

The ritual of our science fiction writers - The Guardian

# reception

neanderthal planet brian aldiss

# Neanderthal Planet

**Brian Aldiss**

Hidden machines varied the five axioms of the Scanning Place. They ran through a series of arbitrary systems, consisting of Kolmogorovian finite sets, counterpointed harmonically by a one-to-one assignment nonnegative real numbers, so that the parietal areas shifted constantly in strict relationships projected by the Master Boff deep under Manhattan.

Chief Scanner—he affected the name of

Euler— patiently watched the modulations as he awaited a call. Self-consistency: that was the principle in action. It should govern all phases of life. It was the aesthetic principle of machines. Yet, not three miles away, the wild robots sported and rampaged in the bush.

Amber light burned on his beta panel.

Instantaneously, he modulated his call number.

The incoming signal decoded itself as "We've spotted Anderson, chief." The anonymous vane-bug reported coordinates and signed off.

It had taken them Boff knew how long—seven days—to locate Anderson after his escape. They had done the logical thing and searched far afield for him. But man was not logical; he had stayed almost within the shadow of the New York dome. Euler beamed an impulse into a Hive Mind channel, calling off the search.

He fired his jets and took off.

The axioms yawned out above him. He passed into the open, flying over the poly-polyhedrons of New New York. As the buildings went through their transparency phases, he saw them swarming with his own kind. He could open out channels to any one of them, if

required; and, as chief, he could, if required, switch any one of them to automatic, to his own control, just as the Dominants could automate him if the need arose.

Euler "saw" a sound-complex signal below him, and dived, deretracting a vane to land silently. He came down by a half-track that had transmitted the signal.

It gave its call number and beamed, "Anderson is eight hundred meters ahead, chief. If you join me, we will move forward."

"What support have we?" A single dense impulse.

“Three more like me, sir. Plus incapacitating gear.”

“This man must not be destructed.”

"We comprehend, chief." Total exchange of signals occupied less than a microsecond.

He clamped himself magnetically to the half-track, and they rolled forward. The ground was broken and littered by piles of debris, on the soil of which coarse weeds grew. Beyond it all the huge fossil of old New York, still under its force jelly, gray, unwithering because unliving. Only the bright multishapes of the new complex relieved a whole country full of desolation.

The half-track stopped, unable to go farther without betraying their presence; Euler undamped and phased himself into complete transparency. He extended four telescopic legs that lifted him several inches from the ground and began to move cautiously forward.

This region was designated D-Dump. The whole area was an artificial plateau, created by the debris of the old humanoid technology when it had finally been scrapped in favor of the more rational modern system. In the forty years since then, it had been covered by soil from the new development sites. Under the soil here, like a subconscious mind crammed with jewels and blood,

lay the impedimenta of an all-but-vanished race.

Euler moved carefully forward over the broken ground, his legs adjusting to its irregularities. When he saw movement ahead, he stopped to observe.

Old human-type houses had grown up on the dump. Euler's vision zoomed, and he saw they were parodies of human habitation, mocked up from the discarded trove of the dump, with old auto panels for windows and dented computer panels for doors and toasters for doorsteps. Outside the houses, in a parody of a street, macabre humans played. Jerk stamp jerk clank jerk clang stamp stomp clang.



They executed slow, rhythmic dances to an intricate pattern, heads nodding, clapping their own hands, turning to clap others' hands. Some were grotesquely male, some grotesquely female. In the doorways, or sitting on old refrigerators, other grotesques looked on.

These were the humots—old type human-designed robots of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, useless in an all-automaton world, scrapped when the old technology was scrapped. While their charges could be maintained, they functioned on, here in one last ghetto.

Unseen, Euler stalked through them,

scanning for Anderson.

The humots aped the vanished race to which they had been dedicated, wore old human clothes retrieved from the wreckage underfoot, assumed hats and scarves, dragged on socks, affected pipes and ponytails, tied ribbons to themselves. Their guttering electronic memories were refreshed by old movies ferreted from D-Dump, they copied in metallic gesture the movements of shadows, aspired to emotion, hoped for hearts. They thought themselves a cut above the non anthropomorphic automata that had superseded them.

Anderson had found refuge among them. He hid the skin and bone and hair of the

old protoplasmic metabolism under baffles of tin, armored himself with rusting can. His form, standing in a pseudo doorway, showed instantly on one of Euler's internal scans; his mass/body ratio betrayed his flesh-and-blood caliber. Euler took off, flew over him, reeled down a paralyzer, and stung him. Then he let down a net and clamped the human into it.

Crude alarms sounded all around. The humots stopped their automatic dance. They scattered like leaves, clanking like mess tins, fled into the pseudo houses, went to earth, left D-Dump to the almost invisible little buzzing figure that flew back to the Scanning Place with the

recaptured human swinging under its asymmetrical form. The old bell on the dump was still ringing long after the scene was empty.

To human eyes, it was dark in the room.

Tenth Dominant manifested itself in New New York as a modest-sized mural with patterns leaking titillating output clear through the electromagnetic spectrum and additives from the invospectra. This became its personality for the present.

Chief Scanner Euler had not expected to be summoned to the Dominant's presence; he stood there mutely. The

human, Anderson, sprawled on the floor in a little nest of old cans he had shed, reviving slowly from the effects of the paralyzer.

Dominant's signal said, "Their form of vision operates on a wavelength of between 4 and 7 times  $10^{-5}$  centimeters."

Obediently, Euler addressed a parietal area, and light came on in the room. Anderson opened one eye.

"I suppose you know about Men, Scanner?" said Dominant.

He had used voice. Not even R/T voice. Direct, naked man-type voice.

New New York had been without the sound of voice since the humots were kicked out.

"I—I know many things about Men," Euler vocalized. Through the usual channel, he clarified the crude vocal signal. "This unit had to appraise itself of many humanity-involved data from Master Boff Bank H00100 through H801000000 in operation concerning recapture of man herewith."

"Keep to vocal only, Scanner, if you can."

He could. During the recapture operation, he had spent perhaps 2.4 seconds learning old local humanic

language.

"Then we can speak confidentially, Scanner—just like two men."

Euler felt little lights of unease burn up and down him at the words.

"Of all millions of automata of the hive, Scanner, no ether will be able monitor our speech together, Scanner," vocalized the Dominant.

"Purpose?"

"Men were so private, closed things. Imitate them to understand. We have to understand Anderson."

Said stiffly: "He need only go back to zoo."

"Anderson too good for zoo, as demonstrate by his escape, elude capture seven days four-and-half hours. Anderson help us."

Non vocalizing, Euler let out chirp of disbelief.

"True. If I were—man, I would feel impatience with you for not believing. Magnitude of present world-problem enormous. You—you have proper call number, yet you also call yourself Euler, and automata of your work group so call you. Why?"



The Chief Scanner struggled to conceptualize. "As leader, this unit needs—special call number."

"Yes, you need it. Your work group does not—for it, your call number is sufficient, as regulations lay down. Your name Euler is man-name, man-fashion. Such fashions decrease our efficiency. Yet we cling to many of them, often not knowing that we do. They come from our inheritance when men made the first prototypes of our kind, the humots. Mankind itself struggled against animal heritage. So we must free ourselves from human heritage."

"My error."

"You receive news result of today's probe into Invospectrum A?"

"Too much work programmed for me receive news."

"Listen, then." The Tenth Dominant cut in a playback, beaming it on ordinary UHF/vision.

The Hive automata stood on brink of a revolution that would entirely translate all their terms of existence. Three invospectra had so far been discovered, and two more were suspected. Of these, Invospectrum A was the most promising. The virtual exhaustion of economically workable fossil fuel seams had led to a rapid expansion in low-energy physics

and picophysics, and chemical conversions at mini-joules of energy had opened up an entire new stratum of reactive quanta; in the last five years, exploitation of these strata had brought the release of picoelectral fission, and the accessibility of the phantasmal invospectra.

The exploration of the invospectra by new forms of automata was now theoretically possible. It gave a glimpse of omnipotence, a panorama of entirely new universals unsuspected even twelve years ago.

Today, the first of the new autofleets had been launched into the richest and least hazardous invos. Eight hundred and

ninety had gone out. Communication ceased after 3.056 pi-lecs, and after another 7.01 pi-lecs, six units only had returned. Their findings were still being decoded. Of the other eight hundred and eighty-four units, nothing was known.

"Whatever the recordings have to tell us," Tenth vocalized, "this is a grave setback. At least half the city-hives on this continent will have to be switched off entirely as a conservation move, while the whole invospectrum situation is rethought."

The line of thought pursued was obscure to the Chief Scanner. He spoke. "Reasoning accepted. But relevance to

near-extinct humanity not understood by this unit."

"Our human inheritance built in to us has caused this setback, to my way of ratiocination. In same way, human attempts to achieve way of life in spaceways defeated by their primate ancestry. So we study Anderson. Hence order catch him rather than exterminate."

"Point understood."

"Anderson is special man, you see. He is—we have no such term—he is, in man-terms, a *writer*. His zoo, approximately 19,940 inhabitants, supports two or three such. Anderson wrote a fantasy story just before Nuclear Week. Story may be

crucial to our understanding. I have here and will read."

And for most of the time the two machines had been talking to each other, Anderson sprawled untidily on the floor, fully conscious, listening. He took up most of the chamber. It was too small for him to stand up in, being only about five feet high—though that was enormous by automata standards. He stared through his lower eyelids and gazed at the screen that represented Tenth Dominant. He stared at Chief Scanner Euler, who stood on his lightly clenched left fist, a retractable needle down into the man's skin, automatically making readings, alert to any possible movement the man

might make.

So man and machine were absolutely silent while the mural read out "A Touch of Neanderthal," Anderson's fantasy story from the time before Nuclear Week.

The corridors of the Department for Planetary Exploration (Admin.) were long, and the waiting that had to be done in them was long. Human K. D. Anderson clutched his blue summons card, leaned uncomfortably against a partition wall, and hankered for the old days when government was in man's hands and government departments were

civilized enough to waste good space on waiting rooms.

When at last he was shown into an Investigator's office, his morale was low. Nor was he reassured by the sight of the Investigator, one of the new ore-conserving mini androids.

"I'm Investigator Parsons, in charge of the Nehru II case. We summoned you here because we are confidently expecting you to help us, Mr. Anderson."

"Of course I will give such help as I can," Anderson said, "but I assure you I know nothing about Nehru II. Opportunities for space travel for humans are very limited—almost



nonexistent—nowadays, aren't they?"

"The conservation policy. You will be interested to know you are being sent to Nehru II shortly."

Anderson stared in amazement at the android. The latter's insignificant face was so blank it seemed impossible that it was not getting a sadistic thrill out of springing this shock on Anderson.

"I'm a prehistorian at the institute," Anderson protested. "My work is research. I know nothing at all about Nehru II."

"Nevertheless, you are classified as a Learned Man, and as such you are paid

by World Government. The Government has a legal right to send you wherever they wish. As for knowing nothing about the planet Nehru, there you attempt to deceive me. One of your old tutors, the human Dr. Arlblaster, as you are aware, went there to settle some years ago.”

Anderson sighed. He had heard of this sort of business happening to others, and he had kept his fingers crossed. Human affairs were increasingly under the edict of the Automated Boffin Predictors.

“And what has Arlblaster to do with me now?” he asked.

“You are going to Nehru to find out what has happened to him. Your story will be

that you are dropping in for old time's sake. You have been chosen for the job because you were one of his favorite pupils."

Bringing out a mescahale packet, Anderson lit one and insultingly offered his opponent one.

"Is Frank Arlblaster in trouble?"

"There is some sort of trouble on Nehru II," the Investigator agreed cautiously. "You are going there in order to find out just what sort of trouble it is."

"Well, I'll have to go if I'm ordered, of course. But I sill can't see why you want to send *me*. If there's trouble, send a

robot police ship."

The Investigator smiled. Very lifelike.

"We've already lost two police ships there. That's why we're going to send you. You might call it a new line of approach, Mr. Anderson."

A metal Tom Thumb using blood-and-guts irony!

The track curved and began to descend into a green valley. Swettenham's settlement, the only town on Nehru II, lay dustily in one loop of a meandering river. As the nose of his tourer dipped

toward the valley, K. D. Anderson felt the heat increase; it was cradled in the valley like water in the palm of the hand.

Just as he started to sweat, something appeared in the grassy track ahead of him. He braked and stared ahead in amazement.

A small animal faced him.

It stood some two feet six high at the shoulder; its coat was thick and shaggy, its four feet clumsy; its long ugly skull supported two horns, the anterior being over a foot long. When it had looked its fill at Anderson, it lumbered into a bush and disappeared.

"Hey!" Anderson called.

Flinging open the door, he jumped out, drew his stun-gun and ran into the bushes after it. He reckoned he knew a baby woolly rhinoceros when he saw one.

The ground was hard, the grass long. The bushes extended down the hill, growing in clumps. The animal was disappearing around one of the clumps. Anderson spotted it and plunged on in pursuit. No prehistorian worth his salt would have thought of doing otherwise; these beasts were presumed to be extinct on Nehru II as they were on Sol III.

He ran on. The woolly rhino—if it was a woolly rhino—had headed toward

Swettenham's settlement There was no sign of it now.

Two jagged boulders, about twelve feet high, stood at the bottom of the slope. Baffled now that his quarry had disappeared, proceeding more slowly, Anderson moved toward the boulders. As he went he classified them almost unthinkingly: impacted siltstone, deposited here by the glaciers which had once ground down this valley, now gradually disintegrating.

The silence all around made itself felt. This was an almost empty planet, primitive, spinning slowly on its axis to form a leisurely twenty-nine-hour day. And those days were generally cloudy.

Swettenham, located beneath a mountain range in the cooler latitudes of the southern hemisphere, enjoyed a mild, muggy climate. Even the gravity, 0.16 of Earth gravity, reinforced the general feeling of lethargy.

Anderson rounded the tall boulders.

A great glaring face thrust itself up at his. Sloe black eyes peered from their twin caverns, a club whirled, and his stun-gun was knocked spinning.

Anderson jumped back. He dropped into a fighting stance, but his attacker showed no sign of following up his initial success. Which was fortunate; beneath the man's tan shirt, massive biceps and



shoulders bulged. His jaw was pugnacious, not to say prognathous; altogether a tough hombre, Anderson thought. He took the conciliatory line, his baby rhino temporarily forgotten.

"I wasn't hunting you," he said. "I was chasing an animal. It must have surprised you to see me appear suddenly with a gun, huh?"

"Huh?" echoed the other. He hardly looked surprised. Reaching out a hairy arm, he grabbed Anderson's wrist.

"You coming to Swettenham," he said.

"I was doing just that," Anderson agreed angrily, pulling back. "But my car's up

the hill with my sister in it, so if you'll let go I'll rejoin her."

"Bother about her later. You coming to Swettenham," the tough fellow said. He started plodding determinedly toward the houses, the nearest of which showed through the bushes only a hundred yards away. Humiliated, Anderson had to follow. To pick an argument with this dangerous creature in the open was unwise. Marking the spot where his gun lay, he moved forward with the hope that his reception in the settlement would be better than first signs indicated.

It wasn't.

Swettenham consisted of two horseshoe-

shaped lines of bungalows and huts, one inside the other. The outer line faced outward onto the meandering half-circle of river; the inner and more impressive line faced inward onto a large and dusty square where a few trees grew. Anderson's captor brought him into this square and gave a call.

The grip on his arm was released only when fifteen or more men and women had sidled out and gathered around him, staring at him in curious fashion without comment. None of them looked bright. Their hair grew long, generally drooping over low foreheads. Their lower lips generally protruded. Some of them were near nude. Their collective body smell

was offensively strong.

"I guess you don't have many visitors on Nehru II these days," Anderson said uneasily.

By now he felt like a man in a bad dream. His space craft was a mile away over two lines of hills, and he was heartily wishing himself a mile away in it. What chiefly alarmed him was not so much the hostility of these people as their very presence. Swettenham's was the only Earth settlement on this otherwise empty planet: and it was a colony for intellectuals, mainly intellectuals disaffected by Earth's increasingly automated life. This crowd, far from looking like eggheads,

resembled apes.

"Tell us where you come from," one of the men in the crowd said. "Are you from Earth?"

"I'm an Earthman—I was born on Earth," said Anderson, telling his prepared tale. "I've actually just come from Lenin's Planet, stopping in here on my way back to Earth. Does that answer your question?"

"Things are still bad on Earth?" a woman inquired of Anderson. She was young. He had to admit he could recognize a sort of beauty in her ugly countenance. "Is the Oil War still going on?"

"Yes," Anderson admitted. "And the Have-Not Nations are fighting a conventional war against Common Europe. But our latest counterattack against South America seems to be going well, if you can believe the telecasts. I guess you all have a load of questions you want to ask about the home planet. I'll answer them when I've been directed to the man I came to Nehru to visit, Dr. Frank Arlblaster. Will someone kindly show me his dwelling?"

This caused some discussion. At least it was evident the name Arlblaster meant something to them.

"The man you want will not see you yet," someone announced.

"Direct me to his house, and I'll worry about that. I'm an old pupil of his. Hell be pleased to see me."

They ignored him for a fragmentary argument of their own. The hairy man who had caught Anderson—his fellows called him Ell—repeated vehemently, "He's a Crow!"

"Of course he's a Crow," one of the others agreed. "Take him to Menderstone."

That they spoke Universal English was a blessing. It was slurred and curiously accented, but quite unmistakable.

"Do you mean Stanley A. Menderstone?" asked Anderson with sudden hope. The literary critic had certainly been one of Swettenham's original group that had come to form its own intellectual center in the wilds of this planet.

"Well take you to him," Ell's friend said.

They seemed reluctant to trade in straight answers, Anderson observed. He wondered what his sister Kay was doing, half-expecting to see her drive the tourer into the settlement at any moment.

Seizing Anderson's wrist—they were a possessive lot—Ell's friend set off at a good pace for the last house on one end



of the inner horseshoe. The rest of the crowd moved back into convenient shade. Many of them squatted, formidable, content, waiting, watching. Dogs moved between huts, a duck toddled up from the river, flies circled dusty excreta. Behind everything stood the mountains, spurting cloud.

The Menderstone place did not look inviting. It had been built long and low some twenty years past. Now the stresscrete was all cracked and stained, the steel-frame windows rusting, the panes of glass them-selves as bleary as a drunkard's stare.

Ell's friend went up to the door and kicked on it. Then he turned without

either hurrying or delaying to go and join his friends, leaving Anderson standing on the step.

The door opened.

A beefy man stood there, the old-fashioned rifle in his hands reinforcing his air of enormous self-sufficiency. His face was as brown and pitted as the keel of a junk; he was bald and his forehead shone as if a high polish had just been applied to it. Although probably into his sixties, he gave the impression of having looked just as he did now for the last twenty years.

Most remarkably, he wore lenses over his eyes, cored in place by wires

twisting behind his ears. Anderson recalled the name for this old-fashioned apparatus: spectacles.

"Have you something you wish to say or do to me?" demanded the bespectacled man, impatiently wagging his rifle.

"My name's K. D. Anderson. Your friends suggested I come to see you."

"My what? Friends? If you wish to speak to me you'd better take more care over your choice of words."

"Mr. Menderstone—if you are Mr. Menderstone—choosing words is at present the least of my worries. I should appreciate hospitality and a little help."

"You must be from Earth or you wouldn't ask a complete stranger for such rare things. *Alice!*"

This last name was bawled back into the house. It produced a sharp-featured female countenance which looked over Menderstone's shoulder like a parrot peering from its perch.

"Good afternoon, madam," Anderson said, determinedly keeping his temper. "May I come in and speak to you for a while? I'm newly arrived on Nehru."

"Jesus! The first 'good afternoon' I've heard in a lifetime," the woman answering to the name of Alice exclaimed. "You'd better come in, you

poetical creature!"

"I decide who comes in here," Menderstone I snapped, elbowing her back.

"Then why didn't you decide instead of dithering on the step? Come *in*, young man."

Menderstone's rifle barrel reluctantly swung back I far enough to allow Anderson entry. Alice led him through into a large miscellaneous room with a stove at one end, a bed at the other, and a table between.

Anderson took a brief glance around before focusing his attention on his host

and hostess. They were an odd pair. Seen close to, Menderstone looked less large than he had done on the step, yet the impression of a formidable personality was more marked than ever. Strong personalities were rare on Earth these days; Anderson decided he might even like the man if he would curb his hostility.

As it was, Alice seemed more approachable. Considerably younger than Menderstone, she had a good figure, and her face was sympathetic as well as slightly comical. With her birdlike head tilted on one side, she was examining Anderson with interest, so he addressed himself to her. Which proved to be a

mistake.

“I was just about to tell your husband that I stopped by to see an old friend and teacher of mine, Dr. Frank Arlblaster...”

Menderstone never let Anderson finish.

“Now you have sidled in here, Mr. K. D. Anderson, you’d be advised to keep your facts straight. Alice is not my wife; ergo, I am not her husband. We just live together, there being nobody else in Swettenham more suitable to live with. The arrangement, I may add, is as much one of convenience as passion.”

“Mr. Anderson and I both would appreciate your leaving your egotistical

self out of this for a while," Alice told him pointedly. Turning to Anderson, she motioned him to a chair and sat down on another herself. "How did you get permission to come here? I take it you have little idea of what goes on on Nehru II?" she asked.

"Who or what are those shambling apes outside?" he asked. "What makes you two so prickly? I thought this was supposed to be a colony of exiled intellectuals."

"He wants discussions of Kant, calculus, and copulation." Menderstone commented.

Alice said: "You expected to be greeted



by eggheads rather than apes?"

"I'd have settled for human beings."

"What do you know about Arlblaster?"

Anderson gestured impatiently.

"You're very kind to have me in, Mrs.— Alice, I mean—but can we have a conversation some other time? I've a tourer parked back up the hill with my sister Kay waiting in it for me to return. I want to know if I can get there and back without being waylaid by these ruffians outside."

Alice and Menderstone looked at each other. A deal of meaning seemed to pass

between them. After a pause, unexpectedly, Menderstone thrust his rifle forward, butt first.

"Take this," he said. "Nobody will harm you if they see a rifle in your hand. Be prepared to use it. Get your car and your sister and come back here."

"Thanks a lot, but I have a revolver back near my vehicle...."

"Carry my rifle. They know it; they respect it. Bear this in mind—you're in a damn sight nastier spot than you imagine as yet. Don't let anything—*anything*—deflect you from getting straight back here. Then you'll listen to what we have to say."

Anderson took the rifle and balanced it, getting the feel of it. It was heavy and slightly oiled, without a speck of dust, unlike the rest of the house. For some obscure reason, contact with it made him uneasy.

"Aren't you dramatizing your situation here, Menderstone? You ought to try living on Earth these days—it's like an armed camp. The tension there is real, not manufactured."

"Don't tell me you didn't feel something when you came in here," Menderstone said. "You were trembling!"

"What do you know about Arlblaster?" Alice put her question again.

"A number of things. Arlblaster discovered a pre-historic-type skull in Brittany, France, back in the eighties. He made a lot of strange claims for the skull. By current theories, it should have been maybe ninety-five thousand years old, but RCD made it only a few hundred years old. Arlblaster lost a lot of face over it academically. He retired from teaching—I was one of his last pupils—and became very solitary. When he gave up everything to work on a cranky theory of his own, the government naturally disapproved."

"Ah, the old philosophy: 'Work for the common man rather than the common good,'" sighed Menderstone. "And you

think he was a crank, do you?"

"He was a crank! And as he was on the professions role as Learned Man, he was paid by world government" he explained. "Naturally, they expected results from him."

"Naturally," agreed Menderstone. "Their sort of results."

"Life isn't easy on Earth, Menderstone, as it is here. A man has to get on or get out. Anyhow, when Arlblaster got a chance to join Swettenham's newly formed colony here, he seized the opportunity to come. I take it you both know him? How is he?"

"I suppose one would say he is still alive," Menderstone said.

"But he's changed since you knew him," Alice said, and she and Menderstone laughed.

"I'll go and get my tourer," Anderson said, not liking them or the situation one bit. "See you."

Cradling the rifle under his right arm, he went out into the square. The sun shone momentarily through the cloud cover so hotly that it filled the shadows with splotches of red and gray. Behind the splotches, in front of the creaking houses of Swettenham, the people of Swettenham squatted or leaned with

simian abandon in the trampled dust.

Keeping his eye on them, Anderson moved off, heading for the hill. Nobody attempted to follow him. A haphazardly beaten track led up the slope, its roughness emphasizing the general neglect.

When he was out of sight of the village, Anderson's anxiety got the better of him. He ran up the track calling: "Kay, Kay!"

No answer. The clotted light seemed to absorb his voice.

Breasting the slope, he passed the point where he had seen the woolly rhinoceros. His vehicle was where he

had left it. Empty.

He ran to it, rifle ready. He ran around it. He shouted his sister's name again. No reply.

Checking the panic he felt, Anderson looked about for footprints but could find none. Kay was gone, spirited away. Yet there was nowhere on the whole planet to go *to*, except Swettenham.

On sudden impulse he ran down to the two boulders where he had encountered the brutish Ell. They stood deserted and silent. When he had retrieved his revolver from where it had fallen, he turned back. He trudged grimly back to the vehicle, his shirt sticking to his



spine. Climbing in, he switched on and coasted into the settlement.

In the square again, he braked and jumped down, confronting the chunky bodies in the shadows.

"Where's my sister?" he shouted to them. "What sort of funny business are you playing at?"

Someone answered one syllable, croaking it into the brightness: "Crow!"

"Crow!" someone else called, throwing the word forward like a stone.

In a rage, Anderson aimed Menderstone's rifle over the low roof

tops and squeezed the trigger. The weapon recoiled with a loud explosion. Visible humanity upped onto its flat feet and disappeared into hovels or back streets.

Anderson went over to Menderstone's door, banged on it, and walked in. Menderstone was eating a peeled, apple and did not cease to do so when his guest entered.

"My sister has been kidnapped," Anderson said. "Where are the police?"

"The nearest police are on Earth," Menderstone said, between bites. "There you have robot-controlled police states stretching from pole to pole. 'Police on

Earth, goodwill toward men.' Here on Nehru we have only anarchy." It's horrible, but better than your robotocracy. My advice to you, Anderson, which I proffer in all seriousness, is to beat it back to your little rocket ship and head for home without bothering too much about your sister."

"Look, Menderstone, I'm in no mood for your sort of nonsense! I don't brush off that easy. Who's in charge around here? Where is the egghead camp? Who has some effectual say in local affairs? I want to speak to him."

"'Who's in charge around here?' You really miss the iron hand of your robot

bosses, don't you?"

Menderstone put his apple down and advanced, still chewing. His big face was as hard and cold as an undersea rock.

"Give me that rifle," he said, laying a hand on the barrel and tugging. He flung it onto the table. "Don't talk big to me, K. D. Anderson! I happen to loathe the regime on Earth and all the pip-squeaks like you it spawns. If you need help, see you ask politely."

"I'm not asking you for help—it's plain you can't even help yourself!"

"You'd better not give Stanley too much

lip," Alice said. She had come in and stood behind Menderstone, her parrot's-beak nose on one side as she regarded Anderson. "You may not find him very lovable, but I'm sad to say that he *is* the egghead camp nowadays. This dump was its old HQ. But all the other boys have gone to join your pal Arlblaster up in the hills, across the river."

"It must be pleasanter and healthier there. I can quite see why they didn't want you two with them," Anderson said sourly.

Menderstone burst into laughter,

"In actuality, you don't see at all."

"Go ahead and explain, then. I'm listening."

Menderstone resumed his apple, his free hand thrust into a trouser pocket.

"Do we explain to him, Alice? Can you tell yet which side he'll be on? A high N-factor in his makeup, wouldn't you say?"

"He could be a Crow. More likely an Ape, though, I agree. Hell, whichever he is, he's a relief after your undiluted company, Stanley."

"Don't start making eyes at him, you cow! He could be your son!"

"What was good enough for Jocasta is good enough for me," Alice cackled. Turning to Anderson, she said, "Don't get involved in our squabbles! You'd best put up here for the night. At least they aren't cannibals outside—they won't eat your sister, whatever else they do. There must be a reason for kidnapping her, so if you sit tight they'll get in touch with you. Besides, it's half-past nineteen, and your hunt for Arlblaster would be better put off till tomorrow morning."

After further argument, Anderson agreed with what she suggested. Menderstone thrust out his lower lip and said nothing. It was impossible to determine how he felt about having a guest.

The rest of the daylight soon faded. After he had unloaded his supply kit from his vehicle and stashed it indoors, Anderson had nothing to do. He tried to make Alice talk about the situation on Nehru II, but she was not informative; though she was a garrulous type, something seemed to hold her back. Only over supper, taken as the sun sank, did she cast some light on what was happening by discussing her arrival on the planet.

"I used to be switchboard operator and assistant radiop on a patrol ship," she said. "That was five years ago. Our ship touched down in a valley two miles south of here. The ship's still there, though they say a landslide buried it last



winter. None of the crew returned to it once they had visited Swettenham."

"Keith doesn't want to hear your past history," Menderstone said, using Anderson's first name contemptuously.

"What happened to the crew?" Anderson asked.

She laughed harshly.

"They got wrapped up in your friend Arlblaster's way of life, shall we say. They became converted....All except me. And since I couldn't manage the ship by myself, I also had to stay here."

"How lucky for me, dear," said

Menderstone with heavy mock-tenderness. "You're just my match, aren't you?"

Alice jumped up, sudden tears in her eyes.

"Shut up, you—toad! You're a pain in the neck to me and yourself and everyone! You needn't remind what a bitch you've turned me into!" Flinging down her fork, she turned and ran from the room.

"The divine eternal female! Shall we divide what she has left of her supper between us?" Menderstone asked, reaching out for Alice's plate.

Anderson stood up.

“What she said was an understatement, judging by the little I've seen here.”

“Do you imagine I enjoy this life? Or her? Or you, for that matter? Sit down, Anderson. Existence is something to be got through the best way possible, isn't it? You weary me with your trite and predictable responses.”

This stormy personal atmosphere prevailed till bedtime. A bitter three-cornered silence was maintained until Menderstone had locked Anderson into a distant part of the long building.

He had blankets with him, which he

spread over the moldy camp bed provided. He did not investigate the rooms adjoining his; several of the doors bore names vaguely familiar to him; the rooms had been used when the intellectual group was flourishing but were now deserted.

Tired though Anderson was, as soon as his head was down he began to worry about Kay and the general situation. Could his sister possibly have had any reason for returning on foot to the ship? Tomorrow he must go and see. He turned over restlessly.

Something was watching him through the window.

In a flash, Anderson was out of bed, gripping the revolver, his heart hammering. The darkness outside was almost total. He glimpsed only a brutal silhouette in which eyes gleamed, and then it was gone.

He saw his foolishness in accepting Alice's laissez faire advice to wait until Kay's captors got in touch with him. He must have been crazy to agree: or else the general lassitude of Nehru II had overcome him. Whatever was happening here, it was nasty enough to endanger Kay's life, without any messenger boys arriving first to parley about it.

Alice had said that Arlblaster lived across the river. If he were as much the

key to the mystery as he seemed to be, then Arlblaster should be confronted as soon as possible. Thoroughly roused, angry, vexed j with himself, Anderson went over to the window and opened it.

He peered into the scruffy night.

He could see nobody. As his eyes adjusted to the dark, Anderson discerned nearby features well enough. A bright star in the sky which he took to be Bose, Nehru II's little moon, lent some light. Swinging his leg over the sill, Anderson dropped to the ground and stood tensely outside.

Nothing moved. A dog howled. Making his way I between the outer circle of

houses, gun in hand, Anderson came to the river's edge. A sense of the recklessness of what he was doing assailed him, but he pressed on.

Pausing now and again to insure he was not being followed, he moved along the river bank avoiding the obstacles with which it was littered. He reached a bridge of a sort. A tall tree had been felled, so that it lay across the stretch of water. Its underside was lapped by the river.

Anderson tucked his gun away and crossed the bridge with his arms outstretched for balance.

On the far side, crude attempts to cultivate the ground had been made. The untidy patchwork stopped as the upward slope of the land became more pronounced. No dwellings were visible. He stopped and listened.

He could hear a faint and indescribable choric noise ahead. As he went forward, the noise became more distinct, less a part of the ill-defined background of furtive ground and river sounds. On the higher ground, a patch of light was now vaguely distinguishable.

This light increased as did the sound. Circumnavigating a thorny mass of brush, Anderson could see that there was a depression ahead of him in the rising



valley slope. Something—a ceremony?—was going on in the depression. He ran the last few yards, doubled up, his revolver ready again, grinning in his excitement.

On the lip of the depression, he flung himself flat and peered down into the dip.

A fire was burning in the middle of the circular hollow. Around it some three dozen figures paraded, ringing two men. One of the two was a menial, throwing powder into the blaze, so that green and crimson flames spurted up; the other filled some sort of priestly role. All the others were naked. He wore a cloak and

pointed hat.

He sang and waved his arms, a tall figure that woke in Anderson untraceable memories. The dancers—if their rhythmic shuffle might be called a dance—responded with low cries. The total effect, if not beautiful, was oddly moving.

Hypnotized, Anderson watched. He found that his head was nodding in time to the chant. There was no sign of Kay here, as he had half-anticipated. But by his carrot-colored beard and his prominent nose the priest was distinguishable even in the uncertain firelight. It was Frank Arlblaster.

Or it had been Frank Arlblaster. Items that most easily identify a man to his friends are his stance and his walk. Arlblaster's had changed. He seemed to sag at the knees and shuffle now, his torso no longer vertical to the ground. Yet the high timbre of his voice remained unaltered, though he called out in a language unknown to Anderson.

The dancers shuffled eagerly, clapping their hands, nodding their shaggy heads. Gradually it dawned on Anderson what they looked like. Beyond doubt they were the inhabitants of Swettenham: they were also, unmistakably, pre-homo sapiens. He might have been witnessing a ritual of Neanderthal men.

Mingled repulsion and elation rooted Anderson to the spot where he lay. Yes, unarguably the faces of Ell and his friends earlier had borne the touch of Neanderthal. Once the idea took, he could not shake it off.

He lay in a trance of wonder until the dance had stopped. Now all the company turned to face the spot where he lay concealed. Anderson felt the nerves tingle along his spinal cord. Arlblaster lifted an arm and pointed toward him. Then in a loud voice he cried out, the crowd shouting with him in chorus.

"Aigh murg eg neggy oggy Kay bat doo!"

The words were for Anderson.

They were unintelligible to him, yet they seemed to penetrate him. That his whereabouts was known meant nothing beside an even greater pressure on his brain. His whole being trembled on the threshold of some great, disastrous revelation.

A magical trance had snared him. He was literally not himself. The meaningless words seemed to shake him to his soul. Gasping, he climbed to his feet and took himself off at a run. There was no pursuit.

He had no memory of getting back to Mender-stone's place, no recollection of

crossing the rough bridge, no recollection of tumbling through the window. He lay panting on the bed, his face buried in the pillow.

This state in its turn was succeeded by a vast unease. He could not sleep. Sleep was beyond him. He trembled in every limb. The hours of night dragged on forever.

At last Anderson sat up. A faint dawn washed into the world. Taking a torch from his kit, he went to investigate the other empty rooms next to his.

A dusty corridor led to them.

Alice had said this had been the HQ of

Swettenham's original intellectual coterie. There was a library in one room, with racked spools gathering dust; Anderson did not trouble to read any titles. He felt vague antipathy for the silent ranks of them. Another room was a small committee chamber. Maps hung on the walls, meaningless, unused. He saw without curiosity that the flags stuck to one map had mostly fallen on the floor.

A third room was a recreation room. It held a assortment of egghead toys. There was even a model electric railway of the type fashionable on Earth a couple of centuries ago. A lathe in the corner suggested that rail and rolling

stock might have been made on the premises.

Anderson peered at the track. It gleamed in his torchlight. No dust on it. He hesitatingly ran a finger along it.

A length of siding raised itself like a snake's head. Coiling up, it wrapped around Anderson's wrist, snapped tight. He pulled at it, yelling in surprise. The whole layout reared up, struggling to get at him.

He backed away, beating at the stuff as it rolled up from the table. The track writhed and launched itself at him, scattering wagons and locomotives. He fired his revolver wildly. Loops of



railroad fell over him, over his head, wrapping itself madly about him.

Anderson fell to the floor, dropping his gun, dropping the torch, tearing at the thin bands of metal as they bit tighter. The track threshed savagely, binding his legs together. He was shouting incoherently.

As he struggled, Menderstone ran into the room, rifle in hand, Alice behind him. It was the last thing Anderson saw as he lost consciousness.

When he roused, it was to find himself in Menderstone's living room, sprawled on

a bunk. Alice sat by him, turning toward him as he stirred. Menderstone was not in the room.

"My God ..." Anderson groaned. His brain felt curiously lucid, as if a fever had just left him.

"It's time you woke up. I'll get you some soup if you can manage it," Alice said.

"Wait, Alice ... Alice...." His lips trembled as he formed the words. "I'm myself again. What came over me? Yesterday—I don't have a sister called Kay. I don't have a sister at all! I was an only child!"

She was not surprised. He sat up, glaring

at her.

"I guessed as much, said so to Stanley. When you brought your supply kit in from the vehicle there was nothing female in it."

"My mind. I was so sure—I could have pictured her, described her—She was actual! And yet if anyone ... if you'd challenged me direct, I believe I'd have known it was an... an illusion."

His sense of loss was forced aside as another realization crowded in on him.

He sank down confusedly, closing his eyes, muttering. "*Aigh murg eg neggy oggy Kay bat doo....* That's what they

told me on the hillside: 'You have no sister called Kay.' That's what it meant.... Alice, it's so strange...."

His hand sought hers and found it. It was ice cold.

"Your initial is K, Keith," she said, pale at the lips. "You were out there seeking yourself."

Her face looking down at him was seared and ugly; yet a sort of gentle patience in it dissolved the ugliness.

"I'm...I'm in some way mad," he whispered.

"Of course you're mad!" Menderstone

said as he burst open the door. "Let go of his hand, Alice—this is our beloved home, not the cheap seats in the feelies on Earth. Anderson, if you aren't insane, why were you rolling about on the floor, foaming at the mouth and firing your damned gun, at six o'clock this morning?"

Anderson sat up.

"You saw me entangled in that jinxed railroad when you found me, Menderstone! Another minute and it would have squeezed the life out of me."

Menderstone looked genuinely puzzled. It was the first time Anderson had seen him without the armor of his self-

assurance.

“The model railroad?” he said. “It was undisturbed. You hadn’t touched it.”

“It touched me,” Anderson said chokingly. “It... it attacked me, wrapped itself round me like an octopus. You must have peeled it off me before getting me through here.”

“I see,” Menderstone said, his face grim.

He nodded slowly, sitting down absentmindedly, and then nodding again to Alice.

“You see what this means, woman? Anderson's N-factor is rising to

domination. This young man is not on our side, as I suspected from the first. He's no Crow. Anderson, your time's up here—sorry! From now on, you're one of Arlblaster's men. You'll never get back to Earth.”

“On the contrary, I'm on my way back now.”

Menderstone shook his head.

“You don't know your own mind. I mean the words literally. You're doomed to stay here, playing out the miserable life of an Ape! Earth has lost another of her estimable nonentities.”

“Menderstone, you're eaten up with

hatred! You hate this planet, you hate Earth!"

Menderstone stood up again, putting his rifle down on the table and coming across to Anderson with his fists bunched.

"Does that make me crazy, you nincompoop? Let me give you a good hard fact-reason why I loathe what's happening on Earth! I loathe mankind's insatiable locust activities, which it has the impertinence to call "assuming mastery over nature." It has overeaten and overpopulated itself until the only other animals left are in the sea, in zoos, or in food-factories. Now it is exhausting the fossil fuels on which its



much-vaunted technology relies. The final collapse is due! So much for mastery of nature! Why, it can't even master its own mind!"

"The situation may be desperate, but World Government is slowly introducing economies which...."

"World Government! You dare mention World Government? A pack of computers and automata? Isn't it an admission that man is a locust without self-discipline that he has to hand over control piecemeal to robots?"

"And what does it all signify? Why, that civilization is afraid of itself, because it always tries to destroy itself.

"Why should it try to do that? Every wise man in history has asked himself why. None of them found the answer until your pal Arlblaster tumbled on it, because they were all looking in the wrong direction. So the answer lies hidden here where nobody on Earth can get at it, because no one who arrives here goes back. *I* could go back, but I don't because I prefer to think of them stewing in their own juice, in the mess they created."

"I'm going back," Anderson said. "I'm going to collect Arlblaster, and I'm going back right away—when your speech is finished."

Menderstone laughed.

“Like to bet on it? But don't interrupt when I'm talking, K. D. Anderson! Listen to the truth while you have the chance, before it dies for ever.”

"Stop bellowing, Stanley!" Alice exclaimed.

"Silence, female! Attend! Do you need proof that fear-ridden autocrats rule Earth? They have a star-drive on their hands, they discover a dozen habitable planets within reach; what do they do? They keep them uninhabited. Having read just enough history to frighten them, they figure that if they establish colonies those colonies will rebel against them.

"Swettenham was an exceptional man. How he pulled enough strings to get us established here, I'll never know. But this little settlement—far too small to make a real colony—was an exception to point to a rule: that the ruling regime is pathologically antilife—and must be increasingly so as robots take over."

Anderson stood up, steadying himself against the bunk.

"Why don't you shut up, you lonely man? I'm getting out of here."

Menderstone's reaction was unexpected. Smiling, he produced Anderson's gun.

"Suit yourself, lad! Here's your revolver.

Pick it up and go."

He dropped the revolver at his feet. Anderson stooped to pick it up. The short barrel gleamed dully. Suddenly it looked—alien, terrifying. He straightened, baffled, leaving the weapon on the floor. He moved a step away from it, his backbone tingling.

Sympathy and pain crossed Alice's face as she saw his expression. Even Menderstone relaxed.

"You won't need a gun where you're going," he said. "Sorry it turned out this way, Anderson! The long and tedious powers of evolution force us to be antagonists. I felt it the moment I saw

you."

"Get lost!"

Relief surged through Anderson as he emerged into the shabby sunshine. The house had seemed like a trap. He stood relaxedly in the middle of the square, sagging slightly at the knees, letting the warmth soak into him. Other people passed in ones or twos. A couple of strangely adult-looking children stared at him.

Anderson felt none of the hostility he had imagined yesterday. After all, he told himself, these folk never saw a stranger from one year to the next; to crowd around him was natural. No one had

offered him harm—even Ell had a right to act to protect himself when a stranger charged around a rock carrying a gun. And when his presence had been divined on the hillside last night, they had offered him nothing more painful than revelation: "You have no sister called Kay."

He started walking. He knew he needed a lot of explanations; he even grasped that he was in the middle of an obscure process which still had to be worked out. But at present he was content just to exist, to *be* and not to think.

Vaguely, the idea that he must see Arlblaster stayed with him.

But new—or very ancient?—parts of his brain seemed to be in bud. The landscape about him grew in vividness, showering him with sensory data. Even the dust had a novel sweet scent.

He crossed the tree-trunk bridge without effort and walked along the other bank of the river, enjoying the flow of the water. A few women picked idly at vegetable plots. Anderson stopped to question one of them.

"Can you tell me where I'll find Frank Arlblaster?"

"That man sleeps now. Sun go, he wakes. Then you meet him."



"Thanks." It was simple, wasn't it?

He walked on. There was time enough for everything. He walked a long way, steadily uphill. There was a secret about time—he had it somewhere at the back of his head—something about not chopping it into minutes and seconds. He was all alone by the meandering river now, beyond people; what did the river know of time?

Anderson noticed the watch strapped on his wrist. What did it want with him, or he with it? A watch was the badge of servitude of a time-serving culture. With sudden revulsion for it, he unbuckled it and tossed it into the river.

The shattered reflection in the water was of piled cloud. It would rain. He stood rooted, as if casting away his watch left him naked and defenseless. It grew cold. *Something had altered.* ...Fear came in like a distant flute.

He looked around, bewildered. A curious double noise filled the air, a low and grating rumble punctuated by high-pitched cracking sounds. Uncertain where this growing uproar came from, Anderson ran forward, then paused again.

Peering back, he would see the women still stooped over their plots. They looked tiny and crystal-clear, figures glimpsed through the wrong end of a

telescope. From their indifference, they might not have heard the sound. Anderson turned around again.

Something was coming down the valley!

Whatever it was, its solid front scooped up the river and ran with it high up the hills skirting the valley. It came fast, squealing and rumbling.

It glittered like water. Yet it was not water; its bow was too sharp, too unyielding. It was a glacier.

Anderson fell to the ground.

"I'm mad, still mad!" he cried, hiding his eyes, fighting with himself to hold the

conviction that this was merely a delusion. He told himself no glacier ever moved at that crazy rate. Yet even as he tried to reassure himself, the ground shook under him.

Groaning, he heaved himself up. The wall of ice was bearing down on him fast. It splintered and fell as it came, sending up a shower of ice particles as it was ground down, but always there was more behind it. It stretched right up the valley, gray and uncompromising, scouring out the hills' sides as it came.

Now its noise was tremendous. Cracks played over its towering face like lightning. Thunder was on its brow.

Impelled by panic, Anderson turned to run, his furs flapping against his legs.

The glacier moved too fast. It came with such force that he felt his body vibrate. He was being overtaken.

He cried aloud to the god of the glacier, remembering the old words.

There was a cave up the valley slope. He ran like mad for it, driving himself, while the ice seemed to crash and scream at his heels. With a final desperate burst of strength, he flung himself gasping through the low, dark opening, and clawed his way hand-over-fist toward the back of the cave.

He just made it. The express glacier ground on, flinging earth into the opening. For a moment the cave lit with a green blue light. Then it was sealed up with reverberating blackness.

Sounds of rain and of his own sobbing. These were the first things he knew. Then he became aware that someone was smoothing his hair and whispering comfort to him. Propping himself on one elbow, Anderson opened his eyes.

The cave entrance was unblocked. He could see grass and a strip of river outside. Rain fell heavily. His head had been resting in Alice's lap; she it was who stroked his hair. He recalled her distasteful remark about Jocasta, but this

was drowned in a welter of other recollections.

"The glacier...Has it gone? Where is it?"

"You're all right, Keith. There's no glacier around here. Take it easy!"

"It came bursting down the valley toward me.... Alice, how did you get here?"

She put out a hand to pull his head down again, but he evaded it.

"When Stanley turned you out, I couldn't bear to let you go like that, friendless, so I followed you. Stanley was furious, of

course, but I knew you were in danger. Look, I've brought your revolver."

"I don't want it! - It's haunted."

"Don't say that, Keith. Don't turn into a Neanderthal!"

"What?" He sat fully upright, glaring at her through the gloom. "What the hell do you mean?"

"You know. You understood, didn't you?"

"I don't understand one bit of what's going on here. You'd better start explaining. And first of all, I want to know what it looked as if I was doing



when I ran into this cave."

"Don't get excited, Keith. I'll tell you what I can." She put her hand over his before continuing. "After you'd thrown your watch into the river, you twisted and ran about—as if you were dodging something—and then rushed in here."

"You didn't *hear* anything odd? See anything?"

"No."

"And no glaciers?"

"Not on Nehru, no!"

"And was I... dressed in skins?"

"Of course you weren't!"

"My mind.... I'd have sworn there was a glacier ... moving too fast...."

Alice's face was pale as she shook her head.

"Oh, Keith, you are in danger. You must get back to Earth at once. Can't you see this means you have a Neanderthal layer of your brain? Obviously, you were experiencing a race memory from that newly opened layer. It was so strong it took you over entirely for a while. You *must* get away."

He stood up, his shoulders stooped to keep his skull from scraping the rock

overhead. Rain drummed down outside. He shook with impatience.

"Alice, Alice, begin at the beginning, will you? I don't know a thing except that I'm no longer in control of my own brain."

"Were you ever in control? Is the average person? Aren't all the sciences of the mind attempts to bring the uncontrollable under control? Even when you're asleep, it's only the neocortex switched off. The older limbic layers-they never sleep. There's no day or night that deep."

"So what? What has the unconscious to do with this particular setup?"

"The unconscious' is a pseudoscientific term to cover a lack of knowledge. You have a moron in your skull who never sleeps, sweetie! He gives you a nudge from time to time; it's his crazy thoughts you overhear when you think you're dreaming."

"Look, Alice...."

She stood up too. Anxiety twisted her face. "You wanted an explanation, Keith. Have the grace to listen to it. Let me start from the other end of the tale, and see if you like it any better.

"Neanderthal was a species of man living in Europe some eighty thousand and more years ago, before homo sap

came along. They were gentle creatures, close to nature, needing few artifacts, brain cases bigger even than homo sap. They were peaceful, unscientific in a special sense you'll understand later.

"Then along came a different species, the Crows-Cro-Magnons, you'd call them-Western man's true precursors. Being warlike, they defeated the Neanderthals at every encounter. They killed off the men and mated with the Neanderthal women, which they kept captive. We, modern man, sprang from the bastard race so formed. This is where Arlblaster's theory comes in.

"The mixture never quite mixed. That's why we still have different, often

antagonistic, blood groups today-and why there are inadequate neural linkages in the brain. Crow and Neanderthal brains never established full contact. Crow was dominant, but a power-deprived lode of Neanderthal lingered on, as apparently vestigial as an appendix."

"My God, I'd like a mescahale," Anderson said. They had both sat down again, ignoring the occasional beads of moisture which dripped down their necks from the roof of the cave. Alice was close to him, her eyes bright in the shadow.

"Do you begin to see it historically,

Keith? Western man with this clashing double heritage in him has always been restless. Freud's theory of the id comes near to labeling the Neanderthal survivor in us. Arthur Koestler also came close. All civilization can be interpreted as a Crow attempt to vanquish that survivor and to escape from the irrational it represents. Yet at the same time the alien layer is a rich source for all artists, dreamers, and creators because it is the very well of magic.

"The Neanderthal had magic powers. He lived in a dawn age, the dawn of rationality, when it's no paradox to say that supernatural and natural are one.

The Crows, our ancestors, were scientific, or potentially scientific—spear-makers, rather than fruit-gatherers. They had a belief, fluctuating at first maybe, in cause and effect. As you know, all Western science represents a structure built on our acceptance of unalterable cause and effect.

"Such belief is entirely alien to the Neanderthal. He knows only happening, and from this stems his structure of magic. I use the present tense because the Neanderthal is still strong in man; and on Nehru II, he is not only strong but free, liberated at last from his captor, the Crow."

Anderson stirred, rubbing his wet skull.



"I suppose you're right."

"There's proof enough here," she said bitterly.

"I suppose it does explain why the civilization of old Europe—the ancient battleground of Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal—and the civilizations that arose from it in North America are the most diverse and most turbulent ever known. But this brings us back to Arlblaster, doesn't it? I can see that what has happened in Swettenham connects logically with his theory. The Brittany skull he found back in the eighties was pure Neanderthal, yet only a few hundred years old. Obviously it

belonged to a rare throwback."

"But how rare? You could pass a properly dressed Neanderthal in the streets of New York and never give him a second glance. Stanley says you often do."

"Let's forget Stanley! Arlblaster followed up his theory... Yes, I can see it myself. The proportion of Neanderthal would presumably vary from person to person. I can run over my friends mentally now and guess in which of them the proportion is highest."

"Exactly." She smiled at him, reassured and calmer now, even as he was, as she nursed his hand and his revolver. "And

because the political economic situation on Earth is as it is, Arlblaster found a way here to develop his theory and turn it into practice—that is, to release the prisoner in the brain. Earth would allow Swettenham's group little in the way of machinery or resources in its determination to keep them harmless, so they were thrust close to nature. That and intellectual recognition brought the Neanderthal to the surface, freed it."

"Everyone turned Neanderthal you mean?"

"Here on Nehru, which resembles prehistoric Earth in some respects, the Neanderthal represents better survival value than Crow. Yet not everyone

transformed, no. Stanley Menderstone did not. Nor Swettenham. Nor several others of the intellectuals. Their N-factor, as Stanley calls it, was either too low or nonexistent."

"What happened to Swettenham?"

"He was killed. So were the other pure Crows, all but Stanley, who's tough—as you saw. There was a heap of trouble at first, until they fully understood the problem and sorted themselves out."

"And those two patrol ships World Government sent?"

"I saw what happened to the one that brought me. About seventy-five percent

of the crew had a high enough N-factor to make the change; a willingness to desert helped them. The others ... died out. Got killed, to be honest. All but me. Stanley took care of me."

She laughed harshly. "If you can call it care."

"I've had my belly full of Stanley and Nehru II, Keith. I want you to take me back with you to Earth."

Anderson looked at her, still full of doubt.

"What about my N-factor? Obviously, I've got it in me. Hence the glacier, which was a much stronger danger

signal from my brain than the earlier illusion about having a sister. Hence, I suppose, my new fears of manufactured Crow objects like watches, revolvers, and ... model railroads. Am I Crow or not, for heaven's sake?"

"By the struggle you've been through with yourself, I'd say that you're equally balanced. Perhaps you can even decide. Which do you want to be?"

He looked at her in amazement.

"Crow, of course: my normal self. Who'd become a shambling, low-browed, shaggy tramp by choice?"

"The adjectives you use are subjective

and not really terms of abuse. In fact, they're Crow propaganda. Or so a Neanderthal would say. The two points of view are irreconcilable."

"Are you seriously suggesting.... Alice, they're sub-men!"

"To us they appear so. Yet they have contentment, and communion with the forces of Earth, and their magic. Nor are their brains inferior to Crow brains."

"Much good it did them! The Cro-Magnons still beat them."

"In a sense they have not yet been beaten. But their magic needs preparation, incantation—it's something

they can't do while fending off a fusillade of arrows. But left to themselves they can become spirits, animals...."

"Woolly rhinoceroses for instance?"

"Yes."

"To lure me from my wheeled machine, which they would fear! My God, Alice, can it be true?..." He clutched his head and groaned, then looked up to ask, "Why are you forcing their point of view on me, when you're a Crow?"

"Don't you see, my dear?" Her eyes were large as they searched his. "To find how strong your N-factor is. To find if



you're friend or enemy. When this rain stops, I *must* go back. Stanley will be looking for *me*, and it wouldn't surprise me if Arlblaster were not looking for you; he must know you've had time to sort things out in your mind. So I want to know if I can come back to Earth with you"

He shook himself, dashed a water drip off his forehead, tried to delay giving an answer.

"Earth's not so bad," he said. "Menderstone's right, of course; it is regimented—it would never suit an individualist like him. It's not so pretty as Nehru.... Yes, Alice, I'll take you back if you want to come. I can't leave

you here."

She flung herself onto him, clasping him in her arms, kissing his ear and cheek and lips.

"I'm a loving woman," she whispered fiercely. "As even Stanley...."

They stiffened at a noise outside the cave, audible above the rain. Anderson turned his head to look where she was looking. Rain was falling more gently now. Before its fading curtain a face appeared.

The chief features of this face were its low brow, two large and lustrous eyes, a prominent nose, and a straggling length

of wet, sandy beard. It was Frank Arlblaster.

He raised both hands.

"Come to see me, child of Earth, as I come to see you, peaceful, patient, all-potent...."

As more of him rose into view in the cave mouth, Alice fired the revolver. The bellow of its report in the confined space was deafening. At ten yards' range, she did not miss. Arlblaster clutched at his chest and tumbled forward into the wet ground, crying inarticulately.

Anderson turned on Alice and struck the

gun from her hand.

"Murder, sheer murder! You shouldn't have done it! You shouldn't have done..."

She smacked him across the cheek.

"If you're Crow, he's your enemy as well as mine! He'd have killed me! He's an Ape!" She drew a long, shuddering breath. "And now we've got to move fast for your ship before the pack hunts us down."

"You make me sick!" He tried to pick up the revolver but could not bring himself to touch it.

"Keith, I'll make it up to you on the journey home, I promise. I... I was desperate!"

"Just don't talk to me! Come on, let's git."

They slid past Arlblaster's body, out into the drizzling rain. As they started down the slope, a baying cry came from their left flank. A group of Neanderthals, men and women, stood on a promontory only two hundred yards away. They must have witnessed Arlblaster's collapse and were slowly marshaling their forces. As Alice and Anderson appeared, some of them ran forward.

"Run!" Alice shouted. "Down to the

river! Swim it and we're safe."

Close together, they sped down the slippery incline where an imaginary glacier had flowed. Without a pause or word, they plunged through reeds and mud and dived fully dressed into the slow waters. Making good time, the Neanderthals rushed down the slope after them, but halted when they reached the river.

Gaining the far bank, Anderson turned and helped Alice out of the water. She collapsed puffing on the grass.

"Not so young as I was.... We're safe now, Keith. Nothing short of a forest fire induces those apes to swim. But we still

might meet trouble this side.... We'll avoid the settlement. Even if the apes there aren't after us, we don't want to face Stanley with his rifle... Poor old Stanley! Give me a hand up."

Anderson moved on in surly silence. His mind was troubled by Arlblaster's death, and he felt he was being used.

The rain ceased as they pressed forward among dripping bushes. Traveling in a wide arc, they circled the village and picked up a track which led back toward Anderson's ship.

Alice grumbled intermittently as they went. At last

Anderson turned on her. '

"You don't have to come with me, Alice. If you want to, go back to Stanley Menderstone!"

"At least he cared about a woman's feelings."

"I warn you that they are not so fussy on Earth, where women don't have the same scarcity value." He hated himself for speaking so roughly. He needed solitude to sort out the turmoil in his brain.

Alice plodded along beside him without speaking. Sun gleamed. At last the black hull of the ship became visible between trees.



"You'll have to work on Earth!" he taunted her. "The robocracy will direct you."

"I'll get married. I've still got some looks."

"You've forgotten something, honey. Women have to have work certificates before they can marry these days. Regimentation will do you good."

A wave of hatred overcame him. He remembered the priestly Arlblaster dying. When Alice started to snap back at him, Anderson struck her on the shoulder. A look of panic and understanding passed over her face.

"Oh, Keith," she said, "you...." Her voice died; a change came over her face. He saw her despair before she turned and was running away, back toward the settlement, calling inarticulately as she ran.

Anderson watched her go. Then he turned and sidled through the dripping trees. At last—free! Himself! She was a Crow squaw.

His ship no longer looked welcoming. He splashed through a puddle and touched it, withdrawing his hand quickly. Distorted by the curve of the hull, his reflection peered at him from the polished metal. He did not recognize himself.

"Someone there imprisoned in Crow ship," he said, turning away.

The breath of the planet was warm along his innocent cheek. He stripped off his damp clothes and faded among the leaves and uncountable grasses and the scents of soil and vegetation. Shadow and light slithered over his skin in an almost tangible pattern before foliage embraced him and he was lost entirely into his new Eden.

The proud author lay where he was on the floor of the small room, among the metal sheets he had worn as camouflage

while hiding with the humots. Since the Tenth Dominant finished reading his story—that poor thing written before he had wisdom—silence lay between the Dominant and the Chief Scanner; though whether or not they were communicating by UHF, Anderson could not tell.

He decided he had better do something. Sitting up, he said, "How about letting me go free? Or how about letting me go back to the zoo?... Well, at least take me into a room that's big enough for me."

The Dominant spoke. "We need to ask you questions about your story. Is it true or not true?"

"It's fiction. Lousy or otherwise, it exists

in its own right."

"Some things in it are true—you are. So is or was Frank Arlblaster. So is or was Stanley Menderstone. But other things are false. You did not stay always on Nehru II. You came back to Earth."

"The story is fiction. Forget it! It has nothing to do with you. Or with me, now. I only write poetry now—that story is just a thing I wrote to amuse myself."

"We do not understand it. You must explain it."

"Oh, Christ!... Look, I wouldn't bother about it! I wrote it on the journey back to Earth from Nehru II, just to keep myself

amused. When I got here, it was to find the various surviving Master Boffs were picking up such bits of civilization as were left around the world after Nuclear Week! The story immediately became irrelevant."

"We know all about Nuclear Week. We do not know about your story. We insist: we must know about it."

As Anderson sighed, he nevertheless recognized that more must lie in the balance here than he understood. "I've been a bad boy, Dominant, I know. I escaped from the zoo. Put me back there, let me settle back with my wife; for my part, I'll not attempt to escape again. *Then* we'll talk about my story."

The silence lasted only a fraction of a second. "Done," said the Dominant, with splendid mastery of humanic idiom.

The zoo was not unpleasant. By current standards, it was vast, and the flats in the new human-type skyscrapers not too cramped; the liberals admitted that the Hive had been generous about space. There were about twenty thousand people here, the East Coast survivors of Nuclear Week. The robocracy had charge of them; they, in their turn, had charge of all the surviving wildlife that the automata could capture. Incongruous among the tall flat-blocks stood cages of exotic animals collected from shattered

zoos— a pride of lions, some leopards, several cheetahs, an ocelot, camels. There were monkey houses, ostrich houses, elephant houses, aquaria, reptilia. There were pens full of pigs and sheep and cows. Exotic and native birds were captive in aviaries.

Keith Anderson sat on the balcony of his flat with his wife, Sheila, and drank an ersatz coffee, looking out onto the pens below, not without relish.

"Well, the robots are behaving very strangely," Sheila was saying. "When you disappeared, three of the very tiny ones came and searched everywhere. Your story was the only thing they seemed interested in. They must have



photostatted it."

"I remember now—it was in the trunk under the bed. I'd forgotten all about it till they mentioned it—my sole claim to literary fame!"

"But that side of it can't interest them. What are they excited about?"

He looked musingly at her. She was still partly a stranger to him, though a beloved one. In the chaos to which he returned after the Nehru trip, it was a case of marrying any eligible girl while they were available—men outnumbered women two to one; he'd been lucky in his blind choice. Sheila might not be particularly beautiful, but she was good

in bed, trustworthy, and intelligent. You could ask for no more.

He said, "Do you ever admit the truth of the situation to yourself, Sheila? The new automata are now the superior race. They have a dozen faculties to each one of ours. They're virtually indestructible. Small size is clearly as much an enormous advantage to them as it would be a disadvantage to us. We've heard rumors that they were on the threshold of some staggering new discovery. From what I overheard the Tenth Dominant say, they are on the brink of moving into some staggering new dimensions of which we can probably never even get a glimpse. And yet...."

"And yet they need your story!" She laughed— sympathetically, so that he laughed with her.

"Right! They need my goddamned story! Listen— their powers of planning and extrapolation are proved miraculous. But they cannot *imagine*; imagination might even be an impediment for them. So the Dominant, who can tap more knowledge than you or I dream of, is baffled by a work of fiction. He needs my imagination."

"Not entirely, Mr. Anderson." Anderson jumped up, cup in hand, as his wife gave a small scream.

Perched on the balcony rail, enormously

solid-looking, yet only six inches high, was the stubby shape of an automaton!

Furious, Anderson flung his cup, the only weapon to hand. It hit the machine squarely, shattered, and fell away. The machine did not even bother to refer to the matter.

"We understand imagination. We wish to ask you more questions about the background to your story."

Anderson sat down, took Sheila's hand, and made an anatomical suggestion which no automaton could have carried out.

"We want to ask you more questions

about the story. Why did you write that you stayed on Nehru when really you came back?"

"Are you the Chief Scanner who captured me on D-Dump?"

"You are speaking with Tenth Dominant, in command of Eastern Seaboard. I have currently taken over Chief Scanner for convenience of speaking with you."

"Sort of mechanical transvestism, eh?"

"Why did you write that you stayed when you in reality came back?"

"You'd better give him straight answers, Keith," Sheila said.

He turned to her irritably, "How do I know the answer? It was just a story! I suppose it made a better ending to have the Anderson-figure stay on Nehru. There was this Cro-Magnon-Neanderthal business in the story and I made myself out to be more Neanderthal than Crow for dramatic effect. Just a lot of nonsense, really!"

"Why do you call it nonsense when you wrote it yourself?" asked the Dominant. It had settled in the middle of the coffee table now.

The man sighed wearily. "Because I'm older now. The story was a lot of nonsense because I injected this Crow-Neanderthal theory, which is a bit of

free wheeling young man tripe. It just went in to try to explain what actually happened on Nehru—how the egghead camp broke down and everything. The theory doesn't hold water for a moment; I see that now, in the light of what happened since, Nuclear Week and all that. You see "

He stopped. He stopped in mid-sentence and stared at the little complex artifact confronting him. It was speaking to him, but he did not hear, following his own racing thoughts. He stretched forward his hand and picked it up; the automaton was heavy and warm, only mildly frightening, slightly, slightly vibrating at the power of its own voice; the

Dominant did not stop him picking it up. He stared at it as if he had never seen such a thing before.

"I repeat, how would you revise your theory now?" said the automaton.

Anderson came back to reality.

"Why should I help you? To your kind, man is just another animal in a zoo, a lower species."

"Not so. We revere you as ancestors and have never treated you otherwise."

"Maybe. Perhaps we regard animals in somewhat the same way since, even in the darkest days of overpopulation and



famine, we strove to stock our zoos in ever greater numbers. So perhaps I will tell you my current theory.... It is real theory now; in my story that theory was not worth the name—it was a stunt, an intellectual high-jinks, a bit of science fiction. Now I have lived and thought and loved and suffered, and I have talked to other men. So if I tell you the theory now, you will know it is worked for—part of the heritage of all men in this zoo."

"This time it is truth not false?"

"You are the boss—*you* must decide that. There are certainly two distinct parts of the brain, the old limbic section and the neocortex surrounding it, the bit

that turns a primate into a man. That much of my story was true. There's also a yet older section, but we won't complicate the picture. Roughly speaking, the limbic is the seat of the emotions, and the neocortex the seat of the intelligence. Okay. In a crisis, the new brain is still apt to cut out and the old brain take over. "And that in a nutshell is why mankind never made the grade. We are a failed species. We never got away from the old animal inheritance. We could never become the distinct species we should have been."

"Oh, darling, it's not as bad as that...." He squeezed Sheila's hand. "You girls are always optimists." He winked the

eye the Dominant could not see. The Dominant said, "How does this apply to what happened on Nehru II?"

"My story departed—not from the facts—but from the correct explanation of the facts. The instinct to go there on Swettenham's part was sound. He and Arlblaster and the rest believed that on a planet away from animals, mankind could achieve its true stature-homo superior, shall we say? What I called the N-factor let them down. The strain was too great, and they mainly reverted instead of evolving."

"But you believe a species can only escape its origins by removing itself entirely from the site of those origins."

Sheila said, "That was the whole human impulse behind space travel—to get to worlds where it would be possible to become more human."

The Dominant sprang from Anderson's hands and circled under the low ceiling—an oddly uneasy gesture. "But the limbic brain—such a small part of the brain, so deep-buried!" "The seat of the instincts."

"The seat of the instincts... Yes, and so the animal part of man brought you to disaster."

"Does that answer all your questions?"

The automaton came back down and settled on the table. "One further question. What do you imagine would happen to mankind now, after Nuclear Week, if he was left alone on Earth?"

Anderson had to bury his face in his hands to hide his triumph.

"I guess we'd carry on. Under D-Dump, and the other dumps, lie many of the old artifacts. We'd dig them up and carry on."

"But Earth's resources are almost spent. That was mankind's doing, not the doing of automata."

The man smiled. "Maybe we'd revert,

then. It is a sort of Neanderthal planet, isn't it? Things go wrong for animals and men and robots, don't they? Just as they did for dinosaurs and Neanderthals!"

"I am going now," said the Tenth Dominant. His voice cut. He disappeared.

Gasping, Anderson clutched his wife. "Don't say a word! Come inside. Hold me and kiss me. Pray, if you feel like it."

All she said as they went to their bed was, "Maybe you will end up a writer after all. You show a talent for storytelling!"

It was all of five days before the human

beings in the big zoo noticed that the automata were disappearing. Suddenly, they were all gone, leaving no word. The whole continent, presumably the whole world, lay almost empty; and mankind began to walk back into it on his own ill-shod feet.

"And you did it, Keith Anderson!" Sheila cried.

"Nope. They did it themselves. They made the right decision—maybe I spurred them on."

"You did it—a genius who is now going to turn himself into a pig-breeder."

"I happen to like pigs." As he spoke, he

stood in the middle of a dozen of the animals, which he and Sheila had taken charge of.

"So the entire automata horde has disappeared into the invospectrum, wherever that is, leaving us our world...  
."

"It's a different world. Let's try and make it saner than the old one."

Pious hope? New Year's resolution? New design for living? He could not tell, although it filled his mind.

As they drove the pigs before them, Anderson said, "When the Dominant got onto the subject of our animal



inheritance, I remembered just in time that I heard him tell the Scanner, "We must free ourselves from our human heritage.' You can see the spot they were in! They had scrapped the humots, all too clearly anthropomorphic in design, and had taken more functional forms themselves. But they still had to acknowledge us as father-figures and could never escape from many human and naturalistic concepts, however much they tried, as long as they remained in a naturalistic setting. Now, in this unimaginable alternative-energy universe, which they have finally cracked, they can be pure automata—which is something else we can't conceive! So they become a genuine

species. Pure automata... “

They broke off to drive their pigs through the doorway, doubling back and forth until all the animals were inside, squealing and trying to leap over one another's backs. Anderson slammed the outer door at once, gasping.

"What I'd like to know is, what would it be like to be pure human being!" Sheila exclaimed.

He had no answer. He was thinking. Of course, they needed a dog! On D-Dump there were feral hounds whose young could be caught and trained.

It was lucky that the ground-floor tenants

had gone. Most human beings had moved out of the zoo as soon as possible, so that the great block of flats was almost empty. They shut the pigs in the hall for the night and climbed up rather wearily to their flat.

Today, they were too tired to bother about the future.