



PHOENIX ISLAND

CHARLOTTE PAUL

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Epilogue

Phoenix Island

Charlotte Paul

Signet (1975)

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

PHOENIX ISLAND - WHERE HORROR AND HOPE LOCKED IN A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE

It was the most fearful of global disasters -- a tidal wave, such as Earth had never known.. And on a small island in the North Pacific, a group of highly civilized men and women found all vestiges of civilization swept from them -- as death rushed toward them,

plunging them into a primitive battle for survival that both stripped naked their most elemental passions of lust and greed, and revealed their inmost resources of courage and human endurance....

THEY WERE FIGHTING AGAINST TIME--AND EACH OTHER--IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SURVIVE...

--Andrew Held, world-famous physicist, whose guilty secret could destroy him.

--Felicia, his beautiful, socialite wire, who had a taste for young lovers.

--Donald Campbell, a brutal, sexually starved ex-convict, whose only law was that of the jungle.

--Norma and Blake Mansfield, whose "perfect marriage" concealed an aching void of need.

--Warren Brock, a celebrated, witty and effete homosexual sculptor.

--Carlo, an almost too-handsome Hawaiian musician whose specialty was love-starved women.

--Diana, a lovely young girl desperately afraid of her own wakening sensuality.

--Rolf, torn between the white man's world and that of his American Indian forebears.

All of these people would be forced to discover the primal truth about themselves and each other in the ultimate struggle for survival on **PHOENIX**

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PHOENIX ISLAND

Charlotte Paul

Edited by Mark Shepard

35th Anniversary Edition

Islander Press

Friday Harbor, Washington

2013

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Revisions © 2011–2013 by Mark Shepard

Kindle Version 1.1

Charlotte Paul (1916–1989) led a life marked by the pursuit of numerous careers—news editor, wife, back-to-the-lander, freelance writer, mother, novelist, rural newspaper proprietor, memoirist, parole board official—and usually several of these at once. Living mostly in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, with a multi-year stint in Washington, D.C., she spent her final two decades on Lopez Island, one of Washington state’s enchanting San Juan Islands. On these she modeled chief locales of what became her most popular novel, *Phoenix Island*.

Fiction

Hear My Heart Speak ~ Gold Mountain
~ Wild Valley (originally:
The Cup of Strength) ~ Phoenix Island ~
A Child Is Missing ~ The Image ~
Seattle

Memoir

Minding Our Own Business ~
And Four to Grow

**For more info on Charlotte Paul
and her books, please visit
www.islanderpress.com**

Editor's Note

Perceptive readers of the original edition of 1976 may notice some differences in this 35th Anniversary Edition. Every good writer deserves a good editor—and in working with the text, I became convinced that, for this book, Charlotte's publisher never supplied one.

So, with the approval of her estate, I have tried to fill that role—smoothing rough places, reconciling contradictions, adjusting for modern literary conventions, breaking up often marathon sentences and paragraphs, and occasionally even rearranging portions to improve the flow. I have also

removed parts of the ending that did nothing but set up a sequel—one that Charlotte regrettably never wrote.

Not having the author present to review these changes, I can only hope she would have approved my revisions and recognized them for what I intend them to be: an homage to a magnificent work.

Mark Shepard

www.markshep.com

Book 1

ASHES

Prologue

Ancient myth tells us of a monster imprisoned in the earth. When that monster sleeps, the great seas are quiet and the land is at peace. But awakened, he is angry—and in anger, he is violent. Once his ferocious power is unleashed, the earth quakes, mountains explode, and seas rise and crash against the land in murderous waves.

Far below Pater Island in French Polynesia, the beast within the earth lay undisturbed. But his sleep was restless.

For the moment, his terrible energy was trapped within what geologists call the earth's *outer core*. Its molten rock, simmering at ten thousand degrees

Fahrenheit, is held between the earth's solid *inner core* below and its *mantle* above—a solid rock layer eighteen hundred miles thick.

But the thickness of the earth's *crust*—the top layer, resting upon the mantle—is no more than twenty-five miles, even beneath the continents. Below the oceans, it is only two or three.

At intervals, since long before human history, this thin crust has cracked and deformed in gigantic upheavals, which the ancients attributed to the fury of the monster within the earth. Nowhere has the ocean floor been more tortured by the rage of the beast than in the Pacific; nowhere is the equilibrium between

crust and mantle and core more precarious.

Geologists do not talk of monsters. They tell us that gigantic fissures line the Pacific Ocean floor. Along these faults, the edges of crustal rock press against each other with unimaginable force. As the pressure builds, the ocean floor bends until it can bend no more.

Then the monster within the earth shudders and awakens angrily from his slumber. Along the great cracks, the earth slips, rising or dipping, sliding sideways or up and down.

This expression of the monster's cosmic rage, we call *earthquake*.

Yet this thunderous movement in the earth's crust may not satisfy the

imprisoned beast. The cracks in the ocean floor may go much deeper—beyond the earth's thin crust and on down hundreds of miles through the mantle below. And if cold ocean water rushes downward through widening cracks to meet molten rock surging upward, there will be an explosion.

And *this* demonstration of the mythical monster's fury, we call *volcano*.

Earthquake and *volcano*—they may be disasters, but they are not the master killer. Earthquake is mother to *the* killer, the great wave that oceanographers call *tsunami*.

The word is from the Japanese: *tsu*, a small bay, port, or harbor; and *nami*, a

wave. Others call it *tidal wave*.

If the balance of forces among the earth's layers is disturbed, the shifting and upheaval of the ocean floor triggers the earthquake, the earthquake triggers the tsunami, and the tsunami is the wave that kills.



On a beautiful August morning in the late 1970s—the day the French were to test their revolutionary nuclear warhead, the Victoire—nothing had yet happened to disturb the monster within the earth. Pater Island, the tiniest and most remote outpost in French Polynesia, was a green dot in a sparkling sea, twenty-four hundred miles south of Hawaii and twenty-four hundred miles northeast of

New Zealand.

All preparations for the bomb test were complete. In concrete shelters, observers counted off the minutes. The slender palm trees rimming the test site swayed gently with the summer breeze.

Far below Ground Zero, deep within the core of the earth, the awful forces were in balance. The monster slept, the ocean was quiet, and peace lay on Pater Island.

1

It was fourteen minutes and twenty seconds before Shot-Time.

In the last hour, this bombproof chamber of steel and concrete had become a sinister place. At one time, the Directeur of the Bureau des Essais Atomique had considered it an engineering triumph. But now the grim, gray walls seemed to be closing in on him. As if to clear his head, he swallowed several times, hard.

Within minutes, the most powerful nuclear warhead in the history of the world would be exploded here on Pater Island. Not merely a moderately bigger and better hydrogen bomb, such as had

been tested the year before by the People's Republic of China. No, with this weapon, French physicists had created a fusion device with a destructive potential *one and a half times* greater than the bomb of the Red Chinese.

And *he*, the Directeur, had the key—the one that opened the line to the control point aboveground. He alone would unlock this line and give the order to detonate the bomb.

Victoire—"Victory." The Directeur himself had given the mammoth explosive this proud name. Some of the more Francophobic journalists had been calling it instead the Armageddon, and they had refused to come to Pater Island

to observe the test. But what did they know of the exhaustive preparations, since only sketchy bits of technical information had ever been released to the press?

The safeguards were absolute—the necessity of making them so was what the Directeur had emphasized repeatedly. In an effort to calm himself, he reviewed those safeguards now, like a man in silent prayer counting off beads of a rosary:

Ground Zero, where the bomb was buried deep in the rock, was at one end of Pater Island. The underground observation post and the control point were at the other. Sixty kilometers separated the two areas.

That distance was in itself such a safety factor that Control had been built aboveground. It was a steel building, the size of several large trailers joined together on the long side. It housed all the equipment for detonating the bomb and recording the results of the test. Electrical and television cables connected it to the installation at Ground Zero and to the nearby underground observation post.

Numerous technicians were in that ground-level control center now. The Directeur could not recall hearing any of them express fears for their safety. In fact, even several government officials had elected to view the test from Control, rather than going underground

with the other observers.

So, this vast chamber within the rock was probably an unnecessary precaution. And a costly one, the Directeur reflected. Sleeping quarters for two hundred; cooking facilities; plumbing complicated by the courtesy of providing separate comforts for the ladies. And all that was in addition to the closed-circuit television, the seismographs, the maps and charts, and the telephone system that connected the bunker with Control. Ah, yes, it had come very dear.

As for the installation at Ground Zero—again, they had been cautious in the extreme. The bomb was buried in a hole twenty-five hundred meters deep. This

vertically drilled shaft was lined with steel casing, which was firmly cemented to the wall of the hole. Two years had been spent on this construction alone. Meanwhile, numerous calibration tests had been conducted with small-yield explosives, and the findings carefully studied by the Directeur's special Containment Evaluation Panel.

This panel's unqualified approval had been required before the Bureau could even set a date for testing the Victoire. During this past week on Pater, the Directeur and his full advisory panel had reexamined every aspect of the preparations.

Yes, the Victoire was capable of demolishing the biggest city in the

world. But, through this kind of underground test, her appalling potential was to be measured with no risk whatever.

When the bomb was detonated, the shock would crush and melt the surrounding rock and, within a few hundredths of a second, create an underground cavity hundreds of meters in diameter. But the radioactivity and unimaginable heat would be contained in the ground.

Yes, Victoire was trapped in the bowels of the earth, for the vertical hole in which she was buried had been thoroughly “stemmed.” From the bottom of the hole to the surface, the shaft was packed with sand, gravel, and numerous

plugs of poured concrete and plastic. And any other man-made holes created in the process of drilling or construction had likewise been carefully sealed.



The Directeur's thoughts were diverted by the approach of one of the Bureau's consultants—the graying, soft-voiced Paul Clicquot.

Clicquot always tried his patience. He had an absentminded but total dedication to science, and never considered the political side of things. Today he had irritated the Directeur even more than usual by trying to speak with him at the early morning press conference about the efforts of the Australian and New Zealand governments to stop this test on

Pater Island.

Today, of all days! And in the presence of scores of journalists! Incredible.

“Yes, Paul?” the Directeur said curtly, clasping well-groomed hands over his bulging abdomen.

Looking up into the Directeur’s florid face, meeting his commanding gaze, Clicquot’s faded blue eyes blinked rapidly.

“Jean,” he said hesitantly, “please excuse me. But I must ask you once more. Reconsider, I beg of you. For the past hour, the word *Armageddon* has been sounding in my head.”

The Directeur, suffering from his own inexplicable fears, replied snappishly.

“You have been listening too much to those American journalists. The device’s name is Victoire.”

Clicquot smiled tremulously. “I have to remind you, Jean, that it was not American journalists who gave it the name Armageddon. It was our old friend and colleague, Dr. Andrew Held. The newspapers merely quoted him.”

“Aaahhh.” The Directeur’s right hand clenched and struck the palm of his left. “Here we are, back again to Andrew Held. You *know* all his objections to this test have been studied conscientiously.”

“Yes, but we have considered only what is *probable*—not what is *possible*. Dr. Held is not a foolish man.”

“H e w a s a *brilliant* man,” the

Directeur replied sharply. “Perhaps even the most brilliant physicist of our time. But that was the *old* Dr. Held, of the fifties and sixties and early seventies.

“Paul, *pardon*. I do not wish to offend you, but I have no time now for pointless debate. I must call together my advisory panel. However, I will say this: Ever since Dr. Held changed from the greatest weapons expert in the world to the loudest messiah of world disarmament, I *do* find him foolish!”

“There is still time!” Clicquot’s voice was husky with fear. “You have the authority to stop the test. You have the key!”

“You are crazy,” the Directeur

whispered angrily. "Lower your voice. And please, no more about Dr. Andrew Held!"



Andrew Held, whose name had excited the Directeur to dyspeptic fury, was at that moment in the living room of his home on Phoenix Island, five thousand miles northeast of Pater Island. He moved about restlessly, frustrated in regard to two events completely beyond his control.

One was the imminent arrival of a particular guest.

Two hours hence, his skipper and general mechanic, Donald Campbell, would steer the cruiser *Trident* into the bay below the house. Among the

passengers would be a woman Dr. Held had not seen in almost two years—a woman he loved, yet was extremely apprehensive about seeing again: his second wife, Felicia Stowe Held.

He wanted her here, he did not want her here...

The truth was, it didn't matter which of his ambivalent feelings dominated. There was nothing he could do to either hasten her arrival or delay it.

The second reason for his unproductive pacing was the French bomb test on Pater Island.

If his calculations were correct—and his calculations always were, at least in matters of science—the device he called Armageddon would be detonated in

another five minutes. And about this too, he could do nothing.

He had tried—God knows he had tried. But his new position on nuclear arms had so confused his friends, and so startled his erstwhile enemies, that neither group had really listened.

Could he blame them? Maybe not. For thirty years, he had been the country's most vocal advocate of armed preparedness. And then—at a point in his career when he was secure in an important post in the capital, and when the government had never been more supportive of his philosophy—he had become an earnest Isaiah, pleading loudly and publicly for total disarmament.

So far as it had been reported by the press, his metamorphosis from hawk to dove appeared to be based entirely on scientific reason. But in truth, Andrew Held's sudden conversion to the ministry of disarmament was rooted in strong emotions—just as had been his thirty-year campaign to arm the United States with the deadliest weapons that science could develop.

During those long years, he had preached that the only way to insure peace was to win the international arms race. But his reasoning had been riddled by obsessive fear and suspicion of Russia—feelings that went back to his early childhood in Budapest.

Pogrom.

Even as a little boy, he knew the bloody meaning of the word. Hungary sheltered thousands of refugees from the east and the north, and many told their frightening stories in the drawing room of his home. Other times, he overheard the servants whisper about unimaginable horrors. Solemn conversations between his elders ceased abruptly when he came into the room.

Though he was too young to visualize the exact shape of the terror, he could recognize grief and fear. And he knew it had been caused by Russia.

When he was six, the fear came closer to home. The Galician fortress of Przemyśl—defended by a hundred thousand men, mostly Hungarians—

surrendered to the Russians after a long siege had exhausted all supplies. Among the defeated was his uncle, his mother's brother.

Andrew had never before seen his mother cry. It shocked and distressed him, for adults as he knew them (not counting the servants) were consistently dignified and regally calm. He had assumed that crying was only for little children. Trembling, he watched his mother sob uncontrollably against his father's shoulder.

The terrible something that had befallen his uncle Laszlo and reduced his mother to a weeping stranger was all the fault of the Russians.



Even as a child, Andrew Held had *langelme*—a “flaming mind.”

When he emigrated to the United States as a man of twenty-seven, his genius was already fired by a passionate desire to explore the uncharted territory of atomic physics. It was his moment of personal triumph when he stepped up to a blackboard at Princeton University in 1951 and scrawled the breakthrough formula that cleared the way for the development of the hydrogen bomb.

When the H-bomb became a reality, a feeling of tremendous relief swept over Andrew. By that time, Russia had set up its puppet government in Hungary. Members of his family and their friends had been rendered destitute by what was

called *communization*—a word that, for Andrew, as for most Hungarians, ever after meant “rape.” And the aftermath of that rape had brought poverty, hunger, reprisal, and death.

These were the four horsemen who had galloped into Andrew’s world bearing the Red flag. But now there was an all-powerful weapon to hold the horsemen at bay.

And he, Andrew Held, had forged that weapon.



The Directeur had had enough. His peace of mind, indeed his very sanity, seemed to depend on isolating himself from his trembling consultant, Clicquot.

He walked across the room to a

corner unoccupied by observers, who had taken places in front of the monitoring equipment. Once more by himself, he resumed his self-assuring litany:

There would be shock waves, of course, as the bomb's unleashed energy moved outward through the layered rock of the ocean floor. Considering the fantastic power of the Victoire, seismic signals would undoubtedly be picked up as far from Pater Island as fifteen hundred to twenty-five hundred kilometers. The bomb might even trigger a shallow earthquake. But on the basis of preliminary tests, they estimated it would reach only somewhere between five and six on the Richter scale—and,

in the highly seismic Pacific, that was commonplace.

There would also be aftershocks, but they wouldn't last for more than twenty-four to thirty-six hours. As ecologists had charged, some sea life would perish in the immediate vicinity of Pater. That couldn't be helped. The matter of importance, the Directeur reminded himself, was the protection of human life.

The small native village on Pater had long since been evacuated, and the people had been resettled at government expense on the island of Bagatea, one hundred fifty kilometers away. At that distance, they would barely feel the motion of the earth. Here on Pater,

observers would feel strong vibrations for a minute or two, nothing more.

“Like riding a train,” his press aide, Henri, had told the children at the press conference yesterday on their arrival by plane from Papeete. And to the press, he had commented, “The Directeur’s children! Would he have brought his own children to Pater if it were not completely safe?”

At the thought of the children’s presence, the Directeur was gripped again by the sensation of being trapped.

Perhaps it was the walls without windows and the low, heavily reinforced ceiling that aroused these irrational fears. They were so deep in the ground. The Directeur imagined he

could actually feel the pressure of the rock that lay above.

And the air didn't seem real. It felt like a manufactured, airlike substance, with which he could fill his lungs only with great effort...

Ah, there they were, with their governess, on the other side of the room. Jean, Marie, and Toinette, ages six, eight, and ten. Cameramen from several countries had already photographed them, and Henri had alerted the Bureau's staff photographer to catch them precisely at Shot-Time. Clapping their hands with excitement, laughing together, something like that.

Automatically, the Directeur looked again at his wristwatch. Twelve minutes,

fifty seconds and counting.

2

Dr. Andrew Held threw down his pen. He rose from his desk and walked across the room to the windows, which opened onto a deck above the water. His basset hounds, Mike and Lili, who had been sleeping in the sun by his desk, lifted their massive heads and followed their master's movement with large, sorrowful eyes.

Moments later, Andrew recrossed the room and looked down at what he had written. Growling a wordless sound of displeasure, he returned to the window. The dogs, disapproving of all this activity, dropped their heads onto their paws and closed their eyes.

Normally, Andrew did not pace. He had known fear, anxiety, and frustration in abundance during his sixty years, but he had vented these feelings in other ways—usually by taking some sort of action. He scorned pacing as a form of brooding, a substitute for action but not equivalent to it.

Moreover, he could not walk without limping. It had been more than forty years since the accident that resulted in the amputation of one foot. Despite long practice with various aggregations of steel, wood, and rubber devised to replace it, he had never entirely accepted the loss, nor ceased resenting the limp that betrayed it.

His thick black eyebrows drew

together as he glanced once more at his wristwatch.

Toni, his gentle, passive first wife, in one of her rare efforts to express herself, had said he wasted his strength when he fought things he could not control. “If you can do nothing about it,” she used to say, “you must forget it.”

To give up graciously—that had been Toni’s way of life. But Andrew’s was different. Many a project beyond his control had ended up *under* his control, simply because he had been too stubborn to give up in an unequal fight.

Unequal certainly described his fight to prevent testing of the Victoire, and to preserve a small, remote island called Pater. He had undertaken that fight in the

name of another island, called Balegula.

And in the name of an old friend, Aaron Salinger, whom he had, in good conscience, mortally wounded.



When the creature that Andrew had fathered was exploded in a full-scale test, the peaceful little Pacific island of Balegula, selected as the shot site, was transmuted into a submarine crater 175 feet deep.

This violent destruction had raised no doubts in Andrew's mind. In fact, apart from his scientific genius, Andrew's greatest strength was a lack of self-doubt. But when his longtime friendship with another brilliant physicist, Dr. Aaron Salinger, broke up in the

heavy seas of controversy, a curious depression took root in his mind.

Aaron Salinger and Andrew Held had been students together at Göttingen. Later, they worked side by side on the first experiments with atomic energy. But they came to a philosophical crossroads.

The path toward disarmament and test bans went one way, and that path was Aaron Salinger's. The path toward super-bombs and massive retaliation went another—and that was Andrew Held's.

For a time, the balance of opinion was in Salinger's favor. But then it shifted. Salinger, suspected of ties with Communist Russia, was called before a

government hearing board in the investigation of evidence that he was now a security risk.

Andrew had been openly opposed to Salinger's views ever since he had attempted to prevent development of the hydrogen bomb. As a result, the government called Andrew as a witness.

It had been a bitter experience to testify against his colleague. Still, it was Andrew's honest opinion that Salinger should not be granted clearance. And under the grueling questions of the security board, he had no choice but to say so.

Afterward, Salinger had resigned from government service and dropped virtually out of sight. His supporters—

the entire fraternity of scientists who had always opposed Andrew's ideas, but through impersonal discourse—now became Andrew's bitter personal enemies. Their hostility sapped his strength. But Andrew could have accepted even that, if it hadn't been for the terrible effect on Toni.

For Toni had *not* been a fighter. Every snub, every denunciation had wounded her. And her instincts allowed her no recourse to retaliation.

At the annual conference in Denver, a trio of prominent scientists—old friends, to Toni—deliberately ignored them. Toni's reaction was to retreat to their hotel room and remain there until Andrew packed their suitcases and

telephoned to change plane reservations. They left two days before the conference ended.

Far worse was to come. A student organization called Soldiers for Peace marched around their home, shouting obscenities, waving banners, and trampling flower beds. Toni hid behind drawn shades, and cried uncontrollably when Andrew opened a window to address the crowd.

Within a few days, he had a high steel-wire fence encircling their property, and the students were held back by its locked gates. Nevertheless, Toni kept their heavy drapes drawn across the windows and refused to leave the house. Even after the demonstrations

subsided, he often came home in the evening to see her at the window, peering through the curtains, with her thin, pale face.

The home she loved had become her prison. He suggested a boat cruise, but she refused tearfully. He asked her to come along on a business trip, and her refusal verged on hysteria.

The doctors later explained her death in pathological terms, but Andrew knew that his testimony against Salinger had dealt the fatal injury. True, an organic illness had eventually overtaken her. But by then, she had lost any will to live.

One day shortly before her death, he had decided impulsively at noon to leave the laboratory early. On the way

home, he stopped at a fruit stand and bought a box of warm, fragrant peaches.

The locked and bolted front door was opened by the nurse he had hired to stay with Toni during the day. Andrew went quickly into the shadowy, airless bedroom, where she lay, small as a doll, in their ornately carved oak bedstead. He placed the box of fruit on the bedside table, then sat on the bed and gently took her hand between his two.

They talked for an hour, all on their childhood in Budapest. Then Toni drifted off to sleep.

Andrew, shaken by premonition, retreated to the empty living room. There he pulled back the drapes and threw open the windows. Gusts of air washed

over him, laden with the green smell of freshly cut grass.

He dropped into a chair, covered his face with his hands, and wept. Not only for the dying woman, but also for the girl she had been: A girl in starched, full-skirted dress and pinafore, with thick white stockings and shiny black pumps. A girl with two long plaits of coppery brown hair, and bright ribbons tied in bows at their ends. A girl who often joined the games he played with her two older brothers in a beautiful park in Budapest—and whose favorite fruit was peaches.

3

The Directeur's glance moved nervously around the room, seeking assurance that, in spite of his turbulent emotions, he was not attracting attention.

The four members of his advisory panel were close by, talking together quietly, awaiting his summons to their final conference before Shot-Time. The observers and journalists had arranged themselves in clusters so that everyone had a clear view of one of the six closed-circuit television sets, which were arranged in a wide, convex arc along one side of the bunker.

An hour ago, the room had buzzed with their conversation. Now their

voices were hushed, their attention focused on the big electric wall clock or on the television screens.

The Directeur pushed back his immaculate shirt cuff and squinted at the dial of his wristwatch. Only twenty seconds had passed since he last checked.

Was it the presence of the children that disconcerted him? The Directeur frowned and once more looked at his watch. Twelve minutes. He would make another call to Control.

With an occasional nod to a colleague, the Directeur pushed past the small groups standing between him and the telephone communications system. He alone carried a key to the gray steel

box containing the telephone. An ordinary metal box. And locked inside, a telephone that would not have looked out of place in the humblest atelier in Paris.

He stepped up to the box and withdrew the key from his coat pocket. All around him, conversation stopped. He could feel a hundred eyes fixed on his back.

Were they wondering, as he was, if *this* time the report from Control would be reason to postpone the test? The weather might have changed. They might have detected a malfunction in some part of their equipment. Something wrong with the pipes, or with the cables from the bomb emplacement to the surface at Ground Zero.

Subduing a nervous tremor, the Directeur inserted the key, opened the box, and dialed Control.

The response was quick and unqualified: Everything was in readiness. All was well.

“Jean?”

The Directeur turned quickly, startled by a voice so close to his ear. Clicquot again! *Merde!* Well, he wasn't going to permit the little man's fears to infect him, or even to be aired.

“Ah, yes, Paul. It won't be long now.” The Directeur cleared his throat, for it seemed to him that the pitch of his voice was unnaturally high. “About nine minutes.”

“Jean, I beg—”

Turning away from Clicquot, the Directeur made his way over to the members of his advisory panel.

“Well, well, my dear colleagues. Shall we retire for a minute or two?”

A private conference room, as small and plain as a monk's cell, opened off the central chamber. With a determined step, the Directeur strode into it, his four advisors following.

As the door closed, the Directeur caught a glimpse of his consultant. Poor Clicquot! He stood motionless, staring at the locked telephone box as if hypnotized.



The final conference of the advisory panel was nearly as brief as the

Directeur's last call to Control. All reports were favorable. No adverse circumstances had arisen to delay the test. In four minutes and twenty seconds, the Directeur would make his last call to Control, and this call would authorize the beginning of the countdown.

When the Directeur opened the door and stepped back into the main chamber, the room was so quiet, he could hear the soft hum of the electronic equipment. The gray steel boxes were like living creatures, pulsing with electricity, straining to receive messages that were due now in less time than a man would take to light and smoke a cigarette.

Silent and watchful, the observers waited for the Directeur to speak. Their

faces—even those familiar to him—seemed strangely distorted. The bluish artificial lighting stained them all the same hue, and cast dark shadows under their eyes.

He was expected to address them—just a few words from the top official, the man with the key. His fingers fumbled in his coat pocket and nervously clutched the chain to which the key was attached. He was about to speak, when without warning his children broke through the crowd.

The two younger ones, Jean and Marie, ran to him and tugged excitedly at his sleeves.

“How much longer, Papa?” said six-year-old Jean. “Papa, how long do we

have to wait?”

The Directeur freed his hands and awkwardly patted the tops of their heads. He noticed that the eyes of many of the observers were focused solemnly on this little family group.

“Not much longer, little ones. Here, look at my watch... Two minutes... You have had your pictures taken, eh? How many times? Did you count?”

Bending to their level, he gave Jean and Marie an absentminded hug. Then he straightened up—the key on its heavy chain still dangling from his fingers—and found himself facing his eldest child, his firstborn, Toinette. She stood absolutely still, looking into his face with wide and frightened eyes.

“Two minutes,” he repeated. He had never before noticed how much she resembled her mother. The fear he had been trying to deny swept through him like an electric shock.

My God! the Directeur thought. *Could I be mistaken?*

Numbly, he looked again at his wristwatch. Almost a hundred men and women waited for him to speak.

“Gentlemen...” He swallowed and cleared his throat. “Gentlemen, if you will arrange yourselves so you can all see the television screens. I am about to call—”

“No!” screamed a man’s voice, strident with terror, and Paul Clicquot burst from the group. Lunging at the

Directeur, the gray and aging Clicquot grasped the hand that held the key.

The Directeur jerked his hand free and secured the key in a tightly closed fist. "Clicquot!" he commanded. "For the love of God..."

Confused, little Jean looked from Clicquot's stricken face to his father. "Papa, Monsieur Henri said it would be like riding a train."

The consultant's mouth was open, his tongue protruding slightly as if his face had frozen at the moment he screamed. Wordlessly, he struck again at the Directeur's hand.

This time, the Directeur's attention was diverted by his effort to push the children out of the way. With a grimace

of surprise, he let the key drop to the floor.

Like a small, demented hawk, Clicquot swooped down on his prey. Key clutched to his chest, he looked wildly around the room—a room from which, clearly, there was no escape.

The Directeur stepped forward and placed a restraining hand on Clicquot's arm.

“No!” cried Clicquot hysterically. “Stop the test! It is not too late to stop the test!”

“There is *no reason*,” the Directeur said hoarsely. “I cannot stop the test—I *will* not stop the test—because there is *no reason!*”

Some observers had retreated. Others

moved forward, closing in on Clicquot. He fought them, striking out with both hands.

“Henri!” the Directeur commanded.

“Henri!”

His press aide stepped through the ring around Clicquot. The men trying to hold him relinquished their captive and backed away. Henri was a young man; Clicquot was old and frail, but fired by desperation. As the two men struggled, both Jean and Marie broke into frightened sobs.

“Why are they doing that, Papa?” Marie begged tearfully. “What’s *wrong* with that man?”

Clicquot’s resistance lasted less than a minute. Henri secured the key and

handed it to the Directeur. Then, pinning the older man's arms behind his back, Henri half lifted, half pushed him into the small side room where the Directeur had held his advisory meeting. Just before the door closed, the Directeur noticed a cut on Clicquot's forehead. Blood streamed from it, running over one eye and coursing down his cheek.

Shaking uncontrollably, the Directeur turned to the telephone box and inserted the key. He dialed Control and issued the order for countdown.

Behind him, little Jean's shrill, childish voice rose above the low murmur of the observers.

"You promised, Papa. Like riding a train, is it not?"

4

When Andrew Held renounced his platform as “Father of the H-Bomb” and began to campaign for disarmament, no one had any reason to expect it.

Twenty years had passed since the terrible day he testified against Aaron Salinger. Andrew was respected in his field. He was now employed by the Pentagon at a generous salary. He was the friend of influential senators, as well as key Administration figures. Even the respected U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union supported his views in public statements, emphasizing that the United States must keep its defenses so strong that Russia would be deterred from

yielding to the temptation of a first strike.

Andrew was also wealthy, rather to his own astonishment—for physics professors do not ordinarily grow rich. In addition to his lucrative salary, he had inherited an unbelievable sum of money from a childless uncle in Europe, who chose him as heir because he was himself even more fanatically anti-Soviet than his famous nephew.

To complete the picture of a man who is happy despite the burden of a brilliant mind, he was enjoying his second marriage.

Felicia Cabot Stowe was beautiful, wealthy, and a good many years younger than he. It was proof of his self-

confidence that he had married her, for she was a passionate woman who could be too much of a challenge even for a man her own age.

She was as different from Toni as a bright color photo is from a black-and-white—besides being, in most ways, temperamentally different from Andrew himself. Felicia was sophisticated, while Andrew was direct and even at times antisocial. She was *soignée*; he looked as if he had been caught in a high wind. She was a skillful manipulator in situations where he had a tendency to charge in like a mad bull. She was one of the two or three most photographed Washington hostesses, whereas theater parties and formal balls only made

Andrew restless.

Yet they had been drawn together, as if everything that had happened to them separately had prepared them for recognizing each other now.

They were each secure in their own abilities; they didn't compete with each other, or even bother to analyze their differences. From the beginning, they had a strong common bond of mutual desire. He was excited by Felicia—not only by her body and her need, but by the discovery that he could fulfill such a passionate woman.

They did not have to go to bed together before deciding they were in love. The knowledge overtook them one evening as she caressed his hand, her

head bent low. Suddenly, for no reason, he thought: *Felicia Stowe, you're in love with me, and I, Andrew Held, am in love with you—and what, really, do we know about each other?*

He said softly, to the top of her head, “Don’t look up.”

“Why not?”

He laughed. “Is that typical? Do you always ask why?”

Her muffled voice replied, “Absolutely. I won’t take an order. But I’ll do anything you ask, if I understand and accept your reason.”

“All right, I’ll tell you. A little scientific research. What color are my eyes?”

“Why, they’re brown, of course.”

“Now look up.”

“Not yet,” she said. “First, you tell me. What color are mine?”

“They’re—”

He stopped abruptly. He knew her eyes were bright and expressive. He knew they shone with amusement, and grew soft with sympathy. But he did not know their color.

He chuckled. “All right, you win the first round. Now look up, please.”

She lifted her head and looked directly into his penetrating blue eyes. Her own eyes—green as the sea—began to sparkle.

“Oh, well,” she laughed gaily. “I was right, in a way. You *think* brown. As for you, Dr. Held, be advised: *I* think

green.”

Yes, they had married for love, despite not having known at first the color of each other’s eyes. And because, at the time, he was so confident of himself, the demands of the marriage were easy to meet.

Yet, the first small crack had already opened in the fortresslike confidence that had been his strength for thirty years. Much later—after he had fled Washington and barricaded himself within the lonely isolation of Phoenix Island—he was able to look back and see its source.

It was Toni’s death. After that event, during bleak early morning hours, every incident that had hurt her would surface

in his sleepless mind like a spirit message she had sent him. He wrestled with the thought that he himself, if only indirectly, had caused her destruction.

In daylight, the ghosts of guilt would fade, and after some months, would leave him in peace even at night. And then, a year or so after marrying Felicia—when his well-being had never seemed more secure—a series of events reopened the old wound. And in the raw emotion that was uncovered were planted doubts like dragon's teeth.

First was the report that the French were experimenting with a thermonuclear weapon infinitely more powerful than the hydrogen bomb they had tested in 1974. No public

announcement was made, but the scientific community had its grapevine. It quivered with the message that this super-bomb, to be called the Victoire, would carry a load unprecedented in the history of nuclear weapons. Which meant it would potentially be the greatest destroyer in *all* history.

Andrew did not fear France as he did Russia. He had attended university with one of France's top physicists, and several consultants with their Bureau des Essais Atomique had been longtime friends of his. But gradually, an unaccustomed fear began to stir in his mind.

The United States had always refused to share its knowledge of atomic

weapons. Thus, French scientists were forced to go through their own long, hazardous series of experiments and tests—ones that could, if subject to the smallest error, result in accidents, injuries, destruction. And now they were testing the Victoire, a warhead with unimaginable power.

True, it would be tested on a remote island. And surely there would be safeguards. But he was troubled by the memory of another island: beautiful little Balegula, which a bomb—*his* bomb—had reduced to a useless hole.

To his growing concern about the French bomb was added bitter disillusionment with the president of the United States.

Andrew had long been proud of his contacts with the country's chief executives, and of his own part in forming Administration policy. He liked to tell about the sunny afternoon in the summer of 1939 when he and another young Hungarian drove to the Long Island home of Albert Einstein. There, while they sipped tea, they obtained the great man's signature on a letter to President Roosevelt—a letter stating that the power of the atom could be used to make an incredibly powerful weapon. That letter had been a moving force in the president's decision to authorize work on the first atomic bomb.

Ten years later, Andrew had sought and obtained President Truman's

support in the battle to develop the H-bomb. When Andrew's whole program was threatened by a ban on testing, he had convinced President Kennedy that such a moratorium was idiotic, and the president had ordered that tests be resumed. Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy—they had all commanded his respect, even when they did not share his views.

But at the time that France began work on the Victoire, the president of the United States was a man whom Andrew disdained. Yet this man—arrogant beyond belief, pious and mealy-mouthed—had authority to order an all-out nuclear attack, without concurrence of the Congress or the country's citizens.

Andrew—knowing as did few of his countrymen how dreadful was the hydrogen bomb's potential—was sickened to realize that such a weapon was under the control of a man so lacking in intellect and integrity.

More and more often, Andrew found himself wondering: Had Salinger been right? In harnessing nuclear energy, had they really created a keeper of peace and protector of mankind? Or had they unleashed a monster?



The final step in his conversion came from the announcement of a nuclear bomb test by India.

Andrew was incredulous. The United States, Russia, China, France—these

were military powers. But India? Where the million dollars claimed by New Delhi as the cost of its first nuclear blast—obviously a preposterously low figure—could have fed twenty-five thousand people for an entire year?

That night, he was tormented by hideous dreams. Of his own visit to New Delhi, where child beggars had looked up at him with large, dark eyes, and an old man had held up the moribund body of his starving baby and pleaded for fifty rupees. Of Aaron Salinger, calmly smoking his pipe during his security hearing, while at the other end of the room, a cold-eyed chairman kept repeating, *I will ask you again, Dr. Held. In your opinion...* And of

Toni, dying in a huge oak bed.

In the morning, his head had cleared. Though exhausted, he had finally made a decision.



To Felicia, he said simply, “I’ve changed.”

She raised her eyebrows. “Yes, Andy? I didn’t know you ever bothered.”

“Salinger was right, after all.”

Her green eyes lit up with a humorous twinkle. “Ah! Now at least I know the general area of discussion. Well, perhaps he was. But that incident is buried in the past.”

Andrew’s bushy eyebrows drew together in an inward-looking frown. “The incident, but not the issue. I have

no influence in India. I do in France.”

Felicia’s attention had already turned to the engraved invitation in her hand. “Very good,” she said absently, as she studied the elegant raised script. “Then you will come along willingly to dinner at the French Embassy.”

He did go, though reluctantly. While they ate, he suffered through the sort of conversation that, by an unwritten code, skirted every subject of keen or immediate interest. But after dinner, his restraint collapsed. In conversation with a French official, he began to talk about the Pater Island test and the more-than-super-bomb, the Victoire.

“I am concerned about my old friends in the Bureau des Essais Atomique. They

are moving ahead too fast. You must tell the Directeur—or perhaps Paul Clicquot would be the man—that it is one thing to invent a bomb, but it is another to develop adequate safeguards. When it comes to tests, the safeguards are more important than the bomb itself. I wish...”

“Yes, Dr. Held? You wish... ?”

Andrew answered sincerely, and in a louder voice than he intended.

“I wish it were possible to protect you from error. I have done so much work in that regard. Yes, I think I could help.”

A few days later, he expressed the same thoughts to one of his associates in the Pentagon.

“Wouldn't we be wise to cooperate in

this with the French? After all, France is an ally—an important part of the anti-Soviet bloc. By helping them develop their potential for retaliation, we would be protecting ourselves.”

The man looked at him curiously. “Are you suggesting we divulge atomic secrets to a foreign country?”

Andrew shook his head impatiently. “To the *French*,” he said, scarcely noticing the incongruity. “Before it is too late.”

Almost a year later, Andrew learned during interrogation by the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission that his remarks to the French official, and also his comments to his friend in the Pentagon, had been reported. The

Chairman would not say by whom.



The message from the Directeur of France's Bureau des Essais Atomique came as a complete surprise. The Bureau, said the message, had been advised of Dr. Held's interest in their current project. Would he be willing to assist the government of France?

Andrew replied that, in view of the United States policy on secrecy, he did not know how he could do so.

There followed a series of telephone calls, letters from France, and visits by officials from the French Embassy. At each stage of communication, the offer became more specific. At length, Andrew saw clearly the future they

proposed.

He would, of course, have to resign his present position with the United States military. He and Felicia would move to Paris. In a country not restricted by treaties or test bans, he would be free to pursue his work with thermonuclear weapons far beyond where the United States had called a halt—in fact, with no limits.

It was in the moment that Andrew comprehended the opportunity being offered that he fully recognized the radical change in his philosophy. He did not *want* to participate in developing ever more powerful weapons. He *feared* what the French were doing. He feared also what *India* was doing, small as

their first effort might be—for he now saw all nuclear weapons as a threat to the survival of humanity.

Thinking again about the nature and power of the French bomb, he became agitated and blurted out, “It ought to be banned!”

Felicia smiled. “It? To what do you refer, my dear? Not connubial bliss, I sincerely hope.”

He could only shake his head, speechless in the face of realization: After fighting a battle with all his strength for all his adult life, he had joined the other side.

Andrew seldom disclosed his professional concerns to Felicia, and had said nothing at all about the

developing contact with the French. So, of course, she could not know now what he was talking about. She laughed softly, rose from her pink velvet chair, and came toward him with hands outstretched—hands that glittered with her favorite emerald and diamond rings.

“Well, it’s past midnight,” she said, brushing his cheek lightly with the tip of her beautiful straight nose. “Let’s go to bed—where, I assure you, nothing is banned.”

That was the first night Andrew consciously tried to satisfy her. And perhaps because he was determined to do so, he failed.



The first time Andrew realized that his

personal and confidential mail was being intercepted, he called himself a fool for not having anticipated it.

He checked his telephone. As expected, the faint but distinct sound of a connected electronic device could be heard, once he listened for it. Somewhere in the building, a recorder was automatically tripped into action whenever he lifted the receiver.

Though he did not bother to search for it, he knew there was undoubtedly also a tiny microphone planted somewhere in his private office. And when he stepped into a taxi and gave the driver an address, he felt insulted—but not surprised—that a blue car pulled out from the curb at the same time and

followed him all the way down the parkway to his apartment on the river.

He knew very well of such things. Being spied on had been a fact of life when he was a young man in Hungary and power-hungry Admiral Horthy had established himself as dictator. And *surveillance* was too impersonal a term for what he had experienced in Germany before fleeing to England in 1933.

Still, it wasn't those indignities of his early years that came back to him now. It was the Aaron Salinger affair.

Yes, Salinger had been spied on. He had been followed by two or three Secret Service men, his letters read and copied, his telephone conversations recorded. And Andrew had considered

such affronts to his friend to be “necessary precautions.”

The memory was an ulcer on his conscience. The sound of the telephone bug, the discovery that his private secretary was sending memos to the FBI with the identity and length of stay of every visitor to his office—these things did not infuriate him. They filled him with guilt.

After several weeks, Felicia tried to delve beneath his brooding—and his impotence. She joined him in his bed and, touching him, whispered, “Tell me what’s happening.”

Until this whole French affair had blown up, the pressure of her hand had always been enough to arouse him. She

had always been the aggressor. That in itself had excited him. But now the insecurity he felt in regard to his work seemed to have embedded itself in his groin.

What's happening.

Why, everything he had believed in had been turned inside out. He hardly understood it himself! And as for telling Felicia about the FBI and the Secret Service men and his offer from the Bureau des Essais Atomique—he was totally incapable of communicating those sorts of things to a woman who was his wife.

What's happening.

Felicia's hand was stroking him gently, and all he could think of was

how, the last time he had tried to respond, he had failed dismally. Her hand was arousing not desire but fear.

What's happening.

With a flash of cruelty as foreign to him as self-doubt, he said brusquely, "When I want you, I will come to your bed."

Felicia froze, and for a moment lay rigid at his side. Then she stepped out of his bed and back to her own.

Already ashamed, Andrew thought, *Toni would cry. Felicia will not.*

He was right. Across the dark gap between their beds, Felicia's voice came cool and steady.

"When you do—*i f* you do—I will decide whether *I* want *you*."

A moment later, he heard her slide out of bed and walk barefoot to the bedroom door. As it clicked shut behind her, he restrained his impulse to follow and apologize.

Felicia was angry, he well knew, and in anger she would be unyielding. But she was not the kind to feel hurt. He doubted she even knew how to cry. How pointless, therefore, to offer to comfort her.

He turned over and closed his eyes, determined to sleep.



In the living room, Felicia lighted a small crystal lamp and walked to the sideboard. She was trembling with anger. She stood there, both hands

gripping the sideboard as if about to push it through the wall. Her eyes were fixed in a furious and sightless stare at the row of cut-glass decanters.

She would pack up, leave, tonight.

No, that was childish. She would stay, and take a sleeping pill. Damn it, no—that was weak and foolish. She *disdained* people who relied on pills.

Her hands began to ache, and cold air settled around her bare feet. She released her grip on the sideboard. With a curious stab of panic, she realized that anger was draining out of her.

Stay angry, she told herself. *It feels so much better than falling apart.*

Shivering, she picked up a decanter of cognac, removed the heavy stopper, and

poured a generous amount into a cocktail glass. “Have a drink,” she whispered. “Have a good, stiff drink.”

She picked up the glass, lifted it partway to her mouth, and stopped.

Felicia stared blankly at the glass in her hand. The shadowy room was still, except for the rhythmic ticking of the marble mantel clock—a faint voice that seemed to echo her own pulse. She looked pleadingly at the hand that held the drink, waiting for it to lift the glass to her lips.

For long, trembling seconds, the hand remained motionless. Then it carefully returned the untouched drink to the sideboard.

Felicia turned, dropped into a chair,

and covered her face with her hands. Her fingers felt cold compared to the tears that welled up, spilling between them to flood her cheeks—tears she could not control and did not bother to wipe away.

On Pater Island, the countdown was complete. The moment of Victory had come.

In the underground bombproof chamber of concrete and steel, two hundred observers stared fixedly at television screens. The only voice was that of six-year-old Jean asking, "Now, Papa?" while a photographer from the Associated Press took his picture.

Aboveground at Control, the signal was given, and a man's forefinger pressed a lever no bigger than his thumb. At the other end of the island, thirty-five miles away and eight thousand feet below the surface, the most powerful

nuclear device in the world was detonated.

At precisely ten in the morning in the time zone for French Polynesia, the great bomb released its energy. Raised to a temperature of several million degrees, its contents vaporized. A tenth of a millionth of a second had passed.

Then the first shock, as the pulse of the bomb moved outward and downward from the unimaginably hot high-pressure region. The earth melted. A cavity formed and expanded. Four-tenths of a second had gone by.

And as soon as that, everyone knew that something had gone horribly wrong.

The fury of the explosion rumbled from one end of Pater Island to the other,

shattering solid rock, heaving up the overlying earth in a series of monstrous regurgitations. Shocks gripped the concrete vault of the underground observation post, preparing to crush and dismember it.

A child screamed; a little girl sobbed, "Papa!" The Directeur of the Bureau des Essais Atomique clutched his abdomen and reached for the telephone to Control. His press aide, Henri, stared blindly at the seismograph, his face ashen and both hands covering his mouth. The observers' faces froze into death masks as the televisions displayed the lethal blackness of disaster.

Locked into the anteroom by order of the Directeur, Paul Clicquot dropped to

his knees. He had no time even to weep.

The floor trembled and cracked, the walls imploded. Observers were thrown into the center of the room and crushed under the battery of electronic devices.

In the last fraction of a second before the observation post exploded into unidentifiable fragments of steel and concrete and human flesh, to sink into the widening crater where Pater Island had been, the Directeur saw the face of his firstborn, the solemn, wide-eyed Toinette—and he thought he was looking at her mother.



It would be contained, the scientists had said. The chimney was safely plugged. There would be some vibration, some

minor upheaval of the land at Ground Zero, perhaps a few landslides along the coast—no more.

They were brilliant men. But their calculations had been too small for the unleashed power of the super-bomb.

The terrible force of the Victoire penetrated downward as well as laterally, breaking through all structures that men had built to control it. Not as Victory but as Armageddon, it bit deeply into the shallow crust of the earth, striking down through ocean floor to invade the underlying mantle. The equilibrium between layers of the earth was jolted, the balance between opposing pressures was lost. In the dangerously seismic region of the

Pacific Basin, the man-made bomb set free the monster inside the earth.

All along the network of faults that scar that ocean floor, the explosive force found weaknesses. The earth's crust contracted violently, crinkled, and ruptured.

Along the shores of islands near Pater, rocky cliffs were shattered, and land for miles up and down the coastlines sheared off and fell into the sea. For hundreds of miles around Pater, great blocks of ocean floor heaved upward ten to twelve feet, and other blocks as suddenly dropped down.

Old cracks widened, new wounds opened. Through the torn and crumpled surface, the molten content of the earth

surged upward, beginning the creation of land masses that would soon rise above water less than a mile from where Pater Island had been.

For nine minutes, a vast area of the South Pacific groaned and creaked with the spasms of the mammoth quake. Then, as if the monster's anger had been exhausted, the earthquake subsided. But her offspring, the aftershocks and the tidal waves, now came alive.

Her life had been short. Theirs were just beginning.



Tsunami is born at the epicenter of the earthquake. While the mother is still shuddering with the convulsions of labor, the destructive infant is already

moving out from its birthplace. Like ripples across the surface of a pond when a stone is dropped into the water, the series of long, low sea waves begins its predatory journey.

Where will tsunami strike? And when will it? And how hard?

Seismologists study tsunami behavior as clinical psychologists analyze the pathology of a disturbed child. They cannot avert his furious outbreaks—no oceanographic device for preventing tsunami has ever been invented. But they can observe the nature of his tantrums and, based on their severity, estimate how long it will be before they run their course. Above all, their understanding of the child's dementia makes it possible to

warn those near him that it is time to get out of the way.

In essence, this is the purpose of the Tsunami Warning System—the TWS—a network of seismograph and tidal stations all over the Pacific, with headquarters in Honolulu.

No, the TWS technicians cannot prevent earthquakes, or stem volcanic eruptions, or limit the size of nuclear devices to be exploded on test sites in the Pacific. But with seismographs and teletypes and tide gauges sophisticated enough to make their own telephone calls, they can spot the first evidence of a disaster—natural or man-made—within minutes of its occurrence.

Within half an hour to an hour, they

can ascertain the magnitude of the shock and identify the epicenter. And as they piece together reports from warning stations all over the Pacific, they know whether that shock has awakened the monster within the earth—and whether, as a result of his terrible wrath, tsunami is on the move.

Near the epicenter, it may already be too late. Tsunami often arrives too fast to send warnings to settlements within two hundred miles of its birthplace. Even at greater distances, no warning system—not even the new and improved TWS, with its thirty-three seismograph stations and fifty tide stations—can move docks and schools and warehouses and hospitals out of the path of the killer

wave.

On this August morning, tsunami's first target will be Bagatea, only one hundred miles north of Pater. Next it will strike Tolui, one hundred fifty miles beyond Bagatea. From there, the waves will rush on to Hawaii, then curve across the open sea toward the vulnerable coastline bordering the cracked and deformed submarine floor of the Aleutian trench.

It will be ten or eleven hours before the first of the killer waves can travel from Pater Island to the coast of North America. The first victims at the end of this long journey will be offshore islands, such as the Outer Islands of Washington State and British Columbia

—a chain of remote islands reminding us that, millions of years ago, a mountain range stretched out across the water we now call the North Pacific.

The tip of the chain—the most remote of all the Outer Islands—is Phoenix Island.



In the time zone where the black remains of Pater Island protruded grotesquely from a turbulent sea, it was 10:15 a.m.—only fifteen minutes since Shot-Time. It was 12:15 p.m. on Phoenix Island, where Andrew Held, a genius in the invention of mechanical devices that could blow up the world, was glowering at a simple contraption called a radio.

No matter what he did to it, it

wouldn't work until Donald Campbell arrived with the mail, in which Andrew expected the replacement part needed for repair. Another frustration in a day oppressing him with things he could do nothing about.

He wanted to listen to the news. No, he *demanded* that the defective radio give up its waywardness and broadcast the news!

If Toni were alive, she would urge him to accept what he was powerless to change. But Felicia... Ah, Felicia was a different sort. Felicia scorned passive attitudes. She accepted *nothing*.

Andrew shook his head fiercely, as if he could clear it of these disturbingly persistent reflections. When she arrived,

he would be courteous, even friendly, but also... well... a little detached. He did not even know her reason for coming.

Murmuring his favorite Hungarian expletive, Andrew walked unevenly down the hall. He would ask Mary, his cook, to make a fresh pot of coffee. The two basset hounds were at his heels, ever loyal to anyone headed for the kitchen.



At the same moment Andrew Held on Phoenix Island started in pursuit of coffee, Ewa Beach in Honolulu, Hawaii—where the Tsunami Warning System has its headquarters—was in peaceful midmorning slumber. Inside a brick

rectangle that housed the seismic recording center and communications department, a battery of seismographs was producing the nearly smooth lines that reported all was well.

The two men in the office were sitting quietly, at ease, when the alarm sounded.

Startled, the younger man muttered, "Holy Christ!" and ran across the room to the seismographs. His veteran partner followed at an even pace, unruffled by the familiar sound of trouble.

The message on two of the seismographs was unmistakable. Like polite, well-mannered people who suddenly start waving their arms, each recorder had a needle jerking erratically from side to side.

The older man studied the machines with the quick and knowing eye of an expert. There had been an earthquake—one of terrifying proportions. The worst was probably over, though the spasms of aftershock might go on for hours, even days.

But the machines had not told him precisely where the initial quake had occurred, and this he had to learn as quickly as possible. If the earthquake had triggered a tsunami, the waves would already be on their way. Pinpointing the epicenter was essential to calculating the wave's travel time across the Pacific, to predict arrival time at any particular coast.

Though they would be too late to help

settlements near the epicenter, beyond that area there would be hope. Figuring 500 to 600 miles an hour in open water...

The veteran seismographer's thick fingers were swift and agile on the teletype keys.

REQUEST IMMEDIATE READINGS
FROM ALL STATIONS.

The race was on.

6

Dr. Andrew Held went out onto the sundeck overhanging the water, where his cook, Mary, had placed a lunch of dark rye bread and strong cheese on a table next to his lounge chair. His bushy eyebrows drew together as he faced the open sunlight, and for a moment his blue eyes teared.

Someone else might have donned sunglasses in such light. But he disdained dark glasses—they altered color values.

He also scorned the lotions and unguents with which civilized people anoint themselves before going out in the sun. He was a dedicated sunbather, and

his compact, heavily muscled body was evenly tanned, head to toe—but his tan was a product of methodology, not chemistry. *X* minutes per day, calculated according to the exact number of days he had been exposed to the sun. He had never been sunburned.

As he sat down, the two hounds, Mike and Lili, took up positions at a respectful distance, waiting for the signal to come forward for the last bits on his plate.

Andrew ate slowly, savoring the simple food. Now that his eyes had adjusted to the light, they moved restlessly along the horizon, trying to project onto its smooth, unbroken line the image of the cruiser *Trident* on her way back from Wolf Island.

She wasn't due for two hours, but Andrew had never waited patiently for anything he really wanted. The *Trident* was carrying the part he needed to repair the radio, and he wanted it urgently. In fact, he had been frustrated to the point of frenzy by his inability to pick up news broadcasts covering the bomb test on Pater Island.

And, yes, the *Trident* was also bringing Felicia.

Did he *want* Felicia? In one sense, yes, and desperately. For all his determination to shut her out of his mind, he had yearned for her continually over the past two years—but always as she had been during the first years of their marriage. Restless, demanding,

passionate. When he envisioned her body, it was as if it had been created for him—the beautiful long thighs opening to receive, the back arched slightly as she drew his head down to her breasts and whispered, *Gently, lick me gently...*

But often a different scene came to mind and, like a terrible avenging angel, drove out the first. The scene in the darkened bedroom when Felicia had come to his bed and he sent her away. *When I want you, I will come to you.*

How could he have rejected her so cruelly? And beyond that, how could he have reassured his conscience with the thought that Felicia would not suffer as Toni would have!

After that night, the structure of

Andrew's life was shaken to its foundations by a series of events—all occurring in such rapid succession that, later, everything seemed to have happened at once.

First, he was summoned to the White House. There, a presidential aide issued a warning.

“We have no reason to doubt your loyalty, Dr. Held. But I would like to remind you that a close association with any foreign power could be misinterpreted.”

With difficulty, Andrew controlled his indignation. “I am a scientist, Mr. Kreuzner. I have what you call ‘close association’ with physicists all over the world! But I am an American.

When I became a citizen in 1941, I swore to protect and defend the United States. For me, this was and is and always will be my primary obligation.”

The aide was a lean young man, tall and athletic, with a military haircut and cold blue eyes that did not match his smile. “We have given you the highest security clearance. We trust you.”

Andrew’s indignation hardened into anger. “What do you mean, sir, when you say ‘we’? Do you speak of yourself and the president of the United States? Or yourself and God? You say, ‘*We* trust you.’ Why, then, the wiretapping? And your enlisting my secretary in your spying? And the two Secret Service agents who follow me wherever I go?”

The young man's condescending smile dropped from his face. "I have no knowledge of such things," he said smoothly. "Be assured that we—"

As if the regal pronoun had burned his tongue, he stopped abruptly. When he began again, the smile was once more applied to his face.

"Remember these two things. Policy may be determined by vote of the entire Atomic Energy Commission, but ultimately it must be approved or disapproved by the president. The president, on his own authority, without concordance of any agency or commission, can order an all-out attack with any or all nuclear weapons in our possession. Secondly, remember that

anyone who divulges military secrets to a foreign power is violating the security of this country—and *that* is called *treason*.”

With that, the aide turned his back and pressed a buzzer on his desk. The office door opened, and a Secret Service agent with a noncommittal expression appeared, to usher Andrew from the office to the White House door. There, a second agent accompanied him all the way through the gates to a taxi.



The command performance at the White House embittered him. An interrogation at the Pentagon the next day did even more to change the course of his life.

Unlike the presidential aide, these

military men did not cover their threats with smiles. They gave him chapter and verse, including reports from the FBI in Washington and from a CIA man in Paris.

Whatever indecision still obscured his new position was abruptly cleared away. His role was now crystallized.

He was by now unalterably opposed to *any* use or further development of thermonuclear devices. It was his duty as a loyal citizen to say just that. An immediate concern, though, was the super-bomb being developed by France.

Though he could not accept the French Bureau's offer, it showed he was respected by the French. He would use all his influence, and as much technical

data as he dared, to persuade them that the weapon they were developing was potentially disastrous. He would try to convince them that such a monstrous invention should never be tested.

Meanwhile, for the world as a whole—for scientists, politicians, heads of state—he would write a book justifying his new position. He would call it *The Noble Truth*.

He wrote the book at home, most of it late at night after Felicia had gone to bed. They slept in separate rooms now. More and more, Felicia was going out alone to various dinners and benefit balls—the nature of which he did not remember, even when she bothered to tell him.

He was also sending letters to France—first to the Directeur of the Bureau des Essais Atomique, and then to his old friend Paul Clicquot. They replied courteously but questioned his arguments, primarily on the grounds that he had not included enough specific technological data to support them. Of course, if he would accept a post with the Bureau, and thus assist the republic of France...

His sense of urgency grew. Now there were reports that an island in French Polynesia had been selected for the first test of the super-bomb. Andrew began to address his pleas to French newspapers and to scientific journals. This effort brought a letter from the Bureau's

Directeur, asking that he fly to Paris so they could talk in person.

By then he had finished his book and voluntarily submitted it to the Pentagon's public information officer. The day after the French asked him to fly to Paris, the Pentagon verdict was rendered—not by the PIO but by the General himself.

His manuscript, *The Noble Truth*, expounded views contrary to United States policy. No clearance. However, in consideration for the long hours he had spent writing it, the book would be purchased by the government and kept on file.

“And if I submit my manuscript to a publisher?”

“You would be violating a Defense

Department directive. If the book were accepted for publication, you would be dismissed.”

Andrew returned to his office at once to dictate a formal letter of resignation.

When he got home that evening, he found a note from Felicia. She would be out until quite late—a meeting of the program committee for an important charity ball.

He felt unaccountably relieved. He was taking a night flight to Vancouver, British Columbia, where he was to be the main speaker at a conference. He packed quickly and left for the airport by taxi—much earlier than was necessary.



After the conference, he was approached

by a Canadian physicist, Dr. Harvey Stapleton. He was a quiet man, with soft brown eyes, large hands and feet, and a benign smile.

“Dr. Held, you have apparently been under considerable strain. I have a boat. Nothing elegant, but she’s seaworthy. I’m about to take her on a cruise through the Outer Islands. Will you come along?”

An ocean cruise? Once, Andrew would have rejected the suggestion as frivolous, compared to the serious work it would force him to postpone. But everything was changing now. His former convictions lay around him in a hundred jagged pieces. A new Andrew Held was emerging painfully from the

wreckage—though somehow, in struggling to find himself, he was losing Felicia.

An ocean cruise? Why not? For the moment, he could not bear to go back to Washington and the big apartment overlooking the river—and Felicia.

They cruised west and a little south of Vancouver, moving at a leisurely pace through the blue waters of the Pacific, on to the archipelago known simply as the Outer Islands. There among the islands, they fished for cod and snapper, drifting the length of rocky reefs where seagulls, cormorants, and puffins perched and nested. Hair seal and sea otter slid into the water at their approach.

At low tide, they would go ashore in

the dinghy and pick oysters off the rocks. Evenings, after a sun-filled day of cruising, they would drop anchor offshore, or in the shelter of a narrow bay—and Andrew would sleep as deeply as he had as a boy in Hungary.

After four or five days, the sunshine and peace had overpowered his body like a sedative. But his mind seemed tuned to the twinkling brilliance of the water, for it quivered with an impossible dream.

“You said that many of the smaller islands are owned privately?”

“Yes, indeed,” Stapleton told him. “In fact, a friend of mine bought one, just two or three years ago. One of the Canadian islands. By the way, we’re in

the United States now.” With a sweeping gesture, he included all the bright water around them, and the three nearest islands. “Forgot to mention it.”

“Over there, too?” Andrew asked, pointing due east.

“Yes, that land you can just barely see along the horizon—that’s the American mainland. Coast of the state of Washington. Good many islands between here and there.”

Stapleton sat up straight. “See here, Andrew. You sound quite serious. Are you really considering buying something? Leave Foggy Bottom forever? Chuck the whole thing?”

Andrew’s voice was bitter. “I cannot. I am only dreaming.”

“Even so...” His friend swiveled and looked thoughtfully back toward Canada. “Even so,” he repeated, “let’s take a look.”

He reached for the detailed chart he had followed in their course south from British Columbia.

“See this island, here? Where it says Furness? F-u-r-n-e-s-s. My friend—the one who bought the island—tells me this one’s for sale. Estate matter. There was a small farm on it, maybe forty years ago, but when the farmer died, his widow left the place. It’s terribly isolated. Not one of the heirs has had any use for it. Second generation of heirs trying to get rid of it now.”

He put down the chart and looked at

Andrew with a boyish smile on his face. “It’s way off our course—really a far place. But we’ll do it.”

To reach the island identified on the chart as Furness, they crossed a seemingly endless stretch of open water. Looking back toward the American mainland, the irregular outlines of a hundred small islands grew dimmer and dimmer as the boat sailed farther out to sea.

The rest of the Outer Islands had vanished over the horizon when, to the west, the profile of a single island was suddenly outlined against the sky, as if it had just emerged from the water.

“There she is!” Stapleton cried. “Curious shape, don’t you think?”

Andrew agreed. At the north end, cliffs rose two hundred feet above the water, crowned there by heavy forest. From those heights, the land sloped southward to a plateau only thirty or forty feet above sea level. Then it rose again to a lesser hill in the south—gently rounded, and covered with pine, alder, and madrona. The shape of the island made Andrew think of a crouching beast.

“Furness,” he mused. “If I owned this island, I would call it Phoenix. Phoenix, the resurrection. Phoenix—rising not from ashes but from the sea.”

His friend nodded in understanding. “I guess most of us dream at some time about having an island of our own. The island mystique. But are you sure you’d

want *this* one, so far from everything?
What would it offer you?”

“Escape, my friend,” Andrew answered without hesitation. “And in escape, I would find peace.”

On his return from Vancouver, Andrew had his first bitter argument with Felicia.

He told her he had resigned; she called him a headstrong fool. He tried to explain why he had reversed his stand on nuclear weapons; she said he could have done it quietly and kept his job. He revealed the indignities of surveillance he had borne patiently for months; she criticized him for having committed the acts that brought it on.

“You confided your wonderful idealistic thoughts to a French official at a party, and you were overheard!” She laughed derisively. “Even *you* should know that, in Washington, you *don't*

discuss ideas at a social function!”

Andrew looked at her for several seconds before he could speak. He had always found her so beautiful. Dark auburn hair, swept up into an elaborate but completely suitable hairstyle, rather like the coiffure of a Middle Eastern princess. High cheekbones. A straight, perfectly proportioned nose. Wide-set green eyes with heavily painted lashes. And a mouth in which the upper lip curled a little, and the lower lip was a little fuller than the upper.

He thought, *She is beautiful—perhaps too perfectly beautiful. If you drew a line down the center, both sides of her face would be exactly the same. She looks... lacquered.*

“Well?” Felicia’s voice was sharp. “Now that you’ve resigned, what do you intend to do? Run away to Paris? Work for the French?”

He answered solemnly, “No. Though I still have that option.”

“You realize I would not go with you?”

“To be honest, I had not thought about it. No, I am sure you would not.”

“Ah.” Her green eyes blazed. “But you *have* thought about what to do with this book of yours?”

“Yes,” Andrew replied wearily. “I have, indeed. Now that I have resigned from the government, I am a free agent. The publication of my book is an issue that rests between me and a publisher.

The Pentagon kept my manuscript, but I have a carbon copy. I will go to New York in the morning.”

Felicia turned angrily and walked away. The heavy green satin of her hostess coat made a whispering sound as she crossed the thick white carpet. At the sideboard, she dropped two ice cubes into a crystal highball glass and poured vodka over the ice.

“Hemlock, anyone?” she asked over her shoulder. “May I serve you, Dr. Held?”

“Thank you, no.”

She turned around, lifting her glass in a toast.

“Here’s to the New Evangelism. Viva Jeane Dixon and Isaiah—not to mention

Cassandra. Well, I have certain modest talents as a prophet myself, and I hereby foretell—with apologies to Geneviève Tabouis, et al.—that the only way your so-called campaign for peace will get a majority vote is if you retreat to a desert island. Alone.”

Island . . . Her sarcasm did not divert him from the picture that word evoked. Furness, which he would rename Phoenix...

“Not a *desert* island,” he said thoughtfully. “An island of cliffs, and a long, narrow bay. Dark green evergreens, seagulls screaming—”

“My God,” Felicia breathed, taking another sip of chilled vodka. “You sound serious. Where *is* this island?”

Where the waters of the farthest ocean fall over the edge of the earth?”

“Off the coast of British Columbia, northwest from the coast of Washington State. I saw it when I went out for the Vancouver conference.”

“Who lives there?”

“No one.”

“A house?”

“I would build one.”

Suddenly, she was as serious as he. She looked at him thoughtfully, then set her empty glass on the sideboard. Turning very slowly, she surveyed the elegant room. When her glance came around to her husband, she shook her head.

“I couldn’t, Andy. *This* is what I want.

This is where you found me, this is where I belong. *I* have not changed. If sometime, somehow, you were to make this insane dream come true and move to your island in the Pacific, you know I could not come with you. I would not survive. I would not *want* to survive.”

Andrew said gently, “It is only a dream, Felicia. Now, I am very tired, and I am going to catch the ten o’clock shuttle to New York tomorrow. I’ll say good night.”

As he walked by her, he had an impulse to embrace her and ask her to come to his bed. But the day had exhausted him. He would be no good. So, instead, he patted her perfectly smooth cheek and, limping badly, went

off to his separate room.

In New York, the editor expressed enthusiasm and promised a decision in two weeks. Andrew flew back to Washington and took a taxi to his office. There, without a thought for electronic monitors or telephone bugs, he called his travel agent and made arrangements for a flight to France.



Again, Felicia's weapon was sarcasm.

“Are you naive, or just plain stubborn? With all you've been up to, how could you expect these government men not to distrust you? Just because you have not violated their trust? And besides, they are right, you know. If you were not considering the French offer,

you would not be making a trip to Paris.”

“I’m going to Paris only to try once more—in a different way, this time—to persuade their Bureau that they should stop work on this terrible bomb. The Victoire, they are calling it now. I think a better name would be Armageddon.”

“The French want your brains, not your principles.” She stopped abruptly. “Did you say you called your travel agent from your office?”

Andrew said absently, “What? Oh, yes. Yes, why not?”

“Dear God,” Felicia moaned. “You *are* stubborn as *well* as naive. Be prepared.”

A few days later, while at Dulles

airport before boarding his plane to Paris, her words came back to him in a rush.

At the gate, the regular security guard examined his attaché case and topcoat with such thoroughness that the people behind him demanded that he step aside and let them take their turn. Satisfied at last, the guard closed Andrew's case, returned it and his topcoat, and signaled to someone, who had apparently been waiting in an unlighted corner of the security area.

A middle-aged man in business suit, white shirt, and dark tie stepped out of the shadows and approached them. He was carrying the suitcase Andrew had deposited earlier at the ticket counter to

be checked through to Paris. The noncommittal expression, the conservative dress, the athletic physique, and above all, the steady, unsmiling eyes—Andrew knew instantly that the man was a Secret Service agent.

“Would you mind coming with me?” the man asked politely, somehow leaving no alternative for one who *would* mind, and mind very much.

Andrew looked at his watch and frowned impatiently. “The plane leaves in twenty minutes.”

The agent’s answer was to place a hand under Andrew’s elbow and guide him firmly across the lobby to a door marked Private. The door opened at his knock, and Andrew, more or less

propelled by the elbow, went in.

It was a small room, brightly illuminated by a battery of fluorescent ceiling lights. The furnishings were coldly clinical: three or four plain chairs; a glass cabinet containing medical instruments; a washbasin and paper towel rack; a standing lamp with adjustable gooseneck. And in the center of the room, a stainless steel examination table, covered by a two-foot-wide strip of white paper.

At the far side of the room, a door opened, admitting a young man in starched white jacket and white trousers.

“I am Dr. Youngman,” he said pleasantly. “Dr. Held, would you be kind enough to remove your clothing.”

For several seconds, Andrew was immobilized by disbelief. He looked at his wristwatch, and the figures meant nothing to him.

All at once, his perceptions came into focus. His accent, usually faint, became more pronounced in anger, but his voice was level and cold. “I had not anticipated the pleasure of your acquaintance, Dr. Youngman, and have not allowed time for it. My plane leaves in less than twenty minutes. I have no intention of taking off my clothes.”

Andrew turned to the Secret Service agent. “This is a democracy, I believe? If you have a warrant, I will comply. If not, I expect you to escort me to the boarding area, along with the luggage

you had no right to take from the airline.”

The agent spoke without emotion. “I do not have a warrant, but I can easily get one. I will hold you here until I do, if you refuse to submit to a body search.”

“*Body* search,” Andrew repeated, scarcely able to register it. He turned back to the doctor.

The doctor had curly red hair, pale lashes over pale blue eyes, and white skin stippled with large orange freckles. He spoke in a disconnected way, as if determination to do his job were pushing the sentences out of his mouth in random-size chunks.

“I believe that, through... your, uh, cooperation... we can get you... onto

your plane... on time.” His face was flushed with the effort. “If we don’t find... anything, that is.”

Again, the imperial *we*. Andrew exploded. “*We*? You and this insolent Gestapo agent? You and the Pentagon? You and God?”

At that point, perversely, Andrew decided that *nothing*—not even a body search—would prevent him from keeping his appointment in Paris. In furious silence, he took off his clothes.

The young doctor may not have been at home in conversation, but when it came to physical examination, he yielded to none. Andrew’s every orifice was treated as a possible hiding place.

He started with the head. He probed

inside the ears, ran a finger along the wet valley between gums and cheeks, shone a light up each nostril. Then his fingers moved to the armpits, scratched through the hair, slid down the body to probe in the pubic hair around the genitals. He next tested the tip of the penis, as if he believed it a logical spot for a circumcised male to conceal contraband.

When he came to the feet, the prosthesis seemed to show promise. The doctor removed it, examined it minutely, shook it—and finally, almost reluctantly, reattached it to the leg.

He straightened up. “Ah, well... If you will please climb up on the table. That’s right, that’s right... No, no, not to

sit. Please turn over. Rest on your elbows. Yes, yes, knee-chest position. Knees a little forward, please.”

An angry protest rose in Andrew’s throat as the white-coated demon spread his buttocks and, with an uncompromising thrust, inserted a cold metal object into his anus. Andrew choked back words, and closed his eyes to try to shut out the insult and the pain.

“We won’t be long,” the doctor murmured. “Relax, please...”

In silence, Andrew fought the undignified attack that the metal tube had launched against his body. With all the strength he controlled in those muscles, he tried to close the anal entrance. But the probing metal proceeded

relentlessly, past all obstruction, until it had advanced beyond every sphincter the human mind can command.

Andrew's eyes were still closed when the tube was withdrawn, bringing with it the primeval odor of human waste. The doctor carried it to the washbasin, dropped it with a clatter, and noisily washed his hands.

"Nothing," he pronounced, addressing himself exclusively to the Secret Service agent. "Sorry."

The agent's voice betrayed no feeling, one way or the other. "That so? It wouldn't have to be very big."

The doctor replied impatiently. "Nothing, I said."

"Well, okay..."

Only then did they seem to notice Andrew. Together they helped him to his feet, and while he dressed, the agent telephoned the boarding area. He advised the guard at the other end of the line that their passenger would be there in three minutes, and that they were to hold the plane.



When Andrew flew back from Paris, he was prepared to tell Felicia that she had been right in her judgment. The French *did* want his brains—*not* his principles.

One consultant, Paul Clicquot, had shown interest in his arguments against testing the Victoire. But the Directeur of the Bureau had listened for only a few minutes before rising from his chair at

the head of the conference table. He thrust out his ample belly, adjusted his cuff links, and in tones bordering on rudeness, said he hoped his old colleague Andrew had not traveled so far to discuss irrelevancies.

“Irrelevancies!” Andrew regarded the Directeur with a long, thoughtful stare. Was it possible that this eminent scientist was satisfied to assess his monstrous super-bomb on technological grounds alone, and to close his mind completely to its human and social implications? Incredible. Inhuman! *And yet*, Andrew reflected with a sickening surge of guilt, *a year ago I would have spoken just as he is now.*

“I came to Paris because you

requested it,” Andrew said with dignity. “And because I assumed your request was based on appreciation, or even need, of my particular skills.”

“I am sorry, my friend.” The Directeur toyed with his right cuff link. “We all acknowledge your scientific genius. It is the art of persuasion that seems to elude you.”

“It cannot elude me, because I do not pursue it.” Andrew smiled wryly. “I know all about the art of persuasion. It consists of telling one’s listeners what they want to hear. I have told you the exact opposite. And so you feel threatened in your cherished ambitions, and you repudiate me.”

Andrew planned to recite this

conversation for Felicia's amusement, even at the risk of hearing a note of malicious glee in her laughter. He was also prepared to confess that he had been searched at the airport.

Yes, the Americans had insulted him, and the French had rejected him. He had been shocked and he had been disappointed. But Andrew had never acknowledged defeat, however conclusive it might appear to everyone else. A colleague had once remarked, *Mortals yield. Andrew Held does not.* Even before the mammoth airship landed at Dulles airport, Andrew's spirits were rallying. He was forming a new plan.

He could not—would not—go back into government service. But he could

always teach. In fact, he had received three excellent offers as soon as news of his resignation appeared in the newspapers. In addition, there was his writing. Judging by the comments of the editor in New York, *The Noble Truth* was sure to be published, and he would want to start work on a second book.

Actually, he would not have to teach. Financially, he was free to spend all his time writing. How wonderful it would be to concentrate on creative work, in an atmosphere unpolluted by the intrigue and tension and caste system of Washington.

The memory of a distant island popped into his mind, like a picture suddenly illuminated by a spotlight. But

of course, Felicia would not consider such a wild scheme—and part of his regrouping and his gathering of purpose was a resolution to rebuild his marriage.

Felicia was still uppermost in his mind when he emerged from customs and walked into the lobby of Dulles airport. She was not in the crowd waiting to welcome passengers, but she seldom met him—and in this case, he reminded himself, she could not have done so. He had not known, when he left, he would stay in Paris only three days, nor had he cabled.

The thought struck him that he should have brought her a gift. He could at least have picked up something in one of the shops at Orly. When he stepped into the

taxi, he instructed the driver to make a stop at a liquor store. There he bought a bottle of excellent *brut*.

Thus it was that Andrew was holding a bottle of champagne when he discovered his wife making love to a young man he had never seen.

He had not meant to enter quietly, but the door was ajar, and the carpets throughout the apartment were deep and soft. Now, gripping the bottle of champagne, he stood in the doorway of their bedroom.

The young man was darkly beautiful, with long black hair waving back from a smooth, unwrinkled forehead. His head rested on the cushioned back of a chair—the eyes closed, the nostrils a little

dilated, the full lips slightly parted. His naked body was as finely sculpted as the head, and smooth but for fine, dark hairs on the chest and calves.

His groin was concealed by the back of Felicia's head. In the seconds before Andrew wheeled and fled to the living room, he noted that the young man stroked her breasts in perfect time with her slow back-and-forth rhythm.



Six months later, Andrew had completed his purchase of Furness Island. He had also somehow persuaded the twelve bureaucrats on the United States Board of Geographic Names that it could be renamed Phoenix without undue harm to their policy on local usage.

After another three months, the first boatload of building materials arrived at Phoenix, and construction began.



It was 2:24 p.m. on Phoenix Island, where Andrew Held lay on a canvas deck chair beside the pool and let the August sun relax and warm him.

It was 12:24 p.m. in Hawaii, where the shriek of sirens warned the residents of coastal towns that all sea-level areas must be evacuated.

Tsunami was on its way!

8

It is ironic that a “tidal wave” is not, in the normal sense, a wave, and has little or nothing to do with tides. It is energy.

It starts from great blocks of the ocean floor thrusting upward or dropping suddenly, as the land trembles and cliffs slide into the sea. This downthrust and upheaval of the tortured earth’s crust projects its energy into the water, generating the catastrophic waves. But a tidal wave is not a body of water traveling across the surface of the ocean. The sea remains in place. The wave is energy passing through it.

Consider what happens when you crack a whip. The force of the movement

ripples along the length of the whip from the handle to the tip. The motion travels, not the leather.

In open ocean, tsunami pretends innocence. The waves are only a foot or so high, and each wave is so long that it may be a hundred miles from crest to crest. Traveling at four to six hundred miles an hour, the deceptively shallow ripples follow each other at intervals of ten to forty-five minutes.

A few hours hence, these waves may kill thousands and destroy millions of dollars worth of property. Yet their approach cannot be spotted from an airplane, and in open water they will pass harmlessly under an ocean liner. It is only when the path of the potential

murderer is blocked by a land mass that the true lethal nature of tsunami is revealed.

As the wave approaches the coast, the depth of the ocean decreases, and the killer slows down proportionally. At an ocean depth of twenty-five thousand feet, tsunami travels at about six hundred miles per hour. At twelve thousand feet, four hundred miles per hour. At three thousand feet, only two hundred miles per hour.

But the retarding of speed is not an indication of weakness. When the ocean is sixty feet deep and the destroyer is advancing at only thirty miles an hour, the wave that raced so innocently across open water is actually preparing for the

kill. The shallower the ocean, the higher the wave. With the victim in sight, tsunami collects itself into a striking force that may smash the shoreline with a wall of water hundreds of feet above normal high tide.

A steel and concrete lighthouse one hundred fifty feet above the water may be ripped from its foundations and cast into the sea. Shoreline installations are smashed; docks, warehouses, and fuel depots dismembered. Ships in harbor are swamped, overturned, and tossed against each other like wood chips. And when the wave recedes, heavy machinery, lengths of railroad track, and blocks of limestone or granite weighing ten tons or more will be strewn among

the wreckage—as if a careless child, finding something better to do elsewhere, has suddenly run off and left his toys.

Having destroyed, the diverted killer wave moves on, once more gathering speed as it passes the obstructing land mass and rolls back into open water. But woe to those survivors who think the danger is over and return to the shore from their place of refuge on high land. For another wave will follow, perhaps in fifteen or twenty minutes, perhaps in an hour.

There is no way to know how many successive waves will strike at any particular spot, or how much time will elapse between them. There is no way to

guess whether the next wave will be more or less destructive than the last.

Above all else, tsunami is deceitful and unpredictable.



On the island of Bagatea, the natives lived in cottages scattered through groves of palm and pandanus trees rimming the shallow harbor. Their guests from Pater had been housed in the old military barracks on the hill, where they could look down on the village, the harbor installations, and the frame cottage of “Monsieur,” the local government official.

When Pater Island exploded, the shock hit Bagatea almost instantly. Native huts swayed like paper houses

caught in a crosswind. Flimsy walls fell apart, and corrugated roofs slid to the ground. Frightened women and screaming children pulled themselves from the wreckage, and the grove vibrated with human cries.

On the hill, the barracks shuddered and groaned in a rhythmic convulsion that severed the power line. While terrified Pater Islanders huddled in the yard, clutching their children and mumbling broken prayers, the old building swayed in its dance of death. The raw end of the power line, snapping sparks, whipped about like a maimed snake.

In the garden adjacent to his cottage, Monsieur's reactions were swift. His

small tide station was not a regular subscriber to the Tsunami Warning System, but it was his duty to report to Honolulu should his gauge show any unusual rise or fall.

At the front of his house, the porch had collapsed. The building hung over the bay, unsupported. He ran to the back of the house. The back door was jammed into a crooked frame and would not open. But the kitchen window had been broken. Disregarding the shards of glass, he crawled through it and ran across the dipping floor to the workroom where his equipment was set up.

His guess had been right. The tidal gauge was rising dangerously. It screamed, *Tsunami! Report to*

Honolulu! He swung around toward the teletype—but at that point, the power went off.

There was no tidal gauge, no communication.

He drew in his breath sharply. The people in the barracks on the hill were lucky—up there they would be safe. But his own villagers lived right on the edge of the water.

He ran from house to house, calling out the warning. Some villagers had been injured by falling roofs or timbers, and all were confused and frightened. But they respected Monsieur, and they fled the village and made their way toward the hill.

The first group of fifteen or twenty

villagers was halfway up the slope when a wailing and shrieking mob of Pater Islanders came rushing downhill from the barracks.

“Fire! Fire! Run!”

They looked up and saw it was true. At the top of the hill, flames were leaping higher than the barracks roof, and smoke billowed out through broken windows.

The hysterical cries of alarm compounded as the wave of fleeing Pater Islanders struck the group from the village. Panicked, the Bagatea natives turned around, and with their visitors from Pater hard on their heels, ran downhill. In their frenzied eagerness to escape the fire, no one heard Monsieur’s

shouts or interpreted his gestures as he tried to make them look out to sea.

When the first wave reached the harbor, most of the villagers had their backs to the water, staring at the tall flames on the hill above.

The great wall of water soared over the reef. The villagers turned around, and screams of panic burst from a hundred mouths. Like stampeding animals, they ran back toward the hill.

It was too late. The wave swallowed the *proas* and small boats in the harbor, spewed them out in shreds, then rolled forward, overtaking all but a few before they could reach safety.



One villager escaped the killer wave by

a miracle.

It was a young girl—the most beautiful of all Bagatea's dark-eyed and smiling young women, already spoken for by a fisherman. She had struggled against the wave to no avail. Then, as if some benign power were intervening in her behalf, she was lifted high on the wave and carried forward. The wave deposited her gently on a grassy spot above the village, inches short of the highest water mark.

The turbulent water had spared her life but stripped her of all clothing. Her lovely naked body, wet but pulsing with life, lay stretched out on the hill above the village, like an offering to the sky. She was unharmed, but she was

unconscious.

And for that reason, she did not see—and could not run from—the fire now moving out from the burning barracks, across the sunburned field.



When the second wave roared in, a half hour later, it claimed only a few lives—those of people lying on the beach unconscious.

It was the third wave that lifted Monsieur's painted house off its shaky supports and carried it forward a hundred feet above the beach. Casting the house onto the clearing at the top of the hill, the wave drew back.

The house settled down on the mud, just a few feet from the smoldering

remains of the barracks.



One hundred miles north of Bagatea, on the island of Tolui, the elderly government official was experiencing an uncomfortable sensation: a strange pressure in his ears.

Was it his new medication, perhaps?

Frowning nervously, he applied the palms of his hands flat against his ears, pushed in, then released the pressure suddenly—more or less as he had done as a young man when water had gotten into his ears while swimming. But there was no relief.

All at once, an idea struck him: air pressure. He hurried across the room to his barometer.

The instrument was acting strangely, indeed. Within a few minutes, it fell three millimeters. Then for half a minute it held steady. Then a fast rise of about seven millimeters, and again a short lull, again a fall.

A typhoon? The thought filled him with dread.

The pressure in his ears seemed to follow the changes of the barometer. When the needle indicated a rise, the pressure was worse. When it fell, he felt better. He stared dumbly at the instrument, as if it were a tribunal with power to save him or condemn him.

Gradually, the time between rise and fall grew longer, and the difference between high and low narrowed, until

the barometer settled quietly on a point and stayed there.

An earthquake, then, not a typhoon. The elderly man sighed deeply. The worst was over. What he had been feeling was the impact of the aftershocks. Now his ears felt better, but his arthritic knees cried out for rest. So he crossed the office and lowered himself carefully into his easy chair...

He was sound asleep when the first wave of tsunami slammed against the island.

The voice of his male servant woke him. "Wave, big wave!" The man's face was constricted by terror.

Still half asleep, the government's man on Tolui pushed himself out of his

big chair and stumbled across the room to the door. His only coherent thought was that something was happening and it was his responsibility to do something about it.

The administration building stood on a slope above the port, fifty or sixty feet beyond the docks and warehouses that rimmed the bay. The old man looked down unbelievably at a scene worse than any typhoon in his experience.

The wave had deluged all the buildings at the water's edge. One or two had been knocked off their pilings and had fallen sideways. Others had held firm, though their windows were smashed. Several roofs had been dislodged, swept away, and dropped at

crazy angles in the mud.

As for the villagers, some had escaped entirely and were running up the slope toward higher ground. Those caught in the buildings but not drowned were struggling to free themselves. Cut and bleeding, they were trying to crawl through broken windows, or to cling to floating rubble.

Several bodies were floating in the bay. Far out, the port building was bobbing on the water like a small Noah's ark. A native woman was clinging to the peak of the roof, screaming at the running figures on shore.

The government official stared while his servant pulled his arm. "Run! Run!"

the man shouted in his face. “First wave go out. Next wave come, maybe soon, maybe higher! Hurry, please!”

He followed numbly after the servant, who had already bounded yards ahead of him. He wasn't much of a weatherman, but he knew that another wave was sure to follow. He might have ten minutes.

He struggled painfully up the hill, conscious of the ache in his knees. Then he heard a voice—the voice of a woman. Like Lot's wife, he turned.

It was the storekeeper's wife, crying out from a spot about halfway down the slope. She was thoroughly wet, and appeared to be wedged between a tree trunk and the hill in such a way that she could move only her arms. She beckoned

to him, calling his name.

Without a thought for the second wave, the old man slid down the hill to the spot where the woman seemed chained to the protruding tree trunk. Her terrified explanation was incoherent, but he understood at a glance. The first wave had gone over her, lifted her, thrown her against the hill, and receded, leaving her alive. But she was, indeed, chained to the tree trunk. Her long black hair was hopelessly wrapped and tangled around the tree's lowest limbs.

He tried to sort out the strands, but she would not hold still. He had made only a few clumsy efforts when she began to scream and point toward the bay.

He did not need to look around. He

took his penknife from his pocket and pulled out the blade. Holding a handful of the woman's hair in his left hand, he cut her hair free with jerky, sawing motions of his right. She was free.

The instant he cut the last strand, she leaped away. On hands and knees, she clawed her way up the hill.

An old man with arthritic knees cannot climb a hill as easily as he can slide down. The government man tried to escape the second wave, but it was no use. It swallowed him, cast him out into the bay, rolled him over and over like a balsa log, pounded him against the wreckage of the port authority office, and then pulled back, dragging his unconscious body out to sea and down to

its depths.



By the time the Tsunami Warning System headquarters in Honolulu had gathered enough information for its first advisory bulletin, it was already too late for Bagatea or Tolui. Tsunami was already back on course across open water, racing north at five hundred miles an hour.

At 11:45 a.m., Hawaiian Standard Time—1:45 p.m. on Phoenix Island—tsunami was ninety minutes old and had traveled six hundred miles.

Ahead were the islands of Falatopa, Markham, Ile de Ciel, Thompson, Davis Reef, Simpson, Mauritius. In another six hundred miles, tsunami would cross the

equator. Then, for the most part, it would be open sea all the way to Hawaii.



Tsunami was slowing down as it approached Markham Island, one hundred fifty miles northeast of Tolui.

The freighter *Wotan* had just departed Markham and cleared port, and was now a mile beyond the harbor mouth. The quartermaster had just poured coffee and was standing with a wide white mug in each hand, when the helmsman exclaimed to the captain, "Sir!"

Several things then happened almost at once. The captain wheeled around, looked dead ahead, and saw a high, broad bank of water rolling in from the ocean. The first mate shouted, "Tidal

wave!" And the wave reached the *Wotan's* bow.

At twenty to thirty miles an hour, the great bore of water moved under the freighter, lifting her straight up. On this broad, nearly flat crest, the *Wotan* rode forward.

The captain prayed to God and tensed himself for the moment his ship would drop into a trough and be swallowed by the sea. "Hold on!" he shouted hoarsely, and the quartermaster nodded, as if the skipper were talking about coffee mugs.

But there was no trough, no sudden drop. Having passed under the *Wotan's* stern, the steep front of the assaulting wave rolled on toward land. Ahead of the ship, the surface of the sea was level.

In less than a minute, the *Wotan* had been lowered gently and was proceeding steadily out to sea.

“Coffee, sir?” asked the quartermaster.

He hadn't spilled a drop.



There were no protecting reefs to divert tsunami as it closed in on Markham harbor. By the time it reached shore, the first wave was forty feet high. It swept over the town, picking up buildings, trees, automobiles, people, and livestock.

On the hill above the harbor, a young marine biologist ran to the telephone to call the port administrator. Four rings, five, six. No answer.

He hung up the receiver, checked the number, and dialed again. It rang once... and then silence. The line was dead. His hand shook as he replaced the receiver.

He was no seismologist. It was up to Markham's port administrator to notify the Mission Hydrographique at Papeete. Papeete would forward the message via radio telegraph to the station at Nandi in Fiji. From there, it would be transmitted via FFA communications to headquarters of the warning system at Ewa Beach, Hawaii.

But it all had to start with the port administrator, and his office was on a pier only a few feet above sea level.

The biologist tried to phone again, but the line was definitely dead. He

replaced the useless receiver and repressed a shudder, trying not to think of what kind of death had swept over the people at the other end of the line.

So, there was no telephone, no radio. But someone had to get a message to Papeete, and fast. Ah! His most treasured possession suddenly came to mind—a fine, modern shortwave transceiver, a radio that could transmit as well as receive.

In three strides, he crossed the shabby parlor and examined the control dials, like great, shiny eyes peering out from the gray-green steel case. But of course, this ham operator's dream radio was as useless as the telephone, now that the power lines were down. He turned away

—and through the window, saw the hood of his old Fiat, parked just outside the cottage door.

The car battery.

In fifteen minutes, he was ready. He had disconnected the ham radio and carried it outside. There, he had placed it on the ground where he could attach it to both the car battery and the antenna cable from the roof. The old Fiat was idling smoothly. *It should keep the battery charged, he thought, at least long enough to get out a warning.* He murmured, “*Deus volente,*” and picked up the small microphone.

He began with the vocal equivalent of S.O.S.: “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. This is FO8VZ, FO8VZ, FO8VZ.” He

listened, signaled again, waited. Finally, a slight murmur of replies, one stronger than the others.

“This is XE3QQ, XE3QQ. Roger, Roger, go ahead.”

In a shaking voice, the biologist began his message. “XE3QQ, this is FO8VZ. QTH is Markham Island. We have been hit by a tidal wave.”



At Ewa Beach, the men at the Warning Center were preparing a second bulletin when the report came in for Markham.

MARKHAM	ISLAND	EXPERIENCED
SEISMIC	SEAWAVE	AT 2205 Z.
WATER	LEVEL	40 FEET ABOVE
MEAN	SEA LEVEL.	PAGO PAGO
TIDE	GAUGE	INDICATES

ABNORMAL HIGH TIDE. WILL
ADVISE.

“Tsunami warning,” said the senior seismologist. “Get it out fast!”

Within minutes, this message left Honolulu for all warning stations in the Pacific:

THIS IS A TSUNAMI
WATCH/WARNING. A SEVERE
EARTHQUAKE HAS OCCURRED AT
LAT. 24.9 S., LONG. 154.6 W.
VICINITY OF PATER ISLAND, AT
2015 Z, 3 AUGUST. A TSUNAMI
HAS BEEN GENERATED THAT IS
SPREADING OVER THE PACIFIC
OCEAN. THE INTENSITY CANNOT,
REPEAT, CANNOT BE PREDICTED.
HOWEVER THIS WAVE COULD
CAUSE GREAT DAMAGE. IT MAY
BE FOLLOWING ELONGATED

AFTERSHOCK PATTERN NORTH AND
EAST TOWARD PACIFIC COAST.
THE DANGER IS EXTREME AND
MAY LAST FOR 12 TO 14 HOURS.

The message concluded with a list of
estimated travel times:

ETA HAWAIIAN ISLANDS 0145 Z,
4 AUGUST. ETA ALASKA 0715 Z,
4 AUGUST. ETA BRITISH
COLUMBIA 0615 Z, 4 AUGUST.

For Hawaiians, about four hours. For
Phoenix Island, about nine hours.

But there was no warning system on
Phoenix. And because electronic
devices are not infallible, there was no
radio to carry the news to Dr. Andrew
Held.

At last Andrew had finished his lunch, except for the scraps he always saved for his dogs. He snapped his fingers, and the hounds struggled to their feet and lumbered across the deck to his chair.

Mike, the male—named after the world's first hydrogen bomb—swallowed the bread and cheese in a gulp. Lili accepted the food from Andrew's extended hand, but the pungent odor of the cheese assaulted her sensitive hunter's nose. She placed the scrap carefully between her big webbed paws, sneezed, and looked up at her master apologetically.

Andrew nodded. "Ah, yes, Lili. Either

you eat it, or Mike will. It is your choice.”

The air was soft, carrying a mélange of warm seashore scents from the gravel beach below the house. Andrew adjusted his lounge chair to a semireclining position. Lying back with arms outstretched and eyes closed, he invited the August sun to reach inside and melt his anxieties.

Anxiety, he reflected, is a noncreative emotion. Unlike anger—which produces action—it weakens one, and deprives one of a sense of direction.

It struck him that some of his houseguests, due that afternoon, might be suffering those debilitating effects of anxiety at that moment. How could they

know they were heading toward gourmet meals and most of the bodily comforts they would enjoy in Manhattan and Washington, D.C.? Just the process of getting to Phoenix was enough to make them uneasy.

The three urbane Easterners among them undoubtedly thought of the Pacific Coast as a resort area extending several miles north and south of Los Angeles. To them, Seattle would seem a last outpost. But even after reaching that, they would have to make a hundred-mile drive north, to the town where the ferry boat departed for the Outer Islands.

Then would come a long ferry ride, past islands revealing little or no human habitation. And when they got to the very

end of the line—lonely, isolated Wolf Island—and found it was still only a way station on the route to Phoenix...

Andrew smiled. By the time Donald Campbell got those three guests aboard the *Trident*, they would be visualizing Phoenix Island as something rather like a French penal colony. The idea amused him.

It amused him, too, to reflect on the curious composition of this little house party. He hadn't really selected his guests. They were coming on their own, each for his or her own reasons. Their simultaneous arrival was an accident—one he had decided to memorialize with a dinner party.

Besides his guests, the *Trident* was

bringing six cases of champagne, a young musician by the name of Carlo, and a young girl named Diana, who was to help Mary with the cooking and housework. It was a luxurious ratio—four hired servants, four guests.

Among the latter was Warren Brock, the fashionable sculptor from San Francisco. He had a summer home and studio on Wolf Island and had accepted a commission to do a large figure for the corner of Andrew's living room. Witty, eccentric, homosexual—Warren was a hedonist who would not have agreed to come to Phoenix if he hadn't been assured that the cuisine would be excellent and the pool heated to eighty-five degrees.

There would also be a young couple, Norma and Blake Mansfield. Their customary habitat was New York City, with an occasional foray to the north shore of Long Island. Mrs. Mansfield was the niece of a physics professor whom Andrew had known since 1935, when Andrew first came to the United States and taught at George Washington University.

Andrew had never met the Mansfields, but his old friend, Professor Sterling, had asked that he invite them, and had done so in such a way that Andrew couldn't very well refuse. Why would his friend want them here? To check up on the well-being of the old hermit? Well, they would find him

healthier and more cantankerous than ever.

And then there was Felicia.

Andrew sat up straight and opened his eyes. Looking from the house to the adjoining outbuildings, then on to the boathouse and the swimming pool, he tried to anticipate Felicia's reaction.

She would be impressed, probably surprised, by the size of the house. As for the interior—the walls of clear-grain cedar, the floor-to-ceiling fireplace of blue basalt, the slate floors—she might consider it dark compared to the apartment in Washington, all white and gold and crystal. But the bedroom...

He frowned, uncomfortable at the thought of Felicia's seeing that room.

She would know instantly what he had done: Designed and decorated it to duplicate, as closely as possible, her bedroom in Washington—hoping, as he had at first, that she would change her mind and come live with him on Phoenix.

He stood up and glanced at his wristwatch. Two o'clock. They wouldn't be here until four.

With his lunch digested, it was time for his afternoon swim. Andrew believed in physical fitness—more as discipline than as pleasure—and swimming was an exercise well suited to a man with one foot. He swam twice a day, on schedule.

“Mike! Lili!” he called. The dogs

followed him from the sundeck, down the long ramp between the house and the pool area, to the dressing rooms.

Andrew went into the first one. There was a bench along one wall and a shelf above it, where brightly colored beach towels were stacked in two neat piles. His swim trunks were draped over a towel bar, where he had left them to dry after yesterday's swim. On the opposite wall were clothes hooks and hangers, so his slacks and sports shirt would not get wrinkled.

Andrew's personal habits were as orderly as a mathematical formula, and his fastidious cleanliness showed. His thick brown hair always looked as if just washed and towel-dried. His wide

forehead and high cheekbones shone from frequent washing. Everything he wore was spotless and smelled faintly of 4711, the old-fashioned cologne.

Ironically, though, this compulsive neatness failed utterly to produce a neat appearance. Andrew's hair would fall into his eyes, and his clothes—no matter how expensive—seemed to have been pulled at random from the bottom of a steamer trunk. His “rumpled look” had been the subject of frequent, and warranted, public comment.

Systematically now, Andrew removed his shirt and slid it onto a hanger. He unzipped his slacks, and in one movement pulled slacks and undershorts below his knees. Sitting on the bench, he

untied and removed his shoes, placing them beside him.

Though he was not a young man, bending was no strain. His abdomen was flat, the muscles firm and the skin taut. He leaned forward easily and drew off the left pant leg. Now there was only the right leg and foot.

Automatically, Andrew looked up to make sure the dressing room door was closed and locked.

Being nude did not concern him. For the simple act of taking off his clothes, he wouldn't have bothered to close the door. But for Andrew, the final act of undressing was removing the prosthesis that for forty years had served him as right foot. During this ritual, the urge to

guard his privacy was uncontrollable, fanatic.



He was twenty years old. He had just taken a degree in chemical engineering at the Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe and had gone to Munich for further study.

He was not the typical Munich student. He had carried the burden of mathematical genius since the age of four. Even in the playful *Trinkverein* atmosphere of the Bavarian capital, he thought more about quantum mechanics than about the Hofbräuhaus. Yet, he was twenty and gregarious, and when it was time to play, he played with a natural ebullience that made him popular with

his peers—even after they'd discovered his brilliance.

The game of jumping onto a moving streetcar was as old as singing in a *Bierstube*. They all did it, at least when other students were on hand to observe. Of course, the last one to jump had the worst time of it—the platform was already crowded, the streetcar was picking up speed, and his friends, safely on board, were left free to cheer and jeer.

Young Andrew Held was in a soaring mood that day. He'd received a long, surprisingly intimate letter from the sister of a schoolmate in Budapest, then had a stein or two at a noisy *Ratskeller*. Bursting with vitality, he held back so *he*

would have to be last to leap onto the streetcar.

He ran forward and grasped the metal handhold as he jumped onto the step. But something of his caught on the edge—the sole of his shoe, the cuff of his trouser, he never knew. He was jerked backwards, and as his hand pulled free, he lost balance and fell sideways.

The shouts of his friends could not stop the streetcar in time, or blank out the searing pain in his foot as the heavy iron wheel rolled over it.

His foot was amputated that same day. The leg took three months to heal. The trauma... Well, he supposed he'd have *that* the rest of his life.

At twenty, in Munich, his physical

integrity forever compromised, he made three decisions that would shape his life. One was to marry his schoolmate's sister, Toni. The second was to cease his concentration on chemistry—which had been at his father's insistence—and instead to pursue his interest in physics.

The third decision was born of grim and lonely hours trying to envision life with one foot. He decided it would not be enough to philosophically accept his handicap.

His interests had always been chess, music, and poetry. But these would not help him now, for with none of these would his injury pose a difficulty. If he was to purposefully overcome his disability, his chosen recreation must be

of a sort he had seldom if ever attempted. And he must not only pursue it, he must excel at it.

Swimming. Horseback riding. Driving a car. Waltzing. These were the four activities he settled on. He had no experience in any of them—but in time he did them all, and well.

Finally, no outward sign remained to betray him as a man with one foot—no sign, that is, but a slight lurch to the right when going into a pivot for a Viennese waltz.



Andrew swam vigorously for several minutes, then flipped over on his back. How peaceful it was to float in the sun, to hear only the murmur of wind and the

discourse of birds. How right he had been to leave everything behind and, through the alchemy of civilized devices, convert this lonely island into his very own Shangri-La.

If only he could have Felicia back to share it with him.

In less than two hours, she *would* be with him, if only temporarily—providing Donald had handled the arrangements for the guests competently. But then, Donald handled *everything* competently.

A strange man, Donald Campbell. Andrew could never quite figure him out. But when it came to employees, it was sometimes best not to ask too many questions.

10

Although Donald Campbell had been out of prison for eighteen months, the carbolic acid smell of the cell block was still embedded far back in his nasal passages.

La Tuna, Texas. Something in the supplies he had just loaded onto the deck of the *Trident* was sending a message up his nostrils and calling out, *Federal Correctional Institution, La Tuna, Texas.*

The chow line, that was what it brought back. Big steel trays loaded with beet greens and fatty pork, or slices of meat loaf drowning in sauce that looked like congealing blood.

He grunted, sniffed, and spat over the side of the boat, then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. *Goddamn.* Someday Dr. Held would be *with* him when he got one of these remembering spells and blurted out something about a cellmate, or the warden, or VT shop. There was a lot he didn't want Dr. Held to know, and one thing for sure was the fact that he had done three years for auto theft, and right now was a fugitive from a warrant accusing him of assault with intent to kill.

Donald Campbell—whose real name was Henry Jackson Riley—stood six foot four and weighed 240 pounds, all bone, muscle, and guts. He was barrel-chested and short-legged for his height—

a strong, barroom build. He had one scar, a jagged white line about six inches long, cutting across his ruddy face from cheekbone to upper lip. That time when he won the fight but lost the girl.

Girl... Jesus, how he needed a girl. Living on Phoenix Island, he was almost as bad off as he had been in prison.



Donald pulled a folded sheet of paper from his hip pocket, opened it, and checked down his list of things to get on Wolf Island.

Six cases of champagne, in addition to the usual whiskeys and vodka. Fresh eggs and a dozen chickens. A hindquarter of beef and a spring lamb, cut and wrapped for the freezer. Three

cases of assorted groceries from the store in the village, including a dozen boxes of dog biscuits for Mike and Lili. Two gallons of raw milk from the dairy farm. Miscellany such as lubricating oil, kerosene, soap. And, of course, the mail.

The mail was in a large canvas rucksack, stowed with the other supplies under the *Trident's* ample bow. Dr. Held wasn't going to be happy about the mail. It included several packages, but nothing from the electronic supply house from which he had ordered a radio part.

With a touch of malice, Donald thought how indignant the old man would be when he learned he couldn't repair his radio. What a character! No interest

in television or even radio, except for news broadcasts. He spent hours at the big grand piano in the living room—not at all Donald's idea of fun.

Goddamn it, he was going to buy his own TV. Dr. Held had agreed. He had even suggested that Donald take the ferry to the mainland and buy what he wanted. But Donald didn't want to show his face on the mainland—not for a good, long time.

The *Trident* was moored to a float attached at right angles to a long, narrow pier. Four other pleasure boats were tied up nearby. Their skippers and passengers had all gone ashore, probably to the Harbor Inn, a motel/cocktail lounge/dining room

complex above the beach near the pier. All except for a girl in a bathing suit, stretched out on a mattress on the bow of a twenty-footer near the gas pump.

For a delicious moment, Donald thought of approaching her—then decided against it. She might squawk, and this was no time to get into trouble.

Besides, he had something lined up. At least, he hoped he did. Diana Lindgren, Minnie Lindgren's granddaughter, was coming to Phoenix to help Mary with the housework. She was sixteen or seventeen, still in high school. She was about the most beautiful chick he had ever seen. Close up, he got the feeling no man had ever done it to her. He liked the idea—he often daydreamed

about the times he had been a girl's first.

He had heard she had a boyfriend—that young Indian, Rolf. But Rolf wasn't going to be on Phoenix. And on Phoenix, Diana wouldn't be able to run away.

Donald's wide mouth tightened. He ached for a girl. Jesus, what he could do to a girl.

There would be five passengers on the *Trident* besides Diana Lindgren: Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield, the couple from New York. Carlo Minatti, the Hawaiian who played guitar and sang at the Harbor Inn. He was a paid entertainer—but if Donald knew Dr. Held, Carlo would be seated at the dining room table along with the other guests. Like that artist, Mr. Brock...

Donald grinned. That kind of sex was all right in prison. Jesus, he'd had it whenever he wanted it. There were always some willing younger men, and Donald was big and strong enough to take his pick. In return, the boy had a protector. He never had to worry about other guys ganging up on him at night, or trying to make him in the showers.

But that didn't make Donald a fag. Hell, no! *Situational homosexuality* was what his caseworker called it. Back out on the street, Donald wanted girls, preferably with big tits. And he wanted them flat on their backs.

For Phoenix, Diana was his first choice.

He licked his lips and looked across

to the boat where the sleeping girl was stretched out in the sun. Her almost-naked body made him think about the third woman making the trip to Phoenix. Mrs. Held—Dr. Held's wife.

Goddamn, what he knew about her!



Mrs. Held had been staying at the Harbor Inn for the past two nights, and each evening, she spent several hours in the lounge. Donald watched her from an excellent voyeur post, a stool at the bar.

She was an elegant bitch, all fancy hairdo and rings on her fingers. He thought, *First I'd take her, and then I'd take her jewelry.*

But even as he was trying to imagine what such a high-class dame would be

like in bed, he knew he was afraid to try. Something about her made him see himself as he was: big and ugly, with a crooked nose and a bulging forehead.

But she didn't scare Carlo Minatti.

Donald had burned with envy as he watched how Carlo introduced himself to Mrs. Held. It was the first night, when she complained about her cocktail. The bartender mixed a new one, but she complained again. At that point, Carlo put down his guitar, turned off the mike, stepped behind the bar, and made a third cocktail. He carried the drink to her table—and while she was thanking him, he sat down.

On his weekly trips to Wolf Island, Donald had had ample opportunity to

admire Carlo's self-confident technique. Carlo smiled, he laughed, he listened more than he talked, and the girls followed him out of the Inn as if hypnotized. Of course, he had the looks—large, dark eyes with just a little slant to them; a wide, smiling mouth; glistening white teeth; smooth deep-tan skin that never showed the stubble of a beard.

Donald's usual attitude toward other human beings was both doubting and hostile. But Carlo was so natural, so lacking in conceit, that Donald envied him without a trace of resentment or dislike.

He was no beginner, that Carlo. Before the evening was over, he had

bought Mrs. Held another drink, and she had returned the favor. But he was too smart to push his luck. When the bar closed, Mrs. Held went to her room alone.

The second night, Donald watched them from the same post at the bar. At midnight, Mrs. Held stood up, shook Carlo's hand, and like a queen, walked out of the lounge without so much as a glance to right or left. She passed so close to Donald, he saw that her eyes were sea green, and that her upswept red hair was caught and held by a pair of diamond pins.

Fifteen minutes later, Carlo turned off the microphone, locked his guitar into its case, and came over to the bar. He

ordered two big snifter glasses of cognac. One in each hand, he walked out of the lounge toward the motel.

Donald already knew the number of Mrs. Held's room. That morning, he had called her from the reception desk to tell her the time the *Trident* was leaving the next day. Room 12. An even number, so it would be on the bay side of the corridor. He gave Carlo five minutes, and then he, too, walked into the motel.

At the door to Room 10, he stopped and tried the doorknob. It was locked, maybe occupied. He continued past Mrs. Held's room to Room 14. Very gently he turned the doorknob, ready to apologize and explain that he had the wrong number, that his room was down

the hall.

But Room 14 was empty. Light from the hall shone on an empty clothes rack, a freshly made bed. A break for him—the maid had forgotten to lock the room. And at this hour, there wasn't a chance it would be rented for the night.

He entered quietly, then closed and locked the door.

Though it was dark, he knew the layout. A big double bed would be on the north wall. On this side of the corridor, the rooms were L-shaped opposites. In Room 12, the entrance hall was on the north side, but in Room 14, it was on the south—so the furniture was arranged back to back. The headboard of the bed in 12 and the headboard of the

bed in 14 were separated by only a thin inside wall—so they were actually just inches apart.

Donald took off his shoes, set them beside the door, and moved stealthily to the wall beside the bed. The voices in the next room were indistinct. They had to be drinking their cognac at the round cocktail table on the far side.

He waited, his ear pressed against the wall. His mouth was dry. Hurriedly, he went into the bathroom and drew a glass of water. Fresh bath towels were stacked on the shelf beside the washbasin. He pulled one loose, hardly noticing that he knocked the rest of them onto the tiled floor.

Pulse pounding, he went back to the

bed. He very carefully eased his big body down until he was lying on his back full-length, his head turned slightly so as to keep his left ear close to the wall.

The voices were coming closer, maybe to the bed. Then a faint but distinct *whish* as the mattress was depressed by the weight of their bodies, and a dull knock as the bed moved a fraction of an inch and the headboard hit the wall.

Carlo's voice, deep and soft, was so close that the separating wall seemed to be conducting the sound rather than muffling it.

“Beautiful lady, beautiful lady...”

Mrs. Held's voice, higher but husky:

“Leave the light on.”

Donald’s fingers felt for the zipper of his jeans. *Jesus, oh sweet Jesus.*

He had left the room dark. Now *he* wanted light, too. Trembling, he reached for the bedside lamp and found the switch, and a golden glow poured over him as he pulled down his zipper.

They were still talking, in single words, murmured together like a duet.

“There...” “Yes...” “There...”

“Slowly...”

Donald spread his legs and thrust his pelvis forward urgently, as if there were a body there to be entered. *Jesus, oh Jesus.* He moaned out loud, and could not stop. The bed creaked rhythmically with the movement of his hand and the

thrust of his hips.

On the other side of the wall, the bed was alive with sounds. The bedsprings sang, and the bodies thumped the mattress in an ever faster beat. The slippery sounds of sex oozed through the walls, blending with the rising murmur of hungry voices.

Donald's frenzied motions quickened as images imparted by sound swam around him. In the bright light from the lamp, he watched his own strong organ sliding furiously between his fingers.

The whole whirling dance came to its violent end. Carlo's voice: "Now! Now! With me, baby, with me!"

A second later, the voice of Dr. Held's wife, rising in a prolonged

but wordless sob.

Donald was with them, all the way.

It was quiet on the other side of the wall. Donald sank back into the soft bedcovers, reached for the towel, and turned off the light.



The young man from New York City was the first to board the *Trident*. Blake Mansfield was tall and slender, with broad and smoothly muscled shoulders. A tennis player's build. In fact, tennis was his game, whenever he could get away from his law office in Lower Manhattan and spend a little time at his country house on Long Island.

The only contradiction of his image as a slender, well-tailored athlete were his

eyeglasses. His intensely blue eyes were screened by thick lenses in a heavy black frame. He was extremely nearsighted, and without glasses was, for all practical purposes, blind.

He surrendered his luggage to Donald, eyes blinking against the bright sunlight, and said apologetically, "Sorry to burden you with so much luggage. I'm afraid Dr. Held will conclude we're staying for the season."

A few minutes later, Norma Mansfield appeared at the top of the pier. Even from a distance, it was obvious she was not comfortable in this place. At the end of the pier, she hesitated, studying the ramp that sloped down to the float. Grasping the wooden

railing, she descended carefully, as if the whole thing might tip over or sink.

Once on board the *Trident*, she acknowledged Donald with an impersonal nod and addressed herself to her husband. "I couldn't find the mailbox. They said it was right outside. I walked a mile."

Her oval face was framed by straight brown hair, parted uncompromisingly in the middle and falling almost to her shoulders. Her dark eyes looked unhappy, and her thin eyebrows were drawn together in an impatient frown. She had been opposed to her husband's "romantic impulse" to explore the Pacific Northwest, and even more dubious about her uncle's request that

they look up his anchorite friend Andrew Held on some remote island. She was being a dutiful niece, but for all her Puritan credo, having a hard time being a good sport about it.

Blake stroked his wife's hand. He could guess what had happened when she tried to post her letter. The mailbox to which she had been directed was a weather-beaten gray tin rural one on a wooden post beside the gravel road. Norma would have walked right by it, looking for a big red-white-and-blue postbox like those on city streets.

"I know where the box is," Blake said gently. "Give me your letter, Norma. I'll mail it."

"No, no, it's all right." She gave him a

tentative smile, an apology for her peevishness. “It’s for my uncle. Most of all, he’ll want to hear about our visit with Dr. Held. I’ll add onto it tomorrow and mail it when we get back from Phoenix.”

“I’ll add a postscript, if I may.”

Norma looked at him in surprise. Though her uncle was her favorite and only remaining close relative, Blake did not know him well. “Yes, of course. But you don’t, usually...”

Blake leaned forward and pressed her hand. “I just want to tell him I love you.”

For an instant, her thin mouth relaxed and her eyes were wistful. Then the softness vanished, and a look of irritated hauteur settled over her face like a mask.

She withdrew her hand.

“I wonder,” she said coldly, turning her head away.



The next arrival was Carlo Minatti, carrying a small canvas bag and a large guitar case. He jumped aboard, introducing himself with a wide, friendly smile. His dark hair shone with coppery lights, his dark eyes with the natural friendliness that disarmed and engulfed anyone he directed it toward.

As Carlo seated himself across from the Mansfields, Donald saw that Mrs. Held was on her way down from the Inn. At her heels was... Donald wanted to laugh out loud. It was the deputy sheriff, Frank Schmidt. How had

she managed *that*? She probably spotted good old Frank drinking coffee in the coffee shop—it was a regular stop on his rounds of Wolf—and before he knew it, he was playing bellhop.

Mrs. Held proceeded with quick, confident steps—a tall, elegant figure in bright green pants suit, with a green and gold headscarf wrapped around her hair, the loose ends fluttering in the wind. The young deputy sheriff, carrying a bright red travel bag and a matching cosmetics case, trailed behind.

“Mr. Campbell,” she said regally, inclining her head. “Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield, nice to see you again. Mr. Minatti.”

Jesus, Donald thought. The way she

carries it off! As he helped her into the boat, he looked directly into her face, his small, pale eyes shining with secret knowledge. She barely nodded, turned her back, and began a conversation with the Mansfields.

Donald thought bitterly, *Don't treat me like dirt, lady. You don't know what I could tell your husband.*



Warren Brock was a short man, thin and narrow-hipped. His face had an aging prettiness to it. Though his upper lip was straight, his ample lower lip was curved in at the center, like an archer's bow. His eyes were large, dark, and luminous beneath thick, bleached eyebrows. His sun-streaked brown hair was thinning,

but his head was well-shaped, with a broad forehead and a short nose that went straight down from the forehead without indentation—a classical Greek bust of Apollo at age thirty-eight.

“Well, well, well,” he said pertly as he reached the *Trident*. “Beautiful people, all.” He himself was clothed in faded blue jeans and a loose-fitting pullover sweater—in curious contrast to the expensive saddle-stitched leather case in his hand.

Warren stepped lightly into the boat and, like an impish master of ceremonies, turned first to the Mansfields. “*You* are the people from New York. I can see *that*. All Sulka’s, Lord and Taylor, Abercrombie and

Fitch.”

He turned slowly. “*You*, of course, are Mrs. Held.”



Diana Lindgren was the last. Her boyfriend, Rolf, was with her.

Donald stared rudely as they stopped a few feet from the *Trident* and said good-bye. He had to concede that Rolf was a good-looking kid, for an Indian—shiny, thick black hair, curling just a little where it rested on his shoulders; clean-looking gold-colored skin; and a well-shaped mouth under a wide black mustache.

Donald saw him touch Diana, saw her draw back. That pleased him. Damned if he wanted that breed to get to her before

he did.

Rolf wheeled around and walked away rapidly. Diana, an old brown suitcase in hand, watched his retreating back. Her long, dark hair concealed her face until she half-turned and continued to the *Trident*. Then Donald saw that her large gray eyes were filled with tears, and her soft mouth was trembling.

The sight of her crying filled Donald not with pity but desire. He'd have her, by God. He'd have her before she ever made it home.

“All aboard,” he said, looking hungrily at Diana's damp cheeks. “Next stop, Phoenix Island.”

From birth to death, tsunami confuses its prey.

Tsunami's deadliest deceit is to give warning in such a way that few people recognize the sign. When the threat to life and property is greatest, the killer wave prepares its strike not by rushing up onto shore but by pulling back. As if all the water along the coast were being sucked back into the ocean, the tide recedes slowly and steadily. When it reaches the normal low-tide level, it inexorably continues its menacing retreat, until reefs are uncovered and fish flap wildly on rocks never before exposed.

This quiet but steady pullback may continue for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. Then the great wave reverses course and rolls back toward the land at twenty to thirty miles an hour—a ferocious and implacable mountain of water.

The only protection against tsunami's deadly ruse is to recognize the terrible meaning of the pullback. The retreat of the water is a ten- to twenty-minute warning. Ignore it, misunderstand it, and you are lost.

Escape to high land is the sole defense against the killer wave. Once you see it coming, you are already too late.



It was four hours and thirty minutes since

the imprint of disaster had first appeared on the seismographs of the Honolulu Observatory. Tidal stations within a 250-mile radius of Pater Island had not responded to the Observatory's urgent requests for information; it could be assumed they were already obliterated. But reports had come in from stations farther from the epicenter. Those reports had been pieced together to reveal a true portrait of the killer.

SEAWAVES AT 2105 Z, 38 FT.

SEAWAVES AT 2155 Z, 40 FT.

SEAWAVES AT 2220 Z, 44 FT.

Such a report was posted to the headquarters map like a communiqué from the battlefield. It meant tsunami

was *there*. Later, the same station would report:

SEAWAVES 35 FT AT 2310 Z.
SEAWAVES 28 FT AT 2345 Z.
SEAS DIMINISHING. WATER
RECEDING.

Tsunami had struck and run. The monster was outward bound, racing toward its next victim.

ETA HAWAII 0145 Z... ETA
HAWAII 0145 Z...



On all the Hawaiian Islands, coastal settlements trembled with the shrill blasts of sirens. All radio programs

were interrupted at regular intervals for the broadcast of numbered civil defense disaster bulletins.

By local time, the first wave would hit shortly after 3:30 p.m. It would strike Hilo first, on the east coast of the “Big Island,” Hawaii.

Hilo was ready. The tugs in the harbor had put out to sea. Fishing sampans moored along the Wailuku River had been lifted and dragged to high ground. Police cars patrolled the streets, loudspeakers bawling the order to evacuate to designated disaster centers three miles back from shore. And the local mortician had donated two ornate black hearses for the transportation of hospital patients from Puu Maile.



The administrator for the leper colony on Molokai received the tsunami warning in a telephone call from the state health department in Honolulu. It was 2:30 p.m., Hawaii time. He and the tiny Kalaupapa police force had at most one hour to remove hospital patients and residents to safety—one hundred and ten people in all.

But how to remove them? Kalaupapa is a low-lying point of land jutting two miles into the sea and surrounded on all but the beach side by cliffs over sixteen hundred feet high. Charter boats, helicopters, the small Cessna and Beechcraft planes that made the regular mail and supply run—they were all out

of the question, for there wasn't time.

There was only one possible escape route. It had to be the old mule trail, zigzagging up a nearly perpendicular cliff more than a quarter mile high—the narrow, now-neglected path (*kapu*, to the lepers) by which a postman on mule or horseback had once brought mail.

Even for the young and healthy, it was a forty-five-minute climb to the locked gate and heavy steel mesh fence at the top. And Kalaupapa was a colony of old people. The average age was 58, but many residents were much older —“clean,” thanks to the sulfone drugs and to the later discoveries of clofazimine and rifampin, but crippled, disfigured, weak.

Some would have to be supported, even carried. So, the strongest would help the weakest, and the rest would pray and go it alone.

Within minutes, the superintendent had completed his calls, and the orderly flight began. Those not well enough to walk to the base of the cliff were driven there by the colony's fleet of rattletrap cars. With a half hour remaining before the first wave was expected, the column of lepers moved slowly up the trail.

It was overgrown with weeds and littered with chunks of lava rock. A heavy rain had fallen the night before, converting disintegrated lava into black mud. Some lepers had lost toes and had difficulty keeping their balance. Some

had ulcerating leg sores, so that every step was painful. Many stumbled on the slippery path. Many fell. Hands with only one or two fingers clutched at a bush or tree as they pulled themselves upright and went on.

A young medical student started up the trail with an elderly patient on his back. The old man was too weak to hold on, and he slipped off into the mud. Behind them in line was a young woman, whose beauty lived on in her eyes, though her nose was sunken and she had lost one ear. She pulled off her cotton shirt and tore it in two pieces. When the old man was once more on the student's back, she wrapped and tied the cloth around them, binding them securely together.

A middle-aged man, his face mottled with purple nodules, carried a ukulele. His special role in the colony was to lead the singing at the social hall. If they all survived tsunami, they would want to sing.

Slowly, torturously, the long line advanced.



The wave rolled onto the Kalaupapa peninsula in a massive bore of turbulence. Gigantic blocks of black lava tumbled furiously and were carried forward to help in the destruction. Coconut palms were uprooted and flung against the lighthouse. Torn from its foundation, the lighthouse rode the crest as it roared over the airfield and

slammed against two beach shacks, flattening their walls. Still greedy, the wave hit the Catholic church, breaking its windows and ripping off the porch.

Kalaupapa is a place of many cemeteries. Rows of headstones crisscross the land, a tragic vineyard of marble and granite and wood. The destroying wave rolled over the burial grounds, sacrilegiously exhuming the wooden caskets of long-ago exiles. A dozen caskets split open, spilling their contents of bones and withered flesh. Bodies, boxes, headstones, broken church timbers, huge chunks of lava, splintered trunks of palm trees—all were hurled forward together.

The wave crashed against the cliff,

clawing up the trail in a last, furious effort to claim the stubborn human beings who had now dragged themselves barely beyond its reach. Then it receded, pulling heavy objects with it but casting aside anything light or buoyant.

As it withdrew, corpses and pieces of corpses, skeletons and parts of skeletons were deposited on the dormitory steps, on the courthouse lawn, beside the social hall, at the door of the post office. One body it left was that of Father Mike, a Catholic priest recently buried. He was curled around the gasoline pump at the filling station, like a sleeping child claiming his favorite pillow.

On the path, halfway up the cliff, trembling voices joined the ukulele in

the singing of an old, old song.



As if it were tiring of Hawaii, the killer wave veered east, ignoring Kauai and racing along the east coast of Oahu, an angry monster hungry for new victims. Soon, incoming reports began to suggest to the men at Tsunami Warning Headquarters what its latest caprice might be.

“I’ll make a prediction,” the veteran technician said grimly. “The Aleutians, then the Alaskan mainland, then the coast of British Columbia and Washington State. *That* part’s not a prediction—it’s for sure. Where I’ll stick my neck out is about the mood this killer will be in when it hits the continent. There’s

nothing to break it up between here and there. So, I say ugly, very ugly.

“Let’s get back to the teletypes.”



In the Federal Aviation Administration office in San Francisco, a man turned to a special telephone and pushed the black button on its side. The next instant, emergency calls reached offices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

In Washington, the message was received at Washington state patrol headquarters in the capital city, Olympia.

Five officers were on duty in the radio room and the adjoining law-enforcement teletype center. The gigantic Access computer, six feet tall and fifteen

feet wide, was alive with blinking lights and moving knobs and swinging dials. The room was filled with its steady hum. Like the attendant officers, the all-wise machine was quiet, disciplined, and confident.

STAND BY FOR TSUNAMI
MESSAGE .

Within fifteen minutes, the patrol had relayed San Francisco's message to twenty-six primary warning points, and all twenty-six had reported back.



The Whatcom County sheriff received the message from state patrol headquarters without excitement. There

hadn't been a tsunami warning in eight years—and even then, his territory had seen nothing more than an unusually high tide. Still, the sheriff was not the kind to appraise orders and obey only those he personally thought made sense.

Deputy Rankin was standing at attention.

“Okay, Rankin. You say you checked with Bellingham Fire Department.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Mayor's office? Civil defense?”

“Officer Gardner doing it now, sir.”

The sheriff nodded approval. “Looks like you covered all bases... Except Discovery County.”

Officer Rankin's earnest blue eyes showed a look of bewilderment. He

could recite the first and last names of all sheriffs west of the Cascades, but he couldn't recall ever having known the name of the Discovery County sheriff—or even, for sure, the name of the county seat.

“Yes, Officer Rankin, *Discovery*. Made up mostly of the Outer Islands. County seat, Cristobal—population forty-five, counting the sheepdogs. Sheriff DeLancey.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hold it, Rankin. Don't forget that you can't get Discovery by Access. That stubborn bunch out there refused to ante up matching funds. So you'll have to get the sheriff by regular telephone.”

Actually, the sheriff admired the

people of the Outer Islands. In his own way, he was complimenting them.



The sheriff of Discovery County was having coffee with two cronies, the veterinarian and the manager of the county bank. From the front of the Seaside Cafe, the waitress waved a telephone receiver at him from over her head.

“Hey, Hugo, it’s for you.”

The sheriff heaved himself reluctantly out of the booth and threw two quarters on the table to cover his coffee and apple pie. Then he lifted his broad-brimmed trooper’s hat off the rack and walked heavily to the telephone.

“*Hal-lo.*”

His deputy responded with a high-pitched torrent of words, from which the sheriff extracted the term “tidal wave.”

“Calm down, Brady,” he growled.
“I’m coming.”

Once back in his office, Sheriff DeLancey sat at his desk, lit a cigar, and began issuing instructions: Call the mayor of Cristobal. Call in Deputy Smith. Call or car-radio the deputies on all the other islands.

Almost as an afterthought, he said, “Hey, Brady. Don’t forget Frank Schmidt, out on Wolf.”



Deputy Sheriff Frank Schmidt had been up most of the night. Somebody ran a car into the ditch. Someone’s pigs broke out

and were rooting up another farmer's wheat crop. A horse was lost, a horse was found. A dog chased sheep, a dog was shot.

Fire, heart attack, runaway child, fist fight in the tavern—whatever it was, “Call Schmidt” was the standard response. And since he was the only law-enforcement officer on Wolf Island, he was on twenty-four-hour duty. Most of the time, fatigue was his greatest challenge.

Today, his wife, Leona, had taken things into her own hands, though he didn't know it. After lunch, she persuaded him to lie down on the stained and threadbare sofa in the living room. The moment he fell asleep, she went

softly to the spot in the wall where the telephone was plugged in, took firm hold of the jack, and pulled it out.

That would take care of *that*. No telephone to wake him and send him on some stupid errand—like this morning, chasing Mrs. Goodman's geese halfway across the island. The sheriff's office on Cristobal might try to get him through the two-way radio in the patrol car, but that was parked in back of the house. So, they could yell, "Come in, Wolf," all they wanted—he wouldn't hear it.

He needed sleep. He deserved some time off. For once, he was going to get it.

12

When Donald Campbell brought the *Trident* into Phoenix harbor, Andrew Held was waiting. The two bassets were with him, tails wagging, poised to welcome the new arrivals with yelps of pleasure. Once Donald had securely tied up the boat at the pier, fore and aft, Andrew came forward, attention focused on the deck where his houseguests would be seated.

Instantly, his eyes picked out Felicia. The others were a blur around her. He took a few more steps, acutely conscious of his limp. He felt like a foolish young lover, absorbing his returning sweetheart with his eyes.

She looked up at him, and for a moment, she was a young girl. Her green eyes softened, and her lips parted slightly with an excited smile.

But the others were in the way. They climbed out, one by one. Carlo, Diana. He nodded in recognition. Warren Brock. They shook hands. The Mansfields. They introduced themselves and moved along the pier.

Finally, Felicia. She waited for Donald to set her cases onto the dock and to steady her for the step from the *Trident* to the landing. This done, she turned toward her husband and extended her hand.

He grasped it eagerly, and she kissed him lightly on the cheek.

“Well, Andy, you look very well indeed.”

Her voice was businesslike, as if she were telephoning the banquet manager at the Shoreham to compliment him on arrangements for a benefit ball.

Andrew searched her face for the little girl he had seen just moments before. She was gone without trace. The private Felicia was hidden again behind amused, partially lidded green eyes.

As nearly as he could, he said what he felt. “I have thought of you a great deal, Felicia. I am glad you are here.” Why did it sound so banal?

She pulled off her headscarf and smoothed her coppery hair. “Dear Andy, that is very nice for you to say. But I

must tell you honestly, you won't be glad at all. No, indeed, you will not like my reason for coming.”

With that, her bright eyes turned away, and she directed their examining gaze to the big house and sundeck over the water.

“Phoenix, is it? Oh, yes, I know. Something about... the taste of ashes. Well, Andy, come along. Show me what you have made.”

With a light step, she proceeded toward the house.

Andrew followed slowly. The dogs, strangely subdued, stayed close behind.



On Wolf Island, Deputy Sheriff Frank Schmidt was waking from his nap. His

eyelids felt gritty and his mouth was dry. Groggy with sleep, he sat up and squinted at the face of his wristwatch. Christ, it was going on six o'clock!

He stood up, stretched, and walked across the room to the kitchen. "I must've slept for damn near four hours," he told his wife's back. "Never heard the phone once."

She turned down the burner, set the cooking fork on the sink, and with a mysterious smile, walked past him into the living room. As he watched her curiously, she bent over, fiddling with the telephone jack.

"Leona! Did you disconnect the telephone?"

"You bet I did!" She straightened up

and faced him, daring him to find fault. “You got to get some sleep, one way or another. Let people chase their own geese.”

“I’m supposed to be on duty, Leona. A deputy can’t just do that. It don’t matter how tired he is.”

“I’m not sorry,” she said defiantly, and went back to the kitchen.

He would have followed her—he had to get the idea of duty into her head, even if it ended up in a fight—but the telephone rang. It was the sheriff himself.

“Hey, what the hell’s going on over there? We been trying to get you all afternoon. There’s some kind of warning about a tidal wave.”

“Tidal wave?”

Schmidt was a native of Montana. He had read about such things, just as he had read that Mount Vesuvius was a volcano that erupted and wiped out a town. But the idea that a tidal wave would flood Wolf Island was completely unreal to him. However, his sense of duty, which he thought of as vaguely sacred—something like his marriage vows—took over.

“Yes, sir. What’s the procedure?”

“You know your island. The idea is to warn everybody. You know what to do.”

Deputy Schmidt replaced the receiver. *Did* he know what to do? Frowning, he tried to drag from his life experience some antecedent of this emergency.

There was none.

To “warn everybody,” he had to cover an island fifteen miles long and three to five miles wide. He had to convince five or six hundred people that something as fantastical as a tidal wave was a real danger. He had four hours.

One thing he did know: He couldn't do it alone.

Frowning, he picked up the telephone and dialed the volunteer fire department's emergency number. It automatically rang telephones in twenty-four different shops and homes. To the twelve or fifteen persons who answered—most of them wives of the volunteers—he repeated the message he had received from the sheriff on Cristobal

Island and asked that all firemen drive to the fire hall as quickly as possible. Then he strapped on his holster with its heavy .38 Magnum and picked up his wide-brimmed felt hat.

At the kitchen door, he said, "Leona, you heard what I was just telling the firemen."

"Yes, Frank." She made a gesture that said clearly, *Watch what you say in front of the kids.*

"Send them out in the yard. You get on the phone. Take the book, start at the A's. Everybody you get, give them the message. *Just* the message. Don't let them get to talking and tie up the line."

He put on his hat, adjusting it carefully to be secure and level, and ran

to his patrol car. By the time he had started the motor and turned the car around, Leona was beside the driveway.

“Here, take this,” she said, handing him a brown paper bag that felt warm and smelled of fried chicken. “Tidal wave or no tidal wave, you got to eat something.”



Twenty men met at the fire hall: the butcher, the postmaster, the one resident minister, the barber (one day a week), two carpenters, five farmers, three commercial fishermen, two auto mechanics, two truck drivers, the owner of the sawmill, and an artist. On the map of Wolf, the deputy marked out twenty territories. In minutes, a curious fleet of

squad cars—all models, all makes, all ages—was on its way.

From the fire hall, Schmidt proceeded to the Harbor Inn. He advised the manager to evacuate the Inn and motel and to warn everyone aboard the boats moored to the Inn's floating pier.

The manager was incredulous. “Tidal wave? *Here?* Well... I guess I would be liable...” Halfheartedly, he promised to follow instructions.

The deputy ran out to his brown-green car with the horizontal gold stripe and raced to East Harbor, where Wolf's commercial fishing fleet was moored. At this time of year, gill netters were in harbor during the daytime, scattered across the bay nearly as thick as cars in

a shopping center parking lot. They fished at night, usually from five in the afternoon until five the next morning.

Half the boats had already put out to sea. The most the deputy could do was warn the operator of the Company fish tender and the ten or fifteen fishermen still tied up at the pier. But what to do about the boats at anchor in the harbor?

A young boy in a dinghy solved the problem. His outboard had a lot of speed, he said proudly, and he agreed enthusiastically to cruise the bay and pass along the warning.

“They’ll hear me, all right,” he assured the deputy, his freckled face glowing with a happy grin.



In the time he had left, Deputy Schmidt covered every side road he could, following each rutted lane to its dead end. He was chiefly concerned about the people in houses without telephones, those in the fields and on the beaches, and those in isolated cabins in the woods. And as he sought them out, the flat voice of the radio operator in the sheriff's office beat against his eardrums.

ALL UNITS, EMERGENCY
PROCEDURE. FIRST REPORTS
FROM ALEUTIANS INDICATE
SEVERE DAMAGE. ETA ALASKA
MAINLAND... ETA COASTAL AREAS
BRITISH COLUMBIA... ETA
WASHINGTON...

He reached the Lee Corners general store at a few minutes after eight o'clock. Normally the rotund storekeeper, "H.P.," would have locked up and gone home, but the door was wide open.

The deputy bolted through it. A shoulder of lamb lay on the chopping block, and beside it, a slab of beef and a knife and a meat saw.

"H.P.?"

The deputy's voice bounced off shelves of canned goods and drifted like smoke to the far corner, where bolts of printed cotton were stacked on an old oak dining room table. A volunteer fireman had been here, he figured—or maybe Leona had called.

A telephone hung on the wall above an old black ice cream freezer. As he dialed his home number, a burst of unintelligible dialogue came up from the patrol car into the abandoned store. His radio...

The phone was busy.

He put down the receiver, looked uncertainly toward his car, waited, tried again.

Still busy.

The deputy was sweating. Damp circles stained his shirt, spreading under both arms as he dialed, waited, dialed again. The heavy twill fabric of his shirt stuck to his chest.

This time, the phone rang and Leona answered. His voice tight in his throat,

he told her to put blankets and food and a gallon jug of water in the Chevy, and to drive the children up to Justin Heights and stay there till he came for them.

“What *for*, Frank? Our place is way back from the shore. Nothing’s going to come up *this* far.”

“Listen, honey,” he said urgently. “That’s what *I* thought. But reports are coming in from Alaska, and they sound bad.”

“That’s *Alaska!* I’ve been talking to people who lived in the Outer Islands all their lives. They just *laughed* when I said ‘tidal wave.’”

“That’s fine, Leona. Tomorrow, they can laugh all they want. But right now, you do what I say. And fast!”

At nine o'clock Pacific Standard Time on the night of August 4, the first wave of the tsunami was five hundred miles off the coast of British Columbia and the state of Washington. On Phoenix Island, directly in its path, Andrew Held's houseguests sat in the living room, listening to Carlo sing the rippling melodies of Hawaii to the strum of his guitar, while they sipped Benedictine and cognac.

In the kitchen, Mary surveyed the conspicuous waste that remained from a four-course dinner.

Dr. Held himself had chosen the menu. When she protested that every

dish on it was “foreign,” he took a notebook from his pocket, sat at the kitchen table, and wrote down the recipes from memory.

“If you can read,” he said, handing her the notebook, “you can cook.”

So, it had been lobster from South Africa, artichokes and endive from California, cheese and candied chestnuts from France, olive oil from Italy. The beef was the only item that hadn’t been flown in from one to six thousand miles away—and by Dr. Held’s order, even that staple had been tricked up into a center-cut filet that was basted with dry Madeira and cognac and garnished with filled mushroom caps.

Mary viewed the whole meal as an

exercise in useless complication. What would those poor rich people do if they had to get by on plain old food?

She had no criticism, however, of Dr. Held's choice of bourbon—and she'd had quite a bit of it.

Brushing a strand of gray hair back from her face, she calculated her chances of safely nipping a little more. Jimmy, in his job as “helper,” was still unloading the *Trident*. But *he* could catch her with a shot glass in hand and he'd look the other way.

Jimmy was her brother's boy, and as good as her own. His mother had died before the child was old enough for school, and her brother spent most of the year in Alaska.

Mary had reared Jimmy in her own rough Outer Island tradition. He got his first buck deer when he was twelve years old. He could run any tractor made, and he knew how to bring out a calf born in breech position. If they had been poor, who noticed? They weren't the only family that used a rifle to keep meat on the table, and at least Jimmy always had a good pair of boots, and special clothes for school.

He was a good boy, a bright boy. Right now, he was hipped on electronics—but when she had offered to write his father in Alaska and ask for tuition to trade school, Jimmy backed off. He didn't want to leave the island. He'd be satisfied to do a little farming, and a

little fishing, and to cut a little cordwood, if that let him stay on Wolf for the rest of his life.

Mary knew the feeling. As a young girl, she had been a bright student, and with the encouragement of her parents, she went to the mainland to take a secretarial course. After six months, she fled the competition and pressure, and returned gratefully to the comfortable poverty she had always known.

If Jimmy was really interested in electronics, she would help him—but she would not force him to go to school. If it was only a passing dream...

She chuckled tipsily. She could guess why Jimmy was taking so long to clean up the *Trident*. He was fiddling around

with the boat's radio and ship-to-shore telephone system, as he did whenever he figured Donald Campbell wouldn't catch him at it.

That was *his* secret. Hers was that she raided the liquor cabinet whenever Donald forgot to lock it.

Tonight, she was in luck. When Donald left the kitchen to show Diana the swimming pool, he forgot the keys where they lay on the pantry shelf.

Mary stepped over to the back door and peered across the yard toward the pool. No one in sight. A wide smile wrinkled her lined brown face as she hurried into the pantry.



“It’s a beautiful pool,” Diana said

politely, avoiding Donald Campbell's small, staring eyes. But it was hard to keep her mind on what he was showing her. The quarrel with Rolf possessed her—a deep, physical pain that blurred all other impressions.

It had begun when she told Rolf it was foolish to buy Johnson's gill netter. According to her grandmother, Minnie Lindgren, the equipment was poor and the price too high.

Rolf had not really disagreed about the boat. He had been working it for Johnson ever since the gill net season opened. He knew its condition, and he had often cursed Johnson for being too tight-fisted to even put in a radio. But Rolf was also fiercely independent,

consumed by the need to have a boat of his own.

And so he had countered by telling Diana she shouldn't go to Phoenix. While she was gone, he told her, the manager at the Harbor Inn would give her job to someone else. And aside from that, Rolf had only a few weeks to be with her there on Wolf Island.

Actually, these were small differences, easily resolved—if it hadn't been for the emotional storm cloud that had gathered around them.

She would let Rolf kiss her, but lightly. When his mouth lingered, she tensed. If he rested his hands on her back, she trembled uncontrollably.

There had been times when Rolf

embraced her so demandingly, she felt every contour of his body. Yet even as desire flooded through her, she panicked, pulled free, and ran.

“*Why?*” Rolf would ask, with pain and longing in his dark eyes.

She could not even begin to answer. But she *knew* why, and she could face it squarely when alone.

Rolf wanted her, and she wanted him, but she was afraid. She had been afraid ever since that night in her sister’s house—the night she was awakened by the pressure of hands on her bare shoulders and heard her sister’s husband whisper in the dark. *Lie still, baby, just lie still.*

And so, because she did not know how to reach inside herself, wrench out

the tumorous fear, and let him see, Diana had assailed Rolf's desire to buy Johnson's gill netter.

Rolf in turn had retaliated by saying he would be gone for good before she got back from Phoenix.

And so she had been crying when she boarded the *Trident* . . .



Donald's voice demanded, "Hey, *Diana*, are you listening? I said, did you bring a swimsuit?"

"I..." She hesitated, then told the simple truth. "Mine is too old. It was one of my sister's. I didn't think it was good enough."

Donald's eyes fastened hungrily on her lips—the lower lip softly rounded,

the upper lip short and curving. Her dark hair parted over her shoulders, fanned out over her breasts. Nippled peaks thrust through the silky covering.

The tip of his tongue moved across his lips as he imagined what it would be like to pull off her clothes. He had been aching with such images from the moment she came aboard the *Trident*. Those big eyes of hers, so wide open beneath the thick, dark lashes.

He'd like to show her what a real man looks like. Those eyes would get even bigger!

If he guessed right and she *hadn't* ever had a man between her legs, she might be afraid. And *that* was the image he liked best. Diana crying, Diana

struggling while he held her easily...

Diana backed away and started toward the ramp leading up from the pool to the house.

“Wait a minute. First you oughta see that building there—the one Dr. Held calls a cabana.”

He cupped a big hand under her elbow and guided her up the ramp to the bathhouse. Opening the first door, he pulled her into the shadowy dressing room.

“Some place, huh?”

His little eyes moved from her lips, to her throat, to the smooth, tanned skin above her shirt's top button. The shirt was bright blue, and as she looked up at him, her wide eyes held shimmering

reflections of that color.

“Towels, shower, everything you need except a bathing suit. But who needs a bathing suit, huh?” His attempt at a friendly laugh turned into a gurgle deep in his throat.

She tried to leave, but his massive body blocked the door.

“Don’t be in such a hurry, Diana. Listen...”

Now, he could see, she was scared. Her mouth opened, and her eyes shone. More than ever, she reminded him of a trapped animal. God, he wanted her...

Dizzy with need, he looked into her frightened face. “You think I’m going to hurt you, don’t you, Diana?”

She whispered, “Yes.”

“I want to. Jesus, how I want to. But I won’t.”

He stepped aside, clearing the doorway.

“Go on back to the house. Right now.”

Paralyzed by fear, she was motionless.

“I said, get the hell out of here!”

Then she was past him, out the door, running up the ramp toward the house.

“You’re beautiful!” Donald cried huskily after the fleeing girl.

In a fury of loneliness, he pulled a terrycloth towel off the shelf and in one motion ripped it in two.



While Carlo sang, Andrew rested his head against the back of the overstuffed

throne that was his favorite chair, and reflected on his good fortune in bringing this disarming young Hawaiian to Phoenix.

Superficially, the dinner party was a success. The food had been excellent, for all Mary's grumbling. And though Diana was truly a native daughter—a child-woman who should have wild flowers in her hair, and the juice of wild berries on her lips—she had served all four courses without a gaffe. In short, the stage props had been in order.

Nevertheless, Andrew reflected, there had been a brittle edge to the well-bred conversation, and the atmosphere at table had snapped with invisible tensions.

It was more peaceful now—for, while Carlo played, the others were relieved of the burden of communicating with each other. Everyone, Andrew mused, had retreated across his personal moat and hoisted the drawbridge.

His glance moved in speculation from guest to guest.

He liked Blake Mansfield. Blake was everybody's Best Friend in College. Loyal, courteous, sensitive, eager. When Andrew called him Mr. Mansfield, the nice blue eyes had smiled myopically through the thick lenses, and the young man said earnestly, "*Blake*, if you don't mind, Dr. Held."

The inconsistent forms of address hadn't struck Andrew at the time. He

was, after all, Dr. Held to his students, and this young attorney had about him a distinctly collegiate air. But he recognized the inconsistency now, and smiled.

Yes, Blake was charming, and so was his wife. It was the way they directed their charm toward everyone *else*—scarcely speaking or even looking at each other—that broadcast the tension between them.

And when Blake spoke of escaping New York City, Norma's altogether proper image had split apart.

“I don't want to leave New York,” she had objected. Her eyes teared and her voice was unsteady. “I like a modern apartment, with a doorman, and a sauna

bath on the roof, and the laundry and garbage and cleaning taken care of by someone else.”

Carlo had been the one to intercede, with such easy good humor that the conversation resumed its civilized course. Andrew couldn't even remember what he had said. Just a few words softly spoken, a gentle laugh, somehow sympathizing with Blake and Norma at the same time.

Carlo, he thought, was the one with the truly unassailable charm. And it wasn't something he had studied and acquired, like an academic degree. It seemed to well up naturally.

Andrew's attention turned to Warren Brock. He was not a man Andrew liked,

he decided. Yes, he was amusing, and admirable in his ability as a sculptor. But at the dinner table, his witty commentaries on women had been almost too incisive, and he was too open, too militant, about his homosexuality.

The obbligation of his thoughts was interrupted by Mike, the male basset, who strolled across the room on stubby, pronated legs and laid his damp muzzle on his master's knee. With a long, guttural sigh, the hound rolled his bloodshot eyes in frank admiration. Andrew dropped one hand onto the dog's head and began to knead the satiny hide.

Composing thumbnail analyses of his

guests, he recognized, was merely an exercise for a curious mind. The truth was that only one person in the room strongly interested him.

Stroking Mike's ear, Andrew looked up again, his gaze at last settling on Felicia.

How elegant she looked in her dinner gown of white silk, cut with the high bodice and low, circular neckline of a medieval robe. Yet her heavily jeweled fingers tapped the chair's arm in a quick, nervous rhythm.

At the dinner table, she had radiated a queenly self-assurance as she described her current project, a benefit ball at the Shoreham. But now, while the music imposed on them all at least a pretense

of repose, he sensed that Felicia's composure was a fragile cover for emotions she wanted to conceal.

Was it possible that regal Felicia was actually unhappy?

With a shock of revelation, Andrew realized he had tonight been listening and attending to his wife as never before.

He had always been bored by social conversation, and he usually retired from the lists, silent and restless—even while, in professional circles, he was a spirited conversationalist. He had once pointed this out to Felicia when she criticized his moody behavior at a dinner party.

“In the presence of people capable of

understanding what I am saying, I talk a great deal.”

Felicia nodded. “Yes, I know. I have seen you with your fellow scientists. You do *all* the talking. But I suppose,” she said wryly, “that’s because you have a great deal to say.”

“At this point,” he retorted, “I have more to learn from my enemies than I do from my friends.”

“Ah, Andy. If only I were an enemy...”

Andrew closed his eyes, shutting out the dinner party on Phoenix in an effort to plumb the meaning of that long-ago conversation. Had he ever really listened to Felicia? Had two years of solitude now taught him something that

might have saved their marriage?

He had always securely believed in his being a “sensitive” person. Tonight it struck him that most people who profess sensitivity are actually thinking of how they themselves are affected by others—not at all of how sensitive they are toward anyone else.

Mea culpa, he thought unhappily. Was it now too late?

He did not know Felicia’s purpose in coming to Phoenix, or what she meant to reveal to him. But he sensed, with gloomy foreboding, that it would destroy all hope she might someday come back into his life.



On the fishing grounds off the coast of

Wolf Island, the twinkling lights of the gill netters cast cheerful streams of gold across the black sea. By the time Rolf Morgan steered Johnson's old tub into the area, he was late, and two dozen boats had already taken positions.

With no radio, he couldn't query other boats—and it would have been too soon anyway. They had just made their first set, and it would be at least two or three hours before they pulled their nets and discovered if this was to be a good night. But the broad swells, the smell of the wind, and the size of recent catches told him the sockeye were running.

With any luck—or more exactly, without any *bad* luck, such as wrapping his net around a buoy, or fouling it up on

his reel—he might haul in a thousand dollars worth of salmon before six o'clock in the morning.

This was the night. This was going to be a big one.

And still he kept thinking, *I don't care.*

He had felt better when he was angry, as he had been that morning, while saying good-bye to Diana at the Harbor Inn marina. Anger had cloaked his guilty knowledge that he could have avoided their quarrel. Anger had blurred the image of Diana crying.

But all too soon, anger had deserted him. From the beach, he watched the *Trident* back away from the pier, circle slowly, and put out to sea. And long

before the boat was out of sight, his natural honesty had risen like a clean, fresh wind and blown away the last ugly wisp of indignation.

It had been a lonely and aimless afternoon, frustrated as he was by his impossible wish to see Diana—not next week, when she would come back to Wolf, but right away!

At five o'clock, he rowed out to his gill netter. Once on deck, he lifted his skiff and secured it to the roof of the cabin, then slid his lunch bucket and bad weather gear under the bow. A quarter hour later, he had checked his equipment and gasoline supply and was listening to the hum of the winch motor as it rotated the spool and hauled anchor. But as he

left harbor at the tail end of the nightly parade of fishing boats, Rolf was still obsessed by the desire to see Diana, to touch her, to somehow make things right.

Now, here on the fishing grounds, he threw the clutch into neutral and looked around at the other boats. Some would return to harbor in the morning with salmon spilling out of both fish pens and flopping around in the hold. His boat could be one of them, and there wasn't a fisherman out here who needed money more than he. Old Johnson was asking all of seven thousand for this aging gill netter, but a catch of two or three hundred sockeye would make a good down payment. Yes, this was the night...

He never unreeled his net.

The practical realities were clear to him: He had to fish to make money, and he had to wait before seeing Diana. But reality was no match for the surge of youthful rebellion that tightened his chest and beat in the veins of his neck.

“You crazy Indian nut!” he yelled as he shifted the engine into gear. And with all the speed the aging scow could muster, he put out to sea and headed for Phoenix.

In an hour, the last companionable lights from other boats had faded away. The rhythmic chugging of the engine floated across empty sea. The water peeled back from the stern in long, straight, parallel rolls that spread out behind till their ripples flattened and

melted into night.

He was totally alone, moving out of blackness, into blackness...

He was roused, but not by fear. The coursing of his blood felt *good*—like winning a tough canoe race. He did not for a moment doubt himself, his boat, or his absolute need to see Diana. In fact, throughout this long, dark ride, his only tremor of fear came on considering he might *not* have gone on to Phoenix Island.

The sun had been down two hours. Directly behind the gill netter, the bright disk of the moon lifted above the horizon. A silver glow spread across the water.

In the distance, the faint outline of an

island appeared, as if rising from the sea.

Rolf jumped to his feet. Laughter burst from his throat like a song.

It was after ten o'clock, and Andrew's guests were in a euphoric mood, induced by excellent liqueurs and Carlo's lilting melodies. No one spoke of going to bed.

Felicia listened with her eyes partly closed. She was secretly amused that so many of Carlo's songs were already familiar to her. In fact, the whole situation piqued her sense of the ironic. That her partner in a *petite affaire* should be under her husband's roof. That she should be sitting equidistant from husband and lover, free to observe them both from under half-closed eyelids.

The situation, however, was potentially dangerous. She intended to

be extremely cautious.

She had come to Phoenix on a mission for which she must secure the utmost of Andrew's goodwill. Though their marriage was by now only a technicality, her husband had refused to cooperate in obtaining a divorce. He clung obstinately to the notion that their multiple problems would magically dissolve, and that here on Phoenix Island—Heaven forbid!—they would reunite.

Rationally, Andrew must realize she hadn't been celibate for two years. But emotionally, he would react furiously if he stumbled across the tracks of another man.

So, Felicia was grateful to Carlo. He was not only an artful lover, but—not

surprisingly for a man with an innate sense of the fitness of things—he also had a gentlemanly respect for protocol. Here on Phoenix, he had skillfully avoided any word or action that might suggest they had ever met.

Her attention moved from Carlo to Andrew. Yes, there was beauty in Andrew's face. Refinement to the narrow, high-bridged nose, a compelling vitality in the bright blue eyes. When they first met, she was attracted by the intensity of those eyes, and was touched by the hint of vulnerability, betrayed occasionally in a sudden softness around his mouth. She even liked his shaggy look—the bushy eyebrows, the ruffled tangle of brown, curly hair.

Yes, she had loved him almost as much as she admired him. But how did she feel now?

She didn't know. Even her memory of once loving him was confused and dimmed by the scars of their mutual failure.

As if such reflections had struck a nerve, her head jerked to the side—just enough to remove Andrew from her line of vision and to bring into view the Mansfields and Warren Brock.

An amusing man, the artist. His effeminacy did not repel her. Every mature woman needs one close homosexual friend. The malicious edge of his wit did not hurt her, because she was familiar with his game.

During cocktails, he had opened a portfolio of sketches and photographs of his sculpture. A number of photographs showed wood carvings of a slender male figure. Felicia guessed—correctly, as it turned out—they were made from the same model.

“On Wolf Island?” she asked, touching the edge of one of those photographs with the tip of a slender forefinger.

The sculptor’s round mouth pursed into a near-perfect circle as he framed a silent *No*. Then, in a brittle tone, he amended his answer. “Until recently. I sent him back to California.”

Felicia had thought, *Aha, a lovers’ quarrel.*

Watching Warren now through half-closed eyes, Felicia decided he was interesting because he was unpredictable—totally candid one moment, devious the next. The Mansfields, by contrast, were almost stereotypes.

Very *nice* stereotypes, she thought, turning her half-gaze toward them. Literate, patrician, politically conservative, with clean good looks, suitably athletic and yet holders of season tickets to the symphony. Their bodies were slender and well cared for. Felicia guessed they exercised in a set routine at least a quarter hour a day. Their clothes were expensive but restrained.

To Felicia, it was no wonder that

Norma—pretty and so well brought up—was so obviously uncomfortable in a strange environment. Her patterns were plainly inherited, confirmed, and set in concrete; they protected her from having to deal with the unfamiliar. If her husband was serious in his heretical thoughts of leaving New York City, then Norma's world was under siege, and the controlled hostility that shot back and forth between them like an electric current was understandable.

Felicia herself, she reflected, would be unwilling to leave Washington. *If I were you, you good-looking blond tennis player with the lucrative law practice, I'd romp right back to New York as fast as possible.* Some growths

could not be transplanted. If he tried to move his wife, she would shrivel up, like a plant without water or sunlight.

Carlo's song ended. Andrew rose and limped across the room to the carved teakwood sideboard. The hounds, Mike and Lili, who had been sleeping beside his chair, now lifted their heads, following their master's movements with sleepy speculation. Having decided that crossing the room was impractical, they dropped their heads onto their paws and closed their eyes again.

At the sideboard, Andrew picked up a cut-glass decanter, filled with a gold-brown liquid that glowed in the muted candlelight. "I suggest we give Carlo a half-hour break. I'll refill the glasses."

His guests murmured agreement. Setting down his guitar, Carlo went out the sliding glass door to the sundeck and disappeared down the steps to the boat dock.

Felicia rose. "I'd like to finish the evening with champagne—if you have it, Andy. First, however, I'm going to my room. Just for a moment. I'll be right back."

To fulfill Felicia's request, Andrew pressed the button connected to a bell in Donald's quarters at the back of the house. There was no answer. He tried three times, still with no response.

Frowning, he pressed the second button, which sounded in the kitchen. Not Donald but Diana answered the

summons. Still wondering why his manager was not on the job, Andrew told her to fetch champagne, wine bucket, and glasses.



Felicia stepped into the bedroom and, flipping the light switch, closed the door behind her. As she approached the dressing table, an alcove containing a small writing desk came into view.

Donald Campbell, with a flashlight dangling from one hand, stood between the desk and the wall.

Felicia's reaction was not retreat but advance. "Explain yourself, Mr. Campbell," she said icily. "And then—*get out!*"

Donald's scarred face stiffened with

surprise. In a hoarse voice, he spoke the truth. “I was just leaving, anyway.”

After the scene with Diana, Donald had felt ugly and rejected. His impulse to come looking for Mrs. Held’s jewelry was the conditioned reflex of a self-hating human being. He had always rid himself of bad feelings by getting back at someone.

But his mind worked slowly. He had been in the bedroom several minutes before stumblingly realizing that stealing on Phoenix would be impossible. There weren’t enough suspects. Diana and Mary and the boy, Jimmy, had stayed in the kitchen all evening and could alibi one another. Besides, who would suspect *them*?

When Felicia surprised him, he had just decided to wait until he ferried her back to Wolf Island. The burglary of a motel room would be hard to pin on him. But now she'd caught him, and she kept coming on, her head lifted up high and mighty, her bright mouth drawn down in an expression of disgust—an expression he knew all too well.

Damn you, lady. Rich bitch who screwed Carlo Minatti and thought she could get away with it.

His small eyes narrowed.

“Well, I *was* going to leave. But I *ain't*, until we have a little understanding. Like about you and Carlo last night.”



Carlo was standing on the end of the boat dock, smoking a cigarette. His half-hour break was up. It was back to the living room for more music, more songs.

But he was reluctant to leave just then, because far out, beyond the mouth of the *U*-shaped harbor, the masthead light of some sort of fishing boat twinkled like an orange star. As she yawed around, the port and starboard lights blinked red and green, and the white glow atop the cabin swung from side to side. She must be a small boat, for the lights were close to the water. And she *must* be headed for Phoenix—if only because, for a boat this far out, this was the only possible destination, short of the Aleutians.

As the boat came nearer, moonlight

pulled its shape out of shadow. A large reel was mounted at her stern. So, a gill netter.

Carlo smiled. That crazy young Indian! Who but Rolf Morgan would put into Phoenix Island on a night when every other fisherman on Wolf Island would be making his grubstake, forty miles to the east? Carlo's intuition had already supplied the reason. He himself had never in his life gone to so much trouble to see a girl, but he sympathized with the impulse that spurred Rolf to follow Diana all the way to Phoenix.

He would have called out, but the gill netter was still too far away, and Rolf couldn't possibly hear his voice over the thudding beat of the engine. Carlo

turned, still smiling, and strolled toward the house.

On first coming down to the dock, Carlo had noted automatically that the tide was out. As he walked back now, something about the tide began troubling him.

He stopped, turned around, and surveyed the harbor with a growing sense of unease.

This afternoon, the deck of the *Trident* had been even with the pier. Now he couldn't see it at all, until he leaned over the edge of the dock and looked straight down. There it sat in the water, rolling gently from side to side, still tied to the pier fore and aft.

He did some simple figuring. This

month, there was a difference of nine or ten feet between the early morning highs and lows—but only a three- or four-foot fluctuation between flood and ebb tide in the late afternoon and evening, with a shorter period before the tide turned. So, with high water about 3:00 p.m., add approximately five hours for the water to go out. What was it now?—10:30 p.m., more or less.

For at least two hours, the tide should have been *rising*. Yet even as he stood here, trying to figure out what seemed wrong, Carlo could see the water get lower. Very slowly, but steadily. Not like the flux—the swishing forward and back, forward and back—of a normal tide. It was receding as if the whole bay

were going to empty out, as if some huge, invisible suction pump was drawing all the water out to sea. It reminded him of...

Hilo!

Hilo in 1960, when the sea had pulled back, just as it was doing now—and a half hour later, the mountainous bore of raging water had roared back into the harbor, swamping and crushing small boats, pounding the larger craft against the docks, drowning or maiming those who had ignored the warning and stayed to watch.

Of course! *Tsunami!*

For a few seconds, Carlo stared helplessly at the approaching gill netter. He muttered a prayer to Pelé to have

mercy on a young fisherman too far out from land to hear a warning. Then he raced for the house.

He did not see the boy, Jimmy, who had been hiding in the cabin of the *Trident* ever since Carlo came down to the dock and lit his first cigarette—Jimmy, who was fascinated by the ship-to-shore telephone and the marine band radio.

Donald Campbell had forbidden him to touch them. So tonight, as on other nights when he figured he wouldn't get caught, he had left the kitchen, presumably to go to his room—but instead he had crept through the dark, around the boathouse and onto the pier. When Carlo ran past the boat on his way

to the house, Jimmy praised his luck and went back to his loving study of the radio—the device he had never quite dared to turn on.

Carlo's clattering footsteps on the wooden pier were also heard by the cook, Mary. Since she was stretched out on a lounge chair beside the swimming pool, she could not see who it was. But then, like Jimmy, she didn't want to *be* seen, either.

The moment she had found herself alone in the kitchen—with Donald Campbell gone goodness-knows-where, and Diana serving champagne in the living room—Mary had “borrowed” a fifth of bourbon from the pantry. Then she had used her cunning to find a nice,

quiet corner where no one would ever think to look for her.

She chuckled. Who in the world would expect good old fat Mary the cook to be sitting in the dark by the swimming pool?

What the heck—she had put in her day's work. They could search and yell for her all they wanted. She was going to stay right here, drinking whiskey and having a right good time.



Felicia looked squarely into Donald's grinning face. "That's blackmail, you know: You won't tell Dr. Held I was in bed with Carlo, if I don't tell him you're a thief."

Donald shook his head. "You know I

ain't stole nothing.”

“You entered my room. Your intent was to steal.”

Donald's little eyes were shrewd. “I'm the maintenance man. I had to check the electric heaters.”

“You expect Dr. Held to believe that?”

“Even if he don't, I can sure get him to believe what I know about you.”

She spat out furiously, “He'll fire you! You'll lose your job!”

“Huh! What'll he do to *you*?”

She stared at him, repulsed by his brutish strength and panicked by the raw threat of an ugly scene to come. Yes, she had acted impulsively, stupidly, indulging in a night of lovemaking with a

young and beautiful man. But her husband hadn't been in her bed for three years. *He* had deserted *her*. Her occasional affairs since that time should be judged on the basis of aesthetics, not morals.

Still, she did regret her act, and in fact was badly frightened by the prospect of this infuriating little melodrama being played out to its unpleasant conclusion. This clumsy oaf had not half-imagined the harm he could do to her and her plans. In his subtle way, Andrew could be so much more punishing than Campbell's simpleton version of "aggrieved husband confronting unfaithful wife."

For a moment, she felt like a small

child trying to see how long she could hold her breath, as she balanced the meanness of bargaining with Campbell against the destruction of her entire purpose in coming to Phoenix.

Then her head cleared. If she had any pride, there was only one possible course. She walked to the door, opened it, and said curtly, "Follow me."

Bewildered, Donald trailed her down the hall. "What the hell," he grumbled at her heels. "I told you, I won't say nothing if you don't."

She swept on, her long, pointed white sleeves floating behind like banners. "You bungler," she threw back over her shoulder. "*You're* not going to tell him. *I* am."

Donald's voice rose to a nervous whinny. "Listen, lady, there's no use to —"

He reached out to stop her—but his big hand barely grazed her shoulder, for now she was running. Together, with Donald almost losing balance as he tried to intercept her, they burst into the living room.

The three men were near the front windows. Across from them, Diana had been holding a tray of champagne glasses while Norma Mansfield transferred them to the sideboard. But now the only movement in the room was the turning of heads, and the only sound, Felicia's and Donald's heavy breathing.

Andrew came forward, threw a

puzzled look at Felicia, and then at his manager. “I wanted you, Donald. You didn’t answer my ring.”

“I was checking the heating system.”

“He’s lying.” Felicia’s voice, very low, stung the air like the crack of a whip. “Andy, I have something to tell you.”

Andrew’s bushy eyebrows met in a worried frown. “Now?”

Felicia gestured toward the French door that opened into the garden. “I’d prefer, Andy, that you and I and Mr. Campbell step outside. I can promise you that what we have to say will be excessively boring to your other guests.”

“Yes, of course.” With a polite nod to

Felicia, Andrew moved toward the open door.

But he did not reach it. On the opposite side of the living room, the glass door to the sundeck slammed open, and Carlo burst in.



Carlo too was breathing heavily, and his dark skin shone with perspiration.

“Dr. Held! Tsunami!”

They all stared, most of them absorbing neither the strange word nor the terror so obvious in his dark eyes.

“Tsunami!” he cried again.

In uneven, rapid steps, Andrew crossed the room.

“Tidal wave, Carlo? You are sure? You know the signs?”

Still fighting for breath, Carlo described what he had just seen in the bay, and then what he had seen as a boy of twelve when a tsunami swept into the town of Hilo. Buildings knocked off their foundations. Buses overturned. Sixty-one people drowned because they refused to heed fair warning. And much more.

It was a frantic recital, a spilling of ugly, brutal pictures. Shocked, Norma automatically turned toward her husband, waiting for him to call it all nonsense. Instead, he murmured, “Frightening”—though in the same detached tone of voice he would use to find fault with the opera’s new baritone.

Warren Brock’s thick, sun-bleached

eyebrows rose in skepticism. He remembered newspaper accounts of a “disaster” in Hawaii—but those people loved them! Look what they did every time Mauna Loa erupted. They rushed so they could charter planes and fly over the crater!

Felicia simply did not comprehend *tsunami* as a scientific reality. Her eyes strayed to the frosty wine bucket and its unopened bottle of champagne.

Only Andrew listened with silent intensity. With Carlo’s first gasping announcement, Andrew’s lightning calculator of a mind had raced backward from effect to cause, mentally tracing the links from tidal wave to earthquake, to submarine landslide or explosion, to the

fearful potential of the Armageddon bomb test on Pater Island. And realizing the origin, he fully appreciated the danger.

With one quick gesture, he cut off Carlo's monologue. "Carlo, how much time do we have?" His commanding tone made it clear to everyone: Andrew Held was in charge.

"Maybe twenty minutes, maybe only ten. The pullback acts differently, different places."

"The house, the dock, everything is at sea level. We'll leave instantly and climb to higher ground." Andrew's alert blue eyes reviewed the troops. "We're all here, except Mary and Jimmy. Donald, go fetch them," he said, turning

to his manager. "I'll lead the others to the path up the hill. You know the way. You, Mary, and Jimmy will go directly there. On your way. Hurry!"

Donald disappeared through the dining room.

Norma was on her feet, plucking nervously on the sleeve of her yellow linen dinner dress. With a small frown, she turned to Blake. "Climb a hill? In this? Shouldn't we change?"

Blake said politely, "I'm afraid there may not be time."

Andrew limped to the door that opened onto the backyard. The two basset hounds struggled to their feet and followed him, tails wagging with pleasure at their master taking them for a

walk.

“All of you, quickly. But *do not run*. You could stumble and hurt yourselves, and that would slow us all down. The hill is steep, and the path is rough. We use it very little. It is going to be a hard climb.”

In the backyard, they knotted around him. “*No*,” he said sharply. “Form a line.”

With Andrew in the lead—and the dogs in tandem at his heels—they proceeded across the backyard, down a grassy slope framed by rose bushes, then up again to the base of the hill. The gardens, well-kept shrubbery, and clipped lawn all ended abruptly. Ahead lay a narrow path, barely visible in the

pale moonlight. It followed a steep course upward between monolithic boulders, their gray granite surfaces obscured by a heavy growth of scrubby madrona trees and twisted pine.

Andrew stopped and looked around. This was the spot where Donald, Mary, and Jimmy were to join them. But the only shadowy figure beyond the rear of the column was that of Felicia, with flowing white silk rippling out behind her as she ran back toward the house.

“Felicia! No!”

But the white figure kept running. Andrew muttered in Hungarian. Then in English, he gave the others their orders.

“Blake, will you proceed, please, with Mrs. Mansfield and Mr. Brock.

Diana and Carlo—you, too. When you reach the top of the first hill, you will be in dense woods. Moonlight will be cut off. You will have to feel your way carefully. Whatever happens, do not leave the path. In one or two places, there is a precipice on each side. Now, quickly, but carefully—”

Carlo spoke. “Dr. Held, I have to go back.”

“In the name of God, why?”

“A friend from Wolf, a gill netter. He was pulling into the bay just when I saw what the tide was doing. He was too far out to hear me, so I left and ran for the house. But by now he’s closer, and he might have turned off his engine. If he’s caught in the harbor, on his boat...”

The sentence was left unfinished as Carlo turned to go back. Diana cried, “Rolf!” and started after him.

Andrew shouted, “No, Diana! I say no!”

His answer was the rapidly fading image of a slender girl in white, running downhill toward the boat dock.



From the hill above came the sound of stumbling footsteps, the crackle of brush, the plop of rocks dislodged by a footfall and rolling down the path. Andrew was alone—except for Mike and Lili, waiting expectantly, tails thumping on the hard ground.

Other than Carlo, he was the only one burdened with full knowledge of what

they faced. The girl Diana might have run through the night calling, "Rolf!"—but she comprehended only that he was in danger, not the kind of disaster that threatened him. The Mansfields and Warren Brock had accepted his instructions only because he was host and they were well brought up. As for Felicia...

The unusual exertion was already stirring up pain in his bad leg. From the first, he had recognized that, once everyone else was on the path, he would place himself at the end of the line. Now he also had to go back for Felicia, without considering the extra price of this repeated descent and ascent.

He had already begun his descent

when he saw her, walking unhurriedly across the moonlit yard. At the edge of the lawn, she halted and tucked some sort of sack into her bodice. Then she lifted her long silk skirt and continued carefully up the slope.

When she was beside him, she said simply, "I went back for something."

"Something of greater value than your life?" he said angrily.

She laughed. "Bosh, Andy."

Another figure left the house and moved up the slope. It was Donald—alone.

Andrew called, "Where are the others? Mary? Jimmy?"

Donald stopped ten feet below them. "I went through every room in the house.

I looked all around the yard. I can't find them.”

“They can't have disappeared. Go back and look again.”

Far below, a shout from Carlo broke the peaceful night. “I see the wave! I see it! Run!”

Donald advanced on Andrew, looming over him like a crazed giant. “*You* go back and look!”

With that, he pushed the older man off the path. As Andrew fell, Donald dropped to the ground and scrambled up the dark hillside on hands and knees.



The crest of the killer wave glistened in the moonlight. It rolled into the harbor at twenty-five miles an hour, deliberate

and unhurried in its attack.

Its first victim was Rolf Morgan's gill netter, which it picked up like a piece of cork and pitched against the end of the boat dock. The cabin burst free of the main body of the boat and tumbled end over end onto the deck of the *Trident*.

The *Trident*, festooned with splintered parts of the fishing boat, rode high on the water until it reached the walls of rock around the swimming pool. Like a frightened traveler trying to gain entrance to the inn, the sixty-foot cruiser knocked again and again on the swimming pool walls. Her glass shattered and her oak timbers cracked as she beat uselessly on the rock.

The great mountain of water roared

over the concrete sea wall and into the pool. Trapped and angry, the flood picked up pool chairs and tables, crushed them in a furious eddy, and spit them out, far over the wall and back into the bay.

In five minutes, the entire complex of buildings—house, powerhouse, cabana, covered moorage—had been reduced to wreckage. Some of it was carried out to sea when the first wave receded. Some was abandoned on the beach, lifeless plunder for the series of waves to follow. Some was cast up high on the bank—for the first thrust of tsunami clawed hungrily at the hill that Andrew and his guests were climbing.

The last to save themselves were

Diana and Carlo. Hoarse from screaming, weak from crying, the two had waited until the white bore of the tsunami was visible at the mouth of the harbor. They escaped it by such a narrow margin that the edge of the murderous water was licking at their legs and thighs before it withdrew, pulling back with an angry hiss.

If they could have remained on the dock but a few moments longer, they would have seen Jimmy on the bow of the *Trident*, his slender figure as still as stone, as the wave smoothly ripped the boat from its mooring to pitch it against the wall of the swimming pool. And they would have seen Mary's body lifted and hurled over the sea wall and tossed into

the roaring blackness on the other side.

They would not have seen Rolf at all.



The wave was as capricious in retreat as it had been in attack.

Most of the *Trident* was left for the next wave, but the hull of Rolf's gill netter rode out of the harbor as if on a track. The first wave also captured the bodies of Mary and Jimmy. The boy was sucked down by the undertow and would have been killed by drowning—if he hadn't already been thrown against the hull with such violence that his neck was broken.

Mary, drunk and buoyant, was tossed like a rubber doll on top of the wave. At some point outside the mouth of Phoenix

harbor, where the surface of the sea had flattened out, she was thrown against the hull of the gill netter. She had the presence of mind to grab the piece of anchor chain still suspended from the battered vessel, and to hold on until she had the strength and wind to pull herself up and over the side. Then she passed out.

In the battered remnant of an old fishing boat, Mary was carried out to sea—lying on her back in three inches of seawater, still drunk, still unconscious, but alive.



They were safe on top of the hill. They had bruises, cuts, and scratches, for they had all stumbled on rocks or fallen into

thorny underbrush. But they were alive, and even dry—except for Diana and Carlo, whose clothes were soaked almost up to the waist.

They dropped wearily to the ground, stunned by a disaster they still couldn't believe. Too spent to try to communicate, they sat as far from one another as they had dared wander apart in the dark. With nothing to say, they listened to the sounds of destruction—not really visualizing it, or even wanting to. The only human sound that carried into the strangely separated encampments was Diana's weeping.

After the first wave receded, the sound from below was diminished to the whispering pulse of normal waves,

breaking gently at the feet of the cliffs. But Andrew, after conferring briefly with Carlo, announced that no one was to go back down the hill.

They accepted the order mutely. Why shouldn't they? Even if there were no further danger, they had no taste for seeing what had happened already. Anyway, they all expected to be rescued first thing in the morning, and this hilltop would be as good a place as any to wait out the night.

If one of them had kept a journal, two events would have closed the report for that day.

The first took place just before the second wave roared into the bay and carried off the carcass of the *Trident*.

They heard a voice—a young man's voice—calling weakly, but distinctly, from below.

Diana jumped to her feet. "Rolf!"

"No! Not you!" Andrew's voice rang with authority. "Carlo, Blake, *you* find him."

Carlo spotted Rolf on a shelf of rock some seventy-five feet above sea level. He was wedged between the cliff and the only pine tree—crooked and deformed as it was—that had managed to take root on that ledge.

Rolf was too weak to climb on his own. By moonlight, Carlo sought precarious footholds on the cliff's irregular face and worked his way down. Then, one arm around Rolf's

waist, he made the upward climb, half dragging, half guiding the injured youth.

In the dark clearing at the top of the hill, Rolf lay down among the others—just as the roar of the second killer wave rose from the beach. Diana sat down beside Rolf, but they did not speak.

After some time, she lay down by his side, and Rolf drew her to him.

And this was the second of the notable events at the end of that first day on Phoenix: For the first time in her life, Diana—innocent though it was—fell asleep in a man's arms.

Book 2

REBIRTH

Nine people occupied the steep hill above Phoenix Island's harbor. Two of them slept, while six others waited tensely for the roar of the next incoming wave and the malignant hiss of receding water.

Only the ninth, Andrew Held, retained a sense of time. When sounds from below reached the crescendo of a new assault, he referred automatically to the illuminated face of his calendar watch, clocking the time between waves.

Twenty minutes. Then thirty minutes. Forty minutes.

Pale moonlight filtered through pine trees to outline the huddled figures

around him. Like separate armed camps, they kept up their positions several feet apart, walled off from each other by the shock of the disaster. Except for Rolf and Diana, asleep in each other's arms, they all sat up, backs braced against tree trunks. In the moon-streaked dark, Andrew was able to make out their profiles. Most of the time, they stared straight ahead, as if to avoid even the slight engagement of looking at each other.

Shortly after midnight, Andrew struggled to his feet. He limped to the spot where Felicia was drawn together, her arms around her knees and her head resting against a tree. A wisp of moonlight shone in her wide-open eyes.

He asked, "Are you warm enough?"

Without looking up, she answered, "Would you give me your coat?"

"Of course." He began to pull off his dinner jacket.

"No, no." She laughed wearily. "Keep it, Andy. I'm not cold."

He touched her bare arm, testing the warmth of the smooth skin. She drew back.

"Just leave me alone." Her voice was low and unsteady. "I am enduring, and I'm not very good at it."

"I'll sit with you."

"No!" Her head lifted defiantly. "Thank you, but I prefer to be miserable in private."

He dropped his dinner jacket at her

feet and retreated to his own small, lonely territory.



Some time later, the last great wave crashed against the cliffs of Phoenix, clawing peevishly at the remnants in the bay and then subsiding.

The monster's fury was spent. For hundreds of miles along the Pacific's rim, tsunami died on dark and mutilated beaches.



Another hour went by. On the hill, Andrew checked his wristwatch and noted that this peaceful lull had continued far longer than any of its predecessors. He waited, looking

frequently at his watch, listening not to any sound but to the lack of it. He was instinctively cautious about interpreting the prolonged stillness—but after two hours, he was sure.

“It’s over,” he said quietly. “The last wave has come and gone.”

Their heads turned toward him, but no one spoke.

More loudly, he repeated, “It’s over. The tsunami, the tidal wave. It’s passed.”

Warren Brock’s voice inquired pettishly, “Well, what do you recommend? A toast to tsunami? That would suit me, but someone neglected to bring the champagne. How about blending joyful voices in a fine, old

hymn? Praise God from whom all blessings flow, tra la.”

A brittle laugh from Felicia, a muttered “Shut up, you crazy fag” from Donald Campbell, and then Andrew’s firm voice took charge.

“We mustn’t leave the woods until daylight. It wouldn’t be safe. I suggest we try to sleep.”

Blake Mansfield spoke for the first time. “That’s very sensible,” he said, in a tone he might have used to compliment the serve of a tennis opponent.

For a few minutes, the little encampment on the hill rustled with movement as each of them sought a comfortable position on the hard ground. One by one they settled down, still apart

from one another.

Felicia was next to last to submit to sleep. When she finally lay down full-length on the pine needles and covered herself with Andrew's dinner jacket, he was still upright. Fifteen minutes passed and she had not moved. Then he, too, lay down and closed his eyes.

As they slept, clouds gathered, dimming and shutting off the pale moonlight. The wind changed course, and a fresh, young breeze came from the southwest—carrying rain.



Andrew was the first to awaken. The rain was harmless, yes, but it almost seemed the last straw.

His right leg throbbed, but that pain

was at least familiar. It did not deter his precise, scientific mind from evaluating the circumstances of this strange new day.

Daybreak. The strip of pink and orange sky visible through the trees shone with refracted light from the rising sun. The thick green roof of overlapping branches had deflected raindrops fairly well from the others. In any event, damp clothing would dry quickly, once they got down the hill and into the open.

Ah, yes, he thought grimly, once we get down the hill! On three hours' sleep, we will have to face the true nature of the calamity.

Which of the others had the slightest notion what they'd see when they

reached the house? Carlo, perhaps, because he had witnessed the disaster of a tsunami before. But even Carlo might not have thought beyond the disaster to the next questions.

Now that we have saved our lives, what happens next? And if we aren't picked up soon, how do we continue to save our lives?

Andrew pushed himself up onto one knee and rose stiffly to his feet. As if his movements broke a spell, the others began to stir. Disoriented, drugged with sleep, their eyes moved anxiously from one member of the group to another. As they came fully awake, their faces showed embarrassment and, yes, hostility.

Except Diana, Andrew noted. When Diana looked at Rolf, there was no tension in her sensitive face. She kneeled beside him, examining his cuts and gently pressing her fingers along his bruised and swollen thigh.

“I don’t think it’s broken,” she said quietly. Putting one arm around him, she helped him sit up.

He smiled, teeth very white beneath his dark mustache, his dark eyes bright. “Did you sleep?”

She smiled back, saying nothing. To Andrew, it was a perfect answer, as it expressed a bond—of love and acceptance and sympathy all at once—and did that so well that words would have been superfluous.

A few feet away, Warren massaged his eyelids with delicate strokes of his forefingers. “*Don’t* tell me I snored, *please*,” he said to no one in particular.

Donald stumbled into the underbrush, obviously intent on relieving himself. Blake bounced to his feet and brushed pine needles from his mud-soiled, rain-spotted garments, while Norma smoothed her hair with the palms of her hands and asked him, “Did you bring a comb?”

Felicia, looking like a queen whose crown is on crooked, extended one arm in Andrew’s direction.

“Give me a hand up, will you, Andy?”



In weary silence, the group descended

the hill. At the spot where the heavy growth of pine, fir, and salal bushes opened onto the sloping lawn—where, the night before, they had started their ascent of the narrow path up the hill—they came to a halt.

Norma gasped. Donald swore under his breath. Andrew closed his eyes and thought, *My God, do I deserve this calamity?*

The destruction was total. Timbers that had supported the wooden pier were still in place, rising above the peaceful surface of the bay like parallel rows of stumps. But the pier, the *Trident*, and every structure on shore had simply vanished. The house, the cabana, the powerhouse, the boathouse—all that

Andrew had built had been erased. The ledge on which the house had stood was scoured down to hardpan.

Such was the power of the tsunami that even parts of the shoreline had been reshaped. On the far side of the bay, the face of the hill had been cut back to raw blue clay. Layers of sand and gravel had been swept off the beach, exposing underlying shale in some places and creating new pools in the rock.

In place of everything civilization had brought to Phoenix were the rejects of the sea. Strewn the length of the crescent-shaped beach were mutilated fragments of man-made devices. The wheelhouse of a boat, a torn gill net hopelessly tangled around a bedspring, a

tennis racket impaled on a gaff hook, a badly bent galvanized five-gallon milk can, men's clothing snarled in a mat of eelgrass and kelp. Hundreds of useful objects in wood, metal, and glass, having been ripped loose, tumbled out to sea, and thrown back onto the land, were so twisted and broken that their original purposes would be hard to identify.

In the former rose garden, now buried under a thick layer of sand and gravel, shattered remnants protruded through the surface of the ugly dune—a pot handle here, a coat hanger there, the top half of a dining room chair. In the pool, now open to the sea, its cement bulkhead smashed, there had collected a grotesque assortment of splintered boards, plastic

bottles, and twisted machinery. One bright blue flotation pillow bobbed peacefully on the water.

Sniffing the ground, Mike and Lili, the basset hounds, padded cautiously across the coarse sand. They went directly to a silt-covered lump, and there they stopped. Lili's candlewick tail wagged excitedly. Mike reared backward, lowered his head to a menacing point, and growled.

No one had spoken since their first paralyzing view of the destruction. Still numb, they turned automatically to see what was exciting the dogs. As the object came into focus, Felicia's anguished voice split the air with a prolonged, high-pitched scream.

It was a human hand, reaching up through the blackish ground as if the corpse below were signaling for help.

Andrew put his arm around Felicia. "Donald," he said quietly.

Donald went ahead, dropped to his knees, and with a few scooping motions, cleared away the covering sand.

"It's Jimmy," he called over his shoulder. "I better cover him up again, huh?"

"Yes, please."

Andrew glanced quickly at the stricken faces of this little cluster of people. Warren looked almost as if he were laughing, but only muted sobs left his twisted mouth. Felicia clutched a little leather sack hanging on a ribbon

around her neck and stared blankly at the telltale mound. Norma wept helplessly.

Andrew's mind leaped forward. At this point, their first numbness had yet to wear off. They were horrified by the sight of the dead boy, but they saw him as the victim of a disaster that had reached its end. Now, before this small band of civilized, well-bred human beings began to grasp the danger they were in, he must assume leadership.

His voice was calm but clearly authoritative. "Listen a moment, please. We will take care of the boy later. Right now, we need to talk about what we are going to do. Let's find a place to sit down."



Years before, General Curtis LeMay had been a good friend of Andrew's. As if his mind had been programmed to produce the memory when needed, Andrew suddenly recalled a conversation he had had with the General in 1949, when he founded the Air Force School for Survival.

In survival, the General had remarked, the greatest enemy is not hunger, climate, or terrain. It is fear. Fear can paralyze human beings into passive acceptance of their fate, or it can shock them into panic. The one dependable antidote is purposeful activity. Make a plan, keep busy, keep trying.

But these people, Andrew reflected,

did not yet realize survival was the issue. They had no idea how isolated Phoenix Island was from the rest of the world. He thought, *If a helicopter suddenly swoops down to pick them up, or a Coast Guard cutter appears in the harbor, they won't recognize a miracle. It's what they are expecting.*

In fact, they would be so confident that the nightmare of the past six hours was about to end with their timely rescue that they would not yet even be aware of the outlandish picture they made. Bizarre little figures in evening dress, surrounded by hellish destruction, waiting for rescuing angels to emerge—*deus ex machina*—from the nothingness of the empty sky or the

endless sea.



They sat on driftwood logs that the men rolled and dragged to form a rough circle. Since, disaster or no, they obviously still thought of him as their host, Andrew was the first to speak.

“Well, my friends, we haven’t been shipwrecked on a desert island, à la Robinson Crusoe—but our situation is not very different. We have lost our transportation to the mainland or to Wolf, the nearest island. We have lost all means of communication. We can *expect* to be rescued, and we can *hope* for that rescue to come soon. But meanwhile, I think we should analyze our immediate needs.”

He paused, sensing they weren't really paying attention. The Mansfields, for example, did seem to be trying to remember their manners, but their eyes kept wandering to the spot where Jimmy lay covered by sand.

All right, Andrew thought. Let's face things squarely, starting with Jimmy.

“You're wondering about the boy. Blake, Donald, will you two take charge of burying him?”

Blake looked at Andrew curiously. “I *will*, of course, but I think... That is, as a lawyer, I question whether it's advisable. His family will want the body, and so will the authorities. When we're picked up, the body will have to come with us.”

Andrew hesitated. Facing the reality of a bad situation was like swimming in icy cold water. Entering slowly was torture, but plunging in could produce dangerous shock.

He remembered the instructions his father had given him. *Walk in until the water comes up to your waist, then go back to the beach. Your body will react to that first chilling assault, and within a minute, you can go back and swim without feeling the cold.* It was time for this group to enter the water—but only up to the waist.

Andrew said carefully, “What to do with Jimmy depends on what we expect will happen to us. If we are picked up soon, it would be pointless to bury him.

If we remain on Phoenix for some time, it's a different story.”

Warren sniffed delicately.
“*Obviously.*”

“Oh, for heaven's sake, Andy,” Felicia exclaimed. “Why are we sitting around like children during story hour? Someone will be coming after us. Much as I admire the scenic wonders of Phoenix Island, I have no intention whatever of spending another night on top of that hill.”

Andrew said patiently, “I don't blame you. You want to get back to Washington before the benefit ball at the Shoreham. Everyone here wants to be rescued. Except perhaps *you*, Donald.”

Andrew patted the heads of his

hounds, his blue eyes twinkling brightly under bushy eyebrows. “Mike and Lili are in this, too. I’m sure our present condition is not *their* idea of a dog’s life.”

Felicia snapped, “Get on with it, Andy. You agree, we all want to be rescued. What must we do?”

Andrew smiled. “A moment ago, you were demanding that some outside force or agency descend on Phoenix and save us all. Now you seem to say that we ourselves must do something if we are to achieve what we want.

“Perhaps I shouldn’t quote Sophocles at a time like this—especially since I can’t remember the words exactly. But almost twenty-four hundred years ago,

he put into words *why* we will survive and *how* we will survive. He said, ‘Of all the wonders of nature, surely the most wonderful is man. For he has caught the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, first in his mind and then in his net.’

“And that is what we will do right here and now. We will devise our means of survival, first in our minds and then with whatever tools our minds tell us we must use. I think, Felicia, that your marvelously practical mind is already working along those lines.”

For the moment, Felicia was confused. She had meant to be disagreeable, and he had retaliated with a compliment, albeit one tinged with

irony. Fingering the little pouch now hanging unconcealed on the outside of her dress, she murmured, “Well, there must be some way we can send distress signals.”

“No electricity, no telephone or radio or shortwave, no ship-to-shore.”

Warren giggled. “*I* know. A note in a bottle.”

Andrew looked at him evenly. “Do you even have a pencil and paper?”

“No, no, certainly *not*,” Warren replied brightly. “I wouldn’t *dream* of throwing the game.”

Norma had been studying her broken fingernails, moody and silent. At the sculptor’s quip, she looked up disapprovingly.

“This is anything but a game, Mr. Brock. I for one am beginning to realize we are in a very serious situation. The first step toward being rescued is being missed, isn’t that so? But no one knows Blake and I came here.

“Blake’s office, our personal friends, our relatives—they knew we were flying to Seattle, but no more. I did write my uncle that we were looking up Dr. Held.” She turned to her husband with a small, rueful smile. “That’s the letter I couldn’t mail on Wolf and brought to Phoenix.”

Who knows we are here? Like an invisible, grinning specter, the question hovered over the circle.

“Now, that’s a pretty thought,” Warren said soberly. “No one looks for us, because no one knows where to look.”

Andrew turned to the musician. “You, Carlo?”

“The manager at the Harbor Inn would have been angry if he knew the time I took off was to come here.” He shrugged and smiled. “So, I didn’t tell him.”

“Rolf?”

“All anyone knows is I went out with the other boats to fish.”

“Diana?”

With a glance at Rolf and a faint smile, she said, “I told Rolf.” They both laughed, like children overcome by a private joke.

Rolf said, “But your grandmother knows.”

“Oh, yes.” She turned back cheerfully to Andrew. “My grandmother knows where I am. She’ll get someone to come for us.”

“Oh, pshaw,” Warren said. “I liked the bottle idea.”

Andrew started to speak and then stopped. Should he point out that the tsunami that struck Phoenix had undoubtedly rolled on to strike Wolf Island, and might have brought more of its horror to that long, flat outcropping?

No, he decided—not yet.



Blake said uncertainly, “Excuse me, but it seems to me...” He looked toward

Rolf and then Carlo, apologizing in advance to persons who probably knew more about these things than he did. “Shouldn’t we build a signal fire?”

Heads nodded, and a chorus of approval echoed around the circle.

Andrew lifted one hand. “In daylight, would a fire be seen at a distance? I rather doubt it.”

Rolf said, “Not the fire. The smoke.”

“Ah, yes. Good, then,” agreed Andrew. “We can begin to act. Let’s collect driftwood.”

“First,” Felicia said firmly, “I’d like a drink of water.”

It was a simple statement of one of the commonest of all human needs, but it shocked them. *Water*. Yes, of course.

They *all* wanted a drink of water. They looked at each other expectantly, each waiting for the next person to do something about it—with no result.

Blake broke the uneasy silence that followed. “I remember reading someplace, years ago, that you can go without eating for forty days, but you can’t live a week without water.”

He looked around the tense, silent circle. “Sorry. I should have remembered something more cheerful, right?”

16

All the machinery on Phoenix Island had been maintained and repaired by Donald. Far more than Andrew—who had refused to learn the operation of the power plant or the jet pump, because he considered them too simple—Donald fully realized how dependent they were on equipment that had vanished with the storm.

“Jesus God,” he said fervently, like a man coming out of a deep sleep. “We haven’t got any water.”

“No water?” Norma’s tone was incredulous. Even out in the country—which was the way she described the heavily populated settlement on Long

Island where she and Blake maintained their second home—water was something supplied by a utility company and paid for by the fifteenth of the month. Out of the right faucet it ran cold, and out of the left it ran hot.

“But I thought...” Blake turned to Andrew. “I think you said during dinner last evening that you have your own water system? There must be a well.”

Donald guffawed rudely. “Sure, there’s a well. Three hundred and fifty feet down in solid rock. You need a pump to bring water up, and we ain’t got a pump. And it wouldn’t make no difference if we did, with the power plant gone.” He rubbed his lips with the back of his hand. “I’m already thirsty as

hell.”

“This is getting ridiculous!” Felicia’s haughty posture was only half convincing. To Andrew’s practiced ear, her voice carried an undertone of honest fear.

Blake blinked behind thick lenses. “I believe I have read that you can drink small amounts of seawater.”

Carlo shook his head vigorously. “You can drink a little seawater, but only when you don’t really need it. Right now, our bodies aren’t dehydrated. A little salt water wouldn’t hurt us too much. But after a while it would, because we’d get twice as thirsty.”

Donald regarded Carlo with a mixture of admiration and suspicion. “How

come you know all that?”

Carlo's wide white smile was no less charming for Donald than for anyone else. "I was born and brought up in the middle of the Pacific Ocean."

Rolf's voice, deep and low, said, "Those pools in the rocks probably have something we could use in place of water. There may be fish. There's water in the spine of a raw fish. You just have to suck it out."

"Raw fish! No, *thank* you." Warren's tongue licked his full lower lip. "Of course," he said less disdainfully, "I do like *ceviche*, the way they serve it in the bars in Panama. Grated corbina, lime juice, hot sauce. *Tops* for a hangover. And I *a m* getting thirsty. Why do you

suppose that is? I wasn't the *least* bit, Felicia, until you brought up the subject."

Diana said quietly, "When you're afraid you can't get water, you get even thirstier."

"Water," Blake said thoughtfully. "Strange. This is the first time in my life I ever really thought about water."

Warren sniffed. "This is the first time in my life I ever wanted any except with Scotch."

"There must be water on the island," Diana said. "There was a farm here a long time ago. The old Furness farm, that the island used to be named for. They would have located it near some kind of water, like a spring or a creek, or maybe

a lake or pond.”

Felicia grimaced. “I don’t want polluted water.”

“What would pollute it?”

The question came from Norma. Andrew looked at her with surprise. Perhaps there was more inside her finely sculptured patrician head than rigid conventions.

“It might be muddy,” Norma persisted, “but not polluted.”

Felicia wrinkled her nose. “Who wants to drink muddy water?”

Andrew smiled. “*You* will, my dear. When you are thirsty enough.”

“Mud settles out of water,” Rolf said simply. “Or we could use one of our shirts to filter it. What we need is

something to put water in when we do find it. I saw a milk can on the beach. If it doesn't leak, we could take it when we go to the farm." He turned to Andrew. "I'd be glad to go. Where *is* the farm?"

Andrew pointed toward the high north end of the island. "I've only seen it by air, when a hydroplane brought me here on my first trip. There's nothing left, as far as I could see. I'm ashamed to plead ignorance, but on account of this"—he tapped his right foot—"I have never explored that part of Phoenix."

Rolf's dark eyes moved to Donald.

"Hell, don't look at me! I came here to handle the boat and keep the equipment running. I ain't no nature

lover, and that farm lies somewhere along the top of the island, high up and maybe three miles beyond the woods where we camped last night. So, go ahead, Daniel Boone. I'll stay here and pile up wood for our fire."

Felicia said sarcastically, "Rolf's leg is badly cut and bruised—while *you*, Mr. Campbell, appear to be in the pink of condition.

"In any case," she went on, "we should *all* stay right here, because this is where they will come looking for us. When they arrive, I don't want to be romping through the brush in evening slippers and a thousand-dollar Aldano original. Besides, I'd be no good on a water hunt. The only sign of water I am

prepared to recognize is a chrome-plated drinking fountain with a sign over it saying *Eau Potable*.”

In a softer voice, she addressed Rolf. “Couldn’t you find water right around here?”

“Maybe. Like along that clay bank over there. Dark stains usually mean underground water. Or if you see someplace in a field where everything is growing greener than any place else—that means water under the surface. If you dig down, it will collect at the bottom of the hole. But the nearest and easiest right now would be rainwater, if we can find any.”

Rainwater! Another of General LeMay’s precepts of survival jolted

Andrew's memory: *You can't afford to make mistakes, for even the smallest may endanger the lives of others.*

He, the host and leader—at least *pro tempore*—had made a mistake. When it rained during the night, why hadn't he anticipated their need for water? If he was assuming responsibility, he should also accept blame.

“We should have collected rainwater last night,” he said apologetically. “It was my mistake, and we can't afford mistakes. Before we stumble into another one, let's sort out priorities.

“I guess we all agree that the search for water can't wait for the building of a signal fire. Shall we divide into two groups, and one look for water while the

other gathers driftwood to burn?”

“Dr. Held.” Norma’s smooth forehead drew into a worried frown. “I suppose it *was* a mistake not to catch rainwater last night, and I know searching for water is important. But aren’t we about to make another mistake? About the tides?”

She cast a frightened glance at the raw ground where the house had been. “I know a little about tides, because of our place on Long Island. Wasn’t it a low slack when we came down to the beach?”

Carlo nodded vigorously. “Yes, yes, it was.” He jumped to his feet and looked appraisingly at the quietly lapping water.

The night before, he had anticipated

the tsunami because he understood the cycle of tidal rise and fall. With Norma's question, last night's timetable came back in a rush. Normal high tide about three in the afternoon, when the *Trident* came into Phoenix harbor. Normal low about five hours later, and the next high about one o'clock in the morning.

Yes, it figured. At dawn, the water had been as far out as it would go until the next low tide sometime in the afternoon, and in between, the water would rise and flood the beach. He turned and looked at Norma, frank admiration in his dark eyes.

"If it was low slack about an hour ago," Norma said with a small,

thoughtful frown, “then the tide is turning. When it comes all the way in, won’t it carry away all the things we see lying around? Such as things we could use as water containers?”

Blake exclaimed, “Norma, of course, you’re absolutely right!”

With a new, positive ring in her voice, Norma continued. “Before we do anything else, I think we should search the beach and carry everything useful to higher ground.”

Warren jumped to his feet. “I *love* to beachcomb.”

Blake stood up. “How much time do we have before high tide?”

“One moment, please.” Andrew pushed himself to his feet, pain pricking

at his right leg like a series of small electric shocks. “Norma, I’m grateful for your foresight. Yes, before anything else, let’s comb the beach. But let me put in a few words of caution.

“Beachcombing is certainly the right thing to do, but we could go about it the wrong way. The day is getting warmer. If you run, if you exert yourselves so you perspire, you’ll dehydrate your bodies and increase your need for water. Blake, please don’t experiment with seawater. You would probably vomit, and that would dehydrate you dangerously. Remember, our bodies are already weakened by loss of sleep. Being overtired and thirsty at the same time is bound to affect us emotionally. Let’s get

busy, but slowly and deliberately.”

Felicia tucked the little leather pouch inside her bodice and stood up—an imperious figure, despite her formal hairdo having started to disintegrate, with several long strands of red-gold hair hanging down her back.

“God, Andrew,” she murmured, “you always manage to sound like you are standing at a blackboard with a slide rule in your hand.”

“I’ve always been a teacher,” he said quietly. “But I’ve never pretended to know everything. Right now, I am very much aware of my limitations.”

“You’re saying I’m not aware of mine,” she said, flushing. “Forgive me, Andy. This... this crisis, or whatever it

is, ought to bring out the best in me instead of the worst. But all I can think is: What silliness is this, hopping around the beach like a horde of maddened pack rats? I'm thirsty and I want a drink of water, and then I want to sit down and wait.

“You see? I told you—I'm not good at enduring. You *are*. You're... admirable.”

Before he could reply, she had turned away and retreated toward the beach.



The ledge where the house had been was designated the warehouse for their curious treasures—it was a good twenty feet above the level of normal high tide. At Blake's suggestion, Andrew acted as

storekeeper, sorting out the objects they brought to him and stacking things of a kind in separate piles.

When the others were busy on the beach, Donald seized the opportunity to talk to Andrew alone.

“Dr. Held, I’d sure like to know what you meant when you said I was the only one who might not want to get rescued. How come? You think you know something about me?”

Andrew shrugged. “No, not really. In any case, it doesn’t matter.”

“Well, you’re right about me not wanting to go to the mainland. I got into a little trouble.”

“I said it doesn’t matter. Relax. Phoenix may turn out to be a better

hiding place than you ever imagined.”

“My real name—”

Andrew broke in impatiently. “You are Donald Campbell to all of us. A different name would only cause confusion. You have been very helpful to me. I’ve depended on you, and you’ve never disappointed me. So, forget the confessional. It’s not important now. What *is* important is the fact that, right now, I need you more than ever. We *all* do. You’re stronger than any of us.”

Donald’s pale eyes narrowed suspiciously as his mind tried to assimilate the idea of being needed.

“Well, I *am* strong,” he admitted finally. Then, remembering another concern, he said, “Look, it don’t seem

right to leave Jimmy where he's at. If we have an extra high tide... How about I pull him out while the others aren't too close and bury him right, someplace up there in the woods.”

“Can you do it without a shovel?”

“Huh!” Donald held out his hands, presenting them proudly for Andrew's inspection. “I can do more with these than the average man can with a goddamn shovel.”

Andrew nodded solemnly. “I don't doubt it. But remember Mr. Mansfield talking about taking the body with us when we're picked up? I gather you aren't as confident as he is that we'll be rescued soon.”

Donald's eyes narrowed in a look

both shrewd and secretive. “I got a good idea what our chances are. But I won’t say anything to the rest of them. Like they say, what you don’t know won’t hurt you.”

“I’m afraid I can’t agree,” Andrew said with a deep sigh. “We are very much in danger of being hurt by what we don’t know. Well, anyway, Donald, you have the right idea about Jimmy. You might break off a sharp piece of shale from the cliff over there and use it to help you dig. We’re going to need those hands of yours.”

Donald said gruffly, “Yeah, sure. Well, there’s a lot I can do.”

He took several steps away, stopped, and turned back.

“Mr. Mansfield told me to call him by his first name. What do you think of *that?*”

Not waiting for an answer, he wheeled around and hurried down the slope to the beach.

Felicia knelt to examine a shiny object half-buried in the sand. With a slender, enamel-tipped forefinger, she uncovered a sterling silver fork—undoubtedly part of a three-piece carving set.

What a crazy collection, she thought, as she added the fork to her pile of bric-a-brac. A gallon jug with a severed neck. A pair of men's swimming trunks. An electrical extension cord. Several bits and pieces of broken china. A screwdriver with a yellow handle.

She had collected all she could carry at one time. If only she had a shopping bag... Instantly, her practical self reminded her of the way she had carried

apples when she was a little girl visiting her uncle's farm. In her skirt! So, this thousand-dollar original was good for something, after all.

With deft motions, she drew the skirt together at the hemline and lifted the gathered edge with one hand, then with the other picked up her discoveries and dropped them into the cradle she had formed. She was revealing her panty hose, but they were all too busy to notice—and in any case, it didn't seem to matter.

The streaking of her makeup and the smudging of her mascara did disturb Felicia a little—especially when she caught a glimpse of Diana bounding over logs and rocks like a wood nymph, her

skin clear and radiant, her loose, unlacquered hair falling softly about her face. Of course, Diana was so beautiful however you approached her—surely the epitome of natural beauty.

Felicia's elaborate coiffure had finally collapsed around her shoulders. *But I did save the hairpins*, she thought, and she thanked the god of the sea for not coughing up any mirrors, or even pieces of mirror. If she looked like she had just won the world championship for female wrestlers, so be it—it would all be over soon.

One of the group's first finds had been Rolf's discovery of a large stainless steel mixing bowl, scratched and dented but luckily right side up. It was partially

filled with rainwater—enough to give all nine castaways several swallows. So, Felicia was not actively thirsty, and her hunger pangs were not much worse than those from her periodic campaigns to lose weight.

She did not know what the others were feeling and did not particularly care—except for Andrew. Yes, Andrew...

Felicia was good about being honest with herself. Wasn't she a little relieved that this search of the beach kept her from talking to him? Yes, she *was* relieved, she *was* glad. The truth was, she dreaded the moment she would say, *Andy, I want a divorce, because I am going to marry another man.*

Curious the way that “other man”—the key to her future happiness and comfort—had become such a misty figure during the past two days. Perhaps it was because Andrew was so very real and so very near. Her awareness of Andrew as a vital, physical human being was threatening to reduce the man in Washington, D.C., to a faceless figure, a theory rather than a man.

Damn Andrew!

During the years of separation, Felicia thought she had rid herself of the reactions that once made her so vulnerable. The desire for his approval. The strong physical attraction. The knowledge of his body, and the sparks of excitement he lighted with the smallest

gesture of tenderness.

She thought these feelings had died when the two of them pulled back within themselves, like knights retreating to their own castles—pulling up the drawbridges, safe because they were separate. But yesterday, when she got off the boat and saw him standing on the pier, with the two dogs at his feet, remembered feelings had come back in a rush.

Of how deeply they had been in love. Of their first lovemaking, when he came to her apartment late one night, shaken by some incident during an evening meeting of government officials.

He had hardly spoken. When she put a drink into his hand, he studied it

curiously, as if trying to identify it. Then he looked up at her. His intense blue eyes spoke so eloquently, she told him, “Bother the drinks. We’ll have them later.”

Taking his hand, she led him into her bedroom. She undressed very slowly. The bright bedside lamp illuminated every part of her as she stretched out on the bed. Cupping her full breasts in her hands, she said, “Andy, I want you. Oh, Andy, I want you.”

God, how sweet the moment he had entered her, as strong and gentle as his tongue in her mouth...

For a long, terrible moment yesterday on the Phoenix pier, Felicia had been afraid she would burst helplessly into

tears. And now, approaching Andrew with her skirt full of crazy bits and pieces, she felt ridiculously excited.

She held out her skirt and looked down at its contents to avoid his bright, analytical gaze.

“The bounteous gifts of the seas,” she said gaily. “I lay them at your feet.”



The tide was rising, but by ten o'clock they had collected everything the beach offered. Silence engulfed them as they dropped to the ground and surveyed the pathetic piles of broken boards, shattered glass and pottery, wire and string and net.

Andrew's voice brought the drowsy circle fully awake. “Some of you may

think that gathering such things as these has been a childish pastime. But bear with me just a few minutes longer.

“We can see here what the storm left us—but these piles of junk don’t constitute our entire wealth as a community. I’ve been thinking that everything we’re wearing, everything we’re carrying, is potentially useful and should also be considered part of our inventory.”

Felicia laughed. “God love the orderly, scientific mind. Andy, you’re truly unique.”

“I’m trying to remember things I may never have known.”

“I’m not sure what you mean by that, but let’s get on with the game. I’d hate to

still be sitting here playing Show and Tell when the Coast Guard arrives.”

“I’ll start with myself.” Andrew tapped his watch. “Calendar wristwatch, in good condition. In my pockets, one handkerchief—and that’s all. Everything that usually makes them bulge is... that is, *was* laid out on the chiffonier in my bedroom. Clothing includes a jacket, trousers, undershorts, shirt, necktie, socks, shoes—” He stopped abruptly.

His mechanical foot. Since it contained metal, it was undoubtedly more valuable than anything he had mentioned. But even Felicia had never seen him as much as attach it to his leg. Nor had she—except in a quick glance in the bedroom or beside a swimming

pool—ever really observed the pointed, footless stump that was his right leg without the prosthesis.

It would be easier to expose or discuss any other part of his body. Just the thought of uncovering his maimed leg suffused Andrew with a feeling close to grief.

During his long-ago trip to India and the Far East, a beggar had displayed an amputated leg, whining pitifully as he extended a pleading hand. Andrew filled the dirty palm with all the money in his pocket, then fled, limping, from the fellow human being he could not keep himself from despising wholeheartedly.

Carlo, smiling warmly, said, “You’ve forgotten something, Dr. Held.

Something metal.”

Andrew started.

“Your tie clasp.”

“Ah.” Andrew exhaled deeply. “Yes, of course. All right. Would the next person...?”

Around the circle, they spoke with varying degrees of embarrassment. Carlo showed none at all, even when it came to the athletic supporter he wore with lightweight summer slacks. When it was Norma’s turn, she flushed and for the first time tried to pull together the open seam of her dress.

Blake produced the group’s second wristwatch, along with his clothing, leather wallet, and wedding ring. Warren quipped about his own gold

fillings.

Rolf's voice was so low, he could hardly be heard. Diana, on the other hand, seemed perfectly natural and at ease.

“My sandals, my panties and bra, and my dress. That's all. I don't have any rings or jewelry or even hairpins. It isn't much, is it?”

For Donald's turn, he reached into his hip pocket. Grinning broadly, he pulled out a sturdy jackknife.

“Three blades,” he said proudly. “That ought to be some help, huh?”

Andrew smiled approval. “That knife makes you the millionaire of this group.”

Felicia was the only one who hadn't spoken. When she saw it was her turn,

her hand flew to the little leather pouch hanging on a ribbon around her neck.

“Felicia?”

Her fingers tightened convulsively on the little sack. She took so long to answer that the attention of the entire circle fixed on the mysterious object.

“Just the usual skimpy female raiment,” she said finally. “Oh, and these.” She opened her other hand, revealing a dozen large, bronzed hairpins.

Andrew had never squandered his powers of observation on details of feminine adornment. For him, it had always been enough to register the total effect. But suddenly he knew what that leather pouch contained—the objects so

precious to his wife that, at the risk of being overtaken by a tidal wave, she had run back to the house to get them.

What an insane sense of values! he thought. But he instantly corrected himself. To Felicia, who had been unwilling or unable to understand the peril of tsunami, going back to save a sackful of precious gems was perfectly consistent with a sense of the practical.

Donald said belligerently, “Well, go on, Mrs. Held. What’s in the leather bag? The rest of us didn’t hold nothing back.” With his three-blade jackknife displayed on one big, rough palm, he seemed to be challenging Felicia to match his prize.

Andrew said quickly, “It’s not

important. This was all voluntary, Donald. She doesn't have to show—"

"She don't, don't she!" interrupted Donald with an angry roar. "How come *she* don't? Carlo here offered to give up his jock strap for a slingshot."

"Mrs. Held has a right to privacy."

"Huh! When she goes into the woods to piss, she does. But not when we're trying to put all our useful stuff together—things we need so we can get along on this island. That means things *all* of us need."

Felicia's haughty resistance dissolved in an instant, her face breaking into a smile. Slowly at first, then with more and more abandon, she gave herself up to bursts of laughter.

“Here, do have a look!” she gasped when she could catch her breath. She pulled the ribbon over her head, opened the pouch, and shook the contents into her lap.

In silence, eight people stared at a tangled mound of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and brooches. Diamonds and emeralds winked in the morning sunshine. A string of pearls glistened wetly. A topaz ring shone like a comet.

“There, you see? I *do* have something to contribute to the general good. Whenever we are hungry or thirsty, we’ll just rub one of these little magic stones!”

“Oh, for Chrissakes.” Donald’s hungry eyes moved from Felicia’s lap to

his own open palm. Contemplating the jackknife, he began to smile.

“Goddamn. It’s funny, at that, all right. Goddamn, it sure is enough to make you laugh. If we were in the city, that stuff of hers would be worth fifty thousand dollars, and you couldn’t get three bucks for my knife. But here, the way things are...” He chuckled. “Want to trade, Mrs. Held?”

“Thank you, Mr. Campbell. At the moment, that gadget of yours may be worth more than my jewelry, but *I’m* going back to the city. You can play millionaire for a day, but I have no use for your knife.”

Donald looked at her boldly. “I wonder. Don’t that depend on how long

we're stuck here?"

Felicia pointedly ignored this and began to refill the leather pouch. Pulling the cord over her head, she dropped the sack into the crevasse between her breasts.

"Well, now, Andrew, I'm getting awfully hungry. We haven't eaten in over twelve hours. What are we going to do about it?"

Andrew wanted to say, *We'll rub one of those little magic stones.* But he decided not to.

Somehow, the notion didn't seem funny anymore.

Rolf lowered two strings of fish onto the upper beach.

“These were flapping around in the swimming pool—or what’s left of it. They must have come in with high water and got stranded when the tide went out. They’re good and fresh.”

Warren’s short upper lip curled with distaste. “*Horrible* eyes! Are we going to *eat* those ugly creatures?”

Rolf said quietly, “That’s what fish look like before they’re cooked. But you don’t have to eat them, if you don’t want to.”

“But I’m *famished*. What else is there? . . . All right. Just this once. But

not raw, *please*.” Daintily, Warren dusted his palms against each other and backed away.

“No, I’ll cook them. The way my grandmother used to—on sticks beside a fire.”

Fire... As the word *water* had struck them dumb a few hours earlier, the word *fire* now hung in the air while they looked at one another expectantly.

Andrew spoke first. “Warren, Felicia. You both smoke.”

Warren shrugged elaborately. “Yes, but I use matches. I can’t abide those fussy little gadgets that are always running out of fluid.”

“Matches are fine.”

“But that’s what I mean. I used the last

one an hour ago.”

Andrew grimaced and went on. “Felicia, your cigarette lighter?”

“It was on the table in the living room.” She laughed shrilly. “It probably still is.”

Warren snickered. “All we have to do is find the living room.”

Andrew turned to the others. One by one, they shook their heads.

“Sorry,” Blake said earnestly. “Neither of us smoke.”

“I see.” Andrew looked around the group. At this point, Felicia and Warren, the specialists in facetiousness, were as sober as the Mansfields. Andrew felt a little sorry about that. For both those two, a sense of the absurd was an

important defense.

“We do need fire,” he began, his mind automatically sorting and grading their various needs. “Right now, to cook by. Later, for our signal fire. Eventually, for warmth—because it will be cool by evening.” He smiled wryly. “Or it might rain, which would solve one problem and create another.”

Felicia crossed her arms over her breast. Her long, painted fingernails tapped impatiently on the bare flesh of her upper arms.

“I’m really *very* hungry, Andrew. Don’t Boy Scouts learn to make fire without matches? Who here was a Boy Scout?”

Blake said, “I was, for a while. I

remember trying to get a spark by rubbing two sticks together. It never worked. At least, not for me.”

“The sun’s rays through a convex lens...” said Andrew thoughtfully. “If we had a magnifying glass. Or a flashlight, or binoculars, or a camera... Well, forget about that—we don’t. But there’s broken glass in our warehouse here. The bottom of a bottle might work, or another piece of glass from it.”

He looked inquisitively at his wristwatch and touched the crystal. “I have never tried it, but I think two watch crystals, with a little water between them... Blake, you’re wearing a watch.”

“Excuse me.” Rolf’s tone was friendly but faintly defensive. “You

don't have to take your watches apart. That way of making fire only works when you've got a bright sun. If the fire went out and the sky was cloudy..." He shrugged. "Don't waste your watches. I can make fire without them."

Felicia looked at Rolf in open admiration—probably, Andrew decided, as much for his physical beauty, with his characteristic high cheekbones, as for his knowledge of fire making.

"Fine, Rolf. What's your method?"

"A fire drill."

Andrew nodded. "I should have thought of that. I've seen it done in a native village in Africa."

Rolf gave him a level and unsmiling look. "My grandfather taught me, in *our*

native village.”

Andrew heard and accepted the rebuke. “Do you want help?”

“Only to stack driftwood. We should have a lot of firewood before I even try to get a flame. I’ll go look for tinder.”



The spot for the fire was chosen under Rolf’s direction. It was well above high water so the incoming tide would not extinguish it, but as close as possible to a ready supply of firewood. And it was out in the open—not only to make it visible from a distance but to eliminate the danger of forest fire.

Then, while the others collected driftwood, Rolf began his search for tinder. He went into the woods with two

implements: a sharp piece of broken glass, and the stainless steel bowl that had earlier held rainwater.

His first find was a dead cedar log. He pulled off several long strips of bark. Under the bark, the log was infested with insects whose threadlike trails honeycombed the rotten wood. With the shard of glass, Rolf scraped the powdery dry rot into his bowl.

Moving on through the woods and out into a field, he had soon collected handfuls of dead bracken fern, long grass, and small, dry twigs. When he came upon a pine tree that was oozing golden sap, he had another idea.

Nearby, greenish-gray moss hung in festoons from the limbs of a dying tree.

He tore handfuls of the moss from the lower limbs and rubbed it into the sticky, aromatic juice of the pine tree. Like the rotted wood, dried fern, grass, and cedar bark, the pitchy moss would help produce a quick, hot fire.

His final acquisitions were to be used in the making of the fire drill itself: a branch from an alder tree, and a dry willow stick about a foot long.

Back at the spot selected for the bonfire, Rolf rolled the strips of dry cedar bark between his palms until they were reduced to a reddish-brown dust. Beside this mound of bark dust, he set down the bowl of powdery wood rot. These two substances were his tinder.

Next was the kindling. He broke

small, dry twigs into pieces several inches long and made a stack of them. In another stack, he heaped handfuls of dried bracken fern and the moss that was sticky with pine sap.

One by one, the wood gatherers gave up their plodding round trips to the beach and became part of a silent, curious group around Rolf and his neatly organized fire making. He looked up and smiled bashfully.

“So far, so good. But now comes the fire drill. I hope my grandfather was a good teacher.”

Diana’s hand touched his shoulder. “What I remember is, you were always a good student.”

Working methodically, Rolf laid out

the five parts of his drill, testing each piece in turn, and preparing it as needed.

An alder branch, a yard long and an inch in diameter—that was the bow. For the bowstring, he used a leather lace from one of his own boots.

The fireboard was a lucky find in the warehouse of refuse. Though one end was splintered, the other was flat on both sides and square on the edge. And the board was about the right size—five or six inches wide, a half inch thick, about a foot and a half long.

With the sharp piece of broken glass, Rolf gouged out a cone-shaped hole, not far from the squared edge of the board and halfway through it. Then he cut a *V*-shaped notch from the hole to the edge of

the board, with the sharp point of the *V* extending nearly to the center of the hole.

The fourth part of the fire drill was the spindle—a dry willow stick about a foot long. Once more Rolf used the glass, this time as a plane, and shaved the stick lengthwise until it was no longer round but six-sided. With the same crude implement, he tapered one end of the stick so it looked like a blunt pencil. The other end, he rounded off.

Finally, he selected a small chunk of wood to fit over the rounded end as a knob.

Stroking his mustache, he gave all parts another careful inspection. “I guess I’m ready to put it together.”

He tied the shoelace bowstring to one

end of the curved and flexible alder bow. Then he wrapped the bowstring twice around the willow spindle, pulled the string taut, and wrapped it around the other end of the bow.

On the spot chosen for the fire, Rolf placed the fireboard on top of a plain board from the warehouse. He filled the *V*-shaped hole with several pinches of his tinder and piled the rest on the ground before him in a small pyramid. Then he crouched with one foot firmly on the fireboard.

With one hand, he grasped the wrapped end of the bow; with the other he held the spindle, with the rounded end pushed up against the knob, now seated in his palm. He inserted the tapered,

blunt-pencil end of the spindle into the notched hole in the fireboard.

Rolf looked up, his dark eyes sparkling. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he told his attentive audience, “you are about to find out how good an Indian I am.”

Pressing down on the knob to hold the spindle upright and in place, he began sawing back and forth with the bow, forcing the spindle to revolve in the hole in the fireboard.

At first, his strokes were long and the pressure light—a cellist playing a slow waltz. Gradually, the hand on the wrapped end of the bow increased the tension by pressing the thumb toward the palm. At the same time, he speeded the

rhythm of his sawing strokes—the cellist working up to a *schottische*.

Rolf's long black hair bounced on his shoulders, and his bare back glistened. His breathing kept pace with the rapid movement of his arms. In a few minutes, a tiny wisp of smoke rose from the notch in which the spindle revolved so frantically.

He accelerated, breathing hard. Suddenly, the smoke tendril burst into a small, billowy cloud.

Rolf dropped the bow, picked up the fireboard, and quickly poured the smoking wood dust onto the small pyramid of pulverized bark and punky wood. Dropping to his knees, his face only inches from the smoldering tinder,

he blew gently, drew another breath, and slowly blew again.

The smoking dust ignited with a tiny orange spark. Rolf grabbed a fistful of sticky moss and, holding it against the spark, continued to blow. The live spark caught, and the moss erupted into flame. He reared back, reaching for a handful of small, dry twigs.

Fire! He *was* an Indian, after all.

Rolf dropped a second handful of twigs and grass and fern. As the uncertain orange tendril exploded into a sturdy flame, a chorus of cheers sounded at his back.



Felicia could not understand why they should not eat *all* the fish for lunch.

“I tell you, I’m *starved!*” she protested when Andrew insisted they divide Rolf’s catch into two parts and save half for an evening meal. “I don’t know why, but I’ve never been so hungry in my life. And after all, we have nothing to eat but the fish. No salad, no vegetables...”

The fish were already cooking. Using Donald’s jackknife, Rolf had gutted, beheaded, and split them, then skewered the thick filets on green sticks planted around the fire and leaning over the heat at a slight angle. The outer skin was charred, but the white flesh inside exuded a fragrant juice.

Diana sat near Rolf, her legs drawn up and her chin resting on her knees. “I

could find some roots or greens that would be like vegetables. But the fish is almost cooked. I'll look this afternoon, and we can have that tonight."

"Roots?" Norma's pale face brightened with interest. "Do you mean, like burdock roots?"

Felicia threw a glance at Norma that dismissed her question as ridiculous. "Those are *weeds*."

Norma hesitated but then said firmly, "At one time, Mrs. Held, *everything* was."

Felicia laughed. "Oh, I suppose so. But thistles, or the roots of thistles? What foolishness. We'll poison ourselves."

Norma's adherence to good manners

kept her from challenging someone who, in relation to her own age, would be classified an “older woman”—even if that woman, like Felicia, was only in her late thirties. But she still replied with considerable spirit.

“Admittedly, I don’t know much about it. But there’s a health food store on Sixty-third, where I go occasionally to buy honey. I saw a book there called *Eat the Weeds*. I just glanced through it.”

She threw Diana a rueful smile. “Now I wish I had read it, because I’m hungry, too.”

Diana’s soft mouth curved into a smile. “I guess being hungry had a lot to do with it when my grandmother used to pick nettles, and pull up cattails in the

swamp, and things like that. She often took me with her. I learned quite a lot.”

Norma said eagerly, “When you look for greens and roots, may I go with you, Diana? I took botany at Wellesley.”

“Oh, my dear Aunt Maude,” Warren snorted. “When I get marooned on an island, it has to be with a Wellesley girl.”



As the sun began to settle on the horizon, Andrew sensed that even Felicia had accepted the fact they were going to spend another night on Phoenix Island.

Once they had finished an evening meal of bass and dandelion greens, weary silence engulfed the group around the bonfire. Though they were physically

near each other, they retreated within themselves once more—hugging their disappointment in the nameless authorities who should by now have plucked them off this wild place and transported them quickly to clean sheets and to hot and cold running water.

Night was overtaking them. The last scrap of food had been eaten, the last portion of water drunk, and they were exhausted. Still, they sat around the bonfire, dumb with fatigue but clinging to faith in the signal fire that earlier in the day had seemed guaranteed to bring quick rescue.

Donald was the first to stumble up the hill toward their camp. A little later, Blake said, “Norma, it will be easier

while there's still a little light.”

As they left the circle around the fire, Blake put his arm around his wife. It was a commonplace gesture, and yet it struck Andrew as odd.

What was surprising about such an ordinary show of affection? And then he realized it wasn't Blake's gesture that seemed different, for Andrew had observed several of his efforts to pat Norma's shoulder or hold her hand. No, it was Norma who was acting differently. She hadn't pulled away this time—and as they disappeared into the shadow of the hill, she slipped her arm around Blake.

Andrew looked around at the somnolent figures huddled beside the

fire. “Well?” he asked. “Don’t you think we’d all better get ready for another day?”

There were sleepy murmurs of protest, but most of the stragglers stood up. While Carlo banked the fire, the others fell into line and began moving slowly, over the logs and rocks toward the path up the hill.

Only Felicia lingered hopefully, desperate for a search party to spare her a second night in the woods.

Andrew said gently, “I know, dear. We’re the same, that way. It’s hard to give up.”

“You never do,” she said, then added bitterly, “except at the wrong time.”

Not waiting, she walked off alone.

With Carlo's strong hand guiding him, Andrew limped across the dark beach and began the painful climb.

19

The sound dragged Andrew across the no-man's-land between sleep and awakening. At first it was more a vibration than a sound—a steady rhythm of blows muffled by distance—which his sleep-drugged mind could not translate into any recognizable entity. It grew louder, as his growing consciousness struggled harder and harder to free itself of the persistent hold of sleep.

The dream images fled, and his waking mind groped for light. He opened his eyes.

All around him they slept, still figures under patchwork coverings of salvaged

cloth. Far above him, the source of the sound hovered invisibly, hidden by the entwined branches of pine trees. A loud whir, chopping the air...

Wide awake now, Andrew shouted, "Helicopter! Donald! Rolf! Blake! Run for the clearing!"

In seconds, they were all on their feet, and Rolf was racing barefoot along the path to the beach. Diana was only a short distance behind him, lithe and sure-footed as a doe. The others followed, Felicia and Norma lifting long skirts above their knees. Andrew loped along unevenly at the rear of the column.

Felicia's triumphant voice floated back to him. "They've come, Andy! Didn't I tell you? Thank God they're

here.”

Andrew overtook the others at the top of the hill, where the path broke into the open and descended toward the beach. On the ledge below, Rolf had uncovered the banked fire, and pale flames were beginning to lick at the driftwood he laid on hot coals. Diana had pulled off her white dress and tied it to the end of a long stick. In miniscule underpants and bra, her slender young body whipped from side to side as she waved the improvised flag in a frantic semaphore.

But they were too late—Andrew knew it instantly. The thudding beat of the blades was already diminishing.

In silence, the Mansfields followed the strange bird's retreating outline. The

excitement in their faces faded as the sound of the helicopter, and then the sight of it, was swallowed up by the unending sky.

Blake reached for Norma's hand. "Bad luck. But another will be along soon."

Norma pulled her hand free and continued down the path to the fire.



The noise and vibration inside the helicopter ruled out normal conversation. But as they took their last look at Phoenix Island, the three men on the search and rescue team exchanged meaningful glances.

"Wipeout!" the copilot bellowed. The pilot and paramedic nodded their

agreement.

The pilot made a circular gesture that said, *Want to make another pass?*

The copilot shook his head, shrugged, and shouted, “Seen all there is to see! *Nobody* could have lived through all *this!*”

The pilot looked over his right shoulder into the sober, frowning face of the paramedic. The young petty officer was staring back at the island, though it was already diminishing in a vast expanse of empty sea. “Joe!”

Startled, the young man drew himself together at the sound of his name. Facing front, he mouthed his answer: *Nothing for me to do there, sir.*

The copilot was scrawling notes on a

pad braced against his knee. The pilot tapped his arm and wiggled a beckoning finger: *Let me see what you've written.*

Grim-faced, the copilot picked up his notepad and held it out at an angle so that both of his companions could read it. Pilot and petty officer looked thoughtfully at the words that were to appear many times later—first in official Coast Guard reports, and soon after in newspaper and magazine accounts of the tragic toll of the August 4 tsunami.

All buildings and installations destroyed. Shoreline altered significantly. No evidence of survivors on or near the island. Devastation total.

The paramedic leaned back in his seat and wearily closed his eyes. The pilot forced himself to focus his attention on the chart and the next area to be searched. The copilot, rereading his notes, wet the tip of his pencil on his tongue and, with one heavy black stroke, underlined the key words:

Devastation total.

Then he looked out the window—but Phoenix Island was already only a blur on the misty horizon.



Andrew did not have to suggest that they gather and talk things over. Like a well-trained team responding to a familiar

signal, they sat down on logs around the bonfire and waited dejectedly for their leader to interpret this new disaster.

Blake cleared his throat. “Coast Guard, I think it was. I made out a number. And it was the right color. Kind of a silvery aluminum, with the international orange band around the fuselage.”

“Well, that’s good,” Felicia broke in. “That means they’re searching for us. They’ll be back.”

“You may be right, Felicia,” said Andrew. “But I think we’ve got to face another possibility.”

He sighed deeply. He had assumed leadership because that had been his role throughout his adult life—but in a

desperate situation, authority had its price. Yes, hope was healthy, as essential to survival as oxygen is to breathing. But if the level of hope were raised too high, the realities of the situation would inevitably cause a sudden and potentially dangerous drop, a kind of spiritual hypoxia.

How often would he have to risk the antagonism of these stubborn believers by drawing a line between hope and self-delusion?

He said carefully, "Phoenix is way outside the boundaries of any routine patrol. So, that helicopter was undoubtedly on a search mission. Now that they've checked the island and observed no signs of life, they have no

reason to come back.”

“Yeah!” Donald was making an awkward attempt to stifle a grin. “You’re right, Dr. Held. Them guys already covered their run. They won’t be back.”

Donald’s big face shone with childish glee. Andrew reflected, *He enjoys knowing that everyone else is more anxious to leave Phoenix than he is.*

Andrew glanced around the circle, trying to gauge the temper of these tensely silent people. “I’m sorry, but the truth, as I see it, is that our chances for early rescue are now greatly diminished.”

Felicia jumped to her feet. “What did we do wrong *this* time?” she asked

furiously. “What was our mistake? You said we should build a signal fire. We *built* a signal fire. Then some brainless idiot puts the fire out—”

Carlo said quietly, “I am the brainless idiot. But I didn’t put it out. I banked it, which is the right thing to do if you want to have fire in the morning.”

Felicia ignored him. “Well, Andrew? You were right here when Carlo banked the fire, whatever that means. Why didn’t you stop him?” Her voice rose into an angry sob. “They *came* for us! They would have taken us off this godforsaken rock. I want to *leave* Phoenix, can’t you understand that? I *must* leave Phoenix. And I’m asking you, what are you going to do about it, just

exactly what are you going to *do*?”

Warren's mouth formed a small *o* as he wagged his forefinger at the angry woman. “You're getting a little shrill, dear heart. Try for medium range. Nothing over high C, *please*.”

Felicia sobbed, “You stay out of it, Warren,” and sat down on the log. Tears left glistening trails as they rolled down her cheeks and dropped onto her hands.

“Stay out of it?” Warren retorted. “Look, lovey, I'm in it just as much as you are. And *I'm* not screaming and pointing fingers.”

Norma said coolly, “You're doing something worse. Mrs. Held is frightened, and you respond with ridicule.”

Warren made a half-turn to stare mockingly into Norma's face. "Fiddle dee *dee*! Felicia screams like a fishwife, and you *explain* that she's frightened. What priceless pearls of insight do you hold to cast in *my* direction?"

"You're frightened, too. But you handle it a different way."

Warren's composure cracked wide open. "Don't bother to analyze *me*, you Boston bitch!" he retorted shrilly. "I've been dissected, identified, and catalogued by the best of them, and still, no one knows *me*."

Blake crossed the circle in one stride and dropped his hand on Warren's shoulder. "Your language is offensive, Mr. Brock. It wouldn't give me any

satisfaction to hit you, but you *are* going to apologize.”

Donald growled, “It would give me *plenty* of satisfaction,” and he began to rise.

Andrew’s voice broke in commandingly. “Sit down, Donald. You, too, Blake.”

After a second’s hesitation, Blake released Warren’s shoulder and returned to his place. “Sorry. You’re right, of course. An apology from *him* would be as meaningless as the insult.”

They fell into weary silence, but the crosscurrents of hostility were tangible: Felicia was scornful. Blake was superior. Norma was defensive. Warren was cruel. Donald was brutal.

Felicia began to wipe her tears with the corner of her long white skirt. Diana, as if a storm had passed, turned to Rolf and smiled.



The furious exchange of insults and accusations had ended abruptly. More alienated than ever, most of them sank into mute depression, responding in monotonous tones to Andrew's efforts to get them talking.

He reflected that, thanks to mattresses of fern and cedar boughs, they had all benefited from a good night's sleep. But with their second day on Phoenix stretching ahead of them, that was their only asset.

They needed water—at least a quart

per person per day, according to what Blake thought he had read someplace, sometime. They were hungry, but they had no food gathered. While the August sun shone, it would keep them warm, but—particularly in the case of Felicia, whose fragile white silk dinner gown was already ripped in half a dozen places—the problem of clothing could not long be held in abeyance.

Yet it seemed to Andrew that the worst aspect of their situation was not these primitive physical needs. It was that the group lacked the spirit to find ways in which those needs could be met.

The passive acceptance of one's fate—that was one of the dangers his friend General LeMay had warned against. Yet

these weren't passive people. Even Norma, who had seemed at first to be the helpless captive of her Upper Manhattan conventions, had shown surprising spark.

How to shake them up and get them moving, when all they could think about now was that little dot of helicopter disappearing into the distance?

Andrew began, "It wasn't a mistake to bank the fire."

Carlo said quickly, "Mrs. Held didn't mean what she said. We're all feeling anxious." He threw Felicia a gleaming smile. "I'm not an idiot, but I *have* done crazy things. Some of the nicest things that ever happened to me were at least a little bit crazy."

Addressing the group as a whole, he said seriously, “If we want to keep up the fire tonight, we can set up watches.”

Blake said eagerly, “I’ll certainly take my turn.”

“So will I. But it won’t work.” Rolf’s dark face became animated as he explained. “Patrols don’t go out at night if they don’t have to, because it’s too hard to see anything. This one must have come out just to check damage done by the tidal wave. They’re looking for boat wreckage, and for bodies. They wouldn’t try to spot things like that in the dark.”

“Awful,” Felicia murmured. “Oh, how awful...”

“But there are a couple of things we

can do,” Rolf continued. “One is what we did yesterday—make smoke by putting wet wood and weeds on the fire. That’ll make white smoke instead of black, and white is what shows up best against rocks and gravel.”

Rolf’s eyes sparkled as he turned to Diana. “That was a good idea, waving a flag. If we cut down a sapling and set it up as a flagpole, in the clearing at the top of the hill...” He hesitated, then went on. “But we wouldn’t have to use your dress for the flag. There’s some cloth over there that we found on the beach.”

Donald put in gruffly, “Say, listen, you two kids can’t do that alone. If your flagpole is big enough to see, hoisting and planting it is going to take some

muscle. I'll work with you."

All at once, all were talking. Apathy had vanished like fog in the heat of the sun.

Warren announced he would look for water, searching for signs Rolf had mentioned the day before: dark stains in a clay bank, patches of especially green grass.

Felicia said wryly, "Well, Warren, you haven't mentioned a pond or a brook. In your diligent pursuit of dark stains and green patches, I hope you won't overlook the obvious."

"I am never *obvious*, sweet one. Only infuriating."

With surprising strength for a man so delicate and small-boned, Warren swung

the five-gallon milk can onto his shoulder and proceeded jauntily down the beach.

Carlo said, “My specialty is seafood. Maybe not the kind you’re all used to. Chitons, limpets, mussels, snails, barnacles. I’ll go along shore and see what I find.”

Before starting out, he examined the warehouse of beach debris and selected the yellow-handled screwdriver and a plastic pail with a hole in the bottom. Then, waving and smiling, he went off alone.

Andrew thought, *And now we are four. The Mansfields, Felicia, and I.*

Standing together, Blake and Norma debated what they should do. Search for

edible roots and greens? Try to make fish hooks out of Felicia's hairpins? Weave honeysuckle vines and bracken fern into room dividers for the "dormitory"? It seemed impossible for them to agree.

Andrew, who considered himself nonsubjective—even emotionally detached, when it came to people outside his intimate family circle—caught himself wishing fervently that these two overnice young people would quit sparring and go off on some project together. It gave him a ridiculously poignant satisfaction when they agreed that first Blake would help Norma collect wild foods, and then Norma would help Blake construct green walls

to separate the sleeping areas.

When they had gone, Felicia said drily, “Andy, you’re beaming like Mama at her eldest son’s bar mitzvah.”

“They’re all right, those two. I like them.”

“You sound downright maudlin. For *you*, that is. I thought you never let yourself get involved in other people’s problems.”

Andrew said thoughtfully, “That’s true. I never have. At least, not in their *personal* problems. I think it’s been a way of saving myself for things I consider more important.”

“More important than personal problems?” Felicia’s voice was wistful. “Is that possible?”

She laughed, recovering her poise, and her distance. “Well, I’d say that Blake’s desire to build a wall around their beds is a good sign. I, too, like privacy in the bedroom.”

It was a mistake, a slip of the tongue—a cruel reference he was sure she made carelessly, with no intention of invoking the picture that shot into his mind. Andrew looked down at his hands, thinking that if men were allowed to cry...

“Andy...” Her tremulous voice, the impulsive movement of her hand to his shoulder, told him she had hurt herself, too. “Andy...”

“It doesn’t matter,” he said unsteadily. “I agree that Blake’s idea of bedroom

walls is a good one. But we'll have to wait and see, won't we?" He looked up, directly into Felicia's unhappy, sea-green eyes. "We don't know yet whether he'll build a wall around them—or between them."

"Oh, Andy." Her fingers pressed urgently into the hard shoulder muscle. "I'm so sorry, so desperately sorry."

"It doesn't matter, Felicia," he said quietly. As if they were moved by feelings of their own, his fingers reached out and caressed her cheek. "It was a long time ago. A very long time ago."



The flagpole had been raised, and Diana and Rolf had started off to look for roots and berries on their own.

“What the hell,” Donald muttered, staring jealously after the retreating figures.

They wanted him all right, when he took hold of a dead pine and cracked it off at the roots. And he was an okay guy when he carried boulders to the center of the clearing, and hoisted the tree and planted it in a base of fieldstone. But they didn't want him any longer than that.

Disgruntled, Donald turned and made his way back toward the beach.

He was still in the woods when he saw Felicia. She startled him, moving through the timber like a ghost, in her long white dress with her hair hanging loose and wild. He ducked behind a tree—he didn't know exactly why. If it had

been Dr. Held or Mr. Mansfield, he would have charged through the underbrush and made himself known. But Mrs. Held...

Jesus, he *hated* Mrs. Held, but he still liked to look at her when she didn't know he was looking. Those beautiful big boobs, hanging full inside that thin white dress...

Hiding out on Phoenix had always meant living without a woman, and that was bad enough. But to have three half-naked women running around all day, and sleeping near you at night—Christ, that was driving him crazy. The worst of it was that each was a beaut, in her own way. If he didn't hate Mrs. Held so much, he'd try to make it with her.

What in hell was she doing in the woods alone? Going to meet Carlo? The thought excited him. *That* would be something to see, wouldn't it? The two of them making love—*seeing* it, instead of just hearing it. The idea hit both his pulse and his groin almost as fast as it came into his head. He'd follow, keeping out of sight.

But Mrs. Held didn't act like she was going to meet someone. She moved slowly from bush to bush, examining each one. Looking for something to eat, that was it. Berries, or hazelnuts, or some of those things Diana and Rolf had been telling them about. Damn. She wasn't meeting Carlo, after all.

Still, he watched her, keeping himself

hidden by big trees, while shifting position enough to keep her in sight.

When her skirt caught on a twig, she lifted it, wound it around her waist, and tucked the end inside the folds over her stomach. God, this *was* something to see. She was as good as naked from the waist down! Panty hose did nothing but blur the outlines of her rounded thighs and the dark *V* between her legs. And then she dropped to the ground to examine something. Bent over like that, her white breasts were bare right down to the nipples!

Oh Christ, he thought, *oh Christ*.

She stood up and looked around, still searching for something to eat. *She don't know nothing about wild berries,*

Donald thought smugly. Since his move to the Pacific Northwest, he might not have picked up a lot, but he wasn't near as ignorant as this elegant broad from back East.

When he saw that her attention was drawn to a big-leafed shrub as tall as she was, he wanted to laugh out loud. He knew *that* one. By God, you couldn't hang around the Pacific Northwest without sooner or later meeting up with a devil's club. Every stem was covered with vicious barbs. Take hold of one of them, and your hand would throb with a dozen wounds.

Felicia had seen the brilliant red berries. She was going right up to the big plant. By God, she was reaching out

with both hands, like she was going to hold the stem with one hand and pick berries with the other!

The thought of calling out and warning her flashed across his mind, but just as quickly faded. If he did, she'd know he'd been watching. Besides, it was just an accident he was there.

Dumb—God, she was dumb. *Dumb, dumb, dumb*, he said to himself—and, grinning, he waited for Felicia to grab the devil's club.

“Don't touch that!”

The high-pitched voice exploded right at his ear. Donald froze, too shocked to drop to the ground or to run. Mouth agape, he turned his head. Warren Brock was only a few feet away.

“Felicia, pet, back away from that monster and don’t touch any part of it.” Warren’s voice had returned to normal. “And remember what it looks like, because if you’re going to go gamboling about in the woods, you could run into it again. Donald, you should recognize a devil’s club when you see one.”

Felicia withdrew her hand, doubly startled to hear Warren’s voice and to see Donald only a few yards away. As always, she recovered quickly.

“Thank you, Warren. Thank you very much.” She loosened her skirt and let it fall. “I thought the berries might be edible. I’m so *damned* hungry.”

“So am I, lovey. But let’s leave the food gathering to our more

knowledgeable companions.”

“I’m not ready to give up.” Felicia lifted both arms, pulled her long hair back from her cheeks, and began to braid it into a single plait. “I’ll admit I don’t know anything about wild berries, but I should be able to recognize a hazelnut—and Diana says they grow wild in these islands.”

Finishing her braid, she held the loose end and asked, “You don’t happen to have a rubber band, do you, Warren?”

“A rubber band?” He uttered a wispy laugh. “No, sweet. And I left my hair ribbons at home.”

“Here.” With her free hand, Felicia lifted the hem of her skirt. “Tear off a piece for me, please. About an inch or

two wide.”

“Your *Aldano*? That greedy Italian wouldn’t sell a two-inch strip for less than three hundred dollars... Oh, all *right*, Felicia. As you like, dearie. Here we go.”

Warren knelt delicately and, with hands posturing like a ballerina’s, ripped a strip from the hem of the white silk gown. With a quick twist, he tore off enough of the strip for a hair ribbon, then rolled the remainder into a neat silken pellet and thrust it deftly down the front of her dress. To Donald’s astonishment, she didn’t object or even seem to notice.

“I’m on my way.” Her amused grimace was for Warren alone. Donald was excluded as definitely as if she had

pushed him aside.

The moment she was out of sight, Warren wheeled toward Donald. Like an angry bantam, he glared up into the face of the man strong enough to crush him.

“You cold-blooded, rotten son of a bitch!”

“Hey, watch your mouth, buster. I don’t have to take any shit off you.”

“You were grinning, actually *grinning*. You knew she was going to hurt herself, and you were *enjoying* it!”

“Oh, shut up. What’s it to you? You mind your own business, and I’ll mind mine.”

“Ducky, just *ducky*! That’s what I *intend* to do—especially when I see you backing up to the edge of a cliff.”

Donald lowered his head and scowled into the little man's flushed face. "Listen, you, don't get me riled. I could break you in two, and you know it. You know something else? I hate fags."

Warren's derisive laugh rippled through the shadowy woods. He picked up the milk can, gave Donald a long, knowing look, and—still laughing—walked away.



They had had no breakfast. So, all were back at the beach by the time the sun was overhead, drawn by the hope that the others would have found food and water. But Warren's milk can was empty, and there was nothing to eat but dandelion greens gathered by Norma,

salmonberries picked by Diana and Rolf, and a bucket of strange shellfish Carlo had plucked off the rocks.

“Chinaman’s hats,” Carlo explained, picking up a conical shell no larger around than a quarter. “Limpets. I’ll show you.”

Crooking his forefinger, he scooped the morsel of raw seafood out of the shell, popped it into his mouth, and swallowed it. “Like that,” he said, smiling. “Very good.”

Felicia had already finished her small share of salmonberries. She looked hungrily at the strange food but slowly shook her head. “We’ll do better this afternoon. I can wait.”

Andrew picked at a limpet, rolled it

on his tongue, and with some difficulty, swallowed. It tasted like a particularly salty oyster. His shaggy eyebrows lifted.

“Not bad at all, Carlo. I suppose we could cook them.”

“We could—but in Hawaii, we think it spoils them.”

“Oh, let’s not wait to cook them,” Warren said with his mouth full. “Not until we have more than this.”

The meager meal was over in minutes. As they looked at the empty pail and dry milk can, Donald’s announcement that a signal flag was now flying on Phoenix Island brought almost no response. Food, drink—these needs consumed and distracted them.

They began to talk in a nervous and

disconnected way about all the things they would collect during the afternoon. Now that Felicia was equipped to recognize salmonberries, she was sure she could find another bush. Carlo had discovered a gravelly beach that might yield clams at low tide. Diana and Rolf were going to search for the old Furness farm. One by one, they promised each other they would have plenty to eat when they came back in the evening.

They were still sitting on the beach, their mouths dry and stomachs contracting with hunger, when the two basset hounds, Mike and Lili, came bounding down the slope. Mike was in the lead, carrying something in his mouth. Lili, yelping anxiously, was

making a futile attempt to overtake him.

Mike raced across the sand and came to a sudden halt, a few feet in front of his master. A gray, white-tailed rabbit hung limply from his mouth—the head, with round, staring eyes, flopping on one side of Mike's mouth, and the furry hindquarters on the other. Panting and wagging his tail, Mike looked up at Andrew.

Lili made a quick experimental foray in the direction of the rabbit. Without relaxing his hold on his prize, Mike sounded a low warning growl. Lili backed away and stretched out on the ground. Dropping her head on her front paws, she fixed sad, bloodshot eyes on Mike's mouth.

Donald exclaimed, “Hey, that’s a fresh kill!” He jumped up and approached the dog. “Okay, Mike. Good dog, Mike.”

Mike rolled his eyes upward and, through clenched jaws, growled again, more menacingly than before.

Andrew spoke up. “That’s his, Donald.”

“That’s meat! Fresh meat!”

Andrew said quietly, “Mike knows that.”

“But we could *cook* that rabbit. It’s a good size. It would give us all something solid to chew on.”

Rolf said very quietly, “He hunted for it. *We* can hunt rabbit, too. The best time is dawn. I’ll go out tomorrow morning.”

There was a murmur of agreement from the other men, and then a heavy silence.

Donald looked around the group, blinking uncomprehendingly at their disapproving faces. *What the hell.* Rabbit meat right at their feet, and they didn't have the guts to take it away from a dog.

Scowling, he retreated and sat down on a log. Mike carried his kill to a safer spot and settled down to eat it.

Look at them all, Donald thought angrily. They're staring at the damned hound like the sight of raw meat was putting them in some kind of trance. Staring and drooling.

They were as hungry as he was, he

knew it. Their stomachs were growling as loud as his. How did they get off looking down their noses at him? *Goddamn hypocrites*. If he had taken the rabbit when they weren't looking, and roasted it over the coals and offered them all a piece of it, not one of them would have asked where he got it. Not one.



Blake welcomed the task of gathering firewood. The monotonous physical exercise diverted him from the pain of hunger.

After an hour, he stopped and surveyed the fruits of his labor.

“Curious thing,” he said to Andrew. “That’s nothing but a pile of wood, yet at

this point it looks to me like a pile of gold. I'm almost ashamed how proud I am I collected it—but I feel I've stored up something more valuable than money.”

Andrew smiled. “Well, you're right. It *is* a lot more than driftwood. It's energy.”

Norma looked at him thoughtfully. “That's been your life work, hasn't it, Dr. Held? Energy. Atomic energy.”

“Atomic energy in particular. But I've also had a lot to say about coal, oil, solar energy, and so on. And I've been a little schizophrenic, I guess. On the one hand, I've played Cassandra, foretelling in awesome tones—at least I *hoped* they were awesome—that our entire

industrial system is doomed if our production remains tied to imported oil at ten to fifteen dollars a barrel. But I've also taken the role of Pollyanna, which I prefer. Because I believe there *is* a cure to our ailing economy.”

Felicia said, “*A* cure! Only one? It seems our brilliant chief executive has prescribed at least three. Turn off the lights. Turn off the air conditioner. And don't drive your car.”

“Well, we *do* use too much power.” Norma's voice was primly defensive. “Or I should say, we use power unnecessarily. Don't you agree, Dr. Held?”

“Oh, yes, of course. We should conserve. We've been importing forty

percent of our fuel. We could reduce our fuel consumption by twenty-five percent through conservation alone, and make up the remaining fifteen percent by reopening abandoned oil wells, converting coal into natural gas, and so on. Austerity, self-control—they unite people, if the cause is just. What better common cause than to reduce the level of our self-indulgence?”

Felicia's laugh was faintly derisive. “Just two days on this island of yours has put me distinctly *not* in the mood for self-denial.” With a significant glance in Norma's direction, she added, “And I suspect that ‘doing without’ would hardly be the tie that binds. Forty-eight hours with no comforts whatever have

not made me love my fellow man.”

“But they *have* made you *work* with him,” Andrew said.

“Out of necessity, not desire.”

“The end result is the same. You’re surviving.”

Andrew, with a reassuring smile for Norma, began to walk off—but serious-minded Norma cut off his retreat.

“Dr. Held? You said there is a *solution* to the energy crisis. And that wouldn’t be conservation?”

“Oh, no. That would satisfy our immediate needs. But in the long run, our survival—at least, our survival as a great industrial power—may well depend on what you see right out there.”

He turned and pointed west. “It’s all

around us. Seawater. An almost limitless source of energy. A nation that can put men on the moon can turn seawater into fuel.”

Warren said cheerily, “I *adore* riddles!”

“I don’t.” Felicia’s tone was sharp. “They make me feel inferior. And that makes me feel anxious.”

“Tonight,” Andrew said, “when we’re together around the bonfire, I’ll explain. Right now, it’s back to work.”

“Tonight,” Felicia echoed, frowning as her glance traveled from the beach to the hill above, where they had slept the night before. “We’ll still be here tonight?”

No one answered her question. Like

Andrew, they were all intent on getting back to work.



The freighter was bound for Alaska, cutting a clean, straight line in the smooth sea and making her seventeen knots—and no more. The captain, like Andrew Held, believed in the economical use of oil.

The seaman on watch in the bow narrowed his eyes against the setting sun. He gave himself thirty seconds to decide whether the floating blur off the starboard was really a boat or just an extra-large piece of drift. As he adjusted his binoculars, the dark object came into focus.

The hull of a boat. Wide in the stern,

high in the bow. A commercial fisherman—or as much as was left of it.

Letting the binoculars hang around his neck, he opened the telephone box at his elbow and rang the bridge. “Floating object, sir, one point off the starboard bow.”

In the absence of the captain—who was in his quarters, dipping into the ship’s stores of Scotch—the bridge was being coned by the second mate. He instantly translated “floating object” into “wreckage of a boat,” and that raised the possibility that a person or persons might be inside. The freighter had been at sea and out of reach of the tidal wave, but radio reports ever since had supplied a continuing story of tsunami

disasters.

To check the “floating object,” they would have to change course—and that meant calling the Old Man.

“Hell’s fire!” was the captain’s response to the telephone ring. Looking lovingly at his shot glass, he reached for the phone with his free hand. He listened a moment, then delivered his orders quickly and cleanly: Steer for the object. Alert the lifeboat crew. Pull alongside the derelict. Cut the ship’s engines.

Within minutes, the freighter lay still in the water, and the lifeboat crew, headed by the boatswain, had lowered a lifeboat and was descending the long rope ladder. None of the men bothered talking before they reached the

splintered hull.

“Christ,” exclaimed the engineer. “It’s an old woman. A *dead* old woman, if you ask me.”

A half hour later, Andrew Held’s cook, Mary, had been put to bed in the stateroom intended for the occasional use of the freighter’s wealthy owner. Since that owner had a tendency towards *mal de mer*—as well as a deep-seated repugnance for all things maritime, other than his company’s profit and loss statements—the room was seldom occupied.

“She’s alive, all right.” The first aid man, the freighter’s only medical officer, was comfortable dealing with cuts, bruises, and severe hangovers, but this

old woman baffled him. She was breathing, but something had given her a terrible shellacking. Her clothing was half torn off, her body was covered with bruises and scratches, and a large swelling suggested a monumental blow to the head.

Concussion? Fractured skull? Internal injuries? He really didn't know, and he said so.

The captain nodded. The lifeboat crew had completed the rescue and hoisted the wreckage onto the deck. The first aid man had given the best diagnosis he could. Besides her injuries, this woman was obviously suffering from exposure. Her face, arms, and legs were badly sunburned, and her lips were

cracked and bleeding and rimmed with dry salt.

On their present course, it would be four days before they made port. Should they continue on that course? That would be the economical thing to do, and the Company was all for economy. But this woman was hurt, and they didn't know how badly.

Knowing that the Company would be very touchy if one of its ships docked with a corpse on board—and that the Coast Guard could get downright mean if he didn't make a prompt report of a rescue at sea—the captain hesitated only briefly.

“Radio the Coast Guard.”

Once the message was sent, with a

copy and the time of transmission entered in the ship's log, the captain returned to his quarters. There he refilled his shot glass and sat down to wait for the whirring beat of the Coast Guard chopper.

In the stateroom, Mary moaned, rolling her head to one side—and once more sank into warm, engulfing blackness.

Diana and Rolf came out of the woods into the clearing and, as if by agreement, stopped.

The old farm they'd been seeking lay before them—but there wasn't much left to see. A pile of rotting logs overgrown with blackberry brambles and wild roses—that would be the farmhouse. Not far beyond it, some sort of barn or shed had disintegrated, scattering rough timbers like jackstraws. Grass, ferns, and wild currant had repossessed the clearing, almost smothering even the huge stumps that some early Furness, long since dead, hadn't been able to burn or pull while clearing the land.

Diana imagined that, if she looked hard enough, the soft summer haze would evaporate like mist and reveal the last Furness farmer as he carried a bucket to the cow barn, or the last Furness woman as she hung clothes on the line. And that, if she listened, listened deeply, she would hear voices—a woman calling to her child, a man shouting *Gee!* and *Haw!* as he guided his draft horse along the single furrow...

“Seeing ghosts?”

She looked up, and knew Rolf had been watching her. Laughing, she made a joke out of rubbing her eyes with her knuckles. “Have they gone?” she asked, keeping her eyes closed.

“No, I think they live here all the time.

But they aren't looking.”

Rolf bent his head, and his lips touched hers in a gentle and lingering kiss.

A tremor went through her. It was a *good* feeling—a free, happy feeling of being excited and comforted at the same time. And it had felt good also to lie innocently in his arms, that first night on Phoenix, while the waves thundered on the beach below. But last night she had retreated to her separate bed, pretending not to see the question in Rolf's eyes.

Why? How could she want him so badly—like this kiss, which she had half expected, or to be honest about it, half asked for—and still have inside her a secret, fearful self, who screamed in

panic at the thought of being held and uncovered and seen and touched?

Diana turned her head, rested her forehead against his shoulder, and once more closed her eyes. When Rolf's arms went around her, she felt enclosed but not frightened. Somewhere in the peaceful clearing, a meadowlark sang.

Against her ear, Rolf said, "Diana, I want to tell you something. Look at me."

She shook her head against him. "I don't want to move."

"All right. I'll tell you anyway. I love you. You're my girl—and someday, you'll *be* my girl, all the way."

She squeezed her eyes closed and fought the impulse to pull free of him and run. He continued to hold her, but his

arms made no demands, and one hand gently stroked the back of her head.

“You don’t have to be scared of me, Diana. You don’t have to be scared of anything we do together. Someday we *will* make love, but it won’t be until *you* want it as much as I do.”

In a choked voice, she whispered, “I love you, too.”

He laughed softly. “Oh, I know that, or I wouldn’t be talking like this.”

In her surprise, she lifted her head and looked into his face.

“You’re funny-looking,” he said. “Your eyes are too big, and they’re gray or purple or purple-gray—and what kind of color is that for eyes? Besides, you’ve got those funny-looking long

eyelashes, and your nose is too short, and it's covered all over with freckles.”

In mock anger, she raised a small brown fist. He caught it, and at the same time jumped to the side so she lost her balance. Together they fell to the ground in a squirming tangle of arms and legs.

They lay in the long grass, half-winded, laughing. The old fear stirred but quickly subsided, for Rolf made no attempt to touch her any more, other than to reach out and hold her hand.

Someday, he had said, they would really make love, but not until *she* wanted it as much as *he* did. Silently, Diana added her own qualification:

Not until the memory of Julie's husband stops scaring me and turning

me cold.



His name was Bud. “Bud,” he explained, “because I’m your buddy—just like a brother.”

Julie, her sister, was carrying a baby, and the doctor had said that, with her history of miscarriage, she ought to spend most of the seventh month in bed. Their mother had left Wolf years before—not even their father or grandmother knew where she was—so Julie came to the Lindgren farm to stay with Diana and their father and Minnie Lindgren. Bud came over from the mainland every weekend.

It had been a Saturday—a cold, rainy Saturday—when, sometime late at night,

Diana was awakened by the pressure of a hand clamped over her mouth. She tried to turn her head, and the pressure increased. She pulled her hands free of the bedclothes and struck at the arm. Another hand grabbed her right wrist, while the dark body above her dropped to pin her left arm to her side.

Bud's voice sounded low and rough. "Don't fight me, little girl. Just take it easy. I'm Bud, your buddy-buddy, remember?"

Diana's attic bedroom was wedged under the slanted roof. Raindrops echoed her frightened pulse.

"You're fifteen, sweetie. You're a big girl now—I been noticing that. Look what we got here." His hand slid inside

her nightgown and settled over her breast. While his thumb and forefinger played with the nipple, he whispered, “That feel good, Diana? Don’t that feel good?”

She struggled against his weight, against the rough palm clamped so tightly across her mouth.

“Don’t do that, Diana. I’m not going to hurt you. I’m going to make you feel *good*, sweetie.” In the darkness, he was a weighted shadow, crushing the breath out of her, and his voice was a pleading whisper. “I promise you, it won’t hurt—only a little bit. Promise you won’t yell and I’ll take my hand away. You don’t want to yell, anyway. You know how sick your sister is.”

The thick voice went on, painting pictures of the terrible things that would happen to Julie if she got upset. She would bleed, she would lose the baby, she would die. For two weeks, Diana had seen how pale and weak her sister was, and how scared of losing her baby. With all that, Diana was too frightened now to doubt what Bud said.

Slowly, Bud removed the hand that covered her mouth. Now she was free to cry out. But she didn't.

“Please go away, please,” she begged him. “Leave me alone, please.”

“In a little bit, sweetie. In a little bit.”

He pulled the bedclothes down to her waist, and the cold black air washed over her breasts. He said hoarsely, “No

one ever touched you before, did they? Sweet little virgin baby.”

Desperately, she jerked one hand free and tried to hit him. He caught and held it.

“I told you, don’t do that. Remember your sister. Remember what you would do to Julie.”

She lay back, defeated, hot tears stinging her eyes.

“That’s a good girl. Sweet little girl. Someday, somebody’s going to give it to you. I’m just going to make it easier for them. I’m going to fix that sweet little virginity of yours.”

That’s when the worst part began. With his body weight and one hand, he held her fast, while his second hand

moved under the covers and slid along her belly. The hand found the warm and secret place, and pressed down hard on the patch of soft, curly hair.

He whispered, “There... there... there...” Each time he said it, his strong finger entered her and, with each stabbing motion, pushed a little deeper—until the words were flooded out of her mind by pain.

At last he said, “Ah,” like a long sigh, and stopped. Slowly, he took his hand away.

“Don’t forget, nobody’s to know about this but you and me. But *you* know, sweet Diana. I got into you, in a way.”

He stood up and crossed the room. She heard the door close softly behind

him.

Diana lay alone in the dark, fear and shame hitting her in convulsive waves. The only coherent thought she could pull from the turmoil was that her sister, Julie, must never know. And in the morning, the same resolution came back to her with first consciousness.

Her whole body ached, and her arms were sore, but she concealed it from the shrewd eyes of her grandmother. She even managed to wash the blood from her bedsheets when no one would see.



This morning, raising the flagpole and flying a tablecloth flag had seemed of vital importance to Rolf and Diana—but now that they had located the old

Furness farm, they no longer searched the sky for Coast Guard helicopters. Their eyes were on the ground. Hunger and thirst had pushed rescue from their minds.

Somewhere, the Furness family had drawn water from a well, or dipped it at a spring. Somewhere, they must have planted an orchard. Grain and corn had once grown in this stump-cluttered clearing, and a vegetable garden would have been located near the house. And even if no trace could be found of the many growing things they had cultivated here, at least wild berries and edible weeds would have thrived wherever heavy timber had been cut, opening the land to the sun.

Methodically, Diana and Rolf began their hunt.

Three kinds of fruit grew all around them: The pinkish-orange globes of wild rose hips; the dusty purple clusters of wild currants on their bushes; and the large blackberries on vines that nearly enveloped the old stumps. They would pick these later, on their way back to camp. For now, it was more important to explore beyond the clearing, in order to get a more thorough idea of the sources of food and water on this end of the island.

Their first discovery was a second clearing, hidden from the first by a grove of alder that fifty years of undergrowth had made into an effective screen. As

soon as they passed through the woods, the land began a gradual slope downward, then rose again at the far side of the meadow, forming a natural bowl at the bottom.

“Look, oh, look!” exclaimed Diana when they saw what lay in that bowl.

A pond! A dark, still pond, rimmed by cattails and skunk cabbage, and overgrown in some places by floating clusters of yellow pond lilies. Water! Muddy, streaked by green scum, but water. And on the other side of this miniature lake—rising from a field of wild grasses and fireweed stalks—a dozen gnarled apple trees.

“Let’s go!” shouted Diana.

They ran down the sloping field,

Diana in the lead with her long hair streaming and her bare arms lifting and dipping like the wings of a glider.

“Hey, we’re not supposed to run,” Rolf called. “Dr. Held told us not to use up our energy.”

But he was right behind her, and right beside her when they both reached the edge of the pond and dropped to their knees. With short, skimming motions of both hands, they cleared away the bright green growth that lay on the surface of the water, then cupped their hands together and without hesitation scooped the dark water into their mouths. Then they fell back on their buttocks with legs stretched straight out and laughed, with brownish trickles of water still rolling

down their chins.

Diana's eyes were bright with amusement. "It smells bad. I can just see Mrs. Held..."

Rolf smiled. "It smells muddy but tastes wet—and that's good enough."

He reached across the bank to a clump of skunk cabbage and pulled off one of the large, shiny leaves. In one swift motion, he rolled the leaf into a cone-shaped cup, dipped it into the pond, and held it up to Diana's mouth.

"Have another drink, Swinomish-style."



Rolf remembered a great deal that some of the older coastal Indians had said about the uses of wild plants and trees.

Just the one plant at his feet, the rank but plentiful skunk cabbage, was useful as a vegetable, as material for lining berry baskets, and as medicine—for the cure of carbuncles, to purify the blood, and to ease childbirth.

Diana's knowledge of wild foods had come from her frugal grandmother, who had also taught her the first lesson in gathering nature's bounty: to recognize what would poison her.

They knew it would not take long for the two of them to gather enough roots and berries to provide several meals for the whole group. In addition, the old orchard offered them a surprisingly bountiful crop of small, hard green apples. But the problem was how to

carry their harvest across fields without paths and through woods without trails, and do it with virtually no containers.

From the junk pile—which was already being called the “warehouse”—they had picked out a man’s shirt, a plastic bucket with no handle, and a bundle of fishnet. With these, and with Rolf’s shirt, they improvised their packs.

By twisting green honeysuckle vines, Rolf fashioned a kind of rope. He wrapped this tightly around the rim of the pail as reinforcement, then looped it across the top as a handle. This was for carrying pond water. If it held, the pail would transport as much as needed until they could return the next day with the five-gallon milk can.

Diana folded the fishnet into several thicknesses, so that nothing would fall through the holes. Then she picked apples to put into it, leaving enough room for half a dozen pond lilies she harvested as well. The lily rootstalks, she knew, could be roasted, and the green seed pods could be sliced for salad.

Rolf waded into the pond and brought out several skunk cabbages, which he tied up in his shirt and hung at his belt. In one hand he picked up the pail of water, in the other the fishnet sack of apples and pond lilies, and started up the slope toward the farm.

Back at the old farmhouse, Rolf rested while Diana piled blackberries and

currants on the extra shirt, separating the layers of fruit with mustard greens.

“How about those over there, at the edge of the clearing?” Rolf pointed to a tall bush covered with clusters of tiny red berries.

Diana shook her head. “My grandmother said never to eat them. Some people they don’t hurt, but others they make deathly sick—and she said there wasn’t much profit in finding out which kind I am.”

“Too bad,” said Rolf. “They *look* good.”

Diana gathered the edges of the shirt, forming it into a kind of sack, then picked it up with its load of berries. With a smile for one another, they turned

south and began the long trek back to camp.

By the time she reached the clearing, Felicia was desperate. Mouth dry and head throbbing, she was obsessed with finding something to eat.

All afternoon, she had been thinking of favorite dishes. *Filet of sole with green grapes. Breast of chicken amandine. Soft-shell crabs. Asparagus with hollandaise...*

At first she had tried to blot out such thoughts, for they made her even hungrier. But as the hours passed, her mind reached out in spite of her and enveloped the succulent images, as greedily as a carnivorous plant closing on a particularly fat fly.

How long had it been since her encounter with Warren and that beast, Campbell? How long had she been struggling against underbrush and falling over logs? For two hours at least, perhaps longer.

But if she had finally reached the old Furness farm, it was worth it. Diana and Rolf had said, if they could only locate the farm, that was their best bet for finding food and water. And here was an open field—a broad field dotted with charred stumps, and sprouting all kinds of unrecognizable ferns and weeds and vines. There, in a clump of brambles and tall grass, was a pile of logs and the remnant of a wall.

Yes, surely, she had found the Furness

farm. Now, to search.

But search for what? Even the few “natural foods” she had experimented with had come to her from a store, so dried, toasted, crumbled, and ground that she could not have guessed what the product looked like as a growing thing.

As she hesitated at the edge of the clearing, a bird flew by and settled on the branch of a large, dark-leafed bush.

Berries! The bush was covered with clusters of red berries. Like the dove who appeared to Noah, the little gray and black bird had brought her a message. Moreover, he plucked a berry and flew off with it—so, it was obviously edible.

Picking up her long skirt, Felicia ran

across the field and raked her fingers through a bright cluster so the berries fell into her palm. She put four or five into her mouth, chewed, and swallowed, once more reassuring herself that they could not be poisonous if a bird had taken any. They were seedy and they were tasteless, but they weren't bitter—and that, surely, was another good sign. Something to eat, something to ease the cramp of hunger...

All restraint was gone as Felicia reached out with both hands and, in feverish haste, pulled the berries off their stems and pushed them into her mouth.

While she was eating, she thought of the others. They might not have been as

lucky as she in finding something to eat.

She should just pick the berries and carry them back to camp. Carlo had found those strange little shellfish, Norma had collected dandelion greens, Diana had picked salmonberries, and they had brought it all back. In just a moment, she would stop eating and begin to harvest the remaining berries to take back for the others. That's what she had intended when she took along a rusty coffee can from the warehouse.

In just a moment, after she had eaten just a little more...

But if there was *this* bush, wouldn't there be others? She hadn't really explored. She would find another bush and fill the coffee can before she

returned to camp. In any case, why had she been so naive as to assume that Carlo had shared *all* the shellfish he found, or that Diana hadn't eaten more salmonberries than she brought back for the rest of them?

Sauve-qui-peut, Felicia said to herself, filling her mouth and reaching for more.

The coffee can was too small, anyway. What little it would hold wouldn't be worth dividing. The sensible thing was to eat all these berries now, then come back tomorrow with a larger container and look for another bush.



Their meal that evening was primitive.

But for people suffering hunger for the first time in their lives, filling the stomach was deeply satisfying.

Carlo had found an abundant supply of small white clams. On seeing them, Warren sang out merrily, “Ah, the *pièce de résistance!*” for he had been studying with obvious distaste the produce collected by Rolf and Diana. “Gorgeous, with *lots* of melted butter.”

For the first time, Norma was not offended by Warren’s deliberately ridiculous postures. She looked his way and smiled.

“I was just thinking,” she said, “how strange it is that, even when I’m grateful to have something to eat—anything *at all* to eat—I’m so terribly conscious of

what we don't have. No butter for the clams. No salt for the vegetables. No sugar for the berries. No spices or oils or dairy products. I'm ashamed of myself."

Warren's bleached eyebrows lifted. "Oh, tsk! *Ashamed*. Isn't it enough to cope with your disadvantaged digestive system without trying to appease your Puritan conscience at the same time?"

Norma's precise features stiffened for an instant, and then relaxed into the same moody half-smile.

"One of my Puritan mother's lessons should be a help right now, not a burden. I had to eat whatever was served—and whenever I resisted, she said, 'You don't have to like it. You just have to eat

it.””

“My *dear*, how *repressive*. Didn’t you ever rebel and simply throw your food on the floor?”

“Never,” Norma said wistfully.
“Never...”

Without being asked, Carlo, Diana, and Rolf had taken charge of preparing the food. High on the beach, they dug a pit about two feet across, then covered the bottom with small stones they had heated in the bonfire. On top of these, they arranged layers of seaweed that Rolf called *dulse*, then the clams, then dandelion greens, and continued alternating layers of seaweed, clams, and greens, until the hole was packed. A top layer of heated stones put a lid on the

cooking pot.

While the contents steamed, the three cooks turned their attention to the rest of the meal.

“Skunk cabbage!” Warren shrugged elaborately and turned his head. “Oh, well, I’ll eat it—if I don’t have to see you do whatever you’re going to do to it.”

Diana broke the plant apart and set aside the small inside leaves. “It’s the oil that makes it smell skunky,” she explained. “After I’ve boiled these tender leaves in three waters, they’ll taste like regular cabbage.”

“Well, dear, that’s not exactly *gourmet*,” Warren observed. “But at this point, I’d eat the skunk too, if I didn’t

have to catch him.”

“Skunks are edible,” Rolf said. “But there aren’t any in these islands.”

He was sitting cross-legged on the ground, with a board across his knees and Donald’s jackknife in his hand. Using the board as a chopping block, he cut the stems and seed pods of the yellow pond lilies until they looked like cole slaw. Then he scraped the yellow-green bits into a badly cracked mixing bowl. To this green salad, he added a handful of finely shredded dulse.

“For flavor,” he said. “But it’s also full of vitamins and minerals.”

Carlo wrapped skunk cabbage roots in thick green streamers of kelp and buried them in the hot ashes. While they

baked, he cut a dozen green sticks, sharpened each at one end, and on that point impaled a small, hard apple. Each stick was thrust into the sand, as close to the heat as possible without burning the fruit.

“If they’re halfway cooked,” Carlo explained, “they’ll be softer and sweeter.”

The blackberries and wild currants needed no treatment. Or rather, what they needed, as Warren pointed out, was sugar and cream.

“Oh, well,” he chirped, his large, round eyes moving appreciatively from the roasting apples, to the bowl of salad, to the boiling cabbage. “Sugar and cream is another *do-without*.”

“It’s a *do-without* situation,” Norma responded—and then the thin line of her mouth softened as she giggled. It was a totally spontaneous, childlike giggle, and so unlike his reserved and proper wife that Blake turned and stared.

She met his startled look and giggled again. “Think of it, Blake—of everything we can *do without*. And *you’re* the man they talk about in those advertisements that say, ‘For the Man Who Has Everything.’”

“It *is* funny,” he agreed uncertainly, wanting to join in the nonsense but unsure of himself. “I guess, when we eat, we’ll *do without* plates and *do without* forks.”

“There you go!” she said gaily.

Blake, still perplexed but trying hard, slowly began to smile.

To be playful, even briefly, was so unlike Blake that Andrew could not repress a responsive chuckle. Rubbing his chin, which already bristled with a salt-and-pepper stubble of beard, he thought of a *do-without* of his own—but decided not to offer it. A reference to their lack of razors would only remind Blake that he hadn't shaved for two days—and that would undoubtedly distress such a fastidious person, even more than it would to go hungry.

We may have some fine beards around this campfire, Andrew mused, before a rescue team gets around to Phoenix Island.



During dinner, Felicia ate very little. The berries she had eaten earlier had not satisfied her hunger, but they seemed to have taken away her appetite.

They were eating on thick outer leaves of the skunk cabbage, supported by boards—and when Diana offered her a “plate,” Felicia accepted it with every intention of dipping into the strange buffet with her fingers, just as the others were doing. Yet even the steamed clams—which were a familiar food and one she had always been fond of—filled her with revulsion. She was hungry but she wasn’t. Her stomach cried for food, but an unpleasant tightness gripped her throat, and swallowing was difficult.

She tried a bite of apple, and it was no better.

Felicia looked around surreptitiously. Had anyone noticed she wasn't eating? No, they were focused on the contents of their own plates.

She sat among them, steadying her plate with both hands, and wondered how she could explain why she wasn't hungry. Because she had filled up on berries—no, she certainly wasn't going to tell them that. Thank God that, for the moment at least, no explanation was necessary.

But then Diana looked at her curiously, as if to ask what was wrong. Felicia shook her head.

“Are you all right?” asked Diana.

Felicia nodded. She longed to put down her food and leave the circle, but that would attract attention.

“Would you like something more?”

Diana’s concern irritated her. “No, no!” Felicia snapped. “I have always been a slow eater.”

For a moment, Diana’s thoughtful eyes lingered on her, and then the girl looked down at her own plate and continued eating.

Slowly, the gripping sensation in her throat spread to her stomach. Felicia bore it in silence until the painful churning settled in a lump inside her rib cage. As inconspicuously as she could, she set her plate down on the sand and leaned forward, both arms crossed over

her stomach to press against the pain.

Now she had attracted Andrew's attention, as well as Diana's. Though her hands felt icy and her face burned, she tried to ignore them both.

Andrew was standing over her. "Felicia, are you ill?"

She shook her head violently. But she *was*, of course. Ill, terribly ill, and obviously from eating all those berries.

"I think you are." He sat on the log beside her, gently touched her forehead, and pressed his fingers against her wrist. At his signal, Diana crossed the circle and dropped to the ground at Felicia's feet.

"Her pulse seems fast," Andrew said quietly. "Are you sure that nothing

we've eaten is poisonous?"

"I'm sure. And besides," said Diana, pointing to Felicia's plate, "it can't be anything we've had for dinner. She's hardly touched it."

A half hour earlier, Felicia would have ordered them to mind their own business. But now, her agonized cramping and the secret knowledge of its cause were frightening her. With each jolt of pain, the fear grew. Instead of pushing Andrew's hand away, she clutched it.

"What *i s* it, Felicia?" he begged, putting his arm around her. "You're shaking. Your hands are cold and the palms are damp. Where *were* you this afternoon? What happened?"

She meant to whisper, but her voice got caught in a wave of nausea. "Poisoned!" It came out in such a loud, agonized cry that everyone around the campfire abandoned their plates and closed in around her. "I ate some berries. They must have been poisonous!"

An excited murmur went through the group. Warren cried, "Oh my God, I *knew* it. We'll all be dead by nightfall."

"Take it easy." Carlo put a firm hand on Warren's arm and led him across the beach. "Sit down and stay here. There's nothing wrong with you, or any of the rest of us, except Mrs. Held."

Diana stood up. "Please," she said quietly. The men fell back, but Norma

remained, and Diana turned to her as if they both understood she would. “What do you think, Mrs. Mansfield?”

“We should induce vomiting. Isn’t that what *you’d* do?”

“Yes. As quickly as we can.”

Felicia moaned. “Vomit? Throw up, in front of all these people?”

In desperation, she pulled free of her husband’s supporting arms and tried to stand. Her legs buckled, and she fell to the ground. Clutching at the log, she made a futile attempt to pull herself up, and then Andrew was on his knees beside her, helping her.

Even as the fear and pain attacked her in spasms—and even as her helplessness grew as clear to her as the hammering of

her heart—Felicia fought against the prospect of brutal exposure from emptying her stomach in the presence of others.

“Let me go!” she sobbed—though without Andrew’s arms she would have slipped to the ground. “Away from here! I can’t vomit! I won’t vomit! Leave me alone!”

Diana called out, “Rolf, would you stir up the fire?”

Dimly, through half-closed eyes, Felicia watched Diana’s slender but strangely authoritative figure. She moved quickly, dipping the stainless steel bowl into the bay, carrying the bowl to the fire, setting it over the brightest flame.

Felicia was aware of Norma lifting

the skirt of her yellow dinner dress to blot Felicia's forehead and cheeks, aware of the slippery, cold moisture oozing from her pores and collecting between her breasts, aware that Carlo had somehow rounded up the others and drawn them to the far end of the beach. She saw everything through a mist, and knew she must be crying.

And now Diana was dipping one finger into the bowl of water. Now she was picking up the bowl and bringing it to her and telling her to drink from it. Felicia's last resistance was a weak attempt to turn her head away—and then she gave up, and Diana was holding the bowl to her mouth.

It all blurred together after that. The

taste of the salt water; the uncontrollable spasms of her stomach as it reacted to the lukewarm liquid; the tears streaming from her eyes so that she could not see but only feel that Norma was holding her head down and that Diana was in front of her with the empty bowl in her hands. Her head was throbbing as if it would burst by the time the crescendo of contractions reached its awful climax. She opened her mouth and let the gaseous, evil-smelling contents of her stomach pour out into the bowl.

By then, she had lost all control. She surrendered herself to her body and to all the ugliness it was visiting on her and, gasping, prayed for the agony to end. Andrew was speaking to her, but

she did not understand the words. Norma and Diana were close, but she could not make out their faces.

At last, it stopped. There was an ache under her ribs, but it was quiet pain, and her body was still. Andrew was wiping her face with a warm cloth. Everyone else, even Norma and Diana, had disappeared.

Felicia leaned against him, too exhausted even to cry.

“You’ll be fine.” Andrew’s fingers, awkward but gentle, brushed her hair back from her face. “Strange, isn’t it, that not one of us is a comb carrier. Nine persons, and no one with a comb in his pocket. Tomorrow we’ll have to see what we can do about that. I’ll bet on

Rolf knowing what Indians did before they could buy combs at a dime store.”

“Oh, Andy, what a disgusting sight I must have made.”

Andrew chuckled. “My dear, none of us saw anything we haven’t seen before, or won’t see again.”

“Awful, awful.”

“I know,” he said soothingly. “I understand your feelings. The queen has no legs, neither does she vomit.”

Felicia laughed weakly. “Exactly. And the queen got her comeuppance.”

“Never mind. You didn’t do it in the grand ballroom of the Shoreham Hotel. And here on Phoenix, we’re a *do-without* society, remember?”

“As in ‘*do without pride*’?”

“Oh, no, not at all. Just *that* kind of pride—the kind that makes you too good to be human.”

Felicia sighed. “Don’t preach, Andy. I *am* human.”

Andrew’s arm squeezed her affectionately. “I think I am, too. But I’m not sure. Being human—how does it feel?”

Weak and aching though she was, Felicia lifted her head and looked into her husband’s steady blue eyes.

“Humble,” she said softly. “Terribly, terribly humble.”



At Andrew’s request, they collected around the beach fire. The waning moon was hidden by a misty overcast;

darkness enclosed them. They drew together instinctively, sitting nearer to one another than they had in daylight.

Andrew glanced around the circle of faces turned so gratefully toward the orange glow of the fire.

“I know how tired you are, but I think we’ll all rest better if we’ve agreed on definite plans for tomorrow. In fact, I wonder if we shouldn’t meet together *every evening*.”

“Whatever for?” Felicia murmured wearily.

“To exchange ideas. To ask questions. To share.”

“Coo!” Warren said weakly. “That sounds like the minister I had to listen to every Sunday. He was always asking to

share. ‘I want to *share* this thought with you,’ or, ‘Let us *share* this moment.’ He had a puffy face and buck teeth and a nervous tic in his right eye. I didn’t know what else he had, but whatever it was, I didn’t want to *share* it.”

Andrew smiled. “You may not *want* to share, Warren, but the fact is, it’s not something you can avoid. We have *shared* a disaster. For two days, we’ve *shared* the experience of finding food and water. *Sharing* may be an offensively ministerial word to you, but in our present circumstances, any one of us, on our own, would perish. As a *community*, we *may* survive.”

Blake said uneasily, “You make it sound rather desperate, Dr. Held.

Actually, some sort of search party is bound to discover us long before it's a question of survival. We may have to wait a little, of course. Two, three days. Perhaps a week."

"And while we wait?" Andrew's bushy eyebrows came together in a thoughtful frown. "I worry about that word *wait*. I have seen our country wait, instead of planning ahead. Wait to negotiate for disarmament until the world is committed to an arms race. Wait until the water is poisoned with industrial waste, and the air is thick with smog, and we have too many people and not enough fuel. Admittedly, two hundred million persons can survive a long time without anticipating the future.

But on Phoenix Island, we are nine. I fear for us, if we do not plan ahead.”

“But haven’t we already?” Blake asked. “We decided to keep a signal fire going. We erected a flagpole so we can fly a distress sign. What more could we do?”

“You are still speaking of rescue. I’m talking about *living*—and for that, we can’t count on anyone but ourselves. There are nine of us. We have different skills. We’ve got to use them.”

Norma said thoughtfully, “Some skills are more practical than others. I mean, I do think it’s far-fetched to be talking about survival—as Blake says, it won’t come to that. But if it did, Donald would be better off than any of us. He’s the

strongest. He's used to working with his hands." She shrugged. "And he's got the jackknife."

For a moment, Donald's battered face softened into a grin of pleasure. But as his eyes moved to Andrew, the pleased look disappeared. He said soberly, "Well, yeah, I got a knife. But I don't know how to organize nothing. I never been a foreman or a boss. I ain't no leader, like Dr. Held."

It was the first time Andrew's leadership had been acknowledged out loud. He said tentatively, "We *do* need a leader, simply because we need some degree of organization. But I may not be the one you want. Rolf, for example, knows more about living outdoors than

do all the rest of us put together.”

Rolf's smile showed white teeth under his full black mustache. “That doesn't make me a leader, Dr. Held. You *think* faster than all the rest of us put together. That's what counts.”

There was a general murmur of assent.

“All right, I'll take charge, *pro tempore*—on the understanding that I can be deposed by majority vote.” Andrew's eyes twinkled humorously as he added, “As my oath of office, I'll adopt this precept: ‘Leaders always follow where their followers lead them.’ But I will not,” he said smiling, “go so far as Mahatma Gandhi. As I recall, he once said, ‘There go my followers; I must

hasten to catch up to them, for I am their leader.””

Smiles and nods of agreement seemed to close that discussion.

Andrew continued. “Well, then, we’ll meet regularly every night, and everyone will be given an opportunity to speak. I stipulate *regularly* for a reason. Some of you may find it hard to express yourselves, and you’d hesitate to call a special meeting when you have something to say. By establishing a nightly routine, we create a system that spares us a daily decision as to whether we ought to meet—and one that gives all of us, whether shy or aggressive, an equal chance to speak out.”

He paused. “Well?”

Norma was the first to speak. “I’d like to suggest two rules I think we should follow. Concerning what we eat.”

They listened attentively as she documented her case. Tomorrow, they would be hunting for food just as they had today. Since most of them knew little or nothing about what they might find, there were two mistakes they were likely to make—one was to eat something poisonous, the other was to overlook something edible.

Both mistakes could be avoided, if they made two simple rules and followed them conscientiously. First, bring everything back to camp. Second, subject every questionable berry or root or plant to the six-bite test.

“I’m no expert at hunting wild mushrooms,” Norma admitted with a small, self-deprecating smile. “They aren’t abundant in the East Sixties. But my friend Lucy is an amateur mycologist, so I’ve learned a little from her.

“Whenever Lucy picks mushrooms she hasn’t identified previously, she goes through a six-bite test. That is, she cooks one of the mushrooms and eats one bite every hour for six hours. If no symptoms develop by the end of that time, she knows the mushroom is edible. We could use the same test on other wild plants and berries, too.”

Felicia said, “Aren’t there some mushrooms so poisonous you should never take even a bite?”

“That’s true,” agreed Norma. “But those are well known, and Lucy taught me to recognize them.”

Norma’s rules were quickly agreed to. But on a proposal put forth by Blake, the group was divided.

“This morning, when we saw the Coast Guard helicopter fly away, we talked about setting up watches on the beach to keep the fire going overnight. I think we should do that tonight.”

The line of division was instantly clear. Those who knew the Outer Islands, Andrew observed, considered Blake naive. No search planes or ships would be roaming around Phoenix at night. But the Mansfields, Felicia, and, to a lesser extent, Warren were still

unable to grasp the fact that they were beyond the jurisdiction of a social body duly constituted to account for all its members (as well as to number, fingerprint, list, photograph, and catalog them). One side had faith in a signal fire, and the other thought it a silly waste of firewood.

Only Donald had nothing to say for or against Blake's proposal. If they were stranded for any length of time, Andrew decided, he ought to devote some thought to the big man's motivations. But the issue at hand was immediate and must be settled before they climbed the hill to the dormitory.

"It isn't possible for all of us to agree on every issue," Andrew said, breaking

into the discussion, “and it isn’t necessary. We can decide things by majority vote, if you like—though, personally, I think that method is dangerously simplistic. Even if the vote were eight against one, the sole dissident might know more about the subject than the other eight.”

Rolf’s low voice dispelled the last shred of disagreement. “I think we should keep the fire going because *some* of us want to. It doesn’t matter to me how many do. I’ll keep watch tonight. Someone else can do it tomorrow.”

Blake blinked rapidly. “Well, of course, the point is, we’re hoping we won’t *need* to do it tomorrow night, right? In any case, let’s take our turns on

the beach. Three-hour watches—that would be about right, wouldn't it?"

Looking around the circle, Andrew guessed they had all picked up Rolf's implication that they wouldn't be rescued that soon, and Blake's assumption that they would be. But no one wanted to pursue the subject.

It was agreed that Rolf, Carlo, and Blake would be on duty tonight. Andrew broke a stick into three pieces of varying lengths, and they drew. Blake pulled the shortest and got the ten-to-one shift, Carlo would watch from one to four, and Rolf from four to seven.



They lingered by the bonfire, sharing an unspoken reluctance to leave the warmth

and light. At length, Norma broke the silence.

“Was it only this afternoon that you were talking about the energy crisis, Dr. Held?”

Felicia said wearily, “Only this afternoon. It’s been a long day.”

“The riddle!” Warren chirped. “You were going to tell us the answer to the riddle. Seawater into fuel. How? Or should I say, what?”

As he had that afternoon, Andrew gestured toward the open sea. “The *what* is all around us. Deuterium. An almost limitless source of energy.”

“Deuterium?” Norma asked.

“Yes. Strange word, isn’t it? But it should be as much a part of the layman’s

everyday vocabulary as *gasoline* or *vitamins* or *apple pie*. It's a heavy form of hydrogen. An ideal fuel for thermonuclear fusion. A single cubic meter of seawater—or two hundred and sixty-four gallons—contains enough deuterium to provide the heating equivalent of fifteen hundred barrels of crude oil.”

He paused and rubbed his stubble-covered chin. “Think of it! That water, lapping almost at our feet, could supply *billions* of times more energy than all the oil deposits in the world.”

“But the waste material? The pollution?” Norma’s polite self-control was a poor cover for the anxiety that Andrew’s statement so obviously had

aroused. “Radioactive material is deadly, isn’t it? Maybe you can convert seawater into deuterium, but wouldn’t the conversion process be terribly dangerous?”

“That’s just it,” Andrew responded. “It wouldn’t. You’re thinking of nuclear power plants as they exist today. They *do* produce radioactive waste. They use uranium or plutonium, and the waste is indeed highly dangerous. But the waste from a thermonuclear fusion power plant would be helium—and that’s harmless enough that we use it to blow up balloons for our children.

“No, I assure you, Mrs. Mansfield, I am as concerned about safety as you are. I am as opposed to pollution as you are.

That's precisely my reason for urging an all-out program for utilization of deuterium. It's clean energy, and it's safe. And it could free us once and for all from the ransom we have been paying to foreign governments."

Andrew paused, and in a much softer voice said, "Forgive me, Mrs. Mansfield. You didn't ask for a lecture." He turned to Felicia. "You're very tired, I know. The watches have been set up. The signal fire will blaze all night. I think everyone but the keeper of the flame should try to get some sleep."

Felicia sighed. "I suppose so. But I don't mind your lectures, Andy. On the contrary, I'm pleased to get a glimpse

into your mind. You haven't always been so... so communicative." She stood up. "But I'll be on my way up the hill. No, I don't need a torch. It isn't really dark," she said, starting off.

Andrew nodded at Blake. "You're taking the first shift? Ah, fine. And you've got a wristwatch." With that, he too said good night, and limped across the beach toward the hill.

In a few minutes, all but Blake had followed suit. He sat alone by the fire, looking out to sea—awaiting the nocturnal rescuers who must surely be on their way.



It was midnight, and normally the skipper of the Russian trawler would

have been enjoying a sound sleep, induced by his native vodka and enhanced by visions of the fine catch they would make when they reached a new fishing ground the next day. But he was worried, and therefore disinclined to put his head down on a pillow and lose hold of his situation.

Not that he expected trouble—even though, under the new agreement, he was on the wrong side of the international boundary. The Americans couldn't possibly patrol their entire expanded offshore territory, and so far, his boat had moved through the darkness on a black and empty sea.

He was really more concerned about American fishermen than about the

American Coast Guard. The latter would take him and his boat into custody. But commercial fishing boats—ah, that was a different matter. Several Russian trawlers had been chased, and he had heard bloody details about one the Americans overtook.

And to whom could his countrymen complain? To their country, they were an embarrassment, not heroes. That is, when they got caught.

This skipper didn't want to be the center of an international incident, even as a hero. This skipper wanted to slip in quietly, fill his boat with fish, and get back to the mother ship. He was risking a cracked head if he ran into an angry American crew, and the impoundment of

his boat if American officials caught up with him. So, he was too tense to sleep.

He decided he wouldn't even try. Instead, he went on deck.

The skipper's eyes were sharper than those of the man on watch. Even before the watch yelled, "Lights off the port bow!" he had seen the tiny point of light on the dark horizon.



Blake thought at first he might be guilty of wishful thinking. He *wanted* to see lights. Damn his weak eyes!

He should have admitted how poor his vision was and let someone else take his shift by the fire. Both Donald and Warren had offered to do so. But since it had been his suggestion, he had felt there

would be something vaguely dishonorable—or at least irresponsible—about being excused, even on legitimate grounds.

But that *was* a light. Or perhaps two or three lights blurring together, on the very edge of the sea. He had already built up a tremendous fire, but now he threw driftwood on it recklessly, until the flames drove him back and a shower of sparks shot up into the night.

Were the distant lights getting brighter or dimmer? Damn his myopia—he couldn't tell. He cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted with all his strength up the hill—"Rolf! Carlo!"—over and over.

When he stopped to catch his breath,

their voices were answering from the woods on top of the hill. Seconds later, Donald, Rolf, and Carlo ran into the circle of the firelight. The two basset hounds bayed excitedly at their heels, as if this midnight chase was their own idea.

The men stared seaward in a silence broken only by the panting of the hounds and the snapping of dry cedar as it exploded from the heat and ignited.

“It’s a boat, all right,” Rolf said finally. “A big one. She’s pretty far out, but she’s coming this way.”

“Hurray!” The cheer was from the top of the hill. The others had left their beds and were moving cautiously down the path. In a few minutes, they were all

lined up on the beach, all eyes intent on the maddeningly slow approach of the lights.

“Why don’t they speed up?” Norma exclaimed. “Why are they taking so long?”

“Never mind,” Felicia said gaily. “The point is, they’ve seen us. They’re on the way!”

Responding to the excited voices, the hounds thumped their tails on the sand.



It was true—they *had* been spotted. The trawler’s skipper took one long look at the lights off to port and rumbled into the pilothouse like a truculent bull.

His orders were short and blunt: Change course. Get out to sea.

They would have had to move in a lot closer to identify the lights, and closeness was just what he didn't want. The identification would be mutual. Coast Guard, commercial fishing boat—whatever it was, he would give it a wide berth.

Out, way out, until those cursed lights disappeared.



On the beach, they heaped still more wood on the fire, and Rolf lighted the end of a pine bough and swung the torch over his head in frantic signals. As the light at sea grew dimmer and dimmer, they began shouting impotent commands.

“Come back!”

“Look here!”

“Over here!”

But their desperate voices served only to arouse the basset hounds. Barking frantically, they charged back and forth along the edge of the water.

Andrew tried repeatedly to tell them it was no use. He was sure their bonfire had been sighted, and equally sure that, at the moment of sighting, the boat had reversed her course and put out to sea.

But they could not comprehend what he was saying. Someone had seen them and deliberately sailed away? How could that be? They refused to believe it.

At last the glimmer of light faded. They fell into despairing silence.

With a nod at Blake, Carlo sat on a log near the fire to take the second

watch.

The others moved slowly toward the hill, staying close together, helping each other climb the steeply treacherous path.

On the morning of the third day, a west wind blew in off the ocean. It whipped the crests of the waves into whitecaps, and drove the sea against the island with such force that the gravel floor of the bay tumbled noisily with each rollback of the water.

The cold wind suited the mood of the nine weary, shivering humans who picked at a breakfast of strange, new foods. The small, hard roots of Queen Anne's lace had been cut into one-inch chunks and boiled until soft. Then Diana had mashed them and combined the pulp with the purple-black berries of the salal bush and the meat of wild filberts. The

result was a bland but pleasantly sweet and nutty mush that provided all the nutrients of the domestic carrot—a tame descendant of Queen Anne’s lace—as well as the vitamins of raw berries, and the high potassium and phosphorus content of nuts.

But despite the comfort of a nutritious breakfast, they ate in silence, for failure hung in the air like a gray mist.

At midnight, they had gone back to sleep oppressed by the failure of a signal fire that, for some unknown reason, had driven help away rather than attracting it. A rabbit hunt at dawn had proven another failure.

The hunters had armed themselves with short, heavy sticks, with the idea of

scaring up rabbits and clubbing them. Rolf, Carlo, Donald, and Blake had determined to join in this enterprise. Warren's shrill pronouncement—"If I go along, I'll faint!"—was accepted without comment. But when Andrew got up to go with them, they objected.

He swept their objections aside. Mike and Lili would undoubtedly flush rabbits for them. But at obedience school, the hounds had scored only twenty points out of a hundred, and they wouldn't stop at merely flushing the game—unless he were present to give the order. So, Andrew struggled through the underbrush, in the wake of the hounds and the hunters.

When they returned, they could report

one discovery: Rolf had found deer droppings in a small clearing, where underbrush formed a natural screen and the weeds had been broken and trampled. It was a deer refuge—a sleeping place—and it meant there were game animals on Phoenix far more important as potential food sources than the rabbits and chipmunks they had already seen.

However, this hope for the future seemed small—after all, how could they hunt for deer when their only weapons were Donald’s jackknife and the yellow-handled screwdriver? So, it did not offset the morning’s failure. The hunters had returned without meat.

“Failure is a normal part of all human

endeavor,” Andrew said as they finished their gloomy breakfast. “When the Massachusetts Institute of Technology offered a course in failure, I should have enrolled—but I felt too important and too old. Oh, well. Here on Phoenix, we’ll acquire the same knowledge through home study.”

Rolf said, “I should have realized we wouldn’t catch rabbits in daylight. We’ve got to do it after dark. You shine light into a rabbit’s eyes, and he freezes. Like lighting a deer.”

Carlo showed white teeth in a wide and knowing grin. “Hal-lo, my friend the poacher! You talk like you been there before. But where do we get the flashlights?”

“We could make torches.”

As they planned, the mood of the group lifted. Only Blake remained gloomy.

“I’m awfully sorry. Rolf, Carlo, I’d very much like to go with you. But there’s no use pretending to you *or* to myself. I’d be a liability, not an asset. My eyesight. It’s bad enough in the daytime. At night, it’s worse.”

Rolf said quietly, “Three’s enough, anyway, Mr. Mansfield. Donald and Carlo and I. That’s plenty.”

“Racing through the woods with torches.” Warren lifted one arm and waved it dramatically. “Greek runners carrying the eternal flame. Stay with *us*, Blake. They’ll set you on fire.”

“There’s more to it than that,” Norma said solemnly. “Blake, I am very much opposed to your attempting anything that might risk breaking your glasses.”

“I know. That was on my mind this morning.”

Blake removed his glasses and wiped the lenses on his shirt sleeve. Without them, his eyes looked larger, the color a deeper blue. And yet, as those eyes traveled around the circle, their expression was vague and unfocused.

“I’ve always been fairly fast. Track team in college, and tennis, of course. But this morning, running over rough ground...” He shook his head. “I was so afraid of falling that I was the slowest man in the field. I’m awfully sorry. I’m

ashamed to make excuses.”

Carlo turned to Blake and smiled warmly. “Hey, weren’t you *born* nearsighted? Then why be ashamed? *I* was born with a dark skin. It’s mine, so I like it.”

Andrew looked into Carlo’s peaceful face. “Carlo, you have a truly wonderful gift. I think you’d manage to live inside your skin even if it were green. I’m not nearly as secure, nor”—addressing Blake—“as wise in accepting my limitations.”

He tapped his right foot. “You see this, Blake. Because of this, I *did* fall this morning. Oh, I wasn’t hurt, physically. I got back onto my feet without anyone noticing, which saved

my pride. But the point is, I knew I shouldn't have tried to go on the hunt. A man past sixty, whose right foot is a combination of wood, metal, and hard rubber?" He shook his head. "I wouldn't have insisted on going, but you all objected so strenuously that I had to prove you wrong."

He dug into his pocket and pulled out his wristwatch. "You see what happened when I fell. Smashed my watch. We might be able to use the metal wristband, but any other part—the crystal, for instance, which Rolf recognized could be of value—is now useless." His eyes went back to Blake. "I am the one who ought to be ashamed of myself."

Blake said quickly, "Oh, no indeed,

Dr. Held. I'm sorry you've lost your watch, but *I* have one, you know. We can still keep track of time."

"But not of the days. Mine was a *calendar* watch."

He gave the shattered instrument a rueful look and stuffed it back into his pocket. "However, Man was not born with a gold-plated calendar watch. There are simpler means of keeping track of the days."

Warren pursed his lips. "Why should we? What are we—a little colony of latter-day Robinson Crusoes, fearful lest we forget which are the Sabbath days?"

"I doubt it," Andrew responded. "Though we might borrow from the inventive Mr. Crusoe. In fact, making

and keeping a calendar would be a good job for me. A daily reminder of hubris—of the day I insisted on going rabbit hunting.

“Yes, I believe that’s what I’ll do. I’ll set up a post, and every day, I’ll cut a notch in it. The seventh notch will be twice as long as the previous six; and on the first day of every month, the mark will be longer and deeper than those for the first days of the week.”

“What childish games!”

Felicia had been bent over the fire, with the half blanket from her bed thrown over her shoulders. She stood up now, wrapping herself in the sleazy khaki-colored remnant as if she had put on a velvet opera cape. She began to

pace.

“I’m sorry, Andy, but all this desert island make-believe doesn’t amuse me. A calendar! It isn’t going to bring help any faster, and we certainly won’t be here long enough to forget the date.”

“No, of course not.” Norma was wearing a dark gray woolen shirt that Blake had discovered, there among the half dozen torn and salt-streaked garments in the warehouse. Only with an immense exertion of self-control had she suppressed a shudder when the soiled and greasy wool first touched her skin. It was keeping her warm, she needed it, but she couldn’t help imagining the coarse garment was full of germs. Now, though, her eyes followed Felicia’s tall

figure admiringly—white silk swathed in a dirty army blanket, and still looking queenly.

“Of course not,” Norma repeated. “None of us have ever experienced anything like what we’ve been through in the last few days. How could we lose track of them? We all know it’s the seventh of August.”

Felicia halted her nervous promenade. “The *seventh*? Norma, dear, don’t play Rip Van Winkle. You’ve lost two days. It’s the ninth.”

The ninth . . . The moment the words sounded, Felicia’s amused expression vanished and her face was contorted by anger. Her green eyes blazed, and her chin lifted imperiously. She turned on

Andrew.

“Oh, why did you have to remind me? I promised to be back in *Washington* on the ninth. I have a meeting of the program committee scheduled for tonight. It’s important. It’s *very* important.” Her voice broke. “Your calendar. Curse your damned calendar! Curse your bloody island!”

Andrew looked at her sympathetically. “Felicia, why don’t you sit back down by the fire. You’re shivering.”

“I am *not* shivering!”

Andrew yielded with a lift of eyebrows and a short, oblique nod. “I should have said, you *would* be shivering—if you were the kind of

person who shivered.”

Not at all appeased, Felicia still sat down as Andrew had suggested. He went on quietly.

“It isn’t the ninth, Felicia. Norma was right. Today is the seventh of August.”

Norma said quickly, “When so much has happened, it’s hard to realize what a short time it’s taken. But we came to Phoenix on the fourth, and that evening there was the dinner party...” In precise detail, she recited the chronology of their four days and three nights on the island. Then she concluded by saying, “You see, Felicia, it would still be possible to get back to Washington by the evening of the ninth.”

The earnest statement caught Andrew

by surprise. He glanced at her quickly. No, Norma was not mocking Felicia. She was totally serious, totally sincere.

But Felicia's reaction was the greater surprise. Felicia didn't grasp the forlorn hope offered by Norma. She didn't even seem interested. Instead, she said softly, "I owe you all an apology."

With a diffident shrug, she pulled the blanket more tightly around her shoulders. "Yesterday, I gobbled up berries, instead of bringing them back so they could be divided. Of course, I nearly killed myself in the process—but that's beside the point. And today, I make a scene over a personal frustration of no interest or importance to any of you."

She paused so long that they wondered if she had finished, but then she went on. “I suppose I should go back to that first, awful night and recall how I was the brilliant individual who risked my husband’s life, by running back to the house when we should have been climbing the hill. On top of that, what I rescued was a sack of jewelry—when, in the same time, I could have grabbed pots and pans or whatever else might have been worth something to us all.”

She paused again, then uttered a short laugh and looked down at her hands. “So, I apologize, sincerely. I suppose, in any group of nine, there’s bound to be one spoiled, pampered child.”

No one spoke. Their faces were

thoughtful, as if Felicia had held up a mirror they could not help looking into. Andrew reflected that he alone among them could know how rarely Felicia apologized for anything—or how especially difficult this apology must have been.



On Wolf Island, the shattered structure of the Harbor Inn lay on the beach, like a sea monster with a broken back.

“Look at that,” the manager said to the volunteer fireman. “I’ve had it. But how was I to figure I needed insurance for tidal waves?”

The fireman made a notation in a spiral notebook.

“The village was hit even harder than

you were,” he said, wetting the tip of the pencil on his tongue. “After three days, we’re still digging in six feet of silt and rock, trying to uncover the wreckage. There’s boats and cars all tangled up with what’s left of the buildings. It’s a mess, a terrible mess. I don’t know when we’ll stop adding to the body count. There were so many people over here from the mainland—tourists and like that. We got no way to trace them.”

“Well, I can account for the Inn’s guests. As soon as the deputy came by and warned me, I notified everyone.” The manager began enumerating motel units on his fingers. “Twelve guests, and they were all packed and gone in less than an hour. Oh, yes, there were three

others. A young couple from New York—name of Mansfield—and a Mrs. Held. But they checked out before the deputy came by. I think they were all going back to the mainland by the four o'clock ferry. The Mansfields, they came here by rented car from Seattle, I remember that.”

“How about your cook and the rest of the help?” The fireman opened his notebook to a page headed Missing and ran a blunt finger down the list. “Right, I thought so. Carlo Minatti worked for you, didn't he? And Diana Lindgren?”

The manager shook his head. “Yeah. Terrible. I heard about them. They weren't around here at all, that day. Both of them took a week off. The cook, the

bartender, and the maids—I sent them home and I’ve seen them since, so they’re okay. But I haven’t heard anything from Diana and Carlo. More than likely, they were fooling around down at the village and got caught there.”

“Did they go around together?”

“Diana and Carlo?” The manager’s curt laugh scoffed at the suggestion. “Hell, no. Carlo was too smooth to play in virgin territory. But they both liked to dig clams and hunt for agates or driftwood—that sort of stuff. They were probably out on the beach somewhere, where they wouldn’t have heard any storm warning. What else can you do around here for recreation?”

The fireman said mirthlessly, "I got one idea."

"Huh! So have I, but Diana wouldn't do it."

Once more, the fireman dampened his pencil. Beside the names Diana Lindgren and Carlo Minatti he wrote, *Presumed dead*.

"It's too bad," he said gruffly. "I suppose you heard we already found the body of Diana's grandmother. So, that's the end of the Lindgren farm. We're watering the stock, me and my neighbor, until we find out what's going to be done with the place."

"And what about the deputy? Where's Frank Schmidt? I'll tell you, when he came by and told me a tidal wave was

coming, I damn near asked him what he'd been smoking. I understand he sent his wife and kids to Justin Heights, while he kept driving and warning people. Have you found him?"

The fireman's ruddy face was grim.

"We found him, all right. Couple hours ago. He was still in his patrol car. The water must have come right up over it. He might have had a chance, if he'd been able to get out. But when the wave hit the village, it was carrying pieces of boats it had smashed up in the bay. The bow of one of them hit Frank's patrol car broadside—damn near sliced it in two. Frank's right arm was gone, and his skull was crushed. The steering wheel was broken off, and the boat jammed

him so hard on the broken end of the steering column that we had to pull like hell to get the goddamn stick out of his chest.”

The fireman looked down at his notebook. “Funny thing,” he said huskily. “He was still wearing his trooper’s hat.”



Whenever the group gathered, Rolf had been the quiet one—listening to the others, weighing what they said, showing approval in the twinkling of his dark eyes, showing disapproval by the set of his mouth in a hard line. But it was a new, assertive Rolf who initiated a plan that would involve them all—not just for the day, but for as long as they were isolated on Phoenix Island.

“We’ve all been looking for food, but we’ve been living from meal to meal, never thinking beyond what we can find that same day. That would be all right if everything grew right near our camp. But it doesn’t.”

Though his language was plain, the urban sophisticates listened respectfully, with Warren restraining his kittenish patter.

Rolf’s plan was to organize into teams that any civil servant trained in governmentese would have called task forces. A team of four would regularly go back to the old Furness farm, while a team of three would comb the shoreline and beaches. The last man—*That’s the Old Man*, Andrew mused, instinctively

glancing at his artificial foot—would remain at camp and try to convert the contents of the warehouse into useful objects.

Rolf was presenting more than a plan, Andrew noted. With beautiful simplicity, he was presenting three concepts from which his plan had sprung.

The first was the economical use of time. Properly organized, their searches for game, seafood, and edible plants would require fewer man-hours to yield a greater amount of food.

Secondly, Andrew observed, Rolf was preaching specialization. If the seafood team was particularly interested in shore life, it would be more efficient in identifying and gathering it. And the

same principle applied to those who would search the woods and fields.

A third precept underlay Rolf's unvarnished statement that everything they had to do could be done faster and better if they had tools. He did not quote Henry Ward Beecher's proverb—*A tool is but the extension of a man's hand...* But Andrew felt sure that only the expression might be foreign to him, not the idea. It amused Andrew that modern industrial society should be based on economic theories so advanced that Rolf's Indian forebears lived by them five hundred years ago.

Andrew observed that no one in the group listened to Rolf more closely than did Norma. He could imagine her in one

of his physics classes, frowning nervously as she attempted to transpose every word of his into a neat, thick notebook. As if to confirm the image, Norma raised her hand.

“I was wondering—” She became aware of her schoolgirl arm, flushed, and dropped it to her side. “I just wanted to ask... The idea is to gather as much as we can at one time. Won't things spoil? We don't have refrigeration.”

“There are other ways to keep food,” Rolf said. “Smoking it. Drying it. That was always done by the women.”

With some difficulty, Andrew kept from laughing. The ancient culture recognized the principles of specialization, conducted its own time-

motion studies, and knew that human superiority depended on how cleverly people could invent mechanical devices to do their will. But the ancient culture also rested firmly on the male's "natural" right to assign menial tasks to the female.



When Rolf, Diana, and the Mansfields reached the old Furness farm, it was agreed that Blake and Norma would pick apples while the younger couple searched for edible roots in the damp, rich area around the pond.

The wind had changed, and the chilly mists had vanished. The sun shone, bright and yellow. A morning that had been saturated with failure and hostility

opened like a flower into a warm, sweet-smelling summer day.

Blake felt his tension ease. The sun was penetrating his doubt and confusion as if they were sore muscles. As he relaxed, he began to hope that today at last he could have a real talk with Norma.

Not that he'd even been trying. From the moment they boarded the plane in New York, almost every conversation between them had been plagued by argument—or else by them both being so determined to *avoid* argument that they wound up in a truce of unhappy silence.

It had been a little different these past three days. Norma had not been exactly responsive, but at least she hadn't

argued or complained. It was his own sense of guilt—*You got her into this*—that had kept him bouncing back and forth between a Pavlovian urge to apologize and the opposing inner voice that shouted down the idea of peace at any price—*Apology be damned!*

If only Norma would act as if they were in this thing together! If only he could open the line of communication without breaking through the block with a *mea culpa* he knew he would resent having to offer.

The trouble is, you're too much alike. That was the therapist's opinion. They both had perfectionist parents; they both had grown up under a system of negative reinforcement. As a result, they

constantly looked to each other for the approval they had never received from their parents.

So, now, true to form, he wanted Norma to forgive him for “getting her into this.” Plus he wanted her to applaud him for being admirable and cooperative and... *Well, what?* . . . For being a good boy.

A good boy. The solemn words, echoing through his mind, suddenly struck him as funny. In an abandoned orchard, on a remote island, with meadowlarks singing and crickets humming and the sun soaking him to the bone, why couldn't he just be happy picking apples? Why was the child within him waiting for Norma to say he

was doing a *good job* picking apples. Or better yet, waiting for Norma to *not* say it—so that, once more, he would have sought and been denied her approval.

“Norma?”

She was on her knees, searching for windfall apples hidden in the tall grass. She looked up, clearly surprised by his cheerful tone of voice.

Obedying an impulse—as unusual for him as this bursting desire to laugh—Blake sat down beside her. “Rest a minute.”

Her glance went automatically to the small pile of apples she had collected. “We shouldn’t waste time. The more we pick—”

“I said, rest a *minute*. One minute.

Surely, talking to me for one minute is *not* a waste of time.”

She opened her mouth, and he knew what sort of defensive replies would spill out in answer to his own needlessly defensive statement. He stopped her.

“I have a question. Before you answer it, may I remind you, Mrs. Mansfield, that you are under oath. Here it is: When Dr. Held talked about making a calendar, why were you so sure that today is August seventh?”

For an instant, her serious, dark blue eyes were clouded by a wary look. But when she saw him smile, they cleared and brightened, reflecting his mood.

“Because I knew what day of the week it is. Wednesday.”

“Our day for the therapist.”

A slow smile appeared at the corners of her mouth. Blake dropped backwards onto the grass.

“I knew it! Four o’clock on Wednesday, and we’re off to Lexington Avenue, where Dr. Gostrand explains that we never grew up. Dr. Gostrand admits *he* never grew up, either, but the difference is he *knows* he didn’t. Tell me...” Blake put his hand on Norma’s bare arm and very gently pulled her down until she was resting against his side. “Do you really mind being here in this old orchard, picking apples and ruining your best dress? Would you rather be in Dr. Gostrand’s office?”

“Am I still under oath?”

In genuine astonishment, Blake exclaimed, “Would you lie if you weren’t? I didn’t think you knew how.”

“Oh, I’m a good Puritan,” she said. “I don’t tell lies to other people, only to myself. But back to your question, counselor. No, I would not rather be in Dr. Gostrand’s office. I don’t know why. I respect him. I have always thought he helped us, just the way I always thought medicine that tastes bitter does you the most good. But right this moment, I don’t feel like swallowing something because it’s good for me. For some reason, I’d rather be picking apples.”

“If there were a psychiatrist on Phoenix Island, you and I would be sitting in his office right now.”

Norma's soft hair brushed his cheek. "But there isn't. Besides, there is so much work to do, we don't have time to go to therapists."

Blake laughed. "We don't have time to be neurotic."

For the second time in minutes, he was hit by an impulse and again gave into it, without the smallest pang of guilt. He raised himself on one arm, placed his free hand on Norma's breast, and with the yielding flesh soft against his palm, kissed her deeply.



The meadow was a black hole in the woods, capped by a gray night sky. When Carlo and Rolf walked into it, their bowl of fire glowed in the dark like

a fallen star.

The camp's one and only metal container rested securely in the center of a board that Carlo had scoured with a piece of shale. Carefully, the two young men lowered board and bowl to the ground.

“We shu-ah get some kine fyah, eh?” Carlo breathed, lapsing into Hawaiian pidgin for the first time since he'd come to Phoenix. “Dis kine fyah shu-ah goin' make da rabbits run wild and crazy, wha you think?”

There were four islanders in the hunting party, all very hungry—for hunger remained a gnawing, ever-present problem despite all their foraging. Rolf, Carlo, and Donald were

there, and Diana, because she had insisted.

“You can’t do it with three,” she had pointed out. “It will take at least four, and five or six would be better. If I can hunt rabbits on Wolf, I can hunt them on Phoenix.”

“This is different,” Rolf said. “You’ve never hunted with a torch.”

Knowing that Rolf hadn’t either, Diana laughed and said, “You’ll show me.”

Diana was carrying the nets. They had made two reasonably good copies of an ordinary dip net, using the all-purpose honeysuckle vine in place of circular metal rims, and attaching purselike sacks made from their warehouse supply of

damaged gill nets.

Donald carried the torches—strips of cedar bark twisted tightly and tied at each end. He dropped his load and peered skeptically across the dark field.

“I sure don’t see no rabbits.”

Rolf pointed toward the thick undergrowth at the edge of the field.

“Over there, the ground is covered with droppings. But we’ll never scare them out of the bushes. Their holes are under those, and they’d just go deeper. If we’re going to get any rabbits, it will have to be out in the field. But there are plenty of burrows out there, too. I saw them this morning. Rabbits hole up during the day and run around at night until after dawn. They should be out

now, out in the open.”

He selected a torch and poked it into the bowl of hot coals. When he withdrew it, the burning end was another bright spot to pierce the shadows. He handed the torch to Diana, then picked up and lit a second cedar stick.

Briefly, simply, he outlined the technique. They would work in pairs, one person carrying a torch and the other a net. The rabbit would be startled by the flame, momentarily paralyzed, and confused as long as it was caught in the circle of light. When it ran, its course would be erratic. Both netman and torchbearer would have to overtake the rabbit, one keeping it dazed with light while the other scooped it up in the

oversized butterfly net.

Donald grumbled, “Jeez, I’m strong, but I never said I was fast.”

Rolf smiled. “Think about how that roasted meat will taste, and you’ll put on speed. Here, Donald, you carry the light, and I’ll take the net. Diana’s fast, so we’ll give her the other net. Carlo, you run with her and hold the torch. Okay? Let’s move out. Slowly, until we scare something up. Then run like hell.”

They advanced, a small phalanx in a pool of quivering firelight. They had walked only several yards when they spotted their first prey. Three rabbits. Their round eyes stared blindly at the orange blaze as their gray and white bodies crouched in the grass.

“Hal-lo day-yah!” Carlo shouted, leaping ahead with the torch held high.

The pidgin war cry sounded like gunshots on a still night. The rabbits awoke from their paralysis and shot forward in a frenzied attempt to escape the light. The four hunters, almost as startled as the rabbits, bounded after them.

The pursuit was as lunatic as the course taken by the rabbits. The three animals ran in three different directions, vaulting over hummocks, racing first to the right, then to the left—one moment hidden by a patch of long grass, and the next, darting across the path of light to circle their pursuers and lose themselves in the dark at the rear of the column.

The disorganized teams plunged ahead blindly, and in the excitement, the netmen separated from the torchbearers. Rolf and Diana charged into the blackness after rabbits no longer dazed by light, while Donald and Carlo could do nothing to catch rabbits while carrying torches.

“We’ve got to do better than that,” said Rolf when they regrouped in the middle of the field. “This time, stay with me, Donald. Carlo, quit yelling in Hawaiian and keep your eye on Diana.”

Their second effort was more successful. When they flushed two rabbits, the two teams bore down like swooping hawks. Both rabbits leaped sideways, closely followed by Carlo

and Diana on the left, Donald and Rolf on the right. As if their pattern had been preset, the two animals completed short arcs and then bounced back toward each other. Both teams wheeled around and, in the single-minded pursuit of their own game, became tangled with each other.

“Ugh, awgh!” groaned Donald when Diana tripped over his feet and, in falling, plunged her elbow into his stomach.

“Hey, you buggah,” Carlo sang out as Rolf hurtled past and threw himself and his net to the ground.

Diana wasn't hurt, Donald regained his breath, and under Rolf's net was a rabbit. Carlo secured the animal by the ears and gave it a chopping blow at the

base of the skull.

“Eh, bradda,” he said to Rolf. “We do some moah, ah? I goin’ try widda net.”

Once again, their lights moved across the meadow, catching and for an instant holding the little animals. Once more, they risked bruises, broken bones, and cuts and burns as they attempted to follow the insane leaping and bounding of their prey.

This time, Carlo was the only winner. “Hal-lo day-yah!” he kept hollering as he pounded across the field. He returned with a rabbit, dropping the limp form at Rolf’s feet.

“You crazy,” Rolf said amiably. “Yelling only makes them run faster.”

“As aw-right, bradda. I wen catch da

buggah, anyway.”

“Next time, save your breath and catch two.”

After a short rest, they lighted new torches and started again. They threw themselves at rabbits that were momentarily blinded by the light and, when they missed, jumped up again and set off across the dark field. In the eerie half-light they raced, circled, dived, and leaped to the tune of their own thudding footfalls and labored breathing. For another hour, hunters and hunted joined in a wild game, like children playing “Follow me!” Animals and humans darted back and forth in a wild choreography of circles and zigzags, furious sprints and sudden stops.

When they'd had enough and were starting back, Donald looked disconsolately at the seven rabbits they had managed to bag. "You guys did all the catching."

Carlo shrugged and said good-naturedly, "No worry, bradda. We all goin' eat da same. We goin' share. Anyway, wen you chase-um and wen we catch-um, no make no difference. Dey all da same thing."

"It's more fun to catch."

They ignored the childish complaint and went on through the woods toward camp. Donald followed, a petulant frown hidden by the forest shadow.

It wasn't only that they hadn't let him use a net. He had another gripe he

couldn't tell them. When Diana ran into him and fell at his feet, he had helped her up. She had gasped, "Thank you," but pulled her arm free with a quick jerk, as if she couldn't stand to let him touch her.

Donald was hungry to touch her. Even in the midst of the rabbit hunt, the feel of her firm, smooth flesh excited and distracted him.

I'll get her yet, he thought angrily. And nobody—not that young half-breed, or anyone else—will be strong enough to stop me.

Mrs. Eleanor Sutherland, as official chairman of the Harvest Ball, was furious at being forced to attend a committee meeting.

She was a statuesque, big-breasted woman, whose taste in clothes ran to large, flowered prints. Her late husband had made a fortune buying American-made planes from a NATO country and selling them to small countries behind the Iron Curtain. And now, numerous agencies, foundations, and individuals were eager to help his widow spend that money.

But she never spent without buying, never gave without receiving.

In the case of charity balls, her price was ample newspaper coverage, with touched-up photographs of the general chairman, no smaller than a quarter page. It was always understood—and Felicia Held had understood it perfectly—that once the big story had been printed, Mrs. Sutherland was not to be called upon for anything until the night of the ball. On that evening, she would sweep into the grand ballroom on the arm of whatever dignitary had been corralled for the event, and seat herself at a table that, alone in the *salle de bal*, stood on a dais illuminated by a rose-colored spotlight.

Tonight, Mrs. Sutherland was furious with Felicia Held. Her unexplained

absence from Washington had made it necessary for the chairman to take charge—and, because of the last-minute nature of the planning, to invite all these women to her home! Finances, contracts, printing and engraving costs—these intricate problems of ball management confused and irritated her.

“Ladies,” she said sharply, “can someone tell me when I may expect Mrs. Held to return to Washington, and to her responsibilities as hostess of the Harvest Ball?”

There was no response. Every woman in the room knew Felicia socially. Most of them had worked with her on other benefit affairs. But Felicia was the friend of many, the intimate of few. Even

her marriage to Dr. Andrew Held, as far as they were concerned, had been nothing more than a big social event, offering them no more than a scant glimpse of Felicia's private self.

Mrs. Sutherland tapped irritably on the mahogany table. "Well? Doesn't *somebody* know where she is?"

A small, neat woman with dark eyes and short gray hair rose to her feet.

"Well, Mrs. Hodges?"

"She told me she was flying to Seattle on business and would be back in town late today."

"*Seattle!*" Mrs. Sutherland scoffed. "Why in the world *Seattle*? And I don't suppose she bothered to send you a note." It was more a condemnation than

a question.

“I didn’t expect one. Felicia telephones. She doesn’t write.”

“She has some kind of fiancé, doesn’t she? Why didn’t you think to call *him*?”

“I did. He knows even less of her whereabouts than we do. And that’s strange, don’t you think? He had no idea how to telephone her.”

“Then why doesn’t *s h e c a l l u s*?” Mrs. Sutherland asked irritably. “Well, I refuse to take over this committee. I have more important obligations. You, Mrs. Hodges! You’re the vice-chairman or assistant hostess or something, aren’t you? Here, you come up and direct this meeting.”

The small woman came forward, and

Eleanor Sutherland swept across the drawing room in a billowing cloud of flowered chiffon. She stopped at the door.

“Somebody is to keep calling her apartment. The minute she gets back, I want to know about it. I have some things to *tell* that woman. And if she wants to keep running events in this city, she'd better take my advice!”

She slammed the door behind her.



In their own home territories, six of the nine unwilling communalists would have been insensitive or even hostile to one another. But the unremitting need to sustain themselves continued to bind them together. Observing their

achievements at the end of two weeks, Andrew had to admit that his disillusionment with human beings had been challenged by this small but persistent echo of his youthful faith in the goodness of his fellow man.

That there were emotional undercurrents, he could not deny. Felicia was frequently preoccupied, even sad. Donald was unloved and knew it; meanwhile, he lusted after Diana, whom Rolf guarded jealously. The Mansfields seemed reconciled to their situation—at least to muddling through until their rescuers arrived—but not really reconciled to each other. And Warren laughed secretly at them all.

In spite of these conflicts, two weeks

had gone by without open hostilities. Even more important, in the areas of basic human need, such as food and clothing, they had made some remarkable adjustments.

Being hampered by her ankle-length dinner dress, Norma had borrowed Donald's jackknife and, with no apparent regret, sliced off the skirt just above the knee. By splitting the side seam of the portion she had removed, she made a shawl. On a cool day, she wrapped it around her, fastening the ends with a rusty nail.

Norma's lack of self-consciousness was remarkable for someone as studiously conventional as she, and derived basically from her lack of

vanity. Judging by her plain-Jane, neat-as-a-pin appearance when she arrived on Phoenix, Andrew guessed she had always dressed simply and worn little makeup.

But if Norma was remarkable, Andrew reflected, Felicia was fantastic. Unlike for Norma, clothes and cosmetics had been Felicia's second career. To be handsomely costumed and perfectly groomed—these were prerequisites to her style of living. And yet, look at her now!

She had given over her white silk original, because the fabric was ideal for filtering pond water. Her panty hose were now part of a fish trap that Carlo had rigged in a kelp bed near the mouth

of the bay—they had already helped catch many small sea bass. Her gold evening slippers had worn through, so Rolf had cut the usable uppers into strips and combined them with double soles of rabbit skin to make her a pair of sandals.

That left her with one civilized garment—her brassiere. And commandeering its elasticized straps had already been discussed at a meeting.

Her present costume contrasted so comically with Felicia Stowe Held, Washington socialite, that Andrew hadn't known whether to joke about it or to express sympathy. Above the rabbit skin sandals, her long legs were bare. The pink beginnings of a suntan could not conceal the many bruises and

scratches she had accumulated in her stubborn pursuit of food. From knees to waist, she was covered by a pair of men's swimming trunks taken from the warehouse. Since the trunks were much too large, she had gathered them at the waist like a dirndl, and belted and secured them with a strip of Norma's yellow linen gown.

The clownish touch was her blouse. It was a feed sack, with a hole at the top for her head, and openings at the sides for her arms. Andrew speculated on how far it had traveled, and about what the tsunami had done to the cargo vessel carrying it. As for the sack itself, it was new, with big red and black letters still broadcasting their message:

FOR BETTER CHICKS USE FARMER DICK'S

Felicia made her first appearance in this costume when the group had gathered for dinner. She strode into camp and stared them all down without a tremor of embarrassment. Her face was tanned, scrubbed, and totally without makeup. Through the metamorphosis of necessity, her elegant, upswept coiffure had been replaced by one thick braid hanging straight down her back.

Almost immediately, she erased Andrew's anxiety about what to say or do. Perfectly poised, she bent forward in a comic version of a regal bow.

“I bring you an important message

from my sponsor, Farmer Dick,” she said solemnly, indicating the bright letters that covered her from armpit to armpit. “Though I can’t understand why he printed it upside down.”

Andrew’s sense of relief deepened into admiration as he saw what extra touch she had added. Her jewelry! Most or all of it either hung around her neck or was pinned over her breast. Diamonds, emeralds, topaz, and sapphire shone against a background of the upside-down advertising slogan.

Andrew said huskily, “Bravo, Mrs. Held.”

Her smile was supremely gracious.

“It’s nothing, really. I always dress for dinner.”



In two weeks, their clothing had deteriorated, but their food supply had improved—in quantity, variety, and methods of cooking and preservation.

Their first searches were either for plants Rolf remembered as traditional among Indians, or for berries and greens that Diana's grandmother had always picked. But gradually, through experiments controlled by Norma's six-bite test, they added to their repertoire.

Often the food plant served other purposes as well.

They dug the roots of sword and bracken fern, roasted them in hot ashes, peeled them, and ate the mealy center. Meanwhile, the foliage went to the

dormitory to thicken their “mattresses.” The young shoots of the spruce tree, they ate raw. The same tree provided a fragrant pitch to be used as chewing gum, while spruce saplings became spring poles for the snares that Rolf was devising to catch rabbits.

The low-growing, hollylike bushes of Oregon grape yielded purple clusters of sour, mouth-puckering berries, which became palatable when boiled and combined with the bland fruit of the salal bush. At Rolf’s insistence, they took not only the grapes but the root as well. His grandmother, a Quinault, had boiled the root and saved the liquid as a sure cure for stomachache.

Like most seaweeds, the ribbon kelp

was another multipurpose plant. They found that any part of the hollow stem was a tough but edible vegetable if soaked for a day or two in fresh water. They used the shiny green ribbons, sometimes eight or ten feet long, to line the baking pit. And the hollow bulb or bottle at one end could be cut to make small serving dishes.

The usefulness of the graceful sea plant did not end there. "Save the long, thin end," Rolf told them. "It's no use wet, but when it dries, it gets as tough as rope. We can use it for fishing line and lots of other things."

At first, they had eaten their island fare only for survival. Always half-hungry, their conversation had been

dominated by nostalgic memories of favorite foods and restaurants: The charming little beer tavern just off Fourth Street in the Village, where roast beef, baked ham, and garlic dills were served on slices of dark rye. The sidewalk café in Portugal where tidbits of barbecued squid were eaten with one's fingers. The creamy pastries at Demers in Vienna. The lobster on Cape Cod, where you chose your entrée by pointing him out in a glass tank of seawater.

As supplies increased in both quantity and variety, they were all still obsessed by the subject of food—but now it was food available on the island. It was an almost constant topic of discussion. At

the same time, they all ate twice as much as they ever had. Even those accustomed to breakfasting on black coffee and one croissant now ate hearty pancakes of mashed roots—spread thickly with applesauce, or with stewed currants and elderberries—while arguing solemnly about the comparative sweetness of tiger lily versus camas.

Discovery of a previously untried foodstuff would call forth a thorough evaluation, not only of taste, but also—thanks to Norma's exposure to the health food store on Sixty-third Street—of vitamin and mineral content. Two hundred years ago, Norma pointed out, the word *vegetable* did not exist. The forebears of modern-day produce were

herbs, known primarily for their medicinal properties.

So, when the group consumed platefuls of steamed chickweed—a brighter green than spinach, while more tender—they knew they were swallowing quantities of healthful iron. Dandelion greens, Norma remembered, offered them twelve times as much Vitamin A as did ordinary lettuce. Miner's lettuce, a type of purslane, had the Vitamin C to keep them from getting scurvy. And so did burdock roots, tasting like white turnips while high also in calcium, silicon, and sulfur.

Many foods were found in or near the pond on the old Furness farm. Besides the skunk cabbage and plump yellow

pond lilies that Rolf and Diana had cut on their first day there, they discovered wild onions, tiger lilies, and camas, all with edible bulbs. The onions were too strong to be eaten on their own, but they were milder when used as stuffing for rabbit, and added flavor to the meat. The tiger lily and camas roots were steamed in a pit, or boiled with fish.

In fact, the pond and its banks were yielding so many edible plants, Norma referred to the area as the “supermarket”—and another Phoenix place name was established, along with “dormitory,” “warehouse,” and “city hall,” where they held their nightly meetings.

Whatever the food, the surplus was

preserved. Berries could be dried. Rabbit and fish could be smoked. Roots, in the Indian fashion, could be steamed or boiled, then mashed, pressed into cakes, and dried in the sun.

Rolf's knowledge of Indian horticulture had been diluted by two or three generations—as well as by the Welsh blood that accounted for his height. But it did lead him and Diana to the supermarket's most desirable food plant.

They were alone on the afternoon that Rolf pointed to some white flowers just breaking the surface of the water at the far side of the pond. On closer inspection, they found waxy white blossoms, with large, arrow-shaped

leaves, growing in several feet of sluggish water.

“Wapato,” Rolf said with satisfaction. “Or arrowhead, if that’s a name you know for it. I’ll wade in and dig them out with my toes.”

“Can’t we just pull them up? The bottom here should be soft.”

“We wouldn’t get anything. The stems are so weak, they’d break off and leave the roots under four inches of mud.”

As with the rest of the group, Rolf’s clothes were now minimal. Most of what he had worn had been put to other uses. His nylon windbreaker, for example, was employed in Andrew’s device for collecting potable water by condensation. And he was barefoot to

save his canvas shoes for when he would really need them.

All he still wore were his patched and faded jeans. He gave Diana a look she couldn't interpret, then turned his back on her and stripped them off.

In an instant, she was transfixed. The way he uncovered his lean brown body was so swift and so natural, it seemed perfectly beautiful, and perfectly right—even when he turned to face her, his hands hanging easily at his sides.

“I don't like to wear wet, muddy jeans,” he said simply, and walked into the pond.

Rolf waded shoulder-deep among the arrowhead. Going from one plant to another, he worked his toes into the soft

pond bottom until he felt the smooth, solid tuber at the base of the stem. Once he had dislodged it, the root rose to the surface, and he scooped it up and tossed it onto the bank.

After a few minutes of this, he rested, his arms floating at his sides, as water dripped from his long black mustache.

“By the way, Diana,” he called casually, “digging wapato is woman’s work. The men never did it.”

In the spot where Rolf was digging, the water would be over Diana’s head. Near the bank, though, grew more of the lovely three-petaled flowers.

She hesitated only a moment. Quickly—and trying not to think about it—she pulled off her dress, bra, and panties.

Then she too stepped into the muddy water.



“Like potatoes,” was the group’s label for wapato tubers baked in wood ashes.

“A little sweeter.”

“A little like chestnuts.”

“Very starchy,” observed Norma, who had become the group’s chief nutritionist. “I’m sure I could dry them and grind them into flour.”

Just a few days later, Norma introduced something new to the dinner menu: a steaming pinkish concoction that tasted like potato soup, with delicate overtones of quince.

“Rose hip soup,” she explained. “I ground the hips, boiled them for about

ten minutes, and thickened the liquid with wapato flour. We're getting more Vitamin C than we'd ordinarily swallow in a week."

As they talked, Andrew realized something: Whenever they first tasted a wild plant, they immediately catalogued it in terms of an accustomed food. Wapato—so prized by Pacific Coast Indians that Lewis and Clark spoke of it in their journal—was not *itself*. It was *like* something *else*. The seashore plantain that Carlo found growing in the crevices of a bare gray cliff was immediately identified as "like green string beans," and not as goose tongue. The thistle root was "like artichokes," and the roots of the sand verbena were

“like beets.” Roast gooseneck barnacles were “like tough, strongly flavored scallops.”

How long will it take, Andrew wondered, to accept what is strange and new without measuring it against the old and familiar?



It was that same evening that Warren’s undiminished yen for English Ovals, his favorite cigarettes, inspired the production of something “like tobacco.”

After dinner, he and Felicia had joined in a dialogue concerning their nighttime dreams. For both of them, the most vivid dream scenes were those in which they had finished an elaborate dinner and were searching futilely for a

pack of cigarettes.

Rolf broke in. “You want to try kinnikinnick?”

Warren pursed his lips. “Dear *boy*, is that something you *smoke*? It sounds like something we used to *do*, when Mother wasn’t looking.”

Rolf said drily, “It’s both. You smoke it, all right. But when I was a kid, my father whipped me when he caught me. It can make you high.”

Warren grimaced in mock dismay. “Oh dear, oh *dear*! High, eh? Where *is* this divine substance, Rolfie boy?”

“Everywhere. Some people think kinnikinnick is just one plant—a little bush with red bark and bright red berries that trails along the ground. It grows in

the woods where it's dry. But my grandfather called that *sacacomis*. I've heard it called bearberry, too.

“*Kinnikinnick* is really a word from back East, and it means several kinds of leaves, dried and powdered and mixed together. Like dogwood leaves and salal leaves—and you can put in dried needles from the yew. I did that once and got a terrible high, like being drugged.”

“Quick, quick, with the kinnikinnick.” Each staccato syllable popped out of Warren's small, round mouth as if he were exploding bubbles. “Point me in the right direction, O sage of an earlier day, and I shall get on with my self-appointed rounds. If I get a good smoke, I'll bless you. And thrice bless you, dear

boy, should I be fortunate enough to become intoxicated.”

By the end of the next day, the leaves of dogwood and bearberry were drying in the sun.

Rolf presented Warren with a small burl as hard as iron, along with several branches of a salmonberry bush. At the evening campfire, Warren carved, scraped, and cut, all with the dexterity and patience he would normally devote to a ten-thousand-dollar sculpture. The result was a pipe bowl with graceful lines and an outer surface as smooth as an apple skin.

Warren held it lovingly, a master craftsman delighting in the tactile beauty of wood. “Ah,” he said softly, and his

eyes gleamed.

Next, Warren peeled the salmonberry branches and removed the pith. In this way, he formed an assortment of pipe stems, then fitted each one perfectly into the bowl he had cut from the burl.

“I’ll make another pipe for you, dear,” he promised Felicia. “Until then, we’ll share—but you can have your own stem.”



Norma and Blake were resting near a clump of wild plum trees when Norma noticed the bee.

The little black and yellow insect was moving industriously through a patch of pink clover—alighting, dipping into a blossom, sailing up and out to the next

stalk. Its concentration was so complete that its flight pattern didn't change when Norma pointed and exclaimed, "Watch out for the bee!" But after several minutes, it rose and flew straight into the woods, like a cargo plane overdue at the airport.

Squinting against the sun, Blake followed the bee's course.

"*Now* I know what's meant by a *beeline*. When he—or, it's *she*, isn't it?—when she had her full load of nectar, she really headed for the barn."

"For the hive," said Norma. "Oh, Blake, be careful! There's another. I don't want you to get stung."

"It wouldn't kill me. I mean, I'm not allergic to bee sting, as far as I know."

“I thought *everyone* was. My mother always said—” She stopped abruptly.

This life they were leading was such a strange combination of total isolation and total togetherness—and, in different ways, each was bringing about a degree of self-examination that their Wednesday afternoon therapist had never achieved. When she was alone, with nothing around her but trees or a meadow or the sea, Norma experienced an all-aloneness that released memories of early childhood—memories long repressed and seemingly forgotten.

All of them centered around her mother.

Mother’s rules and Mother’s punishments came back with painful

vividness also when they were all together. At those times, the unavoidable intimacy of group life made Norma compare herself with the others. Over and over, she heard herself explaining, “I did this thing, or I feel this way, because my mother...”

Bother! she thought. *Forget about Mother!* But this heresy was short-lived, for she quickly said out loud, “I hate bumblebees”—and realized she sounded just like her mother.

In Blake’s mind, dim memories of high school biology and a field trip to an apiary were stirring.

“That wasn’t a bumblebee. It was smaller, with more black on it. It was a honeybee. They can only sting you

once.”

“How many times do you *want* to be stung?” Norma looked anxiously toward another bee that had appeared in the patch of clover. “Look, now that bee is flying away, too. Thank goodness they aren’t coming this way.”

“They don’t hear well, and they don’t have much sense of smell. In any case, they aren’t interested in us. Funny, isn’t it, the way this sort of thing comes back to you, after so long?”

Blake watched the bee disappear into the woods. “I wonder where the hive is. Wait a minute. There can’t be a hive—not one that was built. The last Furness on this farm was gone before you and I were born. And if they kept bees, they

would have built the hives in the orchard, wouldn't they? But we haven't seen a trace of anything of the kind. So, these bees must have their hive in a tree. A hollow tree, somewhere in the woods."

He jumped to his feet. Walking into the clover, he tried to establish the spot where the bees had entered the woods.

Luck was with him. A third bee flew out of a clover blossom just inches from his foot. After a short loop to the left, and another to the right, the bee leveled off as if it had just sobered up, then proceeded with all speed in the same direction as the others. This time, though, Blake memorized a landmark.

"Come on!" he said, as excited as a

small boy following a circus parade. “A honey tree! Honey! Something to put on the berries and into the rose hip tea. Fantastic!”

The search, though, was exhausting and frustrating—on a par, they came to realize, with finding needles in haystacks.

There were no paths in the woods, and Blake was so intent on following the bees’ course that he hadn’t thought to mark their own. In a short time, they couldn’t agree what direction to take to get back to the Furness farm. At the end of an hour, they were undeniably lost.

As their situation became clear, Blake began to apologize. Geographically, they might well be lost, but emotionally, they

were back on familiar ground: Blake adventurously proposing that they find the honey tree, just as he had conceived the idea of coming to these remote islands. Then Blake aware of his wife's disapproval, and trying, through apology, to replace it with her approval.

But for the first time ever, Norma refused to play her role.

“Oh, stop it!” she burst out. “I wanted to look for honey just as much as you did! I know I acted like I came along against my wishes, but don't you see, Blake? That was just to leave a door open—so, if we failed, I would already have set up that I *knew* we would, meaning you were once again in the wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong! But you

weren't wrong, Blake. Or, if you were, so was I!"

Blake was so surprised by her uncharacteristic foot-stamping that he couldn't think of anything to say but *I'm sorry*—and *that*, he realized with a great, cleansing flood of relief, was exactly what she was telling him *not* to say.

"What do we do now?" he said at last, looking around questioningly. "Look for the gingerbread house?"

Suddenly they were both laughing, and Norma—quite in line with her own wishes—was in his arms.



It took another hour, but at last they saw an open space beyond the shadowy

woods, and moments later the field and the brushy growth of wild plum trees came back into view. Right there, only a hundred feet from where they had entered the woods, they heard the low, throbbing hum of the bees.

Moving as carefully as they could, they followed the sound. It led them to the lifeless shell of a fir tree—one that must have once been magnificent, for its huge snag was fifty feet tall and ten feet across at the base.

Above their heads, beyond the reach of Blake's arm, was a hole in the trunk, big enough to admit a cat. All around it, the surface of the tree was as smooth as if it had been polished and varnished. Bees flew in and out of the opening with

the same apparent sense of high mission shown by the three argonauts observed earlier in the clover.

A wild hive, and a big one—for the traffic was so heavy, a dozen bees hovered a foot from the entrance, waiting their turn to go in.

By tapping the trunk gently, Blake determined that the hollow center, and probably the hive itself, began two or three feet above the forest floor. If his recollections of the apiary field trip were accurate, the hive would extend as far above the opening as the rotten core permitted. That was because the incredible building skills of wild bees were applied most diligently *above* the entrance, where the hive would be

warmer and more protected.

“The first step is to cut down the tree,” Blake said. “And when you do that, you need bee veils and a smoker—not to mention washtubs to put the honey in. But we don’t have *any* of that equipment, even back at camp.”

“No, but at camp we can get help, and ideas.”

Blake grinned. “We should certainly get plenty of those before trying anything. When dealing with a swarm of mad bees, haste is not a virtue.”

Something her mother had always said was on the tip of Norma’s tongue. With an unaccustomed sensation of being naughty—and liking it—she decided to forego the recitation.

“Let’s put some marks on the trees,” she said instead, “then pick up our sack of plums and go tell the others.”

She could not remember any time in her life when she had possessed so little, or felt so free.



At the meeting that night, they devised substitutes for bee veils and a smoker.

The veils could be made by combining the women’s nylon underpants with sections of torn gill net. The cedar bark torches they had used for the rabbit hunt could be modified to serve as smokers. They had already succeeded in making sacklike pails by stitching together sections of alder bark with “string” from cattail rushes. Larger

versions of these pails would do as containers for the honeycomb.

But how would they fell the tree?

They had the yellow-handled screwdriver and the jackknife. They could make stone wedges by prying layers of shale from the cracked face of the cliff. In addition, Rolf had fashioned a primitive hammer—a rectangle of granite that was bound with strips of skin to a short, sturdy piece of driftwood. But ingenious as these instruments might be, the depressing reality was that they would not cut through the trunk of a fir tree.

Rolf was always the last to get discouraged when it came to devising substitutes. “But we don’t need to cut

through the whole trunk. Blake says it's hollow, starting just a few feet off the ground."

"Even so, we'd need a saw or an ax." Blake's desire for honey became more and more compelling as the challenges in obtaining it grew clearer. "Damn it, I wish we hadn't *found* the bee tree. We were getting along all right *without* honey."

Rolf pulled thoughtfully on the tip of his mustache. "We didn't always have saws and axes, but we still made canoes. By burning and scraping."

"Of course!" said Warren, who had learned something about Indian crafts in connection to his sculpture. "Heated rocks, a stone adze, clamshells. Bravo!"

Bravo!” he exclaimed, clapping his hands delicately.

“Heated rocks?” asked Andrew. Throughout his career, he had left the implementation of ideas to other, more practical minds. But now, every device, every technique they developed had direct bearing on what he ate, what he wore, and how he slept. Practical detail was no longer boring.

Rolf shook his head. “I don’t know how we could use heated rocks on a standing tree. Canoes were usually made from drift logs, or from trees already on the ground.

“But there’s another way we might be able to burn through a trunk, at least where it’s hollow. Make braids of dry

grass and cedar bark, rub them in pitch, and tie them around the tree. Then light them, like tinder. After a while, the bark right under the braid would catch fire. When it was burnt, we'd scrape off the charred wood, put more tinder into the groove, and burn it again. It would take a while, but I think it would work."

Blake spoke hesitantly, a hint of apology in his voice. "That would create a lot of heat, wouldn't it, Rolf? We'd be burning where the tree is hollow—and wherever it's hollow, it's likely there'd be honeycomb inside."

"Ah." Rolf nodded in understanding. "You're right. That would melt the comb."

"*All* of it?" Warren was dismayed at

the prospect of forfeiting a delicacy that, in less than an hour, had become an obsession. “Wouldn’t there be a *little* bit left? Couldn’t we save enough for one lovely, orgiastic meal—all sitting around, gulping down pots and pots of honey?”

“There *could* be two or three hundred pounds of honey in that one tree,” Blake acknowledged seriously, though with a friendly nod to Warren that said, *You were joking and I recognize it*. Blake adjusted his thick glasses thoughtfully. “But I think we ought to save all we can”—his usually sober face suddenly cracked a boyish grin—“since the Coast Guard seems to be taking their time about getting to Phoenix.”

The grin was unusual enough, but the statement was startling. Andrew looked thoughtfully at the young lawyer's clean-cut profile. Somewhere along the line, this polite establishmentarian had given up his belief in prompt, efficient rescue.

More significantly, he was now able to admit it—and so cheerfully, it could only mean he wasn't at all desperate to leave.

“It's not just this one crop of honey,” Blake went on. “Ideally, we would fell this tree only in a way that the hive wouldn't be badly damaged and we could save the queen. That way, the bees would establish a new colony in another tree. And we'd have to do it in time to let them store up supplies for the

winter.”

Felicia looked at him curiously. “And where was it you said you attended law school?”

“Oh, this is all high school biology. We had a teacher who was fanatic on the subject of bees. Funny thing. I haven’t thought about him for years and years.”

He turned to Rolf. “For right now, it wouldn’t destroy the colony to take just a small section of the comb. As Warren suggests, we could have a *little* honey. Somehow we’d have to climb up to the hole and reach in.”

Within a few minutes, they had agreed on a plan. Three men were required, all wearing the improvised bee veils. One would act as smoker, creating clouds of

smoke to stupefy the bees. The second man would hoist the third on his shoulders. This top man would put his arm through the entrance to the hive and dislodge a piece of honeycomb.

Donald growled, "I'll do any part you say, Mr. Mansfield, but *I* think the one to lift the guy up to the hole ought to be me. In that spot, you need somebody with muscle—and somebody dumb enough to stand still when a bunch of mad bees start buzzing around."

"Excellent," Blake said approvingly. "I'll be the one to stand on your shoulders."

"I weigh less than you do," Rolf stated, "and bee stings don't bother me much. I'll climb up, Mr. Mansfield."

“Oh, for Chrissakes,” said Donald gruffly. “What you weigh don’t matter to me. I can hold either of you.”

Blake nodded. “*You* could lift *both* of us, Donald. And you’ll probably have to, because the smoker will have to blow smoke right into the hive, and I don’t believe he can do that while standing on the ground.” He smiled at Rolf. “So, you see, we’re *all* likely to get stung, even with our bee veils.”

“You’ve all gone crackers,” Warren chortled. “Covering your head with girls’ underpanties! La! I thought *I* had a problem.”



In the Seattle-Tacoma office of the Charge Less Rental Car Company, the

manager was having trouble admitting his error regarding a polite young man named Blake Mansfield.

“It won’t hurt to wait a while,” he said irritably when his assistant asked, for the third time, if this one shouldn’t be reported to the police. “He didn’t say exactly how long he was going to keep it.”

The assistant tapped the lease. “Says here, approximately one week.”

“Well, what does *that* mean, if you’ve got plenty of time and plenty of money? I signed the guy out myself. I talked to him. Strictly first-class. Credit cards from here to there.”

“It wouldn’t be the first time some wealthy customer used one of our cars to

drop out of sight with his favorite sex symbol.”

“Yeah, but in that situation a man doesn’t *steal* a car. That’s the last thing he’d do. Besides, I saw the woman with him. That was his wife, all right.”

The assistant dropped the lease into a desk drawer. “Okay. He’s had the car now since the third of August. He could be in Mexico City by now.”

“Yeah.” The manager looked morosely at his desk calendar. “Yeah.” He was thinking he didn’t mind half as much reporting to the police as notifying company headquarters. When you lost one, the brass acted like you’d stolen it yourself.

“Maybe you’re right,” he said. “Go

ahead. Turn him in. But make it routine. No accusations, no fireworks. He might walk in here yet—today, or tomorrow. And for all we know, he might have connections.”

The Chief U.S. Probation Officer in Seattle was reviewing his file of old parole violation warrants, and he was reasonably pleased. Though he was receiving federal parole board warrants at a rate of fifty or sixty a month, in his district only ten or twelve had been outstanding for as long as two years.

Many years before, at the time he had been appointed Chief, the workload of the probation officers had been weighted with the deadwood of fugitive warrants ten years old. It was obvious, the Chief had decided, that anyone who could stay out of sight for ten years with the FBI on his trail was no longer a threat to

society. He's dead, or he's in a far place. Or he's made a new life and a new identity for himself, and he's going to protect it by staying out of trouble—knowing, as only a fugitive can, that in an age of nationwide police communication and computer databases, it wouldn't take more than a traffic ticket to blow his cover.

And so the Chief had seen to it that the old warrants were gradually reviewed and withdrawn—to the vast relief of the overworked pursuers.

The Chief reflected that the wanted men might be relieved, too, if they knew the parole board's case against them had been shelved. But you can't notify a man when you don't know where he is. And

just as well. Believing a federal warrant was still alive and well in the coat pocket of an FBI agent could keep a tired old offender straight.

He looked critically through the small stack of thin yellow sheets, searching for the oldest warrant application.

RILEY, Henry Jackson

The two-year-old document made three charges:

First, Riley, when released on parole, had failed to report as directed to his U.S. Probation Officer.

Second, he had absconded, for he had been paroled to Seattle but was picked up in California.

Third, while being returned to prison

as a parole violator, he had escaped from the custody of federal officers—which constituted a new felony.

Finally—and the worst allegation for Riley—he had, in the process of making his escape, assaulted a federal officer with intent to kill.

The Chief sighed. There was a quality of sadness, or at least some irony, about this Riley case. The original offense had been a garden-variety auto theft—something for which the guy would have received probation, if he hadn't had a prior record of small-time check writing so lengthy that the judge considered him a nuisance. Even as a parole violator, his situation hadn't been too serious, as long as his only violations had been

technical—the twin errors of “not reporting” and “absconding his district.”

But headed back to prison, he had lost control, and it was all downhill after that. By socking a federal officer, he had made his situation a hundred times worse than it had ever been before.

The Chief picked up the telephone, dialed his first deputy, and asked him to come in.

A big, sandy-haired man in baggy tweeds came into the room. The Chief told him, “Just looking through the old ones.” He slipped the Riley warrant across the desk. “Still nothing on this one?”

His assistant shook his head. “I haven’t heard anything from the FBI

since they thought they had a line on him a year ago. They were looking for him in Seattle. Someone had seen him. But he slipped through the net. He might have gone to Canada.”

The Chief chuckled. “Or if he’s smart, he might have stayed right here. I’ve known more than one case who thought he had it made when he got into Canada with the FBI left behind at the border. When the Canadians got onto him, he learned what the word *cooperation* means.”

He gestured toward the yellow sheet. “What do you think? Shall we ask the parole board to withdraw the warrant?”

“I don’t think it would do any good. Not with this assault charge.”

The Chief nodded in agreement. "My feelings exactly. We'll keep looking for Henry Jackson Riley."

"Or whatever his name is now," the deputy said with a grin. "He can change his name, but that face of his—with the nose flattened out, and that long scar across his cheek? That's going to be recognized, somewhere, sometime."



In the small cove where he had found a plentiful supply of clams, Carlo was digging into the gravel with a sharp stick, and at the same time keeping a watchful eye on the low cliffs extending into the sea like encircling arms.

The water was already lower than he had ever seen it on Phoenix. Equally

important, it was still receding.

Now, he thought. If I'm going to try it, this is the time—when the cliffs are exposed as far down as they're going to be, but I still have an hour before the tide turns.

Hurriedly, he carried the sack of clams to the slope above the beach. There, along with his shoes, he had deposited the yellow-handled screwdriver and another sack improvised from sections of gill net. He dropped the clams on the grass, picked up the screwdriver and the sack, and in a bound was back on the beach and running into the water.

The shock of cold reminded him he wasn't in Hawaii or California, and that

diving without a wet suit was both difficult and chilling. But in a few seconds, his body reacted energetically, and his arms were cutting the water in long, powerful strokes. With the screwdriver between his teeth and the net sack tied around his waist, he swam along the curving rim of rock toward the mouth of the cove.

He spotted his game where the indented face of the cliff was frosted with a powdery orange-pink fungus, and where starfish—some a mottled green-brown, some thick and brilliantly purple—clung to the submerged rock. There they were: two abalone, so drably brown that they seemed to be hiding among their vivid neighbors.

Carlo inflated his lungs and dipped under water. The fingers of his left hand tightened around the flat, oval abalone shell, while his right hand drove the screwdriver blade between the cliff and the broad, muscular abalone foot. It clung stubbornly to the cliff, but with two or three determined thrusts, he pried it loose. Then he popped to the surface, opened the sack at his waist, and pushed the shellfish into it.

With another quick intake of breath, he dived again—and seconds later, dropped the second abalone into his game bag.

Carlo moved along the cliff as rapidly as possible, working feverishly against the inevitable turning of the tide. But he

was cautious as well. For one thing, abalone were frequently close associates of red or green sea urchins, whose spines could make painful punctures. Even more important was care in the use of the screwdriver—the only tool in camp besides the jackknife. If, in his struggle to dislodge an abalone, he should drop the screwdriver, he would return to camp ashamed of the loss of a tool, rather than proud at finding food.

So, he worked both rapidly and carefully, peering into every inlet and crevasse, diving, grasping, prying, popping up again for more breath.

In a period of time he judged to be just under an hour, he had twenty fine,

meaty abalone. He also had three wounds where a sea urchin's spikes had bitten into his hand while he was groping along the cliff. But he still had the screwdriver.

He climbed out on the rock and, for the first time, realized just how far he had traveled. The cove where he had been clamming was out of sight, hidden by a headland jutting so far out into the sea that, at low tide, it appeared to be attached to a spine of barren offshore rocks.

Until now, Carlo had seen these rocks only at a distance. He looked at them thoughtfully.

Seal rocks? If they were, he had made an important discovery. Seal would

mean more than meat, with its fishy taste. Seal would provide grease, which they needed, and thick, durable hides. The stomachs could be cleaned, inflated, and used as bottles.

Carlo jumped up. Though the tide had turned, the water between the cliff and the rocks was still so shallow that he could wade across.

He heard the seals before he saw them. There was a splash and, as he turned his head, a second splash, not much louder than the lapping of the waves. A mother and her pup were in the water, gliding away. Two round gray heads, one large, one small, were visible at first and then sank. Long moments later, they reappeared, thirty or

forty feet beyond.

Carlo watched with mixed feelings. He had something good to report, but he had an affection for seals that didn't harmonize at all with the idea of hunting them. The group needed meat, he himself was eager for meat, and a quiet inner voice argued that anything he was willing to eat, he ought to be willing to hunt.

But a mother? Or the cub with big, round black eyes that looked at you as if a harsh word would make him cry?

“Dakine baby not foh eat,” he said in pidgin.

He had resolved his dilemma—at least for this one short, beautiful summer afternoon.

Humming softly, Carlo climbed the rocky bank and, retrieving the screwdriver and his sack of abalone, started back to the cove.



Felicia was sitting on the grass next to his sack of clams. Dripping seawater, Carlo approached and, after a moment's hesitation, dropped the abalone to the ground and sat down.

With a slight incline of her head, Felicia indicated the plastic bucket on the grass beside her, spilling over with the small gray-green pods of purple vetch. "The girls have decided I can be trusted to recognize something that looks exactly like green peas. These vines are growing all along this bank, in and

around driftwood logs that the tide doesn't reach."

She looked into Carlo's face and said drily, "I just happened to be passing this way. I wasn't following you."

He smiled. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"On the other hand, I didn't *leave* when I stumbled onto your shoes and this bag of clams." She shrugged. "After all, it is a little silly, isn't it, for us to continue avoiding each other? We're bound to be alone together sometime, accidentally or otherwise." A small smile curved at the corners of her mouth. "We might as well get it over with."

"I've wanted to talk to you. I've come close to it, a dozen times."

"But you didn't want to embarrass

me.”

He laughed softly. “In Hawaii, we’d call that *hoomalimali*. Flattery. I couldn’t embarrass you. You’ve got too much poise.”

“*Now?*” Felicia exclaimed, fingering her blouse.

“*Especially* now. It takes real royalty to look elegant in a chicken feed sack. No, I wouldn’t know how to embarrass you, even if I tried. Let’s put it this way instead: I don’t want to put *pressure* on you. That’s why I’ve been giving you room.”

She nodded. “Yes, I know. I understand.”

“Wait a minute. Don’t *misunderstand*, beautiful lady. I want you. I’ve *been*

wanting you. Some other place, some other time..." He reached across the space between them and tugged gently on her thick red pigtail. "I had one night with you. I'll never forget it."

Felicia looked directly into his smiling, dark eyes. "I won't, either. But things are different now."

"I can see that. And it's right." He shook his head, laughing in a way that mocked his own statement. "Listen to me heah, listen to stupid Carlo. A month ago, this lady would let me make love to her, if we could manage it without her husband knowing. Today we could make love and no one would find out, but the lady doesn't want to. And me, I'm saying it's right."

Though his dark eyes were still bright with laughter, his voice was suddenly intensely serious. “You haven’t told Dr. Held why you came to Phoenix?”

She shook her head.

“Don’t.” Carlo picked up one of her hands and pressed it urgently. “Don’t tell him, Felicia. We’re going to be here for a while. Let things grow. Let things happen.”

For a long, thoughtful moment, Felicia looked at him. Then she leaned toward him and kissed him softly on the mouth.

“You’re a beautiful man, Carlo,” she said. “Inside and out. The truth is, I desire you just as much as ever. That isn’t what’s changed.”

With that, she picked up her bucket of

wild peas and quickly left the beach.



Warren was alone when he stumbled upon the carcass. And, being alone, he didn't bother to faint, flee, or cry out at the sight of blood—as he would have done automatically for the benefit of witnesses.

This was his first venture into the heavily wooded area south of camp. He was hunting for the burls he needed to make pipes and bowls. There were no trails—though he had gradually realized that, in taking the easiest way through the underbrush, he was following the kind of half-cleared path that Rolf described as a deer trail.

Right in the middle of the trail, the

remains of an animal lay on blood-soaked leaves and pine needles.

“*Nasty!*” Warren murmured, moving in for a closer look.

The furry body was gutted, and the flesh on both fore- and hindquarters had been shredded. Though it was torn in a way that could be accomplished only by viciously slashing teeth, the head was recognizable. This bloody, mutilated thing at his feet was—or had been—a fawn.

Through his many summers on Wolf Island, Warren had acquired some knowledge of native wildlife. So, even now, with this slaughtered creature offering clear evidence that some carnivore might be lurking nearby, he

felt secure in his conviction that the only Outer Island wildlife that would attack a man is the yellow jacket wasp. There were no wolves, foxes, or coyotes. No bears. Though a fawn would be natural prey for bobcat or cougar, none of the big cats had ever been found in the islands. As far as he knew, there weren't even such unpleasant nuisances as the skunk or the porcupine.

What, then, had killed this little deer-child, and then feasted so brutally on its soft belly and delicate legs?

Warren was carrying the jackknife, primarily to cut blazes on tree trunks so he could return directly to any spot where he found a burl. If he located what he wanted, Rolf would follow with

stone chisels and the stone hammer. Of course, the jackknife was a weapon—the only one the group had. He shuddered as realization dawned that he might have to use it in self-defense.

Surely the killer animal wouldn't attack a *man*? He looked around uneasily. *Nonsense*, he thought. *Utter nonsense*.

Just the same, it occurred to him that a sculptor with valor could be a dead sculptor.

He made a blaze on the nearest tree and, reversing his direction, returned as quickly as he could to camp.



“What did you see besides the dead fawn?” Rolf asked. “Broken twigs?”

Teeth marks? Droppings?”

“I *told* you.” Warren pursed his lips impatiently. “Just the poor little *thing*. I wasn’t going to crawl around through the underbrush, now was I, dear boy? Come nose-to-nose with some sort of four-legged Dracula?”

Rolf glanced at the sun and made an expert guess as to the time of day. “We’ve got time before the others get back for dinner. Diana, you stay here, please. Come on, Mr. Brock. Show me where you were. And, here, give me the knife,” he added with a quick smile. “I’ll bring back something for Mike and Lili.”

Some distance beyond the dead fawn, Rolf found the first clue. In a small clearing, shadowed by fir and cedar, the

tops of two giant slabs of rock broke through the forest floor and leaned against each other to create a small cave. Kneeling at the opening, Rolf peered into the dim interior.

“Bones,” he said. “Old bones, well chewed. And the ground is bare and hard. This is where they sleep. I can smell them.”

“*They?*” Warren’s voice rose in a tremulous squeak. “I’m not really *loving* this. Just leave our card in the silver salver, and let’s go.”

Rolf drew back. Ignoring Warren, he ran his finger along the edge of the rock at the cave’s mouth.

“I thought so,” he said softly, studying the wisps of hair caught on the rock’s

rough surface. “And look here.” He pointed to a small, dark mound, a few feet to the left of the entrance.

Though no woodsman, Warren recognized those feces. “Dogs?” he exclaimed incredulously. “There isn’t a hydrant around for miles!”

“*Wild* dogs.” Rolf’s dark eyes were thoughtful. “The Furness family had sheep. They would have kept a couple of sheepdogs. When they went back to the mainland, they must have left the dogs behind, and they went wild. It’s happened on Wolf.”

“Feral dogs!” Warren’s mind shuffled nervously through half-remembered articles he had read in nature magazines about animals that revert to the wild.

“Do they... Oh, what a perishing thought... Do they attack human beings?”

Rolf stood up. “You bet they do.” With a wry smile, he added, “I think you’ve got the right idea, Mr. Brock. Let’s get back to camp.”



While Rolf and Warren told their story, Andrew studied the attentive faces of the others.

It was becoming a habit, this business of his silent watching, of weighing reactions, of speculating on what course he, as their appointed leader, should take. He could feel his sensitivity to others growing daily, like a tree’s roots penetrating a depth of dry ground to finally reach the water table.

Obviously they were frightened by the possibility of encountering wild dogs. To pretend they weren't would be senseless bravado—and, as a group, they were already showing a pronounced honesty about their human weaknesses.

But, objectively, how great was the danger?

They could take some comfort from the fact that no traces of feral animals had been seen north of camp. This mid-island beach and harbor area, where their primitive settlement was located, was a narrow and relatively treeless strip that connected the great hulking haunch of the heavily forested north end to the lower but equally wooded hills to the south. So far, it was only the hilly

south end that the dogs appeared to consider their territory.

As far as Andrew knew, they had never wandered onto the saddle of land where his home and outbuildings had presented a degree of civilization they may have been afraid to challenge. If they had sneaked down the hill during the day, Donald or the boy Jimmy or Mary the cook would surely have seen them. If they had come at night, wouldn't the keen noses of the basset hounds have picked up their scent?

Not that Mike and Lili were fighters. Their placid, people-loving natures, as well as their full stomachs, had kept them near the house, lying at Andrew's feet—or literally on top of him, when he

allowed them on his bed or in his chair.

Occasionally a wild rabbit had lured the bassets away from home, and they had loped through the woods, baying like a couple of horns in a Model T. Mike had returned from one such chase with a deep gash in the folds of skin under his jaw. Andrew had assumed the hapless hound had tangled with an angry raccoon. But the wound had been in the throat—the instinctive target of a wild dog.

He sighed deeply. No, he could not promise his worried flock that feral dogs on the south end posed no threat. As food gatherers and hunters, they would eventually have to expand their daily foraging to cover the whole island.

Besides, the feral dogs had once been domestic animals; they might not be as rigidly territorial as it now appeared.

Even if it was frightening, Andrew decided, he would have to state the truth. At any time, the dog pack might descend—past the warehouse, past the campfire and the food stores, up the hill to the woods where they slept, and to the fields and woods where they had wandered so freely, secure in their belief that the only dangerous creature on Phoenix Island was an angry yellow jacket.

In this remote and peaceful place, they would have to be armed.



They had talked of weapons, but as a means of securing food, not of defending

themselves. Rolf's snares were weapons in this sense—the first to be made, since they required no materials from the warehouse other than a length of nylon fishing line.

Rolf had placed the snares in a brushy spot where droppings and bits of fur indicated a worn rabbit trail, probably leading to a burrow. A flexible sapling and a forked stick combined to make the twitch-up. He bent the sapling into an inverted *U* and used the forked stick to pin the top to the ground. After tying one end of the fishing line around the pinioned sapling, he ran the line along the ground until it reached the rabbit trail.

At this end of the line, he made a

lasso about twice as big around as a rabbit. Then he draped the line from an overhanging bush so the big loop hung over the path at rabbit's eye level.

A rabbit headed for the burrow would stay on the familiar trail and thus attempt to run through the loop. But its head would catch on the lasso and automatically tighten it. The animal's struggles to free itself would jerk the other end of the line, pulling the forked stick out of the ground and freeing the sapling. The sudden release of the twitch-up would swing the rabbit into the air.

This device had produced a small but steady supply of rabbit meat—but they had begun to talk of larger game. Rolf

had seen deer in the woods at the north end of the island and was devoted to the idea of hunting them. Carlo's discovery that there were seals on some of the rocks offshore emphasized their need for something more than the jackknife and the yellow-handled screwdriver.

And now rose the specter of feral animals, lurking in the woods through which they must pass every day if they were to gather food and water. How could they protect themselves against such a vicious menace?

They had neither guns nor gunpowder. What sort of substitutes could be made out of the crazy assortment of odds and ends they called "the warehouse"? And whatever they invented—clubs, spears,

harpoons, slings—of what use would such pathetically primitive instruments be against feral animals that for five or six generations had learned to survive by killing?

Andrew stood up, walked across the beach to the cedar post calendar, and cut a short notch, marking the passing of another day. The voices around the fire quieted, for this was the recognized manner of calling the meeting to order.

Resuming his place on the log, Andrew began.

“I’m relieved, but not really surprised, to see that no one has panicked at the threat of wild dogs. Their presence is a fact—and at this point, we’ve had some hard-earned

experience in dealing with facts.

“We can hope the dogs won’t bother us. Or more to the point, we can hope *we* won’t bother *them*.” He paused, and a slow, reflective smile pulled at the corners of his mouth. “We’ve been forced to become hunters. Now we may be forced to protect ourselves *from* hunters. For both purposes, we need more weapons.”

He laughed softly. “It’s ironic, you know. We *must* have weapons. We must *invent* weapons. And I’ve been both praised and excoriated for my part in developing the most deadly weapon ever devised by Man. But in our present situation, I’m helpless. I don’t even know how to begin. I probably know

less than any of you about what we should do now.

“So, what do you say? Should we start by looking through the warehouse?”

For several minutes, they went through the piles of debris. A thorough inspection of warehouse supplies confirmed that they lacked almost totally the one material they needed most—metal. What they had of it, they assembled. A roll of chicken wire, two silver forks, a coffee can, some lengths of pipe. They studied each precious fragment, then fell silent.

Andrew looked at the solemn faces and wondered what magic words might have the power to dispel their depression.

They had stripped themselves of their belt buckles, shoelaces, hairpins. Blake, the haberdasher's dream, had donated his belt for the leather and resorted to holding up his trousers with a length of rope. Rolf had offered his shoes, because their rubber soles could be cut up to make slingshots. They had all given up everything they had.

But I haven't, he thought guiltily. I am concealing pieces of metal—because I am still concealing myself.

He made his decision quickly, and acted upon it in frantic haste. He could feel their puzzled stares as he removed his right shoe, lifted the trouser leg, slid off the sock, and detached the prosthesis.

“There's metal in this.”

The imitation foot he was holding seemed to Andrew both comical and hideous. Though he had lived with it, or its earlier counterparts, for many long years, he regarded it now with self-loathing, and was unable to meet the eyes around the circle.

In giving up so much of their clothing, they had all submitted to varying degrees of self-exposure. But what they exposed was beautiful and complete—like the firm nipples of the women's breasts, now unprotected by brassieres and pressing against a single thin layer of cloth. While, to Andrew, the prosthesis was ugly, and his bare right leg—severed and scarred, ending in a point instead of a foot—was unnatural, and for

that reason, repellent.

The silence began to press on him. He lifted his head.

Not one of them was looking at the bare stump of his right foot, though to him it gleamed white and ugly in the flickering firelight. All eyes were focused on the artificial foot he was holding out to them. Their faces showed curiosity and intense interest, but not a trace of revulsion—nor of sympathy, which he dreaded almost as much.

“Remarkable!” Blake said enthusiastically, as if he had just been allowed a glimpse of a highly classified nuclear device. “The sole is sponge rubber, isn’t it? To act as a cushion. Two springs in the front, one in the back,

a rubber toe.” He shook his head in open admiration. “I begin to understand why you walk so evenly, Dr. Held.”

“Yes, it’s fairly complicated,” Andrew managed to reply. “Designed for comfort and for balance. And since very few amputees live near a prosthetist’s shop, durability is important, too.”

“Well, I don’t see no sense in you giving it up so we can get a couple of springs or a steel rod.” Donald’s voice was gruff. Ordinarily he sat through meetings without asserting himself beyond a few surly objections, which he expressed vaguely and quickly withdrew at the first sign of disagreement. Now he was moved by a feeling that had been

developing ever since the tsunami—loyalty to the Boss.

He looked around belligerently. “We ain’t even begun to see what we can make with what we’ve got. Like, I’m going to make a slingshot. That would do a lot more to chase off a pack of dogs than some kind of dagger we might make out of the metal in Dr. Held’s foot. I’m for trying everything else before we break that foot up.”

“Mr. Campbell is right,” Norma said firmly.

“Of course he is. Absolutely!” This from Blake, while Warren studied the prosthesis with a professional eye and murmured, “Beautiful job. *Beautiful.*”

For once, Donald had the unqualified

approval of people to whom he was used to feeling inferior. His scarred and weathered face shone with simple delight—the face of a child winning first prize.

Andrew said unsteadily, “Well, I can walk without it. I thought it might be made into something useful.”

He withdrew into silence, shaken by two strong but conflicting emotions. He was grateful for Donald’s loyalty, and pleased, in the manner of a concerned parent, that the big man had managed to express himself. But when he offered his prosthesis, he had assumed it would be accepted, and the thought of casting it off forever had awakened a tingling sense of relief.

But it was still his. Because they were kind, he was still chained to it.

Slowly, thoughtfully, he leaned forward and fitted the device to the tapered stump of his leg.



The meeting was over. They had discussed a half dozen primitive weapons and agreed to collect natural materials that could be combined with the manufactured bits and pieces in the warehouse.

Materials like yew, because it was strong enough and tough enough for harpoon shafts and for bows and arrows. Like Sitka spruce, because the roots could be used for tying the tines of a spear. Willow, because the bark could

be made into a heavy rope to serve as harpoon line. Hemlock for the stanchions of a fish trap; fir for the handles of dip nets; ironwood or spirea for prongs of a duck spear.

Hereafter, the meeting was to be also a work session for the design and construction of weapons, as well as of housekeeping necessities—bowls, baskets, pails, spoons.

Andrew had insisted this evening on taking a shift as fire-watcher, and so he remained on the beach while the others climbed the hill to the dormitory. Felicia, the last to leave, turned back from the foot of the hill and came and sat next to him.

Looking into the fire, she said, “Andy,

you were magnificent.”

She knew he understood her, but even before he replied, she also knew he would feel compelled to pretend he hadn't. In relation to his injured leg, concealment was too old a habit to be broken in an evening.

“Magnificent? Tell me how, so I may try it again sometime.”

To Felicia's ear, his effort to sound amused was not convincing. “Don't hide, Andy. At least, not from me.”

She leaned forward and, in a firm, uncompromising manner, raised his right trouser leg so the artificial limb was exposed. Smiling, she patted it affectionately. “It's part of you. Accept it. *I* always did.”

She let the trouser leg fall back and straightened up. “As I said, magnificent. I know what it cost you to remove that wonderful device and show us the shocking, ugly thing you had been so careful to cover up. But did you notice? No one stared at you. No one ran from the scene, screaming in terror. Therefore, no one knew what a terrible moment it was for you. Except me.”

Her voice softened. “Do you realize, dear Andy, that your right foot is your only sacred cow, the one and only subject you cannot laugh about? *Once* you did—only once—and I’ll never forget it. We were dancing. There was a waxy spot on the dance floor. I began to slip, and in catching my balance, I gave

your right foot a good, hard kick. I said, ‘Oh, sorry!’ and you grinned and said, ‘Ouch!’

“It took me a second to realize it was your ‘good foot,’ as you called it, and you had actually joked about it. Oh, I’ve loved you a lot, Andy, but never more than then. I felt as if my heart turned over.”

He looked intently into her sparkling green eyes. “Thank you.”

“For what?” she said defensively, with the thought, *Now it’s my turn to panic.*

“For being so... so very tender.”

“Tender?” she repeated brusquely. “That’s hardly my style, is it?” She stood up to go.

“Wait. Please. Sit here for a minute.”

She hesitated, then sat down on the sand, arms wrapped around her legs, her chin resting on her knees. “I know, Andy. There’s something you want to ask me.”

“You’re perceptive, as usual. You probably even know what it is.”

She nodded, eyes fixed on the fire. “Why I came to Phoenix.”

“Exactly. You had hardly stepped off the *Trident* when you announced you had a mission, and that I wasn’t going to like it.”

“But I’ve said nothing since, and you’re curious.”

“Do you blame me?”

“Of course not.”

In Felicia's mind, Carlo's advice rang like a warning bell: *Don't tell him. Let things grow. Let things happen.*

It was impossible. She could not be dishonest with Andrew. Honesty was the base on which her respect for him was built. As well as her respect for herself. She had been honest even about her infidelity.

“Andy, I came to Phoenix to tell you I planned to remarry. Which meant, of course, obtaining a divorce.”

He did not reply.

What price honesty, she thought, still looking away from him into the fire. Why had she felt compelled to cleanse herself at his expense? Was she afraid he would be indifferent to her

announcement? Had she been “honest” because she wanted to know whether she could still hurt him?

She looked up. His eyes were hidden, covered by his hand, but his mouth moved in silent pain.

“That’s only half the truth,” she said quickly, fighting to control her voice. “If I tell you that part, I should tell it all. I’ve changed my mind. I’m not going to marry the man in Washington. I haven’t thought about him twice in a day. Give me another week on Phoenix and I’ll forget what he looks like.”

Andrew’s hand dropped from his face. In the rippling firelight, his blue eyes were almost black.

“You’ve changed your mind about

him. Does that mean you will stay here with me?”

“I don’t know,” she said unhappily, the irony of his question and her answer occurring to neither of them. “Andy, it was never that simple, was it? The trouble between you and me. It was never really another man.”

“I know that.” He smiled reassuringly. “Don’t be sad, Felicia.”

He stood up and held out his hands. She grasped them, and he lifted her to her feet.

“All right,” he said, his eyes shut. “Tell me the color of my eyes.”

“You tell me first.”

Laughing, they clung to each other, and Felicia felt his cheek, wet, against

her own.



In a small hospital in southeast Alaska, Andrew Held's cook, Mary, was known as 16A—Bed A of Room 16. On the clipboard at the foot of her bed were recorded brief periods of semiconsciousness. But she had never fully awakened, or made any sound other than an occasional rasping moan.

In the records of the admissions office, she was described as a survivor, probably of the August 4 tsunami, rescued at sea and transported to the mainland by the Coast Guard. Apart from that...

Name : Unknown

Sex: Female

Age: Approximately 60

Permanent address:

Undetermined

To which someone had added in pencil,

Best guess, some town on the coast,
between Coos Bay, Oregon, and
Wrangell, Alaska.

Though an unconscious old woman was merely a mystery to hospital administrators—who wanted above all to determine what health insurance program her bills should be charged to—the medical staff saw her as a body whose secrets could be probed.

Cerebral

angiography

indicates severe edema. No overt skull fracture.

Nurse Watkins, coming on duty, asked the nurse she was replacing, “Anything new with Sixteen-A?”

“No change. It’s been three weeks, hasn’t it? Or four?”

“At least. Poor old soul. I wonder who she is? It could be weeks, even months, before she can tell us.”

“Report came back from the FBI,” the younger nurse said matter-of-factly. “Zilch on the fingerprints.”

Nurse Watkins sighed. “Too bad. At this point, a criminal record would have been a big help.”

At the meeting the night before, it had been agreed that Norma and Blake would pick the blackberries ripening near the site of the old Furness farmhouse.

The reasoning was that the only evidence of wild dogs had been found on the southern end of the island. During excursions to the north end, where the farm was located, they had never encountered any sign of the pack. So, they concluded that the dogs stayed within their territory, and that the area north of the beach was safe.

Besides, they did not want to hold off and miss the harvest. The species of tiny

wild berry that grew on trailing vines was a far greater delicacy than the larger evergreens and Himalayas that would ripen later on.

The berries were especially plentiful wherever the ground had been burned over. Evidently, years before, in an abortive attempt to rid himself of stumps or brush, some unlucky Furness had let a fire get out of control. Though he had saved the house—the logs and rough-cut timbers where the house had collapsed were partially rotted but not charred—the big cedar stumps at the west end of the meadow were scoured by fire.

Norma and Blake started picking at the west end of the field and had filled their coffee cans by the time they

reached the farmyard area. Thinking he saw something beneath a matted covering of blackberry vines, Blake parted the tangle.

“I can see some boards,” he reported. “But they’re so badly burned, I doubt we could use them for anything... Wait a minute. There are some nails, too.”

Under the burned boards was a low mound, some ten or twelve feet in diameter, and raised a foot or two above the ground. Thoughtfully, Blake peered through the thicket.

“We know there was a bad fire,” he mused. “It must have burned one outbuilding, perhaps two. It seems to me that a farmer would be so busy saving his house, he wouldn’t be able to rescue

the contents of a woodshed or a barn. I wonder... When it was all over and he tried to clean things up, wouldn't he pile all the rubbish in one place? Into a heap, like this?"

Norma's answer was an excited nod. Even rusty nails were a valuable find.

Their arms and legs were badly scratched by blackberry thorns, but the possibility of discovering metal was strong incentive. With sticks and bare hands, they tore at the brush, buccaneers digging for buried gold.

After a few minutes, Blake sat back on his haunches to catch his breath. His face was streaked with dirt; hayseed stuck to his perspiring neck; and rivulets of blood marked the spots where

blackberry thorns had torn his skin. But look at his neat, city-bred wife! She was on her hands and knees, scratching the dirt with broken fingernails. Her lips were parted in a happy, anticipatory smile.

“My dear Mrs. Mansfield,” Blake said. “If your fairy godmother appeared right now and offered you one thing, and one thing only, what would you ask for?”

“A shovel.”

“Not a plane ticket to New York?”

Norma stopped digging, turned her head, and looked thoughtfully into her husband’s dirty, sweaty face.

“Some other time, yes. But right now, I’d take the shovel.”



Diana and Rolf were exploring the woods beyond the orchard. They had never been this far beyond the old farm. And here they discovered something more important to them than gold.

It was a spring—a small pool of icy, clear water, rising to the surface from some hidden underground source.

The spring ran a short and quiet course between lush green banks two or three feet high, then disappeared under a bed of moss. Even submerged, its course was marked by rushes, marsh grass, and buttercups—signs as clear as a blaze on a tree that water was close to the surface.

Following the hidden stream, they were soon back out of the woods,

standing at the edge of the pond.

“I should have figured something was feeding into this pond,” Rolf said. “Or at least, I should have come around to this side before now. I did wonder if the old farm didn’t have some other source of water. But I thought it would be a well, somewhere close to the house.”

Diana dropped to her knees and poked her fingers into the mossy turf. “It’s not too far to the spring, and the water probably runs close to the surface. We could dig it out. Brook water. Lovely, clean brook water.”

Rolf looked down into her face and thought, *She glows, as if there was light coming from inside.*

He sat down beside her. The soft

green bank was cool against his legs. He touched her arm, and it was warm. Smiling, he lifted it to his nose, and the skin smelled sweet, like dried hay.

He kissed the hand and pressed it against his chest.

“That’s my heart,” he said. “When you’re around, it goes crazy.”

Diana’s hand lingered on the warmth of his skin and the beat of his heart. It seemed natural to be touching the body she had seen, and slept so near, and glided against when they swam together in the pond. She moved her hand across the smooth, dark skin, and her fingers caressed the nipple.

Suddenly frightened by her own action, she drew her hand back like a

startled animal—but Rolf caught it. One arm drew her back to him, while the other gently lifted her chin so she looked directly into his eyes. Dark eyes, bright, but as gentle as his hand. Instead of pulling away, she rested against him, longing to be kissed.

At first his lips touched her lightly. But the pressure of his mouth unleashed such a flood of yearning that her own lips parted and she hungrily accepted the gentle probing of his tongue. Very slowly, Rolf lowered her onto the satiny bank. His body pressed against her side, and the kiss continued, open-mouthed, binding them together.

When he lifted his head, she could not speak. When he opened her dress and

softly fingered her bare breasts, she could not move. She felt the nipples harden, and instinctively arched her back as he lowered his head to lick the sensitive tips. Her awareness of him reached deep into her body. His thighs, pressed against her, awakened a hot, pulsing sensation between her legs. As never before in her life, she was conscious of every surface of her body, every opening.

His hand now moved toward the awful secrets of that dark, rainy Saturday night—down her belly and into the hidden place that, in spite of her fear, cried out to be entered. But now the hand that searched was gentle. The fingers were loving, not brutally thrusting, not

hurting.

She whispered, “Rolf... I wasn’t going to, until I could tell you what happened.”

His mouth was against her ear. “Does it really matter?”

“I don’t know. I’m so afraid.”

“Are you afraid of me?”

“No. Oh, no.”

“We’ve both been wanting this. It’s been piling up. We’ve waited long enough, Diana. Let loose, let the feeling go.”

Once again his lips were on hers, tasting her, gently sucking, until her tongue responded, moving feverishly along the roof of his mouth. When their lips parted, she murmured, “I do want

you, Rolf.”

He pulled her dress down over her feet and threw it aside, then as quickly removed and discarded his jeans. Sunshine dropped through the overhanging branches and fell on his naked body in pools of golden light.

Trembling, she let him part her thighs and caress the damp valley. Then he was above her, resting on his arms and kissing her forehead, her cheeks, her ears, her neck. Down below, where fear had been driven out by longing, the slow thrusts of his pelvis were pushing him into her.

The strokes speeded, and went deeper. Frantic with need for him, she opened wider, and her hips responded in

a rhythmic movement beyond her control. The anguish mounted. Even the warm ground under her seemed to pulse with it.

She clung to him, and rocked with him, and the incredible sweetness swept through her until it was unbearable, uncontainable, and she exploded with it. Strange, joyful, loving words burst from her mouth in the final spasm of desire.



Rolf raised himself on one elbow and looked down at the face of the beautiful sleeping girl. Her lashes were dark against her cheek, and her lips were slightly parted, as if, when she fell asleep, she had been about to say something.

Carefully, so as not to wake her, he stood up, stepped into his blue jeans, and knotted the ends of the rope that served as his belt. With several backward glances to make sure he hadn't disturbed her, he walked stealthily to the edge of the woods, where he had seen honeysuckle in bloom.

When he came back, he carried several kinds of wild flowers and long grasses: Flame-colored orange honeysuckle, on a long vine as tough and flexible as rope. Wild ginger, with its lily-pad leaves and spherical dark red petals. Long, densely flowered spikes of the hooded ladies' tresses. Leaves of the rattlesnake plantain, dark green and veined in white.

Diana was still sleeping. He sat down and went to work quickly, braiding the grass and the long, slender stems of honeysuckle vine. Once the braid was the right length, he wrapped and tied the ends together. Into this plaited ring, he inserted the stems of the flowers and the plantain leaves.

When Diana opened her eyes, he was holding the crown of blossoms in both hands and smiling.

“Oh, beautiful!” she exclaimed, sitting up.

He knelt beside her, holding the ring of flowers as carefully as a jeweled crown on a velvet pillow.

“*You* are beautiful.” His voice was very quiet, very low. “Diana, do you

love me?”

Her wide eyes were gray-blue like a stormy sky, and deep as the forest shadows. “I love you, Rolf.”

“Then we are together. You’re mine. But I promise you, I’m yours, too.” He placed the wreath on her head. “All the way,” he said softly. “All the way.”

For a long moment he looked at her, and neither of them spoke. The brilliant flowers flamed above her silky hair. She sat perfectly still, her long, dark tresses falling over her breasts, her hands resting at her sides.

Looking into his eyes, she repeated the vow. “Yes, Rolf. All the way.”

He was about to kiss her, when they heard a woman scream.



Norma was so preoccupied by the treasures buried in the refuse pile that she didn't realize how long Blake had been gone.

Their first discovery had been a jewel beyond price: an ax head! Dull, rusted, and lacking a handle—but still that one basic tool with which they could hew, hack, cut, and shape their way out of the latter-day Stone Age in which they had been living.

So far, nothing else hidden in the layers of dirt, ash, and rotting board had been as exciting as the ax. But, measured by their present standards, even lesser finds were of inestimable value. A pair of pliers, a large hook, a few links of

chain—and the secrets of the mound were by no means exhausted. So, when Blake said, “I’m going to look around in the rubble where the house used to be,” Norma murmured, “Yes, good idea,” and didn’t even look up.

Fifteen minutes later—or ten, or twenty? Her interest in the mound was so intense that she had lost all sense of time—she thought she heard Blake’s voice, sounding very near. She looked over her shoulder, expecting to see him standing directly above her.

He wasn’t there.

She stood up, eyes searching the fields, the farmyard, the area around the farmhouse. Crickets chattered; bees hummed; a bird with an orange breast

surveyed her from the top of a charred stump. But there was no other human being in the entire sun-drenched expanse of meadow. Wherever he was, Blake couldn't have called her. She had imagined it.

A curious chill went through her. Where could he have gone?

Slowly at first, she began to walk in the direction he must have taken. The old farmhouse was now nothing more than logs and timbers, lying on the ground wherever they had fallen. No standing wall, no hedge or fence to conceal Blake's figure. Unless, of course, he was down on his hands and knees, as she had been, scratching in the ruins.

She called his name, and stopped to

listen. There was no answer. Then she began to run.

It was stumbling that saved her life. Her toe caught on the edge of a rotting board, embedded in the ground and overgrown with weeds and blackberry vines. She fell and, gasping for breath, saw that the board was one of several nailed together into a rough cover or lid. At the center was a jagged hole two or three feet across. She knew even before she crawled to its edge that the rotting boards had disintegrated under a man's weight—and that, whatever lay under the wooden cover, she had found Blake.

Lying flat on her stomach, she reached the hole and looked down. Cold, damp air rose from the blackness, laden with

the smell of mud. Her eyes, accustomed to bright sunshine, refused at first to penetrate the shadows. But then she heard him.

“Norma!” His voice was weak and hollow, a distant sound echoing through the dark shaft. “Go back! You’ll fall!”

“It’s a well,” she said, with strange matter-of-factness. Her pulse was pounding, but her head was clear. She felt as if some second Norma—a practical, cool-headed, and ingenious Norma—had stepped into her body and was now in charge. This emergency Norma commanded that her eyes adjust and bring shapes out of the empty black.

A round hole in the ground, about six feet in diameter. A shaft with slippery

vertical walls. And at the bottom of it, some thirty feet below, Blake struggling to keep his head above water.

He could not climb out, and she had no rope to throw him. She had to save him from drowning, but if she moved impetuously, the board under her would give way and she would die with him. Not that this possibility frightened her. If Blake drowned, her own death would be of little concern. But she was his only hope. It wouldn't be fair, the sensible Norma admonished, to be foolhardy or careless and throw away his only chance.

“Hold on, Blake. Just hold on!”

Still flat on her stomach, Norma inched her way back to solid ground.

Gripping the board with both hands, she pulled. The well cover resisted. She took a deep breath and pulled again. At her third desperate try, it broke free of the tangle of vines and weeds, and she was able to drag it away from the opening.

Light shone down the shaft onto Blake's upturned face, ghostly white and floating on top of the dark water. "I'll be right back," she said calmly to that disembodied head, as the self-possessed Norma-in-charge noted that he wasn't wearing his glasses.

She ran to the ruins of the farmhouse. A rope, a ladder... Her frightened, desperate self mumbled, "Please, God," while her icy, calm stand-in searched

efficiently and swiftly for anything long enough to reach the bottom of the well.

There was nothing. The boards were too short, the smallest log was too heavy, and there wasn't a ladder, a rope, or a coil of wire.

Perhaps something still buried in the mound...

As she turned to go back, a shape at the edge of the woods caught her eye. It was a tall, skinny pine, bare of all but a few branches at the very top. It stood out from the straight, healthy trunks around it, because it was no bigger around than her fist and was leaning over.

After a month on Phoenix, Norma could easily identify it as a dead tree—probably rotted at the roots, so that her

weight could crack it off at the ground. And being dead, the tree would be dry and light enough for her to drag to the well.



Norma was back at the well before she remembered that Rolf and Diana were exploring the woods near the pond. Should she try to find them?

No. Blake could drown while she was gone. Instinct told her that, above all, she must stay with Blake.

Peering into the dim light, she lowered the small end of the long, thin pine, guiding it carefully down the wall of the shaft. Meanwhile, sensible Norma-in-charge kept hysteria at bay. Her husband might have slipped

underwater; he might not be able to hold onto the pole; he might die—yet still her mind spun with pedestrian thoughts like, *Why isn't he wearing his glasses?*

“Can you reach it, Blake?”

His voice was a hollow echo. “Not... not... not... quite... quite...”

She slid forward until her head and shoulders were over the cavity. Now, with her arms hanging inside the well, the pole extended another foot or two.

“Almost... almost... almost...”

“Try,” she urged him.

“It's... so... cold...”

“Try!” she commanded. “Reach for it! Now!”

The water splashed. His voice seemed weaker, coming from a distance.

“I missed... Go back... Norma...”

“Blake! Listen to me. You’ll get it this time!” *What did he do with his glasses?*

“Blake, this time you’ll reach it. Ready, set, go!”

The sudden jerk nearly pulled the pole out of her hands, while assuring her that Blake had caught the end. She renewed her grip, observing as if her hands didn’t belong to her that the rough bark had torn the skin on her palms and that bits of crumbly wood fiber were stuck in the open wounds.

“Now hold on, Blake. Just hold on. I’m going to start screaming. I don’t want it to alarm you. It’s just that Rolf and Diana might be close enough to hear, if they’re down at the other end of the

farm.”

She spoke as if it were as easy as a fourth-grade problem in arithmetic. The truth was, even if Blake could hold on, she wasn't strong enough to pull him up. What's more, any strain on the half-rotted pine tree might break the lifeline.

Her hands were bleeding now, and the weight of Blake and the pole brought a wrenching pain to her arms and shoulders. Slowly, deliberately, she inflated her lungs, lifted her head, and with all the strength she could muster, began to scream.



Panting, Rolf threw himself on the ground and took the pole from Norma's hands. "How long has he been down

there?”

Norma shook her head. “I don’t know.” Though the day was hot, she was shaking as if resisting a cold wind.

“This pole wouldn’t hold me if I tried to climb down, even if you and Diana could keep hold of it while I did. And that’s before I even try to carry him back up.” Rolf looked up at Norma. “Have you seen anything else at all we could use?”

“We found some things in that mound over there. An ax head. A piece of chain. Pliers. Some kind of hook.”

“A baling hook?”

“I don’t know what that looks like.”

“Heavy metal, about six inches across, with a handle at right angles.”

“I’ll go see,” said Diana, already running toward the mound.

She returned shortly with a baling hook and the other items. “No rope,” she said quietly.

“Buried like that, it would have rotted anyway. If we had time, we could braid a rope out of honeysuckle.” But Rolf was shaking his head, and the gesture said plainly that they didn’t. “We’ll have to use our clothes.”

Diana unbuttoned her dress and stepped out of it. Norma hesitated—but the sight of Diana, holding her dress in her hand, broke the moment of paralysis, and she quickly opened her own dress and pulled it over her head. Meanwhile, Diana knelt naked beside Rolf, and he

lifted his hips so she could pull his jeans over his feet.

“About four-inch strips,” he said. “You could use the ax to start the tear.”

Within minutes, all their clothing had been reduced to sturdy lengths of denim, linen, and muslin, and Diana and Norma were tying the ends together.

“One of you take the pole,” Rolf said. “The other will have to hold one end of the rope.”

Their naked bodies might have been moving in a well-rehearsed drill. Norma dropped to the ground and took her former position with the pine pole in both hands. Rolf tested the rope, giving each knot a vicious jerk, then handed one end to Diana.

“You’d better wrap it around your wrist. That will keep it from slipping.”

He stood at the lip of the well, with the improvised rope in his hands and the baling hook held firmly between thumb and forefinger. Methodically, he played out the rope, two feet at a time, until the line held by Diana hung straight down the shaft and disappeared in the shadow.

“Is it long enough?” Norma asked. “Can you reach him?”

“I can’t see yet. But we’ll get him, Norma. Just hold on.”

He turned to Diana and smiled. “You hold on, too. All the way.”



Blake was beyond helping himself.

In the bitter cold, his hands clutched

the pole convulsively. But even in the half-light, Rolf could see that his face was the blank mask of a man fighting to retain consciousness. When Rolf grabbed him under the arms and tried to lift him from the water, Blake felt stiff, and there was no responding movement.

Rolf had had little hope that Blake would be in any condition to pull himself out of the well, hand over hand, on the rope. Now he knew for sure that Blake would have to be carried. The question was whether he had the strength to do it, and whether Diana would be able to hold fast while he made the effort.

And how much use could he make of the baling hook? His idea had been to

thrust the sharp point into the wall of the well, as a mountaineer uses a piton, and thus have a handhold, greatly reducing the weight on the line. He tried it, pushing the point of the baling hook into the slippery clay. It stuck. But when he tested it with his full weight, the hook cut a groove and came free in his hand.

So the hook could not be trusted. His reassuring *We'll get him, Norma* had been a cruel boast, an empty promise. In the sunlight, anything had seemed possible. At the bottom of the well, death grinned at him grotesquely from a pool of black water.

Desperate, he decided what to do—knowing fully that, unless he was blessed with supreme luck, he would

lose everything.



Rolf had looped the end of the cloth rope around Blake's waist and fastened it with the baling hook, as a diaper is secured with a safety pin. He untied the manila rope that Blake had been using as a belt, wound it tightly around Blake's wrists, and tied them to the cloth rope at a spot above Blake's head.

Now Blake was attached to the rescue line in two places. He sagged, suspended by the wrists and straining at the waist, but the rigging held. Only half-conscious, Blake twirled slowly, looking as if he was hooked through the navel.

For several minutes, while attaching

Blake's limp form to the rescue line, Rolf had had nothing to hang onto. But Norma still held her end of the pine pole, while Blake had released his grip on it. So now Rolf grabbed the end himself, taking a minute to catch his breath.

He knew that Diana alone could not raise Blake. It would take her and Norma together. That meant Norma would have to drop the pole. So, until they had lifted Blake to the surface, then freed the rescue line and lowered it again, Rolf would have to tread water.

He called out, "Norma, let go of the pole. Put both hands on the line, like Diana. Then pull together, slowly. Go easy, because he's going to be scraping

against the side.”

The pine pole fell into the water with a gentle splash. Slowly, just as he had instructed them, Diana and Norma raised Blake’s inert form.

Rolf treaded water, paddled with his hands, and counted. And counted, and counted—and in the desperate cold, lost count.

A curious, peaceful feeling had begun to invade him—a feeling like falling asleep—when the end of the rescue line brushed his face. He heard Diana call from some far, far place.

“Wrap it around your wrist. Hold on with both hands. Rolf, do you hear me? Rolf! *Do as I say!*”

Her voice dispelled his apathy.

Clutching the end of the lifeline, he thought, *I'll be goddamned if I'm going to die at the bottom of someone's old well!*

The line grew taut, he was being lifted, there was light over his head and Diana's voice calling, "All the way, Rolf, all the way!"—as they pulled him back to life.



When Blake regained consciousness, there were naked figures hovering over him. He looked at them unbelievably as he slowly sat up.

He appeared so bewildered that Norma said, reassuringly, "We're real, Blake. You're safe. Everything's all right."

Then the truth hit her. The vagueness in his dark blue eyes was not only confusion. It was the groping gaze of the extremely nearsighted. His glasses were buried in mud at the bottom of the well.

Blake was alive, thank God. But Blake was practically blind.

The ritual of each night's meeting began with the marking of Andrew's "Crusoe Calendar." A short notch for each of the first six days of the week, and a longer notch for the seventh day—which, after some discussion, they agreed was Sunday.

Their first Sunday had been indistinguishable from other days—for there was so much to be done, no one thought of interrupting the weekday work routine. But on the evening of their second Saturday, Andrew had sensed a general weariness of spirit as well as of body.

"Tomorrow is Sunday," he had said,

inscribing a short notch on the calendar pole. As he resumed his place in the circle, someone murmured in agreement, someone else nodded—but they were too tired to react further.

Looking at passive faces and dull eyes, Andrew realized that his responsibility as leader went beyond keeping them fed, watered, and sheltered—he was more than a herdsman protecting prize cattle. If they were to survive, then their inner selves, disparate as they were, would also have to be nurtured. Otherwise, physical fatigue would sink in too deep to be erased by a good night's sleep.

And there was another factor that he, as leader, could not afford to ignore.

This little colony included three single males whose sexual appetites would not subside simply because they had no partners. Nor would the physical beauty of the three females be less disturbing to two of the three—Warren being immune in this case—because they were already spoken for.

Of course, the arrival of a search party would be the ideal resolution. But an acceptable alternative, Andrew mused with a wry smile, would be the magical appearance of two pretty girls and one pretty boy. Rescue, in that case, might lose some of its charm.

Well, they could do something at least about physical fatigue. He cleared his throat.

“We need a change of pace,” he said. “What would you think of making Sunday different in some way from the other days of the week? I’m not sure how. That’s up to you. But shouldn’t we mark Sunday in some special way?”

“On Sunday, *we* always had roast chicken,” Norma reminisced, looking dreamily into the fire.

“On Sunday,” Warren said brightly, “dear *maman* broke out her best sherry and wore her black velvet. She was at home from three till five.”

“Are you thinking of some sort of religious observance, Dr. Held?” Blake’s voice was deferential, despite an undertone of doubt.

“Religion,” Felicia echoed sleepily.

“When I was fifteen, I got interested in the Young Peoples’ Prayer Meeting on Sunday evening, because my girlfriend assured me there was always a boy to walk you home. I went... no one asked to take me home... and that was the last time I attended Young Peoples’ Prayer Meeting.”

“I can’t understand it,” Andrew said with a smile. “A beautiful red-headed girl?”

Felicia shrugged. “I had braces on my teeth, and my mother wouldn’t let me wear high heels.”

Andrew chuckled and returned to the issue.

“Something religious, if that’s what you want—though that sounds more

formal, or perhaps more restrictive, than what I had in mind. An hour, or even a half hour, of meditation, right after breakfast Sunday morning? When we could think our own thoughts, or, if we wish, pray our own prayers? Carlo might sing, someone else might recite. Though I think—” He paused, turned toward Warren, and smiled. “Though I think your particular genius for poetry might be better expressed on Saturday nights.”

Warren began cheerily, “There was a young lady from Phoenix—”

“That’s what I mean,” Andrew broke in. “All right, shall we try it tomorrow morning? One hour of quiet contemplation, to be followed by a day

of rest in which we each decide how we wish to spend our time?”

It was agreed, and one of civilization's oldest concepts became a keystone of their Phoenix Island lifestyle.



On the first of September, the group had looked on silently as Andrew cut two parallel horizontal lines into the cedar post to record the beginning of their second month. Almost a month on Phoenix, and help had not come. The solemnity of the moment bordered on despair.

But on the first of October, the sober act of marking a new month did not depress them. Though they watched

thoughtfully while Andrew carved the double line, it was not about rescue that they began to talk, but about their accomplishments.

The physical appearance of the calendar reflected how, with each new achievement, the group's spirits rose. Early in September, Warren had begun to carve tiny symbols and figures to embellish the slashes on particularly memorable days.

A bee, on the day they first had honey. A candle with a tiny flame to commemorate Norma's success in making a candle out of wax from the wild hive. A shower of slanting raindrops for the storm that brought a harvest of big, sea-green Japanese glass

balls—floats that had broken loose from some fisherman's net on the far side of the Pacific.

So, when Andrew sharpened the jackknife on a stone and cut parallel lines to herald the new month, a pictorial history of their successes was engraved on the calendar—just as Indian folklore is told on totems and house poles. The plain day-by-day marks might remind them that they had been without rescue for two months, but the delicate pictographs spoke more loudly of exciting discoveries and clever inventions.

Reviewing their progress, they were pleased with themselves. And when Andrew, as town crier, declared, "It is

now October the first!” a spontaneous cheer rose around the campfire.

By now they knew every inlet, cliff, stream, meadow, wood, and hill on the north end of the island. “Island combing” was the name they gave to their daily searches—for, like beachcombing, its purpose was the discovery and collection of any substances or objects that might be useful in their daily lives.

There was nothing haphazard in their approach to it. Though the only evidence of wild dogs had been found on the southern end of the island, they had decided not to wander far from camp except in twos or threes. Working in teams was safer, as well as more thorough. Each team reported its finds at

the nightly meeting. As a whole, the group discussed possible uses of those finds and agreed on team assignments for the next day.

As had been established early in their exile, Andrew was not expected to range very far from camp. But the reports of others on discovered places he'd known nothing about began to make him realize how provincial he had been. Before the tsunami, he had remained isolated in his house and his harbor, content in attachments to his conveniences and his books.

The evening when Norma referred to the island "ecosystem," he reflected that he had lived in the heart of a perfectly balanced natural environment but had

never become part of it. He had simply retreated from his former environment without actually joining the one to which he escaped.

Like the menu at the dinner party on the night of the tsunami, his life on Phoenix had been imported.

The circle of exploration had widened slowly, guided by the gospels of survival: Move slowly. Stop frequently to look and listen. At every distinct bend in the trail, turn around to memorize landmarks, so you will recognize the way back to the beach when you are coming from the other direction. Move cautiously so you won't be hurt. Keep eyes and ears alert to signs of danger—whether from a patch of quicksand, a

tricky rockslide, or the lurking presence of feral dogs.

Advancing slowly and methodically was necessary not only for self-preservation but for reaping the island's natural bounty. *Don't overlook anything*, the survival scripture said. And when you find something you can't bring back to camp—a grove of a certain kind of tree, for example, or a new fishing hole, or a fresh deer sign—observe landmarks accurately so you can find your way back.

Initially, food had been their prime concern. Nothing was more important than knowing where the big, hard-shelled Dungeness crab hid in a bed of eelgrass; where kelp sheltered cod and

bass; where oysters could be picked off the rocks; and where, at low tide, you could dig up shrimp as small as your little finger, and clams as big as the palm of your hand.

As food supplies increased, there was a subtle shift of interest. They were no longer hungry, or even in danger of being so, since the “buttery”—as Felicia had dubbed their stores of dried and smoked foods—was well stocked and constantly growing. The immediacy of staying alive gave way to a new, more sophisticated purpose: making life more comfortable.

Now the way to gain applause at the meeting was to find, for example, a grove of maples—for that wood was particularly desirable for carving bowls,

spoons, and platters, as well as parts for various primitive weapons. Vine maples were another exciting discovery—they could be woven into baskets for carrying clams and fish, and their long, straight shoots were ideal for the wattle works of fish traps.

Crabapple wood for the prongs of a seal spear, yew for a bow and its arrows—every wood had its own character. Whether especially tough or especially flexible, extra soft and light like cedar, hard as metal like ironwood, or dense and heavy as madrona, there was some purpose to which each species of wood could be put—if they, as a group, had the collective imagination to figure out what it might be.

When Warren had discovered a bank of pure blue clay, a whole new range of possibilities opened up.

“*Dishes?*” Warren exclaimed at the meeting. “I’m a sculptor, not a potter. I could use that clay in the creation of a beautiful work of art—something you would feast your souls on—and you want a tureen for the codfish stew. *Merde*. Is this what happens to genius in a primitive society?”

Felicia patted the top of his head affectionately. “Genius will find a way to make it a *beautiful* tureen.”

Despite his protests, Warren molded a variety of utensils. And since these had to be baked to be permanent, he designed an oven and built it—mixing

sand and clay and applying it like cement to a domed armature of green alder twigs. This kiln led to the idea of building a smaller oven for cooking, which in turn gave them their first loaf of bread.

It was coarse, because the wild grains had been ground with a stone mortar and pestle. It was hard, for Norma had been only partially successful in her first effort to cultivate wild yeast, starting with a batter of wapato flour and honey. But it was bread. They cut thick slices, spread them with wild honey, and ate them with rose hip tea, which they drank from Warren's gracefully sculptured mugs.

“I love bread,” Felicia said moodily.

“God, I had almost forgotten how I love bread.”

With some difficulty, Andrew repressed a smile. Her ardent praise for a slice of coarse, unleavened bread brought back memories of Felicia in some of the finest restaurants in New York and Washington, haughtily instructing the waiter to take some slightly deficient delicacy back to the kitchen.

How their values had changed! Once, Felicia would refuse a dish because it was seasoned with black pepper, if she believed white pepper was preferred. Yet no one had been more excited than she over Norma's recently invented condiment. One of the mushroom

varieties that Norma had determined to be nonpoisonous was as hot as chili. She dried it, then ground it in the stone mortar—and now their meals were seasoned with “pepper,” to Felicia’s unqualified delight.

Andrew could smile at Felicia’s revised concepts of gourmet cuisine. But in the area of cosmetics, her childlike appreciation of the simplest refinements touched him too deeply to amuse.

The collection of creams and ointments on her dressing table in Washington had always mystified him. Once, early in their marriage, he had blundered so badly as to buy her a boxed bar of soap. He assumed, because it was scented and ridiculously expensive, that

it would please her. Of course, she thanked him graciously—but the next morning, he saw her give it to the maid.

Yet here on Phoenix, Felicia had taken to making “soap” from the pure white globes of the snowberry. He watched with amazement as she demonstrated to Norma and Diana by crushing the berries between her palms and rubbing them vigorously into her skin.

“It’s a good cleanser, and an astringent,” she told them. “See? It cuts right through grease. And try it when you’ve been handling fish or wild onion. It seems to kill the odors, and leaves a lovely, fresh smell.”

Her second beauty product was one

they *all* shared—even Donald.

Recalling that some kinds of seaweed were used in commercial cosmetics, Felicia had conducted several blind experiments with kelp she had subjected to various combinations of drying, soaking, and squeezing. But she obtained no positive results—that is, until her numerous laboratory specimens were exposed to a day of rain. Afterwards, the bulbs were swollen, and small sacs formed on the inside as if rainwater had been drawn through the membrane. She opened these sacs, and a colorless fluid dropped onto her hands.

“Like glycerin!” she exclaimed later, showing it to the others. “There’s no odor, good or bad. It isn’t sticky, and it

makes my skin soft. Hand cream, face cream... Hurray! We can use it as sunburn lotion, too.”

Again, Andrew could not hide a smile, for as sunburn lotion, Felicia’s kelp product was certainly a little late. Her skin had been burned, peeled, burned again, and tanned. Every visible part of her—arms, thighs, neck, face—was as brown as cedar.

Testing some of the kelp fluid on her own hands, Norma said, “I should think it would also be good for chapped skin.”

Chapped skin? Andrew reflected that Norma was looking ahead to cold weather—not in an overheated New York apartment, but there on Phoenix.

Yes, on Phoenix, where mushrooms

made pepper, and seaweed made hand lotion, and no one—not even Felicia—had spoken of rescue for the past two weeks.



When Felicia had charged him with preaching, Andrew defended himself by saying he was only trying to remember things he may never have known. This quip, made during the first few days after the tsunami, had shifted and matured into the group philosophy: *Remember everything you've ever forgotten.*

When Warren sighed over the lack of sandpaper for finishing his wooden bowls, a long-forgotten memory of Indian custom came awake in Rolf's

mind: dogfish skin. The Indians, especially to the north, had used the skin of this small shark for final smoothing of paddles and dugout canoes. And one of Rolf's recent finds happened to be a natural spot for catching dogfish—a low cliff that dropped down to the ocean so sharply that deep water lay within reach of a fisherman on shore.

That night, Rolf brought three of the small creatures into camp. He skinned them, stretched the tough hides over boards, and fastened them with lacings of split cedar root. Within a few days, he presented Warren with a set of “sandpaper” blocks that were both abrasive and durable.

Donald's memories of early boyhood

in West Virginia led to one of the first weapons in their newly founded “arsenal.”

In Donald’s family, a boy had to wait for his first .22 until he was old enough to earn the money for it—but he could hunt with a slingshot as soon as he could make one. So, the day Donald found an inner tube in one of the island’s inlets, he recognized it at once as the most important component of his childhood weapon.

From the inner tube, he sliced two strips, eight or nine inches long. For the slingshot pocket, he pulled the leather tongue out of one of his shoes and cut two slits. Then he slipped the end of each rubber strip through a slit, where it

was tied.

Next, he selected and cut a suitable crotch stick from one of the farm's apple trees. Each arm of the fork was almost an inch in diameter and four inches long, with the *V* between them perfectly symmetrical. Finally, he fastened the free end of each rubber strip to one of the arms. With the slingshot assembled, all he needed was ammunition—round pebbles the size of marbles, which he could pick up on almost any beach.

He finished the slingshot on a Saturday and displayed it boastfully at that night's meeting.

“I used to bring home a sackful of squirrels every time I went out. I might be a little rusty, but anyone want to bet I

won't show up with meat the first time out?"

"Meat, you might," Rolf said quietly. "But squirrels, no. There aren't any."

"Yeah, yeah, I know that."

Donald's voice was surly, for he hadn't known it at all.

As usual when he felt that in some vague way he had lost, Donald lapsed into angry silence. But he swore to himself that the next day—their free day—he would go hunting. And never mind the rule about staying in pairs! Wild dogs on Phoenix? He'd believe that when he saw it. Never mind, either, about sticking around for Sunday meditation.

In the morning, Donald left the

dormitory while the others still slept. With jackknife and slingshot, he headed south—the area off limits because of feral dogs. Sure, Dr. Held's orders were to stay north of the beach until they had made more weapons, so that a party of three or four armed men could go out on a deliberate search. But, damn it, he wasn't going to wait.

He was a little tired of Dr. Held's orders, anyway. And what if Rolf *did* say there were no squirrels. What did he know about the south end?

Pushing through the underbrush, Donald clutched his pouch of pebbles. On the beach, he could have replaced ammunition as fast as he used it. But here he had to be careful, for once his

pouch was empty, he had no weapon other than his jackknife.

He knew one thing for sure: He wasn't going to waste his ammunition on rabbits. Rabbits could be snared, as Rolf had already proved. Donald wanted to bag something they hadn't eaten before, something that would make their eyes go wide.

He could visualize the meeting that night as they applauded his skill, and as Warren carved a new figure on the calendar pole. Maybe Donald's initials would be cut alongside to show whose "first" it had been. *D.C.* He chuckled at that, knowing those weren't even his real initials.

The only shadow on this pleasant

daydream was a suspicion that Rolf might be right about squirrels—even in the south end. In West Virginia, squirrels had been his chief target. He could knock one out of a tree from forty feet. Hell. If there weren't any squirrels, he'd have to go after something else.

Chipmunks? He'd seen plenty on the island. But they were small and fast—difficult to hit. Besides, they yielded very little meat. He wouldn't look good, if that's all he brought back to camp.

Wild birds? Sure! That was his best bet. He had spotted doves and wild pigeons. There were probably some grouse—and if that crazy kind called a fool's hen was around, he wouldn't even have to risk losing ammunition. The silly

bird would just sit and wait for him to grab it with his bare hands!

The group had had plenty of rabbit meat, and plenty of fish and crab, but no birds. He could already hear them around the campfire: *Why, Donald, this tastes better than chicken!*

He got his first shot while still deep in the woods. A large gray bird with plump body, rounded head, and feathered legs was perched on a limb directly above the trail. A ptarmigan—a northern grouse.

Counting on the tameness of wild creatures in an area where men are unknown, Donald moved closer. The bird didn't seem to even know he was there. A mammal would have been

warned by its sense of smell, but birds are protected only by senses of sight and hearing. Donald concluded that, so far, he was on the ptarmigan's blind side.

He reached into his pouch and withdrew a pebble about the size of a marble. After fitting it into the leather pocket, he lifted his left arm and drew back to his right side. His hand trembled with anticipation as he took aim and released the pebble.

It hit the tree trunk with a small thud and dropped out of sight in the underbrush. The startled bird took flight.

Cursing, Donald ran through the woods, another pebble pinched between thumb and forefinger, ready for a second shot. But the bird had vanished—and

when he went back to pick up his wasted ammunition, he couldn't be sure which tree he had hit. The misdirected pebble had disappeared in a wilderness of thorny growth.

Frustrated, he pushed ahead through the dark tangle of vines and bushes.

He knew what he had done wrong. He hadn't practiced enough with the slingshot before going out with it. That was one error, but he couldn't do anything about that now. More important, in his excitement at spotting the grouse, he had been in too big a hurry to shoot. He reminded himself that the animals on this island—especially on the south end—had seen so little of human beings that they were sure to be unwary. He

resolved to keep cool and take more careful aim.

By the time Donald emerged from the woods into an open field, four birds hung from his belt, tied together by a string around their feet. At the edge of the meadow, he untied the game from his belt, cut the birds' throats so their blood would flow out, and dropped them to the ground.

Four grouse weren't enough for the big show he wanted to put on back at camp. And he had already used up more than half his ammunition—for, in spite of his resolve, he hadn't been as slow and stealthy as he meant to be, and many of his shots had gone wide of the mark. But there was a lot of natural bird feed here

in the meadow—grass seed, patches of wild wheat, blackberries, and Oregon grape. He might be lucky and scare up a whole flock. He'd better be prepared for it.

His thick fingers searched through his pouch and pulled out a half dozen of the smallest stones. If a number of birds flew up at one time, he would fire into the center of the covey—a single shot of three stones that would scatter like a shotgun blast. He would surely get one bird, and he could hope for two. He'd done it before.

His body memory was returning of what it meant to be a sure shot—as he had been in his West Virginia childhood—and with that came a steady hand and

a cool head. So, as he proceeded across the meadow, he was not at all taken by surprise when a flock of wild pigeons rose from the ripe gold grass, hung in the air like a drift of smoke, then circled slowly to the right, their beating wings lifting them higher and higher.

Donald could not control his thudding pulse, but his old sureness with the slingshot steadied his hand and sharpened his eye. He drew back, squinting against the bright sky. Sighting the center of the flock over the fork of the stick, he let go.

A few seconds later, he was bounding triumphantly across the field.

Two birds had dropped. The first was dead. He scooped it up and ran to the

second. It was flopping helplessly, trying to fly with a broken wing. With a quick twist, he wrung its neck.

Six birds. Not bad at all. Even Mrs. Held would have to admit he had done well.

But he might do even better. He hurried back to the spot where he had left his string of grouse and tied up the pigeons with the others. He was looking out across the tall grass, trying to decide which direction to take, when a sound in the woods made him stiffen.

He whirled around. Though he could not immediately identify the noise, all his senses screamed he was in danger. Somewhere in the shadows, the underbrush was being pushed aside by

an animal's advance.

Seconds ticked by. The whispering movement grew louder. He heard a low growl.

Clutching his slingshot, his precious string of birds securely fastened around his waist, Donald ran wildly for the nearest tree. His size and weight were against him, but fear gave him a moment of superhuman strength and will. When the pack of wild dogs broke through the bushes, he was seven feet off the ground, his feet braced precariously on the lowest limb of the tree, his arms flung desperately around the tree trunk.

Below him were four wolfish dogs, with shaggy coats and lean hindquarters. Snarling at each other, they sniffed at

where his birds had left a patch of bloody ground.



Andrew was deeply troubled—and not by Donald's absence from the evening meeting. The man had obviously gone hunting, and, dogged as he was about making a showing with his slingshot, he was not likely to return until it was too dark to take aim.

No, Andrew was far more concerned about Blake, who was safe in camp but sitting on a log staring sightlessly across the bay.

Since the loss of his glasses, Blake had become more helpless with every passing day. Having suffered another kind of crippling, Andrew was

particularly sensitive to the younger man's frustration. Blake blamed himself for falling into the well—just as, many years before, the young Andrew Held had cursed his youthful foolishness in leaping onto a fast-moving streetcar.

The pity was that, before Blake's accident, a new relationship had been developing between the Mansfields, visible to the others in small ways: Norma had begun to laugh easily and naturally, and Blake had ceased his often tiresome politeness. But without his glasses, he was suddenly dependent—on all of them, to some extent, but on his wife in particular—and his conversation was again punctuated with apologies.

It was also tragic that, just as Blake

was becoming attuned to this wild place, he was virtually separated from it. He could not see it; he could not go out into it. During the daily trips of discovery, he stayed at camp with Andrew and tried to weave baskets of cedar bark and heated twigs. He called his work area the “broom factory,” a reference to the traditional handicraft for the blind—a reference that failed as a joke and brought tears to Norma’s eyes.

The only antidote, Andrew decided, was to expose the psychic wound, and to treat it with the realism and humor that these oddly assorted individuals sometimes manifested when coming together as a group. For the nightly meeting had been changing. From its

original form as a period set aside for recitation of the day's activities and the assignment of the next day's chores, it was gradually evolving into a forum. *My encounter group*, as Andrew thought of it when discussion went beyond the practical, into the sensitive area of feelings and reactions and troublesome memories.

But how was he to bring up Blake's problem?

When all but Donald had gathered around the fire, Andrew performed the ceremonial marking of the calendar and turned to the group. "I don't know what's keeping Donald. My guess is he kept hunting until dark."

"He wasn't supposed to go out

alone.” Blake’s voice was peevish, like that of a sick child.

“That may be why he did.”

Andrew returned to the circle and looked around, noting the concentration with which they were all working. Weaving and plaiting and carving—and the long day had begun shortly after dawn, even though it was Sunday, their “free” day.

He tried to keep his own mind on the cedar fibers he was braiding into rope. Blake was doing the same thing, and Andrew’s attention kept wandering to the other man. Something about the way Blake was squinting seemed familiar. Memory stirred, and he was engulfed by a sense of *déjà vu*.

Suddenly, a sharp, perfectly focused mental picture flashed onto the screen of his mind. It was of himself, Andrew, seated in the oculist's office, squinting through a tiny pinprick in a piece of paper.

“If you ever find yourself in a situation where you don't have your glasses,” the doctor had explained, “punch a small hole in a piece of paper and look through it.”

He had experimented that day and found that it worked. Then he forgot about it—until the day he and Felicia had attended an exhibit...

“Felicia,” he said, breaking into the silence, “do you remember that Alaska exhibit we saw in Washington? The

section with Eskimo artifacts?”

“Yes, vaguely.”

“There was a strange little gadget, entirely of wood. I said it reminded me of something my oculist had told me about, years before. Something for nearsighted people.”

“Ah.” Felicia’s head lifted, and her eyes brightened with understanding. Casting a meaningful look toward Blake, she said, “I remember.”

“Yes, yes.” Andrew was conscious that Blake had tuned in and was looking intently in his direction. “Eskimo sunglasses. Very thin pieces of wood where the lenses would normally be. Solid wood except for small holes, one for each eye, like pinpricks in a piece of

paper.”

“You were very naughty,” Felicia said with a smile. “You plucked them right off the open display shelf and tried them on. And they worked. They weren’t fancy, but they worked.”

“Remarkably well.”

Blake’s depression had touched them all, and the dialogue between Felicia and Andrew excited a round of encouraging comment.

“Hey, Blake, bradda, wakine glasses you like?” Carlo then turned to Warren, dropped the lighthearted pidgin, and said seriously, “You tell me what to get. Cedar? Maple?”

Blake murmured, “Right now? Tonight?”

Warren shrugged and pursed his lips. “Since I seem to have been chosen to perform a miracle, why keep you all in suspense? Make it cedar, Carlo *mio*. And bring the screwdriver and some of those pieces of broken glass from the warehouse. This is going to be a real *tour de force*, since the missing Donald seems to have absconded with his jackknife.”

As Warren worked, they abandoned their own projects and watched the sure, deft movements of the sculptor’s hands. He split and trimmed the soft wood until he had two sliver-thin squares. He cut off the corners to make two hexagons, then smoothed all edges with dogfish sandpaper.

After careful measurements of Blake's head, he cut a half frame and temples—also of wood, but thicker than the lenses, so the frame could be grooved. The lenses were fitted into those grooves, and the temples and frame were hinged together with little pegs of wood. The tiny holes in the lenses were made by heating one of Felicia's hairpins and burning as well as boring through the soft cedar. At intervals, Warren tried out his work on Blake, commandeering his head as imperiously as a *couturier* directing a model.

It was late before Warren finished, for he worked with painstaking care and with the creative artist's total unawareness of the passage of time. But

at last the glasses were ready. Warren adjusted the temples over Blake's ears and studied the effect from the front.

Norma had been wearing Blake's wristwatch, and Warren now lifted her arm so the watch was at normal reading distance from Blake's eyes. "What time is it?" he asked quietly.

The circle waited expectantly. The moment of tension lengthened as Blake moved his wife's arm a little forward, then a little back, until the face of his watch was clearly illuminated by firelight.

"Half past ten," he said. "Half past ten!" he repeated, and broke into jubilant laughter.

While the others cheered, Andrew and

Felicia exchanged looks of relief, gratitude, and mutual understanding.

“How do I look, Norma?” said Blake happily.

Norma was laughing as she hadn't for many days. “Like Dr. Caligari,” she said. “But very handsome—and very distinguished.”

They were so caught up in the triumph of the glasses that no one noticed Donald stumble across the beach with a string of game birds dangling from his hand.

“Donald!” Andrew exclaimed as the big man emerged into the firelight.

In a hoarse voice, Donald spilled out his story—of four dogs, snarling at the base of the tree. Of endless time—one hour, two hours?—gripping the rough

tree trunk, fearful that the limb he stood on would crack under his weight. Of shooting at the dogs and missing, time after time, till his pebbles were gone. Of deciding, as night fell, that his only means of escape was to sacrifice some of his birds. Of the vicious yelping when he threw down three grouse, and the fight between the dogs. Of leaping to the ground and fleeing blindly through the woods, running and falling, picking himself up and running again, till the ugly sounds were lost in the night.

“You’re not bitten?” Norma asked.
“You’re all right?”

Ignoring the question, Donald flung the remainder of his prize at Norma’s feet.

“There. That’s three birds, anyway. We ain’t had nothing like *that* to eat before.”

“Donald,” said Andrew in a disappointed voice, “you went *south*?”

His entrance wasn’t turning out right. Instead of admiring the game and patting him on the back for being brave, they were frowning with disapproval. And now all they could talk about was the pack of wild dogs.

“How many?”

“How far south had you gone?”

“Were they big dogs?”

“Did they follow you?”

He had their attention, all right, as long as he answered their questions about the dog pack. He could understand

they were scared—he'd been plenty scared himself. But that wasn't the whole story. He wanted their applause for his skill with a slingshot. He waited hopefully for the voice that said how fine the birds were, and how clever he had been to bring down two at a time. He looked around the campfire, searching for a sympathetic face—and for the first time noticed the crazy wood mask worn by Blake.

His startled "Huh?" and his own baffled stare dealt the death blow to any hope that, for once, Donald Campbell would be the star of the show. Donald, the grouse, the slingshot, even their skittery questions about the dogs—all were pushed suddenly into the

background as the group's attention refocused on Blake's eyeglasses.

They all gathered around Blake, testing his vision by holding up different objects, and clapping as, one by one, he proved he could identify them. Even Diana, whose eyes Donald had at least seen brighten when she looked at the pigeons, now seemed to have forgotten them.

Angry and disappointed, Donald walked to the far end of the beach and sat alone—until the chilling night wind seeped through his clothes and sent him back sullenly to the campfire.



With his keen blue eyes masked by hexagons of wood, Blake looked

sightless as he had not before. And that made his restored agility seem like a miracle.

The wooden lenses were optically far less effective than their civilized ground-glass counterparts, but they gave Blake a greater sense of freedom, for he was relieved of his obsessive fear of breaking his glasses. He knew that, if he ever did, Warren could make another pair in an evening.

Within a week, he had become so accustomed to his primitive spectacles that he once more took part in discovery teams—foraging, hunting, collecting all over Phoenix Island. He moved more slowly than the others, but they were repeatedly astonished by his ability to

spot small objects the rest of them had missed. The pinpoint holes narrowed the area of his vision, but at the same time seemed to sharpen its focus, like tiny magnifying glasses.

His confidence grew as his skill increased and he was freed from the “broom factory.” No one was surprised when he proposed they return to the bee tree, or when he volunteered to take charge himself of obtaining the rest of the honey and relocating the colony.

“Now that we have an ax, we can fell the tree. We should do it immediately, so the bees will have time to build up stores in a new location before cold weather sets in. It’s already late for that, and some of the colony may starve over

the winter, but we can help by leaving them some supplies. Dr. Held tells me that, even in January, the temperature seldom goes down to freezing, so they're not likely to suffer from cold. If I can locate the queen, I think we can have our honey and eat it, too."

This time the bee-tree team was equipped with an ax, for which Warren had lovingly carved a graceful handle. He had also carved a wooden trough like a small dugout canoe, and a larger version of the alder bark "pails" that had been their first and simplest Phoenix-made containers. Once more, their heads were protected by the comical combination of girl's underpants and torn gill net—the Phoenix version of a

bee veil. For the smoking, they carried cedar bark torches and damp seaweed.

When they reached the bee tree, the bees were earnestly at work, storing up for winter. The three men—Blake, Rolf, and Donald—set down their equipment at the foot of the snag and discussed their first move. Meanwhile, workers flew in and out of the tree with no detour to inspect what was going on below.

“Amazing!” said Blake through the protective mask of his wife’s nylon underpants. “It’s just like they told us at the apiary: Honeybees are such dedicated workers, they don’t bother to protect themselves. If they knew we were about to destroy their home, they’d be attacking us or moving their colony to

another tree.”

“They’ll know soon enough,” Rolf said drily. “And they’ll let us *know* they know, too.”

With an experienced eye, Rolf judged the direction in which the tree should fall. On that side, he cut a pie-shaped slice out of the trunk. Then Rolf and Donald took turns with the ax, while Blake brought together wet seaweed and burning cedar bark to create a cloud of white smoke.

“Keep up the smoke,” Rolf urged. The bees, though confused, were flying around drunkenly at the mouth of the hive and hovering a foot or two over their heads. And as the blows of the ax continued, the peaceful hum became an

angry buzz.

“Smoke!” Rolf called more urgently, swinging the ax with a wide lateral stroke.

There was a cracking sound as the old snag leaned; a rending and tearing as it caught and ripped the limbs off nearby trees; and a violent splintering as the trunk hit the forest floor. The trunk shuddered like a fallen beast and lay still.

Luckily, the old tree dropped as Rolf had planned it—onto the side that had the most limbs, so that they cushioned its fall. Also luckily, the bees were at least temporarily stunned by the crash. The moment the tree hit the ground, Blake dropped to his knees and blew smoke

into the gaping entrance to the hive.

Though pacified by smoke and shocked by the fall, the bees were already in action. As Blake explained, each bee had been filling its “honey stomach”—an extra stomach it had to store honey—in preparing to move operations to another tree. Now, like troops during an orderly evacuation, they gathered and made ready to leave. True, a few undisciplined workers did break ranks and sting Blake in three places. But the main swarm hovered in the air, right where the entrance to the tree had been, then after a while flew away.

Their next task was to split the hollow tree—and luckily again, it was not as hard as it might have been. With his

stone hammer, Rolf drove eight stone wedges into the weakened trunk. Then he worked up and down the line, pounding each wedge a little deeper every time. Finally, he inserted the screwdriver into the crack, withdrew it, and tested the tip with his tongue.

“Honey,” he announced. “I’m through on this side.”

They rolled the log over, and this time Donald drove in the wedges. They were arm-weary, glistening with sweat, with eyes stinging from smoke—and Blake’s bee stings had swollen into painful lumps. But at last the two halves of the tree lay side by side.

“Fantastic!” Blake’s tone was worshipful. “I’ve read about it. I never

thought I'd see it.”

The comb was six feet long, firmly anchored at the top of the cavity and at intervals along the sides. It was made up of hexagonal cells, all the exact same size and shape—except for a few oddly shaped cells where the irregularity of the hollow did not permit perfect symmetry.

Through the tiny holes in his wooden lenses, Blake's eyes peered anxiously at a group of cells near what had been the hive entrance. He felt a surge of excitement as his focused vision picked out a bee that was larger, longer, and slimmer than the others.

“I think I've found the queen,” he said eagerly, and got to his feet.

Ignoring the bees still circling above

the fallen honeycomb, Blake picked up the outsize alder pail and wedged it securely between a limb and trunk of a nearby tree. The primitive pail—a cylinder of bark, closed on one end and lying on its side—was to be the new hive.

Blake pulled a large glob of honey from the honey tree and smeared it on the inside of the pail. A dozen bees began humming around its mouth. A dozen more still hovered over the queen.

“Let me borrow the jackknife,” Blake said. With utmost care, he lifted the queen and clipped the end of one wing. Then, pursued by a cluster of the bees, he carried her to the other tree and set her down tenderly on a branch opposite

the alder pail hive. The smaller bees immediately collected around her.

“We’ll hope for the best,” Blake said prayerfully.

A few minutes later, the bee hunters were on their way back to camp with about two hundred pounds of honey, while the bees were once more busily storing for the winter.

Rolf called, “Hey, Blake, your glasses really worked. *I* couldn’t spot the queen, and I’m supposed to have twenty-twenty.”

“I’m glad it worked out,” Blake answered, but absentmindedly—for he was already busily planning how to construct more and better alder cylinders to enlarge the hive.



Though they had quarreled, Warren Brock's young man, Kirk Aspinwall II, had left Wolf Island with the understanding that his lover had not withdrawn his patronage entirely, and that Warren would, within a week or two, drop down to San Francisco for a few days. At the same time, local newspaper reports of the August 4 tsunami did not mention Wolf. So, when his mother was out of the house, Kirk cloistered himself in her bedroom, beyond the hearing of servants, and called collect to Warren's home on the island.

No one answered.

During the next few days, he tried

repeatedly to telephone. He also wrote Warren several letters, each more frantic and pleading than the last.

On the pretext of studying in advance for fall quarter at the U, Kirk spent hours at the public library, combing Seattle newspapers for references to tsunami damage in the Outer Islands.

Fifteen are known dead. Volunteers are compiling a list of the missing.

That was the extent of the news about Wolf. At the end of a week, Kirk gave up hope that names would be furnished.

There was ample coverage in San Francisco as well as Seattle newspapers of the fate of Dr. Andrew Held, world-famous physicist. Large black headlines

gave various versions of *Coast Guard Search Reveals Total Destruction of Scientist's Island Home*. Editorials commented on the irony of the “Father of the H-Bomb” going to his death because of a tidal wave triggered by a hydrogen bomb test. But Kirk had no reason to associate Dr. Held or Phoenix Island with Warren.

The more he thought about it, the more he was convinced that Warren had left Wolf before the disaster. He didn't answer the telephone because he had already departed for California.

But why, then, hadn't Warren called? Was he being punished?

Kirk dialed Warren's studio in Marin County. An official recording advised

him the telephone was disconnected. That was not unusual. Warren was often lavish, such as when he had given Kirk *two* wristwatches—one to harmonize with blues and grays, the other for brown, red, and orange. Still, he had his pet economies—such as having his California telephone disconnected while he was in Washington.

Then again, maybe Warren *was* in his Marin studio, teasing him, making him wait for a call. Or maybe Warren was in one of his working frenzies, and had cut himself off from the world in every way possible—pulling out the telephone plug, not picking up his mail, sending someone out for groceries.

Kirk's pulse raced at *that* thought, for

h e had been that someone. During a creative fit, Warren wanted his loving—wild, intense loving—several times a day. If he was in seclusion now, holed up in his studio on a working binge, there was someone with him. Someone *else*.

Hurt and suspicious, Kirk violated one of Warren's absolute rules. He called on Warren's mother.

She was a tiny woman with a dainty, Valentine face that was marked by a hundred fine wrinkles. Her shrewd blue eyes rested on him sympathetically as he stammered out his mission: He was a friend. He had done some modeling for Warren. He had expected to hear from him about posing in the first week of

September.

Warren's little-bird mother perched on an elegantly gilded chair and nodded as he stumbled to the end of his recitation. At last Kirk fell silent, even less sure of himself than when he started.

"I'm sorry to bother you. I shouldn't have come."

"Nonsense!" she said pertly. "I know. Warren told you not to. That silly boy. He thinks I don't know of his preference for beautiful young men."

She sprang off her chair, hopped to a French antique sideboard, and filled two stemmed glasses with dark amber liquid.

"Here," she said, thrusting one into Kirk's hand. "We'll have some sherry. We both need it. Because I don't have

the faintest idea where Warren is, and that's very unusual. You see, as a person, he is a complete eccentric. As a lover, I presume he takes more than he gives. But as a son, he is the soul of filial piety. He has never given me a moment's concern—as to his whereabouts, that is, or his state of health. Until now.”

She sipped her sherry, her bright little eyes appraising Kirk over the rim of the glass.

“I think we should make some inquiries, don't you, Mr. Aspinwall? You and I are really all he has. Where shall we start?”

In a village on the coast of Maine, Norma Mansfield's uncle, Cabot Sterling, was biting his thin lower lip in a combination of anxiety and displeasure.

He was a spare man, with fine bones, narrow shoulders, a severe profile, and a wise gleam in his deep-set eyes. For several weeks, thoughts of his niece had intruded into the serene little world of his retirement—a world he had taken some pains to insulate against disturbing emotions.

At first he had been puzzled. Norma was always very good about writing. She was particularly faithful when

traveling. A typed itinerary, mailed before she and Blake would leave New York, was always followed by a steady flow of postcards with appropriate comments, written in a careful script, reporting the high points of their trip. But this summer, he had received only one brief note, on the letterhead of the Olympic Hotel in Seattle, Washington.

As her silence lengthened, perplexity had given way to irritation. Though she was his heir, he never made demands. Norma always wrote him because she *wanted* to. Therefore, it was incredible that she had left on vacation without sending her itinerary. And inexcusable to be gone so long without explaining her most unusual behavior. Cabot Sterling

was too much of a gentleman to consider revising his will, but he had decided to express his disappointment when she got back to New York.

The newsmagazine resting on his knees, though, had today supplied reason to be less vexed than worried.

In the obituary column, he had read, *HELD, Dr. Andrew. Victim of tidal wave at age 62. See Science.* Turning quickly to the full article, he had read on with increasing nervousness. His old friend had died as a result of the August 4 tsunami—either at sea in his cruiser, *Trident*, or when his private island was struck by a series of monstrous waves that crushed and carried out to sea nearly every vestige of

his estate.

As he followed the science editor's eloquent review of Dr. Held's career in nuclear physics, and of his sensational conversion to the philosophy of disarmament, Cabot Sterling's mind kept sorting facts and dates. Computerlike, it presented him a printout: *Norma may have been in the Seattle area at the time of the tsunami.*

He rose briskly from his comfortable reading chair and crossed the room to a large oak rolltop desk. Because he never lost or misfiled anything, he was able to put his hand on Norma's note immediately. The postmark, he saw, was blurred. He opened one of several small, shallow drawers, picked up a round

magnifying glass with a brass handle, and adjusted its position to a proper level above the envelope.

August 1. Three days before the disaster. And she was carrying a letter of introduction to Andrew Held.

Cabot Sterling sat down at the desk and selected one of the sharply pointed pencils he always kept in a row beside a pad of lined white paper. He had to get his thoughts in order. And at age eighty-one, he found this more easily achieved by writing them down.

In a few minutes, he had completed his list.

1. Telephone New York apartment.
If no answer, then:

2. Telephone Blake's law office.

If no definite news, then:

3. Write to Seattle

a. Manager of Olympic Hotel

b. Police department

c. Coast Guard headquarters

This done, he left his desk and proceeded to the telephone in the front hall. With orderly procedure determined, the wraithlike sense of foreboding faded. Only a whisper persisted, a tendril of fear that rose from the page of neatly penciled notes in mute query:

If you've learned nothing by the end of your list, what then?



Rolf's desire to bag a deer was becoming an obsession.

He had identified their trails and their sleeping places. He had seen fresh prints cut into soft ground near the pond. He had come upon places they had passed so recently that their droppings were still warm.

Deer meant more than venison. It meant bone for tools and implements. Leather for clothing and bedding. Rawhide thongs for the drill for starting a fire, and for various primitive weapons.

Above all, it was big game—the largest on Phoenix Island. An animal that challenged the hunter with its acute senses. One that awed him with its speed

and uncanny elusiveness.

But there was nothing in their arsenal with which to kill it.

Their collection of ingenious weapons-without-gunpowder had begun providing them a regular supply of rabbit, ptarmigan, wild doves, chipmunks, and raccoon. Besides Rolf's twitch-up snares and Donald's slingshot, the arsenal offered a variety of spears, with tips of razor-sharp shale or carved madrona and shafts hardened by fire. And there were short, sturdy sticks that could be bound to the jackknife or to the yellow-handled screwdriver to form a potentially lethal dagger.

Finally, there were three hunting slings—similar to the one David used to

slay Goliath. These were diamond-shaped pieces of leather, five inches long and three inches wide, with two-foot thongs looped and tied through slits at each end of the longer dimension. In the center of each leather pocket was cut a tiny diamond-shaped hole. The projectile—a smooth, round stone—would nestle in that hole until the hunter wanted to release it.

The end of one thong was tied into a loop that fitted over the middle finger of the hunter's right hand. The same hand grasped the other thong between thumb and index finger. After lowering the pocket until the stone rested against his leg, the hunter raised his arm and whirled the sling around his head, giving

it added speed and power with each circular sweep. As the rock came from behind for the fourth or fifth time, the hunter released the loose thong—and the stone shot forward with great force.

Rolf, Diana, and Donald practiced together daily—for the hunter's sling, though far more powerful than the slingshot, was also less accurate in inexperienced hands. Andrew was often present at these sessions to set up targets or just watch, and he observed a lively competition develop among the three.

Donald, the biggest and strongest, was clumsy at first, while Diana—whose slender body weighed less than half as much as Donald's—was naturally coordinated and graceful. From the first,

she went through the ritual of lifting, whirling, and releasing as if it were a dance.

Gradually, they all developed a remarkable degree of accuracy. Still, when Carlo suggested that Rolf was now ready to get his deer, Rolf shook his head.

“This is no way to hunt deer. The stone would have to hit him in the head, and even then you’d only stun him.”

“Then how about a trap?”

“No good,” Rolf said stubbornly. “A trap has to be baited, and there’s no bait a deer will take.”

Carlo smiled broadly. “Eh, bradda, whatsa matta? I think you no feel like catching deah. Maybe it’s moah betta we

use a beeg snare, or sumteen? I dunno.”

“Snare?” Rolf scoffed. “Not for deer. Slings, traps, snares—that’s for little stuff. I’m going to make a bow and arrows.”

“Hal-lo dayah!” Carlo said approvingly. “Okay. Go make da bow and arrows for da deah. I goin’ make harpoon so I can get my seal. We goin’ see who can bag his game first, okay?”

From then on, evening work sessions were enlivened by the rivalry between Rolf and Carlo. Night after night they worked—peeling, rubbing, chipping, gouging. Warming wood to make it soft, or firing it to make it hard.

During the day, the two of them—both helped by Diana—collected and cured

their materials. Yew for the bow and the harpoon's foreshaft. Cedar for arrow shafts, and Douglas fir for the harpoon's main shaft. Rabbit skin for the archer's wrist guard, and feathers for the fletching of his arrows. Willow bark to be pounded and twisted into harpoon line, as well as into a tumpline—the sling Rolf would need to haul his game. Beach agates from which arrowheads could be chipped, and softer stone to be chiseled and ground to a doughnut shape for a tool to straighten arrow shafts.

They experimented, they failed. They would finish an arrow or a harpoon point, and it would break. But they persisted—Carlo good-naturedly shrugging off every reverse, Rolf

growing more determined with each disappointment.

“What patience!” Felicia commented one evening, as Rolf labored over a stone with the intense concentration of a diamond cutter entrusted with the Hope Diamond. “And everything takes so much *time*—because we can’t make anything until we’ve made the *tools* to make it. And before that, we have to find the materials for making the tools!”

She held up the crude loom on which she was weaving a mat of cedar bark. “Think how long it took you to put this loom together, Andy. And I was days and days rustling through the woods looking for cedar, and peeling the bark, and shredding it.”

“Never mind, dear,” Warren said brightly. “I was a world-famous sculptor, and now I spend two days making a potty. And we’re not even getting union scale!”

Andrew smiled. “We’re certainly learning a different valuation of time. Industrial society calculates the laborer’s worth not by *what* he produces but by how *much*—and by how fast he can do it. *Time is money*—we’ve heard that so often that we believe it. But this great truth of the twentieth century is, on Phoenix, a lie. Here, time is our most freely available resource.”

“If I were getting minimum wages,” Norma mused, “the flour I ground for the bread would cost fifteen dollars a

pound.”

Andrew nodded in agreement. “Of course. But did you make the bread in order to earn money?”

“No. I made it so we wouldn’t be hungry.”

“Ah.” Andrew smiled. “That’s the heart of it. When survival is at stake, time ceases to be a primary measure of value.”



The day came when the two set out together—Carlo with his harpoon, Rolf with his bow and arrows.

“See you tonight, bradda,” Carlo sang as they parted company at the top of the hill.

“Good luck,” Rolf called back,

smiling. His dark eyes were bright with excitement. The bow was smooth in his hand, and the quiver of arrows rested lightly across his back. “If you get back to camp before I do, get a good fire going. We’re having venison steak tonight.”

Rolf moved through the woods swiftly, heading toward the farm. The woods at the edge of the pond was the likeliest spot to find deer—especially at dusk, when the animals would leave cover to drink at the waterhole, and might venture farther to graze in the meadow or nibble windfall apples in the orchard. But Rolf had seen signs of deer in many other places, and today he spotted such signs long before reaching

the old farm or the pond.

In a brushy pocket in the woods, the bushes were trampled, the trunks of the trees were skinned, and undergrowth and small lower limbs were broken. It looked as if an infuriated beast had deliberately attacked everything in sight. And the damage was recent, for the wounds in the tree trunks were still sticky with sap.

A buck. A buck in the rutting season, expressing his pugnacious instincts by ripping up bushes with his antlers.

Rolf dropped to his knees and studied the forest floor. Although the carpet of dead leaves and pine needles had been disturbed as well, he couldn't find marks to indicate how big the animal might be

or which way he had gone. Still, this was definitely buck territory. He chose the direction in which a few crushed leaves and broken twigs hinted at a trail.

He walked stealthily, keeping his eyes on the ground. If he were to step on a dry twig, the snap would break the silence like the crack of a gun. If he were to bend a low-growing limb, it would spring back when released—and even this soft *twang* would warn the buck, if he was close by.

As Rolf proceeded, the signs grew clearer. The faint trail became wider, more distinct. He found an occasional tuft of hair, and scattered droppings. And finally, footprints.

The hind foot was almost on top of the

heart-shaped indentation made by the forefoot. The animal was walking, not running. This told Rolf that, so far, he hadn't frightened his prey. Also, the prints toed out a little. This buck was big.

Rolf first caught sight of him on the edge of the meadow. He was magnificent—a three-pointer, with beautiful haunches and a noble head. His arrogant, upstanding white tail switched as he grazed contentedly, secure in his strength and isolation.

Rolf stole forward. He had hunted deer since he was ten years old, and had never gone through a season without getting his buck. But it was a different story now. His experience in tracking

was still on his side, but his skill with a rifle was useless.

What was the range of his bow and arrow, compared to that of a 30.30? He could only guess. How deeply would his stone arrow penetrate? And if he only wounded the animal, what was his chance of getting a second shot?

He stepped into the open field, an arrow in place, his left hand clamped on the bow, three fingers of his right hand circling the bowstring and small end of the shaft. His chest was so tight, it repressed the rise and fall of his breathing. But he was in luck: The deer was north of him, and the tall trees to the east cast long, protective shadows. He had advanced twenty or thirty feet before

the buck lifted his head and slowly, majestically, turned to inquire.

Rolf froze. But again he was lucky: The light afternoon breeze came from the northeast. The deer did not catch his scent, or turn far enough to see him.

But what now? If he came up behind the deer, he increased his chances of not being seen. But to get a good, straight shot, he would have to approach from the side. Also, with a high-powered rifle, he would have aimed at the head, and at a distance of a hundred and fifty yards. But with bow and arrow, it would be foolish to shoot at anything farther away than forty yards, and he would need the largest possible target—not the head, or the soft, vulnerable neck and

throat, but the body, just behind the foreleg.

He continued straight ahead, still behind the buck, then began circling to the right. He was supremely patient; he was light on his feet; he was stealthy; and he never took his eyes from the target. These traits of the hunter, acquired in boyhood, brought him closer to the deer than he had dared hope before.

Judging by his target practice, he was now well within range. This was his chance.

Keeping his eyes on the buck, Rolf lowered his bow until the arrowhead pointed to the ground. In that position, he pushed forward on the bow and pulled

back on the bowstring. The tension on the curving bow reached an explosive maximum, with his upper arms and shoulders as taut as his weapon.

At that point, he swung the bow upward. Through narrowed eyes, he lined up the tip of the arrowhead with the buck's forequarter. He released the arrow—and in that same instant, the great deer raised his head and looked at Rolf.

As his large brown eyes identified the enemy, the buck hesitated—and that would have been enough to doom him, had Rolf's arrow gone straight to its mark. But the shaft was imperfect, the crude agate arrowhead imbalanced. The deadly projectile flew in a slight arc,

missing the target by an almost invisible margin and dropping to the ground fifty feet beyond the startled deer.

The animal leaped forward, shattering the afternoon quiet with his loud, whistling snort.

Rolf raced forward, fitting another arrow as he ran. But he was too late. The buck, still snorting, bounded out of range and disappeared into the shadow of the woods.



“Don’t feel too bad, bradda. I didn’t get my seal, either. But we try again tomorrow, eh?”

Laughing, Carlo pointed to the carvings on the totem calendar. “Tomorrow night, Warren goan cut two

little pictures—a deer right here on this side, a seal over here on the other. Tomorrow, that's the day."



Tomorrow brought another double failure—and so did the day after that. On the third day, Rolf spotted a spike deer. But again, his arrow missed and he returned to camp empty-handed.

Carlo, though, was already there—and he had bagged a seal.

He had also injured himself. The flesh along his right hip and thigh was gouged and bleeding. There were deep, jagged cuts in his right forearm, and bruises all over him. He explained, with a wide white smile, that he was lucky not to have knocked out his teeth—because,

when his harpoon broke, he threw himself on top of the seal and bit him to death.

“Tell us the rest of the story,” Warren exclaimed, clapping his hands like a happy child. “But be quick about it, because I think you’re bleeding to death.”

“What was it? Barnacles?” Rolf asked.

Carlo nodded. “Yeah, bradda. I wen rassle da buggah. I had to. He was shuah strong. He wen try to drag me off the rock. I wen hold on, and I had the knife, but we was thrashing around and struggling and all kine stuff, and asswen I wen get it. And I wen get it good!”

In two months, they had all been

bruised and cut, but no one as seriously as Carlo now. Norma looked with concern at the worst of the wounds. “We really ought to do something to dress this.”

Warren, following a hasty glance at Carlo’s bloody thigh, had been studiously avoiding the sight. “Rolf, Diana, your grandmothers told you all manner of marvelous things. Veritable *founts* of folk wisdom, judging by all the ideas you two have come up with. Wouldn’t they have had some nostrums for our suffering seal-stabber?”

Rolf turned to Diana. “Have we got some of the wood I was using for the bows?”

“Yes.”

“And any spruce?”

“I think so.”

Diana ran to the warehouse and returned with limbs of spruce and yew. While the others looked on curiously, Rolf stripped off a handful of yew needles.

“Lie down, Carlo,” he said, then stuffed the needles into his own mouth. After chewing energetically for several minutes, he pushed the pulp into his cheek and leaned over Carlo’s leg.

“G r a c i o u s *Maude!*” Warren exclaimed. “I thought so! He’s going to spit!”

As Rolf’s saliva filled the open wound, Carlo winced. “Hey, bradda, that wen hurt!”

Rolf scooped out his cheek with his forefinger and wiped his mouth on his hand. "It's supposed to. But it helps healing."

"Hey, now what you goan do wid that?" asked Carlo, as Rolf picked up the spruce and pinched off a small sac of gum.

"My grandmother was Quinault," Rolf answered, as if that explained everything. He applied the sticky substance to the wound. Then standing up, he said, "Next thing is to boil some pine bark. Lots of bark, not much water. Then you wash all your cuts with it, two or three times a day."

Carlo raised himself on one elbow. "Okay, Doc. How long have I got?"

“Another fifty years.” Smiling, Rolf extended his hand and helped Carlo to his feet. “Unless you keep wrestling bull seals.”

“Not me, bradda. I’m goin’ make me a better harpoon.”

Andrew looked questioningly into the Hawaiian’s dark, expressive face. “You spent three days on the one that broke.”

“I was in a hurry,” Carlo said genially, dropping the pidgin, as he usually did when speaking to Andrew. “I had to beat out Rolf. This time, I’ll spend *six* days. Or eight, or ten. If it takes a month, I’ll get another seal.”

“A month?” Blake had removed his cedar glasses, and his eyes squinted in the general direction of Carlo’s voice.

“Another *month* here on Phoenix?”

Donald cut in. “When are you going to quit thinking about being rescued?” Never since Blake had invited Donald to call him by his first name had Donald’s tone toward him come so close to hostility. “Maybe some of us don’t want to leave. Did you ever think of that?”

No one responded.

Mostly in silence, they began preparing the evening meal. They skinned the seal, stripped it of its blubber, and stuffed it with wild onions, wapato roots, wild thyme, and grated wild horseradish. But in the midst of this activity, Andrew pondered why the word *rescue* had quieted them so dramatically.

Which of the nine might be included in the “some of us” Donald felt might not want to leave? Andrew could venture guesses about most of the others, and had some confidence in his accuracy. But Felicia... What about Felicia?

The one living being for whom he cared more than any other remained—to him, at least—an utter mystery.



By the end of the evening, they had agreed to establish the “apothecary,” where they would keep herbs, leaves, barks, seeds, infusions—anything they had found to be healing or curative.

And Rolf had decided to hunt deer by some means other than bow and arrow.

“I haven’t given up,” he said quietly.

“But I need more practice. Just being an Indian doesn’t make me a good shot with a bow and arrow. That big buck is up there someplace, and I’m not going to wait until I’m sharp enough with the bow to get him. I’ll try another way.”

“What way?” Donald asked. “A snare?”

Rolf’s low voice was hard as ironwood. “Not me. I said before, a snare is for small game. But I *will* try something like a fall-log trap.”

Rolf set out the next morning with the ax. All that day and the next, he worked to perfect a trap that was clever enough to attract a deer, and strong enough to hold him.

It was a stockade, eight feet tall. An

entrance was framed on two sides by boards with vertical grooves, into which slid a door. A cedar bark rope, looped over an overhanging limb, held this door high to leave the entrance open.

Though a week earlier Rolf had proclaimed to the others that a deer would never take bait, he was ready to admit he might have been wrong, and sincerely hoped he had been. Inside the stockade, he impaled the bait of an apple on a sharp stick, to which he tied the other end of the rope. Using rocks, sticks, vines, and more rope, he devised a weighted triggering mechanism. A pull on the apple would release the door, dropping it between the guide poles to close the entrance.

The next morning, he was up early. He raced through the woods, carrying with him the knife for skinning deer, and the sling for hauling it back.

His stockade was a shambles.

The entrance was closed, so his system of weights and forked sticks had worked. And the bait had been taken. Half the apple was gone—and the remaining half clearly showed the teeth marks of a deer. But the animal too was gone, and its escape route was apparent. A large section of the stockade had been broken down. The buck had charged the wall, kicking and splintering it as he bounded for freedom.

Rolf set to rebuilding the trap, making it far more sturdy than before. During

these days, he hardly spoke, even to Diana. His dark eyes looked inward, focused on an adversary he could see even with eyes closed.

After the trap was repaired, he baited it as before. For two days the apple was untouched, and the trap door hung harmlessly over the entrance.

On the third morning, Rolf saw at a distance that the door had dropped. He ran, triumph and excitement surging through him. Grasping his knife like a dagger, he peered through a gap in the stockade wall.

His game had not only taken the bait—it was still enjoying it. Standing on his hind feet, a big raccoon held the apple between his forepaws as he

energetically demolished it.

With a cry of outrage, Rolf leaped to the door, lifted it, and charged in with knife held high. But the raccoon was too quick. With his teeth sunk in the remainder of the apple, he scrambled up the overhanging limb and into the tree, settling himself in a crotch well beyond Rolf's reach. Then he looked down owlshly, once more holding his prize.

Andrew listened to Rolf's account with growing admiration for the young man. He told his story simply, without self-glorification—and with a good deal of humor, when describing the raccoon's black-masked face and impertinent expression.

Yes, Rolf had been humbled, but he was not a whit less determined to get his deer. And by now, "his deer" meant the big buck. No spike, no two-pointer would satisfy him.

"In the morning," he said, "I'll build a snare."

Andrew looked quickly at Donald, who had repeatedly suggested a snare,

and as often been ignored. This could be Donald's moment of triumph—a rare and wonderful occasion when he, the black sheep of the family, could inflate his beleaguered ego with a thoroughly justified I-told-you-so.

But Donald didn't say it. He didn't need to. He just looked at Rolf with his scarred face split by a grin so broad, it looped between his ears. And Rolf was smiling back.

“Yeah, buddy,” Rolf said, laughing. “Just like you tried to tell me. A snare. That's where I've got to. I just had to get there my own way.”

The next morning, before leaving camp, Rolf told Diana his plan. “The only way I'm going to get my deer is to

hide as near the deer trail as I can without getting scented, and then just stay there and wait.”

“How long?” she asked. “All day? And all night?”

“However long it takes,” he replied. “Until I get my deer.”

Rolf took his time in carefully selecting a site. It had to be on a well-marked deer trail, preferably one leading to the watering hole. He finally chose a spot in the woods just north of the pond.

Rolf’s snare was a larger and heavier version of his rabbit twitch-up. He suspended a lassolike loop from the limb of a tree, at the same height aboveground as the head of a deer. Some

distance from the deer trail, he bent an older sapling into an inverted *U* and secured the top with a forked stick driven into the ground. The far end of the lasso was tied to the twitch-up.

If all went well, the deer, in following his habitual trail, would try to walk or leap through the loop. The pull on the rope would release the twitch-up. Then, as the sapling sprang back, the lasso at the other end of the rope would tighten around the deer.

At that point, a successful kill would depend on how quickly the hunter reached the snared animal, and how skillful he was with a knife. The snare would not restrain a two-hundred-pound buck for long.

Of course, with a snare, there was no way for Rolf to select a particular animal. This bothered him, because he was more intent than ever on bagging the big buck. But a snare would not kill a deer, only catch and hold it, like a lasso. The killing had to be done with his knife. So, if he didn't want the animal he caught, he could just let it go.

At dusk on the first day, a fawn walked into the snare and hung choking with his hind hooves pawing frantically, until Rolf loosened the knot and released him. After resetting the snare, Rolf went back to his hiding place, in a thicket ten or twelve feet off the trail.

He slept fitfully, awakening at every night sound. The darkness was alive

with invisible, rustling creatures. But he held himself still, tensed for the moment when the first pale beginnings of the new day would filter through the trees, and when the deer would leave their sleeping places and come to drink at the pond.

The sky was silver-gray and streaked with pink when Rolf heard the sound—a soft snort, the crackling of a broken twig, the whispering movement of underbrush. Though he wanted to leap to his feet, Rolf forced himself to stay down, keep hidden, and wait. With his knife gripped tightly, he peered through the bushes, almost holding his breath as the sounds grew sharper and nearer.

At last the deer appeared. A buck.

Smaller than the magnificent animal he wanted, but a fine, big deer with two points on his furry antlers. He was following the trail faithfully, complacent in his solitude, unconcerned about any creature except another buck big enough to challenge him.

He was so near the noose that Rolf's muscles tensed in anticipation, as if his own head were about to go through the loop. Then suddenly the deer stiffened. After a moment so brief that Rolf had no time to grasp what was happening, the buck leaped sideways off the path, then thundered through the brush and back into deep woods.

Rolf groaned and beat the forest floor with an impotent fist. He had been

spotted, and perhaps scented.

For several minutes, he thought of giving up. Using the snare, he had no choice but to post himself near the trail—and that very necessity was defeating him. A hiding place that close could not work.

His eyes stung with fatigue, and his body ached from being held so long in cramped positions. He had been here for twenty-four hours, and the food and water he'd carried with him were exhausted. But the stream wasn't far, and there were still apples in the orchard and blackberries in the field.

He stood up. His mother's people might be better hunters than he, but his father's people, the Welsh, would often

succeed through sheer stubbornness. What he lacked in skill, he might make up in perseverance.

An hour later he was back at the snare, refreshed by cool brook water and several small red apples. Looking over his ambush, he realized his error. He had been hiding at ground level, where he could be seen and scented. But deer don't look up. If he was above the trail, and if he figured the direction of the wind...

He studied the nearest trees, looking for one with sturdy limbs and some concealing foliage. Ten minutes later, he was sitting in the crotch of a fir, with pitch and bark fragments sticking to scratches on his hands and arms, and

rough bark biting into his buttocks.

Another long day went by, and then another night. He fought sleep, for fear of falling from his perch; and he fought numbness, marshaled by his tortured body to screen out pain. But at dawn on the third day, he saw *his* deer.

He came down the trail with delicate, dancing steps, wearing his antlers like a crown. He stopped every few feet, turning his elegant head slowly from side to side. Seeing nothing amiss, he continued toward the pond.

When he reached the big loop, he did not hesitate. As if it were some lesser creature that would automatically get out of his way, he walked straight ahead, preferring to keep to the simplest route.

As his head passed through the lasso, his antlers grazed the rope. He leaped straight up. At the same moment, there was a loud *ping* and a spanking sound, as the twitch-up pulled free of its anchorage and jerked on the line. The buck, momentarily dazed, was caught just above the haunches, with his hindquarters several inches off the ground.

Rolf was unaware of skinning his legs or bloodying his hands as he slid down the rough trunk. He did not waste a second. Taking careful aim with his knife, he struck at the neck. Warm blood spurted from the wound, hitting Rolf in the eye.

The buck struggled, throwing his full

weight against the snare. Rolf stabbed again—less accurately this time, with one eye covered with blood. The lasso broke, dropping the deer's hindquarters to the ground. Rolf lunged, grasping the antlers with one hand and thrusting the knife with the other.

Wounded and furious, the buck leaped ahead, crashing through the underbrush in a desperate attempt to throw off his tormenter. Rolf held on, numb to pain, nearly blind with blood in both eyes, still doggedly striking with his knife. How far he would be carried, how long the buck would keep running, he had no idea. All that mattered was that he hold on.

At some dim spot in the forest, the

light went out altogether, and Rolf sank into a warm, enveloping blackness.

When he came to, the sun was high. Streaks of light pierced the shadows. And one golden beam shone like a spotlight on the fallen kingly buck, where he lay not ten feet away.



Bruised, groggy, and smeared with both the deer's blood and his own, Rolf still proceeded systematically with the all-important business of dressing out his deer.

He had anticipated his needs, and in spite of the wild chase through the woods, he was able now to collect the equipment he had brought: The jackknife, which had never left his hand.

A length of rope. A dry cloth. And the large, loosely woven basket sling that Diana had optimistically made for him to carry the meat back to camp.

It was a familiar routine. Even as a small boy, Rolf had been taught how to clean and preserve game. When he was old enough to shoot a deer, he was assumed to be old enough to dress it out.

Each step in the process had to be completed as quickly as possible, for yellow jacket wasps were dedicated carnivores that would quickly materialize in a vicious swarm if raw meat and blood were improperly left exposed. Yet each step also had to be carried out with meticulous care, for a haphazard cut of the knife or an unskilled

handling of the organs could contaminate the meat or ruin the flavor.

His first step was to drain the carcass of as much blood as possible. With one sure thrust of the knife, Rolf cut the deer's jugular vein. Then he tied the rope around the buck's hind feet, threw the free end of the rope over the limb of a tree, and hoisted the animal by its hindquarters. Because of repeated stabbings, the buck was already partially drained, but Rolf had guessed the chest cavity was still full of blood. He was proved right by the dark pool that now spread thickly on the forest floor.

While the blood ran out, Rolf searched the underbrush for a sturdy stick that could spread the hindquarters

and facilitate the gutting process. Finding one about two inches in diameter, he cut a two-foot length and sharpened both ends. On each hind leg of the deer, Rolf made a cut between hamstring and bone. Then he inserted the pointed ends of the stick into the slots. With the back legs held firmly apart, he could work on the underbelly.

As he castrated the buck, Rolf was careful not to disturb the musk glands that lay like powder puffs on the inner side of each hind leg. During rutting season, a buck would rub these furry protuberances together, leaving a powdery trail that would telegraph his presence to local does. With rough handling, the strongly scented powder

would drop onto the flesh and leave a taste that no amount of cooking would eradicate.

Equal care was needed when cutting around the anus and the bladder. This was a particularly delicate operation, for a damaged bladder would bathe the meat in bitterly pungent urine.

Rolf started by making a ventral cut, slashing straight down the lower belly to a point below the stomach. He then thrust his hand inside the carcass and felt for the bladder opening. Pinching it firmly between thumb and forefinger, he pulled both bladder and lower entrails out through the hole and cut them off.

Now he was ready to work on the forequarters. Using the heaviest blade of

Donald's knife, Rolf split the chest cavity. As he removed the paunch and intestines, he took special care to retrieve the greatest delicacy of all—the liver.

With the sternum split and spread apart, he cut around the lining of the chest and pulled out the heart and lungs. He considered cutting off the head, but decided that would be easier back at camp. There, his stone hammer and collection of razor-sharp stone wedges would simplify the job.

The deer was completely gutted. But flies and yellow jackets, always attracted to moisture, would soon gather if he didn't dry it thoroughly. He reached for the cloth, and with painstaking care

blotted every inch of the body cavity. That left only the skinning to complete the butchering.

Rolf straightened up. His head throbbed, his back ached, and he knew the long walk back to camp would itself be an ordeal. He would be half carrying, half dragging at least one hundred and fifty pounds of meat.

He decided to put off skinning the buck until he got back to camp. Leaving the hide on would keep the carcass clean. Anyway, the skinning process would be simple: A cut around each hind leg, two more cuts around the forelegs just above the knees—then the hide would peel off in one piece, with little more effort than pulling off a tight

sweater.

Of course, other chores would follow, so that no useful part of the deer went to waste. The leg tendons, for example, would make lacings, tougher than rawhide thongs. And once the paunch and intestines were thoroughly clean, they too had uses—the paunch as a bottle, similar to an old-country wine gourd, and the intestines as sausage casing.

He had a prize, all right, and the thought elated him despite his fatigue. He had said he would get his buck, and he had stayed with it until he did—though he fervently hoped he would never again have to do it this way. Dragged through the underbrush by an

enraged and wounded buck! Rolf shivered. It was a miracle he hadn't been killed by the buck's hooves—weapons even deadlier than his antlers.

Suddenly, he wanted to get back to camp as quickly as possible. Moving quickly but efficiently, Rolf cleaned the jackknife and slid it into his hip pocket. He dug a hole with a pointed stick and buried the entrails. Finally, he rolled the deer onto the basket sling, then looped the rope through the basket handles and slung it over his shoulder. He would haul basket and buck as a horse would drag an Indian travois.

Bone-weary but triumphant, Rolf set out for camp, vividly picturing Diana's face when she saw what he had brought.



The numerous cuts sustained by Rolf had been treated with the apothecary's best cures. The buck had been skinned. The hide had been scraped with clamshells and sharp stones, and then had been buried flat—hair side up—about ten inches underground.

These things accomplished, their interest turned to preparing the most elaborate meal of their exile.

Warren, prattling cheerily about watching his Greek friends roast a lamb over an outdoor fire pit, took charge of the entrée. A hindquarter was spitted on a stick long enough to extend across the pit. Sturdy forked sticks were stuck into the ground at opposite sides of the pit

fire. When the flames had retreated into a bed of glowing red coals, the men suspended the meat over the pit, then took turns cranking the spit so the meat would roast evenly.

Meanwhile, the women prepared the side dishes. “A course dinner!” exclaimed Warren when Diana went the rounds with two bowls of hors d’oeuvres they had never seen before.

One dish appeared to be bite-size cubes of watermelon rind pickle. Warren sampled it daintily. “It *is* melon pickle—I think. Very lemony, not very pickly.”

Laughing, Diana shook her head so vigorously that her soft, thick hair lifted as if caught by a sudden breeze.

“No, it’s kelp. Tubes of giant kelp.” She had peeled it, cut it into one-inch rings, and soaked it overnight. In the morning, she had boiled it in a syrup of wild honey from the bee tree and cider from apples in the old Furness orchard.

“It’s not as pickled as it should be, because we don’t have vinegar. I’m making that now from cider, but it takes almost six months for it to reach the vinegar stage. It will be ready in the spring.”

“Diana, lovely,” Warren said thoughtfully, licking his lips. “Do my taste buds deceive me, or is your cider already a leetle bit hard?”

Diana’s wide eyes twinkled impishly, and her soft lips pressed together in

mock dismay. “Oh, my, *no*. That would be *alcoholic*, wouldn’t it?”

“Exactly, my gentle wood nymph. I see your grandmother taught you well. If you want vinegar in the spring, you’d better hide your still.”

Diana was pointing to the second bowl. “Rolf thought of this one. *Wokas*—Indian popcorn. We roasted the seeds of the yellow lilies that grow in the pond.”

Their second course was a green salad of chickweed and winter cress, spiced with wild mustard seeds and made aromatic by the addition of wild mint. In place of salad dressing—and with another apology for the slowness of vinegar making—Diana sprinkled it with

more of the cider.

As they consumed the appetizers and the salad, their senses were tantalized by the rich fragrance of roasting meat. Now the entrée was ready. In spite of the preliminaries, they ate it ravenously, not at all mindful of having to eat with their fingers.

In between bites of venison, they stuffed their mouths with tubers of Jerusalem artichoke baked in the coals—a starchy, sweetish vegetable, with a flavor that might result from crossing celery root and sweet potato. On this great occasion, they even had dessert: winter pears, taken from the orchard, then split, cored, and baked in honey.

“*Olé!*” Warren set his wooden dish

on the ground and patted his lips with the end of his shirttail. “The hungry body has been appeased. Now for the trembling psyche.”

He drew pipe and pouch from his pocket and filled the bowl with his euphoria-inducing blend of bearberry, dogwood leaves, and yew needles. He lighted a wood splinter in the cooking fire, then cupped his hand over the flame as he held it to the “tobacco.”



The mood at the evening meeting was jubilant. It was the first time, Andrew noted, that they had been united by celebration. Always before, it had been work that brought them together. Work had dominated their waking hours, even

their evenings by the fire.

We have advanced, he mused. We now have leisure time.

Warren had been smoking his pipe even before dinner. Now, his pretty, old-Apollo face had the gentle expression of the pleasantly tipsy.

“How do you call it?” he asked the group in general. “Kinnikinnick... kinny... kinnick... Oh, my blessed aunt, what a fine thing you have done this day, Rolfie lad. We’ve missed you, you know. Knew you were up there on the hill someplace, day after day after day. Proving your manhood and all that.

“Here, Blake, have a puff. Won’t hurt you, counselor. Just a marvelous combination of perfectly legal

substances. It would put them out of business at Haight and Ashbury. That's it, take a long pull on it. A real drag. It will do *wonders* for the reluctant id. Simply *erases* the uglies. Honey, sweet," he continued, beaming at Felicia, "pass yours around, too."

He giggled, raised his eyes to the sky, and said, "I have just composed a poem. Attention, *mes vieux*."

*I'm glad
To be bad,
And I would be gladder
If I could be badder.*

The two pipes made the rounds. Donald inhaled greedily. Norma hesitated, but finally, with a small shrug,

put the pipe stem to her lips and pulled long and deeply. No one refused.

As he took his turn with the kinnikinnick, Andrew reflected that the discipline of survival might be producing a colony of dull Jacks. He had instituted Sunday as a free day, the only proviso being that, before they set out to do what they wanted, they join in an hour of meditation. Apart from Donald's one lapse, they had been faithful to these Sabbath sessions—they had even prolonged them willingly when one of them, in the spirit of a Quaker meeting, was in a mood to speak out. But was one free day enough, seeing they rarely used it for true leisure?

Andrew pulled deeply on the pipe,

then passed it along to Felicia. “Norma,” he said thoughtfully, “allow me to ask you a question. Why is it you spend your free Sundays harvesting wild wheat near the old farm?”

Norma laughed, looking a bit shamefaced. “There is so much to *do*,” she explained. “And in my case...” She gave him a wistful smile. “Remember the Puritan work ethic.”

She went on to describe a memory of her seventh birthday. Her mother had asked if there was any special way she’d like to spend the day—“within reason.” Norma had responded eagerly: Yes, there was. For her entire birthday, she would like to do only things she *wanted* to.

Her mother had agreed easily, and the lovely free day began. Seven-year-old Norma did not make her bed, or dust her room, or take her afternoon nap as she usually did. Instead, she played, and read a book, and sat in the sun with her new puppy.

That is, until midafternoon, when her mother reminded her severely of her neglected chores.

The little girl protested. “But you said I could have all day to do what I wanted!”

“Certainly,” her mother replied. “But I assumed you would *want* to do what you are *supposed* to do.”

No, Sunday was not enough, Andrew decided.

“I would like to introduce an idea,” he said to the group. “The idea of recreation. Fun for fun’s sake. We’ve been so caught up in staying alive that we’ve nearly killed ourselves doing it. Carlo with his seal, Rolf with his buck—all in the name of providing food.

“At this point, we are well fed. We are even semicomfortable, now that we’ve put up shelters in the dormitory and the cooking area. So, for a few hours each day, why don’t we gloat over the fact that, for those few hours, we don’t *have* to work.”

He turned to Norma. “You, Norma, with that work compulsion of yours, could have at least twice the fun of the rest of us. Besides enjoying doing

nothing, you could enjoy *not* doing so much else!”

Norma laughed outright and snatched the pipe from Blake’s hand. “Hurrah! It’s a birthday—everybody’s seventh birthday!”

Felicia had been preoccupied by the serious business of blowing smoke rings and trying to stick her finger through them before they broke up. But now she said, “Let’s cut loose. I’m a confirmed hedonist, and I don’t want to get out of training. But how?”

Warren twinkled at Felicia. “Red Rover, Red Rover, let Johnny come over. Fill the pipes, dear, that’s a sweetie. Now...” He addressed the others with a hand movement like a

ballet position. “You’ve heard our leader. We are going to *play*. Games, anybody? There must be someone who can suggest one.”

Diana turned to Rolf. “Do you think they’d like the bone game?”

Rolf puffed on the pipe and passed it along to Blake. “I don’t know. Dr. Held, do you like to gamble?”

Andrew said quietly, “I have never done anything else.”

“Why, Andy!” Felicia exclaimed. “What secret vices are you confessing? Poker? Roulette? Blackjack?”

Andrew shook his head. “I’ve never played any of them.”

“Yet you say you’ve always gambled.”

“On people,” he said. “On myself.” And softly, so only Felicia could hear him: “On love.”



Rolf explained that the bone game—which he knew chiefly by the name *slahal*—had been standard entertainment for Pacific Northwest Indians, and was still played on reservations during annual meetings, or potlatches. To prepare the game, Rolf cut fifty cedar slivers, sharpening each at one end and sticking it into the ground.

“These are the tally sticks,” he told them. “They represent the stakes. The game goes on until one of the two teams has taken them all. The number of tallies was always decided for each game

before it started, and there could be as many as a hundred.”

Leaving the circle, he sifted through the gravel at the rim of the beach and returned with four stones—two white, two black.

“White represents men, black is for women. We really should play with painted bones, like the large bones of duck wings—but these rocks will do instead. There was more than one way to play the game, anyway—different ways in different villages. Now all we need is something for music.” For that, he turned to the pile of driftwood and quickly pulled out two sticks for each player.

“Okay, we need two teams. Line up on the logs so we’re facing each other.

Diana and I know how to play, so I'll be first leader and she'll be second. We *should* have an even number of players, but it won't matter that much."

They rearranged themselves quickly—Diana and four teammates seated on one log, and Rolf with his team on the opposite side of the fire.

"One pipe per team!" Warren trilled. "Hand it over, Carlo."

Once they were settled, Rolf explained the ritual. Each team started with one white stone and one black. Beginning with the first leader, a player would hold one "bone" in each fist, while an opposing team member would guess the hand with the white one. A good guess earned a tally, a bad guess

gave a tally to the other side.

The “music,” as Rolf called it jokingly, was an all-important part of the game. Everyone—except the player whose turn it was to guess—was to shout or chant at the top of his lungs. This diverting outcry was to be accompanied by a slow, steady rhythm of stick beaten against stick, or against the logs on which they sat. “Not fast, but loud, and in time with each other.”

“Play on, O noble savage!” Warren held two pieces of driftwood aloft, like a cymbalist waiting for his one big crashing note in a long symphony.

Rolf nodded, then cupped his hand around the stones and shook them so they rattled.

“Ayeeow!” Warren’s voice rose in a musical wail. Carlo echoed him in a dramatic baritone. One by one, the others joined in the wordless chant, accompanied by the hollow thump of wood against wood.

Now Rolf’s hands rested on his knees, closed tightly around the stones. Diana, her eyes brimming with amusement, followed the traditional manner of pointing to the white stone. With great ceremony, she slapped her left breast with her left palm, and pointed with her right forefinger. The cacophonous din increased as Rolf opened his hands. Diana had guessed right.

“She gets all four stones and one of the tally sticks,” Rolf called over the

woozy uproar. “Now she rattles them—the way I did—and without showing the color, she passes one pair to the person on her left, the other to the right. I’ve got to guess where *both* white bones are.”

As the pipes went around, the clamor and the laughter rose dizzily above the offbeat thunder of the opposing percussion sections. When a leader guessed the location of one white stone but missed on the second, he received one tally and regained possession of one set of stones. If he missed both guesses, he gave up two tallies, and the opposing leader retained the bones and passed them to two different teammates. Each time the stones changed hands, the winning leader rattled them and passed

them along, while the chanting and beating rose in a deafening crescendo.

They had been at it almost an hour when Donald waved both arms to interrupt the game. “Hey, wait a minute. Wasn’t this supposed to be a gambling game? I see tallies, but I don’t see no stakes.”

Rolf nodded. “That’s true. The tallies only represent stakes, like poker chips.”

By now, they were high on kinnikinnick and drunk on the beat of their crude percussion instruments. Andrew, who had never achieved more than momentary relaxation from the use of alcohol, was enjoying such euphoria that he wanted to sing.

“That’s right, Donald. But without any

money, how can we cash in the tallies?"

"We got Mrs. Held's jewelry," Donald returned, with a shrewd glance in Felicia's direction.

Felicia threw back her head and laughed gaily. Normally, she would have ignored Donald, or simply regarded him icily, without speaking. But the kinnikinnick had softened her.

"Oh, no, Donald, *we* don't. *I* do. I'll put my jewels in the pot when everyone else antes up something as valuable."

Warren said brightly, "Well, I've read about the bone game, and the stick game, too. And, careful scholar that I am, I recall that the Indians used to ante up their *wives*. However, dear friends, I am opposed to such stakes, because I would

obviously be left out of the game.”

He bathed them all in delicately drunken approval. “So... I suggest strip poker. A nice, clean game. We used to play it in kindergarten—whenever we got tired of spin the bottle.”

Blake, the pillar of convention, was overcome by what seemed, at the moment, hysterically funny. “Strip poker? After the way Norma and Rolf and Diana came back from the farm, the day they pulled me out of the well?” He was swamped by an uncontrollable wave of laughter. “I’ll never forget it! Rolf with a big maple leaf hanging from his belt. The girls wearing sword ferns and strips of cloth around their breasts. And damn it all, I could hardly *see*.”

His laughter subsided into gentle hiccups. “At this point, uncovering our bodies wouldn’t be all that much to gamble, would it?”

Donald’s eyes fastened on Felicia’s full breasts. “Oh, I dunno,” he said thickly. “I’d like stakes like that.”

Andrew studied the big man’s face. “No, Donald.” His voice, though low, quivered with warning. “Don’t spoil the game.”

Donald dropped his gaze. “I didn’t mean nothing,” he muttered.

Smoking had given Norma a joyousness that erased the last prim line in her face. “We don’t *have* anything,” she said lightheartedly. “So, we have nothing to lose and nothing to gain. But

we could bet with wishes. Everyone make a wish, and the team that wins gets all its wishes granted.”

Merrily abandoning realism, they made their wishes, with a round of applause when anyone reached a new height of the ridiculous. Felicia wanted six pairs of false eyelashes from Pierre’s Salon on Fifth Avenue, to be shipped air freight. Blake asked for a set of wood-carving tools, so he could make his own glasses—entirely ignoring that, while he was wishing, he could as well wish for prescription lenses from his oculist.

And so it went, with nonsense and laughter, until the turn of the last of them—which was Donald. Lacking the humor

and imagination of the others, Donald blurted out the truth.

“I want a woman. I want a woman, and bad.”

Silence settled over the group like a damp fog. Donald looked at them defiantly.

“I mean it. You guys got yours, except for Carlo. And maybe I don’t need to worry too much about Carlo.” His eyes moved from Carlo to Felicia and back again. “But me, I need a woman. I don’t miss nothing else.”

Warren said cheerily, “Donald, old fellow, don’t feel sorry for yourself. Here, have a pull on the pipe. And think of it this way: You’re no worse off than I am.”

In spite of himself, Andrew guffawed at the sculptor's frankness. The jubilant mood was restored—and though Donald sat a little apart and brooded over his pipe, the others returned to the game.

The shouting, the laughter, the beating of sticks went on, until Blake peered at his watch and announced it was midnight.



Andrew was the last to climb the hill. Felicia was waiting for him at the top. In the flickering light of their cedar torches, her face looked drawn.

She put her arm through his. “Andy,” she whispered, “may I move my bed next to yours? I’m frightened.”

Her question had all too briefly

excited hope—before her explanation dashed it. “Frightened?” he repeated, covering his disappointment.

“Of Donald.”

“Oh, yes.” Despite the vivid impression made on him at the time, Andrew had almost forgotten Donald’s bold stare at Felicia and his own admonition.

“Of course, Felicia. You don’t need to give a reason. It’s what I want. We’ll move the beds. But are you serious about Donald? Does he really frighten you? He’s all talk, it seems to me.”

Felicia said thinly, “He’s all animal.”

He pressed her arm. “I would be pleased to be your protector—though we both know, don’t we, that if I were ever

to fight Donald, I would have to kill him with the first blow. I'd never get a second."

"Don't joke, Andy, please."

Her hand holding the torch trembled so badly that Andrew took the flaming stick away from her, dropping it on the ground and crushing out the flame.

"Come along," he said, putting his arm around her. "One light is enough."

Slowly, in silence, they walked along the path to the dormitory.



Jean Charles Brouillet, cultural attaché to the French embassy in Washington, D.C., considered jealousy an impractical emotion. On the rare occasion when a tiny flame of it licked around the edges

of his incombustible savoir faire, he doused it quickly by adding a new member to his cast of sexually appreciative women. But the existence of Andrew Held had always bothered him, even after he and Felicia were firmly affianced.

He had never met the man. By the time Jean Charles had been sent from Paris—*Dieu*, that was a sad day!—the famous physicist had already folded his tent and quietly stolen away to some barbaric shore on the opposite side of the continent. His name, though, was spoken so often and with such partisanship—both for and against—that when Jean Charles finally saw a photograph, the intense blue eyes, the dark, bushy

eyebrows, and the narrow, aristocratic nose seemed like features of a man he had known a long time.

An older man, he had noted with some satisfaction. Charming in the drawing room, he imagined, but probably less impressive in the bedchamber. Especially to a woman as young as Felicia.

Felicia herself had assured him that she and Dr. Held were totally incompatible. But she had never enlarged on that statement. In fact, she never discussed the marriage at all—until circumstances forced her to admit that, even after two years' separation, she had never dissolved it.

“Yes, of course, he did ‘desert’ me—

in that he left Washington and never came back. On the other hand, I refused to follow him to that island of his. So, if you hold to the code requiring the wife to always remain with her husband—unless doing so threatens health or sanity—then it is *I* who deserted *him*.”

“But it was true, was it not? That following him to that island would have endangered your sanity, if not your health as well?”

Felicia had smiled in a way he found vaguely disturbing. “I never found out, Jean Charles. I never made an attempt.”

Given the situation, a curious blend of resentment and admiration stung Jean Charles whenever he thought of Felicia’s husband. And when Felicia

insisted on talking to Dr. Held personally before filing for divorce, his mixture of feelings exploded into that most useless and impractical emotion—jealousy.

It wasn't necessary, Jean Charles had contended angrily. It could all be done through her attorney. Discussing it vis à vis could lead only to unpleasantness. Besides, he did not want her away from Washington just then. There were several events of importance coming up—among them, the Ambassador's reception in celebration of the Victoire test on Pater Island.

But Felicia had departed on schedule—*her* schedule, he thought irritably.

That schedule also dictated that he

meet her return flight the evening of August 9. There was no surprise when she neither wrote nor telephoned beforehand. Felicia was never late for an appointment and never cancelled one. When Flight 181 arrived from Seattle, Felicia would be among the disembarking passengers.

He had argued against her visiting Dr. Held on the grounds that he wanted her by his side. But as it turned out, he scarcely noticed her absence. At such a terrible hour, how could he? The test of the Victoire was an international disaster; the embassy was in an uproar; the reception was cancelled; and black crepe festooned the chancellery. Only by virtue of an extraordinary respect for

protocol did Jean Charles remember to have fresh flowers sent to Felicia's apartment before he went to meet her at the airport.

Incredible! he thought when she didn't appear. He checked with the airline. There was no Mrs. Held on the manifest. He rang Felicia's travel agent, and a musical voice expressed sincere regret that, because of office policy, Mrs. Held's travel arrangements could not be divulged without Mrs. Held's express permission.

After two days with no word from Felicia, Jean Charles realized what had happened. Obviously, she had never ceased to care for Dr. Held. Upon her seeing him again, her true feelings had

been resurrected.

It was inconsiderate of her not to let him know, but he was charitable in his interpretation: She had not meant to deceive him—she had truly loved him—but, with respect to old ties, she had deceived herself. And hadn't he known, really, all along? Hadn't those seemingly silly whispers of jealousy come from a sensitive inner voice? Yes, a voice that had tried to tell him why she was so taciturn about discussing her marriage, so quick to repel his tactful inquiries into her personal affairs.

By the end of the week, Jean Charles was absolutely certain his fiancée had deserted him for her husband. But with that certainty came a change in his

emotions. Charity gave way to anger, and anger cried out for retaliation.

One of Felicia's compatriots had frankly told him that his engagement to her longtime friend was a cruel disappointment. Now he took her to dinner, and then to bed—and there, slowly and carefully, with passionate attention to the finest detail, he proved to them both that Felicia's loss was her gain.

When he left her, languid on a disheveled bed, he promised to be back the next evening. And on the way out, he noted the color scheme of the living room, so as to make an appropriate selection at the florist's in the morning.

Though Felicia had been comforted by the nearness of Andrew's bed, she slept badly. Andrew was in her dreams, in jumbled juxtaposition to her fiancé, Jean Charles. Sometimes they were distinct from each other, sometimes blended—one figure superimposed on the other.

In one dream, it was growing dark. Andrew was going away from her. She followed, and he pushed her back. She cried out to him, but her voice made no sound, and he grew smaller and smaller as he drifted farther and farther away.

Someone was calling. It was Jean Charles. She turned toward him, but he had no face. She tried to explain that she

had to find Andrew. He laughed. Suddenly frightened, she looked at him closely.

It was Donald, naked...

She screamed, and the dream sound came out of her real mouth as a soft moan. She grasped the edge of wakefulness, her body tense, her heart beating rapidly, as dream shapes crowded the darkness around her. *Only a dream*, she assured herself, pushing back scenes still pulsing with reality.

Fully awake, she lay very still. For weeks, awareness of her physical self had been growing. Her dreams, even her daytime thoughts, had been possessed by sexual need.

Proximity to Andrew was not helping.

At a distance, she had yearned for him. With her bed next to his, desire was so strong, she could not black out erotic images—of Andrew touching her, Andrew gently caressing her breasts, Andrew's body covering her and pressing her against the ground.

She knew that the others, having seen Andrew move their beds together, assumed they meant to make love. There had been those wise looks, and a show of exceeding tact in the way the mated pairs—Norma and Blake, Diana and Rolf—had hastened to their individual bowers. And in how the singles—Warren, Carlo, Donald—had dragged their beds to the dormitory's far corners.

It was ironic, cruelly ironic. Andrew

had not touched her, except for a good-night kiss.

She had not expected he would. She knew the pattern well. Andrew was afraid of being impotent, and he hid behind the pretense that he had no desire. If she were the aggressor—as he had wanted during the first years of their marriage—she would risk either his rejection, which would hurt her, or the exposure of his impotence, which would hurt them both. And so she was as careful not to touch *him* as he was to avoid *her*.

Fatigue, pride, secret fears—they had combined in Andrew to repress his desire and strip him of his strength. Meanwhile, the old, familiar sexual

pressure was building up in her—just as it had before, when she finally allowed another man to satisfy her.

Felicia closed her eyes and wished fervently for peaceful, dreamless sleep. God, she had called Donald an animal, but was she any different? If she could manage it, wouldn't she be with a man right now? Carlo would need nothing more than a gesture, a look...

She turned away from Andrew's sleeping form, away from his body's warmth and the intimate sound of his breathing. Her hands were clenched into fists. She opened them, forcing herself to relax, to breathe deeply, to let her aching body and whirling mind sink into a nothingness where there was no desire.



Blake's cedar eyeglasses had been their cleverest invention, and the ax head their most valuable find. The value of the glasses could be seen in the restoration of Blake's usefulness and self-esteem. The ax's value, from its inaugural use in felling the bee tree, was more visible—for, with the ax, the Phoenix colony entered an era of construction.

They immediately recognized Andrew as the designer. This was not because he was already their administrative officer and judge advocate, but simply because he thought of things before anyone else did—and the greater the difficulties, the keener his interest.

As always, his role was limited to

that of master planner. He was not physically able to implement his plans. Others cut the trees, peeled the trunks, notched the logs, and carried the clay. As had been true throughout his career, he was the idea man, not the mechanic—and this was just as pronounced when the project was a log shed as it had been when he worked out the principle of the hydrogen bomb.

Their first significant building project was a smokehouse. Andrew applied himself to the project as if he were designing a nuclear fission plant.

If the meat, fish, or game birds to be cured were exposed to direct heat, or if the heat was too intense, they would be cooked rather than smoked as was

essential to preserving them. If the firebox was on the ground below the food, the proper ratio of heat to smoke would be hard to control—for, every time new alder wood was laid on, too much heat might be kindled. In addition, the smokehouse had to be properly vented, or the fire would go out—but if there were too many openings, the smoke would escape without doing its job.

Andrew analyzed the problems and conceived the solutions. The others put up the building. The end product was a narrow structure roughly the size of a telephone booth—a skinny log cabin, except that the logs were set vertically rather than horizontally.

The rusty nails they had salvaged from

the wreckage of the old farm buildings were too precious to use if any substitute could be devised. So, the logs—tree trunks about six inches in diameter—were tied together with slender roots of spruce trees. The resultant walls were fastened to four corner posts driven into the ground.

The women chinked the cracks with moss, spruce pitch, and seaweed. They also wove coarse mats to be suspended, like racks, at different levels.

The real coup—and Andrew's pride—was his design for obtaining the greatest amount of smoke with the smallest amount of heat. The firebox, he decided, should be separate from the smokehouse, but connected to it by a

passage or culvert. Through this would come the smoke, but very little heat. Warren went to his precious clay bank for material and, following the blueprint Andrew drew in the sand, molded a domed fire chamber with an arched conduit to the smokehouse.

“And on the seventh day, they rested,” Andrew recited with satisfaction as the first food to be smoked was loaded onto the racks. But even as Warren decorated the cedar post calendar with a tiny bas relief of a smokehouse, Andrew added, “Is it too soon to admit I’ve got a plan for something else?”

This next invention was a bathhouse—but even before it was built, they named it the “spa.” It was a far more

ambitious project than the smokehouse. It included a bench, a large wooden tub, a hearth, two large vessels for water—fresh in one, seawater in the other—and of course, a building with room enough for them all.

The spa testified to Andrew having bathed in a good number of countries. As in India, the bather would achieve maximum cleanliness with a minimum of water. First would come one bowl of seawater poured over the body, then a thorough soaping, then a rinsing with a second bowl of water, this time fresh. This procedure they called the “Hindu bath.” Then, as in Japan, the bather—already clean—could climb into the wooden tub for a leisurely and relaxing

soak.

The bather could also approximate the Scandinavian technique of stimulating circulation through sudden transfer from hot to cold. This was done by heating stones on the hearth and dropping them in only one of the large water containers, then rinsing alternately with water from both. Another option was to create a steam bath by laying wet seaweed on the hearth. And since the spa was on the beach, the hardier bather could even risk the Pacific Coast Indian's cure-all: a steam bath for as long as the heat was tolerable, followed by a naked plunge into the chilling sea.

They were so long finishing that project that Andrew grew restless to

begin new ones. At the meeting one night, when cold air and rising wind reminded them they were now well into October, Andrew began the discussion.

“What next? Who has plans for the future?”

“I do.” To everyone’s surprise, it was Rolf who spoke up. “I’m going to build a canoe.”

They all looked startled. Even Diana seemed surprised, Andrew noted, for she looked at Rolf questioningly.

“That would be a challenge, Rolf,” said Andrew. “A dugout? Like the Nootka Sound canoes?”

“Nothing as big as the *war* canoes. More like a whaler. Around twenty feet.”

“Have we got the tools?”

“Besides the ax, all I need is an adze. I think I can make one out of polished stone—or maybe I’ll try with bone. But half the job is hollowing out the log, and that’s done by burning.”

“I have a question.” Felicia’s green eyes mirrored the flickering light of the fire. “What inspired this idea, Rolf? What do you plan to do with your canoe?”

Rolf said quietly, “Go get help.”

“Oh, my sweet aunt!” Warren exclaimed. “Dear boy, I don’t doubt your cleverness. For all the marvelous things you’ve made, you have my *boundless* admiration. But a *canoe*? Rub-a-dub-dub, Rolfie. You might as

well set out across the Pacific in one of our cooking bowls.”

Diana grasped one of Rolf’s hands and leaned forward to look directly into his eyes. “You don’t need to,” she said softly. “I’ll be all right.”

Felicia’s head turned, her eyes bright with understanding. “Ah, now it comes clear. Diana, you’re going to have a baby.”

Diana’s lips parted in a soft smile. “Yes. But I can have it right here.”

“Lawsey *me*.” Warren’s blue eyes had never looked so round or so big. “Now we’re having a baby. *Merde*. What will we think of next?”

“Your concern is touching,” Felicia said crisply. “But to be candid, Warren,

a baby has nothing to do with you.”

Warren’s rosebud mouth formed a reproving moue. “Don’t be cutting, Felicia. I *have* sired a child.” He darted a look at her. “Aha!” he chortled, wagging a finger under her nose. “That surprised you, didn’t it, love? I’ll tell you all about it—*sometime*. But for being so sniffy, you’ll have to wait. Meanwhile, let me assure you that, short of taking the babe to breast, I have considerable expertise in the care of the human infant.”

Andrew stopped the dialogue with a commanding wave of his hand. “When the time comes, Warren, I’d like to hear your story, too. At the moment, though, let’s get back to the canoe.”

He turned to Rolf. “I am deeply concerned. A canoe for fishing, for setting out a crab trap, for moving more easily from one beach to another—that’s one thing. But to try to paddle to Wolf—and that *would* be the closest inhabited island—that’s something else.”

“I might run into a fishing boat somewhere between here and Wolf.”

“And you might run into a storm. You know better than I how suddenly they come up.”

Donald’s gruff voice broke in angrily. “It’d be goddamn stupid to try crossing in a goddamn dugout canoe—I don’t care *how* good it’s built. You got the tide going against you, no matter when you start out. Either you fight it when you

leave Phoenix, or it turns on you when you're somewhere in the middle. You might as well commit suicide. Christ, there's no use trying to get off this island. We're doing all right anyway, aren't we?"

Warren's eyes twinkled. "What are we hearing from the great stud? I thought you wanted a woman."

"I do," Donald growled. "But I don't want to leave Phoenix."

"Obviously," Warren purred.

"Don't do it, Rolf." Norma had been listening attentively, her forehead creased with a frown. Now the frown was gone, and she spoke to Rolf with the calm voice of a person who has weighed all the factors.

“We’ve taken enough risks. Carlo has been injured from it, and so have you. Of course, *all* of us have been cut and burned and scratched and bruised—and that can’t be helped. We almost lost Blake from a complete accident. And every time we leave camp, we take a chance on being attacked by wild dogs—which can’t be helped either, because we must keep hunting to stay alive.

“But *I do* believe we can choose between risks that are necessary and those that are not. It is *not* necessary to try to paddle a canoe from Phoenix to Wolf. You want to do it for Diana’s sake—I know that, Rolf. We all know that. But what if you drowned? Would it comfort Diana to know you’d done it for

her?”

It was Norma's longest and most eloquent statement, and they honored it with silent reflection.

“I think,” Andrew said at last, “that Norma has spoken for all of us, and very well. Certainly I can't think of anything to add.”

Blake cleared his throat. “I do have a question or two,” he said in a thoughtful tone. “First, Diana, my sincere congratulations. Norma and I have always wanted children, but we haven't been fortunate. So we are delighted that... that *w e* are going to have a baby”—this with a quick smile at Warren. “But that will be some months from now, right?”

“Yes. I wasn’t even sure about it until this week.”

“Oh, gracious!” Warren rolled his eyes. “My least favorite subject. Menstruation.”

“*Tais-toi*,” Felicia snapped. “Blake, I think I’ve caught your drift, but please go on. Ignore our resident comedian.”

Blake said soberly, “My second question is about the canoe. Can you estimate, Rolf, how long it will take to build? I’m certain we would all help in any way we can. But there’s a good deal to it, isn’t there?” He added apologetically, “I’ve done a *little* reading about the coastal tribes.”

Rolf uttered a short, self-deprecating laugh. “I’m not even sure I *can* build it.

They were specialists, the canoe makers. If a chief was rich enough, he hired one to make and repair all his canoes. And when it came to the big canoes—some of them the size of a schooner—the head canoe maker had a couple of assistants.

“So, I don’t know. Even with your help, it’ll be slow. But from now on, the weather will be right. Canoes were made over the winter, because summer heat tends to crack the wood. And I’ve already spotted the hull log. So, I’d guess six weeks to two months.”

“Well...” Blake said uneasily. “The point is, we’ve been discussing the completion of a canoe and the birth of a baby as if they were to take place here. Should we assume that in seven or eight

months—or even *two* months—we will still be on Phoenix Island?”

“We shouldn’t assume anything,” Andrew said emphatically. “Nine people cannot drop out of sight without someone deciding to investigate. Now, a search *was* made, and the helicopter saw nothing here but wreckage, and unquestionably reported just that. This suggests that some strong evidence of our existence needs to surface before the authorities take another look at Phoenix. Still, rescue may come at any time. Six months from now, or tomorrow.”

“We seem indifferent,” Blake mused. “We don’t always even bother to keep the signal fire smoking.”

“I know,” said Andrew. “And it’s

been at least six weeks since Warren told us how exquisite the pastries are at Demel's."

He picked up Felicia's hand, studied the scratches on the back, touched the broken fingernails. The skin was stained red-brown, all the way to the wrist. "Who would have guessed that the most elegant hostess in the nation's capital would become so interested in weaving baskets that she's now making dye out of hemlock bark to decorate her handwork?" Giving back her hand, he chuckled softly.

"I think what's happened, Blake, is a natural shifting of our interest from rescue to survival and beyond. Rescue is something that must be done *for* us,

survival is something we can do for ourselves. It's human nature to be more interested in what we can do than in what is done for us by others. We are not passive people, thank God—and as soon as we recovered from our shock and self-pity, we became absorbed by the serious business of saving our skins.

“Now we've advanced beyond bare living. At this point, we can *embellish* our lives, as Felicia did when going from making a plain basket to creating one with designs. We can afford leisure, as we proved that first evening we devoted to playing games instead of working. No, indeed, we are not at all indifferent—not to what is real and vital.”

He paused, rubbing his beard. “End of lecture, eh, Felicia?”

“I should think so,” she replied with a smile. “Though I must say, it was one of your better ones.”

“Okay, bradda Rolf,” Carlo sang out in pidgin. “We go make some fine kine canoe—just for here on Phoenix, okay? And then, I tell you, you goan help me.”

Rolf nodded. “Sure. Making what?”

Carlo hummed a few notes and gestured with both hands. As if the instrument were already cradled against his chest, he murmured, “I’m goan make a fine, fine guitar. Da best kine.”

A cheer went around the circle.

“Could you make some other instruments, too? Or show us how?”

Diana asked. Her lovely child-woman face was glowing with interest. “Like recorders, or a drum? I agree with Dr. Held. We’re happy when there is something we can *do*. Even if we can’t do more than beat sticks together in time to the music, we could all play, couldn’t we?”

“Shu-ah,” Carlo responded. “Play *and* sing. Hey, Warren bradda, you ever see a xylophone like from Africa? They make good kine music. You real genius at carving. I think you can make one fine xylophone.”

Warren nodded excitedly. “*Divine!* Today a xylophone, tomorrow a Wurlitzer.”

For most of the rest of the evening, the

conversation galloped merrily from idea to idea for a musical ensemble, which Warren wanted to name the Phoenix Phiddlers. Their departure from this topic came only when Andrew dropped in a comment, sudden and completely out of context.

“I wish I had paper and pencils.”

The rollicking chatter ceased abruptly.

“So you could write?” Felicia nodded sympathetically. “I’ve thought many times that probably the worst thing the tsunami did to you was to destroy all your manuscripts—especially your new book.”

Andrew smiled. “I thought about that at first. I haven’t, though, for weeks. No,

I'd like paper so I could draw plans. I've got an idea for a project, but it's too big to blueprint by scratching in the dirt with a stick."

Several voices jumbled together to ask what he planned to build. But Andrew shook his head.

"I want to work it out first. I want to give you enough detail so you can visualize it clearly before deciding whether to undertake it. Because it would require hard work on the part of us all. And also a kind of..." He hesitated, his bushy eyebrows drawn together in concentration. "A kind of change in our philosophy."

Warren's round eyes were quizzical. "I don't know what you are scheming,

Andrew. Obviously, it is not ours to know at this time. But I can make you a clay tablet—as large as it need be—and I can carve sticks with fine points or broad points or some of each. As long as you keep the tablet damp, you'll be able to keep drawing on it. And think how easily you can erase!”

“Excellent! Thank you, Warren. That's just what I need.”

For a few minutes, they waited expectantly for a hint as to the nature of the project. But Andrew's eyes were focused on the bonfire as if the leaping flames contained images he alone could see. Mike, the big male basset, made a bid for attention by resting his chin on his master's knee and looking up with

imploring eyes. Andrew patted his satiny head absentmindedly, only half aware of the hound's silent appeal. He was truly lost in his private world of ideas.

If any of the others had withheld information of such vital interest, they would have been pelted with questions and pinpricked by Warren's sadistic whimsy. But Andrew's retreat into concentration was so complete that he was out of their reach. And he was their leader—a modest and kindly leader, but a leader they never questioned.



In Blake Mansfield's law office in New York City, Gloria Tucker was sorting her employer's mail.

Her instructions were to open all

business correspondence, write brief acknowledgments, and refer urgent matters to Mr. Mansfield's partner, Simon Boyd. On Fridays, she was to pick up whatever personal mail had collected at his apartment—and as soon as he and Mrs. Mansfield had worked out a definite itinerary, he would send her their forwarding addresses, probably from Seattle.

But a month had passed since the Mansfields left New York, and there was still no word from either of them.

Ms. Tucker was more irritated than surprised. Through the sensitive radar system peculiar to really good private secretaries, she had picked up mute messages for weeks before her employer

went off on vacation.

Mr. Mansfield wanted to go out West and just wander around. Mrs. Mansfield was upset, because she didn't like to go on a trip without all hotel reservations confirmed in advance. She also prepared for every vacation by reading Fodor. After carefully underlining her selections of the best restaurants, the most interesting shops, and the most important historical monuments, she would carry the annotated volume in her travel handbag everywhere on her trip. But there was no Fodor's *Guide to the Pacific Northwest*—a fact that seemed to relieve and delight Mr. Mansfield, to Mrs. Mansfield's obvious irritation.

So Ms. Tucker wasn't surprised she

hadn't received an itinerary. However, she *was* a little annoyed. She would have enjoyed telling people she wasn't at liberty to reveal her employer's vacation plans. She hated having to reply instead that she hadn't the least idea what those plans were.

She was systematically slitting the envelopes with the letter opener that Mr. Mansfield had brought her from Florence, when a Seattle postmark caught her eye. The return address sprang at her from the left-hand corner of the business envelope: *Seattle Police Department*.

She opened it quickly and unfolded the single sheet. To her utter amazement, she read that Blake R. Mansfield was

wanted for stealing an automobile.

“Ridiculous!”

Over the puzzled protest of Mr. Boyd’s secretary, Chrissy, she charged into the office of Mr. Mansfield’s partner.

Simon Boyd was a portly, white-haired gentleman, with a slow, calm voice and beaming blue eyes. He agreed with her assessment of the letter, but assured her the mistake could be easily rectified. He would simply call a former colleague now in practice in Seattle and ask him to look into it.

“But I don’t know where they are!” Gloria Tucker blurted out, abandoning completely her preferred image of the secretary privy to everything. “I haven’t

heard a *word!*”

“You say they flew to Seattle, and that’s all you know?”

She nodded unhappily.

“No idea of specific places they wanted to see, or friends they meant to visit? Were they going on to Alaska, perhaps?”

“Mr. Mansfield did talk about Alaska, but nothing definite. And he spoke of some islands—somewhere off the coast of Washington, I think. Mrs. Mansfield’s uncle in Maine had a friend who lived on one of the islands. I heard her say something about calling on him, if they were passing by.”

“Do you know the name of the uncle?”

Ms. Tucker frowned thoughtfully.

“I’ve heard it. Mrs. Mansfield’s parents have been gone for years. He is her closest relative. But I don’t handle *her* correspondence, of course, and all I can remember is Mr. Mansfield’s reference to an uncle in Maine.”

“And you don’t recall the name of the island where the uncle’s friend lives?”

“I can’t, because I never heard it,” Ms. Tucker retorted defensively. “It was just... well... way off someplace. That’s one reason Mrs. Mansfield was so disturbed.”

“Mmm. Well, it will all come clear.” Simon Boyd’s eyes were kind, and his voice reassuring. “Send Chrissy in, will you? And then take a cab over to the Mansfields’ apartment and bring back

the mail.”

But it isn't Friday!

The automatic protest was never spoken. “I’d be glad to, Mr. Boyd.”

When she had left the room, Simon Boyd pulled down an atlas from a shelf of miscellaneous reference books and opened it to a regional map. He thoughtfully studied the hundreds of tiny islands strewn along the coasts of British Columbia and Washington.

The spa was finished. Alongside the wooden tub, the bench for reclining, the hearth, and the various vessels for carrying and dipping water, it offered several enhancements—the work of Felicia, Norma, and Diana.

“I feel like a throwback to the days we didn’t have opposing thumbs,” Felicia commented when she first tried to carve combs out of syringa or mock orange. But she persisted until she had completed a full set of nine—the long-haired, heavily bearded men now needing combs even more than the women. In addition, she and Norma improvised bath brushes and sponges,

using the coarse white moss that grew prolifically in the cracks of outcropping rocks.

They now had three kinds of soap. One kind was the snowberries they had all used since Felicia discovered their cleansing and astringent effect. Another was liquid cleanser made by boiling the bark of the thimbleberry bush. Both were borrowed from the household lore of coastal Indians.

The soft soap that they used for laundry and for bathing was an old-fashioned staple Diana had often seen her grandmother make on the farm. The ingredients were tallow from Rolf's first deer, pine needles, and wood ashes from the cooking fire. After storing those

ashes in a wooden barrel, Diana repeatedly poured scalding water over them. The liquid that drained through a hole at the bottom was the saponifying agent, comparable to the lye found in cans on the shelf of a supermarket.

The pine needles provided perfume. Diana boiled them in a small amount of fresh water and added the fragrant liquid to the lye solution. After this mixture set overnight, Diana skimmed off the froth and added melted deer tallow. She then boiled the mixture slowly, and again set it out to cool overnight. By morning, soap had risen to the surface, and Diana could skim it off with a wooden paddle.

Their most sophisticated toiletry, Felicia felt, was shampoo. They had

developed two kinds: one made by soaking willow roots, the other by boiling stalks of the horsetail rush. “For dry hair, and for normal hair,” Felicia explained when her latest products were presented to the group. She decided there was no need to add that, according to Rolf, the latter decoction was standard Indian treatment for scalp vermin.



On an afternoon more like mid-August than late October, Felicia returned from picking the last evergreen blackberries. Setting her pails down near the cooking area, she looked around. It was still early, and the others were away on their various assignments. Camp was

deserted.

She had been thinking about a bath, and longing for it. Visiting the spa was too involved a procedure to be a spontaneous activity like stepping in and out of a shower stall. Now was the time, she thought—while the others were gone and she could go through the ritual as devotedly as she wished.

With a fresh, sun-dried undergarment from the warehouse thrown over her shoulder, she proceeded along the curving beach to the spa.

They should have named it the “temple,” Felicia thought, smiling at the faintly blasphemous parallel. Filling the reservoir bowls, starting the fire to heat water, soaking and scrubbing and

shampooing—these were sacred rites. The mass of purification. Along with the shampoos and the soaps and the bath brushes, they should have furnished it with a collection plate.

Walking softly on moccasined feet, Felicia was in clear view of the spa's open door when she realized the cabin was occupied. Donald, naked as in her dream, was just inside the door. He was bent over, drying his legs and thighs by rubbing the skin briskly with the palms of his hands. It was obvious he had neither seen nor heard her.

She hesitated, gripped by the sight of this very real male body. Deeply tanned, except for the stomach and buttocks. Heavily muscled. A powerful being,

whose entire anatomy—it seemed to her in this brief moment of unexpected and unseen observation—existed for one purpose: to carry and protect the proud member emerging from its dark bed of pubic hair.

She took a step backward...

The massive body straightened up, and Donald's small eyes caught and held hers. He stood erect, making no effort to step into the shadow or to close the door.

She tried to speak, and no sound came out. She tried to run, but her body did not respond. It was like her nightmare, when a faceless Jean Charles had been transposed into a naked Donald, and she and he had been bound together by the

misty paralysis of the dream.

Except, in the dream, Donald had been grinning. The real Donald had longing in his eyes, and hope.

“It’s you,” he said.

“I’m sorry. I thought... I assumed no one was here.”

“Only you and me.”

“Put something on.” She meant to scold, to dictate, but her voice shook.

“I don’t want to,” he said thickly, and walked toward her.

Her heart was pounding, and an inner voice screamed, *Run!* But her legs were immobilized by an overpowering weakness.

“I ain’t been too bad to you, have I?”

She gasped out, “The devil’s clubs!

That day in the woods. You stood by and watched, knowing what would happen when I touched them. You were going to let me!”

“I felt sorry about that. Forget it. I ain’t done nothing since. I’m talking about something else. A way I been good to you.”

She nodded helplessly. “You mean that you haven’t told Dr. Held...” Her words came out unevenly, jerked out of her mouth by her furious pulse. “That you haven’t told him about Carlo.”

Donald’s big head moved up and down in slow assent. He took a few more steps, as slow and inexorable as a figure in a dream.

“I ain’t *going* to tell him,” he said,

looming over her. “I *was* going to. I don’t want to, no more.”

“Go away.” It was an anguished whisper. “Go back.”

“You don’t mean that. I’m big and dumb. You called me an animal. Maybe I am. But I got eyes. You can call me anything you want, but that don’t change what I know. And I know you’re hurting just as bad as me.”

She stared up at him, trembling with awareness of a body her mind commanded her to flee from. Transfixed, the mute and helpless Felicia stood perfectly still, even when she saw what he was going to do. A separate Felicia, standing outside the circle of the dream, watched him open her shirt, pull it off

her shoulders, and drop it to the ground.

“Oh sweet Jesus,” he said hoarsely, his eyes fixed on her full breasts. He licked his lips and slowly, worshipfully, bent his head.

When he touched her, the nightmare dissolved. The rasp of his breathing, the hot, searching tip of his tongue, released her.

“No!” she screamed—and, unlike in the dream, the full sound of terror burst from her throat.

She leaped to the side, retrieving her shirt with a lightning-fast sweep of her arm, and holding it over her breasts, turned to run. But a powerful hand grabbed her shoulder and jerked her backwards, throwing her to the ground.

She struggled, even though his great strength held her easily. She cried out again and again, even though she knew no one would hear.

Her shirt lay to one side. Pinning her arms to the ground, he buried his face between her bare breasts. Resting on one knee, he slid the other up and down her thigh in a frenzied effort to lift her skirt.

She was bare now, her legs and lower trunk twisting and turning to escape him. Her skirt was a wrinkled ribbon across her belly. The harder she fought, and the louder she shrieked, the more desperately his pelvis pressed against her resisting thighs.

“Don’t fight,” he pleaded. “Baby, don’t fight.”

Locked like animals in mortal combat, they rolled onto their sides. His legs were a vise she could not break. Panting, he forced her again onto her back and, with an angry lateral jerk of his hips, spread her thighs.

“Now, baby. Now, baby,” he crooned, almost weeping. His hard, bursting member probed furiously for entrance.

Her strength was waning. Her legs trembled with exhaustion. An all-pervasive lethargy seeped through her like the effect of a drug. Yet, over and over, her reeling mind protested, *This isn't what I want!*

She closed her eyes, marshaling the last of her strength for a final, futile

defense against his insulting invasion.

Then suddenly, she felt him pull back. His hands released her arms and he jumped away. Still screaming, her eyes still shut tight, she felt the crisp autumn air play over her skin.

She heard a loud grunt, and the thud of a falling body.

Felicia stopped screaming and opened her eyes. Donald lay on the ground, and over him stood Carlo.



Donald rested on his elbows and squinted up at Carlo, stunned that a man he could so easily crush would dare attack him. His thick lips locked in an incredulous grin.

As Felicia sprang to her feet and

pulled down her skirt, Carlo picked up her shirt and handed it to her. The laughing friend-to-all was gone. In his place was a man whose dark eyes blazed, and whose mouth was set in a line of cold fury.

“Get out of here!” he told her evenly. “Fast!”

Donald, grunting, got up on one knee. Felicia gasped out, “Carlo, run!”

Carlo shook his head and pointed toward camp. “I said, leave. Right now.”

“My God, Carlo! He’ll kill you!”

Donald, still kneeling, nodded. “You said it, baby,” he muttered hoarsely. “But you should stick around. This is going to be something to see. And it

won't take long.”

Felicia's voice rose in desperate protest. “He's so much smaller than you. He hasn't a chance.”

Donald was rising, fists clenched and a brutish grin of anticipation clamped on his face.

“Stop it, Donald! Stop it!”

Before Donald came fully upright, Carlo's right arm shot out—a pistonlike punch, straight from the shoulder. Donald staggered, catching his balance only after two or three lurching steps. He stared at Carlo.

Donald's grin was gone now. One big, square hand went to his face and awkwardly caressed the fresh cut at the corner of his mouth.

“Well, Goddamn you, you dirty little Dago!” Donald growled. “You don’t even let a guy get to his feet! I was going to take it easy on you, but I ain’t now. I’ll break you in—”

Carlo’s right fist cut off the rest of the sentence.

Bawling wordlessly, Donald lunged, his powerful arms extended in a murderous vise. Carlo jumped to the side. Two or three quick, light steps, and he was out of reach.

“Stand still and fight!” Donald bellowed, arms and fists poised before his chest.

Keeping his eyes on Donald’s flushed and angry face, Carlo danced backwards.

He had no illusions. He weighed one hundred thirty-five pounds to Donald's two hundred forty. One solid blow from Donald's fist, and the fight would be over. Or worse.

Carlo knew that, for Donald, there was no law on Phoenix, because no one was strong enough to enforce it. He was already in some kind of trouble—probably serious—for he had made it clear that, for him, Phoenix was a hideout. So Donald had little or nothing to lose—and that made him doubly dangerous.

As for Carlo, all he had going for him was what he'd learned in the high school gym in Hilo from his boxing instructor, Joe Kaalehone.

You're a peaceful enough kid, he could still hear the old pug say. But before you're an old man, you'll get into some real fights—and in some of them, you'll be up against a much bigger, stronger guy. He'll have the weight and reach on his side, you'll have the speed. He'll tend to be a swinger, so you gotta learn to punch. But your real advantage is, he'll expect to win.

With a prayer for the soul of his old teacher, Carlo thought, *If I can keep cool while Donald gets mad...*

Donald charged, fists clenched, teeth bared in an ugly smile. His left arm swung forward in a deadly roundhouse. Carlo ducked, and the long arm whistled

over his head.

For a second, Donald's equilibrium was lost, as the momentum of the misdirected blow pulled him forward. That was time enough. A brutish grunt broke from his open mouth as Carlo put all his strength into two quick punches to the stomach.

Enraged, Donald charged again. His right fist grazed Carlo's cheek, but his left swung harmlessly, for Carlo dodged to the right and ran behind him. A string of obscenities poured from Donald's swollen mouth as he wheeled around, swinging blindly at an opponent who wouldn't stand still.

Donald advanced, and Carlo backed away. Donald swung, and Carlo leaped

nimbly to the side. Maddened and frustrated, Donald forgot everything but his need to catch and to crush. But after every murderous blow that didn't land, after every charge that left him facing the wrong direction, there was that split second in which Donald was off balance, both physically and mentally. Each time, Carlo, his mind cold as ice, smashed his fist into the big man's face.

At the first blow, Felicia had retreated to watch from the shelter of the spa. There was no use running to get help. If any of the others had returned to camp, they would already have heard her screams and come with Carlo. Nor did it make sense to follow what had been her first impulse—to pick up the

biggest stick she could find and rush to Carlo's assistance. Carlo moved too quickly to be helped by a woman wielding a piece of driftwood.

But he did need help. So far, he had protected himself, but he was only holding Donald at bay. At any moment, Donald's fists and their terrible force might achieve their objective.

Her gaze swept the interior of the bathhouse, seeking a weapon better than a driftwood club. A bowl? A burning stick from the hearth?

Donald's jackknife.

It lay on the bench next to his clothes. She stared at it, desperation eroding her instinctive reluctance to touch it, while the curses and grunts of the killer animal

outside battered her senses.

In dreamy slow motion, she approached the bench, and her hand, seemingly independent of her, reached out toward the knife. She picked it up. Thumb and forefinger carefully pulled out the heaviest blade.

The dream sequence continued jerkily, like a hand-cranked motion picture. With the butt of the knife firmly grasped in her right hand, the wide blade extended like a dagger, she walked out of the spa and proceeded slowly toward the men.

Donald and Carlo were facing each other, both of them crouched and watchful. Donald's puffy face was smeared with blood from a bad cut over

his mouth. His small, pale eyes had lost their habitual look of shrewd suspicion—they were vacant and unfocused. His big chest heaved with the rhythm of his heavy breathing. Carlo, too, had been hurt. A gash over one eyebrow was sticky with blood, and his cheek was raw from one of Donald's grazing blows.

But the difference between the two men was not in the extent of their injuries. It was in their frames of mind.

Donald had begun the fight with supreme confidence that, in one blow—maybe two, to be safe—Carlo would be lying at his feet. Carlo had gone into it expecting to be smashed senseless, perhaps killed.

But at this point, Donald knew he had thrown everything he could, and—crazy as it seemed—the smaller, weaker man was still on his feet. What's more, Donald's futile plunging and swinging were wearing him out. Even his righteous rage at Carlo's dodging tactics had become a burden rather than a help.

As Donald's confidence ebbed, Carlo's had mounted. He hadn't won the fight, but by some miracle, he hadn't lost it. He had Donald off balance. Anyone would bet he couldn't defeat Donald. But hope whispered that, with his present tactics, he could get Donald to defeat himself.

He waited, tensed and wary, for Donald's next move. Just then, his

peripheral vision picked up the figure of Felicia. She was moving toward Donald—with a knife in her hand.

Donald's big head swiveled toward Felicia. Carlo shouted, "No! Felicia, stop! Go back!"

She obeyed mechanically, turned around, hesitated, her back to Donald.

Donald and Carlo lunged at the same instant. Donald aimed at Felicia's back, one long arm reaching for the knife. Carlo threw himself at Donald, bringing his full weight against the back of the big man's knees, like a football player clipping an opponent.

Donald dropped with a thud, dragging Felicia with him. Even then, he kept his attention on the knife. On his knees, he

groped for it, panting and straining against the obstacle of Felicia's body.

He wasn't looking out for Carlo at all when his head was rocked forward by a fierce blow—a rabbit punch behind the ear—and then a second, and a third. The third time Carlo's fist crashed home, Donald exhaled deeply and, grinning stupidly, slumped unconscious to the ground.



Andrew's fury was intensified by his sense of helplessness.

Returning to camp, he had found Carlo standing guard over a mute and sullen Donald, while Felicia anxiously added firewood to a pile already high. A glance told him there had been a fight,

and Felicia's tense, tear-streaked face told him it had involved her.

It was Carlo who explained what had happened. Felicia was as mute as Donald—but as Carlo began to describe the scene, Felicia's whole body responded with obvious and apparently uncontrollable shudders. Suddenly, she left them, returning to the beach almost at a run.

When Carlo had finished, he asked, “What you want to do with him, Dr. Held?”

Andrew could only shake his head. In all their earlier disputes, he had functioned with judicious calm, nonjudgmental as he listened to the evidence, objective in rendering a

verdict. But the attempted rape of Felicia brought him down from Olympus and dropped him into the human jungle. He shook with raw emotion: anger at Donald, outrage that the man he had befriended would repay in such coin. Plus a deep, aching fear of what the experience might have done to Felicia.

Carlo had asked what he wanted to do with Donald. That was simple. He wanted to kill him. Not by decree, letting some substitute firing squad do the job for him. Not even with a gun or any other weapon that would separate him physically from the act of killing. He wanted to hurt, to mutilate, to destroy this human animal with his own animal body.

But he wasn't physically able to do it. This knowledge added bitterness to his rage.

In a voice thick with anger and frustration, he said, "When the others are here, we'll talk about it." Then, with a nod at Carlo that said, *I'll leave him to you*, he followed Felicia to the far end of the beach.

She was picking up small pieces of driftwood and dropping them into a willow basket. The contrast between her clothing and her elegantly long-legged, full-breasted body touched him deeply. Her skirt was the remains of a tablecloth. Her blouse had been a chicken feed sack. For warmth, she wore a vest of rabbit skin, with the fur on the

inside.

Before, they had laughed over this costume. But now Andrew saw it as another indignity—not at all on the level of Donald's attack, but somehow related to it.

He had always thought of Felicia as completely self-possessed. Her poise had always been unassailable. Until this exile on Phoenix, he had never seen her cry. Suddenly he knew what now moved him so strongly. After all these years, he was discovering that Felicia was vulnerable.

He limped across the gravel beach. Lifting her basket of firewood with one hand, he placed his other gently on her arm.

“That will do for now. If you’re warm enough, I’d like to sit for a while.”

She nodded and let him guide her up the sloping beach, to a rocky ledge where the swimming pool had been. They sat down, and for several moments, neither spoke. Andrew’s fury and bitterness toward Donald had retreated to the background as he focused on Felicia. He held her hand tightly in his.

“Did he hurt you?”

She shook her head. “Not... not really.”

“Not physically.”

She nodded, tried to speak, but choked on the words and stopped.

He put his arm around her and held her against him. “I don’t know how to

help you. I know *my* feelings, but I don't know yours. You've hardly spoken. Would it ease things for you to talk about it?"

"No— Yes, I think it would."

"Please do. I want to hear."

Still she didn't speak. With a flash of insight, he knew why.

"I've never been good at listening, have I, Felicia? No, don't deny it. I know it's true. But I've been learning to, here on Phoenix. You talk, and I will listen—*really* listen. I won't walk away, or pick up a book, or look out the window with my mind on something else. And please understand—" He put one hand under her chin and turned her head, so his eyes looked directly into

hers. “Please understand that I love you. That I’ve always loved you.”

“Always?” Her green eyes were unwavering, her voice steady. “Even when you came to my bedroom and found me naked, making love to another man?”

The words and the memory they invoked hit him like an invisible fist. Perhaps they *did* have to talk about it. Perhaps it was inevitable—a true *scène à faire*, the confrontation that would raise a ghost in order to banish it forever. But *now*? In the midst of dealing with the trauma of Donald’s attack? He felt short of breath as he forced himself to reply.

“Did I love you when I found you with

that man? Ah, Felicia.” He closed his eyes in brief acceptance of pain. “At that one particular moment? No, how could I? Or I should say, yes, I still loved you, but love was submerged by anger and pride. And guilt. Because even then, I knew I was responsible.

“I wanted to think of you as an unfaithful wife. I held onto that image long enough to get out of Washington. But underneath, I always knew it was my failure as a husband that led to your infidelity. The shock at finding you with another man was the shock of facing my own inadequacy.”

Felicia remained in the circle of his arm but freed her hands and turned her head, so she could speak to the vast and

empty sea.

“You have no idea how long I took to accept the role of unfaithful wife. Even after you moved into the second bedroom, I clung to the righteous notion that I was a ‘good wife.’ Even if my husband didn’t make love to me, of course I would never turn to someone else.”

She smiled ruefully. “I had quite a debate with myself—just like the one I went through as a young girl. I was still a virgin when most of my friends had long since given up the prize. It was different, you know, back in the early sixties. Girls were having sex, all right, but still felt they had to offer some philosophy to excuse their folly, or to

explain why it wasn't folly after all. What stopped me was not so much a moral credo that said sacrificing a mucous membrane would be wrong. What stopped me was an instinct to hold on to something I could give up only once.

“It was the same, Andy, when you no longer came to my bed and my body ached to be loved. I was still the hesitant virgin. Taking a lover for the first time was like a second loss of virginity. I fought it off as long as I could. Not because I was afraid I'd get caught—though I did, didn't I? And not because I'd get pregnant, or a house detective would knock on the door, or some friend would recognize me in the lobby and

report to you. I hadn't been afraid of those things as a young girl, either. No, in both cases, I hesitated to commit the irrevocable. One is never *almost* a virgin, or *almost* a faithful wife."

She sighed. "You *are* listening, aren't you, Andy? I'm grateful, because there's more."

She was silent a moment, studying her hands with their scratches and rough skin and broken fingernails. He waited, holding her but not pressing her. When she began again, her voice was calm.

"I am a very physical person, Andy. I should say, a passionate person. As a young virgin, I held it in until one night on a grassy slope above a river. Then the floodgate broke, and I gave myself

willingly to a young man who was probably as surprised by it as I was.

“That night in Washington, when you came home early—that was my first affair. And it was much the same as that midnight by the river. I was starving. You had given me ample justification. And still I held back, as attracted as I was to other men. Oh, I never pretended not to be. The desire to be touched and made love to was so dammed up inside me, I’m sure the men who approached were drawn by some kind of chemical signal. Yet I fled from them, scared by my own need.

“Until that night you came home from Paris. The dam broke. I allowed that young man to see me home from the

dinner party. I allowed him to come up to the apartment for a nightcap. When he took my hand and led me to the bedroom, I went of my own free will. And I undressed myself.”

Andrew retrieved her left hand, holding it firmly between his own two and pressing it for emphasis. “I’ve said it before, and I mean it just as much now, Felicia. That was a long time ago. A long, long time ago.”

Felicia shook her head. She avoided his eyes, but Andrew could see that her own were brimming with tears.

“That’s just it, Andy. *That’s* all over, of course. That affair ended a few weeks after it started. But I am still a woman who needs physical fulfillment. There

have been other men since.

“There’s a connection, you see. Between all this past history and Donald’s attack this afternoon. In the motel on Wolf Island, before your boat brought me to Phoenix, Carlo and I made love.” She was aware of Andrew’s startled look but went on. “Somehow Donald found out about it—and that first evening here, before the tsunami, he even threatened to tell you. But that too is part of the past, just as much as the young man you saw in my bedroom two years ago.”

She drew a deep, quivering breath and turned to look into Andrew’s troubled blue eyes.

“Everything before Phoenix is past.

It's the *present* I'm trying to live with. I am *still* a passionate woman. I *yearn*. And I have a guilty feeling that stupid Donald sensed it. He's an animal, yes. When I let myself dwell on what he tried to do, I feel terribly angry. Worse than that, I feel... *crazy mad*. But *I* am an animal, too. I didn't want *him*. My God, no. But I *want*. And he knew it."

"Felicia," said Andrew quietly. "Do you want me?"

Startled, she searched his face. Her green eyes misted as she whispered, "Yes, Andy. Oh, yes. More than ever."

His old fear of impotency stirred, but it quickly sank beneath a new and exhilarating sense of Felicia's need for him. In only a few minutes, the past had

become irrelevant. Here beside him now was a woman he had never known so intimately as he had during these three months on Phoenix. Years before, he had *thought* he knew her body. But in the furious pace of the sophisticated urban world, she had revealed it to him only for brief interludes, for the specific act of intercourse—and then had withdrawn it, excluding him once more from its mystic rituals...

The thought stumbled, tripping over another piece of the whole truth—one he had subconsciously tried to skip over. Had it been Felicia withdrawing from him, or the other way around? If she had retreated after the act of love—retreated literally, to her own bed, as well as

figuratively, into her own thoughts— wasn't it because he had shut her out?

Mystic rituals? He had been totally absorbed in his own! His scientific experiments. His political involvements. His writing, and teaching, and lecturing. In his pride and eternal striving, he had spent every ounce of his creative energy on those pursuits, until there had finally been nothing left for Felicia.

No, she hadn't excluded him. The wall between them had been built from *his* side. But here on Phoenix, that wall had been gradually knocked down, by the impacts of a new and binding intimacy.

In Washington, Felicia had locked the door when entering the bathroom. On

Phoenix, he made her sanitary napkins of sphagnum moss and scraps of cloth, accepted with no self-consciousness. In Washington, an impersonal third called a doctor had taken charge of her when ill. On Phoenix, Andrew had held her while she vomited. Felicia had been stripped of mystique—and what remained was a warm human being, vibrant with life, and honest about her needs.

Deep in his groin, Andrew felt a surge of excitement. Even the smell of her skin excited him, driving out self-doubt and flooding him with desire.

Andrew stood up, taking Felicia's hand and lifting her to her feet. Without speaking, he led her up the beach to the uphill path. His pulse was rapid as they

climbed the hill and entered the shadowy privacy of the dormitory. Neither of them needed to speak. The way she clutched his hand, the pressure of her breast against his arm—these were a message plainer than words.

Hidden by the thatched shelter over and around Andrew's bed, they lay side by side. The feel of Felicia curving responsively went through Andrew like an electric current. He raised himself on one arm, and with one finger gently traced the curve of her slightly parted lips.

“Be patient with me,” he whispered hoarsely. “But, oh God, let me love you now.”

Felicia's head lifted slightly and their

mouths met. Andrew tasted the sweet moisture as her searching tongue caressed the roof of his mouth. He felt his body strain against restricting clothes. With his mouth still pressed against hers, Andrew removed her fur vest and shirt, and then, with trembling fingers, stripped himself to the waist.

He lifted his head to gaze at her. With lips still parted, Felicia held her breasts with both hands, pressing them upward as the nipples swelled and hardened.

Desire coursed through him in a hot tide, and with it, a triumphant sense of strength. He lowered his head and softly licked around a nipple. He was hard to bursting, but felt himself strengthen even more on hearing Felicia moan, very

softly, arching upward to meet him.

Somehow he drew off the rest of their clothing. He released her breast and slid down, licking her navel, running his tongue gently along the curve of her lower belly. Anticipating him, she cried out, “I want *you*, Andy!”

He spread her legs and softly, rhythmically, stroked the sensitive folds. “Bring me in,” he said hoarsely, and gasped with unbearable excitement as her hands found him and pressed him against the damp entrance. He thrust, pulled back slowly, thrust again.

“Love me,” she moaned. “Love me, love me...”

“Felicia... Oh God, I can't wait.”

“Don't wait. I'm ready.”

In furious haste, his hands moved under her buttocks and lifted her. He was deep within her, impaling her.

Words dropped from his mouth, matching the spasms of pleasure that gripped him. Together they climbed and climbed, bound in an uncontrollable primitive rhythm, exploding as one at the peak. Gasping, they fell down softly on the other side.

“Oh, my love,” Felicia whispered. “My lovely love.”

Andrew, above her, lay very still, in a sweet half-death, voluptuously languid. The after-pulse of pleasure vibrated between them and slowly, slowly faded.



Carlo had not meant to watch. He was

already in the dormitory when Andrew and Felicia appeared at the crest of the hill and walked arm-in-arm to Andrew's bedchamber. And Carlo's errand had been legitimate—nothing contrived, no intention of following or observing.

Why, then, couldn't he move away quickly? Flee from the love scene that his rapid pulse anticipated?

Because he was hungry for a woman. Because he never saw Felicia without remembering in detail their one night together. His impulse to protect her from Donald hadn't been pure or unselfish. It was wanting her, remembering her, that had filled him with foolhardy courage.

The ugly truth was that he'd fought Donald because he wanted her himself.

Maybe, subconsciously, he'd believed he would have her when the fight was over...

Leave! Get out of here! Hey, bradda, you got no business standing here. That's a nice lady, and you like her. The woman has her man—and it's not you!

But he couldn't tear himself away. He stayed, eyes fixed on the man and woman only partially hidden by the shelter over their bed. He stayed and watched, catching glimpses of lovemaking and muted bits of speech. Felicia's full breasts, her long red hair spread out on the ground, her husky voice as she lifted her arms and drew the man down—until their two bodies

were a white blur, dimly seen through dark green underbrush.

Carlo hated what he was doing, but was powerless to pull himself outside the reach of the love act he ached to share. Only when the crescendoing voice of Felicia cried out in the ecstatic sob of her climax was he able to turn away.

Then he fled, running through woods to the cove he so often visited alone. There he stripped off his clothes and plunged into cold, clean water.

The evening meal was normally a festive reunion. They ate heartily, chatted amiably, and laughed at—or booed—Warren's impudent questions as to the genera and mating habits of any wild food he hadn't tasted before.

But tonight was different, and they all knew why. Knowledge of Donald's attack and the fight with Carlo had flowed from one to another, through an almost osmotic process requiring few words.

They ate without appetite—tense, silent, scarcely noticing what was on their plates. As if the forces of nature had picked up their mood, the wind rose,

chilling the air and whipping the sea into angry waves that beat against the cliffs and fell back, foaming, into dark water.

While the women cleaned the cooking area and the men, grim-faced, combed the beach for firewood, Andrew forced himself to face the problem that confronted them tonight.

What should be done to Donald in retribution for what Donald had done to them? The problem of crime and punishment. And it *was* to them all, Andrew reflected. Their faces clearly showed the personal outrage that Carlo alone had had opportunity to release.

Andrew understood their feelings better than his own. Next to Felicia, he was the one most wounded by Donald's

brutish act. Yet his reactions were not clear-cut.

His anger over Donald's act was bitter. And the revelation that Carlo had made love to his wife was still embedded in his consciousness like a barb. But that afternoon, something had come alive between him and Felicia, and also within himself. The first delicate thread of a new bond had been spun—and he wanted, more than anything else in the world, to strengthen it.

Andrew looked at Donald with revulsion. He did not want to look at Carlo at all. But this woman beside him, who occasionally pressed his hand, or turned to look unblinkingly into his eyes

—she was his, as she had never been before.

For Andrew, then, both the incident at the spa and Felicia's confession of the affair with Carlo were events diminished, as though seen through the reverse end of a telescope.



Andrew opened the evening meeting with the rite of the calendar. One short, unadorned notch. As he turned to face the group, he reflected on the irony of marking this day as an ordinary one.

“We all know what our business is tonight.”

They answered with murmurs or nods. All except Donald, who had taken his seat on a log some distance from the fire

—the accused man seated in the dock.

“I have some thoughts as to how we should go about discussing Donald’s breach of...” Andrew paused, rubbing his forehead with his fingers. “How we should handle such a serious offense. I can’t pretend to be objective about this. So, it is more important than ever that the personal feelings of one individual—in this case, myself—do not prevail, or even influence you.

“Blake, you’re our legal expert. May I call on you first?”

On the opposite side of the bonfire, Blake rose. The cold wind ruffled his long hair, and his eyes were masked by his wooden eyeglasses. His gaze traveled slowly around the circle,

measuring and recording what he saw in each face. Then he removed his glasses, as if he had no more need of sight.

“Well, I...” He closed his eyes and rubbed the eyelids with thumb and forefinger. “It’s very kind of you, Dr. Held—very complimentary. Kind of *all* of you to allow me to speak first. But I can’t pretend any special expertise... That is, I am an attorney, of course. But that hardly qualifies me in this, more than any of the rest of you. After all... the issue here isn’t strictly legal, is it?”

Andrew shook his head. “No, of course not. Not in the conventional sense. This isn’t a courtroom, it’s a family gathering. But the family has been injured by one of its members. The

injury is too serious to ignore. Somehow, we've got to sort ourselves out so we can face it and deal with it. If that makes me the judge when I'm not a judge, you are certainly the logical choice for prosecutor."

Blake looked myopically beyond the bright ring of the campfire. "You're saying Donald is on trial."

Felicia's voice broke in angrily. "My God, Blake, what do you think *happened* this afternoon?"

"I know, and I'm angry, too." Blake's voice was so quiet, it seemed to belie his statement—but his hands worked convulsively, closing into fists, opening, closing again. "You see, that's my problem. I want to be objective. As

Dr. Held suggested, I am trained to see both sides of every issue. At the same time, I am... I am enraged.”

“Good!” Felicia snapped. “*I* am enraged, too, and so is everyone else.”

Blake regarded her calmly. “Any human being is entitled to a defense. We should not allow ourselves to become... a band of vigilantes.”

Felicia leaned forward to reply, but Andrew rested a hand on her arm.

“Certainly not, Blake,” he said. “But I doubt we will act as such. We’ve been very close to each other since the tsunami. A *family*, and an unusually intimate one. I am confident that, despite strong feelings, we will reach a fair consensus.

“But the point is, we’ve got to talk about it. We’re all *thinking* about it. We’re all... *angry* about it. We must bring it into the open, and come to an agreement.”

“All right, then. I’ll try to state the case against him.” Blake paused and looked down at his hands, still caught between his professional training and his personal feelings. “But who will speak for Donald?”

For several minutes, the only sounds were the splash of waves against the rocks and the explosive crackle of the open fire. Andrew looked from face to face.

“Will someone volunteer?”

The silence stretched on. At length,

Norma said tentatively, "I should think Donald could speak for himself."

Andrew turned to him. "Donald?"

The big man turned a bruised and swollen face toward his accusers. "What good would that do me?" he asked bitterly. "What kind of games you guys playing? I'm a human being, for God's sake, like Mr. Mansfield said. You all know what happened. You want me to plead, huh? Like, guilty or not guilty? Christ, that's not even how it goes. I know more about this business than any of you."

Donald stood up, towering over his accusers. "First thing is, we make a deal. You say, 'Rape,' and I say, 'No way. You got to offer me something

better.’ So, you drop it to assault third. I figure I can live with that, so I stand up and say, ‘Guilty, your honor.’ And that’s that. I don’t need no lawyer. I been there.”

Blake drew himself up to full height. For the first time, the uncertainty was gone, and in posture and voice, there was dignity and self-assurance.

“You’re forgetting something, Donald,” he said coldly. “The criminal process doesn’t end with determination of guilt—admitted or otherwise. After that comes the sentencing. That’s when you really need someone to speak on your behalf.”

“Sentencing? What can you do to me?” Donald’s battered lips flung the

question against the rising wind. “Send me back to the mainland? You can’t. Hang me? You ain’t got the guts.

“Huh! *I* know what I done. And I know what *they* done.” His long arm shot out to point first at Carlo, then at Felicia. “But, hell, *that* don’t matter, because *she’s* high class! So, you all go ahead and decide what you want. I ain’t got nothing more to say.”

Andrew studied the faces around the fire. Those faces were angry but not vengeful—with the possible exception of Warren’s, whose cherubic mouth was pinched in undiluted fury. If Felicia, the victim, could feel as much guilt and pity as she had revealed to him earlier that day, it wasn’t surprising that the others

were ambivalent.

“I think we can accept Donald’s statement as an admission of guilt,” Andrew said quietly. He nodded toward Blake. “Would you continue, please?”

Blake blinked thoughtfully at the curling flames. “I think it might be appropriate... As you said, Dr. Held, this isn’t a courtroom—it’s a family gathering. For that reason, I’d like to step out of my role as... well, as legal advisor, and bring something personal to the discussion.

“Before the meeting tonight, we were talking about Donald’s offense. I overheard—or I should say, I got the impression—that, even though Felicia is very angry, she is also troubled by a

sense of... of guilt. As if the circumstances, the intimacy of our lives, Donald's unsatisfied need for a woman... as if somehow she *caused* the attack.”

Blake looked toward Felicia, allowing her a chance to speak. But, looking down at her hands, she only shook her head.

Blake continued. “I feel very strongly that this feeling has to be looked at openly, because our unusual intimacy is going to continue as long as we're here. The women are not to blame for that, or for any... acts it might inspire.

“Outraged as she is, Felicia seems to feel that the proximity of a woman to a man who feels a need for her is cause

for leniency. I'm saying that, legally, there is no extenuating circumstance in such a case. A woman—even a desirable one, whose nearness presents temptation—has a right to choose her partner, and a right to live naturally and freely. Unless she clearly invites aggression, her physical attractiveness does not make her responsible for any feelings she may arouse.

“In short, the situation at the spa this afternoon may have been seductive, but *Felicia* did not seduce. Blame for a violent act cannot be transferred to its victim.”

Blake frowned slightly, as his weak eyes tried to find Donald's figure in the shadows beyond the firelight. “That's

all, I think, Dr. Held. Except for deciding what we're going to do.”

“Yes. Thank you, Blake.”

Andrew's gaze traveled slowly around the circle. “I'm sure you all want to conclude this meeting as quickly as possible. Certainly Donald does. He's indicated as much, by pleading guilty. So, in terms of courtroom procedure, we are ready to consider sentencing. In that connection, I have something to say. A recommendation. In fact, an earnest request.”

He cleared his throat and proceeded in carefully measured phrases. “You accepted me in the role of judge. I appreciate your trust. But in our community of nine souls, no one man

should decide what penalty another must pay. Whatever we do to Donald will affect us all.

“Therefore, I cannot accept sole responsibility for the decision. I will accept *my* share of the responsibility. But so must each one of you. We must *all* decide. As an eight-man jury, if you like.”

His fingers stroked his beard as he weighed what he was about to say. Before a gathering of the world's most brilliant physicists, Andrew Held's mind discharged original, accurate, and well-supported scientific theory with the speed and precision of a high-powered automatic rifle. But that was impersonal. Tonight, all around him, his companions

in exile stared at the fire, their faces distorted by raw emotion.

“Judging by my own feelings,” he said hesitantly, “we may have some problems deciding what to do. Back in the city, Donald’s offense wouldn’t come any closer to us than a small news item in the daily paper. Donald himself would be nothing but a name—meaningless when read, and soon forgotten. If he was convicted, we might have some casual opinion as to whether the sentence was lenient or harsh. But whatever our thoughts on the matter, not one of us would know the offender—much less have to carry out the order of the court.

“But here on Phoenix Island, we *do* know the man to be punished, and know

him intimately. He isn't a name in a newspaper, or a shadowy figure flashed for a few seconds on a television screen. We've seen him eat his food. His bed is near ours. We know his reactions, his weaknesses, his desires, his strengths.

“In short, he's a person—a living and familiar part of our own daily lives. We can't shove the offender back to where we might like him—to being a statistic, or a class, separate from our sacred selves, different from *us*, the Good People.

“And there's another reason we'll probably find it hard to sentence Donald. Whatever the punishment, we have to inflict it ourselves. On Phoenix, we can't—what's the expression?—‘let George

do it.' We don't have professional jailers and police and prosecutors so we can keep our distance and say, 'You take care of it. That's what you're paid for.'"

Andrew's arm shot out as he pointed toward the invisible mainland. "Back there, in sum, a criminal is a nonperson we've never seen, who commits an act we don't believe ourselves capable of, and is caught and punished by officials we neither respect nor adequately compensate. But here..."

He shrugged. "I have said enough. Perhaps too much. But remember, whatever we do, we must all share the responsibility. Now, Blake, may I ask you to take over?"

Blake rose again, straight, tall,

intensely serious. Their heads inclined toward him, their eyes following him solemnly. Viewed from below, his lean figure seemed to reach for the sky. His untrimmed beard trembling in the cold wind, his myopic eyes peering into the unseen, gave him the face of a troubled mystic.

“What are the alternatives?” he asked them, looking over their heads toward the unbroken expanse of the sea. “A hundred and fifty years ago, we didn’t have prisons as we know them now—places of punishment, rather than places of detention *before* punishment. Back then, there were only three penalties for crime: death, maiming, and banishment. It was the Quakers who introduced the

idea that placing an offender in confinement for a period of time would force him to reflect on his sins and grow penitent.

“But we have no penitentiary on Phoenix Island. We have no jail or lock-up. We’re back a century and a half. Will you vote, then, for death? I doubt it. Will you vote for maiming?”

A ripple of protest passed around the human circle.

Blake nodded. “Then I suggest we have only one choice. Banishment.”



Banishment.

The word in itself sounded ugly and cruel, and Andrew noted they seemed as shocked by the suggested punishment as

by the crime. They protested as if Blake had recommended medieval torture. Their eyes kept flicking uneasily toward Donald's bulky form, a shadow in the cold darkness. Yes, they were angry; yes, they were outraged; yes, they demanded justice. But as Andrew had predicted, not one had faced the fact that this demand would inevitably lead them to rendering that justice themselves.

Banishment.

That wasn't like a prison they would never see. That was a condition they could visualize with painful clarity. A living-in-the-wilderness, with all the suffering of their own exile on Phoenix increased a hundredfold by the loneliness and helplessness of enduring

it alone.

Banishment.

Except for two or three angry outbursts from Warren, they were solemn, even sad, as they explored every possible alternative. It took more than an hour for them to finally accept that their only choice was between sending Donald away and doing nothing at all. At that point, the discussion faded into weary silence.

The proposal was banishment for one month. Andrew asked each of them to vote. One by one, they rose and approved the sentence.

All except Warren. He sat silently, his lips pressed together and his round eyes staring forward with a malevolence

Andrew had never seen in him.

“Warren?” Andrew asked. “Everyone else has spoken.”

“*I want his blood. I want to hurt him where he lives. I recommend castration.*” The sculptor shrugged elaborately. “But I couldn’t perform the operation myself, even if the rest of you agreed and could hold him down. And since I couldn’t do it myself, I can’t expect someone else to, now, can I? So, having submitted my recommendation, I withdraw it. *Not* out of kindness. Out of cowardice. Like most upper-class citizens, I prefer to ‘let George do it’—as you so aptly expressed, Andrew.”

He inclined his head ceremoniously. “I bow to the majestic majority.

Banishment it is. Yes, make it unanimous.”

“You’re sure?”

“Utterly,” Warren replied, with a small, unreadable smile.



Like a sullen child, Donald stood just outside the circle, while Andrew outlined the conditions of his exile.

“You are banished for one month.”

Donald shrugged and stared at the ground.

“For that length of time, you are excluded from our community. You cannot enter this area, for meals or for any other purpose, and you cannot sleep in the dormitory.”

Donald growled, “Who says I want

to?”

Andrew continued firmly. “Except for the area out of bounds—the beach, the dormitory, the spa—you may move freely about the island. With one restriction: You are not to approach any of us. When you hear or see someone else—*if* you do—you must avoid a meeting. A voice in the distance, and you go the other way. If you disobey, we will impose physical punishment. Do you understand?”

Donald nodded, still avoiding their eyes. In fact, Andrew noted, they were *all* looking at the ground. Donald’s disgrace was as painful as a public hanging.

“You don’t have to leave tonight,”

Andrew concluded. "But you are to move your bed outside the dormitory area. In the morning, we will give you a pack of dried and smoked food and a gourd for carrying water."

During the long pause that followed, Andrew felt a surge of relief. The judgment was fair, and Donald was accepting it without a fight.

He realized he had been afraid all along of what the big man might do. Though Carlo had beaten him that afternoon, Donald was fantastically strong. The shame of being judged and exiled, added to the humiliation of his defeat by a much smaller man, could have driven him to strike back with no thought of the consequences.

Donald grumbled low in his throat, "Eight against one," and turned to go. Andrew was silently thanking God, when Donald stopped and turned back.

"I'll go, all right. But not without my jackknife."

Before anyone could move or even think, Donald lunged at the seated Carlo, knocking him over. He dug his hand into Carlo's pocket and drew out the knife. Then, holding it in his fist, he jumped up and backed away from the fire.

"Don't nobody try nothing!"

Carlo and Rolf leaped to their feet and threw themselves at the big man. Donald fell to the ground. Grunting, he swung at them with both arms and kicked wildly. They retreated and he was up,

fighting blindly, cursing and panting.

Andrew's voice rose above Donald's angry bellowing. "Donald, stop! Rolf, Carlo, back off!"

They obeyed. Donald, his shirt half torn off and a fresh cut bleeding over one eye, faced them all with the jackknife in hand. Laboring for breath, he choked out his words.

"Don't come no closer. I never stuck nobody in my life, but if I got to, by God, I will now!"

"Donald!"

The big man swung around reluctantly and faced the commanding voice. Andrew looked directly into the small, pale eyes. He held out his hand, palm up.

"Donald, please give me your knife."

Donald stared at him and remained still, as if Andrew's gentle but authoritative tone had paralyzed him. Andrew waited in silence, his hand extended. Then Donald's bullish head began to move slowly side to side.

"If you please, Donald."

The movement stopped. Very slowly, Donald lifted his hand to look at the jackknife he clutched so tightly. Then he took one step forward and dropped his beloved possession into Andrew's outstretched hand.

"This is the only knife on the island," Andrew said quietly. "We need it. We all use it."

"It's mine! It's the *only* thing that's *mine*."

“Yes. But that’s not as important, here on Phoenix, as the matter of who needs it most. Is it you, or all the rest of us?”

“It’s mine,” Donald repeated hoarsely. “I *want* it.”

Andrew hesitated. He looked around the circle but saw that no one was about to intercede or offer a solution. After the shock and tension of deciding Donald’s punishment, they were clearly ready to leave this issue to him.

He made his decision.

“Donald, perhaps you are right, after all. I think, since you will be alone for a month, your need may indeed be greater.” With a half-smile, he offered the knife.

Donald grabbed it, turned, and ran off

through the dark toward the dormitory.



Warren moved like a cat through the velvet darkness.

The meeting had not been to his liking. They had been too easy on Donald. For what was more brutal than rape? His own sexual code might be, well, *broader* than the average citizen's. But it excluded force. He had never had a love partner, man or woman, who did not join him willingly.

He abhorred all dumb brutes whose lovemaking was a crude release rather than an aesthetic experience. For him, the physical act of love was a form of communication, in which the pleasure one took was intensified by the pleasure

one gave. He had been described by a dozen vulgar synonyms for *homosexual* and had merely laughed at his censors, knowing full well that his love practices were more considerate, more delicate, more civilized than theirs.

But the thing this afternoon... Thank God he had been spared the ugly details, for he had been nauseated simply knowing that Donald had tried to invade Felicia's body against her wishes. This was the most terrible humiliation he could imagine.

But Donald, too—he had promised himself during the meeting—would know humiliation.

Warren followed a zigzag course through the dormitory, avoiding the

crude lean-tos that sheltered beds, then proceeded softly beyond. At last his eyes picked up the shadowy profile of Donald's lean-to. Obedient to Andrew's order, Donald had moved well away from the others, a hundred yards separating him from his nearest neighbor.

Warren stopped, listening for slow, regular breathing that would tell him Donald was asleep. But there was no heavy breathing, no snores. Only the rustle of a large body moving restively on a bed of fern and cedar boughs.

He slid to the entrance and whispered, "Donald?" The rustle stopped abruptly.

Warren dropped to the ground and crawled under the slanting roof.

“Donald, you’re awake?” he asked softly. He felt the edge of the bed against his side and knew that Donald’s outstretched body was parallel to his.

“What the hell?”

Warren placed one hand gently over Donald’s mouth.

“Sshh, lover. The others are asleep. Let’s not wake them, eh?” He withdrew his hand, letting the tips of the fingers dwell for a moment on Donald’s lips. “You can’t sleep, I can’t sleep. I wonder why?”

“*I got too much on my mind.*” Even as a hoarse whisper, Donald’s voice quivered with self-pity. “I don’t know why *you* can’t sleep. Chrissakes, I don’t even know why you’re here.”

“Because I feel very badly about how you were treated this evening. The cold, cold shoulder. Everyone so inhumanly perfect. They sin not, neither do they forgive the sinner. Fiddle dee dee. The lovely Diana is with child. How did she get that way? Norma the prude has been blossoming like a goddess of fertility. And unless my senses deceive me, even our great mentor, the Reverend Dr. Held, has at long last discovered what that thing between his legs is meant for, besides the elimination of bodily wastes. But they expect *you* to be a monk. It’s not fair.”

There was much of Warren’s monologue Donald did not understand, but the tone was plainly sympathetic. He

responded with childlike appreciation.

“Yeah, that’s right. It *ain’t* fair. That Mrs. Held ain’t no angel. She let Carlo screw her, I know. I heard them in the motel on Wolf.”

“You *did*?” Warren’s hand settled delicately on Donald’s throat and moved under his shirt until it found a nipple. Caressing it, Warren whispered, “Tell me *all* about it.”

Donald had often excited himself by recalling that night in the Harbor Inn—that night when the sounds from the next room had seeped through the wall to form images of an act he could not see. Warren’s invitation to describe it made his hungry member strain upwards, even while diverting his attention from the

suggestive pressure of Warren's fingers.

"I was in the next room. I couldn't see nothing, but, Christ, it was almost as good as seeing. They come over to the bed. It kind of creaked, real slow at first."

"Yes, yes..." Warren's hand traveled smoothly along Donald's hairy chest, unbuttoning the front of his shirt, opening his trousers. "What else did you hear?"

"She said, 'Keep the lights on.' Oh Jesus, she wanted him to look at her. It was like I could see it happening."

"Like this?" Warren whispered lovingly, his mouth pressed against Donald's ear. His hand encircled Donald's erect member as his tongue darted in and out of Donald's ear.

“Christ, what’re you doing?” Donald moaned. “Hey, leave off. I don’t have nothing to do with faggots.”

“No, love, no. Except when there aren’t any girls. What did you do in prison, love? There must have been plenty of pretty young boys. Which way did you do it?”

“Oh God.” More erotic images crowded his memory and made his blood pound. “*I* did it. No one did it to *me*.”

“Of course. You’re big. You’re a man. And you’re bursting with it, sweetie. You need it so bad, you’re going to explode. That’s the only reason you went after Felicia today. I understand, I know.” Donald’s great

organ, free of his clothing, pulsed in Warren's hand. "I believe you, Donald. In prison, you were the one who did it, I can tell. But it's good the other way, too, I promise you. And I've been wanting you, I want to get into you..."

Warren's fingers caressed and pressed while the tip of his tongue teased Donald's nipple. "Let me do it to you, Donald," he begged softly. "I won't let go of this great, beautiful thing of yours. I'll hold it, I'll love it."

His hands went around Donald's waist. Gently but insistently, he turned Donald and pulled him into knee-chest position.

Donald whispered hoarsely, "No, oh God, what are you doing? No, no, I've

never let *anyone* do it to me.” But he gave no resistance as Warren pulled down his trousers and as deftly and quickly opened his own.

“Feel this,” Warren murmured, directing Donald’s hand to his bare crotch. Donald’s fingers closed convulsively. “Ah,” Warren whispered. “You can feel it, can’t you? You know how ready I am, lover. So, *so* ready!”

“Goddamn it, no,” Donald moaned, withdrawing his hand. But Warren’s warm flesh rubbed against his bare back, Warren’s arms encircled his waist, and Warren’s fingers, warm and damp with saliva, stroked him rhythmically.

“Oh God, oh my God,” he sobbed as a rigid column separated his buttocks and

began its penetration. Warren's gentle hands kept stroking, Warren's member was entering—and all at once, nothing mattered but to receive, to be pierced, to be taken.

“Lover, lover... ,” Warren's voice crooned as Donald lifted to accept him. “There's more, Donald, more. I'll give it to you, lover. There, there...”

With bodies locked, the rhythm mounted. A wild torrent of obscenities rushed from Donald's mouth as Warren's hands moved feverishly back and forth and Warren drove himself deeper and deeper.

And then—just as Donald's whole body was about to explode in a shuddering climax—Warren's hands

released him, Warren's member withdrew, and somewhere in the dark, behind and over him, Warren's voice jeered at him.

“Bye, bye, big boy. Sorry, but you just don't *have* it, do you?”

Donald groaned as the peaking desire, trapped inside his body, began to knot into a hot ball of pain.

“Damn you!” he gasped weakly. “Leaving me like this. Damn...”

“Sweetie, you're just not that *good*. No one ever tell you before? Well, *well*. I do *wonder* about all your little chums in the jail. Very polite boys, I'd say. As for myself...” He laughed softly as he pulled on his trousers with businesslike precision. “I am discriminating—which

means, dear Donald, I know a good lay from a bad one.”

Donald sent a fist blindly through the dark, but Warren had already moved aside. “Tut, tut!” he said coyly. “Better pull up your drawers, Donny boy. Awful thing, pneumonia of the *sitzplatz*.”

He slipped through the entrance to Donald’s shelter, like a ghost melting through a wall. Outside, he laughed again.

“Ask not what us faggots can do for you, but what you’ll do for us.”

With a whisper of movement and a rustle of leaves, he was gone.

Donald did not wait for first light. Gathering his clothes, he fled through the woods, down the hill to the beach,

around the harbor to the south, and on and on, until he was lost in a part of the island he had never seen before.

When the night sky began to silver, he was as far as he could get from the people he never wanted to see again. His body—bruised and cut by Carlo, shamed by Warren—rebelled against such cruel usage and collapsed like a deflated blimp. As he dropped to the ground, the hard casing of his jackknife pressed into his flesh. One big hand fumbled for the trouser pocket and pulled out the knife.

Tears rolled down his scarred cheeks. He buried his face in the crook of his arm and fell asleep, the jackknife still clutched in his hand.



In the morning, Andrew was the first to leave the dormitory and walk down the hill to their camp and cooking area above the beach. He was the first, therefore, to discover that the buttery—with all the smoked and dried foods they had been storing up for the lean winter months—had been raided during the night.

Donald...

Andrew had spotted Donald's relocated shelter that morning. Finding it empty, he assumed the big man would be somewhere around camp, probably making up the pack of supplies they had promised him. But would Donald—even an angry and shamed Donald—have

done such terrible mischief to their only hedge against hunger, or even starvation?

Donald was to return in a month. Why would he vandalize supplies on which his own life might depend?

The destruction was sickening. Baskets of venison jerky had been torn to shreds, dragged through the dirt, and abandoned, half empty, some distance away. Packages of smoked fish wrapped in layers of fern had been ripped open, plundered, and left to spill the rest of their contents onto the ground. Earthen bowls filled with dried berries had been overturned and broken, sacks of pemmican pulled down from the shelter walls. And the structure itself had been

damaged, as if fury had been as much a motivation as hunger.

Quite soon the others would come down the hill. Andrew dreaded the blow this malicious attack would deal. The loss of a third to a half of their food stores was a threat to their physical survival, but it would mean more to them than that. His band of industrious and frugal food gatherers would take the destruction as a personal violation. The fact that much of the food had simply been dirtied or torn open and then abandoned only added insult to injury.

Did Donald do this? No, Andrew thought. Donald would steal, but he would not waste all this—the meats and fruits and vegetables he had so diligently

labored with the rest of them to acquire and accumulate.

The evidence was plain, when Andrew went back over the splintered doorway and the ground nearby. No man or woman had done this. In the tooth marks, the claw marks, the careless destruction, he saw a new danger, even greater than from the calamitous loss of food.

The feral dogs that Donald had once fled were no longer staying at the south end of the island. Attracted perhaps by the rich meat odor drifting from the smokehouse, they had ventured outside their usual territory.

The evidence also suggested that Donald had already gone into exile, but

without his survival kit of jerky and pemmican. It was reasonable to assume he had left *before* the invasion of the dog pack. If he had seen the ravaged buttery, he would have run to the group on the hill—if not impelled to sound a warning, then at least to save his skin.

Why had Donald departed in the night? Which direction had he taken? Why hadn't he waited for the promised pack of supplies? These were questions Andrew could not answer. But for the moment, he could not concern himself with them. He had to deal with the immediate situation, and quickly.

Donald had possession of the all-important jackknife. The remaining eight had lost their most effective weapon, as

well as their strongest man. True, they could rebuild the buttery, and to some extent replenish their food supply. But this beach camp and its nearby dormitory were no longer safe. Dogs bold enough for this act would certainly grow bolder, now that they had discovered human food and glutted themselves on it.

It was time, Andrew decided, to reveal his plan.

He had already used five or six of the soft clay tablets Warren had made for him—etching designs into their surfaces with finely pointed sticks. He would bring them out this morning, introducing and explaining the project that had occupied his thoughts for several weeks.

Of course, there were still unsolved problems... But he would not have waited much longer in any case. The weather was already changing from the golden warmth of a long Indian summer to the steel-gray chill of approaching winter.

Yesterday, he would have called his project advisable. Today, with the menace of feral dogs settling over the camp like a heavy frost, it looked more like a matter of life and death.

Book 3

ASCENT

Felicia, at Andrew's side, leaned toward the fire, her arms extended to the flame.

“Andy, let's get on with it. Anything you have to say will be more cheerful than what we're all thinking.” She shivered. “I haven't felt so terrible since the day after the tsunami.”

It had been two months since Andrew had any need to call an emergency morning meeting. Ironically, that lengthy interlude was one reason for the group's bleak mood today.

Everything had been going well. Yes, there had been problems—but in finding solutions, they had discovered in

themselves new dimensions of imagination and inventiveness. And now, in less than twenty-four hours, the harmony of the group had been shattered by violence from within, and a ferocious outside force had threatened their safety and destroyed a good portion of the food stores on which their survival depended.

The mildest term Andrew could think of was *setback*. Emotionally, it was more of a cataclysm—a sudden, terrible drop from a sense of prosperity into black depression.

The weather, too, contributed its share of gloom. The prevailing southwester had retired as the wind shifted around to the north. The air was heavy with the threat of frost, and the morning light was

gray and misty. Phoenix Island was a derelict ship drifting on an angry sea beneath a threatening sky.

Rolf piled drift logs onto the fire and sat next to Diana with his arm encircling her protectively. Blake pulled off his tattered woolen shirt and draped it around Norma. The clay tablets on which Andrew had engraved his plans were resting on his knees—but there were other matters to deal with first.

“We won’t mark the calendar this morning, unless some of you think we should. Let’s hold that for the evening meeting.”

Andrew paused and then, hearing no protest, launched into the subject he knew was uppermost in their minds.

“I’m sure you’re all aware that Donald has already departed for his month of exile. But as far as I can tell, he left without the survival kit we expected to make up for him this morning.”

Warren’s Cupid lips parted in a malicious smile. “Tsk!” he breathed. “He must have been in a god-awful hurry.”

“Yes?” Felicia asked impatiently. “For some stupid reason, he left without any supplies. Well? What can *we* do about it?”

“He *does* have his jackknife,” said Blake. “And undoubtedly his slingshot and his hunting sling.” The expression on Blake’s face was partly obscured by the masklike wood eyeglasses—but to

Andrew, the grim mouth line and careful tone of voice suggested Blake was still caught between revulsion at Donald's act and the judicial objectivity he felt he should offer.

"He can make it," said Rolf, whose quiet voice for once held a sharp edge.

"Well, *well*," Warren said drily. "You're supposed to be *inscrutable*, dear boy."

For several minutes they were silent. *All right*, Andrew thought, *what will it be? Revenge or compassion?*

Carlo had been staring into the fire. As he lifted his head, his dark eyes swept the circle.

"Nobody has to agree with me, but I'll say what I think. Maybe Donald *can*

make it through the month. But he's no nature boy like you, Rolf. He lived on this island for a year and never got a half mile in either direction from the house. Of course, he did some hunting when he was a kid, and he's had plenty of experience the last few months. So, like I said, he probably can make it—for thirty days."

He paused, and a shadow of a smile played around his mouth. "Remember, he got beaten by a guy half his size. *That* was punishment. And I got a feeling—a real *strong* feeling—that I'm not the only one who got even with him, one way or another." His eyes flicked toward Warren and as quickly moved away.

"Anyhow, that's not the point, at least

to me. That package of pemmican and jerky or whatever else was going into it—that was what we agreed to, wasn't it? Maybe Donald doesn't deserve it, but it *was* part of the deal.”

After a silence, Felicia was the first to respond. “Carlo's right, I suppose. We ought to make up a package and get it to him, somehow.”

Observing the circle of faces, Andrew saw that Felicia's stand, however half-hearted, had settled the issue.

Warren responded with a careless shrug. “Oh, well, if that's the way you feel, dear heart. After all, yours should be the role of righteous indignation. Personally, I find retribution more fun than pity. But I've had *m y* pound of

flesh, thank you. So let's make up the care package. May Donald's kit runneth over."

With a worried frown, Norma asked, "But how will we get it to him? We haven't the slightest idea where he went."

Rolf said quietly, "I do. He went south. I found tracks. I didn't go very far, but there were still plenty of signs when I turned back. So, I think I could find him, if I go before another rain."

Andrew nodded approval. "Good. We have more to discuss now, Rolf, but as soon as we've finished, will you put the package together, please? And deliver it, if you can."

"Are we through with Donald?" asked

Warren. “May I introduce a less dismal subject?”

“The floor is yours,” Andrew replied.

“*Well...*” Warren threw out his chest, squared his shoulders, and lifted his round chin in comic imitation of a great orator girding himself for his next Olympian utterance. “A long time ago—*eons* ago, right after the tidal wave, when all of us, innocents that we were, thought rescue was just around the corner—like prosperity during the Hoover administration—you’ve all forgotten, I’m sure, but at that time I proposed sending a message in a bottle.”

Andrew smiled, “I do remember, Warren—especially the fact that I was so discouraging about someone else’s

idea. I pointed out we had neither paper nor pencil.”

“True, true, you discouraged me, Andrew, but you at least gave a reason. Everyone else simply ignored me. You know, ‘There goes that whimsical little faggot, chattering about sending an SOS in a bottle. Man-child, funny little boy, playing games. Ha.’ And again, ‘Ha, ha.’

“But at this point, almost three months have passed and we still haven’t been rescued. In three months, my silly bottle might have landed on somebody’s beach, and we’d be on our way back to civilization right now, instead of worrying about being torn to shreds by wild dogs.”

He continued, dusting his soft golden beard with delicate fingers. “What you all fail to realize is that I am never more serious than when I am silly. So let me be silly-serious once again. We *do* have a bottle. Just one bottle, intact and unbroken. We have learned to make ink. As for paper, I’ve been experimenting with pounding and drying bark, with a result that’s something like papyrus. Or we could write on small clay tablets—ones that are narrow enough to slip through the neck of the bottle.”

“A cork?” Norma inquired. “Or any waterproof stopper?”

Warren shrugged elaborately. “One of America’s most renowned sculptors has been whittling hairpins and knife

handles. Why can't he whittle a stopper?"

Norma said gravely, "To make sure water won't seep in, you should dip the neck of the bottle into melted beeswax, both before and after the stopper is inserted."

"Excellent!" Warren clapped his hands. "You're never more serious than when you're serious, are you, Norma love?"



Questions had been answered; issues had been raised, aired, and in most cases, settled. Now Andrew felt free to present his plans. The large clay tablets, still on his knees, lay face to face, hiding their secrets.

“It’s time to tell you what I’ve worked on ever since Warren made me these tablets. Please be patient with me if, in the process of explaining, I turn into a professor. As Felicia knows, I am incapable of saying more than fifty words together without sounding as if I were standing at a blackboard with a piece of chalk.

“So... My plan is based on two facts and two premises... See? I’m doing it already.”

Felicia laughed and patted his arm. “Relax, Andy. Go ahead and profess.”

“Ah,” Andrew sighed. They were all smiling at him. “Well, I... Well, my plan is based on two facts and two premises. And the first fact is this: We have placed

our settlement, such as it is, on and near the beach. Partly because this is where the house was—you might say, where *civilization* was—like people living on the slopes of Vesuvius, who automatically set about rebuilding their nests on the same old site. And partly because we wanted to remain where a rescue party would be most likely to spot us.

“Fact number two: The weather is changing. We’ve had a beautiful, warm fall, but winter is approaching. Now, as to the two premises...” He stopped abruptly and turned to Felicia. “Am I worse than usual?”

Her green eyes sparkled with amusement. “You’ve got us hanging on

your words, professor. The premises?"

"First, we must have living quarters for cold and stormy weather. And second, our living arrangements, wherever they are located, must include some signaling device that will announce our existence to any ship or aircraft that comes close enough to see it.

"With these factors in mind, I've concluded that we should build a good, solid log house on the site of the old Furness farm. As soon as the rough exterior is erected, we should leave the beach and resettle on the north end."

"No signal fire?" asked Norma anxiously.

"No reason why not! The farm is on a

high point of land. A plane or helicopter would spot a bonfire in the clearing, perhaps more readily than one on the beach.”

Blake tilted his head in thought. “It might be more visible from the air, but a ship would still need to be west of the island to spot it. That clearing is screened on three sides by heavy woods.”

“True,” agreed Andrew, “the flame wouldn’t be visible from the sea in all directions—but the smoke would. And we have learned how to make lots of smoke, black or white.

“But I’m not proposing we put all our faith in signal fires. My plan includes a watchtower, a flagpole, and a signal

flag, which are better indications of human inhabitation than a column of smoke. Fire doesn't necessarily mean people. Last year, a little island east of Wolf burst into flame, and half the timber was burned off. No one had landed there for six to eight months. Fires *do* start in wilderness. From lightning, for example."

Felicia said thoughtfully, "But are we really ready to leave what we have here? The spa, the smokehouse, the buttery, the little shelters in the dormitory? Granted, they are all temporary. We built them as simply and as quickly as we could—mostly, I think, to keep our minds off our situation, and certainly not to last. So, perhaps we

should not be reluctant to leave them. But the house you speak of, Andy—a sturdy log cabin, big enough for us all...”

She looked at him quizzically. “I’m trying to be realistic. I think we’ve all advanced well beyond that time of innocence Warren mentioned, when we were so naive—or so ignorant—that we expected a Coast Guard cutter to steam into the harbor at any moment. But, Andy, a house? A signal tower? It sounds so... so *permanent*.”

Andrew nodded. “I was afraid that aspect of my plan would trouble you. And I’ll admit, I chose the old farm as the building site for the same reasons the first Furness picked the spot. That’s

where the best supply of sweet water is located. That's where the soil is rich and deep, and where the best building materials are at hand. And it's protected from wind and salt spray—not exposed to all weather like this harbor area.

“All this adds up to permanence, yes. But we've got to face it: We don't know *when* we'll be rescued. Sticking stubbornly to our summer camp won't delay winter's arrival. We've got to get ready for heavy rain, cold wind, nine- and ten-foot tides, even snow.

“We've admitted it, in one way. You, Felicia, and Norma and Diana in particular. You asked me to make you a loom. Norma asked Warren for knitting needles. All three of you have been busy

making yarn and thread out of all sorts of fibers, and you make use of animal hides like seamstresses getting the most out of a bolt of cloth. When you began to feel cold, you began to make warm clothing.

“That’s wonderful, but it isn’t enough. We need a house, too. The dormitory...” Andrew paused to smile at Diana. “The dormitory is not the best place to have a baby.

“Our house will be snug and warm. Eventually, it will have separate bedrooms for privacy. The old well that nearly took Blake from us will now provide a water supply only a few steps from the house. And we won’t have to give up the bathhouse *o*r the smokehouse. The wooden sections can

be torn apart and moved, like prefabricated buildings.”

In the silence that followed, Andrew tried to estimate what the impact of his proposal had been. He didn't have to wait long.

“We've got an ax,” Rolf said. “We couldn't do it without an ax.”

Warren spoke as if from the center of a lovely daydream. “The house will be *warm*. I'll build a big, circular fireplace in the center of the living room. I can see it, all glowing and pink. Something contemporary.”

Felicia's laugh was almost lighthearted. “Contemporary, meaning Phoenix '77?”

“Warren, will you build an oven,

too?” Norma asked. “The one here has been fine, of course—but something a little bigger and, well, more...” Her serious, dark blue eyes suddenly twinkled with humor. “Permanent?”

“Dr. Held?” Excitement shone from Diana’s lovely wood nymph face and wide, expressive eyes as she pointed to the tablets in his lap. “Please don’t make us wait any longer. Show us your plans!”



For an hour, they had been studying Andrew’s drawings and arguing a dozen details of construction. All happy talk, Andrew noted—a delightful diversion from the grim issues this emergency meeting had been called to consider.

He raised his voice above the

cheerful babble. “May I bring up something else? I promise it won’t take long.” And as they resumed their seats, he thought, *Indeed it won’t*. He knew what he meant to do, and he knew he couldn’t go through with it if he didn’t do it quickly.

Andrew looked down at the ground beside him. The big rock was there—as he knew it would be, having put it there himself. Why did he keep checking it, as if it might roll away?

“We’ve talked before about weapons. We’ve added considerably to our store in the arsenal—to the best of our ability, with so little metal of any kind. Even the Indians on these islands, a hundred and fifty years ago, were better off than we

are. They had metal as soon as the white man began exploring the coast. Without proper maps or charts, the first European navigators kept running their ships aground or breaking them up on rocks and reefs. The Indians learned what iron was when the wreckage washed up on their beaches.

“Metal—we need it, badly. Every bit we can find, no matter how small.” He was talking too fast. His voice was strained, and pitched too high.

I want to do this, he told himself. I've considered it thoroughly, I've planned it deliberately. Then why do I run on like this, as if no one could cut off my head as long as the tongue is wagging?

In the midst of a sentence about wild

dogs and the need to be armed, Andrew's voice trailed off. The moment to act was billowing out like a thundercloud, hanging before his eyes.

Now!

His movements were so decisive and so unexpected that no one—not even Felicia, sitting next to him—could do anything to stop him. Their expectant faces transformed and froze in expressions of disbelief and dismay as Andrew removed his prosthetic device, picked up the large rock, and with one desperate blow, smashed the combination of wood, rubber, and metal that for four decades had been his right foot.

Very slowly—it would be harder to

keep his balance now—he leaned forward and picked up the shattered mechanism, then laid it carefully across his knees.

“I think we can get six to eight spear points out of this. Rolf, Warren, Carlo, I’ll leave it to you to decide. I’d just as soon...”

His voice failing him, he picked up the prosthesis and held it out.

“Here!” he said gruffly. “Take it. I’m glad to be rid of the damned thing. It’s a nuisance and always has been. I’d just as soon not see it again.”

Suddenly, the women were all around him. Diana’s wide blue-gray eyes, misty with tears, looked into his. Norma, the reserved one, hugged him and kissed him

on the cheek. Felicia murmured in his ear, “You idiot. You sweet, crazy idiot.”

Meanwhile, talking over each other in their excitement, the men discussed making something to protect Andrew’s bare stump and to build his right leg to the same length as his left. Rolf would supply the leather. Warren would do the carving. Carlo reminded them there was still plenty left of the inner tube used to make slingshots.

“What am I?” Andrew said huskily, objecting to all this attention. “The queen bee? Santa Claus? I really meant it. I hate that thing. I always have. Now I’m free of it. *Free.*”

But no one paid mind to his protest. Someone’s lips brushed his cheek. A

firm hand pressed his shoulder.

Andrew sighed deeply. A lovely, warm feeling settled over him. He hadn't felt so good in a long, long time—not, perhaps, since he was a lad, running joyously to leap aboard a moving streetcar.



Carrying the ax and with the Care package under his arm, Rolf followed Donald's tracks for some time without difficulty. Fresh footprints in rain-soaked ground, along with trampled ferns and raw ends of broken twigs, were like fluorescent arrows pointing in the direction of flight.

As Rolf had expected, the big man hadn't moved in a straight line. Like all

wild creatures, he had let nature dictate his course—circling clumps of brambles rather than pushing through, walking around a fallen log rather than climbing over, and speeding his pace, Rolf guessed, only when coming to flat and open ground. Even without the obvious signs, Rolf could have trailed Donald simply by following the path of least resistance.

Until the dry wash.

All definite signs ceased at the top of a steep bank. Looking down, Rolf saw that rain and melted snow had cut into the gravelly soil, scooping out a straight, almost vertical, trench that any vacation hiker would identify as a path.

Of course, Rolf knew the hiker would

be wrong. With the first heavy rain, this “path” would show itself as only a narrow gully, a conduit of water from the upper slope to the meadow below. But many an amateur following a trail through hilly or mountainous country had lost his way by mistaking a dry wash for a shortcut.

No trail was known on this end of Phoenix, but Rolf guessed that Donald would automatically follow something that looked like one. There were no footprints in the dry wash or on either side of it—but there wouldn’t be, for the bank was composed of gravel and sand.

With the ax gripped firmly in one hand and the backpack of supplies secure under his left arm, Rolf descended the

steep bank in a crouching position. At the bottom, though, all clues to Donald's whereabouts seemed to end.

The big man could have proceeded at any angle. The meadow was carpeted with coarse wild grass, on which a man's footfall would make no imprint. But without any specific goal, the most natural thing would be to walk straight ahead. So, this Rolf did. At the same time, his eyes searched the field on both sides for any sign Donald had taken a different direction.

When Rolf reached the woods on the far side of the meadow, he stopped and studied the forest floor. Finding nothing, he moved along the rim of the woods, first to the left, and then to the right.

Perhaps Donald hadn't walked this far. He might not have slid down the dry wash at all. He might have stopped and then changed direction, even circled back. Rolf re-crossed the meadow, zigzagged his way up the gravel bank, and searched for signs he might have missed.

Tracking means looking down—so when Rolf heard a single snapping twig, the cause of the telltale noise was seen only by his peripheral vision, and there only briefly. A flick of brown disappearing into a mass of dark green.

Animal? Man?

Donald?

Rolf thought it over. A frightened deer would not pause or hesitate in its

escape, and the snap of twigs and swish of limbs would follow its flight. One of the wild dogs? No, for whatever it was had stood five or six feet off the ground. Behind the tangled mass of bushes and vines, Donald must be watching.

Rolf called out, "Donald?" There was no response.

Again he called, and again, pausing each time to hear any sound that would tell him Donald was retreating through the woods. But the big man neither answered nor gave any sign of moving from his hiding place.

He was there, no more than twenty yards away. Some inner sense of Rolf's shouted it as loudly as if his ears had picked up the rhythm of Donald's

breathing or the thud of his pulse.

But Rolf had no intention of flushing Donald from his protective thicket. Not with the shame Donald must feel at being sent into exile. And Rolf knew that could not be all of it. Though he couldn't fathom the cause, something had so distressed the defiant Donald of the evening before that he had fled in the middle of the night. Rolf recoiled now from the idea of forcing him into the open.

"Donald," he called out slowly and distinctly, "you left without any supplies. We made up this package for you. It's mostly pemmican and jerky and dried apples. But I put in some fishing line and two wooden hooks, and also a fire drill.

And there's a deer paunch, too, so you can carry water."

He waited. A faint rustle, a flicker of color almost indiscernible from the deep green of the underbrush, and then silence.

Setting down his ax, Rolf lifted the coarse basket of supplies with both hands and wedged it into the scaly crotch of a madrona tree. Then, with the ax again in hand, he waved once with the other to signal good-bye and turned north toward camp.



On the agenda of the monthly evening meeting of the Gregory Place Council of Co-Owners was an item to discuss what should be done about the Mansfield

property.

Council member Thelma Thorstad had already made up her mind.

Let others seek to delay a decision, saying the circumstances were so unusual, they didn't know what to do. Mrs. Thorstad *did* know what to do—because it was all there, in the real estate laws of the state of New York, in the Condominium Purchase Agreement, in the bylaws, and in the requirements of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Housing Act.

“Mr. Chairman!”

Mrs. Thorstad always puffed under stress, and her bosom now heaved energetically as she spoke. She noted for

the Council that Mr. and Mrs. Blake Mansfield had violated the bylaws by defaulting on maintenance charges and ignoring a notice of special assessment. She also pointed out that, according to economists, fifty percent of the country's population would live in condominiums by 1996; that action should therefore be taken to release all available units; and (huffing mightily) that the Mansfield property could now legally be sold any time the Council so voted.

A young woman with thoughtful brown eyes and prematurely gray hair signaled to the chairman and rose when he nodded recognition.

“As you know, Norma Mansfield has been a personal friend of mine ever

since she and Blake bought their apartment. It is inconceivable, to anyone who knows the Mansfields, that they would do anything... irregular...”

Her voice broke off. She coughed, composed herself, and went on in a firm tone of voice. “I have talked with Blake’s law partner, Mr. Boyd, and with several more friends of theirs. I’ve also talked with the English couple who subletted the apartment during the time Blake and Norma were to be on vacation. They all agree that something serious must have happened to prevent the Mansfields from returning to New York on schedule. I’m afraid that... that something terrible...”

“*T h a t* is for the *authorities* to

decide!” In the eyes of Thelma Thorstad, authorities were very large and eminently capable. “*O u r* business tonight is the management of this condominium.”

The young woman, whose name was Lucy, had few friends she valued as highly as Norma Mansfield. Health foods and hunting wild mushrooms may have brought them together, but what had secured their bond was their shared traits—namely, a reserved manner and the need of a well-ordered life.

No wonder, then, that Lucy had been badly shaken by all she had learned from inquiring about her friends: Norma never writing her uncle in Maine! Blake not consulting his law partner before

extending their trip—and being accused of stealing a rental car! Both of them spending two nights at a Seattle hotel—a fact confirmed by police—then simply dropping out of sight.

“Mrs. Thorstad, *please!* Can’t you understand? They have *disappeared!*”

Uneasy murmurs from other council members provided background to Mrs. Thorstad’s breathy response. “Rules are made... to be followed.”

The chairman took charge with a gentlemanly tap of his gavel. “It’s only been two months, hasn’t it? Let’s not take hasty action against owners who have been so entirely reliable in the past. I will entertain a motion that the question of selling the Mansfield

property be tabled for at least another month.”

Lucy whispered, “I so move,” then excused herself and hurried from the room. Like her friend Norma, she was too well brought up to show feelings in the presence of casual acquaintances.

They all had ways to work on the house.

The men felled trees and hauled the logs to the building site. There the women debarked them with stone hatchets—a time-consuming effort that told Andrew more about their attitudes than any of them would have admitted. Yes, stripping the bark off would increase the lifespan of the cabin, because it delayed damage from rot and routed the wood-eating insects that made their home under the bark. But if speed was more important than permanence, it was a dubious embellishment.

Many an early cabin was made of rough logs. Many a cabin had no floor

other than hard, bare ground. These Phoenix builders, though—the men as well as the women—were united by perfectionist and aesthetic instincts. *Their* cabin would have smooth, insect-free walls. *Their* cabin would have a wood floor. The moment they started to build, their common goal was to erect the best—even though a great deal less would have served the stated purpose of sheltering them for the cold winter months.

Was it merely a desire to regain the bodily comfort they'd been conditioned to expect as their birthright? Or was it instead a primeval urge for self-betterment and self-expression?

Whatever it was, Andrew reflected, it

had shown itself almost from the first. They hadn't made many baskets before they began to weave into them decorative colors and patterns. After only one batch of plain soap, they'd begun to experiment with flowers, herbs, and pine needles to add pleasing scent and color.

Once the logs were trimmed and debarked, the ends had to be shaped to fit into each other. Here, Warren surprised them. He liked to disclaim knowledge of anything practical—yet, at some time in his career as a sculptor, his dedication to the beauty and uses of wood had detoured him into the technique of jointing logs.

“I've done my *best* to forget it,” he

assured them. "But the awful truth is, I do know a chamfer from a mortise. And I could discourse for an hour on the relative merits of square, saddle, and dovetail notches."

On Warren's advice, they chose what he called the "sharp-notch" design—because it could be done with the ax alone. With two slashes, the end of the log was transformed from a circle into a pie-shaped wedge. Two smaller cuts on the side opposite the pointed edge created a wide notch.

Once they had prepared as much of this rough "lumber" as they estimated they would use, their progress was rapid, and the house seemed to spring out of the ground. First they laid a

foundation of rock that would prevent the logs from rotting on damp ground and would allow air to circulate. On this solid base, two cabin walls were erected at once by interlocking the logs at right angles to form a corner of the house, with the pie-shaped joints pointing up and the notch underneath each log snugly fitted over the pointed end of the log below it. Chinking the walls with moss and clay was then done by the women.

In less than a month they had erected four walls, enclosing a living space that would accommodate them while they gradually added on to it with more rooms.

There was still the roof to be raised—

and that would require many more trees for beams and rafters, plus bolts of cedar to be split into thick reddish-brown shakes. But once that was accomplished, they could live in the unfinished shell. From adzing timbers for the floor, to building interior walls, everything else could be done after they moved in.



When they spoke of Donald, it was a reference to how much help he would have been in felling trees and dragging heavy logs from the woods to the farm site. Their careful voices betrayed neither anger nor compassion.

Did they miss him? Yes, Andrew decided, in the sense that they were

keenly aware of his absence.

But Donald was taboo for thirty days. It was a verdict they had all had opportunity to debate and had all agreed on. Therefore—as their avoidance of the topic implied—seriously discussing his absence was taboo as well. What would it do except disinter the corpse of Donald's act—an act they hoped in time to bury permanently? Not that they could forget, or were required to forgive. But moving beyond that memory would be the only practical way to live together, in this small and inter-reliant community.

Each evening, when Andrew put another mark on the totem calendar, he wondered if he was the only one who counted the days Donald had spent in

exile. But he thought not. He often saw expressions of intense introspection, shuttered looks in the eyes, grimness around the mouths.

But then their growing anticipation of Moving Day would take over, and their faces would light up with excitement. In happy singsong, they would count the days together—not the days Donald had been gone or that must pass till his return, but the days they had worked on the house and still must work before they could leave the beach for the warm, dry shelter of a home they had built themselves.

No, they did not talk about Donald. But they did know he was alive.

Once or twice a week, Rolf and Carlo

went hunting. Besides their usual devices for bagging fowl and rabbit, they carried new and formidable weapons added to the arsenal after Andrew's sacrifice of his prosthetic foot. The prosthesis had yielded enough metal for nine spear tips. Attached to long, straight lengths of hardwood, they made lightweight, razor-sharp spears.

At a meeting, it had been voted unanimously that everyone—man and woman—should carry a spear for safety whenever they left camp. So, Rolf and Carlo drew no notice by taking the spears along on their hunting trips. Still, when one day the two announced they were going to track game in the unexplored south end of the island,

Andrew knew instantly they were concealing their chief purpose.

Hunting in the south made little sense in itself, for the group was sincerely dedicated to building the log house, and plenty of meat could be snared, trapped, or speared en route to the old Furness farm site. No, Andrew thought ruefully. Vicious weapons for vicious animals. The two men were out to track down, and if possible to decimate, the roving pack of feral dogs.

When the two returned from their first foray into the south, they brought game, but a quick glance at their clean spear tips told Andrew that Rolf and Carlo had had no reason to use them. He was caught in a riptide of emotions—relief,

because the two were unharmed, and disappointment, because they had not destroyed any of the dogs.

As Rolf dropped his string of grouse, he revealed another reason for venturing into alien land. “We watched for Donald. We came across ashes. So, he’s been able to make fire. No other sign.”

The third time they went into the hills south of the harbor, Rolf and Carlo came back with a different report.

“We saw him,” Carlo said. “And he saw us, I’ll bet you that. But he took off, went the other way.”

Andrew nodded. “That was the agreement.”

“Shu-ah,” Carlo acknowledged. “The only difference is, we didn’t think he

would head south. We figured he would stay north of the beach, in the territory he's used to. Especially since he knew where Rolf saw signs of the dog pack. Man, you don't have to be a coward to be afraid of a pack of wild dogs. What is he, super brave?"

Rolf said thoughtfully, "Braver than it makes any sense to be. Maybe, because he's so big, he thinks he can handle anything. And maybe he can—but I still wish we could find that pack and wipe it out. It's a matter of getting the dogs before they get him. Or one of us, of course. But right now, Donald's in more danger than we are."

●

Like most new projects on Phoenix, the

making of a canoe had to begin with creation of the necessary tools.

Rolf's grandfather had often recited the names of the four guardian spirits to whom the master canoe builder of the old days appealed for aid: Adze, Wedge, Ax, and Cedar Tree. Thanks to Norma's and Blake's discovery on the old Furness farm, the colony had already acquired an ax. Then Ax had simplified the task of obtaining Cedar Tree—for without Ax, Rolf would have been forced to fell the tree with stone chisels or by controlled burning.

With the assistance of two of the spirits secured, Rolf was able to proceed to the making of Adze and Wedge.

Adze was the more important of the two. However fully a canoe maker was equipped, the hand adze was the jewel of his tool kit, because his skill with it was his measure as an artist. Wedges of elk horn or yew wood, mauls of stone, chisels of bone or shell were used in felling the tree and rough-shaping the hull—but it was the adze that transformed the crudely hollowed log into a graceful canoe, and the adze that enabled the canoe maker to finish his work with such distinctive markings that it could not be mistaken for anyone else's.

The adze itself was a work of art. Because his grandfather had been a Nootkan, Rolf had heard more about the

D-adze common to that tribe than about the elbow adze of the north or the straight adze of the south. Rolf's had a blade of polished stone and a haft of hardwood carved into a rectangle with rounded corners—a distinct letter *D*—with smoothly whittled indentations to fit his fingers where they gripped it. The blade was lashed to the handle with a strip of deer hide.

Diana watched Rolf's progress with a mixture of love and anxiety. Warren, though, observed with a detached and impersonal recognition of canoe making as an art.

At first, Warren's appreciation of Rolf's effort had been mild. "Very pretty," was all he said when Rolf used

stone wedges to split the log, hot stones to char the center, and chisels, maul, and wedges to scoop out the burned wood and rough-shape the outside of the hull. But when Warren saw the finished adze, he breathed, “Beautiful!” And when Rolf began to adze the outer surface—cautiously hewing and rehewing until he got the line that pleased him—Warren laughed and clapped like a child at his first circus.

“By my dear, sweet Aunt Nellie,” he chuckled. “This isn’t carpentry, Rolfie boy. This is *sculpture*. What have I been doing, making attenuated Jesus Christs with skinny beards, and earth-mother nudes with bulbous breasts? If I want to create expressions of sex and religion, I

should go into boatbuilding!”

From then on, through the final shaping of the canoe, Warren could often be found looking on with frank admiration.

As a child listening to his grandfather's reminiscences, Rolf had little more than tolerated them, regarding them as the maunderings of an old man dwelling on a forgotten time. But at more than one stage in the shaping of his canoe, he wished fervently he had listened more carefully. How thick should the hull be? How much should he cut on the outside? How far should he burn and scrape on the inside?

He did remember one formula, since his grandfather had repeated it to the

point of monotony: A thirty-foot whaling canoe was a finger width at the gunwale, two fingers on the sides, and three on the bottom. But Rolf wasn't building a whaler. His canoe was about eighteen feet long. That meant it could be thicker, didn't it? As long as it was light enough to carry? With a silent prayer to the guardian spirits, he gambled on boyhood memories.

Using the camp's precious yellow-handled screwdriver, Rolf drilled several holes in the hull. Then he made plugs to fit the holes, and scorched them until they could be distinguished easily from the red-brown cedar log. He cut the blackened plugs into pieces as long as the desired thickness of the hull, then

pushed them into the holes from the outside, making them flush with the surface. These were his guides, his warning system. While adzing the interior, cutting into a dark plug would tell him instantly he had gone far enough.

“Marvelous, simply *marvelous!*” Warren exclaimed. “Clever chaps, those Nootkans. And clever of you to remember, dear boy. I’m relieved to see that your Welsh blood didn’t dilute your Native American instinct. Oh, the Welsh are all right, I suppose, if you want to dig coal or sing in a chorus. But boatbuilding? Stick with your mother’s people. They were bobbing all over the North Pacific when your father’s antecedents were piling up rocks to hide

behind.”

Once the log had been hewn inside and out, Rolf undertook the spreading of the hull. Again he realized he had given his grandfather more love than attention. He knew the spreading was done with hot water, and with sturdy sticks or stretchers—but if he had ever known the details, they had long since faded from memory.

To his rescue came Carlo, with his knowledge of Hawaiian dugouts, and Warren, with his understanding of the temper and strength of wood. All three worked together to increase the beam.

First they poured several inches of hot water into the hull, adding heated stones until the water came to a boil. At the

same time, they kept up small, slow fires on both sides of the canoe—near enough to warm the outside but not so close that the wood might be scorched. Every inch of hull was soaked with hot water to insure the wood's pliability.

At that point, hand-hewn boards, or "stretchers," were inserted crosswise between gunwales. After a time, this set of stretchers was replaced by a longer set, then that one by a still longer one—and this went on progressively until the hull was spread to the proper width in proportion to length. The last set of stretchers was left in place so the canoe would retain its shape, and also to make seats for paddlers who preferred sitting to kneeling.

At last, the job was done. Diana, on her knees, was moving along the side of the canoe, reaching in with a wooden scoop to bail out the last pools of now-tepid water. And it was only now, as Rolf watched her thoughtfully, that he fully realized that his purpose in building the canoe had shifted.

Presumably this dugout would be used for salmon fishing, and for reaching coves and beaches more accessible by sea than by land. That had been firmly established when the canoe was first discussed at the meeting. The group had overwhelmingly opposed his idea of trying to paddle across open sea to get help.

At that time, he had allowed himself

to be convinced—or at least he had bowed to the majority. And he had of course recognized the risk.

But, back then, he hadn't yet built the boat. *Canoe* was an idea, a theory. As the tree became the hull log, and the log became a seagoing craft, and this magical transformation took place under his own hand, his imagination had begun to reach out.

If he could go out a mile, he could go another mile—and another mile after that...

Diana was carrying his child. It was easy to say she could bear the child without a doctor because Indian women had managed that for centuries. But Diana wasn't Indian. And as the weeks

passed, her assurances that “Everything will be all right” did not quiet the anxiety he felt when noticing the changes made by pregnancy. Her slender waist was thicker, her breasts were fuller, and in spite of her efforts to hide it, he had seen her grow pale with sudden attacks of nausea.

His own mother had scoffed at hospitals. She had borne six healthy children with nothing more than the brief assistance of a midwife. But Rolf had overheard enough female conversation about “complications” to know that keeping childbirth natural did not mean it was easier or safer.

He had tried to keep in mind that, small and slender as Diana was, she

wasn't delicate. She was one of those deceptively tough small people—all muscle and wire. She could run like a deer, climb trees like a bobcat, swim like an otter. But he always got back to it: She was a girl, *his* girl, with his child, and she had never had a baby. How could she be sure—how could *anyone*—that she wouldn't have “complications”?

The discovery of a feral dog pack on Phoenix had added to Rolf's anxiety. He was realistic about the dogs and therefore duly afraid of them. But he was a practical and experienced hunter, confident in his ability to avoid or escape, if not wound or kill. It was a different matter to think they might attack

Diana.

The more he thought about it, the more it frightened him. She couldn't always stay close to him. She was armed, yes. Like Felicia and Norma, she never left camp without her dagger and her spear. In addition, she carried a slingshot for hunting rabbits and wild fowl—and through months of practice, she had become so accurate that she *might* be able to drive off a single dog, if she wasn't caught by surprise.

But would it likely be just one? Donald had counted four dogs, and no one knew how many more might be on the island. Chances were that they moved in a pack—and pack instinct would multiply the viciousness of a

single dog tenfold.

Rolf's attention was drawn back as Diana finished her bailing and, panting a little, rose from her knees. For a moment, she stood still with her eyes half closed and breathed heavily, like a runner at the end of a hard race.

Rolf's heart contracted. It was so unlike Diana to be clumsy or short of breath. He went to her quickly and, taking the scoop from her hand, dropped it to the ground. Then he took her in his arms and gazed down at her.

Wide eyes, picking up blue light from the sky. Short, straight nose, still adorned with the last of summer freckles. Satiny skin, glistening softly with moisture that smelled like drying

hay. Lips barely parted, curving in a tender smile.

“Diana,” he whispered. “I love you. God, how I love you.”

Their mouths met. And in that moment, Rolf knew what he would do as soon as his canoe touched the water.



To replenish the buttery in any way possible was the purpose of Norma and Felicia as they prepared to leave camp one day. At this time of year, the task would not be easy.

In late summer and fall, the woods and fields had been rich with wild foods. Also, on the old Furness farm, there were plants that had stubbornly reseeded themselves, as well as trees

and vines that had refused to give in to neglect—and all these had yielded a surprisingly large crop of fruit, berries, and grain.

But the harvest was long past. The fields were brown and soaked with rain. Blackberry vines, salal bushes, Oregon grape were bare. Wild growth was still green—for in this corner of the Pacific Northwest, only a small proportion of plant life was deciduous—but even evergreen plants and trees, for all their lively color, lay dormant, retrenching against the first frost.

However, there were roots to be dug, and some weed stalks that could be peeled down to a tender core. In the Furness orchard, a few apples, pears,

and plums might still be scattered on the ground. The cedar bark baskets that Norma and Felicia had strapped to their backs would not be empty on the return to camp.

Norma was the expert on wild plant food. In the gradual drift toward specialization, she had surpassed even Diana, whose inherited folk knowledge she had quickly absorbed. Felicia would go along as Norma's helper, for her own area of expertise was basket making and weaving, and she could seek out materials at the same time they searched for food.

There was another reason Felicia accompanied Norma, a reason neither of them cared to dwell on: It was no longer

safe to leave camp alone. Except for in the open area around the harbor and in the dormitory on the hill, they had agreed to move about in pairs or threes or fours. And the women were never to venture into the woods south of camp.

So, Norma and Felicia prepared to set out together on the familiar trail north to the farm. Both were armed—in accord with the group's decision—with spears and daggers. These were not for hunting, though the selective destruction by the dogs had left meat as the community's primary lack. The two women left that endeavor to the men and to Diana, who was expert with bow and arrow and with the slingshot. They would be doing their part if they instead increased the

supply of roots so that meat rations could be reduced.

No, the weapons the two carried were only for self-protection—which neither of them had yet quite grasped also could involve killing.

Looking at Norma, Felicia's sense of the ridiculous diverted her from any grim thoughts about weapons. Laughing, she said, "Aren't we lucky there are no mirrors on Phoenix?" She pointed to her own costume and to the near duplicate worn by Norma.

They were clothed mostly in skins. Vests, skirts, leggings, moccasins—all were the pelts of animals, with the fur worn on the inside for greater warmth. Rain capes of woven cedar bark, draped

from their shoulders and falling below their knees, were tied around their necks with rawhide thongs.

And coiffures to match, Felicia thought. Her own long red hair was twisted in a knot and secured at the nape of her neck with several polished cedar pins—substitutes for manufactured hairpins she had donated for fishing gear. Norma's bobbed hair had grown long enough to wear in a thick, bouncing pony tail. She had taken to brushing it straight back from her fine-boned face and tying it with a wide band of creamy-tan rabbit fur.

“Prehistoric women,” Felicia said. “That's what we are. All we need to complete our ensembles are polished

thigh bones to stick in our hair.”

Norma responded with a faint smile. “I know. We’ve come a long way, haven’t we. From Sixty-third Street in New York, and Lafayette Park in Washington. But I’m comfortable with it—except for this.” She touched the scabbard at her belt and the protruding handle of the dagger. “And this.” Her eyes lifted to focus on the sharp tip of her spear. “I really don’t like them.”

“Oh, pooh. Neither do I. But we’ll take them, all the same.”

“You don’t suppose... ?”

Felicia shrugged. “That those terrible dogs would be up north? That they could have run right through the dormitory without one of us noticing? Of course

not. But Andrew...” She choked on the memory of the emergency session when Andrew had destroyed his foot.

“Remember, Andrew broke up his prosthesis just for... He believed...” She swallowed hard and began again. “Oh, fiddlesticks, Norma. I mean, let’s just do as we’re told.”

“Of course. I meant to. It was just... just that... I suddenly tried to imagine what I would do with a dagger or spear if something *did* attack me.”

Felicia looked into her partner’s troubled face and smiled in understanding. “Very simple, dear. You’d attack right back. You’d do that, wouldn’t you, even on Sixty-third Street?”

Norma relaxed visibly. Adjusting the shoulder harness that attached to her basket, she said drily, “*Especially* on Sixty-third Street.”

“Then let’s go dig roots.”

Nodding and smiling, Norma led the way.



Before they left the farm, they took stock of their inventory. Norma’s sharp eyes and ever-expanding repertoire had resulted in full baskets. It wasn’t meat, but it would help fill their stomachs. They shouldered their baskets and set out for camp.

At the edge of the orchard, they saw the raccoons—four of them, half hidden by the tall, dry grass. Their heads down,

they were sniffing around the base of a tree, searching for the last edible windfalls.

Felicia and Norma approached cautiously, with nothing more in mind than to view the comic faces of the animals before they detected the presence of the women. They came within fifteen or twenty feet, and still the raccoons seemed oblivious. They pawed through clumps of grass, retrieving an apple here or there, biting and chewing with a concentration that excluded their human observers.

How cute they are! Felicia thought. *What a funny waddle.* Then she suddenly saw before her something more than amusing little animals.

This was meat—to replace the stores the wild dogs had carried off. This was fur—for blankets and clothing they would need over the winter. Food and clothing, the two basic elements of survival, were theirs for the taking. Were she and Norma going to stand by while four raccoons ate their fill of apples and scuttled off into the woods?

The men had killed many raccoons. She had eaten the meat, and she was wearing one of the pelts. Could she protest, “But I don’t like to kill anything”—while taking for granted her right to share what someone else had killed?

She lifted her spear and looked with revulsion at its pointed tip. The way the

raccoons were acting, she could probably take at least one by surprise. Of course, if they were alerted by a quick move or loud sound... She was tempted to scare them off “accidentally.” No one would expect her to hit a running, half-concealed target.

One raccoon reared up on its hind legs. Its pert triangular face was turned toward the two women. Bright eyes peered through eyeholes in a furry black mask. *How human it seems*, thought Felicia.

With part of an apple held delicately between slender front paws, the little forager surveyed them with no trace of panic. Its expression was curious but amiable. It seemed surprised but not

really resentful of this human intrusion into its orchard. As Rolf had explained many times, animals on Phoenix were not accustomed to being hunted. They had never learned to fear humans.

Felicia whispered urgently, “Norma! We’ve got to.” It was senseless to expect Norma to understand her, but such a terrible taste of bile was rising in Felicia’s throat, she couldn’t trust herself to say more.

Turning her head, she saw that Norma’s face was ashen and her mouth was trembling—but her spear was raised. Norma understood.

The one raccoon continued to study them, while the others, heads down, kept rustling through tangled grass. Felicia

thought desperately, *I can't, I can't...*

But she could. The memory of how the buttery had looked after the raid *assured* that she could—because she *had* to. Food stores ravaged, their precious winter supplies strewn along the beach, the hard work of days and days—no, weeks and months—lost in a single attack.

I can. Just charge. Drive the spear... “We’ve got to!” she repeated, though she had already begun to cry.

Together they crept forward, then suddenly ran toward the animals. Norma’s spear struck one raccoon just a second after Felicia drove her own into the soft belly of the upright, curious one.

The two survivors scuttled through the

grass. Felicia now saw they were much smaller than the animal quivering at her feet. And so was the one killed by Norma.

Then Felicia realized why her raccoon had stood watch while the others ate. Felicia had slaughtered the mother, as Norma killed one of her kits.

Felicia sank to the ground, sobbing wildly.

Norma sat beside her and reached for her hand. Holding it tightly, she whispered, "I know, I know..."



At home, Nurse Watkins was Louise, devoted wife of George B. Watkins. In that small town in southeast Alaska, George enjoyed a reputation for fair

dealing—both in his dry goods store and in poker games in the back of the tavern on Sunday afternoons. One bond of their marriage was they were both on their feet all day, from which both suffered backache and swollen feet.

After pouring two mugs of strong black coffee, Louise sat opposite her husband at the kitchen table. She slumped over her cup, elbows on the table, chin resting on her hands. “I haven’t got the strength to change out of my uniform.”

“Your posture is terrible,” George commented mildly. He got up long enough to retrieve a bottle of Demerara rum from the cabinet under the sink, then poured a generous shot into each of their

mugs. “Anything happen at the hospital today?”

She nodded wearily.

“Bad day, huh?” George patted his wife’s capable hand. “Leave your cases at the hospital, honey—like I leave unpaid bills at the store. If we don’t, our minds will grow as weak as our arches.”

“You’re right, George. But there’s been one case I can’t keep from bothering me.”

“Must be Sixteen-A.”

She sipped her coffee. “That’s the one.” Setting down her cup, she leaned back and briefly closed her eyes.

“She talk some more?”

“She tried to. She tried *hard*, and I stayed right with her. But it was all

jumbled, the same as it's been before. Like a person who's had a slight stroke. It seemed as if things were clear in her head, but she couldn't get them out. She couldn't communicate."

"Still talking about an island?"

"That's the one word that *did* come out, good and clear. She said it over and over. Her eyes practically *begged* me to understand."

"But no names? Hers, or the island's, or anybody's?"

"None at all. Just *island, island, island.*"

"Huh. Needle in a haystack. Think of the hundreds of islands along this coast. She might not even be talking about Alaska. She might have come from B.C.,

or even Washington.”

Louise sighed heavily. “I just can’t get that old, wrinkled face out of my mind. Especially those frightened eyes.”

George said cheerfully, “Oh, come on, lady. You’re a seasoned pro. Besides, you said Sixteen-A was getting better. I know it’s been three months, but one of these days, what she says will hang together. And you’ll be right there when it does.”

Louise rubbed the worry lines between her eyebrows. “George, Sixteen-A died today. She tried so hard to talk—and then she collapsed. She was dead an hour later.”

“Ah. So *that’s* what got to you today.”

“Now we’ll never know who she

was, or where she belonged. Somewhere there's an island... But the hospital has already done everything they can to trace her. It's... a dead end.”

There was a long silence. George got up, refilled their mugs with coffee, and picked up the bottle of rum. “Let's have another dollop.”

“Yes. Thanks, George,” said Louise, as her husband tipped the bottle over her cup and added another cheering measure of spirits, 150 proof.

Andrew never needed to ask why Rolf and Carlo would go hunting on the south end of the island. From their first venture into that area, it was clear why the two young men would sacrifice a half day or more in pursuit of “game”—at a time when both were so intent on building the house that they normally worked on it from sunup to sunset, regardless of weather. Andrew understood and sympathized with their aim of eliminating the feral dogs.

But on their return, there was one question Andrew always did ask: “Did you see him?”

Sometimes they had. But usually only

a glimpse, a rustling of brush, telling them Donald was near and they were being watched and followed.

Shortly before Donald's term of exile was to expire, Rolf and Carlo announced at breakfast they were again going hunting.

Andrew glanced at the totem calendar. "If Donald shows himself, or if you think he's in earshot, tell him we're expecting him on Saturday—another six days. I suppose he's tried to keep track, but perhaps not. In any case, hearing it from you will make it firm."

"La dee da, Andrew!" Warren grimaced. "Do you *h a v e* to be thoughtful? Worse than that. You're being *kind*."

“Try it yourself, Warren,” Felicia snapped. “You’ve often said you enjoy new experiences.”

“Oh, my dear lady,” Warren said with a small chuckle, “not if they *improve* me.”

As Rolf and Carlo shouldered their weapons and left camp, Mike and Lili, the basset hounds, abandoned their posts near the bonfire and lumbered down the beach, sniffing the hunters’ footprints. Andrew watched with amusement. Rolf and Carlo were only thirty or forty feet ahead of them, and if the dogs had looked up, they could have seen and followed easily. But that wasn’t a basset’s way. Typical hounds, they used their noses instead of their eyes.

So, their noses to the ground, Mike and Lili trotted along the beach on their stubby, pronated legs, so absorbed in following the scent, they almost bumped Rolf's heels before they lifted their heads. At that point, they wagged their tails frantically and uttered baritone yelps of joy at this unexpected reunion—with friends from whom they had been separated for a full minute and a half.

Lili's barrel-shaped torso was even more comical than usual, for she was to have puppies in four or five weeks. Andrew smiled at the grotesque bulge of the basset *enceinte* before turning his attention to the first project of the day.

As the morning wore on, Andrew wondered once or twice where Mike

and Lili might be—but he was not concerned. The hounds loved everybody in the group and often bestowed their joyful companionship on some of the others. But when Carlo and Rolf returned midday, Andrew recalled he had last seen the dogs following the two young men down the beach.

“Did you see Mike and Lili?” he asked with a twinge of anxiety. “Weren’t they with you?”

Carlo’s black eyes grew troubled. “Not for long. They acted like they *wanted* to follow—but when we got to the woods, we sent them back.”

“They *did* start back,” Rolf added. “And that was the last we saw of them. I thought they’d be here with you.”

Their faces reflected Andrew's own disturbance. "Well, they aren't lost," he said, trying to downplay his concern. "A basset hound never is. It's only the owner who sometimes gets misplaced."



Donald was proud of himself, and it felt good. That would help at the end of his month of exile, when he had to go back to camp and face the people who sent him away.

He wasn't a woodsman. They had known that when they condemned him to thirty days in the woods. But, by God, he had done all right. Even if the basket of supplies Rolf left in the madrona tree did carry him through the first few days.

The way he had been feeling that first

morning, he would have liked to send the basket right back to Them—*Them* being the eight who had sat in judgment on him. But that would have meant coming out in the open for Rolf to see. Besides, even while he begrudged Them, even while he resented that *They* were in a position to be generous, something told him he might eventually be glad they were.

His instinct had been right. For a time, he ignored the cache, trying to feed himself on raw roots, the cores of cattail stalks, and the few dry blackberries still clinging to evergreen vines. But at the end of his second day in the wilderness, he was desperately hungry, as well as frustrated by bungled attempts to start a

fire with sticks.

So, he found his way back to the madrona tree. His hands trembled as he tore open the package. In a choked voice, he cursed his benefactors.

After that, something began to change. A *something* he couldn't identify at first—within himself, and between him and the woods around him.

In the community of nine, Donald had done more than his share of work—but always under someone else's direction, since there was always someone around who knew more than he did about living in the wilderness. And he had never been observant. In a way, he refused to be. When he was given a job, he did what he was told, and sought the others'

approval by doing it longer and harder than expected. If someone *else* got the job—lighting a fire, for example, or shaping a wooden fish hook—he always felt it was because they didn't believe he could do it. So, the hell with them! He wasn't going to watch and see how it was done!

Exiled on the south end, alone and unaided, he had been forced to experiment. He tried, and he failed. With no one to correct his errors, he simply tried again.

The change—the *something* that made him proud—was that he had finally begun to think for himself.

This was a thing that had never been allowed in the county orphanage, or

later, in the strict boys' school run by the church. And when he was older, both in the army and in prison, he saw that the man who thought for himself was the man who spent time in the brig or the hole for breaking rules.

Donald wasn't even thinking for himself when he got married. Hell—hot as he was for the girl, he hadn't been thinking at all. If he had, he would have known she'd walk out on him the first time a soft-talking guy put his hand on her knee.

In fact—with the exception of when he worked on engines—he couldn't remember any time in his whole life that he had known the satisfaction of praise for something he thought up himself.

Success, when it came, meant he had managed to follow orders.

But alone in the woods on the south end of Phoenix Island, it was all up to him—especially after finishing off the food brought by Rolf. He wouldn't starve *if* he could think how to obtain food. He wouldn't be cold *if* he could figure out how to build shelter.

Rolf had left him a fire drill and fish hooks along with the food. But even with the drill, Donald failed to make fire the first time he tried, and he lost one precious hook before getting the hang of tying hook to line. So, his first fire and first fish excited him as nothing since he had last repaired a diesel engine no one else could.

Now, after almost thirty days, he was thinner. His long hair was matted and full of bark and moss, since he hadn't bothered to make himself a comb. But he was proud. Hell, he'd almost laughed out loud that morning, when Rolf and Carlo came shouting through the woods.

“Donald! Donald! In six days, the month will be up. Keep track of it, Donald. Six days. Six days.”

Ha! They didn't need to tell him that! That was one of the first things he'd thought up. A calendar. The trunk of a tree growing beside the little creek where he got drinking water. Every morning, when he went to drink and fill the deer paunch left by Rolf, he cut a notch in it—just the way Dr. Held did

every night at camp.

It was something a leader did. And for now at least, Donald was his own leader.



The wild dogs had scared Donald into his finest accomplishment.

Funny thing: He hadn't given the dogs a thought—not that night he fled the dormitory, stumbled along the dark beach, and went into hiding on the south end of the island.

He had been totally confused. He had been sick, as if Warren had planted an ugly growth deep in his gut. So, he ran in the one direction that avoided the place they all slept, the place where Warren was laughing at him. He ran blindly—

tripping, falling, struggling to his feet, and running again—hardly thinking what was ahead, in his reckless drive to leave humiliation behind.

But when he awoke in the morning, he remembered. And fear rippled through his aching, exhausted body.

Some time before his exile, somewhere on this south end—maybe near where he was lying—four wild dogs had driven him up a tree while he was out hunting birds with his slingshot. It was on this south end that Warren had come across the remains of a fawn slaughtered and eaten by dogs. And it was on this south end that Rolf had located the dogs' cave.

Donald reasoned he would have to

take his chances by day. He couldn't just find a safe place and hole up in it. Dogs or no dogs, he had to hunt and fish and fetch water.

If he had to defend himself, he figured, a knife wouldn't be as good a weapon as a spear—so he would make one, by lashing his jackknife to a stick. And he had his slingshot. It wouldn't kill an attacking dog, but under the right conditions—like, if he had time to climb a tree—it might let him stun the animal and scare him off.

Of course, the trick was to hear them coming. Listening was his best defense against a dog pack. So, while moving around, he would walk softly and slowly, stopping often, ears straining for

every sound.

But when day was done? Donald wasn't sure if wild dogs roamed at night, but he knew instinctively that any danger would be greater after dark. So, he needed a safe place to sleep.

He faced the problem alone. And forced to think for himself, he came up with an answer: Sleeping safely meant sleeping up high, well off the ground. He would build a tree house.

He started with a solid platform of small drift logs securely tied to the heavy lower limbs of a maple tree. On three sides, a heavy stand of evergreens screened him from the wind. To keep out rain, he slung honeysuckle vines over a branch above, tying opposite ends to

opposite sides of the platform, then used these as a warp to weave a tentlike roof of cedar boughs.

Also from honeysuckle, he plied a rope tough enough to hold his full weight. Looped over the ridgepole limb, it served in place of a ladder. He learned to pull himself up with his hands gripping the rope and his feet on the tree trunk—like walking up the tree.

The roost was so small, he had to sleep folded up like a jackknife. But he was reasonably comfortable from carpeting the platform with layers of moss, fern, and cedar boughs. And reasonably safe from falling if he should move about in his sleep—for the platform was enclosed by a foot-high

picket fence of green saplings.

He was so proud of his tree house that when he realized Rolf and Carlo were hunting in the area, he almost hoped they would discover it. But they didn't.

Once he even watched them walk right under it. They were looking for trail signs and never looked up. On one hand, Donald felt pleased by that, as if he had put one over on them. On the other, he was disappointed to miss their admiration and praise for his achievement.



Six more days on his own, six more nights in his tree house. And now, as the idea of returning to camp took hold, Donald's high spirits began to falter.

In a lame effort to reassure himself, he thought, *They're going to be mighty surprised to see me as healthy as the day I left. From now on, they'll give me credit for some brains.*

No, he wasn't going to crawl back. He would walk right in, look them right in their faces...

But his earlier mood of defiance could not be recaptured.

He could see himself walking across the beach toward the bonfire. All their eyes would be trained on him, like spotlights in a prison yard. Would Dr. Held say something? Would anyone? And what would *he* say?

As if the dreaded scene would manifest for him, he turned north, staring

bleakly through the trees.

“Goddamn,” he muttered unhappily.
“Goddamn, goddamn.”

Six days to go, and he was already afraid to face them. But he knew he had no choice.



Donald was kneeling on the ground, skinning one of the two rabbits he'd killed that morning, when he heard distant movement in the underbrush. Dropping the rabbit, he grabbed his spear and scrambled onto his feet, freezing in a semi-crouch.

The dog pack? No, there wasn't enough noise. But maybe wild dogs didn't always *stay* in a pack. Maybe they hunted alone, or in pairs. That's what it

sounded like—one or two dogs. Coming anywhere near, they would easily have picked up the scent of his freshly killed game.

The crackling and swish of parted brush was growing more distinct. They were coming toward him.

He gripped his spear and, looking around quickly, backed up against the nearest tree he knew he could climb. If it was the pack, he'd throw them one of the rabbits, giving him time to reach the safety of limbs six or seven feet above ground. But if there were only one or two dogs, he would slip behind the tree, let them find the meat, and then take them on—first with his slingshot and then with his spear. In twenty-four days of

exile, he had learned a great deal about how to kill with such simple weapons.

He was frightened at the prospect of fighting wild dogs, but he wasn't panicked. Confidence had come as he'd discovered that even big old dumb Donald Campbell could think for himself.

The noise in the bushes grew louder. Now he could hear the animals themselves. Not growling or yapping—sounds he associated with wild dogs from when he had seen those four while bird hunting. What he heard instead was panting—the labored breathing of dogs who had run hard.

His palms were slippery with sweat. His right-hand fingers ached from the

pressure of gripping his spear. Without lowering his eyes, he dropped to one knee, leaned forward, and picked up one of the rabbits. *Come and get it*, he thought grimly. Returning to his semi-crouch, he tensed to either throw the meat or leap behind the tree the moment the dogs emerged.

The brush separated. Mike and Lili, tongues drooping from open mouths, plodded into view.

At sight of Donald, Mike bounded forward, keening with joy. Lili emitted little yelps of recognition and pleasure as she ran to Donald, threw her full weight against his legs, and looked up at him with large, adoring brown eyes. Saliva dripped from the loose folds of

skin at the corners of their mouths as their tongues tried to lick his hands and pant at the same time.

With a lump in his throat that hurt like tears held back, Donald sat on the ground and swept both dogs into his arms. Their prickly muzzles planted wet kisses on his bearded cheek. Their continuing wails of delight said, *We've found you, we've found you...*

“Okay, okay,” Donald growled as he rubbed their satiny ears. And then, in spite of himself, the tears spilled over and slowly rolled down his cheeks.



For an hour or two, Donald tried various ways to convince himself he had a right to keep Mike and Lili with him, and

even that he should.

They had come to *him* after tracking him. It was a long way back to camp. They would be company. At night—since he couldn't get them into his tree house—he'd sleep with them on the ground. Or he'd find a cave...

But it was no use. He was kidding himself. He had to take them back, and that same day. Dr. Held would miss them and worry if they weren't in camp by dark. Besides, it wasn't safe for them here. A dog pack that would kill a deer wouldn't be scared off by a pair of friendly hounds who had never fought in their lives.

Anyway, he wouldn't have to take them *all* the way. Just to the north rim,

where the hill sloped down to the beach. The dogs would see the people and run to them, while he stayed hidden by the trees. Once they were back with Dr. Held, he would head south again.

He fed them one of his rabbits, then roasted the other and wrapped it in ferns. After banking the fire, he put the cooked meat and his water bag into the basket Rolf had left. This he strapped on his back like a rucksack. Into his hip pocket he stuffed his slingshot, then filled his other pockets with smooth, round stones collected as ammunition from the beach.

“Okay, let’s go.” He whistled softly.

The hounds, sleeping contentedly by the fire, lifted their heads and studied

him doubtfully. *Get up?* When they were so comfortable lying down? *Go?* When this was the warm place, so obviously the place to stay? Lili's soft upper lip trembled. What had come over their friend? Mike's elephantine ears lifted, as if trying to pick up a sound that would justify Donald's peculiar behavior.

Then loyalty to man—however demented his actions—overcame their reluctance. Groaning audibly, Mike and Lili got up on their fat webbed feet. Their big, dark eyes said, *I'm moving, see? I'm moving, I really am,* as they lumbered over to Donald.

He picked up his spear. "You're going home. Goddamn," he said thickly. "Goddamn."

And he set out through the woods. The bassets wagged their tails as they padded along at his heels.



They were halfway to camp when Donald heard the sound. This time there was no question in his mind, for the distant crackling of underbrush was punctuated by the yelps and growls of an excited dog pack.

A month alone in the woods had sharpened his ears and taught him to translate what he heard. There were three or four dogs, maybe even five. They had killed something and were fighting over it.

It might be a deer—for as swift as the deer is, a wild dog can outrun it in the

end due to greater stamina. But if it *was* a deer, there would be food for all. They wouldn't be fighting. So, it was something smaller—and they were quarreling over it because they were viciously, murderously hungry.

Just ahead of Donald, Mike and Lili were still as statues—heads turned toward the strange sound, ears lifted and hanging like flaps from foreheads wrinkled in perplexity. Along their spines, from shoulders to tail, the short hair suddenly stood on end—a wide, bristling strip denoting instinctive fear.

Donald's frantic eyes combed his surroundings for any source of protection. Alone, he would have climbed a tree. With Mike and Lili

depending on him, that was not an option. They needed a hollow tree or cave to put them beyond the wild dogs' reach, or at least to give him some chance of taking them on one at a time.

But here, there was nothing. Just pine and fir trees, with tall, limbless trunks rising straight from the forest floor. There was underbrush, but that wouldn't hide you from dogs. Not from carnivores so hungry they would fight over a rabbit or raccoon.

As Donald could hear, they were *still* fighting over their kill. Their shrill howling was no closer than before. So, now was the time to run.

“Mike! Lili! Come on!” called Donald as ran between the two and kept running.

Over his shoulder, he saw them hesitate with one last backward glance, then trot along in his wake.

Donald pushed his way through the woods, grateful for every small clearing or stretch of ground he could cover quickly without the impediment of vines or underbrush. It was easier for Mike and Lili, whose loose hides helped them wriggle through the worst brambles, and whose wide snowshoe feet were formed for crossing mud or marsh.

Every few minutes, Donald paused and listened. As if this were all part of a game, the basset hounds did the same. For some time, it seemed as if they were leaving the pack behind. The sound of the fighting grew fainter, then stopped

altogether.

To a God he had always claimed never did anything for him, Donald prayed silently that whatever the dogs had been fighting over had been enough to satisfy them—for if they were gorged, they would stop hunting. Then he realized the fighting could have ceased for a different reason: The kill had been small, the dogs were still hungry, the pack had united in search of other game. If that was true, he could only hope they were headed in the opposite direction.

Donald ran and the dogs followed, panting. Donald rested, and the hounds sat and looked at him curiously, their tongues dropping almost to the ground. So vivid to him were the sounds he

dreaded—the crack of breaking twigs, the whoosh and slap of parted underbrush—he felt as if they were inside his head, though no such sound reached his ears.

And then, during one rest stop, it did. Not from close by, but not from very far, either. And coming nearer.

Donald looked around in a panic. His pulse, already quickened by exertion, now hammered the blood vessels in his neck. He could see no hollow tree to hole up in. But twenty yards ahead was a large rock slab, just visible through a tangle of vines and bushes.

“Mike! Lili!” he shouted as he ploughed on, ignoring the brambles that scratched his face and arms. The time

was past to keep his voice down to avoid alerting the beasts. Their frightening sounds were now so close and clear, he could hear them without stopping to listen. The sharp snap, the whispering movement of brush—they weren't just inside his head anymore. They were there on the outside and closing fast—as fast as a dog pack follows its quarry's scent.

Donald's one desperate thought as he stumbled through the woods was their need to reach the rocky outcrop. And from ten feet away, he spotted the formation that could save their lives. The slab jutted out of mossy ground at an acute angle. In the shadow beneath, Donald recognized the opening to a

natural cave. It was big enough to crawl through—though he couldn't yet judge the size of the hollow beneath the rock.

“Mike, Lili... ,” he gasped, and turned back to them just as the first wild dog pushed through the underbrush.

Snarling, the wolfish animal padded stealthily across the clearing toward Mike and Lili. A second dog followed, and a third. Donald stood frozen near the mouth of the cave as a fourth dog lunged into the open, lowered his massive head, and bared his teeth.

Lili eyed the strange dogs and backed off, whimpering, but Mike stood his ground as they surrounded him. His long tail, never before used for anything but wagging, stood stiffly upward as if

flying a battle flag from its candlewick tip. As the pack closed in on him, a low, threatening growl rolled up from his throat.

And then Donald's moment of paralysis ended, releasing his body and leaving his mind calm and focused. Raising his spear, he charged.

At that same instant, the largest dog attacked. Without growling or yelping. With no more sound than the rustle of paws on dry grass. And no sound at all as jaws closed and teeth sank into the soft flesh of Mike's throat.

Oblivious of the rest of the pack, Donald ran into its midst and plunged his spear with all his strength into Mike's attacker. But instead of releasing Mike,

the beast shook his head savagely. Mike's blood spurting from his torn throat, coloring his attacker's muzzle a bright red.

In fury so terrible it almost blinded him, Donald thrust his spear again and again. From behind, another dog leaped at him, biting into his thigh. Scarcely aware of the pain, Donald struck backward with the handle of his spear. That dog fell away, and once more, Donald drove the spear's blade into the one holding Mike in a death grip.

With half a dozen jagged wounds, the beast let go, shuddered, and was still.

But the dead had already scored his kill. Mike's beautiful, satiny head lay in the thick blood pouring from his own

throat. His sturdy trunk, his stubby, crooked legs, remained motionless on the red-stained ground.

Cursing wildly, Donald kicked the corpse of Mike's killer. Once again, a dog sprang from behind. Sharp pain struck Donald's ankle as teeth tore his flesh. Wheeling around, he kicked furiously, the toe of his boot catching the beast in the belly. It yelped, retreated a few feet, and crouched, with yellow eyes fixed on the dead dogs.

Lili crept across the grass and posted herself at Mike's side. Whining softly, she looked up at Donald with wide, unbelieving eyes. He turned to face the three blood-hungry animals and weighed his chances of saving Lili and himself.

Donald suddenly realized that the small, mean eyes of the dogs saw fresh kill and, for the moment, nothing else. If he stood between them and their meal, they would attack him—but if he simply got out of their way, they would ignore him while rushing in to devour the slaughtered dogs. That was it, then. He would grab Lili and run for the cave, leaving them to gorge themselves on one of their own and... Mike.

The thought of the gentle hound being torn to pieces made Donald's stomach knot up. *No, by God! They can't have him!*

Facing the snarling pack, Donald took a step backwards, and then another. At the third, his boot heel hit Mike, and he

stumbled and fell.

As if at a signal, all three feral dogs lunged. Two set their teeth in the corpse of their fellow pack member. The third leaped at Donald's throat but missed the mark, biting hard instead into Donald's outstretched arm.

An infuriated giant, Donald let go of his spear, rose to his feet, and, without a thought for the dog's slashing teeth, grasped the animal around the neck. One violent jerk of his powerful arms, the snap of breaking bones, and the dog was dead.

Donald dropped the body. Securing his spear under one arm, he quickly kneeled, slid both hands under Mike, and gently lifted him. "Lili!" But he didn't

need to call her. As he ran toward the cave, she followed anxiously at his heels.

With every step, Donald expected one or both of the surviving dogs to attack him from behind. When he reached the mouth of the cave, he looked back. One was ripping open the underbelly of the dog with the broken neck, while the other tore at the entrails of the dog Donald had speared. The one at the entrails lifted his head, his bloody muzzle turned curiously toward the cave.

Quickly, Donald pushed Mike's body through the opening. Lili followed it in without being told. Stretched out flat, Donald crawled in after her.

Numbness had held back the pain.

Now the numbness wore off, and pain burned through his thigh, his ankle, his forearm. Murderous stabs of it rocketed through his flesh, telegraphed from one wound to the next. His chest ached fiercely, the lungs scorched by air they fought to inhale.

For just a moment, he rested his forehead on his arm and closed his eyes. In the dark, Lili's warm tongue licked lovingly at his cheek.



They didn't let Donald tell what had happened—not until Norma had cleaned and dressed his wounds and Diana had fed him hot stew and a mug of dandelion-root coffee. Then they listened attentively, there around the fire,

waiting patiently when his voice faltered.

He had trouble finding the words—for what had happened, and even more for how he'd felt. His voice was strongest when describing how he had killed the last two dogs. For this part, he was succinct and matter-of-fact.

Only half gluttoned, the two had abandoned the dismembered bodies of the other pack dogs and followed the trail of dripping blood to the cave. Now the odds were on Donald's side, for the entrance to his shelter was so small, only one dog could attack at a time. Donald had killed the first with his spear, then stunned the second with his slingshot before crawling out and

spearing that one as well.

The final part—the long, dark walk back to camp with Mike in his arms—he covered in a sentence: “Then I dragged Mike out of the cave and came back here.” But then, with no more to tell, his feelings rose up uncontrollably, and he blurted them out.

“I should’ve saved Mike!”

Andrew shook his head slowly. “No, Donald. Don’t torture yourself with such thoughts. You did everything you could—more than any of us could have. And we still have Lili—thanks to you.”

Blake cleared his throat. “Welcome back, Donald.” Blake’s tone expressed the warmth that his eyes—masked by his Eskimo glasses—could not convey.

“Yeah, shu-ah,” Carlo put in quickly.
“Glad you’re back.”

A sympathetic murmur went around the circle as they welcomed him and assured him he had done well. Several times, as they spoke of his return, he heard the word *home*. His wounds throbbed and he ached with fatigue, but Donald’s mind fastened hungrily on the word.

Home. He had come home. They all said so.

All except Warren.

Donald rose, and his small, pale eyes moved uncertainly toward the sculptor. Warren stood apart from the others, arms crossed over his chest, aloofness hardening his Cupid face. Their eyes met

and held so long, the others' voices dropped into uneasy silence.

Warren ended it abruptly. With deliberate steps, he came up so close to Donald, he seemed to stand in his shadow. Tilting his head so he looked straight up into the big man's face, he spoke with no trace of his usual mannerisms.

“Everything's settled, as far as I'm concerned.”

Donald said thickly, “You and me ain't never going to be friends.”

“We don't have to be. But it's hard enough for the nine of us just to keep ourselves alive, without wasting our strength or talents on trying to destroy each other.”

“If everything’s settled like you say,” said Donald, “that means it’s all even. Right?”

Warren nodded. “Precisely.”

Donald’s big right hand started to rise for a handshake but hesitated—until Warren reached to grasp it.

“Okay,” said Donald gruffly. “Then that goes for me, too.”

It was early morning when they prepared to launch the canoe. The rising sun glowed pink and gold along the eastern horizon, while the cooking fire still contrasted brilliantly with the first pale light.

The air was cold but the sea was calm, and cloud banks forming to the north seemed a hundred miles away. Nevertheless, Diana was uneasy as she watched Rolf and Carlo stow fishing gear and a lunch basket into the dugout. A lifetime in the Outer Islands had taught her that the weather was changeable this time of year, purring like a tabby cat one moment and snarling like a cornered

wildcat the next.

She had tried to extract a promise from Rolf that he wouldn't go out very far. His answer had been silence, a long, intent look, and a gentle kiss.

The special care with which they handled the boat deepened her sense of foreboding. An ordinary canoe or dinghy could be dragged across the gravel beach with no thought of damage. With the dugout, though, Rolf and Carlo lifted and carried it to the water's edge, then set it down so carefully that Diana was reminded of her grandmother when she packed eggs. Rough-hewn and sturdy as it looked, the canoe was actually a thin wood shell, in some places only two inches thick.

She wanted to cry out, to hold them back. But why? They knew what they had made. They were both accustomed to the sea. How could she explain her last-minute panic, or justify an unreasoning fear?

As Rolf stepped into the dugout, she found her voice. Pointing north, she called, "Those clouds, Rolf. They look like rain."

"Maybe. But the wind's from the west. They won't be coming this way."

His dark eyes gleamed with excitement as he looked out across the peaceful water. Like a Makah whaler on his way to sea, he had knotted his long black hair and adorned it with sprigs of spruce. He turned, holding the long,

slender paddle aloft in a victorious salute. He was bursting with laughter, bursting with triumph.

The canoe was finished, and yes, the omens were right. Yet still Diana was frightened, without knowing why.

The canoe lifted and fell with each shallow ripple. She called again, "Don't go out too far!" Carlo in the bow and Rolf in the stern were laughing so much they didn't hear her. Impulsively, she ran down to the water's edge.

Carlo saw her and gestured to Rolf, who turned. "Diana! What is it?"

Something pressed against her lungs, making it hard to breathe. She waded heedlessly into the bitterly cold water and stumbled toward the canoe.

Dropping his paddle, Rolf knelt in the stern and reached for her hands. In the morning light, the pupils of her wide, heavily fringed eyes were purple. Her lips parted as if to speak, but nothing came out except shallow, trembling gasps for air.

She clutched his hands in her struggle to express herself. "I said..." She tried to smile. "I said, don't go out too far."

Rolf leaned forward and kissed her softly on the mouth. "Go back to camp and put on some dry moccasins." His voice was low and confident. "And don't worry. We're coming back."

"You have to." She held his hands tightly. "Rolf... you have to."

His dark eyes looked directly into

hers. "I said, don't worry. Go back now. The tide is rising."

Shivering, Diana released his hands. She stood still for a long moment, then waded ashore.

Diana returned slowly to the campfire, where she sat staring into the flames. When she finally looked up, the canoe was already beyond the harbor mouth—already moving steadily out to sea.



The omens *were* right, as Rolf had said. A westerly wind was behind them, and the tide was in flood. Both were in their favor—as long as they headed east.

Rolf's paddle was light and smooth, some seven feet long and diamond-

shaped—which was common for coastal Indian paddles, so they could also be used as weapons. As the steering paddle, Rolf's was larger than the one Carlo wielded so efficiently in the bow.

Watching the strong, steady movement of Carlo's arms and shoulders, Rolf thanked the gods, as he did so often, that he had such a partner. Carlo had spent his life in and on the water. Not only was he a good paddler but, being Hawaiian, his experience had been with saltwater canoes. As a member of one of the Island State's finest canoe clubs, he had taken part in the annual Molokai race, once in the winning boat.

Carlo hadn't entirely approved of Rolf's design for the dugout, arguing that

an outrigger was a safer boat in rough water. But he had bowed good-naturedly to Rolf's urgent desire to finish the canoe as quickly as possible.

“Let's get this one into the water,” Rolf had urged. “Then we'll have something at least for deep-sea fishing. After that, we can work on another canoe, maybe two or three hours a day. An outrigger, if you say so. Or how about a sail? Alder for the mast, pegged to the bottom under the forward thwart. Cedar bark mats or animal skins for sailcloth. A square-sail, probably. Not too big...”

“Hey, bradda,” Carlo had responded. “The longer you talk, the better you sound. Hokay. This one hurry-up job.”

Next one, she goan be some kine queen.”

In Indian fashion, Rolf sat on a thwart, but Carlo, in the bow, knelt to paddle. They moved swiftly and smoothly across the water, caught up in the rapid rhythm of the stroke. At last Carlo lifted his paddle over his head and waved surrender.

“Who we racing?” he asked, laughter tangling with the effort to catch his breath. “And say now, bradda, where we headed, anyway? Didn’t you say the salmon banks would be in close?”

“They probably are.” Rolf picked up one of their water containers—the float ball of a giant kelp, plugged at the small end with a whittled piece of cedar. He pulled the stopper and offered the bottle

to Carlo. Carlo sipped carefully, then grimacing at the salty taste, handed it back.

Rolf's head tilted back as he drank. "Ah." Though the day was cold, his face was flushed and his forehead damp with perspiration. Inserting the stopper, he set the kelp gourd down in the canoe, then dried his forehead with the back of his hand. "I *meant* to go fishing."

The emphasis was slight but distinct, and his tone was gently challenging. Carlo's habitually smiling mouth and laughing eyes were suddenly sober.

"Hey," he murmured. "Hey now, bradda..." His head moved from side to side in a series of silent but energetic denials of his companion's sanity.

“Everything’s right. The wind, the tide. We could make up to four miles an hour.”

Carlo shook his head slowly. There was no trace of lighthearted pidgin as he replied, “It’s a long way to Wolf Island.”

“Maybe we won’t have to go that far. There’s a shipping lane between here and there.”

“You know the odds better than I do. One, two freighters a day along the only lane we’d cross. Even if we happened to hit the right time, who’s going to spot us unless we’re close enough to be run down? On radar, we’d come up like a floating log.”

“Beyond the shipping lane, there’s a

fishing ground.”

“Ha!” Carlo’s solemn expression was being eroded by an irrepressible grin. “Ha!” he said again, and lapsed into pidgin. “We get dat far, bradda, we goan be *dere*.”

Rolf’s eyes gleamed. “Okay. Are you with me? Do we go get help?”

“Just one good thing about it. We won’t have to paddle back.”

Carlo’s answer had been thrown back over his shoulder, for he had already swiveled to face the bow. His paddle was now poised over the water, ready for the first stroke in a long, long journey.



Yes, everything had been right. But how

long it had remained right, they could not tell. Neither had a watch, and they were too absorbed in maintaining their pace to spend even a few minutes estimating time by the sun's position. When Rolf thought to do so, he realized for the first time that the brilliant early morning sunshine had vanished behind a layer of gray clouds.

After calling to Carlo for a rest, he studied the ominous sky. The black clouds to the north seemed darker and nearer, billowing out as if driven by an angry Arctic wind. He turned slowly, letting the air on his damp skin tell him if the wind had changed direction.

Like a mind reader, his partner in the bow spoke his thoughts. "She's shifted."

Like Rolf, he was out of breath, and his words were staccato bursts from a heaving chest.

“Out of the east,” Rolf gasped. “But the tide’s still with us. Ready?”

“Am I crazy, you mean? Shu-ah, bradda. Let’s go.”

Minute by minute, the sea darkened, reflecting the steel gray of the wintry sky. And slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, the wind swung from west to northeast. With the tide flooding in one direction and the wind sweeping down in another, the surface of the sea—flat as a pond, two or three hours before—was breaking into short chops.

Caught in the riptide, the stern of the eighteen-foot dugout rose on the crest of

one wave while the bow slapped into the peak of another. Lifted and pounded by waves shorter than she was, the fragile canoe seemed attacked from all sides.

In the stern, Rolf clutched his steering paddle, fighting to keep the boat on course and the bow pointing at right angles to each cresting wave. The wind was hitting on the starboard quarter. The canoe had little freeboard, and water was already splashing over the bow. If they took too much of it, they would lose their buoyancy.

Rolf watched grimly as an unexpected short chop slammed against the canoe, foaming up white over the bow. Crests of frothy white rode the rough sea all

around them.

“You all right?” he called.

Carlo gestured with his paddle like a plane dipping its wings.

Again Rolf reassured himself. The wind was against them but the tide was with them. They would go on.

It was the changing shape of the waves that first warned of the ever-rising wind. The short chops lengthened into long swells. Even without the cold breath of the northeaster biting his flesh, Rolf would have known the wind was increasing. The higher the wind, the longer the waves and the deeper the troughs between.

Should they turn back? Though still excited by the possibility of obtaining

help, Rolf was not foolhardy. He had proposed attempting to reach Wolf because the forces of nature had seemed solidly on their side. But as strong as his desire to obtain help was the urgency of getting back to Diana. What's more, he felt responsible for Carlo, who would be in sight of Phoenix now if it weren't for him.

Turn back? Unless he did something crazy, Carlo would leave the decision to him. It was difficult to make, for even a strong instinct for survival did not supply data needed to decide where greater safety lay—in turning back or in going ahead.

How far had they come? Were they closer to the area where they might be

sighted by a freighter or fishing boat than they were to Phoenix? Did survival lie in advancing rather than retreating?

He had no instruments to tell him these things, or to warn of what evil caprice the previously benevolent god of the sea might indulge in. He looked up at the purple-black sky, and the first icy drop of rain hit his cheek.

Superstitiously Rolf asked himself, *Is it a sign?* He looked at Carlo's beautifully muscled arms and shoulders, moving in perfect rhythm as his paddle dipped into the angry sea. Carlo was already wet from waves splashing over the bow. Now cold rain pelted his bare head and ran down the back of his neck.

If that was a sign, did they need

another? Even as Rolf asked himself this, one was offered, in the form of sudden recognition. For some time—a quarter of an hour, a half hour—he had had to pull harder on his paddle to keep the boat moving ahead. That could mean only one thing.

The tide had turned. Now *everything* was against them.



Once the canoe was lost from sight, the seven at camp had reviewed their plans for the day. Except for food-gathering expeditions—such as today's trip to the salmon banks by Rolf and Carlo—their primary occupation was house building.

There were still hundreds of trees to be felled—the larger ones for walls, the

smaller for rafters and stringers. Donald had eagerly assumed the role of Paul Bunyan. Now he hurried through breakfast in his zeal to sharpen the ax before setting out for the old farm.

Andrew and Felicia had together taken on a simple, monotonous job: They chinked walls already erected by the young muscle trio of Rolf, Carlo, and Donald.

Norma and Blake, also working as a team, were recognized as the group's best shingle weavers. With hammers, chisels, and adzes—all made of stone—they split cedar shingle bolts into shakes for the roof. The same tools enabled them to level and smooth one side of the logs to be fitted into a rough plank floor.

Blake's pinpoint visual concentration on his work, necessitated by his Eskimo glasses, seemed also to sharpen his mental concentration, turning him into an exceptionally accurate and meticulous craftsman.

Like the Blakes, Diana and Rolf usually worked together—for in spite of her pregnancy, Diana was strong and agile. But with Rolf out salmon fishing, she turned to Warren.

“Whatever you're doing today, would you like a partner?”

“*L o v e* it.” Warren then pointed impishly at her belly, with its small but distinct outward curve. “If you think it would be all right with *him*.”

Diana laughed. “He, she...” She

patted her stomach lovingly. “Let’s say *they* won’t mind. No, I’m feeling fine, really, Warren. I don’t lift anything heavy, and my grandmother said you shouldn’t stretch your arms over your head. But I can do anything else.”

“I’ve found a new bank of clay,” Warren told her. “*Beautiful* stuff. I’m simply *ecstatic*. You could help me—but I’ll do the carrying.”

As soon as she saw Warren’s discovery, Diana guessed it was a product of the tsunami. The cliff of raw blue clay looked naked, compared to the weathered and partially grass-covered shoreline to each side. The cliff was still topped by a foot-deep layer of soil—soggy now from frequent rains. But at the

cliff's edge, this centuries-old accumulation of dirt and vegetation seemed to have sheared off—and so recently that roots of scrub trees and smaller plants still dangled below the overhanging turf.

Diana cautiously approached the cliff edge. The bank dropped straight down to a narrow shoreline. Some twenty feet below them, the limbs of uprooted trees—many of the leaves still green—protruded from a giant pile of sand, rock, and soil. Here and there, a gnarled root system poked through.

“Be careful,” she told Warren. “There’s been a landslide here, probably from the tidal wave. That’s what uncovered the clay.”

“Then *blessings* on thee, tidal wave. None knew thee but to love thee, or named thee but to praise.”

“I’m serious. Look, even the edge is tricky. From here it looks solid. But from over there, where I just was standing, I could see the cliff is eaten away. Clay is slippery. If it’s undermined...”

“Dear lovely nymph of the woods, you are suffering some kind of anxiety syndrome—no doubt caused by *him*. *You’re* not going down that cliff. You don’t even need to get near the edge. I never meant that you should. We’ll do it this way...”

As Warren explained his plan, his gestures were so comic that Diana began

to laugh. Besides, what he'd said was partly true. Her uneasy feeling probably had nothing to do with the clay bank. But it wasn't because of the baby, either. She was anxious about Rolf. Every time she looked at the sky, the dark storm clouds to the north seemed nearer.

But she was being silly, and there was work to do.

“All right,” she said when Warren's lisping recitation came to an end. “I understand. You tie the rope to the big tree and lower yourself with the buckets. When you've got one filled, I pull it up... No, these buckets won't be too heavy for me, even when they're full—not one at a time.”

They had brought many more pails

than they could carry back full, but that too was by Warren's design. They would carry what they could, and tomorrow, with the help of the others, pick up the rest.

At first, Warren's plan worked so beautifully that Diana forgot the threatening sky. Three of the alder bark containers were already filled and lifted when the light rain they'd been ignoring changed suddenly to a hard, pelting downpour.

Going to the edge of the cliff, Diana knelt and peered down through a film of falling water. Warren was digging energetically at the base. She called, and he looked up, grinning.

"Yes, I'm all wet," he chortled. "But

no matter. Water doesn't hurt *clay*. It makes it better!"

The rain was coursing down Diana's cheeks and trickling down her neck. "You'll be soaked through."

"Hi dee ho, sweet, I already am. And so, no doubt, are you. Therefore, there's no point quitting. My, isn't this stuff *lovely*?"

Though a misty fear was collecting at the edge of her consciousness, Diana did her best to accommodate his enthusiasm. After all, rain wouldn't hurt her—she knew that—and thanks to her fur garments and cedar-bark rain cape, she was still warm. Of course, if it turned really cold, she would have to insist they stop and return to camp. When a woman

was carrying, her grandmother had often warned expectant mothers, cold could be dangerous.

But even when the wind shifted and the air grew much colder, she hesitated. Surely it was enough to retreat to the shelter of the big tree's branches. Though the tree was well back from the cliff, a jerk on the rope would tell her when Warren had filled another pail. And that was the only time she'd have to leave the tree's protection.

So it was that she was on solid ground the moment the whole cliff broke loose and slid into the water.

There was no warning—no ominous rumble or preliminary tremor. For fifty feet to either side of where Diana had

just knelt, the shoreline simply disintegrated. Weakened by the tidal wave, perhaps undermined by a strata of gravel or one of the island's many subterranean springs, the land dropped away as if separating itself from an alien body. An avalanche of clay, sand, and gravel roared down the slope and settled with a sound like a human sigh.

In less than a minute, Diana's safe spot under the big tree was only a few feet from the cliff's edge. The raw lip was almost at her feet. Trembling, she dropped to her knees, crawled to the edge, and looked down.

For one terrible moment, she thought Warren had disappeared. Then she saw him. Just his head, and his left arm flung

back, as if he had tried to escape the landslide by swimming backward out to sea. But his wild backstroke had never been completed, and the rest of him was completely buried.

He wasn't struggling to free himself, either. His eyes were closed and his face was still. From above, he looked like a dead creature cast up from the green-black depths, a white water-soaked reject of the sea, resting briefly on shore while it dried and rotted, until the next flood tide could wash it away.

There was no question of going to get help. Even during the few seconds in which Diana tried to tell if he was still alive, a maverick wave crept up, licking Warren's head so his long hair floated

like fine seaweed. She had to get him out of there on her own, and fast.

She hardly noticed how cold the wind had grown, or how the chilling rain was turning to snow. Her concern right now was with the rope. One end was still tied around the trunk of the big tree—and though several of the tree's long, sprawling roots were now exposed, extending straight out over the cliff, the trunk stood firm.

Grasping the rope, she first tried pulling up on Warren's end. It resisted her, for it was buried securely in the newly formed bank of clay, sand, and rubble at the water's edge. But she could still use the rope.

Her vision was blurred by large, wet

snowflakes that clung to her eyelashes. Brushing them off, she rubbed her eyelids, then blinked rapidly. Snow had collected on the rough fabric of her rain cape, weighing on her shoulders and making her move awkwardly. She ripped off the cape and threw it behind her, under the tree.

Then lying facedown with her feet toward the water, she grasped the rope again and tested her own end with a series of quick jerks. It would hold. She began slowly inching her way over the edge.

Diana could descend the cliff, but could she climb up it with an unconscious man? She dismissed the question as fast as it came to her. The

sea was rising. Before dealing with anything else, she had to dig out Warren and move him higher, to the new base of the cliff. There, for at least an hour, they would be above the incoming tide. As her grandmother used to say, *If you want to do things right, you got to do them in the right order.*

Slipping down the rope wasn't difficult, and her feet soon rested on the soft pile of clay and sand. Before releasing the rope, she tested the mound with her full weight. She sank in a little, but not too deeply.

Carefully, she walked down the sloping mound to where Warren lay. Then kneeling beside him, she felt his forehead and the pulse at his wrist.

He was alive—but how badly hurt, she couldn't tell.

Diana dug furiously with both hands, flinging the mud to each side. When his right arm emerged, she saw that the crude shale shovel he'd been using was still in his hand. She pulled it from his grasp.

With the shovel, she could dig faster. In ten minutes, or fifteen, or a half hour—she wasn't measuring so much in minutes as in how much higher the tide had risen—she had worked her way all around him and removed most of the muddy debris from his midsection. Now, if he wasn't seriously hurt...

She stood over him, with one foot on either side. Leaning forward, she took a

firm grip under both armpits and pulled him upward. As she lifted, his eyelids fluttered.

“Are you hurt?” she asked, still lifting. He groaned in reply. “Where do you hurt?”

Then his eyes closed and his body once more was dead weight, resisting her effort to lift him from the mud.

“Mr. Brock!” she called, more loudly.

He stirred again, and his body came alive as he lifted his head and opened his eyes. “Hurting all over,” he murmured. “But not *hurt*, I think.”

“Can you stand up?”

“Try to.”

Diana stopped lifting and instead steadied him as he pulled himself to his

knees. In that position he rested, fighting to catch his breath.

“Feel like truck sat on me. Okay. Now. Upsy-daisy.” Holding Diana’s hands, he first moved one foot under him, then the other, and slowly straightened up.

With arms around each other, they staggered up the mud bank to the foot of the cliff. Warren sagged against the wall of rock and clay and stared groggily at the rope.

“Can you make it?” asked Diana.

Like an unhappy drunk declining to get up off the floor, Warren solemnly shook his head. “Not a chance. Arms gone all soft. You go.”

“And leave you? No. We’re not very

far from camp. I'll start yelling. Someone might be near enough to hear."

"Save your breath. No use, in this wind."

He was right. Close as they were to each other, she could barely make out what he said. In the woods above, the rising wind was howling through the treetops. Her voice would be nothing against the rage of the storm.

"Diana, love," Warren said weakly. "Go. Be a good girl and go. If you run across the Marines, send back a platoon. But go, *now*."

"I can climb the rope. If you hold on to me, and I hold on to the rope..."

Warren managed a faint parody of his earlier gesture toward her swelling

abdomen. “*Him*. That wouldn’t be good for *him*.”

“All right. I’ll go get help.”

Just then, she noticed two things in quick succession. The first was almost comical: the way the snow had collected on Warren’s beard and hair, so thick and white he looked like Santa Claus without his hat.

The second was terrifying. A feeling inside her. A small, gnawing ache. A stirring.

Oh, no! The words weren’t spoken. They echoed in her head like a sound trapped inside.

Oh, no! the voice cried silently again, as she gripped the rope and, wincing from a sudden twinge of pain, began to

pull herself up the cliff.

The relentless wind, the wind-driven rain, the ebbing tide—all these were fighting them. Eventually the struggle would wear them out. Rolf knew that the only way to end that struggle was to reverse course and pray that wind and tide would help them return safely to Phoenix.

He shouted, “Carlo!” and waited for his partner to look over his shoulder. Then gesturing wildly, he shouted, “Back! Back to Phoenix!” Carlo’s head, dripping rain, nodded in understanding.

Turning a canoe in such a heavy sea was risking their boat and their lives. But it was the lesser risk, and they both

knew what to do. Moreover, they had confidence in each other's knowledge.

Paddle like crazy, Rolf recited silently as they began their circle. *Keep the stern on.*

In Carlo's frenzied stroke, Rolf read his own fear of what could happen. Still, they kept the canoe on her keel and brought her around. And suddenly, the wave that might have killed them was instead lifting the stern and thrusting them toward their destination.

"Thanks, brother," called Rolf. But the north wind snatched his voice and tossed it away.

Now that they were headed back, they had a following sea. On mountainous swells the dugout rode forward—lifted

higher and higher as a giant bank of water curled under them, then held aloft for a breathless moment on a foaming, white-capped ridge, and finally cast down into the dark valley between waves.

Wind and sea were driving them back to Phoenix, but there was a price for their help. The wind from behind was fiercely cold. The waves pushed with such violence that only paddling with demonic fury kept the dugout's stern at right angles to them. And there was no respite. The waves kept rolling, the wind kept rising, and the cold rain hit them with stinging force.

With their backs to the advancing waves, they were often caught unawares

by particularly high walls of water. When this happened, it was too late to shout or even to think. But years of practice had embedded the knowledge of what to do, so deeply that they might have been acting by instinct.

As a large wave threatened to roll the boat over, Carlo and Rolf would throw their bodies toward the upper side and sink their paddles deep into the water—catching the water, forcing it under the boat, and with the same strokes, pushing the boat forward with all the speed they could produce. Neither one needed reminding that life depended on keeping the bow on into the swells, and the stern at ninety degrees to the walls of water advancing from behind. To be twisted

broadside was to lose control.

The sea was with them as long as they had the strength and knowledge to channel her formidable power into the course required for their survival. But if they used her wrongly, or failed to hold to their course in the face of her furious efforts to divert them, she would swallow them whole.

As the storm mounted, the swells grew higher and the troughs between them deeper. On the peak of a wave as tall as a house, the cedar canoe would sit poised for the shuddering descent. For an awful moment then, Rolf and Carlo would look down into a hell of black water thirty feet below, while they gripped their paddles in anticipation of

the sudden, wrenching drop. Again and again they survived it, gasping as the icy spray lashed their bodies, stroking in frenzied rhythm as they fought to emerge from the depths and ride forward on the swell.

When did cold rain turn to snow? Neither noticed till the flakes were so thick and sticky that the wind no longer blew them off their faces. In their fight for breath, the air they sucked in through open mouths deposited snow on their lips and tongues. Snow that struck their eyebrows and eyelashes clung damply, blinding them so effectively that they had to risk brushing it off, even when that meant taking one hand off the paddle.

The world around them was a storm-

enclosed cave, all black and white and filled with turbulence: the roaring black sea casting up spumy white crests; the black sky spewing white snowflakes; the dugout plunging from boiling whitecap to black hole between waves.

“Phoenix!”

Carlo’s one shouted word carried back to the stern despite the howling wind. Rolf hunched his shoulder forward to brush snow off his face without releasing his grip on the paddle.

It was Phoenix Island, all right. A dark, shadowy shape, humped up at the north end, dropping into a saddle, and rising again to the south in a series of lower hills. A lone island, erupting from the violent sea like a mythical creature

surfacing for air. Phoenix, Diana, safety.

Despite muscles straining and chest aching with the effort to breathe, Rolf felt a surge of power. They were no longer moving blindly in the storm. Their goal was visible. They could reach what they could see.

Carlo was shouting again. But this time, he turned back toward the stern and, heedless of the danger of lifting his paddle from the water, pointed with it toward the dugout floor. Rolf blinked and wiped his eyes. Squinting against the cold, he saw what Carlo sought to show him.

An ominous crack had opened down the center of the canoe. Rolf stared at it in horror. There was not enough luck in

the world to hold that dugout in one piece.

That is, unless he could lash it together.

Rolf's glance darted to their fishing gear, stowed next to their water bottles under the center thwarts. There was at least enough line to encircle the dugout in two or three places. With the hull wrapped and tied tightly, the crack would close. Such a patchwork repair wouldn't last, but at the speed they were traveling, it would get them to Phoenix.

Should he put down his paddle to do the job, relying on the bow man to keep them headed into the swells? Or was it best to keep the steering paddle moving in the stern, while he tried with shouts

and signals to guide Carlo through the task?

Weighing this made him hesitate—and in those few seconds, the maniac sea took command.

A huge wave smashed against the dugout. Caught at a slight angle, the canoe began to broach. In the stern, Rolf struggled to keep her from swinging around broadside—but by now the crack was widening, and water was coming in through the crack as well as over the gunwale. The damaged shell, once so responsive, had become heavy and unwieldy.

As the boat rose sideways on the ridge of the wave, Rolf saw the fishing gear break loose and slide across the

bottom of the dugout. If it went over the side, they would lose the only lashing they had, and their only chance of holding the canoe together. He leaped for it, groped wildly as the dugout cracked and shuddered from the murderous force of the wave. The gear escaped him, grazing his fingertips as it slid by with the roll of the boat and then disappeared over the side.

Blinded by a burst of spray, Rolf crawled back to the stern and felt for his paddle. But even before the great green comber subsided and he could see clearly, he knew the paddle was gone. In his effort to rescue the fishing gear, he had let go of the handle.

In desperation, he turned to the only

thing he could think of that might help at all to keep them afloat. Warren had carved them a bailer—a large wooden scoop made from cedar, with a leather thong strung through the handle. Rolf untied the thong and began to bail, in a feverish attempt to relieve the canoe of her burden of seawater.

He was on his knees when the crack opened wide and the dugout split in two, as cleanly as if giant hands had pulled it apart.

Rolf heard a cry from Carlo, and then the sea swept over him, and he was fighting it, beating his arms against the rushing water, kicking his feet, praying for breath.



At first the pain was vague—an undefined cramping that came at such long intervals and retreated so quickly that, in between, Diana told herself it was gone for good. Her first instinctive recognition of the pain's origin persisted, but dully, like a bruise that can be ignored because of more urgent injuries.

She had to get help for Warren. He might not drown, but unless he was rescued quickly, he could die of shock and exposure. This thought drove her on, with the bitter wind at her heels and with thick, wet snow collecting on her eyelashes and eyebrows. When she stopped for breath, cold blew into her open mouth and desperate tears burned

her eyelids.

It wasn't only Warren. It wasn't only the pain. It was fear for Rolf.

As she ran, and stopped, and ran again, the image solidified of Rolf and Carlo, safe on land and warming themselves at the campfire. By the time Diana reached the hill above the beach, the hoped-for scene and the imagined feel of Rolf's arms around her were more vivid than the real spasms that now racked her at decreasing intervals.

She looked down, and the dream picture melted. Donald was alone by the campfire.

Trembling violently, Diana called, "Donald!" and dropped to the ground, her arms crossed over the torment in her

belly. He was beside her before she could collect the strength to lift her head and call again.

To Diana, his questions and her answers were a nightmare conversation of broken phrases, one minute making sense and the next minute tossed about insanely on a new flood of pain. But what Donald was *doing* was easy to follow. He was picking her up, carrying her down the steep hill, placing her gently on the ground near the fire. He was covering her with furs. He was propping up walls of the dismantled smokehouse to shelter her from wind and snow. He was holding a cup of water to her lips.

And he was talking. His gruff voice

rumbled through her head. He was saying the same things over and over, with his eyes begging her to understand. She tried, struggling against a new assault of pain.

The terrible knot loosened once more and her head cleared. She understood, and she nodded, trying to tell him she did. That Donald had built up the fire as a beacon for Rolf and Carlo. That Donald knew where the Mansfields were, and that he would bring them here before going for Warren. That she was to lie still, to sleep...

She wasn't sure, after that, whether she was truly awake or had slipped into sleep, dragging the fear and pain with her. She had no sense of time—except

for brief moments of intense clarity when she opened her eyes and saw that the fire was brighter and all the world around was darker.

She was aware of murmuring voices, and after a time, Warren's was among them. She was conscious of Norma sitting by her.

And she knew, more clearly than anything else, that Rolf had not come back.



Donald carried Diana up the hill to the dormitory and put her to bed in the Mansfields' shelter. Norma covered her with furs, then she and Blake lay on either side, enclosing her in a cocoon of body warmth.

Through a haze of pain and terror, Diana felt and saw everything—and as the reality of people and place came into focus, she realized that something within her was changing. The cruel contractions were diminishing, as if her body had expelled the pain.

In the hollow between her legs, a warm fluid was collecting. Suddenly she was wide awake.

“Norma!” It was an anguished whisper.

Norma’s hand pressed her arm reassuringly. “I’m right here.”

“I’m bleeding!”

“Yes. I expected it. Don’t be afraid.”

“That means the baby—”

“Probably,” said Norma softly. “But

not always. Don't think about it. Just rest and sleep."

"I'll make a mess."

"No, no. While you slept, I covered you with bandages. But what if you do? Don't worry about it."

"The baby... I *wanted* the baby."

"But you'll *have* one, Diana. This happens to thousands of girls. Millions, probably. But they try again and have fine, healthy children."

"Did it ever happen to you?"

Norma's throat tightened. This topic was out of bounds—something she and Blake never talked about. An old grief that had grown a scab without healing underneath, suddenly exposed by this child-woman's urgent question.

“Yes. Yes, it did.”

“But *you* didn’t have a baby... afterwards.”

“No,” said Norma, and now she was speaking as much to Blake as to the girl lying between them. “Blake wanted to, but I... I was too much of a coward.”

“But you *could* have.”

In the dark, Norma nodded sadly. “Yes, I could have. And *you will*, Diana. You’re braver than I was. I know you’ll be all right.”

Softly, weakly, Diana began to cry—for the baby she was losing, for Rolf who was out at sea. Norma held her close and wiped her face with a small square of clean cotton torn from the colony’s one tablecloth.

“I know, I know,” Norma whispered, and wanted to weep with her. For what could she say that would soothe the grief for a lost baby? And how could she quiet Diana’s greater fear, that tonight she had lost Rolf as well?



Rolf knew he was drowning.

But, no, he wasn’t. Something was pulling him up.

His head broke the surface of the dark water. Gasping, he felt himself suspended by a hard, rounded surface. He groped for it, encircling it with his arms, once more a little boy floating downriver on a log.

Through a mist of seawater he saw Carlo, and knew it was Carlo’s strong

hand that had lifted him onto the log. Only, it wasn't a log. It was one half of the split canoe, with Carlo stretched out on the other.

Despite the dark and the freezing cold, admiration swept through Rolf, driving out despair. Carlo was indeed a "bradda." He accepted life as it was, and people as they were. If they got out of this alive, Rolf would never hear Carlo blame him for their foolish risk.

If they got out. Rolf knew—as Carlo must have, too—that even with Phoenix in sight, they had very little chance of surviving.

Still, they had the split hull of the canoe, which even in that state was far from useless. The two halves could be

ridden like a pair of surfboards. Lying on their bellies and paddling with their arms, they could keep moving.

That is, as long as they had the strength. They were already soaked, and the water sloshing over them was only a few degrees above freezing. They would find it harder and harder to move their arms, and eventually the cold would sap their energy until they couldn't move at all. If they could keep active, they might have half an hour.

Would they drown? Or die of extreme cold? With Phoenix in sight!

With snow collecting on their heads and with near-freezing water washing over their bodies, Rolf and Carlo propelled themselves toward Phoenix.

Instinctively they stayed close to each other. But they did not try to communicate, for the numbness spreading through their bodies was slowly working into their minds.

What you see, you can reach.

That thought had come to Rolf when they first spotted Phoenix. Now it occupied him fully. His arms and feet moved mechanically, even when they ceased to have feeling. His awareness of being alive gradually dimmed, as if the near-freezing cold were swallowing him piece by piece. Only his head remained, its eyes on the outline of Phoenix, its stupefied brain repeating the mantra: *What you see, you can reach.*

When he saw the light, flickering

against the dark background of the island, Rolf wanted to shout. *Carlo! See! They've got a fire. They're waiting for us!* But the dead weight of his numbness had risen to his throat.

He felt like crying. At the same time, he wanted to go to sleep. He could rest his head on the log...

With enormous effort, he lifted his head. Had he actually dozed? The bonfire seemed more distinct now, the flame guiding them into the *U*-shaped harbor.

He turned his head. *Carlo?* His partner was motionless, arms hanging limp on both sides of the split hull. While the meaning of what he saw worked slowly into Rolf's mind, Carlo

slipped sideways and dropped heavily into the water.

A cry for help formed in Rolf's throat, but he could not force it out. With the last of his strength and with the last of his sense of where and who he was, he released his cedar float and plunged into the water after Carlo.

It was a blind and frantic effort, expended with no sense of how far they were from shore or how long it could take to find Carlo. But Rolf *did* find him, only slightly submerged below the surface. Rolf held the head of the inert form above water with an arm no longer connected to his body, while his other arm splashed and slapped the sea and his legs thrashed.

Just before he slipped into unconsciousness, Rolf's legs dragged across a hard surface. Something in his head shouted, *The rock floor of the bay! You're touching bottom! Stand up, you fool! You're here! You made it!*

But everything he had was used up. His body was lead, his senses frozen, his mind empty. Sleep... He sank, with Carlo under his arm, and darkness closed around him.

And so Rolf was not aware when a hand found him in the dark, or when two arms lifted him...

Andrew shivered heavily. No matter that the beach camp was encircled by wooden windbreaks. No matter that bright flames shot up from the driftwood fire, or that garments of fur and bark enclosed him. Nothing could shut out the wind of December.

Two weeks before Christmas...

He looked thoughtfully at the totem calendar. Every line and every pictograph was known to him. Together they offered a clear record of four months in exile—but no prophecies. Still, his forefinger traced the carvings as if to magically coax some knowledge of things to come.

Winter stung Andrew's nose and cheeks, and his eyes teared from a sudden gust. *The wind brings omens enough*, he thought ruefully—at least concerning the imminent future. Nor was there need to look further, as the forces of nature would keep them busy for weeks. No, there was nothing clairvoyant about the proposal he'd make at the meeting tonight.

Just as well, he mused. For no wondrous knowledge flowed through his finger from the totem calendar.

But the notches did tell him today was Saturday, December 11. And the delicate bas-reliefs did remind him that a great deal had happened to this band of nine diverse personalities in the past six

weeks, testing them severely, both physically and emotionally.

Fortunately, their trials had drawn them together—as tonight’s cold wind brought them close around the campfire. The bonds were real.

In the beginning, they had been bound by raw necessity. Whether they cared about their partners in disaster, whether they felt concern or love, what happened to one happened to some extent to all. They had stuck together to survive.

But during the past six weeks, Andrew had noticed an enrichment of the community bond—a new dimension. Though he disliked the preachy word *share* almost as much as did Warren, Andrew had privately observed that

from such enforced sharing of physical experiences—hunger, injury, sickness, accident—each of them had grown sensitive to the emotional impact of those experiences on the others.

The killing of his beloved hound Mike had certainly hit Andrew harder than anyone else, but they had all identified with his grief. Damn it, Warren's hypersophistication notwithstanding, they had all *shared* his loss.

And when Rolf and Carlo failed to return as expected from their venture with the canoe? Had any one of them cared more than any other?

Diana had, of course—weeping bitterly while gripped by the spasms of miscarriage. But they had *all* been

frightened when the storm came up. They had *all* mourned as night descended on the beach and the absence of the two young men took on new and terrible meaning.

Norma and Blake had retired to the dormitory with Diana to shelter and comfort her. But the others had stayed by the campfire, unwilling to give up the watch—even when it seemed hopeless.

“I’m not really *doing* anything,” Felicia had said, speaking for them all. “But going to bed would be saying I’ve stopped believing they’ll come.”

So, they had waited—Felicia, Warren, Donald, and Andrew—silently sharing an act of faith.

Donald had been restless. A shadowy

movement, the slightest whisper of a sound, made him jump to his feet and rush off to investigate. Twice he thought he heard wild dogs and picked up his spear and strode toward the south.

But mostly his attention was drawn to the harbor. Again and again, Donald's imagination created a shape and set it afloat on that dark expanse. Again and again, he stumbled through the dark to the water's edge. There he peered into the thick night for minutes on end before returning to the bonfire and staring helplessly into the flames.

At first the others followed along on these hopeful forays. But after a while, the futility seemed clear, and they began to stay by the fire. Of course, they hoped

against hope for a shout saying Donald had actually sighted something—but with each of his trips, that dim hope grew dimmer.

When Donald stood up one more time, no one moved or even responded.

“I’m going to take another look. A *good* look, like I should’ve before.”

He picked up a dry stick and thrust it into the flame until the end caught fire. With this torch held high over his head, he charged down the slope.

Felicia said uneasily, “Do you think... perhaps this time...”

Andrew rose slowly and took Felicia’s hand. “Like you, I *do* want to believe. Let’s go see.”

“Let’s!” Warren leaped nimbly over

the log he had been sitting on. “At least we’ll see whether we’re seeing anything.”

When they reached the water, Donald had already waded into the bay. His torch cast dancing reflections on the waves as he swung his arm from left to right and back again. Suddenly he gave a shout.

“It’s them!”

Far to his left, something white had emerged briefly from the shadow, then vanished again into misty black. An arm? A face? Donald plunged frantically through the icy waves, his torch trailing ribbons of fire.

“Rolf! Carlo! I’m coming!”

The arm—he saw it again, floating

like a crooked log. And another arm, and a leg, and finally the dim outline of two bodies, with gray faces barely showing above the shallow water.

With a rending sob, he stumbled toward them—but the toe of his boot caught on the uneven floor of the bay. He tripped and fell, dropping the flaming stick as he instinctively thrust his arms forward to break his fall. The torch hissed and went out.

In total darkness, Donald pulled himself upright, then waded blindly toward where he had glimpsed the bodies. Again he tripped and fell, but this time his outstretched hand met something soft. Like a giant picking up a doll, he scooped up Rolf's dripping

body and tucked it under one arm.

Then dropping to one knee, Donald groped with his free hand and found Carlo a few feet beyond. In spite of the dead weight Donald already carried, he plucked Carlo from the water and secured him under his other arm.

Two large, limp dolls in the hold of a powerful child... This was the alarming yet comic image that emerged from the dark and struggled up the gravel slope toward the three who waited wide-eyed at the water's edge.

Warren had lit a torch and was holding it aloft, like an angelic but jittery Statue of Liberty. Andrew limped forward to help Donald half-carry, half-drag the soggy bodies to the campfire.

“They’re still breathing,” Donald said gruffly as they lowered Rolf and Carlo to the ground.

As Felicia and Warren began removing the young men’s clothing to replace it with their own outer garments, Andrew turned to Donald.

“Thank you, Donald,” he said simply. “Thank you very much.”

Then Warren paused in his task to speak to Donald for the first time since the night of the big man’s return from exile. “No one else could have done it,” he said quietly. “No one but you.”

Thinking back on it now, Andrew marveled that no more words of thanks than that had been spoken. But then, they hadn’t been necessary. Donald had heard

perfectly the sincere gratitude in Felicia's curt, "Don't just stand there! Get into dry things before you freeze!" True, he may have missed the reference to Hercules in Warren's quip: "Can't you see our Donald when Atlas comes up and says, 'Here, hold this for me a second, will you, old chap?'" But that hadn't kept his big, battered face from breaking into a happy grin.

Yes, as with earlier events, they had all felt the impact of this near-disaster. Though Diana's feelings had been strongest, all had experienced fear before the rescue. And all had felt joyous gratitude akin to hers when, weak, sick, and half dead with fatigue, she heard Norma whisper, "Rolf is safe.

He's down by the fire, but he'll be with you soon."



What is it that forges stronger bonds? Andrew asked himself now, as he often had before. *Good fortune or bad, prosperity or adversity?* Whatever the answer generally, here on Phoenix it was disaster and near-disaster—rather than luck or success—that had led them farthest toward tolerance and understanding.

After Diana lost her baby, Warren had shown her a tenderness they had never glimpsed before. And he had come to accept a part of himself he had heretofore studiously rejected—a part that was loving, serious-minded,

vulnerable.

The last remnant of Norma's self-conscious reserve had dissolved as she took on the earthy duties of nursing Diana through a miscarriage. Norma had learned to accept—rather than ignore or reject—the human body when it was soiled, the human spirit when it was wretched.

Donald's fight with the feral dogs had left ugly scars on his arm, leg, and hand—but it had healed the older and deeper though invisible wound from rejection by the group. Since the day he had stumbled into camp with Mike's body in his arms and Mike's blood mixed with his own, they had for the first time come to accept Donald for what he was.

Acceptance. That was the word.

If it is true, Andrew reflected, that love is the ability to accept another human being as is, then in fighting for survival, this little colony has learned love.



They had never discussed as a group what Andrew and Felicia privately called Phoenix Island's quiet evolution of the soul. But on several occasions they had talked about physical changes, which were evident to all.

Muscles had tightened, stomachs were flat, thighs were firm. They had all lost weight. That is, all except Norma and Diana, who had been too thin, and they had gained—for their boyish figures

were rounded out by the same regimen of diet and exercise that slimmed the others.

Their firmer bodies went with a general improvement in health. Though all had been sunburned, cut, scratched, and chapped—and Carlo, Rolf, and Donald had been seriously injured—they healed with remarkable speed. Their skin glowed, their eyes were clear and alert.

The change in Felicia amused and delighted Andrew, for she, more than any other, had been a hothouse flower. She had always “taken care” of herself. Her bathroom scale was her confessional. Her dressing table was an altar where—morning and night—hair,

skin, and nails were revered in joyless rituals.

Looking at her now, as supple and smooth-muscled as an athlete, Andrew realized that in the city she had been soft even at her thinnest. She had substituted massage, which was done for her and to her, for exercise, which she would have had to do herself. And her natural beauty had been hidden as much as enhanced by the outer application of chemically compounded substances.

Now she had undergone four months of what any of her friends in Washington, D.C., would surely view as ghastly deprivation—four months in which her “cosmetics” had been extracted from seaweed and bark and

lichens and wildflowers. And Felicia's real beauty had emerged.

Her body was firm. Even on a dull day, her red hair shone as if reflecting sunlight. Her fingernails, once needing special treatment to keep from breaking, were now so strong, she could use them to uncap a bottle—or so she boasted, and safely, since they had no capped bottles to test her claim. Her skin radiated a subtle fragrance that was like a personal signature.

Norma, their acknowledged health authority, traced both weight loss and improved complexion largely to the sea. As they were finishing dinner one night, she had enlarged her theory in one of her longest speeches ever.

“Exercise has helped us lose weight. So have our cooking methods. We have so little fat or grease, we never fry food. Since we have no sugar, and we have to stretch our small supply of honey, we rarely sweeten anything. Even so, I think our loss of weight is due mainly to what we’re forced to eat, not how we have to prepare it.

“How many of us used to eat fish more than once a week? It seems to me that most Americans—Catholic or Protestant—still think of fish as something eaten on Friday as penance. I’ve read that the average person eats six to ten times more red meat and poultry than fish.

“But here we eat fish every day—

sometimes twice. Plus clams, crabs, oysters, mussels, chitons, barnacles, and abalone. So, we're consuming maybe twenty times the amount of fish and shellfish we would under"—she paused to smile—"under *normal* conditions. Hence the weight loss. Fish has half the calories of meat, not to mention being low in cholesterol.

"Maybe even more important, we're swallowing tremendous quantities of minerals and vitamins. Even our salt is better for us than what we used in the city. You've all seen me make it—filling a flat dish with seawater and heating it in the oven till nothing remains but white crystals. Well, that natural sea salt is full of minerals beyond salt itself and the

well-known iodine. Common table salt, though, is refined to remove most of the trace minerals.

“And don’t forget seaweed. We put it in all our soups and stews. Remember the candy Carlo taught us to make, and what it was made from? Mostly kombu, a kind of kelp.

“So, if our hair is shinier and our complexions are clearer, we owe thanks to the sea. And not even just for what we eat from it. Sea spray is good for us. Salt water baths are good for us. Our glands are in beautiful shape, and we’ll all live to be two hundred.”

Warren’s round eyes opened wide. “You don’t *say!* Well, in that case, perhaps I can finish my statue of the

Aphrodite of Phoenix. There is *hope*.”

“Do you suppose... ?” Andrew tapped his lower lip and looked around thoughtfully at his companions in exile. “It seems to me our general health is remarkable. Though we have had injuries, and Diana suffered a miscarriage, those were accidents rather than indicators of our physical condition.

“Remember when, two or three years ago, a Japanese officer finally came out of hiding in the Philippine jungle? After thirty years in the wilderness—thirty years of daily struggle to survive—he was in better shape physically *and* mentally than his urban contemporaries, with all their nervous tensions.

“What has happened to our own

tension ailments? Norma, you mentioned having migraine headaches. Blake suffered from chronic asthma. Those symptoms seem to have vanished.”

“And I,” Warren put in brightly, “haven’t been constipated since I started having to do it in the woods!”

“What is it?” Andrew asked with a smile. “Does the hard life on Phoenix exhaust us so completely that we fall asleep before our headaches and our asthma and our palpitations can catch up with us?”

“Another example: Do you realize that, in four months, not one out of nine has come down with the so-called common cold? Perhaps that wasn’t surprising in August and September,

when sunshine made up for our lack of clothing and shelter. But in the past two months, we've all been chilled and soaked to the skin and repeatedly exposed to elements from which life in the city protected us—yet there has not been a cough or snuffle among us.

“It's our isolation, I suppose. The germs have no way to get to Phoenix. I predict that, the day after the rescue team finally arrives, we'll all come down with nasty colds.”

Norma shook her head. “Not necessarily. We may not be developing specific immunity to cold germs, but our bodies are generally more resistant. We'll be all right in the city. That is,” she said smiling, “if we take plenty of

seaweed with us, and plenty of seawater.”

“We can’t, Norma,” Blake said quietly. “Remember? ‘You can’t take it with you.’”

“I was only joking.” But Norma’s smile had faded, and her voice was tinged with sadness.



Andrew’s ruminations on the trials and growth of the past six weeks had come to an end—or at least been set aside—for the time of meeting was at hand.

The totem calendar was notched and a few minor issues raised, discussed, and settled. By popular demand, Rolf and Diana recited their latest verse—as they had done many times since the others

discovered they composed poetry while working together.

*I wrap myself in the magic cloak
of sleep.*

*It lifts me and it carries me into a
purpling sky.*

*My silvery bed of clouds is soft
and deep,*

*And a thousand brilliant star fires
twinkle by.*

There were smiles and applause—and then a long silence as they warmed their hands on mugs of rose hip tea and sipped the hot liquid carefully, with sleepy eyes fixed on the bonfire.

“Anything more? Anyone want the floor?” As leader, Andrew routinely

waited until everyone else had brought up their concerns before presenting his own ideas. But gestures and murmurs assured him they had said all they meant to.

“Well, then, let’s talk about Moving Day.”

He rose and limped across the circle to the totem calendar. There he pointed to a slash several inches above the one he had cut that evening.

“Here’s where we started work on the house. November first. Not even quite six weeks ago—and of course, it’s far from finished. But the outside walls are up for the first section. The planks are ready for the floor. The shakes for the roof have been split.

“We can’t complain about the weather. For the most part, it’s been good to us. But it *is* December. Our luck can’t hold out.”

His finger dropped to the freshly cut notch. “December eleventh. Two weeks before Christmas. To lay the floor and put on the roof should take only a few more days. I propose we be settled in our house—spa, buttery, apothecary, and all—before Christmas.”

Felicia exclaimed, “Oh, Andy, that would be wonderful!”

“*Maybe* we can make it,” said Rolf thoughtfully, “if we don’t take off time for hunting.”

“We have enough meat to last us a while,” Norma assured him. And Diana

added, “We can manage.”

Andrew nodded. “We’ve got to get under cover—but after that, we can take our time about finishing the interior. So, you’ll be free to hunt once we’ve moved.”

Warren glanced at Diana. “I hate to mention clay,” he said with an apology in his voice, “but I can assure you all that the central fireplace will be finished within the week. It will keep us warm, and we can use it for cooking while I build Norma’s ovens.”

“Dr. Held?” Donald’s scarred face was troubled. “I want to work on the house, like everybody else. But what about them wild dogs? I was going to go back to the south end and try to kill the

last of them bastards.”

Andrew's face was grim. “That's important, I agree. But it's also dangerous. When you hunt the dogs, Donald, you shouldn't go alone. You and Rolf and Carlo should go as a team. But even so, it may take some time.

“It is my feeling...” He paused, hesitant to state an opinion that might be taken as a command. “It is my *personal* feeling that, unless we enter their territory, the dogs present less of a threat right now than winter storms and high tides. This beach we're camping on is low-lying and exposed. I think we will be warmer and safer up on the north end and in our log cabin, unfinished though it is. But I leave it up to you. To all of

you.”

Within minutes it was clear they were all excited by the prospect of an early move into their house. Even Donald finally said gruffly, “Well, okay, I go along with doing the house first and going after the dogs later.”

A week of illness had left Diana’s eyes looking enormous and dark in a small, pale face. But those eyes sparkled when Felicia brought up the idea of a Christmas Day celebration.

“Thanksgiving went by unnoticed,” Felicia reminded them. “And no wonder. Mike’s death was just too fresh in our minds, and no one had the heart for it. I still...” Felicia’s hand rested affectionately on Andrew’s knee. “I still

have a hard time realizing...”

She took a breath and started again. “Well, we’ve had troubles these past few weeks. But now we have the time and means to celebrate, and we certainly have enough reason. Diana is getting well, and Carlo and Rolf got back safely—thanks to Donald—and in another two weeks, Lili will present us with a wide selection of basset puppies. And you, of course, Andy, will have the pick of the litter.”

At the sound of her name, Lili lifted her head and looked at Felicia expectantly. But seeing no food in Felicia’s hand, she dropped her head to her paws again and, sighing deeply, closed her eyes.

Warren gestured delicately toward Lili's belly. "*There* is a considerate female. Not only, Andrew, is she providing you Michael the Second. Within that grotesquely distended womb, there must be something for *everyone*. Dear comrades, each of us will have a puppy of our own!

"As for a Christmas celebration... Ah, Felicia, you look like every caveman's pinup girl, but the instincts of the capital city's most gracious hostess still lurk within. A Christmas celebration. Excellent! I'll provide the smokes."

"We'll have a banquet," Norma said, "a real feast. Warren, do you suppose you could build a spit into the

fireplace?”

“Why not? If I could, I’d make you a Bastable oven!” Warren’s round mouth then twisted into a mock grimace. “But I *do* ask that the menu include something that isn’t *healthy*. How will we know we’ve had fun if we don’t get indigestion?”

Carlo laughed. “Shu-ah, bradda. We goan eat. We goan smoke. Maybe I get finish making guitar, and we have music. Guitar not finish, we still goan make music.”

“And play some games.” Rolf turned to Diana. “You ever play *smetali*? Or we could have a spear-throwing contest. We’ve all gotten pretty good with our spears.”

“You refer to gambling games, I trust?” Warren said happily. “No doubt our red brothers did some betting, even when they threw spears.”

Rolf smiled so that white teeth glistened between shaggy black mustache and full beard. “For sure, gambling was a favorite way to acquire wealth. In Indian games, the loser paid off in anything from an arrowhead to his best wife.”

In the midst of this conversation, Donald suddenly broke in. “I got something too for the Christmas party.” All voices hushed and all eyes turned his way.

He shook his head. “No, I ain’t saying what it is. I’m just saying, I’m making

something, and we can have it on Christmas.”

Andrew leaned forward and patted Lili’s head. “It’s agreed, then. All efforts concentrated on construction. House, lookout tower, and signal flag.” His head inclined toward the totem calendar. “On the night of December twenty-first, we’ll sleep in our house. And on Christmas Day, we’ll celebrate.”



Cabot Sterling, uncle to Norma Mansfield, refused the hand-wrapped cigar offered him by Simon Boyd, law partner of Norma’s husband, Blake.

Simon Boyd seemed to have expensive tastes, and Cabot Sterling was bothered by that. Original oils on the

walls, an authentic Kerman on the floor. He had been pleased to note that Blake's office, by contrast, looked more like a place of work.

"It's a hard thing to accept," said Cabot Sterling in the severe tone he used when in danger of showing emotion. "But since all our inquiries lead to the same conclusion, I think we must."

Simon Boyd bowed his head thoughtfully. His manner combined courtesy for the older man and sorrow for their mutual loss with genteel reluctance to dwell on the unpleasant.

"I spent a week in Seattle," he said. "Several of the authorities I talked to, by the way, had already received letters from you. I did manage to get that

ridiculous auto theft charge dropped, but I accomplished little else. As for turning up any proof that your niece..." He cleared his throat before finishing firmly. "... That your niece is alive, the police assured me that concerted efforts to find such proof had already failed. They could only conclude that she and Blake suffered some kind of fatal accident."

Out of consideration for the feelings of the deceased's closest living relative, the attorney did not enlarge on what sort of fatal accident had been suggested. The police held to the theory that the Mansfields had picked up a hitchhiker who robbed, killed, and buried them, then made off with their rented car. In

line with that, the rental company maintained that a car not showing up anywhere in the continental United States in three months' time was in Mexico with a new paint job.

Civil defense officials had made a connection between the probable date of the Mansfields' disappearance and the date of the tsunami. But not having yet talked with Norma's uncle, Simon Boyd had no reason to believe that Norma and Blake—the most conservative of travelers—would stray so far beyond conventional tourist circuits as to be caught in any of the remote areas of devastation.

“Had I known that Norma was carrying a letter of introduction to

Dr. Held...” He paused again, for death by a freakish killer like a tidal wave was just as distressing as death at the hands of an armed hitchhiker. In a way, it was more shocking, because the odds against it were so much greater. “I would have gone to the Outer Islands if I had known of any connection between the Mansfields and Andrew Held. Phoenix Island, you say?”

Before speaking, Cabot Sterling pulled a clean handkerchief from his breast pocket and carefully blotted his lips.

“You would have learned nothing more than I’ve been able to discover through letters. We know that they took the ferry to Wolf Island, the terminus of

the ferry line. We know they spent two nights at a motel there, and the motel register indicates they were driving a rented car. If they went on to Phoenix, it would have been by private boat—either Dr. Held’s or a boat they chartered on Wolf. In any case, they left Wolf before the tsunami struck. If they ever reached Phoenix...”

He refolded his handkerchief with great care and returned it to his pocket. “We know from the Coast Guard what happened to Phoenix—and to anyone who might have been on Phoenix—on August fourth. The only other possibility is that they were lost at sea.”

Cabot Sterling rose and smoothed his vest with his palms, then ventured a

quick nod meant to express gratitude.

“I’m indebted to you, Mr. Boyd. For making the trip to Seattle, even if it wasn’t fruitful. For your many inquiries among Norma’s friends here in New York. For handling that business with the condominium association.” A thin smile softened his habitually rigid expression. “An old physics professor is not equipped to deal with real estate on the east side of Manhattan. I was distressed at the thought that Blake was breaking a contract—though of course,” he added firmly, “through no fault of his own. Thank you for stepping in.”

Simon Boyd’s gesture swept aside the suggestion he had done anything of importance. “No, really, Dr. Sterling,

I've just taken care of one or two technicalities. Avoided some problems before they materialized, you might say. And the condominium association probably wouldn't have taken action for six months or so, anyway. But the assessments are now paid up and there's no breach of contract. If Blake and Norma haven't returned by the end of six months, their bank will probably be appointed trustee, and I'm confident I'll be named co-trustee—so we'll have no problems then, either.”

He rose and walked around the desk to extend his hand. “In any case, I'm just holding the fort until they get back.”

Cabot Sterling gripped the attorney's hand and gave it one strong, all-

inclusive shake.

“No need to soften the blow, Mr. Boyd. I can face the truth—and you’d better do the same, unless you want to run this law business by yourself. Norma and Blake are not coming back. For the law, that might take seven years to acknowledge, but *my* training is in science—and I know that if you work a formula correctly, you get the same answer every time. We have the facts, and we have the answer.

“Good-bye, Mr. Boyd. I’m going back to Maine. Be glad to see you if you ever come down.”



They had never worked harder, and never worked together so harmoniously.

Meanwhile, nature, Andrew noted, manipulated their odds—both for and against—in the race to move into the log house by December 21.

Against them was the immutability of the winter solstice—for as Moving Day they had chosen this shortest day of the year. In their favor was an unseasonable spell of dry and windless weather, as if nature were rewarding their industry with the only gift this season could afford.

They worked at the farm site all day. At night, by the campfire, they kept up work on household equipment until a ten o'clock curfew—decreed by Andrew in the interest of preserving health.

Twentieth-century man, Andrew

reflected, measured success and happiness by the ratio of work to leisure. The greater his leisure in relation to the time he had to work for it, the more “successful” he was and therefore the “smarter.” Perhaps it was their mutual compelling desire to finish the house that reversed those values—for clearly they had never been happier. Every perfectly notched log, every rusty nail found and straightened, seemed a sign of success.

“Or it may be,” he confided in Felicia, “we need new definitions. *Leisure* means ‘recreation,’ right? But what does that recreation look like, compared to our activities on Phoenix? Millions of people in noisy, polluted cities spend fifty weeks a year earning

enough to buy two weeks of vacation in the country. But we're already *here*. And what is the work we do? Fishing and hunting. Pottery and weaving and wood carving. Isn't that what *we* used to call recreation?

“No wonder everyone's getting along so well with everyone else. There's no thunder in Paradise.”

With soft mud in one hand and moss in the other, Felicia straightened up and looked appraisingly at the space between logs that she and Andrew were chinking.

“Paradise,” she said drily, “would have matched numbers of men and women.”



By December 20, the house was roughed in. Roof nailed and lashed, floor planks in place, rough doors at the entrances, crude shutters at the windows. The large, circular fireplace was finished, and Warren's pride, a fieldstone chimney, was ready to carry smoke through the roof.

They had spoken of Moving Day as if comparable to a massive troop movement through the Alps in winter. But in the end, there was little left in the beach area to move—for no one had walked to the old Furness farm without carrying a maximum load.

All food supplies from the buttery had already been stored in a lean-to by the cabin's back door. The contents of the

warehouse, the apothecary, and the armory were stacked inside the house. The spa and the smokehouse had been dismantled and carried in pieces, to be reassembled in due course.

Nothing was left on Moving Day except the last of the cooking utensils, plus the beds and bed coverings in the dormitory. The group rose, made their last bonfire on the beach, cooked their last breakfast on the low saddle of land above the harbor, then left for their new home.

They had been so careful to save and transfer every scrap of potentially useful material—every rag, broken bottle, and bit of rusty wire, every straight stick and sharp-edged slice of shale—that by

December 22, all evidence of their months-long occupation had been erased. The area where Andrew's fine house had stood—where powerhouse and swimming pool and boat dock had created a small but respectable pocket of civilization—was even more bare than the tsunami had left it.

Still, they were already calling this place “summer camp”—as if expecting to return to it when warm weather allowed.



In their feverish effort to finish and move into the log house, they had not neglected the signaling system that would take the place of the beach bonfire. As Andrew had promised, their signals on the site of

the Furness farm were an improvement, for there they had both fire and lookout post.

The bonfire was laid on top of the mound of fieldstone piled up by the first Furness settlers while trying to clear the rocky ground. By leveling off the peak, the group had created a stone pyre like a small Aztec pyramid. A flaming stick from their new hearth ignited the fire. As they had on the beach, they arranged to take turns tending the fire overnight—for its flame was the only signal sure to be seen after dark.

For daylight hours, they placed their hope for rescue on their treetop lookout. The field around the log house was rimmed on three sides by tall firs. They

had chosen the highest of these as their “tower” and begun work on it the same time as on the house.

First there was a ladder, with verticals made from saplings, and crosspieces from short limbs lashed to the saplings with honeysuckle vines. Rolf and Carlo, vying with each other, had skinned their knees and hands and suffered several falls while trying to climb it. But after the ladder was firmly tied to the tree trunk, they could climb to the top in relative safety.

From this crow’s nest their flag—their cherished tablecloth—was to fly. Rolf and Carlo had drawn straws for the privilege of hanging it. Everyone gathered at the foot of the tree to watch

Carlo, the winner. He ascended like a drunken monkey, then lashed a flagpole to the topmost limbs and attached the flag.

For a moment it hung lifeless as if in a mute signal of defeat. Then a burst of icy wind swept across the treetops, catching and lifting the cloth.

“Hal-lo deah!” Carlo shouted as the ragged edge of the cloth flapped and stiffened. “She fly!”

Down below, upturned faces broke into delighted smiles, and voices joined in a cheer. Only Donald was silent. His small eyes cast one brief, hostile glance at the flag, then looked away.

“You guys cheer all you want,” he said sullenly. “I got work to do.” He

turned and plodded across the field toward the log house.

His withdrawal was barely noticed—except by Andrew, whose thoughtful blue eyes followed the hulking figure until it disappeared into the house.



Warren Brock's mother sipped her glass of sherry and wondered how best to comfort this poor boy.

He was so self-centered in his grief. He would know—if he could get outside himself long enough to think about it—that she, as Warren's mother, must feel the loss at least as much as he. And *his* pain, at some point, would stop. Hers would go on as long as she lived.

But meanwhile, he suffered blindly

and—so he thought—alone. Except he obviously did want to talk about it.

She could listen equably, for in a sense the details of Warren's death did not concern her. They were incidental, almost meaningless, next to the monstrous truth that she had lost her only son. So she nodded, and listened, and nodded, and sipped sherry.

“The worst part was going to the house.” Kirk Aspinwall shivered. “I think it was because there was nothing *wrong* there. I mean, by that time I had already talked to the new deputy sheriff and the Wolf Island postmaster, so I knew Warren really was...” He choked, cleared his throat, and said firmly, “*Dead*. But I thought that, somehow, his

house would look different. I mean, there would be something... dead about *it*, too.

“But coming up to house, everything outside looked the same—except his car was gone. That gave me a funny feeling, because my first reaction was, ‘He’s run down to the village. He ought to be back in an hour.’

“Of course, right away I realized that, well, psychologically, I was refusing to accept the fact he was dead. I suppose that’s why I went up to Wolf in the first place, even after you’d received an official notice. And why I had to go look through the house, in some kind of hope—in spite of everything they told me—that there he’d be, working in his studio,

wearing old blue jeans and a faded sweatshirt and composing silly verses while he carved.”

“*Obscene* verses,” Mrs. Brock said, nodding her neat, china doll head. “But witty. Never unpleasant.”

“Oh, yes!” the young man agreed eagerly. “Never really *dirty*. Well, I knew where he hid the extra house key—under a flowerpot at the back door. So I let myself in. And that’s when it became... difficult...”

He shivered again. “The worst tidal wave in fifty years, they called it. And it hit the waterfront just below the house. From the front window, I could see where the shoreline had been smashed and cut back. But nothing inside was

disturbed. Everything in perfect order, the way he always kept it.

“He had drowned, died a horrible death, yet his house was exactly the same—as if waiting for him to come back. There was even an open book by his reading chair. It seemed like any minute he would walk in and pick it up and start reading where he left off.

“I couldn’t stay. I checked around, because I knew you’d want me to. To see if the windows were locked, things like that. And when I went outside, I watered the garden, for the few roses still in bloom. Then I left... It was a beautiful day. Bright sun, warm. But I kept shivering.”

The little woman’s large, round eyes

were sympathetic. “You were very good to make the trip. I wouldn’t have asked you to do it, but when you volunteered, I realized I, too, couldn’t quite believe those official reports. I, too, wanted to see for myself—but I hadn’t the youth or strength to face it.”

She raised her sherry glass to her Cupid mouth and took a long swallow. “I’ve left the arrangements with my attorneys. There’s nothing to be done, really, but wait. For seven years, I think. Or is it five? Imagine that! At my age, I am to wait seven years before my son is officially dead.”

Blinking rapidly, she set down her sherry glass, then steadied her hand on the carved oak arm of her chair.

“Or is it five? Perhaps only five. I keep forgetting.”

Felicia awoke slowly. Drugged by warmth, suspended between dreams and reality, she lay absolutely still, wondering where she was.

Gradually her eyes focused and her surroundings took on shape and substance. She and Andrew were in the log house, in a little cubicle surrounded by pine-bough screens that were once the walls of their night shelter in the dormitory. They were wrapped together in coverings of fur and woven cedar bark, and his body was warm against hers, vibrant even in sleep.

She could hear the crackling of the hearth fire, soft footsteps, whispering

voices. One, two, three nights... And last night, their fourth under a roof, had been Christmas Eve.

Now she was fully awake, but she snuggled into her warm chrysalis, sleepily recalling events of the night before.

The trimming of the tree had been a cooperative effort, all nine insisting on joining in. *Nine excited children, Felicia reflected, at once joyful and solemn in their ritual.* So much laughter and confusion attended the decoration that any one or two of them could obviously have finished the job in half the time—yet still none would relinquish their parts.

When they finished, they stood back

while Donald, the tall one, attached a singular decoration to the tip. It was a dove in flight—a miniature that Warren had fashioned out of white feathers and fireweed cotton. From its perch on top, it winked at them all with its miniscule black-pebble eyes.

Below that, slender limbs bent gracefully under ornaments from the wild. Long tendrils of silvery gray-green moss hung in place of tinsel. Fibrous white moss lay like patches of snow. Chains of dried berries and ruby-red rose hips formed flowing loops. Seashells of all kinds, different-sized cones from fir, cedar, and pine, tiny dried starfish like six-pointed stars—from the tip of every branch, one or

another natural object swung on a thread.

For several minutes they admired their creation speechlessly, feeling more awe at the results of their own handiwork than at the most glittery confection in a department store window.

Felicia thought of the Christmas trees that had graced her apartment in Washington, D.C. She was known for them. The Washington newspapers photographed her beside each latest “amazing holiday creation,” and invitations to the cocktail parties where they were unveiled were highly prized. Last year, the tree had been sprayed with silver and powdered with gold sequins, while brittle glass icicles dripped from

its branches. *Original. Innovative.* Felicia smiled at the memory of the newspaper captions.

Yes, the tree *had* been original and innovative—to the degree that it had been rendered unnatural. But it hadn't even been her own creation. Each year, she commissioned a topflight interior decorator to create one *for* her.

Another feature of those parties was a group of madrigal singers, dressed in Old English costumes, hired to entertain her guests with Christmas carols. How different their own caroling had been last night, she thought, sighing pleasurably and granting herself another few minutes in bed.

Carlo had introduced the fruit of his

latest and most successful attempt at guitar making. The moment he began to strum chords, someone else began to hum. In minutes, they were all singing “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen,” and with such gusto that, when they reached the end—gasping and laughing—Warren exclaimed, “I win! I finished first!”

Immediately they began “The Twelve Days of Christmas”—dum-dee-dumming when they didn’t know the words—and from there progressed to every Christmas song any one of them could hum or whistle well enough for Carlo to pick out the chords. If their voices didn’t blend, at least they joined. As in the trimming of the tree, there were no spectators.

When they'd grown sleepy, they banked the fire, and Felicia recited the program for the following day: First, a special breakfast, planned by Norma. Midmorning, they would exchange gifts. The Christmas feast would come in late afternoon. Preceding it would be Donald's surprise—the nature of which he stubbornly refused to reveal.

As all had begun pulling away to prepare for bed, Rolf and Diana called them back. In a low voice like a muted but vibrant drumbeat, Rolf told them, "We've planned something ourselves for tomorrow. We'd like to invite you to our wedding."

Among their murmurs and exclamations, Rolf explained that he and

Diana had composed the ceremony and that all would be asked to take part. So, the wedding was scheduled for one o'clock, between the exchange of gifts and Christmas dinner.

It was going to be a long, beautiful day.

Felicia sat up straight. The cold air was fragrant with wood smoke and the spicy aroma of fresh-cut cedar. She freed herself from the covers as gently as she could and tucked them around Andrew's sleeping form.

Then she dressed quickly. First, the feed-sack shift—her outer garment in warm weather, her “lingerie” in winter. *God bless Farmer Dick and his Better Chicks*, she thought. Next, a pair of

men's swim trunks, cinched at the waist with twine. Over these undergarments she pulled a rabbit-skin vest and a leather skirt, belted with rawhide. She finished by slipping into moccasins.

Next would come a thorough soap-and-water scrub—with the water warm, if the early morning fire builder had put some on the hearth—plus a teeth brushing with a sponge of stiff white moss. Finally, one hundred strokes with her hairbrush—if Warren's most recent experiment with seagull quills and cedar held up that long.

Then, voilà! she thought, laughing inwardly. Madame would have finished her *toilette*. Then Madame would be ready to assume her duties—as chairman

of Phoenix Island's Christmas Gala.



Ever since they had begun construction of the log house, their meals were Spartan—as much to save time for work as to use food supplies sparingly. Breakfast had been only a bowl of hot porridge from starchy roots and dried berries, prepared quickly and eaten hastily in the half-light of early morning winter.

But this was Christmas morning. Taking their time, they relished the delicacies Norma had prepared to honor the day.

There were hoecakes, baked on hot stones near the fire. These had come out a deep gold, the flour being equal parts

ground cattail tubers and bright yellow cattail pollen. To spread on the cakes, they had thick, rosy jam made with wild plums and honey.

A rarer treat, though, was the smoked venison sausage—spiced with peppery mushrooms, wild mint, and powdered seaweed, and simmered in a little seawater. The single loop of sausage that Norma carefully cut into nine steaming, fragrant pieces was one of several she and Diana had made and stored in the buttery—but the only one surviving the dog pack’s raid.

“This is *special*,” Warren exclaimed as he picked up his portion with his fingers and delicately bit off a small piece. “Mmm! Yes, *indeed!* But of

course, it *would* be delicious, wouldn't it, since Norma says meat is *bad* for you."

"I didn't," Norma protested. "I said *fish is better*."

"Don't quibble, dear girl. I can *tolerate* what's good for me, but I *adore* what's bad."

He was about to take a second bite, when Lili claimed his attention. She sat at his elbow, her front paws turned out, like a ballet dancer in second position. Her large brown eyes followed every move of the hand that held the sausage, while her tail thumped hopefully on the rough plank floor.

"Tsk!" Warren said. "You're pregnant, you know. Aren't you

supposed to want dill pickles and ice cream? And don't you know the house rule—no dogs in the dining room? Oh, well, I know you're eating for ten." He bit the remaining sausage into two equal pieces and handed one to Lili.

A slight movement of Norma's caught his eye. "Don't *tell* me," he said before she could speak. "I know, I know. Your mother never allowed you to feed dogs at the table."

Norma smiled wistfully. "True. But that's not what I was going to say. I was about to call Lili to give her a piece of mine."

Felicia laughed. "So much for our Puritan mothers. So was I!"

Tail wagging, Lili made the rounds,

while her meat-hungry benefactors licked their emptied fingers and sipped from mugs of dandelion-root coffee.



When Felicia had first submitted her plans for Christmas Day, the others were all disappointed by her failure to mention Christmas presents.

“Presents?” she said, astonished by the unanimity of their protest. “Isn’t that a little childish?”

“Perhaps we *are* a little childlike,” Andrew had answered cheerfully.

So, an exchange of gifts had been scheduled to follow breakfast.

Now the remnants of that meal had been cleared away, and the dishes washed. They gathered around the

fireplace, where Norma filled their mugs with fresh, hot tea.

They were all trying awkwardly to shield their gifts from view. Several had bulky objects wrapped in bedclothes. Some concealed their gifts under pine boughs or hollylike sprigs of Oregon grape. Donald, grinning self-consciously, emerged from his room with several odd shapes bulging under his shirt.

“How shall we do this?” asked Felicia. “All at once? One at a time?”

A half dozen voices rose in instant and unequivocal answer. “All right,” she said laughing. “One at a time.”

Turning to the stack of firewood, she snapped off a handful of twigs. “Nine

sticks, with nine different lengths. Now we'll draw, and the shortest goes first."

One by one, they revealed and distributed their handiwork. And as the exchange went on, Felicia's concerns about gift giving melted away. They had so many things to give—there really would be something for everyone. Anyway, their anticipation seemed to arise from their desire to surprise and delight, rather than from eagerness to receive.

There were useful things, like baskets, bowls, and a metate and mano—a large, flat rock and a stone roller, for grinding seeds, wild wheat, and roots. There were things to wear, like a carved wooden belt buckle, rabbit-fur leggings,

and a poncho of woven cedar bark. Rolf presented the men with razor-sharp clamshells and promised to demonstrate the old Indian method of shaving and cutting hair.

But as Felicia observed, most of the gifts were not utilitarian. For people with daily lives shaped by urgent necessity, what seemed special was more apt to be something they didn't need.

There were corsages for the women, and strings of beads made from tiny pine cones and ruby-red rose hips. And many gifts were simply small treasures of the wild, to be looked at and touched and felt. Abalone shells with gleaming mother-of-pearl interiors in soft shades

of lavender and pink. Dried starfish in deep purple or striking combinations of orange and green. Opalescent agates—Donald had one for everyone in the group.

Donald also had a special gift for Carlo: several lengths of dried animal gut. “You said you was going to make another fiddle, or guitar, or whatever that is you been working on. These ought to make good strings.”

Among the presents for the group as a whole were two games. One was a pair of large dice and a dice cup, all of wood. The other was a baked-clay checkerboard, its squares crosshatched for “dark” and smooth for “light.” The checkers were wood disks, half of them

stained dark brown.

Andrew's gift for the group was basically practical: a detailed design for a potter's wheel. But for Felicia, he had made a coronet wreath of winter greens and bird feathers.

He placed it on her head. The feathers swept back from her temples like the headdress of a Valkyrie. The crown of glossy leaves contrasted vividly with her shining red hair and brought out the sea green of her eyes—also shining, with her love for the giver.

Last to be revealed was Warren's gift for Diana: a small statue of a female nude, with hands clasped over her abdomen and a secretive smile.

“Fertility symbol,” he told her

brightly. “Rub her nose every night before going to bed.” Then, in a more serious tone, “You’re such a lovely, wild thing, Diana. Make another baby. And if someone like me has a cliff fall on him... Well, pray for him if you *must*, but *don’t* go after him.”



In early afternoon, Andrew was approached by Rolf and Diana. Their eyes shone expectantly, though they held hands like children seeking mutual support.

“Dr. Held,” Diana asked, “would you be our minister?”

“Your minister?” The request, totally unexpected, brought a lump to Andrew’s throat. Years before, when called up to

receive the most coveted award of the international scientific community—even then had he felt more self-possessed than at this moment.

“I... I am deeply honored. I will do the best I can.” His Hungarian accent was pronounced, as it often was when he was caught up by emotion. “You have planned the ceremony?”

Rolf nodded. “We’ve been talking about it for days. We’ve made up a poem, and we know what we want to do. But we’d like you to bring everyone together and say a few words.”

“Do you think we should have a rehearsal?”

Both young people shook their heads energetically. “That would spoil it,”

Rolf said. “But can we go outside for a few minutes and talk?”

An hour later, Felicia called Norma from the kitchen and Donald and Blake from outside. When they were all together, Andrew arranged them in a semicircle with their backs to the hearth. Rolf and Diana, side by side, faced the group, while Andrew stood between the young couple and the others.

Andrew addressed the half circle. “Warren, Felicia, Norma, Blake, Carlo, Donald. We are witnesses this afternoon to the wedding of our friends Diana and Rolf. We have seen them live and work together. We have seen that they do so in harmony and in love. And now they wish to make promises to each other in our

presence. Felicia, would you please bring out the wreaths?”

Felicia disappeared into the young couple's cubicle and came out with two wreaths of glossy madrona leaves. She placed the first atop Diana's dark hair, and the second upon Rolf's.

Andrew asked the couple, “Which of you will speak first?”

Rolf drew Diana's arm through his and grinned at her. “You go ahead.”

Diana's sensitive mouth trembled for an instant, then curved into a smile. Facing the group, she said, “We love each other. We respect each other. We are not *one*. We are not two *halves* that make a whole. We are two separate individuals. But we choose to go through

life together.”

Rolf’s eyes left Diana’s to address, as she had, their friends before the hearth. “I will always take care of Diana, and I will always love her. I will protect her, but I will never own her. She is her own person. She cannot be *mine*.”

“I *trust* Rolf,” continued Diana. “He gives me strength and courage.” Their eyes found each other’s again. “I want to have your child.”

“I will love and care for our child, but I will never love anyone more than you.”

“I want a house—small but all ours.”

“I want to build it for you, with my own hands.”

“We will build it together. Your hands and my hands will make our

house.”

Again they turned to the semicircle of friends.

“I, Diana Lindgren, pledge myself to be Rolf’s loyal wife.”

“I, Rolf Morgan, pledge myself to be Diana’s loving husband.”

Slowly, together, they removed their wreaths and exchanged them, then placed each other’s on their own heads.

Diana said, “Now I am married to you.”

And Rolf echoed, “Now I am married to you.”

Andrew said quietly, “This is a solemn pledge. We all witness and honor it. You are truly husband and wife.”

There was a moment of deep silence. Then Rolf's head bent toward Diana's, and husband and wife joined in a kiss.

“And now,” said Andrew after a considerate pause, “our newlyweds have a song for us. For some reason, they tell me, none of the poems they memorized in school seem to fit the occasion. So, they composed their own, and Carlo worked out an accompaniment. They call it ‘The Song of Phoenix.’”

As Carlo fetched his guitar, Rolf gave the group a gleaming smile. “It isn't very good poetry.”

“It's better than my music, bradda!” said Carlo, laughing. And Andrew said, “It's personal to the two of you, and it's your own creation. We all want to hear

it.”

Carlo plucked out the first notes. Diana and Rolf, their eyes on each other, began to sing.

*I followed my sweetheart across
the deep water.*

*The silvery moon was my heavenly
guide.*

*Deep in the blackness, I came on
an island*

*That rose like a phoenix from the
white foaming tide.*

*Phoenix, my Phoenix, you
sheltered my sweetheart,*

*And out of the darkness you
beckoned to me.*

Your shores and your forests, your

*streams and your meadows,
A world strange and lovely thrust
up from the sea.*

The chorus repeated, and this time, Carlo's melodious baritone joined and blended with the young couple's voices.

*Phoenix, my Phoenix, you
sheltered my sweetheart...*

A few more notes from the guitar followed the chorus, leading into the second verse.

*My sweetheart was waiting. Her
arms were around me.*

*The earth was beneath us, the
forest above.*

*In peace and in beauty we
whispered our promise
To give and to nurture, to cherish
and love.*

The chorus again came around, and Carlo's voice once more joined in. Then, at the repeat, the voices of the others joined too—uncertainly at first, but gradually gaining so much confidence that Carlo instinctively started through the chorus a third time. All nine then sang out so energetically that “The Song of Phoenix”—awkward and amateurish though it might have seemed—filled the cabin with a flood of happy sound.

Phoenix, my Phoenix...

Warm smiles remained as the last notes died away. What came next required no rehearsal, no explanation, no planning—as if all had always known the proper close to a wedding. Starting at one end of the line of their friends, Diana and then Rolf clasped hands with each, and to each one said, “In love and harmony.”

Then all were talking at once, and Andrew was pumping Rolf’s hand, and Felicia was hugging Diana fiercely, unaware of the tears running down her own cheeks.



For months they had eaten their meals like campers, sitting on logs and

balancing plates on their knees—and that was once they'd managed to make plates. For their Christmas banquet, Felicia had decreed, they would have a table and chairs.

Of course, building the log house plus the crow's nest lookout and ladder left no time to make finished furniture. That was to be their communal project, now that the cabin was roofed over and the signal flag raised. Still, they did achieve a table of sorts, as well as something to sit on.

The “chairs” were upended cedar bolts meant to be split into shakes as the log house was enlarged. The table consisted of planks like the flooring, resting on a base of small logs notched

and crisscrossed like a miniature cabin. Primitive though it was, Felicia set the table as if her major concern was whether to use the Spode or the Wedgwood.

A centerpiece of evergreen ran the length of the table, with seashells of all kinds nestled in its dark and fragrant greenery. Each place setting included a plate, a bowl, and a drinking cup—all of it Warren's hand-molded slate-gray pottery. True, they still had to eat with their hands. (“If we did have cutlery,” Blake commented, “I’m sure we’d find it a better use than merely eating with it.”) But they would eat by candlelight, for Norma had cast two beeswax candles and set them on wooden pedestals amid

the boughs of fir and cedar.

When Felicia announced that dinner would be ready in an hour, Donald said gruffly, “Well, it’s time for my surprise.” He left the cabin, then returned a few minutes later with a deerskin pouch.

“Can that be *full*?” Warren inquired with a lift of his blond eyebrows. “Of some divine elixir?”

Donald grinned. “That ain’t what we called it over at the place. We called it pruno. But I think you got the idea.”

He caressed the taut surface with rough fingers but a surprisingly gentle touch. “I been having a helluva time keeping this stuff hid. And hid where it was warm enough to work. It ain’t been

easy to leave it alone, either. That's the trouble with bootleg. Testing it all the time, you finish her off while she's still green."

"Bootleg!" Warren breathed ecstatically. "Donald, you're a prince of a man."

"You better wait till you taste it," Donald said modestly. "It's made all from honey and apples, and some of the yeast stuff Norma uses in bread."

"Is this some fine old recipe, inherited by generation after generation of Campbells?"

Donald's laugh was a short growl. "I *in*-herited it, like you say. From an old con who was always smart enough to get himself a work assignment in the kitchen.

Of course, some of the younger guys called him K.P. and kidded him about dishwasher hands. But, next to the hospital, the kitchen is the best spot in the joint.

“What those young guys never figured out was that wise old K.P. had got himself where he could swipe sugar and fruit or whatever else he needed to make pruno. OJT, the social workers called it. On the Job Training. I’ll say it was! K.P. got trained to make liquor out of raisins and potato peels. One batch he fermented where he’d hid it behind a ceiling light fixture.”

Donald grinned at Warren. “So, it ain’t Old Granddad. It’s old WSP—Washington State Penitentiary. Maybe

you won't like it.”

“I'll like it.” Warren danced to the dinner table and picked up two pottery mugs. “Let us gather and drink a toast to good old K.P. and that grand old alma mater, WSP.”

“Alcohol...” Andrew brought his right hand up in a salute. “Donald, you've got the solution.”

Donald grinned self-consciously. “Me? The solution to what?”

“The energy crisis.” Andrew pointed to the deerskin pouch. “Our most brilliant scientists drink it, as well as have themselves rubbed with it, but never get around to anything as useful as making it.”

“Maybe they never done any time.

Anyway, it don't taste like bonded stuff.”

“Ha! Neither does gasoline or coal. The point is, when you think of alcohol as a *fuel*, taste doesn't matter.”

Andrew smiled. “You, Donald, have brewed this liquor from plants that can be grown in abundance. You say it can even be made from such waste products as potato peelings. Think of it! Energy from corn stubble and grain. From waste paper or trash. From”—he laughed—“potato peelings!”

“But, Dr. Held...” Norma's smooth forehead was creased by a puzzled frown. “Are you serious?”

“Never more so! We should benefit from the lesson learned by the Germans

during the Second World War. They were faced with a critical shortage of oil, so they substituted alcohol. As a fuel, it's more efficient, cleaner, and safer than gasoline.”

“But the last time we talked about the energy crisis, you seemed so positive that deuterium is the solution.”

“Dear Norma,” Warren said with a little moue. “As a virtue, consistency is *highly* overrated.”

Andrew's shaggy eyebrows had lifted in surprise. “Oh, there's no contradiction here, Norma. Deuterium *is* the ultimate fuel, and our long-range goal must be construction of thermonuclear fusion power plants to utilize our almost limitless supply. But when I sing out in

praise of alcohol, I speak of an intermediate step—one we can take almost at once to reduce oil consumption. Moreover, alcohol burns without pollution, which should make it popular with our most zealous ecologists. And most important, everyone can make it in their own backyards.”

He paused and smiled. “I’ll admit, though, that the foot soldiers of the Internal Revenue Service might have trouble convincing our backyard fuel maker he’s supposed to pour the stuff into his gas tank rather than down his throat.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Warren said, prodding Donald’s arm with his mug.



The crude home brew was sweetish and raw and burned as it went down, but they sipped the dark liquid and praised Donald's ingenuity. They drank toasts to each other; to the newlyweds; to themselves, one and all; to Phoenix Island; and to their rescuers, wherever they might be. When they finally sat down to dinner, they were suffused with loving-kindness and a sense of wonderment at the beauty of the day.

The first course was served—there were to be three altogether, with Donald offering to refill cups in between. What with this serving in courses and the new table and makeshift chairs, Diana playfully referred to their “sit-down

dinner.” Her old-fashioned term immediately inspired comparisons with their last meal at table—Andrew’s party for his houseguests the night of the tsunami.

Norma and Blake recalled that there were four courses and, with Diana’s help, recited what they were. Warren remembered nothing about the food but everything about the wine and cognac—and especially the champagne they never got to drink because of Carlo’s urgent tsunami warning.

It was Felicia alone, though, who had total recall. China, silverware, linens, and menu—course by course, and sauce by sauce.

“Beluga caviar. Lobster. A center-cut

filet of beef, mushroom caps, salad of artichokes and endive. And for dessert, candied chestnuts, followed by an excellent camembert.”

Felicia picked up a leg of Dungeness crab and removed the cracked shell, then bit off a morsel of milky meat. “The menu you planned was faultless, Andy. A *grand* dinner, in every way. Remarkable that your cook—Mary, was it? poor thing—was as faultless as the menu, right down to the *sauce bordelaise*.

“At the time, I wondered how she did it. She had lived all her life in the Outer Islands, hadn’t she? She couldn’t have had much experience with South African lobster tails, or basting a *filet* with

Madeira and cognac, or Italian olive oil and endive and all the other imported ingredients that went into that dinner. Because nothing we ate was really native to these islands.”

Andrew sipped his pruno while repressing a grimace, then set down the cup and picked up a crab leg himself. “I hoped at the time to make an impression—especially on you, Felicia. Yet that dinner was in no way as remarkable as the one you and Norma and Diana have prepared for today.”

He held the crab leg aloft. “This is a *real* delicacy. Straight from the sea and onto our plates. Never frozen, stored, packaged, shipped, or airmailed. You point out that Mary was a stranger to

South African lobster tail. And now, even more so than Mary, the nine of us must ‘make do’ with what we can get locally—but that happens to include large quantities of Dungeness crab pulled from the ocean the day before.

“Then there’s the caviar. The night of the tsunami, we had beluga that came all the way from the Caspian Sea. Anyone could have told it was delicious, because it cost, roughly, two dollars per spoonful. But we have caviar tonight, too—caviar we made ourselves, from salmon we *caught* ourselves.

“Let’s go on to today’s second course. Yes,” he admitted in response to Felicia’s wry glance, “I’ve been snooping around the kitchen. Next we

are to have roast grouse, stuffed with a kind of pilaf of wild wheat, wild onions, and herbs. This, I suppose, identifies us plainly as underprivileged.”

With flushed cheeks and blue eyes sparkling, Norma said gaily, “But not undeveloped.”

“I should say *not*.” Warren’s large, dark eyes rested appreciatively on Norma’s midsection. “When we came to Phoenix, my dear Mrs. M., you were built like a malnourished twelve-year-old. I wasn’t sure at first, but at this point, you are *definitely* a girl. I’m counting on you to be my model for Aphrodite of Phoenix.”

“And after the grouse,” Andrew continued, “or perhaps with it, there is a

casserole. Am I right?”

Felicia nodded. “Jerusalem artichokes and mushrooms. Of course, the mushrooms are nothing like the domestic breed, those pallid white caps one buys in grocery stores. Thanks to Norma’s six-bite test, we’ve enlarged our mushroom repertoire to sixteen varieties, each with a distinctive flavor.

“And wait till you hear what us poor folk are having for dessert. Sorry, no candied chestnuts from France. A strictly local product, created by our own Diana.”

Diana laughed softly. “There’s really no name for it.”

“Pooh!” Felicia said. “We’ll make one up. Ingredients: dried apples,

hazelnuts, and honey. Any ideas?”

“I have it!” sang out Warren. “It’s Diana’s Christmas Delight. A delicious name for a delicious dessert—as I can confidently proclaim before tasting a single bite.”

With an eye on Donald, Warren then lifted his mug. “More of this excellent... uh... brew of yours, Donald lad. Let’s all drink to our beggarly condition. Caviar, crab, grouse, mushrooms, Jerusalem artichokes, hazelnuts, and honey. I can hardly wait for the search party to come and save us from privation. No doubt they’ll bring plenty of K rations.”



Felicia drew gently on her pipeful of

Warren's favorite blend of kinnikinnick and reflected that a formal dinner dance at a hundred dollars a plate could not equal their party this day.

From their special breakfast when the early morning light was still wintry pale, to their after-dinner songfest of carols as the sun descended, it had been a day of unbroken celebration. And everything had been extraordinary—the food, the gifts, the wine, and above all, the wedding ceremony. A day of exquisite leisure, but leisure so sweet that necessary household chores had been accomplished without anyone considering it work. At the end of this long, beautiful day, Donald's *heimgemacht* and Warren's "tobacco"

had merely heightened their euphoria, not created it.

Admittedly, they were all a little high. With dreamy expressions, Carlo and his ensemble—made up of Rolf, Diana, and Norma—were plucking, blowing, and drumming their primitive instruments in experimental revisions of “The Song of Phoenix.”

*I followed my sweetheart across
the deep water...*

Blake sang along joyfully, undeterred by his failure to stay in the same key as the rest. During breaks in the music, Warren created limericks on the spot, reciting them with appropriate gestures. Even Donald looked comfortably part of

the scene, his characteristic scowl replaced by a faint, somewhat secretive grin. Listening to the song, he revolved his cup of cheer between his palms and gazed into it, as if an important message might show itself through the dark liquid.

The mood had caught Andrew as well. He lay by the fire with the sleeping Lili pressed against his side. He hadn't moved in half an hour, except to stroke the hound with one hand when she yipped softly in the throes of a canine nightmare.

Felicia looked at him affectionately. How different this peaceful man was from the kinetic one who had moved restlessly through their apartment; the man who had come home late and

reluctantly; the man who had then eaten and slept only enough to be ready for an early morning departure. Even when sufficiently relaxed to sit down at his beloved grand piano, he had yet seemed driven, playing every phrase as a passionate outcry, every chord as a merciless attack, no matter the composer's intent. Locked in combat with the keyboard, he had struggled until exhausted, then gone alone to bed—perhaps, Felicia had often thought, to continue the battle in his dreams.

Phoenix had indeed brought him peace. She smiled at the world-renowned scientist, lying contentedly with a snoring basset hound cradled in his arm.

But what was that she saw in his eyes? Wide open, they were fixed brightly on the rafters above. Felicia recognized this alert but introspective expression—it assured her that his restless spirit, though tamed, was not extinguished. He might well be warmed by the fire, relaxed by the liquor, soothed by the pipe—but in his mind, ideas still moved, plans still formed.

Plans... Felicia was no stranger to planning, herself. She had planned a grand ball at the Shoreham, and she had planned the celebration today. But what a difference between these two!

It wasn't so much the obvious contrast between the sophisticated entertainment of the city and the simple pleasures of

the island, or even so much the extremes of scale. It was more the difference in degrees of participation. In Washington, she and her committee—eight or nine individuals—had staged the elaborate affair for seven or eight hundred people whose only contribution was payment of exorbitant prices. Eight were doers, eight hundred were done unto.

Here, on the other hand, all members of the Phoenix colony were active participants, executing every phase from gathering and preparing the food to creating the entertainment. Even the fire now keeping them warm while filling the cabin with the pungent smell of pine—this, too, was a shared experience. They had all gathered wood, and all were

responsible for keeping the hearth fire burning day and night.

As if Felicia's last thought had been broadcast, Carlo looked up from his guitar to appraise the stack of firewood. Seeing it low, he set his instrument on the block of wood acting as his chair and started outside. In the few seconds the door was open for his exit, Felicia could see the light of the signal fire—another shared experience and responsibility—burning atop the rock mound like a flame on a pagan altar.

Someday, she thought, someone out there in civilization will see our fire, or spot our column of smoke. Someone will see our flag of distress flying from its fir-tree mast. Then they—they, those

impersonal forces, those faceless authorities I once prayed for so earnestly and now seldom think of—will come to the rescue.

Then all or most of the Phoenix colonists would leave, abandoning everything they had created and planned. They wouldn't have to build the driftwood furniture they were now designing, or make cushions for it from duck feathers and fireweed cotton. Norma could forget her little hoard of wild wheat seeds, as she wouldn't be here to plant them in the spring. Andrew could discard his ideas for constructing a windmill, because he could take money out of the bank to both buy one and hire someone to install it.

Also at that time, Felicia knew, she would face two choices. She could return to the city without Andrew, in spite of loving him. Or she could force him—because he loved her—to leave the island that had brought him peace.

Or was there a third choice? Was it possible that Felicia Stowe Held—Washington hostess, devotee of fashion, consummate urbanite—would choose Phoenix Island?

Rolf and Diana, not waiting for Carlo, were singing again.

*I followed my sweetheart across
the deep water.*

*The silvery moon was my heavenly
guide...*

Felicia felt the fire's heat on her cheek and watched a puff of its smoke twist toward the rafters and disperse.

I love the man. I love him as I never have before. But when the moment comes, and the choice must be made—will that be enough?

Carlo had no idea of the exact time. Blake, to protect the group's only surviving wristwatch, seldom wore it—and they had all gotten out of the habit of referring to it when he did.

Still, Carlo could make a good guess. The deepening shadows. The white sky turning slate gray. The rustling day sounds falling silent before the stealthy approach of night. At this time of year, it was dark by four-thirty in the afternoon. The misty dusk settling over the farm told him it was about four o'clock.

From that day on, he thought, each dawn would come one minute earlier than the one before, and each sundown

would come one minute later. In good time, the willow catkins would burst their coverings, and the three-petaled trilliums would bloom in the woods, and it would be March.

They had ricked up the firewood in two stacks. In the first were short, dry pieces for the fireplace in the cabin; in the second, large green logs for the signal fire—for, during daylight, they wanted smoke even more than flame. Carlo picked up two freshly cut alder logs from the second stack and, climbing the rock mound, laid them on the pyre. The flame diminished for a few seconds, then shot up again, higher than before.

The farm area was surrounded by timber on three sides only. From his

vantage point on the mound, Carlo could look west, down the slope to the harbor and beyond to the ocean, with nothing to impede the view. Which was fortunate, Carlo thought as he faced the open sea. A column of smoke and the high-flying flag were good distress signals during the day, but at night, only firelight would pierce the darkness.

Of course, thought Carlo with a chuckle, at least one of the group had his hope elsewhere. Warren still put his faith in the message he had launched in a bottle. Carlo laughed aloud at the memory. Like the admiral's wife christening a new battleship, Warren had recited the sealed message, then kissed the bottle reverently and closed his eyes

before tossing it out on the tide.

Carlo was glad he had been alone when he found the bottle a few days later, in a small, rocky cove just around the bend from where Warren had so ceremoniously dispatched it. If it had been intact, he would have launched it again—but the neck was broken, and the small clay tablets bearing the hopeful message were reduced to blue-gray mud.

But why disturb Warren with such a sad ending to his storybook dream? Or with the fact that a message in a bottle would never have brought a rescue party anyway.

This fire might, though. Any boat running along the west side of the island would be in line of sight. Of course, the

island was nowhere near the regular trade routes—they'd had ample indication of that. Still, the fire should be visible if there *was* a boat, and if it came close enough in. Just in case, he'd lay on another log.

Carlo climbed down, fetched a hefty piece of wood, and was about to carry it back up, when he glanced across the field at their signal flag—and didn't see it. In his surprise, he dropped the log and stood staring at the tree. At first he thought the flag was gone, but as his eyes adjusted to the failing light, he saw it—hanging by one corner, limp and useless.

Leaving the log where it lay, Carlo picked up an armload of wood from the other stack, then hurried back inside.

They were all just as peaceful as he had left them: Rolf and Diana singing. Warren and Felicia puffing quietly on their pipes. Andrew stretched out with his hound. Blake and Norma sipping from cups and quietly talking. Donald smiling to himself, saying nothing.

Carlo knelt to deposit his load gently, to keep from disturbing his companions' mellow mood. Then he went over to Rolf.

“The flag is down. Looks like the top corner broke loose and got caught on a limb. I'm going to go fix it.”

His voice wasn't much louder than a whisper, but it shocked the sleepy gathering into sudden and total attention.

“Brother *mio*,” Warren twittered.

“Surely you’re not going to climb that giant of the forest tonight? The very thought drives me back to the bar.”

He reached for the pouch of home brew and tipped it over his cup. With thick, pale eyebrows raised and lips pursed, he asked, “And whom may I serve?”

Donald held out his mug. After a moment’s hesitation, Carlo picked up his and did the same.

“Besides,” Warren continued as he poured, “the flag doesn’t do us much good at night, does it? Let’s just keep the signal fire going and leave the ascent of Everest for the purposeful morning hours.”

Carlo took a long draught of wine.

“It’s not that dark outside, bradda. I can see to get up the tree. I’m thinking, the way we working on this beautiful stuff, none of us going to feel like climbing trees early tomorrow.”

Blake chuckled. “If you feel as *I* do, you’ll climb the *wrong* tree. AFWUI—Ascent of a Fir While Under the Influence. A well-known violation of the Phoenix Island criminal code. As your attorney of record—”

A small hiccup interrupted his speech. His fingers flew to cover his mouth and pressed urgently as a second spasm rippled from his chest. Laughing, Norma thumped him between the shoulder blades.

“That won’t work,” Blake gasped.

“You’re supposed to *scare* me.”

“Boo!” shouted Norma. They fell into each other’s arms, laughing helplessly.

At the hearth, Felicia was relighting her pipe from a flaming splinter of cedar. “Bother the flag!” she proclaimed, her voice ringing with finality. “This is Christmas. Surely those Coast Guard sea scouts get the day off.”

“They go when and where there’s trouble,” Andrew said.

“Trouble on Christmas?” said Warren. “That just shows how thoughtless some people can be. Imagine, daring to drown themselves on a holiday!”

Carlo chuckled. “Our signals aren’t meant only for the Coast Guard. The

boat we're hoping for might be a freighter, or maybe one of those steamers that give special holiday cruises. In fact, way off the beaten track like we are, I'd put my money on a cruise boat. Twenty to one."

"Oh, what the hell..." Donald's groggy voice ground to a halt. Elbows on his knees, he glared at the floor.

Rolf stood up. "I'm with you, Carlo. Let's go."

Like children at the heels of the Pied Piper, they all got up to follow Carlo and Rolf out of the cabin. All, Andrew noted, except Donald, who had turned sullen and stayed by the hearth with his mug of wine.

"You're not coming?" Andrew asked

when the others had gone out.

“I don’t see no point to it.”

“There *is* a point, Donald. The flag might attract attention at any time. We have no way to know when either of our signals might be sighted, so we must always keep the fire lit and the flag flying. I’m sure you understand that as well as I do.”

“He’s drunk.”

“Carlo?” Andrew shook his head. “No. If we thought that, we wouldn’t let him climb that ladder.”

Standing up, Donald emptied his mug in one swallow and set it down on the hearth. “I don’t have to go just because everyone else does.”

Andrew smiled. “No, you don’t. And

that's why I thought you'd want to."

He turned and limped after the others. And by the time Andrew caught up with them, Donald was at his side.

Carlo headed the column, Andrew and Donald took up the rear. In between, the others straggled tipsily across the shadowy field, laughing and shouting. In the dim light and without his glasses, Blake was virtually blind, but Norma clasped his hand and he plunged ahead, following her lead. And above the din rose the voices of Rolf and Diana.

*I followed my sweetheart,
I followed my sweetheart,
I followed my sweetheart,
And here's what I found.*

*I found Phoenix Island,
I found Phoenix Island...*



Carlo leaned against the tree trunk and fought for breath.

He hadn't quite reached the top, but he could already see what had happened. The rawhide strips lashing the flagpole to the tree had loosened, and the pole had slipped and come to rest among the highest branches. At one corner the tablecloth flag was still fastened to the pole, but in several places it had caught on the bark. He would have to free the flag and rewind the lashing.

He steadied himself against the tree as he lifted one foot, found the next rung of the ladder, pushed himself upward, and

tested his balance before trying to move again. Every step was a struggle against protruding branches and the dizzying sway of the treetop as it bent under his weight.

Carlo was winded again by the time he reached the top. He looked out over the forest to the dark water far below—looked, gasped, and blinked his eyes.

A light—or a twinkling blend of many lights—barely moving across the water to the west of Phoenix Island. The lights of a ship!

For a moment he was so stunned, he couldn't make a sound. A ship? Rescue? It wasn't real—it couldn't be—however much they had planned for it and waited for it. It was a visual trick, like the slow,

deadly pullback of water in the bay that had told him, some five months before, of the tsunami about to roar into Phoenix harbor.

During that nightmare moment on the dock below Dr. Held's house, he had been paralyzed by terror of what he saw. The life-or-death necessity of breaking into a run, of calling out the warning, had momentarily held him spellbound—just as the vision of offshore lights did now. For seconds that were hours, his body wouldn't move and his voice was trapped.

But this was *good* news! This was help!

The paralysis broke.

“Ship!” he cried hoarsely to the

upturned faces at the base of the tree. “I see a ship!”

Suddenly the babble hushed. Andrew’s voice rose as from a deep pit.

“In which direction?”

“To the west!”

“Near? Near enough to see the flag?”

“Not yet. But I think she’s coming this way. I’m going to fix it.”

Andrew’s reply was lost in the blur of excited voices.

Precariously balanced and clinging to the tree with one hand, Carlo worked frantically with the other, jerking and pulling on the lashings. But they were wet from rain and resisted his feverish effort to untie the knots. Meanwhile, tufts of fir needles scratched his skin, and

swaying branches threatened to push him off the ladder.

His head buzzed with the sounds from below—shrill voices begging him to hurry, and in the next breath warning him to be careful.

“Where is it now?”

“Is it coming nearer?”

“How big?”

His foot slipped, and he lost his balance. In the shadows below, someone screamed.

Clawing the air, Carlo’s hands struck a limb and closed in a desperate grip. Then, breathing hard, he slowly pulled himself up, until one foot, and then the other, touched and found support. He looked up.

The flag was gone. In his struggle to save himself, he had ripped off the one corner holding fast to the flagpole. Looking down, he saw the flag falling from branch to branch, slowly and irregularly, before catching on a dead limb just a few feet off the ground.

A chorus of unhappy *oh's* was punctuated by Andrew's calm voice: "Carlo, are you all right?"

Fresh cuts and scratches stung him in a dozen places, and his head throbbed from the jolt of him stopping his fall—but that wasn't what was important now. "I'm okay," he called back. "But the flag isn't."

Rolf's deep voice stood out from the others' disappointed murmuring. "I'll

climb up with it.”

“No use. The way this thing is wrecked, that ship’s going to be long gone before I can get it fixed.”

“Then get down from that tree!” Felicia ordered. “They’ll see the fire. Come on, everyone.”

“The fire!”

New hope propelled the group back across the field, chattering excitedly, while Andrew stayed behind to wait for Carlo. By now, the true blackness of night was coming on fast. Andrew squinted up through the shadows at Carlo’s figure descending the primitive ladder. Then he turned back to the field and let his eyes follow the retreating group, silhouetted against the signal fire.

Dark as it was, thought Andrew, Donald's massive head and shoulders should surely stand above the others in that silhouette. But Donald wasn't with them. Where was he, then? Andrew looked around curiously. Had Donald gone into the woods—whether out of childish pique or from simple need to relieve himself?

He heard Felicia's voice sing out, "Let's go down past the orchard. We'll get a good view from there!"

It was as good as a battle cry. Andrew saw the exultant troops of Phoenix swing to the west, as Warren trilled, "Hurray, hurray! My ship comes in!" In a mood akin to joyful hysteria, they blundered toward the clearing, from where they'd

be able to see the ocean stretching to the horizon and watch the miraculous approach of the ship that must, within minutes, sight their fire.

The moment Carlo reached the ground, Andrew sent him on ahead, then proceeded slowly at his own limping pace. But by the time he caught up with the lately rollicking band, its mood had changed.

Ten minutes before, they had been in a frenzy of joy. They had leaped across the field, heedless of the dark, laughing and shouting and hugging each other in a wild dance. Now, with the signal fire blazing at their backs and beckoning to their rescuers, all stood in hushed silence, looking to the west.

Yes, there it was—the light of a ship, just below where the night sky melted into the sea. The ship was there, really *there*.

At meetings, they had play-acted many versions of their rescue. But the playing was over. This wasn't a game.

Blake, with his poor sight, seemed the only one not mesmerized by the ship's approach.

“I doubt they'll try to find harbor tonight,” he said solemnly—and for the first time in two or three months, Andrew heard the undertone of anxiety so notable in Blake's voice when he first came to Phoenix. “I assume they know that most of these islands are surrounded by rocks. I think they'll drop anchor and

a lifeboat will come ashore in the morning.”

“Drat!” Warren said. “I’ll be sober by then, and in that sorrowful condition, I *hate* uniforms.”

“Maybe they won’t be in uniform.” Rolf’s voice was strangely serious compared to his merry singing of minutes earlier. “She’ll have to come in closer before we can make out what she is.”

“But it *will* come in, won’t it?” asked Norma anxiously. “Even if it’s a freighter or trawler? Wouldn’t any boat stop and investigate?”

“That depends,” said Rolf. “On who they are and whether they know the territory well enough to wonder about a

fire on this island. You know that boat isn't on any regular commercial shipping lane."

"In that case," Norma said firmly, "they wouldn't be here if they weren't coming for *us*. Someone has sent them."

Felicia's hand slipped into Andrew's. "Andy?" she whispered. "I think this time we are really going to be rescued."

"It seems so, doesn't it? They may still have to come closer to spot our fire, but it's certainly a clear signal, and they're moving in this direction."

"It won't be like the helicopter, then," said Felicia, "flying off without seeing us. Or that other ship—the one that changed course so suddenly and disappeared."

Andrew pressed her hand. “No, dear. If we keep that fire burning, they’re bound to see it.”

“I can’t help but wonder...” Felicia’s voice was wistful. “If they’ve really been sent to Phoenix, who do you suppose convinced them to take another look?”

Andrew laughed briefly. “After almost five months without any kind of search effort? I haven’t the least idea. To be truthful, Felicia, I’ve been convinced for some time that we’re all listed as dead. I’ve taken comfort in the fact that we’re all childless and have so few people to weep for us.

“At this point, I suspect that our nearest relatives have become mostly

concerned over the long wait the law requires before a missing person's estate can be probated. As for our friends... Well, I'm sure they've missed us. But in my case at least, I've maintained so little contact since my move to Phoenix that my assumed death couldn't have taken me much farther from them."

"But now they'll discover we're alive. And some people," Felicia said drily, "are going to be surprised."

"Some of *my* colleagues," added Andrew, "will be flatly disappointed."



They were so preoccupied with the slow approach of the ship that Donald's absence went almost unnoticed. Once or twice, it did cross Andrew's mind—but,

each time, his concern was allayed by the thought that Donald must be in the cabin finishing off the home brew. He knew that Donald was sulking, and that the reason for it was somehow connected to the signal flag. But to Andrew, Donald's mood seemed senseless and childish, and probably best ignored.

Still, Andrew could ordinarily read Donald's motivation as easily as a textbook of high school physics. It bothered him a little that he couldn't now. Since Donald's return from exile, he had seemed happy. Why this sudden fit of antisociability?

Andrew could think of no reason for it. Still, he knew instantly who was

responsible when the light from the signal fire behind them abruptly dimmed, flickered, and went out.

“Donald!” he shouted as they all turned and stared incredulously at the spot so brilliantly illuminated just moments before. “Donald!” he called again as rushing bodies flowed past him, nearly knocking him down.

Felicia’s hands on his arm helped keep him from falling. Then she cried, “My God, he’s put out the fire!” and she was running up the slope with the rest of them.

Andrew, alone in the dark, kept calling out to Donald as he worked his way painfully across uneven ground. But it was not until he reached the rock

mound that he saw the big man.

Donald was standing alone, some twenty or thirty feet from the mound. Their largest water containers—the five-gallon milk can and the plastic bucket—sat on the ground at his feet. On top of the mound, tendrils of smoke rose from the blackened remains of the signal fire.

Andrew limped up to him. “You bastard!” he said quietly. “You dirty, rotten bastard!”

“I don’t want no one to come and take me away,” Donald said, almost pleading. “When I seen a ship, I got to thinking. I got...” His voice cracked. “I got scared.”

“They’re trying to rebuild the fire now,” Andrew said grimly. “You’re

going to help them.”

“I don’t want to, Dr. Held! I soaked it, I soaked it good. I doused all the kindling, too. *Goddamn it, I ain’t going to help!*”

It was a pitiful animal cry. But rather than raising his own voice, Andrew lowered it.

“Yes, you are, Donald. Right now.”

Without a word, Donald marched toward the woodpile and began picking up firewood.

A moment later, Rolf ran from the cabin with blazing sticks in both hands. As he rushed past Donald, the sputtering flames lit the big man’s face—and Andrew saw he was crying.

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They worked with desperate speed, against heavy odds.

The kindling was drenched, the fire's bed was black mud. They dropped to their knees and scraped away the sodden ashes with bare hands. Then they ran around the dark meadow, looking for dry grass and dead bracken fern to use as tinder.

When the new fire failed to ignite the water-soaked wood, they raced to transfer the hearth fire to the mound. They filled pottery cookware with hot coals and bolted from the cabin, across the dark field. Stumbling to the top of the pyramid, each one deposited another

small bit of fire and ran back for more. All took part in the frenzied marathon—except Blake, who had to grope his way back to the cabin just for his wooden glasses; Andrew, who couldn't run; and Donald, whom they ignored.

They worked in silence as thick as the surrounding night. There was the sound of labored breathing, an exclamation or gasp as someone nearly fell, but no one talked. Then, when the first hesitant flame licked at the firewood and steadied and grew larger, there was a sighing exclamation, an invisible wave that rippled out from the ring of sweaty, panting fire makers.

As the fire took hold, Donald came forward with an armload of firewood.

One by one, almost ceremonially, the others each took a stick from him and laid it on the growing flame.

Felicia was the first to speak. “Now it will burn. Let’s go back and watch the boat.”

She threw Andrew a questioning look. He told her, “Donald and I will stay here. He’ll keep up the fire.”

“I’ll stay, too,” said Blake. Touching Norma’s shoulder, he said, “You go watch for our rescuers. I’ll wait to meet them personally.” He grinned. “They’re going to *love* my glasses.”

“I’ve already seen the ship. I’d rather stay with you.”

Blake shook his head. “No, Norma. You go with the others. Have another

look,” and he gave her a gentle nudge. Reluctantly, she followed the figures already hurrying toward the orchard.

Andrew, his right leg throbbing, sighed deeply. “Come along, Blake. Let’s go inside and sit down. Getting rescued wears me out. And Donald, would you bring along the milk can and pail?”

The hint was indirect but firm. With one last look at the fire he helped build, Donald followed obediently.



In half an hour—as measured by the curiously accurate timepiece in Andrew’s head—Norma came slowly through the cabin door. Sitting next to Blake, she slid her arm through his and

said simply, "The others are coming."

Expectantly, the three men looked toward her for more, but she shook her head. There was such finality in the gesture that none of them questioned her.

Within a few minutes they had all arrived, one at a time, straggling through the door and silently seeking places near the fire. Felicia alone remained standing, with arms crossed over her chest, her green eyes blazing.

"Well, Andrew. We've done it again. Three times and we're out. It seems the ship had *not* spotted our fire before Donald, here, put it out. By the time our new fire was big enough to see, the ship had gone on its—shall we say—merry way."

“Are you *sure*?” Blake’s tone was incredulous but, oddly, not unhappy. “Of course, I couldn’t *see* the ship, but from what Norma said—”

“Oh, yes, Blake.” Norma’s tone was matter-of-fact and almost pleasant. “There’s no question about it. When we got back to the orchard, that ship, or boat, or whatever it was, was going *away*. And we didn’t leave the orchard until it was *gone*. Out of sight. Invisible. Lost forever on the wine-dark sea.”

“You poor girl,” Blake said sympathetically, as if the question of rescue was not his personal concern.

“Now we’ll never know,” Warren said with a small mock frown. “Was it really the fine young defenders of our

native shores? Though, obviously, they couldn't have been coming for *us*, or they would have *kept* coming!”

He sighed. “You know, for a while, there, I feared our valiant rescuers would prevent me from starting my Aphrodite of Phoenix. But now it appears that the finest sculpture of my career can proceed on schedule. Unless some frigging search team barges in and *insists* on sparing us from privation.

“But we *ought* to be safe for a while now, right? If that *was* the Coast Guard, and anyone asks about Phoenix, they'll have to report that the island was dark and lifeless, won't they? So, unless someone actually stumbles upon us,” he concluded cheerfully, “we're as good as

dead.”

As good as dead. For moments, the words echoed in the silent room.

It was Felicia who finally broke the silence—but in the tone of a music critic commenting on the rendition of an aria.

“That was an extraordinary speech, Warren. You do that sort of thing very well, you know. The declaration of inverted values. Take what is accepted as good and true by us all, then turn it upside down and say, ‘*This is the good and the true.*’

“With the exception of our reverse arsonist”—she indicated Donald with an impersonal nod of her head—“we were all thrilled by what seemed to be the end of our life in the wilds. Ergo, we must

now be correspondingly miserable, because once more we've been passed by, and our chances of being sought out and found have reached the vanishing point.

“That’s our truth, and the logic of our situation. But *you*, dear colleague-in-exile, sit there with a wise smirk on your pretty face, saying we’re lucky to be lost and you’re happy to *stay* lost. That’s the truth according to *you*.”

“Never more serious than when he’s silly,” mused Norma.

Warren lifted his shoulders in a dramatic shrug. “*Dear* Felicia. You worked like a Slavic peasant to rebuild the signal fire. But, student of human nature that I am, I sensed you would not

have needed to display such fervor if you had been absolutely convinced you *wanted* the fire rebuilt.”

With a dimpling smile, he turned to Norma. “I saw the same thing in you, Norma sweet. I saw you look at the milk can and the plastic pail, and the question was all over your lovely patrician face: *Do I want to get more firewood, or do I want to get more water?*”

His large brown eyes panned the room like twin surveillance cameras. “Come, now, let’s be honest—if not with ourselves, then at least with one another. Andrew, instruct your encounter group to relax and let it all hang out. I say *I’m* glad the stupid ship went *away*. Anyone wants to slug me, then go

ahead.” He blinked prettily in Donald’s direction. “Except you, old fellow. I don’t mind getting swatted in the name of therapy, but I *hate* the thought of being squashed like a bug.”

“I got no reason to slug you,” Donald said gruffly. “I don’t want to leave Phoenix, neither.”

“That,” said Felicia curtly, “is crystal clear. Someday, Donald, you simply *must* tell us about your career on the mainland. I’m sure it will be *quite* instructive. As for what the *rest* of us want—” She broke off. “Andy, don’t you want to take hold of this discussion?”

Andrew chuckled. “I think it’s going along beautifully. What could I add to such spontaneous confessions?”

“Your own?”

Andrew’s bushy brows drew together over intent blue eyes.

“In a way, the issue is simpler for me than for the rest of you—but in another way, much less so. I *chose* to live on Phoenix. I have no intention of leaving. So for me, the concept of *rescue* is not synonymous with my being taken away. It means *you*, Felicia, would be taken away.

“I’ve thought about that a great deal,” he told her, “and never with more pain or more... clarity... than tonight. I want to stay. You want to be taken off, carried back to civilization, returned to the comfortable and genteel life you’re used to. To central heating, and high-powered

automobiles, and couturier clothes.”

“And smog,” said Felicia quietly, “and polluted rivers, and gasoline rationing, and inflation, and corrupt government.”

Andrew looked at her inquiringly, a spark of hope igniting. Then, retreating into caution, he said, “Don’t you ever wonder who might take possession of your Louis Seize drawing room suite?”

Felicia seemed to draw inward for a moment. Then her eyes widened, and she looked directly into her husband’s. “No,” she said in surprise, as if the answer had taken her unawares. “And I *should*, shouldn’t I? But the only furniture I’ve been thinking about is what we’re going to build for this house. We

have lots of plans, and I've been looking forward to carrying them out."

A wondering look came over her, and she began to smile. "I guess what I'm saying is, I don't want to leave Phoenix until we've finished the furniture. But by then, of course, we'll have ten *more* wonderful projects, and I won't want to leave till *they're* completed, and after that..."

Gazing into Andrew's eyes, Felicia started to laugh. At first the laugh was low, almost inaudible, then it gathered force and depth. Finally, her head tilted back, and it burst from her mouth like a wordless song. All around the room, smiles answered her outburst, then chuckles, and then all were laughing,

loudly and joyfully.

When she could at last be heard, Diana asked wonderingly, “Didn’t *anyone* want to be rescued?”

“Shu-ah,” said Carlo, his dark eyes dancing with reflected firelight. “We all want to be rescued. But, bradda, not right *now*.”

Eyes met around the once more quiet room as the truth of Carlo’s statement struck home. Then Norma said, “I’ve never felt so well. Or so free. I suppose we’ll go back sometime. I suppose we’ll have to. But for the moment...” She took Blake’s hand. “For the moment, I’m deeply relieved.”

Andrew stroked his beard with thumb and forefinger. “Remember the Swiss

Family Robinson? When rescue came, they had already won the battle and didn't want to go back. Survival is a long, difficult journey. By the time help arrives, it's an anticlimax—if you've already attained the goal in your heart.”

Rolf turned suddenly to Carlo. “Let's get to work on another boat. Maybe an outrigger this time?”

But Carlo didn't hear, because, on his other side, Blake was explaining how they might make a glass substitute for the cabin windows. And when Rolf turned toward Diana, he found she had slipped away.

“Diana?”

At the sound of her name, she appeared from between the screens that

formed temporary walls around their bedchamber, then crossed the room with soft, moccasined steps. Her eyes glistened under their thick fringe of black eyelashes, and her soft lips opened in a radiant smile.

“Lili has had her puppies,” she announced to all. “On our bed.”

“Glory be unto the highest!” exclaimed Warren. “The day is complete. To paraphrase Tiny Tim, there never *was* such a Christmas.”

“How many?” Felicia asked Diana.

She hesitated. “Only six. Not enough for all.”

“Oh, dear,” said Felicia anxiously. “How will we share them?”

Andrew Held, leader, judge,

advocate, and arbitrator, raised his wife's scratched and work-soiled hand and gently kissed it.

“I promise you, Felicia, whatever solution we adopt, it will *not* be the one proposed by Solomon.” He chuckled. “If Phoenix has taught us one lesson, it is that unity is preferable to division.”

Epilogue

On the A deck of the *M.V. Gloria*, two passengers on the Santa Claus Cruise (“Christmas on the High Seas—Give *Yourself* a Gift!”) stood at the window of the lounge bar. One was tall, late twenties, bearded, dressed in mod style, while the stocky older man at his side wore Traditional Tourist. Berkeley campus versus Milwaukee mattress factory. Citizens Against Nuclear Terror (CANT) versus Crawford-Langley Post of the American Legion.

“Strange shape, that island out there,” the younger man mused. “Like an animal, rising up on its haunches. Know what it’s called?”

The man from Milwaukee shook his head. “According to the map on B deck, it isn’t even there. You been staring at it, too? Maybe we’re thinking the same thoughts.”

“One thought,” the younger man said wistfully, peering through the window. “Escape.”

“I’m with you on that. Escape to an uncharted island. Miles from regular shipping lanes. *Hundreds* of miles from smog, overpopulation, violence, inflation.”

“You mean, like, no plumbing, TV, sewers, PTA? Like, living by your wits and ingenuity? I hear you. Starting from scratch with a sharp stone, some leaves and vines, grasses and berries. Living

off the land.”

“The kids are always talking that way,” the older man said. “When I look at that island out there, and then think what I’m going back to, they actually begin to make sense. And I don’t even own a copy of the *Whole Earth Catalog*.”

“But you’re yearning anyway, right? Uh-huh. Your own little patch of wilderness, a hundred miles from the nearest McDonald’s. The question is, would you ever really try it? Get rid of your business, pack up the wife and kids and a few tools, and get the hell out?”

Suddenly the stocky man’s voice was dead serious. “I’m supposed to be a practical businessman. Would I give up

everything I've worked hard to get? The answer is, yeah, maybe I would. Because I've been thinking, what *have* I got? Government regulations. Foreign imports. Bidding for contracts. Negotiating with unions. Martinis at one and six o'clock, and the rest of the time, Alka-Seltzer." His strong, square face broke into a boyish grin. "Hell, I even hate the country club, and it cost me twenty-five thousand and a name change to get in."

The younger man pulled restlessly at his beard. "Well, I teach math, and in my field, all the exciting new ideas are coming from men even younger than me. That makes it rougher all the time... But maybe I'd better quit staring at that

island. I'm tripping on the possibilities. Escape to nature. A handful of people sick of their personal rat races. An island colony."

"Just our gang," said the older man, nodding. "Isolated from the world. Confined on an island, like passengers on an endless cruise."

He sighed. "But who are we kidding? When it comes right down to it, I don't believe either of us would give up what we have now—not if we didn't have to. Still, it's a wonderful, crazy dream."

"It sure is," said the younger. "Hey... wait a minute. Is that fire?" He pointed to where a tiny flame flickered faintly over the island—and was suddenly extinguished as they watched.

“Maybe someone’s already *on* that island. Maybe that was some kind of signal!”

“Not a chance,” said the older man. “It was just a meteor. *Had* to be.” He put his arm around the younger man’s shoulders. “Come on. I’ll buy you a drink.”

And the two wandered back to the bar.