding anything."

Kori looked down at the cement pavement.

"For a moment...." she struggled to find the words, her eyes narrowing into thin slits. "I thought I'd felt her laughter." She smiled, probably at how stupid it sounded. "I guess I just feel cheated. I wanted to kill her myself."

She stared back at him through the flickering, smoky light, uncertainty clouding her green eyes, and Mike gave her his thought, if only for the humor's sake. She smiled, then tittered at the edge of the joke, and then frowned again.

"Yes, Mr. Harrison. She was capable of laughter. But it wasn't the kind of laughter you or I know. I'd first felt it when she kicked Erestyl's burnt corpse into my father's moat. It was the sort of victory laugh that has nothing to do with anything anyone normal would call funny."

"Are you sure you felt it... here?"

She stared into the flames, but wouldn't answer. She didn't need to. Mike stood up, sliding his helmet back on.

"Keep trying."

Johanes, having finished with the inspectors, was busying himself by nosing around the ship's shattered cargo hold. He picked up a piece of smoking meat, smelling it and finally taking a bite.

"Devouring the evidence?"

"Quagga liver. This stuff is great. You ever try it?"

Mike shrugged, "My dad used to love it. What did you find out?"

"There were supposedly two crew members on board when it happened. That makes four corpses, one unaccounted for. You thinking what I'm thinking?"

"This place is a mess, Jo. Three may not even be the correct body count."

"Don't kid yourself. I'm a professional, alright? Three is correct." He handed Mike an automatic pistol.

"Where'd you get this?"

"It was on the floor. Check out the clip."

Mike opened it up.

"Fourteen of fifteen isn't bad."

"Only the difference between life and death, or being healthy versus feeling like slog shit." He smiled.

"Why would she leave it behind."

"Exactly. I don't think it's her's at all. But somebody did fire it for one reason or another. This here may be the reason." Johanes pointed toward a small, metallic, gold-tipped cylinder, still gleaming in the light of the flames. "Look familiar?"

Mike leaned over to grab it.

"Don't, Michael. Look at it. Does it look like it went through an explosion?"

"No."

"Which means that it's probably a little going-away present. For us to go away. Permanently. You understand? I had the worst time steering the fire crew clear of it when they came in here, so I'll be damned if you set it off."

"You sure you're not just being paranoid?"

Johanes smiled, "Just because you're paranoid, Michael, doesn't mean they aren't really out to get you."

Johanes kept poking around, chewing quagga liver, hoping to find some shred of evidence to prove himself wrong. Not too far away, Gardansa was talking on a portable phone.

"You say to them that their petition is under consideration, however, if they violate our airspace, they will face the consequences of their trespasses. That is all."

He hung-up, wiping his forehead with the back of his sleeve, and Mike put a hand on his shoulder.

"What's going on, General?"

"Trouble."

"Of what nature?"

"Of an Imperial nature. Commodore Reece sends her malevolent tidings, a delegation of inspectors to assess the damage."

"So what's the problem?"

"They will be accompanied by the Crimson Queen's escorts to ensure interstellar peace and the sanctity of Imperial property."

He added a flowery emphasis to the last part. If Xekhasmeno was Imperial property, then the starport was even more so. The planetary government's treaty with the Empire made that point abundantly clear. It was the very reason the city was under siege, and it was also the reason the Imps would float a dozen armored gunships over the starport, regardless of airspace.

"...Michael. Look at it. Does it look like it went through an explosion?"

"No."

"Which means that it's probably a little going-away present. For us to go away. Permanently."

"How long do we have?"

"A centim. Two perhaps." Gardansa shrugged, "I hope we have finished our work here."

"You're going to back down?"

"I have no choice. They know, and I know it. The situation is, in short, frightfully plain."

"Then we've achieved nothing."

"Can you prove that?"

"No, but I'm working on it."

"Do it, and I will destroy every vessel on this platform just to be done with her."

Mike blinked, "I take it you've met Sule?"

"She visited me before you arrived three days ago. Told me that ISIS would be watching, and that if I didn't cooperate, she would emasculate me and have my testes for breakfast."

"So it was love at first sight."

"Hardly."

"Admiration perhaps?"

He sighed, "Admiration and love are two distinct creatures, sometimes confused, occasionally compatible, but otherwise the one has absolutely nothing to do with the other. No my friend. It was something more akin to dread and dishonor mixed together with a touch of avarice, the sort of complementary qualities a man can sink his teeth into."

"She made you an offer."

"She made me betray you, or at least I chose to."

Mike smiled, though Gardansa could not see it through the helmet's face plate.

"You'd better get inside, lest Sule make good her promise."

"She is dead."

"She wants air cover so she can get out of here."

"You are hallucinating, my friend."

"Just do me a favor."

Gardansa laughed, turning around, "What is it now? Shall we scorch the entire platform on a gatherer's hunch?"

"That's not a bad idea."

"And start a war in the process, not to mention putting my neck on the chopping block? No, I think not."

"Just do a ship by ship search and try to hold off the Imps as long as you can. That's all I'm asking."

"There are fifteen vessels here. What you propose will eat more time than we are served."

"What do we have to lose by trying?"

Gardansa shifted away, making a guttural sound somewhere between annoyance and acceptance. Mike had to smile. He knew he would get his way. It was easier for the General to give in than to sift among hypothetical arguments, and Gardansa was basically a lazy person.

Mike started to pace the vessel's circumference, watching the work crews extinguish the last of the flames. One of Gardansa's officers stood among them, pulling groups of two off the work at hand and pointing them toward the other vessels. Several meters away, Korina stood upright in the smoke veiled darkness. With the light intensification, she looked almost ethereal, walking toward Mike through the patchy, grey mist.

"So what's the verdict?"

Mike sighed, "Well . . . you still feel cheated?"

"Sule's alive then."

"Probably. Can you track at all?"

Kori shook her head, "I'm a telepath. I get in people's heads."

"Can you read impressions from non-animates?"

She nodded, "Most psyches can somewhat."

"A friend of mine once honed her ability to the extreme by wandering around my house, picking up my things, and scolding me for whatever was going through my mind when I last handled them."

"I'm not that good."

"Considering who your parents are, one would tend to think otherwise."

"I'm not that practiced."

"We'll see. C'mon."

Johanes was still poking around the deck, a piece of quagga liver in one hand and a short, metal rod in the other. Kori regarded him with a mixture of apprehension and curiosity.

"What are you doing?"

"Trying to find the bullet."

"What's he talking about?"

Mike showed her the clip.

"Jo, I'd like Korina to take a look at Sule's going-away present."

"Why?"

"To glean some impressions off it."

"That means touching, doesn't it?"

"Yeah."

"She moves it a centimeter and we could all be organ donors."

"You can stand back if you want."

Johanes sighed and stepped back about a dozen meters.

"Why take chances?" he grinned, lengthening the distance a little further.

Korina didn't look amused.

"I take it this is going to be dangerous?"

Mike shrugged, "Crossing the street is dangerous. Breathing smog is dangerous. This... this is a cakewalk."

She rested her pinky against it, closing her eyes for a long moment during which Mike remained frozen still, all except for his knees. They jiggled back and forth, barely supporting his weight.

Kori looked up, "She feels very dumb."

"So do I," Mike added. "Why don't you take your hand away from it now?"

"One moment."

Kori didn't close her eyes this time. Instead, she just let them become enveloped by that glassy sort of gaze Mike was growing used to.

"Pain."

Kori withdrew her hand, and Mike let the breath out of his lungs in one, steady withdrawal.

"That's it?"

"Her pain was the strongest thing there. Once I found it, there was no point in continuing. It will mask or distort everything beneath it."

"What kind of pain?"

She reached out, and almost without thinking, Mike placed the automatic into her hands. Johanes was back, a smug look on his face.

"Where's the boom?"

"Your hypothesis about the gun is amassing evidence."

"Of what sort?"

They both looked toward Kori. She handed it back, uncertain.

"It's too polluted. Like I said, I am not as good as your friend, Mr. Harrison."

"Well, we shouldn't have handled it. Jo, quiz time. Where do you go on a ship when you're hurt?"

"Medical Bay."

"There is none."

"Ship's locker."

"Where would that be?"

"In front of the airlock, most likely."

Considering a missile had slammed into the ship, the locker was remarkably intact.

"What a mess."

"Well, at least we won't need a key to open it."

They began shoveling through its contents, most of them burnt or foam covered,

scattered in front of the open iris valve. There were vacc suits, communicators, canned rations, and even a few weapons, all standard fare for an independent freighter. There were even medical supplies.

"Oh my... look what we have here."

Mike looked over Johanes' shoulder. The gauze towel was stained a deep red where it wasn't carbonized.

"Looks like somebody didn't want to bleed all over the pavement. Kori?"

"Can I move this one?"

"Be my guest."

She took it in both hand, closing her eyes.

"Lots of pain."

"Get past it."

A look of concentration fell across her features.

"There's too much."

"You're trying too hard. I've seen Kitara... that's the friend I was telling you about... at first she used to do what your doing, and it never worked. Just relax and let it come."

Kori, though drained and disheartened, looked somewhat amused. "I am the psyche here, Mr. Harrison."

"Just try what I'm saying, okay?"

She closed her eyes again, this time wandering amidst the pain without fighting it. Somewhere in the corner of her mind, she felt the worry and strain of failure engulfing her. It was like a wave, drowning away all hope.

"I can't..."

"Yes you can."

"...need help... Reece." She re-opened her eyes, seeming weary and withdrawn. Confusion cluttered her green eyes.

"Who's Reece?"

Johanes answered as he continued sifting through the articles on the deck. "She's the Imperial Commodore on the Crimson Queen. It arrived in-system two days ago. I'm sure you've both heard of it."

Mike nodded, "She just sent a message to General Gardansa. They're bringing in a team of Imperial inspectors, along with the Crimson's defensive force."

"You didn't think to mention this to me before?" Beneath the overcoat, he was still wearing a Draconian insignia. Mike realized that his own was even more blatant.

"Sule must have reached her. Could any of these communicators have talked to orbiting craft?"

"Uh, this one."

He reached for one which was so large it came complete with a back harness. Mike held him back before he touched it, motioning Kori forward. She looked bushed.

"You're kidding, right?"

"You want to find Sule or not? Just give it a shot."

She took a deep breath, grabbing the harness in both hands. Immediately she felt the pain, and underneath it the hopelessness and anger. But there was more, something she couldn't reach. Kori looked up, exhausted.

"I can't."

"We're putting you through a workout, aren't we?"

"I was close to something. I'm just not trained for this."

"C'mon," Mike lifted her up by her shoulders. "It's more likely that she would have made the transmission outside. She wouldn't want a bulkhead blocking the signal for one thing."

"And it's not in a burning freighter for another," Johanes added.

"The surface emotions are too strong anyway."

"We're just asking you to try, okay?"

She sighed, holding it again as they stepped outside. She could feel them depending on her. And yet there was more, Sule's dependence on her people, her need to find someplace to hide. Kori considered each in turn. They were both obvious facts and thus constituted potential figments of imagination. If she could not get below her own prejudices, how could she hope to discriminate Sule's? Kori stared at the various vessels, trying to imagine them as Sule might have seen them, without the emergency workers knocking on doors, brandishing firearms. They would be better off with someone else, someone neutral and non- emersed. All she could concentrate on was her exhaustion. Her anger and desire for revenge could no longer contain it.

"C'mon, Korina. You're not even trying."

She stared upward toward Mike, but instead of seeing him, all she could see was a huge ball of fire where the ship had been, it's flames engulfing her, searing her skin as she rolled on the ground in agony. For a long moment, she couldn't breathe, and then she felt hands on her, pulling her gently toward the sky.

"Kori! Come out of it!"

"Wha..."

"Put her down, Mike."

Mike complied, though he wasn't sure why, and as though in a trance, she crawled back to the communicator, grabbing the receptor in a crouched position.

"Who the hell are you?!"

Several of the guards turned, distracted by her tone if not the content which only a few could understand."

"...get off planet... alive."

She then crawled back toward the ship, tossing the communicator back into the pile where they had found it and began searching her pockets in obvious anger. Johanes handed her a lightpen, which she threw into the ship's hold through the airlock. Around her, Kori saw nothing of the audience she had attracted. She knew only the fire, burning her hands and legs as she stumbled, half-crawling from the blaze.

"Kill you... Harrison."

Mike stepped back as she staggered toward the far end of the deck, clawing in vain at one of the vessel's airlocks and fumbling open the outer comm-unit, the ship's doorbell, in effect. Johanes stopped her from opening a channel, pulling her back and dropping her soundly on the cement. Mike picked her back up, dragging her several meters from the congregation that had now formed.

"Kori... come out of it."

"I'm sorry... I can't do it."

"You did do it."

But she couldn't hear him. Nor could she hear the crowd of soldiers lined up outside the ship, nor Gardansa telling Mike how he always picked the craziest women, nor even the Imperial gunships screaming overhead. Her world was a haze of smoke and fire and illusory burns, powdered wet by an icy veil of morning mist.

"No! Hold fire!" Johanes held his hand up against the anticipated spray of bullets, as though his flesh and bone would constitute a serious deterrent.

"This is an airlock! We need something big! You!"

He pointed toward the adjacent ship. One of the crew was peeking out the dorsal hatch to see what all the commotion was about.

"Who, me?"

"Fire your aft laser turret at this door!"

"What?! Are you crazy?!"

"Do it!"

"I'm not even a gunner!"

"Harrison, take over!"

Mike felt his heart drop down to his stomach as Johanes darted toward the adjacent ship. Immediately, all the solders spread out, and Mike felt the ground rumble as the vessel warmed up its engines.

"Jo, she's gonna bolt!"

"Just grab something and hang on!"

The vessel slowly lifted itself off the ground, a thin row of hand holds convenient for zero-gee repairs extending from the airlock down along its ventral surface. Mike leapt forward and grabbed one, feeling all vestiges of sanity slowly slip away as the vessel ascended further, hovering several meters off the platform with a considerable roar while leaving his body dangling beneath, like a bug about to be squashed.

He had to avert his eyes as the crisp beam of laser light cut a jagged hoop in the airlock's outer door. In its wake, it left a black ring of molten slag, and more out of desperation than design, he felt himself crawl toward it, pounding open the smoking circlet and sending it crumbling inward as a pile of gutted scrap metal. Below, the emergency personnel steadily shrunk to the size of toy soldiers, and Mike clawed his way inside, the deck shaking like a earthquake, sending him rolling against the inner door. Only its window had been fully serrated by the laser, and the opening mechanism refused to respond even to the coercion of an automatic pistol.

Mike reached through the window, recklessly clawing for any knob or button that would open it from the other side. He finally found the appropriate switch at the very end of his reach and nearly took his own arm off as the door slid open, the window's compartment disappearing into the bulkhead. Then the vessel lurched from some impact, throwing him forward and into the deck, and for several moments all he could hear was a deafening thunder. When he opened his eyes, the sky was as bright as day, and he found himself draped over the corpse of a woman, her bruised neck twisted almost completely around to the point where her spine had been severed. Mike rolled off her, the sky darkening as the airlock door closed behind him and several nozzles on the ceiling began emitting a grayish fog.

Through the helmet's face plate, he could see a patch of red Galanglic blinking in the upper-left corner of his field of vision. "Contaminant detected. Switching to internal oxygen supply." The next several breaths felt strange, producing a tingling sensation in his hands and feet. He sat down and consciously slowed his respiration. Meanwhile, the fog began to thin out, flowing through the air lock's shattered window and into the cold, dark night. As the moon rotated from view, Mike could barely make out the walls or the floor, even with the light intensification the helmet provided.

Mike waited a minute, letting his eyes adjust. More medical supplies were scattered on the floor, and in the dim hallway he could barely make out the aperture to the ship's locker. It's latch was broken, and he slid the opening manually. Two vacc suits rested on the floor, their rack broken, and a pile of seal-it patches lay scattered about beneath. Mike grabbed a handful, bumping his helmet into something solid. He yanked out the offending piece of equipment to get a better look. It was a power pack, its thin black cord anchored somewhere within the gloomy confines of the locker.

He reached back inside, pulling out a laser carbine. It's metal barrel glinted dimly in the icy starlight, and Mike donned the power pack over his shoulder, switching the weapon to "ready" mode and pulling off its safety guard. He then crouched down, slowly inching his way down the corridor. It was crossed by another, and Mike peeked left, toward the prow. The new corridor terminated with an iris value, and Mike guess it led to the bridge, to Sule. The door would be locked, and he was holding its key.

Mike positioned himself on his knees directly in front of the door and leveled the carbine to begin sawing. The valve's metal frame seemed ever more sturdy than the airlock, its numerous, interlocking layers refusing to yield against the laser light which was emitted from the barrel in short pulses rather than a steady stream. Another minute or two passed, the carbine's power running low, and his only consolation as gravity began to disappear was that he didn't have to worry about a kinetic kick each time he fired.

He stopped, looking for some power socket in the wall when the valve twirled open, Sule standing in the open aperture with a fully automatic rifle. She began firing before the door was even open, and Mike ducked down as the first several bullets whizzed frictionless and silent above his head, the next several impacting with the top of his helmet, his face plate, and his upper chest. He toppled backward, the numerous collisions tumbling him down the corridor end over end while he watched his own blood seep into the vacuum in the form of little red bubbles, floating freely in the cold, breathless corridor.

He fought the rushing noise in his head, pulling the seal-it patches out of his pocket and tearing them one by one off their spines while placing them all over the fleximesh and the side of his helmet. The liquid adhesive hardened in moments, and in less than a minute, he could feel the pure oxygen rushing into his lungs, his hands tingling with excitement as the corridor seemed to swirl this way and that. He pushed off, with a grunt, floating himself back toward the bridge. Sule was no longer in the corridor, and the open iris valve beckoned him to enter.

Peeking inside, he half-expected to see her at the controls, as if nothing had happened. Instead, he saw her writhing in the corner of the room, a virtual pool with hundreds of little red bubbles floating about the room. They continued to flow in a steady stream from her arm, and Mike could see her desperately trying to cover the burnt hole with her other hand. She didn't have any patches, and as she looked toward him, she seemed to scream, soundless waves of anger stealing the last of her breath until she finally succumbed to the frigid vacuum.

Mike continued to watch, floating without momentum, as a small red spec drifted in front of one eye. It was from inside the helmet, his own blood, and he knew he had no way of binding the wound. Slowly, the cold began to wash over him, and he shivered silently in his private abode. The ship was his, such as it was. For all he knew, it would stay that way forever. □

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'The Harrison Chapters' will be continued next issue.

Four Hundred Years of Domingo

A.Y. Tanaka

AS MOST OF OUR READERS have already reminded us, this year marks the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Joe Domingo's epic poem, The Preparation of the Mining Planets*, one of the highlights of Outer World literature. The author of this month's guest essay is Professor of Literature and Humanities at Ganymede University and senior editor of the thirteen-pack Bibliography of Domingo Studies.*

Unlike most works of Outer World literature, notice and appreciation of The Preparation of the Mining Planets, based on the poet's Brigade experiences, began almost immediately upon publication. That the epic quickly found a strong and friendly reception is reflected in the work of Domingo's younger contemporaries, the poets and dramatists of the so-called Generation of '098:

In *Pygmalion's Brood* by Sarton, the young esthete cries, "Oh, to have Domingo's balls, and stride, clanking, onto an alien planet." The old uncle later asks, "How can I wax comfortable when Joe Domingo calls?'

In Milgrom's *Thy Brother's Captor*, the landlord threatens the rent strikers: "I'll call in Domingo and his crew and he'll *prepare* you as he did those planets." To which the strikers reply, "Ah, but Domingo shares our grit and crib. If one's to be *prepared*, 'tis you, Goldark. Be *prepared*, then, to be *pre-Pared*."

In *The Quaestor* by Sienkowicz, the not-so-mad geographer reveals his treasure: "Ah, look here, young thane. Salvaged, have I, these three – the *Preparation*, the *Outworlder*, the *Fleets of Kairos* – the best ever composed in our garbled tongues, the jewels right priceless of our people."

"Ah, look here, young thane. Salvaged, have I, these three – the *Preparation*, the *Outworlder*, the *Fleets of Kairos* – the best ever composed in our garbled tongues, the jewels right priceless of our people."

Garth de Vega in *Blood Tribute* says of his Domingo-like protagonist, "He retrieved for Earth the pearls we thought we'd wasted."

The plastic arts of that Generation offer even greater testimony. Helion's massive free-standing "Orthos" in Haymarket Square on Phoebos won the Credo/Humanitas award three years running – a first for that medium. The neo-Classical "J.D. Accepting the Victory Flowers at Buzzard's Hill" (inspired by canto 14, stanza 32) by an anonymous committee of art students, still stands at the entrance to Delacroix Hall at the College of Ceres and Tethys.

Malan's "Rhodes Passing the Torch" stood for years at the Teynesian museum but has been moved, under pressure from the Nova movement, to the garden of the Mercantile on Miranda. Aspiring actors have long made the pilgrimage to the museum, and now to the garden, to study the subtle play of emotion on the face of the Rhodes figure. Is that joy we see? Or jealousy? Or anger? Or remorse?

Reynaud's "Execution of the One Called the Desert Monster" (inspired by 19:65-87) in the public library of Thanatos-in-the-Valley, is frequently visited by xenologists and historians for whatever clues it may provide to the aliens' way of life.

A triumph of the neo-Romantic school, yet owing much to the sculptor's Sino-Hellenic background, is Chrysostum's "Young Sir at the Fortress" (inspired by 19:14-24) which for decades moved the young to strip bare and throw themselves at the statue's base. Sadly, it rests now in the provincial vault at Scone.

The professional literary critics held aloof. Those taste-makers of the time, defenders and beneficiaries of the codes of presentation, feared ruining their image as cool sophisticates. Off camera, they enjoyed and valued the Preparation but spoke of it only in flashes: "Interesting ... More or less worthy of attention ... Appears perhaps engrossing ... Makes one feel good ... Revenge against dullness ... There is spirit here ... I find no fault ... One might, in one's spare time, consider this ..."

Listening to them now, they sound like snippets from fuller essays and critical reviews, but these short phrases were the reviews themselves, tossed off casually in personal communications or mentioned in passing in the middle of an article on an unrelated subject. It smacked of danger, or so those tender souls imagined, to challenge too vigorously the dictum that nothing of merit could come from the Outer Worlds. It was their dictum, and theirs to modify.

In his posthumous *Dragons of Io* the converted critic Pinella says, "The mining planets would be dead now were it not for the creative fire of Domingo." "A strange evaluation," says Roehn, "considering the devastation Domingo left behind." Llolf adds, however: "I suspect Pinella meant (given the vagaries of the Tongue) that our memories of those planets as historic – not merely geologic, economic, astronomic – entities would be 'dead' now were it not for the creative fire of Domingo. For only in verse was his fire creative."

Hovic's brief eulogy for Domingo at the federation's memorial service has mesmerized and been memorized by generations of schoolchildren: "He was the first, perhaps the last, to stand and speak so well of us." Hovic later remarked to friends, "He sure beats Torqua," a reference to the leading ("*lonq dead*," Hovic would interject) epic poet of the preceding age, the undaunted author of the heroic cycle that included *Orlando Inflamed*, *The Liberation of Mars*, and *Orlando Beyond*.

Adaptations for broadcast, recordings and live performance made Domingo rich as well as famous. Surprisingly unchallenged by the philosophical community was the series of sequels on the Ether-for-the-Millions network: *Preparation* II through VIII. Despite its elitist name, the network's ratings were consistently high. The set of programs is still available in home pad form and sells well despite the unfortunate with-

drawal by the Cromwell administration of *Preparation* IV, which deals with the relationship of J.D. and Salinch in detail considered much too graphic.

As often happened when an epic caught the popular fancy through print, tape, disk, sphere or broadcast (on some planets, by roving talkers) many a world saw folk ballads and other lyrics arise, based on the characters and episodes of the poem. *Extrapolata*, they are called in the Catalog; on the Outer Worlds they are known as *commentaries*. Even today, in some Exilarchates, a mellow patron will pinch a serving lad or wench and call, "Sing us a commentary, youth, for the ears are dry and sad."

For reasons analysts have yet to uncover, much commentary inspired by the *Preparation* re-tells it from the point of view of the aliens, giving *Preparation* extrapolata its plaintive tone. "Salinch's Lament," born of the episodes of canto 12, stanzas 7-67, is the most familiar, but worthy of a hearing are also "Who Dares Call Me a Monster?" (6:52), "Pray, Where Has My Flesh Gone?" (7:65),

"What Voice Calls Them From 'Neath the Sand?" (1:18), "The Great Wheels Roll" (4:87), as well as "None But I Remember," "The Cubs Were Happy Once," "The Smoke That Kills," and "The Hills are Gone," all based on the episodes of canto 19.

This process both confirms and refutes J/23, which holds that folk ballads are the surviving fragments of lost ancient epics. The implication is that the common people are too dense or too busy to create ballads and other lyrics, even love songs, on their own. That "Salinch's Lament" and the others derive from Domingo's epic (although it was a recent one) seems to support the theory. However, that the ballads are not surviving fragments but thoughtful reworkings of a still unfragmented epic suggests some common people are not too dense or too busy to create ballads and other lyrics, even love songs, on their own.

As also happened when an epic sold an immodest amount of copies, was continually re-broadcast by popular demand and was talked, and talked of, on many a planet, there appeared imitations; at best, attempted approximations. Among the works produced by LTs, intellectuals, warriors and administrators on various worlds, only a handful enjoyed more than a tired nod from critics and public. We pass over the *Cultivation of the Orchard Planets* (as well as the *Plucking* of the same), the *Shattering of the Granite Planets*, the *Awakening of the Sleeping Planets*, etc., with a kind word only for that clever parody of the whole epidemic, Lloy's *Milking of the Dairy Planets*. Sadly, Lloy's wit was not appreciated during her brief lifetime.

Although rushed and uncrafted, the most important of these imitations is *Miner's Planet, Briqadier's Blood* by Jardine. In his very first stanza he asks, "Who dares to speak beyond Domingo? Only those whose ears have heard the truth." Jardine offers nothing new about the nature, value or meaning of the expeditions; he merely changes the hero's name. In the *Preparation* it is "J.D." (by more than coincidence, also the initials of the poet). But in Jardine's version, the Domingo-character's "violent nature" and "warped, mistaken priorities" more than once jeopardize the mission of the Brigades in general and Group A (A-Corps) in particular. Only the courageous and cool-headed leadership of Lt. Ceniza saves the day and leads the Brigades to victory.

As we know, the Ceniza-character also appears in Domingo's poem, not by name, but as the "punk lieutenant," that incompetent officer whose mistaken attitudes toward the troops, the planets, the aliens and the principles of leadership more than once jeopardize the mission of the Brigades in general and A-Corps (Group A) in particular. As we now know, Jardine was, in real life, Ceniza's nephew.

Jardine and Ceniza shared many relatives – writers, critics, editors, professors of literature, librarians, broadcasters and publishers. Their cumulative influence permitted Jardine's epithets to enter the standard phrasebooks of Preparation critics and scholars. In addition to his "violent nature" Domingo was accused of "insubordination in the field," "lack of perspective" in his behavior as well as in his poetry, "unfortunate slippage" in his grasp of truth, and the 'perverse inability to understand and express the significance" of the events he narrates.

Some charges were mutual. "Lack of perspective," for example. Defending the actions of the Brigades in the episodes of canto 19, Domingo's comrade and biographer writes: "You must understand that the 'wild geese' on Chaco, unlike other forms of life, were biologically and spiritually incapable of conforming to the most fundamental standards of the human/alien relationship. Enlightened Treatment just did not work; it only encouraged their senseless attacks." Jardine's grandson replies, "But true Enlightened Treatment had never been tried. Governor Andros used the term to obscure his real policy, that of active oppression and indirect genocide, while diverting attention from his Commissary tapes. Understandably, the Chaqui had to defend themselves."

It was Verne, the chief literary authority of the next generation, who translated the *Preparation* into the Tongue, giving it a wider audience, and was the first to publish an edition bristling with notes. In his preface Verne praises the war speech of the Desert Monster, finding it utterly noble. "The speeches and character of the other leading aliens are "inspiring and realistic" and "almost human." He is 'aroused by Domingo's "spirit of patriotism ... [and] ... the concept of the tree of honor and glory, which, as J.D. so nobly expresses, we nourish with our bold deeds and the blood or comparable fluid of our enemies, the tree we leave behind to give shade to our tomb."

Some weak-hearted readers sighed at Domingo's, and Verne's, emphasis on that tree, for it seemed to obviate the need to store up so-called good deeds in the present life to sustain us in the next. Domingo's attitude implied the afterlife mattered little; what mattered more was the fame achieved in this one, that you lived on only in the memories of those who had known you and would tell others about you. Quiet, ostensibly constructive, activity did not bring the sort of fame Domingo and his fellows sought. Rather, it was the courting of danger, and the triumph, and the triumph's noise recorded. Plunder was not frowned upon if well-earned.

Despite his arousal, Verne regretfully gave a low rating to the work as a whole: "It lacks unity, purpose, creative inventiveness and, ultimately, grandeur." And elsewhere: "The poem is more savage than the worlds of which it treats."

"Words, words, words," comments Monten. "Our Verne, the progressive, the enlightened one, just couldn't bear to call the poem great. He had to steer a middle course between the Wimps and the Hawks. Since the Hawks were then in the Roost, he'd appear a self-degrading brown-noser were he to overly praise their favorite poet."

The edition of the *Preparation* generally held to be definitive is that prepared by Domingo's great-grandson, Javier C. Noriega, using the original battlefield tapes preserved in the cool vaults of the poet's wine cellar. Noriega's extensive introduction gives us new insights into Domingo as a human being and creative artist. The tapes help clear up some disputed areas of interpretation, such as whether "rooking the stalwarts" or "booking the recruits" is the correct reading in 2: 8, whether "lying to the tribe" or "spying on the Five" belongs in 8:13, whether "dun-colored landscape" or "dawn covered the landscape" is the intent in 2:11, whether the mysterious and suggestive "flower of life" that saves Corporal Saad in the wilderness (3:29-33) is rather the "dower(y) of life."

Myrnes concedes Noriega's edition surpasses all others before or since, even those claiming to be based on more complete battlefield and *apres-querre* tapes supposedly uncovered from time to time in one or another Domingo-frequented locale. "This excellence," explains Myrnes, "derives from Noriega's performance as a conscientious scholar as well as a loyal grandson. His edition, with its exhaustive notes and commentary, offers the complete armamentarium of traditional and modern scholarship, giving full weight to the insightful interpretations of the neo-Ganymede and deutero-Raphaelite schools [...] although perhaps without at times allowing for sufficiently imaginative and searching investigation of stylistic elements, such as, for example, a line-by-line, foot-by-foot, even phoneme-by-phoneme exegetical study of the established [i.e., the wine-cellar] text along the lines of Lauren Sterne's admittedly involved but uniquely innovative and revelatory meta-stylistic criticism."

Myrnes' proposal is suitable not so much for the analysis of the *Preparation* as for the analysis of the work of some of the *Preparation*'s scholarly critics.

It was Ash who first formally doubted the *Preparation* was rightly an epic: "It fails to meet certain rules; for example, *An epic shall relate the deeds of an idealized, larqer-than-life hero* (Soncino 362). In the *Preparation* there's no larger-than-life hero explicitly identified as such."

But that is wig-splitting; there is a hero, a normal-sized hero, a common soldier who does uncommon things. Although ordinarily the commander of Group A would be the one to hoist the Flourig, that commander unfortunately is the "punk lieutenant." The real hero, J.D., is always there to redeem the lieutenant, the Group, the Brigades, not by doing all the fighting – though he probably could if he had to – but by inspiring and leading the troops. Domingo, while not overly humble, shares the glory with the Corps. ("To spread the guilt," suggests Aymara.) But he is too modest to reveal himself through more than his initials. In this also he breaks precedent; in a tradition going back to the original *Daughter of Mars* cycle, initials had been used only to identify the villain.

Rhorta points out J.D. engages in some cunning, often humorous, stratagems – another trait of the traditional epic hero (Baris 13, Vaughan 806). One example is the ruse by which a herd of aliens on Iesi was allowed to capture a purposely abandoned sandroller primed to explode when the starter switch was thrown. That the "capturers" were a band of adventurous pups, not the seasoned warriors the pompous First Colonel had vehemently predicted, fulfills one of the most important comic requirements – the surprise deflation of a stuffed shirt.

Ash insists the rule specifies an *idealized* hero; that is, without vices. Cyrus answers: "Read on. A further rule [no citation] permits vices, but vices the hearers understand, if only in their subconscious. These vices must be larger-than-life (or minimal) to the extent the hero and his virtues are larger-than-life (or minimal). Consider J.D.'s gross mistreatment of Salinch. In civilized worlds such behavior is unthinkable, yet many among us long to perform those very acts upon each other and are unaware of that longing."

Wonath reminds us there *is* a central explicit hero, a collective hero: "The Brigades as a whole, operating in unity for a common purpose, to make the universe a better home for humankind." But Dolph suggests Wonath and his party are "victims of confused judgement. Military units don't feel, bleed and die; it's their individual members that feel, bleed and die. Any of ours who assaulted a Chaqui or Credenti stronghold – never mind how 'primitive' or 'defenseless' some now claim they were – or who defended our stations from the Desert Monster's unprovoked attacks, deserves recognition as a hero. The role of J.D., whoever he may be, is not to hog the camera, but to crystallize within himself the best qualities of his comrades."

Domingo's biographer cites a rule that seems to favor the poem's claim to epic status: *An epic shall relate the deeds of valiant heroes, magnanimous to their foes* (Mbona 848). To which Barcos, a noted Wimp, responds: "Valiant, perhaps, but magnanimous only in their insistence that they are magnanimous; magnanimous only if execution without excessive torture is magnanimous; magnanimous only if the destruction of entire civilizations with a 'sincere' apology is magnanimous."

The biographer quotes a further rule: *There shall be a foe worthy of the hero* (Portales 63). Barcos responds: "Depends what you mean by worthy."

The biographer cites a further rule: *The nobility of the foe shall be acknowledqed* (Sung 37). Barcos responds: "Ah, but you omit Sung's key word – 'ungrudgingly.' Domingo must have been terribly worried the foe would appear so noble the audience might not feel threatened enough to root for the hero or buy his book. It was a needless worry. For centuries, now that the coyote, the dingo and the pangriff are extinct, the insecure and marginally competent Terroid has been ever eager for something small enough to kick around, something big enough to get even with."

The biographer's point is well taken, though, in that there are scenes in the *Preparation* that do tend to acknowledge the foe's nobility, but the premise of the work would be undermined were this presented too forcefully. There is the execution of Xka and his pack, where Xka indignantly breaks air in the face of the laser bearer. In a similar episode the Desert Monster stares at the executioner for long moments and then, realizing, cries, "A woman! The Desert Monster shall not sully the conscience of an unborn child!" Domingo continues: "Then that noble Monster with claws well fashioned did tear his [own] innards out and died unshamed."

Delius, doing research at the Black Chamber, discovered the original scansion and rhyme scheme called for "heart" rather than "innards." He postulates "heart" would have inspired too much sympathy for the Monster.

The biographer cites a further rule: *The protaqonist must capture the imaqination and spark the enthusiasm of the reader/ auditor* (Dewi 693). Barcos responds:

"Depends on the reader/auditor."

Some claim the *Preparation* fails to meet the standards of the heroic epic in that it has no love interest, and little interaction between the male and female members of the Brigades; perhaps Domingo did not care to call attention to his own or others' activity in that area. The oddly-formed alien females were available every seventh week or so, but J.D.'s attitude was negative: "Any might have them in any of their parts, were any gross enough."

Despite this, J.D.'s own seduction of Salinch, the Desert Monster's daughter, is a key element of the poem. It also meets the epic standard (Plekhanov 328) requiring at least one of the love interests to be closely related to someone in authority on the enemy's side. It also meets the standard (Vaughan 806) requiring the hero to engage in clever stratagems: The sole purpose of the seduction, J.D. insists, is to gain her golden key and the secrets of the Monster's fort.

The rule bifurcates: *The love interest shall not seriously distract the hero from his/her goal* [see *Orlando Beyond*] unless the love interest him/herself is the goal [see *Orlando Inflamed*] (Kreshkhine 74). Domingo takes the first option by having J.D. execute Salinch: "She taught me great pleasure and thus taught me great sin; it was right she be punished."

Ryder declares this "Irresponsibility poorly disguised as Honor." Barcos: "One's reason is another's excuse."

Another rule states, *The hero shall at some point in the narrative engage in communication with the dead for aid, advice or inspiration to the extent, if necessary, of visiting the after/underworld in person* (Besant 236). This rule can be traced back to fragments of *Orpheus the Nazarene*, who smashes the gates of Plutarch's realm to rescue Father Abraham from the one-eyed Grendel.

The Preparation satisfies this rule. The shafts dug by the first humans on Credence qualify as underworld; into them J.D. descends to burn out the last refuges of the Credenti. The gray sandstone canyons of Eboli into which J.D. and his fog-sprayers descend for a like purpose, also satisfy the requirement. So does J.D.'s descent into the "multi-chambered, endlessly delightful" body of Salinch. His psychological descent into hell – that is, the entire relationship with Salinch, with its haunting (or hollow) guilt – also satisfies it.

Moody and introspective, J.D. has no close friends. Aware of this, Ash cites yet another rule: *The hero shall have two friends and both shall die* (Pindar 17). The first must have already died on the enemy's toe before the poem begins, to justify the mood of anger and intense resolution in which the reader finds the hero. The second must die in battle also, no more than two-thirds of the way into the narrative, to stoke the hero's anger and resolve against the foe. This second friend must be a former enemy, at least a rival, who became attached to the hero through admiration of his virtues, preferably after falling under his toe in physical or mental combat.

Some rules allow the first death to be that of a former lover. Others permit, or require, someone senior to the hero, a significant other of his formative years. The loss must be deeply felt, but not so deeply as to demoralize him; the effect is to encourage him to continue the great tradition the significant other represents. The second death, that of the converted friend (some rules permit a lover or a younger relative) must be so described as to emphasize the loss of the promise the life represents, to justify the call to vengeance. (See *Addenda Bellica* 36, *Addenda Poetica* 87.)

Ash cites another, the "Basic" Rule: *The epic shall be completely removed from everyday experience* (Hashomer 299). Quint and his school are not concerned about that. What impresses them is the basic realism of the *Preparation*. The primitive epics, Quint says, dealt with real heroes in real situations, merely enlarged and exaggerated to make the story come alive, which is to say, more real. He demonstrates how Domingo skips back millennia to the earliest unwritten version of the Basic Rule: *Make it fantastic, make it outrageous, make it impossible, but make it believable* (Apollonius 32).

Quint's influence on poets of his and a few succeeding generations was incalculable. His emphasis on believability and the flavor of realism led to an avalanche of epics based on news articles and reports in scientific journals. Braght even attempted an historical epic based on articles in the recently unearthed *Pravda*.

To C.M. Pidal the question of rules was not important: "Bear in mind that Dimon's *Asteroidians*, Sato's *Nouveaux Voyages* Synchroniques Merg's *Joviad* and *Saturniad*, and Torqua's famed *Orlandiad* – some of the epics used to set the standards the *Preparation* supposedly does not meet – were themselves imperfect imitations of something much older. When rules did serve a purpose was among the predawn bards who composed in their heads, and those were but the rules of survival. The bards faced the challenge of a society too busy fighting or working to take much time out for a long epic. They faced the challenge offered by other forms of entertainment – songs, dances, religious ceremonies, food, sex, conversation, public executions, and instrumental music as an end in itself rather than as a setting for the bard."

Consider, continues, Pidal, how Domingo or any other more-or-less modern epicist differs from the bards of the pre-dawn age. In 12:18 Domingo tells how "The Polthark came ready for battle, dripping with oil, swinging his wrench, spitting a Damniad, sweating a torrent, heavy with anger, paging for blood." A cogent, emphatic description, sufficient for its purpose.

Note how this differs from Domingo's probable inspiration, stanza 67 of *The Striped Flag* by the obscure Bard of the Hurons: "The Yankee came ready for battle, the Yankee came dripping with oil, the Yankee came swinging his [wood? stick? tool? wrench?], the Yankee came spitting a Damniad, the Yankee came sweating a torrent, the Yankee came heavy with anger, the Yankee came paging for blood."

For what purpose must the Huron repeat himself so? In part, it gives him that extra moment to remember the rest of his line. It also helps draw things out, building up for the cathartic head-splitting in the next stanza. But most important for the Bard's survival, it extends the grace period for those in the audience who have turned aside to sneeze, to talk to a friend, to stroll over to a merchant's stall, to scan the skies for argosies, to soothe or whip a restless *eohipp*, or to go further off to relieve themselves. When they turn back, even having missed the opening line ("The Yankee came...") they might yet hear the closing line ("The Yankee came...") and not have lost the chord. The Bard of the Hurons thus keeps his audience and earns his sips and wafers.

Consider, continues Pidal, how the first bards tapped into the lives of the weapon-bearers of their kraals and camps who unwound each evening around the eating place, singing and bragging. The bards

added what those truly involved in the action could not – the *iangis* and universality. Through them the local hero, who was also perhaps the local Odius, becomes Everyhero, who smites the evil Omper on the ice not for the kick of it (any local hero can do that) – but for *us*.

(Those who became the bards may well have taken the only option free to them, for tradition says many a bard was blind, lame or mad.)

Part of the *iangis* came from the handing-on of tales and tricks from bard to bard: How to play the audience, how to play the voice, how to cover for a skipped or premature stanza, how to deal with comments from the crowd such as, "That's a lot of bull, old man."

Well now. The old man might counter with a new stanza, not always impromptu (*Long have I souqht the moment for this*): "And noble [name], brother to the thunder, spoke [and the old man appears to address the heckler], 'Let those who moan and weep with fear, who scoff to hide their shame, who cry that such brave deeds cannot be done, who've lost the heart, nobility and strength – be given pots of lead and freed to seek their innards in the dirt.' " If it veers to the click of it, it stays.

Or the old man might silently acknowledge it was indeed a lot of bull, and begin to subtly re-string his tale.

Without the handing-on from bard to bard, from pulse to pulse, without the challenge met of yet another crew that will not sit still, one loses the *iangis*.

The epicist of later times who sees published his own final, un-evolved version, has skipped the *iangis*. The rules mean nothing when the world that gave birth to them is gone.

The *iangis* came from what the bards lived through. But there are no more bard-worlds and no more bards. Now it must all take place within the poet's mind. But few in any age, on any planet, can profit from that Odius on the sidelines of the brain who calls, "That's a lot of bull, old man."

Lunet suggests Domingo has made the most of his encounters with that heckler. And with the *eohipp* snorts and peddler's cries and the other distractions of the marketplace within his head. And that explains the unexpected *iangis* of his work. Any Pioneer can prepare a mining planet, any Chronicler can report it, but only Domingo can take us with him.

Disregarding the evidence, however, Pelagius (although the most well-read of his or any other generation) calls the Preparation "more chronicle than epic." Kitner says the work, especially cantos 3, 9 and 13, is "merely rhymed history." And Imbers calls it a "fairly competent journalistic account with some esthetic value here and there."

Anthiel disagrees: "Any extended poem successfully arousing heroic emotions is obviously an epic poem. That is the only rule; the *Preparation* certainly follows it."

An entire generation of critics studied and discussed a series of dichotomies (schizophrenias to some) nascent in the Preparation: Light vs. shadow, heart vs. head, body vs. mind, faith vs. reason, passion vs. restraint, action vs. reflection, solidarity vs. individualism, conformity vs. rebellion, communion vs. alienation, fantasy vs. realism.

Yndran of Academe sees two faces of Domingo reflected in the work, the "bearded" and the "shaven." One surveys nature, accepting without complaint what nature offers – the heat, the sand, the noise, the squabbles among the troops, the apparent dearth of acceptable human sexual partners, the distance from home. The other looks for means and opportunity to escape the givens of nature, thence to dominate them.

For the shadowy journalist Ampere – long suspected to be Yndran's alter-ego – Domingo "clearly can't decide whether to tell the truth and run or lie through his teeth and stick around for the party. Do we really want to befriend him, to read him, to go where everyone has been before? A so-called epic that needs excuses made for it by the poet's great-great-whatever-grandson is a poor starter in the great-works-of-art sweepstakes."

The psychoanalytic approach Yndran unconsciously proposes (or is it Ampere?) forms the core of Pandit's famous monograph, made yet more famous by Tyree's aggressive review of it: "Even though a few interesting ideas pop up, or seem to, here and there, P's m-graph as a whole is stuck in the primeval gunk of that perverse neo-eruditic tradition that pants for any little fruitless complication to impair, belabor, confuse or distort the appreciation, evaluation and enjoyment of a work of art. Take one example, just one. Pandit imagines he's discovered a manic brotherhood, a schizophrenic communion, a sort of [deleted] Anonymous across the years between Domingo and Torqua; both ran from

reality while pretending to record it. A schizophrenic communion? Come now, Dr. P.

"Further on we get into the good stuff. Our erudite and intellectually adventurous Dr. Pandit sees in the towered fortress of the Desert Monster a phallic symbol, appropriate to the masculine life-style of the unrefined and unrefinable aliens. It's symbolically thrust at the, er, heart of the effeminate, or unashamedly feminine humans, whose emblem – a golden donut through whose enlarged hole is seen a stylized Earth paradise – is considered suggestive by some. Will Dr. P get away with this?"

"Hardly," answers Mlavy, "for when seen from above – from the *Spirit of Kiev*, which J.D. commanded the first day of the assault – the fortress with its redoubts resembles rather a vagina in a forest of pubic hair, and the advancing column of the A-Corps appears as a throbbing phallus. Such at least can be inferred from 17:12-15."

"Farfetched and gross, the both of you," interjects Pharsis, for whom the fortress represents the high-aiming aspirations of the Earth people, while Nodre sees in the dark fortress ("shadow's realm" of 8:3) those regions of the human psyche ever alien to us.

Generations of critics have kept alive the controversies of Domingo's time, and added more. Caye faults the poem its "unevenness," its "incoherence" (probably in the sense of looseness/smooth-flowing) and, most distracting to him, its "dislocated episodes." Naively, he assumes certain episodes should have logically taken place before or after certain others. Domingo's biographer responds that Caye had obviously not been present at the Preparation, when at times everything took place at once, or when events were planned to happen when they would be least expected, least defended against, most demoralizing to the aliens and most effective.

Caye also faults Domingo's "prolixity on minor themes," such as the thirty-two lines on the design and manufacture of the poet-warrior's belt buckle. In an earlier time the buckle was of greater importance in military life and might have merited the space, but by Domingo's time the buckle was superfluous. The dwelling upon it was

forced, mannered and boring.

Rindl was not bored, though, for if Domingo "felt called upon to include it in his epic there must have been something of epic relevance to it." Nor was Stang bored, for "we unconsciously transport ourselves back to when such things mattered."

In his short paragraph, Caye disparages the work's sterile theme ... intense sterility ... .sterility of thought and deed...cornucopia of sterile images...[and its] overwhelming, all-encompassing sterility, doing poor justice to Domingo's poetic imagination, what little remains of it." Otherwise, Caye is favorably impressed: "I find, for the most part, correct grammar, lively descriptions (where the event described is itself lively) and a variety of characters, some of whom almost come alive."

Compare this with the later comments of Hideki Torres: "The true poetry's less in the verses themselves than in Domingo's lofty conceptions, the most stirring being the solidarity of humankind in the face of alien intransigency. (In the Popular Classics edition of Torres' essays, the phrase was changed to "the alien menace.") Closer to Caye is Alain's lukewarm praise: "Although one notes a certain lack of imagination, it is more than made up for by a careful avoidance of banality."

Yuen feels it unjust to condemn what some consider the lack of poetic imagery in the *Preparation*. He suggests one cannot fairly compare Domingo with such as Torqua, who was a unique blend, even for those times, of artist and intellectual – not called to it by fate or genes but fallen to it by circumstance. Torqua spent much of his youth recovering from sports injuries, including a broken leg during a lunar lacrosse match, severe burns at the laser-fencing *peiste*, temporary deafness and spasms of incoherent ramblings after being trapped below the surface while running the methane rapids, and partial paralysis from defects in a gravity/anti-gravity slide. His long stretches of decommission allowed him time to delve extensively into the classic and pre-classic epics, literary and primitive, ecclesiastic and secular, and to base his *Orlando* work upon them.

Domingo, however, remained a man of action, metaphorically ambidextrous – a sabre in one hand, a stylus in the other – for he composed as he fought. A microphone was sealed to his helmet, another to his collar, and as a comrade told it, "he prattled much, even in the heat of things."

Domingo thus returned to the very birth of the epic: the challenge (*Eya!*) the shout of triumph (*Eya!*) the retelling (*And then I...*).

One must admit Domingo owes much to his predecessor and "companion in schizophrenia," Torqua. Pandit, in his more restrained moments, shows how Domingo, despite his facade of rudeness and tumult, shares Torqua's bold yet elegant line, his rich and valiant vocabulary, his feel for the vibrant verb, his bald gusto for breeze-blown banners, his freedom from self-consciousness in the face of alliteration.

Consider Torqua's "The castellated spires of Duke Menton's cramped keep did glower darkly over the stream-streaked landscape" (*Orlando Beyond* 14:76), how it finds subtle echoes in Domingo's "The spoked spires of Dragon Man's cramped keep glowered darkly over the arroyo-crackled landscape" (*Prep* 2:16). Torqua's famous, "Across the heath rode Baron Devine, drawn by the mutant silver steeds of Anthonium" (*Orlando Inflamed* 12:19) finds echo in Domingo's "Off the dune leaped Sarge Devine to slay the mutant silver-stealing thieves" (*Prep* 7:84). The ordeal of Baron Rothbart (*Liberation of Mars* 13 19) prefigures the even more brutal ordeal of Capt. Cuthbert (*Prep* 9:5-32). The challenge of the evil Lord Damnitz to the "sturdy, unmoved, infinitely proud and patient" Orlandans (*Orlando Beyond* 6:73) is matched by the challenge of the evil Arch Alien Dampt to the "sturdy, unmoved, infinitely patient and vengeful" A-Corps (*Pre*p 17:42).

It was Fitz-of-All-People (whose generation, after all, never knew the enthusiasm of the Brigades era) who insisted that "in spite of its great merits the *Preparation* can hardly be considered a true epic, neither spiritually nor in design, neither formally nor in effect." It was the brutal Melibea uprising of '007 that compelled Fitz to redeem his opinion. "I know of no other work," he then swore, "which more highly exemplifies the noble spirit of the human race than *The Preparation of the Mining Planets*, and which fulfills so completely and wholeheartedly the standards, requirements and traditions of heroic epic poetry.

Ktavono investigated the alien elements in the technique of the poem, in rhyme schemes, rhythmic segues and allomorphic tropes, and sought insights into the aliens' life-style, clothing, political and social organization, economic activity and religion. Of the latter, Domingo's description of what he terms their "feral dreamscape" is now a classic: "In the hands of invisible masters, in the arms of invisible parents, wrapped in invisible blankets, asleep in intangible cradles. Yet the cradles do rock.

In the vocabulary of the poem are indeed alienisms but are often allo-planetic. Nouns such as *knth*, *ptoma*, *atmn*, which in the poem dot the landscape of Fides and are said to be of such significance to the Fidei, are not their talk at all, but derive from the pup-talk of the aliens on Chaco. There are many such allo-planetisms.

There are also occasions when Domingo passes up the chance to use an alien term in a genuine alien context, apparently doubtful his audience could, or would want to, understand. One example is the bitterness of the pack leader Akhts as he turns from watching the strip mining: "A dog has pissed on my planet." Not only were dogs unknown to Akhts, but so was the concept of "planet."

Ktavono doubts the names Domingo gives to the rare alien deemed worthy of a name – Akhts, Xka, Salinch, Damtp, etc. – were names at all, were even alien. She suspects they were chosen or invented for euphony, onomatopoeia or the veering of the beat. They may thus give valuable clues to the phonology of the Outer World dialects of that era. They may indeed be the otherwise unrecorded remnants of the vocabulary of Domingo's subculture.

The gaming tables and mellow sites of all worlds have always had their own jargon but have never been closed societies; linguists and other researchers are warmly welcomed. Not so the hermetic communities. The Bernardians were still active during that period, and terms from their secret prayers could have found their way into the everydaytongue of the mining stations and battle camps – but indirectly, and perhaps with some distortion, simplification or inversion of their original hermetic significance. Considering this, it is possible the rare name Domingo gives to the rare alien deemed worthy of a name may have had specific physical, moral, psychological, satiric or ironic relevance for him and for those who shared his background. Since the records are vague and the Bernardians' successors retain their secrets, we can do little to clarify things. We face the same blank wall as with Kawamoto's *Battle of the*

Urns, where the innocent hero must contend with the seven oddly-named warriors Akron, Bravo, Charlie, Dingbat, Extra, Fungus and Grunt.

Kurath finds the understandably morose descriptions of the morose geography of some of the mining planets to be evidence of the poet's preoccupation with realism. Other critics, such as Royce and Edel, consider them but thinly veiled conventions, essentially the same modular phrases inserted into many a mass-produced, so-called literary epic. Only partial support for this is offered by Ja Sri: "Domingo may have been entranced, as we all are, by the silver lakes, the bronze hills, the waves of gray and auburn sand, but his language had evolved elsewhere. His description of Neruda's moon setting behind the mountains ('a dragon's egg kissing a woman's breast') must derive from the experience of a far different planet, for neither Neruda's moons nor its mountains know such contours.

For Penargh, who believes honesty and exaggeration need not be antithetical, "It's as if the poet sees through the superficial ugliness of his mission and venue to the underlying nobility of his goal, the enrichment of the human planets. Nay, their very survival." Elsewhere: "He lifts the mining planets to a higher zone of beauty and imagination.

San-chei, in his *No Dreams for Iapetus*, claims to share with Domingo "a certain visceral inclination towards the realistic," but in his duties as licensed critic he applies the G standard: How does this work of art improve upon life? Does it tell us what we would like to hear? Does the artist make full use of his powers or is he falling free?

This opposes, in effect, the positivist approach of Huygens (labeled negativist by his detractors) which applies the L standard: How does this conform to objective reality? Does it hold to what we already know and want more of? Does it steady us in a slippery universe?

San-che adds that a clear-headed evaluation of the artistry of the *Preparation* is hampered by the reader's all-too-human tendency to take sides, whether with the Brigades against the aliens, or with the aliens against the Brigades, or with certain aliens (perhaps those of Titus and Chaco) against the Brigades, or with the Brigades against certain aliens, usually those of Melibea.

Among the more recent critics, Jaipuru detects the influence of Domingo on Vantes, Seifert, the Barrel Poets and (strangely enough) the Quiet Ones. He applauds Domingo's "sympathy for the innocent savage corrupted by civilization." Jaipuru explains the only way Domingo could save the aliens on Rimbaud and Lethe was to destroy them before civilization could, in the most honorable fashion then permissible. Domingo realized, insists Jaipuru, that for the aliens of those planets, life under humans would have been sheer Hell. (In Domingo's subculture, Hell was the destination of those who caused or permitted pain to their fellows.) For someone as compassionate as Domingo this was intolerable.

The learned Father Briscoe of the Universidad Dominicana-Jesuita de Callisto finds "*un toque renacentista*" in the poem, "*con su espiritu de cara frente a lo desconocido, iunto con su aire de libertad dentro de la ierarquia,y ademasy sobre todo en su estilo amplio, natural, soberbio, sin arcaismos muy obvios ni trasposiciones chocantes, o sea, requete-artisticas*." As Mende, Wysse and Singh point out, the good Father's interpretation of the controversial term *renacentista* is too broad. He follows his Order's policy of claiming as Renaissance any movement of a planet's society out of illiteracy. Secular scientists are more restrained.

Oberon lists as a strong point Domingo's intense involvement in his subject matter (one would expect that) as opposed to the Bard of the Hurons, who merely observed and described. The comparison is unfair; the final version of *The Striped Flag* came centuries after the Bard's death, enough time to shed the clues of his "intense involvement."

On the other hand, notes Brijn, "Domingo knew how to roll words permanently on acetate and polyasphaltine and thus, as well as participant and poet, was his own final editor. His work has not been victimized by generations of polishers who polish away the glow. In contrast, *The Striped Flag* began to lose its primeval luster once it left the Bard's hands."

For Dwine, Brijn's is a "pseudo-evaluation, nothing but a cheap nod to a fellow chauvinist's vanity in the guise of a tribute to artistic integrity and individualism. The Huronic work was improved over the generations by the careful removal of extraneous detail, anachronisms and minor elements that once may have had significance but which later ages found meaningless; and by the careful process of converting elements linked to a fixed time and place into elements relevant to all times and all places. The Yankees, for example, are more relevant to us today than they ever were to their contemporaries."

In reference to Domingo's style Ktorris observes, "He's certainly not Carthusian [indeed, since Carthus was only three years old when the *Preparation* was published] despite similarities in the use of hyperbole, hyperbaton, syllepsis, syncope, synecdoche, metonymy, irony and metaphor, all part of the shared tradition of the Outer Worlds. He seems more Carthusian than most of Carthus' contemporaries and successors but only in technique; in philosophy, sexual attitude and self-presentation before Nature, there is Space between them.

Priam reflects modern taste – or weariness – when he hesitates before what for him is the complicated disposition of rhymes and rhythms in the *Preparation*, "which oblige a constant, mostly unconscious, effort to pay attention," perhaps analogous to the restlessness of the ancient bard's audience. Priam claims that though Domingo displays more architectonic vigor than others of his guild, it is wasted on us. We may still enjoy heroic epics but we live in a different age (some of us, in fact, have seen more than one) and seek new words and voices, such as Rhode offers in the recent *Junqle of Marras*, which includes, in both sight and sound editions, a newly developed musical instrument for use with the poem.

Despite such innovations the ancient *iangis* is rare, and readers of taste and fortitude long for sterner stuff, for kidney pie instead of fingertips. When the pulse beats thus, one reads Domingo and strides, clanking, onto an alien planet. □

A.Y. Tanaka was born on Maui in 1936, raised in Newark, NJ (safer than the West Coast); lived, sometimes worked, in Puerto Rico, San Francisco, Hawaii, Chicago, Amherst, perhaps elsewhere. His proudest achievement was inventing a phantom senior for his high school yearbook (Weequahic HS, Newark). Since then it's been downhill. Subsequent honors and attainments are as nought.

MICROCHIPS NEVER RUST

Part 1

Eric Miller

LONG USING THE NICKNAME 'The Louisiana Unpurchase', the states which belong to the Iowa Convention still elect and send representatives to Washington using the traditional election year schedule. Early fears that arrests and reprisals would be made against the Un-American politicians never materialized; Washington soon realized that the Western states representatives fulfilled the roles of diplomats, and that, if even on a perfunctory level, they helped the old system function with its magic 50 states. Even as Federal troops marched into Iowa, committees including Colorado and Wyoming senators could be seen calmly discussing the "New American Education Initiative". It is rumored that on the wall of a rebel senator's office is the popular poster depicting a map of the U.S. with all of the states east of the Mississippi missing and replaced by water. An old cursive style script reads `Thar be dragons' on the map's right side...."

From "Wormwood IV" an outlaw journal distributed on piggyback virus.

Hanson sat up on the lower bunk and ran his hand along his unshaven face. The now early light of May was his alarm clock; Hanson was determined to leave the workhouse as soon as possible, even if today was a sleep-in day. The 50 or so workers were still asleep, exhausted by yesterday's 20 hour final stretch. Hanson knew he could hit the terminal early, register his work sheet and get outdoors before running into Chalker. Doing favors for Chalker had meant more than the usual hours of hacking nets and setting up scams. Hanson was sure that Chalker had bit off more than he could chew, and that arrest was soon on its way. The random work siphon scheme was crude by any programmer's standards and way beneath Hanson's, but involvement meant six month's drudge pay for the price of two, and a chance to get out of Wurkhaus for the entire summer. Quietly putting on the sheet-sack and getting up, Hanson looked around the bunkroom at the snoring workers. The air was pungent with sweat and battery acid. Hanson cautiously creeped out along the fire-escape over to Chalker's room and looked in the window; Chalker's cot was surrounded with wine bottles, the sleeping supervisor still fully dressed. Good, a quiet move down the ladder put Hanson right by the work terminal. Hanson entered his card carver's number and noted with delight the work date coming up as 4 month's previous work plus the two he just had. He then pressed a new set of codes and had his earner's sheet shifted forward by 4 months. The new job code was entered to make him a Portuguese tutor, normally a non-earner for a drudge, but one that would make his vacation a lawful one. Hitting the close button caused four asterisks to appear. Oh, shit, I've been caught, groaned Hanson. A press of the disclosure option brought news that he was totally unprepared for. After five years of delays, Central State University was now prepared to hear his dissertation and grant him his Doctorate. A teaching position was also open in the department of Political Science, would he honor them with his presence at a faculty interview? Damn, this must be bad, they must be roping me in. Hanson confirmed the appointment time with his student number and closed the terminal. Giving one last look to the soot stained, gray pitted Wurkhaus, he knew that his vacation plans had gone sour. Attempts to skip the faculty interview would probably cause a roper to hit the streets and maybe kill him. Go to the interview, lie his way through the meeting and they would probably let him go in peace, especially if he feigned homeless fatigue syndrome. The one option that caused Hanson the most stress was that Yes, they do want to hire me. Don't expect that to be the case, it will never happen. But thoughts still hit Hanson with a sickening but elating roar. A real apartment, maybe a real house. Real computer credits, a savings account, free medical care, clothes,...a unicar.... Thoughts exploded out of Hanson's head when the guard dog started barking. The pitbull was the joke of the compound, the victim of a botched attempt to turn him into a roper through a head boost. But still, his barking might wake up Chalker. Hanson quickly jumped the chain-link fence and ran into the woods, finally filling his nostrils with air that didn't smell of recycled chopped old tires. If the origami tribe had survived the winter, Hanson might find them a few miles to the north. With his card carving skills for trade, it would be no problem finding someone who could build him a cardboard dome.

Hitting the close button caused four asterisks to appear. Oh, shit, I've been caught, groaned Hanson. A press of the disclosure option brought news that he was totally unprepared for.

"The Brother Jim phenomena was best understood in the light of new research on the effects of television and mass media in the previous century. Ethnographers were able to chart the rising popularity of several concurrent events that gave rise to today's political institutions. Primarily, these were televangelism, mass media merchandising aimed at the home, and especially the synthesis of several psychological groups that were aimed at providing self-help in exchange for money. The replacement of the obviously religious motives of televangelists with those of self-help merchandising gave this political movement the catalyst it needed to become the motivating political force of the late twentieth-century. The birth of the movement was heralded by the release from prison of an individual calling himself Brother Jim. Replacing obviously sectarian appeals with those honed through the

merchandising and self-help industry, this individual returned to the mass media with the dual goals of achieving the presidency and eliminating psychological competition from the labeled evils of 'secular humanisms'. The cooptation of former self-help leaders such as the World Institute of Korea and Noonetics of California ensured that rival factions would benefit from the period of peaceful control that would follow. Political skirmishes over the combined meanings of state control and psychological control erupted around the turn of the century; the rising tide of economic wealth soon quieted dissent. Brother Jim's ability to appease contending interests and grant absolute political control to those following the Institute of Democracy and World Peace's directives gave him more absolute power than had been enjoyed by any American leader."

Excerpted from "Healing the split: Mind, religion and democracy in the New American Order" Amazonian Technical Institute Press.

"The reports are probably correct: Brother Jim in all reality must consist of three or four individuals who through plastic surgery have made themselves similar to each other."

From 'The New Clan Separatist: The Search for 666' Freebrain Journal, publisher unknown.

Two miles up the road and off to the left, Hanson had found them. The woods had become a misnomer for a scratchy patch of land that had been so stripped of wood that even the stumps had been dug up. An origami man had been hauling strips of cardboard off the truck and was only too glad to agree to Hanson's terms when he found out he was a card carver.

"What can you get me?" the origami man asked.

"A warehouse has been miscounting its stock for the last 2 months. Its right by Wurkhaus and the roper in front has been pretty much deactivated. If you steal their lunch wagon they'll never miss it. I wrote the skip page. All you need do it put this card in the wagon's side around 4 A.M., let it open up, steal what you want and take off"

A nod from the wiry face of the origami man meant the trade was go. He nodded at two emaciated looking kids who were on the top of the truck. The two generator bikes that powered the truck were in need of new chains, a mental note that Hanson stored away. The shorter of the two kids jumped onto the ground and picked up a large serrated knife. The taller kid tossed down sections of cardboard and the origami man took out his knife and started to saw away at the industrial scrap. The sight was remarkable to behold. With deft skill the triangular sections were sawed and pasted together with wall-paper paste tape. Within two hours a raised geodesic dome 12 feet in diameter had been erected on the grassy depression, complete with windows made from pressed plastic bags.

The origami crew stepped back to admire their creation.

"If it rains tonight, this is bad space. The four of us can carry it on the truck up the road about six miles where it will be better," said the origami leader.

An hour later the dome was on a raised spot, covered over with the expert camouflage of leaves and mud that was also the origamists stock-in-trade.

"I think I know where I can get new bike parts" Hanson told the older man. Hanson thought of the upcoming interview. If anything, the interview would give him a chance to see the access code for a mechanic's warehouse in town close to the South Campus. "This Monday, lets go together into town. I have to talk to an office on South campus." Hanson remembered that the South Campus was not at all the same as the North. It would have been much better to see North campus, but the South was better than any other opportunity that would visit the origamists. Always do favors for an origamist, Hanson said to himself, you never know when you might need their help.

"If I can steal one of their office cards, I can fix it so that we should have about 12 open hours in which we can raid their warehouse. I'm an expert at hitting the gates."

"See ya Monday morning," the gappy smiling origamist and his kids trucked away. Standing outside the largely invisible dome, Hanson recalled the several traps he had set at Wurkhaus. No doubt Chalker would be blamed for the theft of food from the wagon and upon being caught would have his employment grade zeroed out. Chalker would then come after him. Chalker was probably having fits right now. Chalker was one of those typically mind-burnt individuals who believed that life in a workhouse satisfied his heartfelt need to have a real roof over his head and to be a servant to the state. Chalker, upon meeting Hanson for the first time, was shocked to find that Hanson lived the life of a homeless nobody who lived off the land as a criminal. Their strained alliance had been forged through their common desire to gain money at expense of the employment list. Beyond this common goal was a seething hatred of Chalker and Hanson for each other. Hanson remembered talking to a drunken Chalker one freezing night at the beginning of the battery acid work order:

"I can't believe you think this is some sort of life! I'm only here because I was arrested last month and I have to stay at Wurkhaus for my two month sentence. There's hardly any food here, and man, look at your arms!"

Chalker's arms had been bleached white through the many nights that the battery acid recycling order had been in effect. The smell of acid stung the air. A poster of Brother Jim hung on the wall next to Chalker's desk, its face bleached blue from the air-born acid; Hanson thought humorously that he looked more like a blue gorilla than the leader of the Free World.

"Shut up Hanson! I'm ON the plan, I'm no damn scraper like you! Its been worked out: you rig the net and we both get our share, and I sign you off."

Unfortunately for Hanson, one work order scam became many little card carving schemes, all at Chalker's behest. Typical scenario: a box of ten to twenty cards would be dropped off at Chalker's desk at night. Hanson would match them with stolen access numbers and route the results to a false persona where deliveries and government bonuses would wait at a warehouse. Hanson would note with wry satisfaction that most of these schemes involved petty rip-offs of the Plan; for example, altering sales figures so that bonuses came more often. Hanson knew that it was very typical: propaganda was so fierce that anyone not selling his share of the Plan was considered a traitor to the common good. Like 75 percent of the population, Chalker could not come up with his share of the National Debt and was thus

enrolled in the Plan. Pressure to do good found Chalker and like minded individuals involved in petty scams aimed at allowing their meager government appointed jobs to be supplemented with side credits. And, like many of these same individuals, Chalker found that splitting the take with so many compatriots yielded quite little. Hanson tried to impress on Chalker the illogic of this lifestyle, but to no effect. As an official homeless person, Hanson had more access food and housing on a temporary basis than Chalker normally saw in a year. The risks were there, the arrests happened two to three times a year, but compared to Plan victims, homeless life was to be greatly preferred. If Chalker had had a girlfriend, chances were that the front guard would not allow her into the workhouse. Absentee landlords frequently sent supervisors over who would claim that this week there was an emergency and we have to get through this, everyone together, so we have to have everyone working through the night. The same supervisors would also demand in extortion the fruits of corruption that Chalker had failed to hide from sight, often threatening to beat him up in his office. But Hanson, there in the office night after night, would see Chalker reading from the Good Works of Brother Jim, now official organs of the government of the United States of America. The image of Chalker that most hung in Hanson's mind was that of him sitting at his rusting hulk of a desk, late one rainy April night, the air hanging heavy with the stench of burning car tires that was the only way to heat the building, the walls covered with a brownish greasy color, and there, Chalker, hunched over a book titled "Paradise Through Hard Work." Hanson realized that the food theft would trip off the Wurkhaus food counter, even though the net choke was hiding most of Chalker's warehouse rip-offs. If Chalker had had the brains, he would try to throw the gaff onto one of the 50 or so battery workers, but this most likely would not happen. Hanson settled on to the inflated mattress he dug out of his sheetsack and placed into the dome. If the interview was something legitimate, Hanson would never have to see the likes of Wurkhaus again. He took off the acid stained shoes and threw them out the dome door. More relaxed than he had been in many weeks, Hanson's last thought as he drifted off to sleep was the image of a girl, in her early twenties, wearing a torn shirt that said on the front "No Justice for the Rainbow Tribe".

"One of the first projects to receive approval was the new launch base on Marojo Island at the headways of the Amazon. Engineers had long written about the advantages of using the rotational force of the Earth's equator to add lift advantage to the newly proposed rockets of the Amazonian Space Agency (ASA). This dream became a reality when the combined German-Iranian offensive created a flood of highly educated Russian refugees who were only too glad to make the newly democratized Brazil their new home. The plan, long dropped by the U.S., of shooting the raw components of a deep space manned Mars rocket into orbit for assembly, has been pursued with exceptional vigor by this new generation of Brazilian space explorers infused with Russian know-how and experience. Launch of the new manned rocket, Tropic Wing, is for 8 months from this date, at a time which calculates the closest arrival of Mars to Earth along the flight path. The most powerful rocket engines in history will give these pilots the before undreamed of time of only 6 months in space, with Earth-like gravity being provided by a rotating bio-sphere that will travel inside the Nuclear driven hydrogen ionizer. (Cut to footage showing a man diving slow-motion into a swimming pool) For this brave Russo-Brazilian crew, no comfort has been spared: looking along the low-gravity axis of the sphere, you can see a health club devoted to all the benefits low-gravity exercise has to offer..."

Presentation to the Conference of the Union of Independent Southern Hemisphere States

"It has come to our attention that only 17 percent of the current population of Brazil claim Portuguese as their sole language. The influx of English speaking Russians into the Republic soon after the turn of the century seriously damaged the efficacy of this powerful and beautiful language which most Brazilians can no longer recognize with any form of fluency. The U.S. is now the only nation on earth that pursues use of this language with any enthusiasm, as it has become quite a mania in the central states where they employ its learning as a mark of cultural distinction. We are distressed to see that school age children in Brazil now read Jorge Amado in English translations and that even classic video presentations of the past have been lip-synced into English. Our distress continues at the failure of our government to help in the preservation of this unequaled muse of the poet's tongue. We have even had opportunity to speak with our members who number in their years the 80's and 90's, and tell us for fact that the cooking of a Brazilian cook who employs the English far inferior to that of one who employs Portuguese. They tell us if we do not act to stop this erosion we will not only lose the greatest will of the poets, but lose for eternity the great treasure of Bahian cooking, whose technique is hopelessly lost in the English language cooking manuals prevalent in this nation."

Translated from "Proceedings of the Brazilian Society for the Preservation of the Portuguese Language"

Hanson sat leaning against the home-dome in the early Michigan May morning. The slightly fragrant, humid scent riding on the cool morning air gave Hanson the feeling that today was going to be a perfect day. Perhaps the message from last week's job terminal was read with too much paranoia. Hanson needed to clear his thoughts and settle his mind. Taking a gulp from his coffee thermo-cup and biting off a piece of sausage he swiped from Chalker's desk, he steadied his mind and started thinking about his past. Number One. For the last five years, just about everything he had ever owned was something that he had stolen. He had yet to find a job in which you were not under some sort of condition to be thrown into a workhouse, worked to death, and had all of your pay subtracted for "living benefits and taxes to the government". Okay. Now number two. For the last five years he was officially classified as a 'homeless person' with no means of support. What is the punishment for a person with no means of support? You get sent to a workhouse. Okay, this makes sense. What do you do if you leave a work-

house and continue to be a homeless person? You get sent to a workhouse again. Good, makes sense. If you're like Chalker, you make the best of things, convert to the Plan, and hope for a better future. Things are miserable, yes, but if I bring in enough money, and have enough recruits into the Plan, I can rest easy if I get fifty people working under me. With 50, enough money is flowing in, my portion of the national debt is covered and I can store some remainder into National credits. With enough skill, I can get two or three recruits under me to handle the business and take off for the Florida Islands. Number three. Everyone has the same idea. If you're like Chalker, you think that every year will be different. So you apply to the government for a work needs prospectus and around February 1st, hundreds of cold, hungry out-of-homies come knocking on your front door, eager to escape the National Defense Draft and telling you they will be the best hard-workies you have seen forever. You tell them that the work will involve mold collections, battery acid recycling, lead extraction, anything. But they say, ya, anything to get out of another Michigan winter starving in a snow hut eating road-kill. But you say I don't want you working here if that's the only thing you want. I want people here who really want to be a part of the Plan. And they see the tar covered windows knowing that there are warm beds behind them and they say, ya. Yes, I'm part of the Plan. I'll do anything to be part of the Plan. And you hope against Thunder that the Winter is long and hard and Spring doesn't come early like it did this year, and this year you paid off your yearly tax share of the National Debt and you can actually call an agent and say I want to be spending time on one of the new Florida islands and I hear you have rental cars thrown into the price of the hotel because this year I'm going to drive across the new Cuba-Florida bridge and collect and barbecue fighting conches on my own personal beach...

No. Number three is a big no. If you're like Hanson, you go to college even though everyone says you're crazy, no one ever gets jobs 'cause you go to college, you might as well go to a Brother Jim church! But you stick it out. You get a B.A. in political science and very carefully you get recruited into the Master's program because the professors realize that you know how to teach the traditional doctrines, but can discuss theory with them after hours. You have read anthropology and psychology and ask them hard questions but know when to respect the silences that mean that someone may be listening to them or may be bugging them....

"All phone systems and all apparatus related by appearance in either digital or analog form, are heretofore considered part of the public information system. As such, all electronic devices utilizing the limited psychological resources thus attributed to the United States government as it is appointed guardian of the Public Good, heretofore appoints itself legally in the capacity of Public Guardian, and that as part of such rights, requires through the legal force of the Federal Government the right to enforce the law that makes all forms of electronic transmission enforceable by law under the subject of a 'Universal Transmitter' such device as which will allow any government official the right to complete surveillance of any speaking American citizenry for the rights of constituting from such conversation any spoken conversation which may be considered seditious and to judge the legal recourse thereof."

Amendment to the 1934 Communication Act of the United States of America.

No, if you have survived the University and have headed on a stellar course toward your Doctoral degree, you have become aware of certain facts of life. For example, if you have not been able to find a job (which in fact 75 percent of your fellow graduates have not been able to) you realize that there are few options open to you. For example, you will be sent to an international workhouse. (International House of Pancakes?). You most likely will not be hired by the University, even given the Doctoral degree. But, you will come to a certain realization, clear and simple. No job, the workhouse. The life of a criminal, the workhouse. The life of a non-criminal: hard work in the work house, near starvation. The life of a criminal: occasional hard work in the work house and the time of your life when you're not getting caught. If you're a good criminal, people are willing to pay you much more than they would a regular 'trabalhista'. Ride out the occasional times spent in the 'haus and you're on easy street. Of course it was not that simple. Living on the outside required certain skills, and the ability to see beyond surface appearance. For example, most grudges would look at the origamista and his scrawny kids and see the most destitute low- life. Look at his pedal-powered truck and geodesic domes and you see a singular genius who, in ancient times, would have been working for NASA. Get to know such people, and you form a network. A network, that if you're lucky, means you only have to work in a brutal German workhouse for only the most vicious months of the Winter and spend the rest of the time outside.

Number 4. This college interview thing. A real monkey- wrench. It means one of two things: something really good, or something really bad.

Off in the horizon, Hanson saw the origamista and the pedal- truck heading toward the dome.

"Nationalism makes Christianity look like Buddhism"

The New Clan Almanac, 2nd Edition

Hanson leaped on the back of the truck. "Let me help you pedal this thing." He could see that at one time this was a pickup truck, its rusted off parts now replaced with scraps of foraged plastics. The two bikes mounted on the bed were rusting apart, but still functioned well enough to transfer enough power from human legs to the electric motor via the generator. Within a few months rust would claim the entire bike array. "I can get replacement bikes at the warehouse," yelled Hanson down to the steering origamista, who himself was contributing power via an old pedal boat system mounted in the cab. Hanson, who still used mountain bikes when he could steal them and not have them stolen from him in the middle of the night, had quite enough strength in his leg muscles to out peddle the origamista's kids. Their combined strength had powered the truck to a steady speed of 25 miles an hour. Within less than an hour they would be at the outskirts of the college section of East Arbor. A large iron flywheel, an antique over 100 years old mounted on a stand between the two bikes, spun with enough speed to allow Hanson and the older kid the luxury of resting every five minutes or so. The younger kid, released from duties and smiling, pulled out an ancient 8-track tape player with a pair of

bashed in speakers. He inserted a grease smeared tape that had long ago worn off the paper label. The music, warbling through the dirty capstan, was unmistakably Willy Nelson, a past century tax dodger who had become a legend due to his capture by the government over tax evasion. "On the road again, just can't wait to git on the road again..." The Old Natural Science building was just now visible at the end of the road. Several autotrucks had passed them on the road into town, doing 50 to pass their 25. Hanson remembered reports that the trucks had hit several pedestrians in town. The German company that owned them was released from any liability: the trucks had no human driver, and therefore no negligence could be found. Like millions of others, Hanson and the origamista could not get jobs as truck drivers with any company that did real business. All trucks were now required to be operated by computer control under federal law due to safety and energy management issues. It was against the law for any underground truckers like the origami man to use electricity off the public grid or any form of rationed combustible fuel for their recycling activities. The origami man was often pulled over by the police for suspicion of electrical use, but soon let go when discovered that the original powertrain consisted of two kids, two rusting bikes, a flywheel generator and what energy the kids and old man could get from their morning breakfast of rice and beans.

Oh shit, here comes a cop. The best way to shake them was to give them the homeless fatigue syndrome rap. The old man and the kids already had it; they would give the cop their 8-track tape player and off they would be. Hanson had to remember. First, always smile. And when they ask you anything always bring up one thing, as if your brain finds it impossible to maintain any complex relationships. The MetalGerman-Fuzz stopped the truck and asked everyone questions. Laughter ensued, as it always did when he found that two little kids comprised all the power. But more questions came in Hanson's direction. It was obvious by his leg muscles that he had been eating a little too good.

"How come you here?" MetalGerman-Fuzz intoned in a thick buzz-saw accent. Fortunately Hanson had hid his sheetsack under the sawed-up couch that functioned as the origamista's cockpit. Staring past the cop's face, a smiling Hanson started talking about an orange he had begged for breakfast. The cop kept at him with different questions only to have the answer be the orange. Hanson mumbled with delight about the orange. The pinched face of the cop erupted into laughter again. A no-homie hitching a ride on the old man's truck. Shaking his head with pity the German jumped back into the unicar, hit some buttons and sped off. The fuzz car like any other, steered under computer command. It was illegal for new cars to have a human operated steering wheel under Federal law for safety reasons. There had been some problems, sure, but new studies had shown that autosteering had reduced most accidents. A popular commercial showed a man leaving a bar, staggeringly drunk, and slopping into his unicar. After barely being able to insert the car card, the unicar lights up and speeds off. A text insert in broken English read 'your designated driver is your car. Its the law.' Hanson remembered that a common worm prank at the time was to hit the ad with a virus that caused footage of an explosive car crash to be spliced to the end. Most national TV services had been so wormed out like this that the only way to deliver the good message of Brother Jim was to carry 16mm film projectors in a van and show current State news on the side of a building. Refurbishing old drive-in theators had become quite a mania, too. Armed guards prevented hardware wormers from getting in and cutting cords or throwing sand into the film aperture. This antique method had been uncovered by a Brother Jimmer working in Germany who discovered that in the First War of the Thousand Year Reich, the Good News of National Socialism had been taken into peasant communities with this method. And it worked! These ancient peasants had been so low-tech that they fell under the spell of 16mm. The content of the film was largely unknown, but one report writes that a film contained footage of the warm beds and good work conditions that would greet European no-homies in the workhouses that Himmler had just set up.

"Definition: Low-tech wormer: an individual who uses old fashioned media to do his phreaking. Example: using the now tons of discarded carbon to print the code for a worm. Distribute the newsletter by placing the carbon on a sheet of gelatin, running the prints and using it as wrapping paper for food. Note: current federal law prohibits the use of paper to transmit written symbols (see Omnibus Recycling Act) but no law says you can't wrap food with it!"
The New Anarchist's Cookbook

The pedal-truck had entered a narrow road that ran through South Campus. Hanson had the truck park a block away from the warehouse. The good thing about a pedal truck is that few people want to steal it when they find out all the work it involves to just get it to go. The four of them walked over to the warehouse across the street, avoiding a board-man who was trying to sell them brain-stim tatoos.

Sitting at the warehouse door was a chimp with a brain-boost wearing the blue Central Services uniform. The easiest score of all, chimps could read cards but could not piece together the complex underpinnings of a scam. Hanson decided he could skip plan A and go directly to plan B now that he saw the guard was a chimp. He smiled and walked up to the grizzled looking chimp, who was lethargicly playing Solitaire on a wood crate.

"I'm here for the shipment. This is my permit."

The chimp grabbed the card and placed it into the net choke. A green slip came out and the chimp looked at it slowly. A nod of his head was followed by the release of a lever which raised the metal door. Good, the skeleton page worm is still valid. The four ran in and quickly pulled the door shut. It was important not to raise suspicion; it was also necessary to keep out the tatoo seller who was milling around outside. Inside, Hanson knew that they had hit the motherload. Along the wall was a rack filled with Mountain bike parts.

"We have to be quick about this," Hanson whispered as he pulled out several cans of spray paint from his sheetsack. The paint inside was a special brownish-orange mixture that looked just like rust when sprayed onto metal. One of the little origami kids grabbed a can and started going over the bike parts. "Rust never sleeps!" Within an hour the paint had dried and the four started bundling together the chains, frames and wheels that they would assemble the next day. The origamistas would have their new power bikes, but for Hanson a mobile bike was in the works. Using his artistic skills,

Hanson would soon be riding around in a new MolyTi Special hidden under a fake patina of rust. To complete the illusion, the new GelSim seat would be hidden under an old piece of burlap and rusty bolts would be attached to the frame with wire. After reopening the door, the four ran the parts across the street and into the truck using a relay approach. The blue chimp watched attentively and nodded from time to time. When the truck was full, Hanson told the old driver, "I'll be back at my dome sometime tomorrow and we'll put everything together" The origamistas smiled and soon the pedal truck disappeared down the street. Hanson ducked down a side street to get out of view as quickly as possible. He knew that as soon as the campus security showed up, the tatoo seller would be able to fill in the details of the heist that would be beyond the ability of the chimp to relay. Hanson looked at himself. If he was going to an interview, he had certainly come to appear as a most undesirable candidate. Acid had streaked part of his black hair white, rust colored paint had dripped all over his shirt and pants and 2 days of stubble covered his face. No time to clean up, the interview was in half an hour, the time it would take to walk to the office. Besides, if they really want to hire me, my looks won't make any difference. Walking northeast, Hanson quickly left behind the warehouse section of South Campus. Besides himself and the tatoo seller, Hanson noted that there were no people occupying this neighborhood at all. Most of the metal sheds being used by Central Services were marked with the simplified logos that made up Standard Primate English. Several times, Hanson walked past the shuffling 4 foot forms of the workchimps in their blue uniforms, their hollow eyes staring up at him, and getting out of the way quickly if he was in their path. Staring out the window of an abandoned looking building was a gray haired chimp who eyed Hanson with fear. The last building that Hanson had to walk past to get onto the academic complex was a food bar. The two chimps seated at the small metal food trough looked up at him and stopped eating. Hanson ran across the street as quickly as he could, dodging a cart full of scrap metal that was being driven in by a chimp wearing a Central State cap. Hanson rarely came into town, and all of a sudden something had really bothered him. Do I really want to work here? Fear gagged his throat. The final image of the warehouse district that really disturbed him was of a chimp toddler on a plastic trike, bubbly happy looking, and pulling a little plastic wagon. In the wagon were a bunch of bones, probably horse or pig bones, but from the distance across the street, Hanson couldn't be sure. Turning away for one last time, he headed toward the row of pine trees that ran along the academic complex.

"Modern historians are at a loss as to what specific event could be pinpointed to as the beginning of the current American Civil war. Rather, they emphasize that the general trends building toward the collapse of the current Union had been in place for many decades: the 8 trillion dollar federal debt, the steadily eroding quality of life, the purchase of key American industries by private creditors within the International Monetary Fund, and the growth of a new American middle class raised on the fruits of the Information Technology revolution, left little doubt that any state able to declare independence from Washington D.C. would do so. The outlaw congress of the Iowa Convention published the famous Adam's Doctrine, lifting verbatim from the Founding Fathers comments that made it a democratic right to reject governance as it was currently practiced in Washington. The forceful seizure of great tracts of land throughout Kansas by the IMF to cover defaults on the debt led to great violence as local populations fought against the newly installed German landlords. The retreat of the German security guards along a line demarcated by the Mississippi river led to the publication of the Economic Bill of Rights, having as its main passage, "No American citizen shall ever be held liable for debt secured or maintained by any organ of government."

History of the IMF in the twenty-first century: Original source unknown.

Several buildings in the Academic Complex were obviously quite new. At least since the very last time that Hanson had been here almost 5 years ago. Like thousands of other so called residents, Hanson's hasty flight from Central State had been signaled by the firebombing of the Administration building with the ensuing riot shutting down services for almost a month. At the interview, Hanson would no doubt be quizzed on the meaning of these events and his possible involvement with them. Hanson held out the worn student identification card that still functioned for him from time to time. When economic conditions permitted, Hanson was able to avoid workhouse life by claiming that he was still enrolled in the Doctoral program of the Department of Political Science. To make the act more convincing, he would show the drudge ropers several of the books he carried in his sheetsack, like "Harmony and the New States" or "Brother Jim: An American Life". The MetalFuzz were guests in the states, and often didn't hide their disdain for Brother Jim, but someone actually getting a Doctorate in this stuff must be so mind burnt that he was completely harmless.

Hanson remembered one incident four years ago: sitting under a tree one summer afternoon, he had been absorbed in a pair of sunglasses that a workhouse drudge had traded him for a grasshopper-bot Hanson once swiped from a landscaper as it left the compound Hanson had been roped into. The glasses were a common novelty at the time; they usually contained photos inscribed in the lenses by a layered grating process. When the wearer stared out through the lenses in bright light, holographic photos would appear suspended out in front of the viewer's face, the most common photos being life sized nude women. But these glasses were quite different. An array of pages appeared in front of Hanson, photos of pages from an old book whose sheets were often creased and torn, edges ripped. The reader of the book was told to read the book and pass the sunglasses on to someone else. Using a small tab on the glasses allowed Hanson to focus in the individual pages of the hologram. This was a photo of a complete, uncensored, unrevised version of George Orwell's "1984" made from a book many decades old! The Holy Grail for a cyberworm like Hanson, the real book was rarely seen in any version other than the burger wrappers that smeared their food contents blue with mimeo ink from the few paragraphs that got out through the low- techers roving library. And this was the real version at that. The current library edition contained all sorts of crap about Brother Jim

and his defeat of Communism, changes made with the "wonderful cooperation of the George Orwell estate". Jeez.

It was with understandable absorption that Hanson allowed himself to be thrown off guard when the compound curfew fuzz kicked his feet yelling "No more lunch hour!"

This fuzz was typically outstate, proud of the fact that he could only use Standard Primate English with his "Happy Debt Holder Scum", typically cursing in German most of the time. The guard quickly grabbed the sunglasses from Hanson's face and the Brother Jim book he had been fake-reading from his hands.

"You Doctor kid I hear? You know German?"

Ya. Hanson knew. He had to pass the University exam in order to maintain the stipend, but that was many years ago.

"Here read this." The guard handed Hanson a crisp looking little black book labeled 'Mein Kampf'. "Learn it. Feel it."

The current Brother Jim administration had made it illegal for the IMF host forces to bring in any non-English material; but this didn't stop a group of MetalFuzzes from importing boatloads of the 'Nazi Bible' into the country so that "finally these screwed up Americans can think straight." The smiling guard then handed Hanson back his glasses and let him spend the rest of the afternoon under the tree reading. The next day Hanson found that by remembering a few choice phrases from the book and shouting "Sieg Heil" to the guards, he would be left alone to do what he wanted. Pretty soon all the Americans in the summer compound were imitating him. Especially effective was the practice of getting together with the guards and practice marching around, their hands raised together in the Nazi salute. If they did that a few times a day, the guards would get so lax that they could even run out at a night and hit the beer stands. They made sure to bring back a few bottles for the guards. One of the guards would make a comment in English that Hanson didn't understand: "So you now a real Hogan's Hero, Ya?" An occasional drunken conference with the guards on the "need for revolution" and things got so lax that Hanson was able to get his own terminal smuggled into the compound. After carving up a few cards for the Fuzz who could then order all the IMF goods they wanted, Hanson was pretty much told he could leave any time he wanted. "But be careful. Not all are like us!" Up to that time, no-homies dreaded being roped in by the IMF so much that they were eager to find work with any American drudge who was rising up the ladder of the Plan. But within a couple of years it had become quite apparent: sign up for the Plan and get the worst work orders handed out by the IMF, but if you fake out the Fuzz, work real hard for an hour or two each day and sincerely ask the Germans to explain this or that meaning of 'My Struggle', wear a 'Mit Blut und Eissen' T-shirt, and your chances for survival and freedom became much better.

The present now found Hanson entering the new administration building. Under the dull light of a gray Michigan morning, the new red granite facade hid any evidence of the firebombing that occurred five years ago. All around him, Hanson was impressed by the newness that meant that at one time or another everything had been replaced at some time in the past five years. Standing at the top of the new steps, he surveyed the crisp geometric forms of the landscaping that went from the building in a line to the north and neatly hid the monorail track. The expense was obvious; pine trees that had been over 20 feet tall were completely wiped out in the bombing five years ago. Yet now, in the exact same spots were trees that reached 30 feet. From his vantage point Hanson could make out another strange sight. On the northwest corner of the South Campus was a cardboard shanty town erected by another contingent of the Homeless Tribe. In years past the attempts at putting up cardboard relief shelters right on the grounds had been repulsed by the tacitly approved drunken raids of the skinhead children who were attending the University while their IMF administrator parents did their stint in the U.S. But the size of this community meant the rules had changed. At the edge of the community could be a seen a large drive-in-theater screen.

Close to the entrance was the typical stack of student papers. Picking one up, Hanson was grateful that English was still used on campus, if the headlines were any indicator:

Border Buildup: IMF Agrees to Transfer of Military Hardware to Indiana. South Brazil: Government Reports Evacuation of Sao Paulo Complete. Amazonia: Mars Launch on Schedule. Western Americans Included on Crew. Riot: Nazi Traditionalists Fight IMF Over Land Rights, Clan Brought in to Mediate.

Hmm. Western America. Poor people are left in peace there. Give any indication you want to move there and risk having a roper visit you in the middle of the night to tear your throat out. The Jimbos and the Nazi's had a nice sounding phrase: "Any debt holder caught attempting to leave the area of his currently assigned work precinct will be arrested for treason against the state." Depending on the zeal of the Metal-Fuzz, you could easily be shot if your homeless condition was one that included a foot sojourn heading west. Since Michigan was surrounded by water, it was travel to the south of your assigned work district that bought immediate suspicion. Travel north was no longer possible, with the bombing of the bridge and snipers camping on the shores of the large beach estates now traded around the IMF like so many poker chips.

Hanson's reflection shot back at him from the door's glass. The paint, the filth and the stubble left no doubt that he was a no-homie, an image enforced by the wild mane of black hair streaked in white, looking so much like a skunk being torn to shreds in a losing battle against a cyberfly.

The walk into the now carpeted lobby bought a nod from the reception chimp who sat behind the registration desk. The chimp was one of those few ten percent of the brain-boost population who could type slowly but with accuracy, and hence were in great demand as office chimps. The chimp was even at home in the suit he wore, wearing a velcro attached tie. A tap of the keys bought a message to the overhead screen, the characters reading "You can't come into the interview looking like this. I will let you into the health club in the basement where you will clean up and get your hair cut. Clean clothes will be available. I will let them know what is happening. Be back at my desk at 11:00." A genius. Most chimps only had a general concept of time, but this one could think forward to something happening in the future. Hanson looked down in embarrassment at the T-shirt he was wearing. Beneath the paint streaks was visible the symbol of an American flag, the stars in the upper-left rearranged so that they formed the pattern of a Swastika." A logo at the bottom read

"IMF Summer Tour – The Broken Crosses" and on the back read "Roadie". Shit, they could get real pissed if they saw this. Best move was to hit the health club and throw it in the trash as quickly as possible.

The Broken Crosses was one of the truly funny media scams to happen all last summer. A group of homeless skinheads had formed a parody rock band using work permits that Hanson had hacked out through an IMF net choking on a wormOS. Several times that summer they had gotten onto college campuses doing their show, although they skipped Central State for obvious reasons. Hanson had wormed up a T-shirt kiosk so that it would print up these shirts, which they exchanged by the hundreds for campus dorm food tickets. The Crosses' lead singer had even managed to get fake registrations so that they could spend the whole summer as 'guest artists from Latvia'.

Before long, a media virus from an unknown source was proclaiming that the Broken Crosses was the most popular band of the summer. The lead singer was soon seen on a Caroline Satellite solemnly telling the interviewer of the many years of struggle they had to go through in Latvia before they finally hit it big, Thanks to all you loyal fans who stuck it out with us all these years. The mania was an endless source of laughs; Hanson even remembered one 18 year old girl telling him that her older brother had some of their bootlegs from years ago. Standing around on campus, adopting a fake Latvian accent and pretending to 'manage' the Broken Crosses, got Hanson more sexual favors than he had seen his whole life up to that point. Typical venues for the group included such songs as "Let's Shave Hitler's Mustache"; Hanson even contributed lyrics to song that got an IMF Grade 4 Ban called "IMF and I am pissed!". Needless to say, the Grade 4 Ban instantly catapulted the group to number 1.

Before getting roped in, at the time the Broken Crosses' media star had burnt out and the gig was up, Hanson had managed to steal as much as 2000 student card numbers and all the files that went with them. A whole block of them went to Chalker later that year. Chalker, unfortunately didn't realize that if you ran a group of foreign numbers all at once, the IMF was sure to get tipped eventually, especially if they were student numbers from rich kids' families. Hanson now felt sorry for Chalker. One step forward and two steps back, welcome to the Plan.

A push of the Health Club lock got Hanson into the shower-room wear he quickly stashed his sheetsack into a locker and slapped on a lock. After showering and wrapping himself in a towel, he walked over to a barber chair where a chimp was waiting for him. The scissors the chimp held looked like blunt kindergarten ones. Slowly and precisely, the happy looking chimp chopped on the wild, black mane for half an hour. Looking in the mirror, Hanson could see that most of the white streaks were gone. A little bowl-cuttish, but I've had much worse. The chimp then gestured to several hangers on a rack that contained blue blazers and matching slacks. After the right fit was found and tried on, Hanson then stepped back to admire himself. Jeez, I look just like a Brother Jim, he thought. In a sarcastic fake southern voice, Hanson barked "No turning back! I'm stepping with the Plan!" The barber chimp pursed his lips in a simian smile. Hanson ran back up stairs, the clock at five to 11.

"You can go into the first door on the left" read the overhead character display.

A tall, blond, blue blazer wearing man stepped from behind a desk to greet him.

"Mr. Arthur Hanson. Have a seat." The man said grinning from ear to ear. Hanson sat down in the plush office chair. The office was large, with several abstract paintings on the walls. "Do you smoke? No? Good. At ten dollars a pack I should quit."

Hanson felt very nervous. Everything was new. Everything smelled new. This is the big rope, I just know it.

Dread knotted his stomach. A tall woman, about 6 foot four, long blonde hair, stepped into the office scowling at the two of them. Oh, shit, here it comes.

"Bob, what do you think you're doing? Do you think that maybe he's even had breakfast today? Christ."

Bob burst out laughing, "Alright, I apologize. Let's head down the hall and get you something to eat." The woman this time cracked out into a smile.

Walking down the hall, the three of them passed several University employees, all the same, all wearing Navy Blue and smiling to each other. A three foot tall chimp carrying a file folder ran into Bob's leg. Bob smiled, and said "Whoa there little guy!" and patted him gently on the head. But so strange to Hanson were the eyes of the chimp, widened in fear during the three seconds that the pat lasted. When the pat ended, the chimp quickly scurried away, the folder clutched tightly to his chest.

The three entered a large sunroom. Milling around the food buffet were even more University employees. Their numbers now confirmed for Hanson the fact that none of them were shorter than six foot. The men were often 7 feet. Women of 6 five seemed very common. And all had blond hair. Hanson was motioned to a chair. Right behind him came the chimp pushed cart filled with Burgers, Fries, and Onion rings. "Eat up!"

The blonde woman had introduced herself as Susan, Vice President for Business Development. Bob interjected, "Look here Art, can I call you Art? Good. The monorail leaves right from this building and goes directly to North Campus. You don't even have to step outside if you want at all, and after all, who would WANT to. When you get your car you just leave it home. Great system I would say." Susan cut him off. "Bob, the poor guy must be so mixed up. We haven't even told him why he's being called in for an interview!"

More knots in Hanson's stomach. Yep, they're playing with me alright.

Bob held out his hand and gripped Hanson's tightly,

"Congratulations, Mr. Hanson. You have been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science. If you will accept the position, we invite you to join our faculty as chair of the department of Political Science. Your duties to commence immediately with teaching duties to begin this Fall Semester. Here are the keys to your house," Bob handed him a house card.

"The car should be in the garage tomorrow. If you need anything at all contact this number and they'll get it for you. Your regular faculty office will open next Monday; an assistant will be there to set up your office this weekend. The info you need should be right on the card. Now what?" Bob looked at Susan who had been straining her face at him. "Just wait. O.K. do you accept?"

A half sound of "ya" left the throat of the now shocked Hanson. "Good. O.K. Sue, go ahead and ask," replied Bob.

Susan pulled out a music CD and handed it to Hanson. On the cover was an overly pixellated photo of Hanson and the

Broken Crosses standing on the makeshift stage of last year's "IM Pissed" concert. The title contained one of Hanson's old worm permutations, for now the group had been labeled as 'Art Hanson and the Broken Crosses'. Susan excitedly asked "Would you autograph this for my daughter?" Then to Hanson's complete shock the statuesque and reserved looking woman growled in a fake Latvian accent "IMF and I am pissed! My daughter is going to be so thrilled to find that you are working on Campus!"

Bob laughed. "O.K. Good buddy. Need anything at all just call my office."

The two administrators got up sharply from the table and strode away, leaving a permanently bewildered Hanson sitting beneath the hot mid-day sun now coming through the sun room canopy.

Half in a daze, he left and went back to the lobby. Facing the reception chimp, he muttered in English, "Can you get a message sent for me?" The chimp nodded yes. A message was written giving the location of the cardboard dome. Directions were given to have it tacked to the door. The message read "Keep everything you want, even the dome if you can use it. I won't be coming back. I just got hired at the University."

"Concurrent with the new Economic Bill of Rights was a series of Acts which were quickly adopted by the newly Debt Free States. The Fair Land Use and Homestead Act was quickly ratified at the Convention held in Mexico City, home of the new League of Debt Free Nations. Its most eloquent orators had to fight against the accusation that old style Leninism would result, but eventually even the staunchest critic was won over." □

Eric Miller is a graduate student at Michigan State University where he studies the use of Computer Aided Design (CAD) in architectural and product design. Other academic interests include Artificial Life, Virtual Reality, and Cyberspace culture. Recreational interests include mountain biking and cross-country skiing in Michigan's beautiful forests, painting, and composing electronic music as well as writing fiction.

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Next Issue:

Watch for the conclusion of Nicole Gustas's *To Touch the Stars*, as well as the continuation of Eric Miller's *Microchips Never Rust* and the next *Harrison Chapter* from Jim Vassilakos. Also watch for a new story from Lou Crago (*The Fourth Cat*). I'm also looking into the possibility of printing a new, exciting serial which I hope to give you more details on next issue. Of course, we'll also be seeing new fiction from authors on an off the net. Until then!

Thank you, thank you very much.