

Hunch

Clifford D. Simak

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Hannibal was daydreaming again and Spencer Chambers wished he'd stop. Chambers, as chairman of the Solar Control Board, had plenty of things to worry about without having his mind cluttered up with the mental pictures Hannibal kept running through his brain. But, Chambers knew, there was nothing he could do about it. Daydreaming was one of Hannibal's habits, and since Chambers needed the spidery little entity, he must put up with it as best he could.

If those mental pictures hadn't been so clear, it wouldn't have been so bad, but since Hannibal was the kind of thing he was they couldn't be anything but clear.

Chambers recognised the place Hannibal was remembering. It wasn't the first time Hannibal had remembered it and this time, as always, it held a haunting tinge of nostalgia. A vast green valley, dotted with red boulders splotted with gray lichens, and on either side of the valley towering mountain peaks that reached spear-point fingers toward a bright-blue sky.

Chambers, seeing the valley exactly as Hannibal saw it, had the uncomfortable feeling that he knew it, too - that in the next instant he could say its name, could give its exact location. He had felt that way before, when the identification of the place, just as now, seemed at his fingertips. Perhaps it was just an emotional hallucination brought about by Hannibal's frequent thinking of the place, by the roseate longing with which he invested it. Of that, however, Chambers could not be sure. At times he would have sworn the feeling was from his own brain, a feeling of his own, set apart and distinct from Hannibal's daydreams.

At one time that green valley might have been Hannibal's home, although it seemed unlikely. Hannibal had been found in the Asteroid Belt, to this day remained the only one of his species to be discovered. And that valley never could have been in the Asteroids, for the Belt had no green valleys, no blue skies.

Chambers would have liked to question Hannibal, but there was no way to question him - no way to put abstract thoughts into words or into symbols Hannibal might understand. Visual communication, the picturing of actualities, yes - but not an abstract thought. Probably the very idea of direct communication of ideas, in the human sense, was foreign to Hannibal. After months of association with the outlandish little fellow, Chambers was beginning to believe so.

The room was dark except for the pool of light cast upon the desk top by the single lamp. Through the tall windows shone the stars and a silvery sheen that was the rising moon gilding the tops of the pines of the nearby ridge.

But darkness and night meant nothing to either Chambers or Hannibal. For Hannibal could see in the dark, Chambers could not see at all. Spencer Chambers was blind.

And yet, he saw, through the eyes - or, rather, the senses of Hannibal. Saw far plainer and

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But darkness and night meant nothing to either Chambers or Hannibal. For Hannibal could see in the dark, Chambers could not see at all. Spencer Chambers was blind.

And yet, he saw, through the eyes - or, rather, the senses of Hannibal. Saw far plainer and more clearly than if he had seen with his own eyes. For Hannibal saw differently than a man sees - much differently, and better.

That is except when he was daydreaming.

The daydream faded suddenly and Chambers, brain attuned to Hannibal's sensory vibrations, looked through and

beyond the walls of his office into the reception room. A man had entered, was hanging up his coat, chatting with Chambers's secretary.

Chambers's lips compressed into straight, tight lines as he watched. Wrinkles creased his forehead and his analytical brain coldly classified and indexed once again the situation which he faced.

Moses Allen, he knew, was a good man, but in this particular problem he had made little progress - perhaps would make little progress, for it was something to which there seemed, at the moment, no answer.

As Chambers watched Allen stride across the reception room his lips

relaxed a bit and he grinned to himself, wondering what Allen would think if he knew he was being spied upon. Moses Allen, head of the Solar Secret Services, being spied upon!

No one, not even Allen, knew the full extent of Hannibal's powers of sight. There was no reason, Chambers realised, to have kept it secret. It was just one of his eccentricities, he admitted. A little thing from which he gained a small, smug satisfaction - a bit of knowledge that he, a blind man, hugged close to himself.

Inside the office, Allen sat down in a chair in front of Chambers's desk, lit a cigarette.

"What is it this time, chief?" he asked.

Chambers seemed to stare at Allen, his dark glasses like bowls of blackness against his thin, pale face. His voice was crisp, his words clipped short.

"The situation is getting worse, Moses. I'm discontinuing the station on Jupiter."

Allen whistled. "You'd counted a lot on that station."

"I had," Chambers acknowledged. "Under the alien conditions such as exist on that planet I had hoped we might develop a new chemistry, discover a new pharmacopoeia. A drug, perhaps, that would turn the trick. Some new chemical fact or combination. It was just a shot in the dark."

"We've taken a lot of them," said

Allen. "We're just about down to a point where we have to play our hunches. We haven't much else left to play."

Chambers went on, almost as if Allen hadn't spoken. "The relief ship to Jupiter came back today. Brought back one man, mind entirely gone. The rest were dead. One of them had cut his throat. The relief men came back too. Refused to stay after what they saw."

Allen grimaced. "Can't say I blame them."

"Those men were perfectly sane when they went out," declared Chambers. "Psychologists gave every one of them high ratings for mental stability. They were selected on that very point, because we realised Jupiter is bad -

probably the most alien place in the entire Solar System. But not so bad every one of them would go mad in three short months."

Chambers matched his fingers. "The psychologists agree with me on that point."

Hannibal stirred a little, sharp claws scratching the desk top. Allen reached out a hand and chucked the little creature under the chin. Hannibal swiped angrily at the hand with an armoured claw.

"I'm getting desperate, Moses," Chambers said.

"I know," said Allen. "Things getting worse all the time. Bad news from every corner of the Solar System. Communications breaking down.

Machines standing idle. Vital installations no good because the men crack up when they try to run them."

They sat in silence. Allen scowling at his cigarette, Chambers stiff and straight behind his desk, almost as if he were sitting on the edge of his chair, waiting for something to happen.

"Situational psychoneurosis." said Allen. "That's what the experts call it. Another sixty-four dollar word for plain insanity. Men walking out on their jobs. Men going berserk. The whole Solar System crumbling because they can't do the jobs they're meant to do."

Chambers spoke sharply. "We can't get anywhere by ranting at it, Moses. We have to find the answer or give up. Give

up the dream men held before us. The dream of an integrated Solar System, integrated by men and for men, working smoothly, making the life of the human race a better life."

"You mean," said Allen slowly, "what have I done about it?"

Chambers nodded. "I had that in mind, yes."

"I have been working on a lot of angles," Allen declared. "Cancelling out most of them. Really just one big one left. But you won't find the answer in sabotage. Not that I won't work to find it there. Because, you see, that's my business. But I feel in my bones that this really is on the up and up - would know it was, except for one thing. To solve

this problem, we have to find a new factor in the human mind, in human psychology -a new approach to the whole problem itself.

"Geniuses are our trouble. It takes geniuses to run a Solar System. Just ordinary intelligence isn't enough to do the job. And geniuses are screwy. You can't depend on them."

"And yet," said Spencer Chambers, almost angrily, "we must depend on them."

And that, Allen knew, was the truth - the bitter truth.

For years now there had been a breakdown of human efficiency. It had started gradually, a few incidents here, a few there. But it had spread, had

progressed almost geometrically; had reached a point now where, unless something could be done about it, the Solar System's economic and industrial fabric would go to pot for lack of men to run it and the power plants and laboratories, the mills, the domed cities, the communication system men had built on all the planets encircling the Sun would crumble into dust.

Men were better trained, better equipped mentally, more brilliant than ever before. Of that there was no question. They had to be. Hundreds of jobs demanded geniuses. And there were geniuses, thousands of them, more than ever before. Trouble was they didn't stay geniuses. They went insane.

There had been evidence of a mass insanity trend as far back as the twentieth century, stemming even then from the greater demands which an increasingly complex, rapidly changing, vastly speeded-up civilisation placed upon the human brain, upon human capabilities and skills. With the development of a scientific age, man suddenly had been called upon to become a mental giant. Man had tried, had in part succeeded. But the pace had been too fast - the work of man had outstripped his brain. Now man was losing out.

Today the world was a world of specialisation. To be of economic value, men had to specialise. They had to study

harder than ever to fit themselves into their world. College courses were tougher and longer. The very task of educating themselves for a place in their civilisation placed upon them a nervous tension that was only intensified when they took over the strenuous, brain-wearing workaday tasks to which they were assigned.

No wonder, Allen told himself, that there came a time when they threw up their hands, walked out, didn't give a damn.

"You've got to find out what's wrong with the bright boys," he said. "You have to find what's in their make-up that makes them unstable. Maybe there's something wrong with their education,

with the way it's dished out to them.
Maybe —"

"The educators and psychologists are conducting research along those lines," Chambers reminded him, shortly.

"I get it," said Allen. "I'm to stick to my own field. All right then. I'm going to tell you something that will make you madder than hell."

Chambers sat silent, waiting. Hannibal shifted himself along the desk, edging closer to Allen, almost as if he were listening and didn't want to miss a word.

"It's this Sanctuary business," Allen said. "You've seen the ads —"

He stopped in flustered embarrassment, but Chambers nodded.

"I see them, yes. I read the papers, Moses. I spread them out and Hannibal looks at them and I read them, just as well as you do. You needn't be so sensitive about my blindness."

"Sanctuary has those ads plastered all over the place," said Allen. "In papers, on signboards, everywhere. Sometimes they call themselves a rest home, sometimes a sanatorium. Sometimes they don't even bother to call themselves anything. Just use a lot of white space, with the name 'Sanctuary' in big type. Refined, all of it. Nothing crude. Nothing quackish about it. They've run about all the other mental sanatoriums out of business. Nobody thinks of going anywhere but Sanctuary when they go

batty now."

"What are you getting at?" snapped Chambers.

"I told you it would make you sore," Allen reminded him. "They've fooled you, just like they've fooled all the rest of us. Let me tell you what I know about them."

Chambers's lips were thin and straight. "Whatever made you investigate them, Moses? Sanctuary is —" He faltered. "Why, Sanctuary is —"

Allen laughed. "Yes, I know what you mean. Sanctuary is lily-white. Sanctuary is noble. It's a shining haven in a world that's going haywire. Yeah, that's what you think and everyone thinks. I thought so myself. I started looking them up on a

hunch. I hated myself. I felt like I ought to go and hide. But I had a hunch, see, and I never pass one up. So I gritted my teeth and went ahead. And I'm convinced that Sanctuary is either the greatest racket the Solar System has ever known or it's tied up with this insanity some way. My best guess is that it's a racket. I can't figure any angles the other way except that maybe they're doing something to drive people nuts just to boost their business and that doesn't add up for a lot of reasons. If it's a racket, I'm wasting my time. There's bigger game to hunt than rackets these days."

He took a deep breath. "First I checked up on Dr Jan Nichols, he's the fellow that runs it. And he's a nobody,

far as I can find out. Certainly not a psychiatrist. Was in the Solar Service at one time. Headed a party making a survey of mineral resources out in the Belt. Had a minor degree in mineralogy. Just that, nothing more, no specialisation. An opportunist, I would deduce. Took just enough education to get a job.

"Our records show the whole party dropped out of sight. Listed as lost. All the rest of them still are lost so far as anybody knows.

"I tried to get in touch with Nichols and couldn't do it. There's no way to reach him. No mail service. No radio service. Nothing. Sanctuary is isolated. If you want anything there, you go there

personally, yourself."

"I hadn't realised that," said Chambers.

"Neither does anyone else," declared Allen. "No one tries to get in touch with Sanctuary unless they need their services and if they need their services they go there. But you haven't heard the half of it."

Allen lit a cigarette. A clock chimed softly in the room, and

Hannibal, leaning out from the desk, took a swipe at Allen, missed him by bare inches.

The Secret Service man leaned back in his chair. "So, since I couldn't get in touch with Nichols, I sent some of my men out to Sanctuary. Six of them, in

fact, at different times —"

He looked at Chambers, face grim.

"They didn't come back."

Chambers started slightly. "They didn't come back. You mean —"

"I mean just that. They didn't come back. I sent them out. Then nothing happened. No word from them. No word of them. They simply disappeared. That was three months ago."

"It seems incredible," declared Chambers. "Never for a moment have we worried about curing or caring for the men who went insane. Sanctuary did that, we thought. Better than anyone else could."

He shot a sudden question. "They do cure them, don't they?"

"Certainly," said Allen. "Certainly, they cure them. I've talked with many they have cured. But those they cure never go back into Solar Service. They are —"

He wrinkled his brow. "It's hard to put into words, chief. They seem to be different people. Their behaviour patterns don't check against their former records. They have forgotten most of their former skills and knowledge. They aren't interested in things they were interested in before. They have a funny look in their eyes. They —"

Chambers waved a hand. "You have to realise they would be changed. The treatment might —"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Allen.

"Your reaction is just the same as mine was - as everyone else's would be. It's instinctive to protect Sanctuary, to offer apology for it. Because, you see, every last one of us, some day may need to go there. And knowing that it's there, we feel reassured. Maybe we go batty. So what? Sanctuary will fix us up OK. Won't cost us a cent if we haven't got the money. Even free transportation if we haven't got the fare. It's something to anchor to in this mad world. A sort of faith, even. It's tough to have it knocked from under you."

Chambers shook his head. "I'm almost sorry you started this business, Moses."

Allen rose, smashed out his cigarette in a tray.

"I was afraid you'd be. I hate to drop it now I've gone this far. It may fizzle out, but —"

"No," said Chambers, "don't drop it. We can't afford to drop anything these days. You, yourself, feel almost instinctively, that it will come to nothing, but on the outside chance it may not, you must go ahead."

"There's just one thing more, chief," said Allen. "I've mentioned it before. The people —"

Chambers flipped impatient hands. "I know what you're going to say, Moses. They resent me. They think I've drawn away from them. There have been too many rumours."

"They don't know you're blind," said

Allen. "They'd understand if they did know that. Better for them to know the truth than to think all the things they're thinking. I know what they're thinking. It's my business to know."

"Who would follow a blind man?" asked Chambers bitterly. "I'd gain their pity, lose their respect."

"They're baffled," said Allen. "They talk about your illness, say it has changed you, never realising it left you blind. They even say your brain is going soft. They wonder about Hannibal, ask why you never are without him. Fantastic tales have grown up about him. Even more fantastic than the truth."

"Moses," said Chambers, sharply, "we will talk no more about this."

He sat stiff and straight in his chair, staring straight ahead, as Allen left.

Mrs Templefinger's parties were always dull. That was a special privilege she held as society leader of New York's upper crust. This party was no exception. The amateurish, three-dimensional movies of her trip to the Jovian moons had been bad enough, but the violinist was worse.

Cabot Bond, publisher of the Morning Spaceways, fidgeted in his chair, then suddenly relaxed and tried to look at ease as he caught Mrs Templefinger glaring at him. She might be a snooty old dame, he told himself, and a trial to all her friends with her determined efforts to uphold the dignity of one of the Solar

System's greatest families, but it definitely was not policy to vex her. She controlled too many advertising accounts.

Cabot Bond knew about advertising accounts. He lived by them and for them. And he worried about them. He was worrying about one of them now. The violin wailed to a stop and the guests applauded politely. The violinist bowed condescendingly. Mrs Templefinger beamed, fingering her famous rope of Asteroid jewels so the gems caught the light and gleamed with slow ripples of alien fire.

The man next to Bond leaned close.

"Great story that - about discovering the Rosetta stone of Mars," he said.

"Liked the way your paper handled it. Lots of background. Interpretative writing. None of the sensationalism some of the other papers used. And you put it on the front page too. The Rocket stuck it away on an inside page."

Bond wriggled uncomfortably. That particular story he'd just as soon forget. At least he didn't want to talk about it. But the man apparently expected an answer.

"It wasn't a stone," Bond said icily, almost wishing the violin would start up again. "It was a scroll."

"Greatest story of the century," said the man, entirely unabashed. "Why, it will open up all the ancient knowledge of Mars."

The violin shrieked violently as the musician sawed a vicious bow across the strings.

Bond settled back into his chair, returned to his worry once again.

Funny how Sanctuary Inc. had reacted to that story about the Rosetta scroll of Mars. Almost as if they had been afraid to let it come before the public eye. Almost, although this seemed ridiculous, as if they might have been afraid of something that might be found in some old Martian record.

Perhaps he had been wrong in refusing their request to play the story down. Some of the other papers, like the Rocket, apparently had agreed. Others hadn't, of course, but most of those were

sheets which never had carried heavy Sanctuary lineage, didn't stand to lose much. Spaceways did carry a lot of lineage. And it worried Bond.

The violin was racing now, a flurry of high-pitched notes, weaving a barbaric, outlandish pattern - a song of outer space, of cold winds on strange planets, of alien lands beneath unknown stars.

Mrs Templefinger's sudden scream rang through the room, cutting across the shrilling of the music.

"My jewels!" she screamed. "My jewels!"

She had surged to her feet, one hand clutching the slender chain that encircled her throat. The chain on which the Asteroid jewels had been strung.

But now the famous jewels were gone, as if some hand of magic had stripped them from the chain and whisked them into nowhere.

The violinist stood motionless, bow poised, fingers hovering over the strings. A glass tinkled as it slipped from someone's fingers and struck the floor.

"They're gone!" shrieked Mrs Templefinger. "My jewels are gone!"

The butler padded forward silently.

"Perhaps I should call the police, madam."

A strange light came over Mrs Templefinger's face, a soft and human light that smoothed out the lines around her eyes and suddenly made her soft and gracious instead of a glowering old

dowager. For the first time in 20 years, Mrs Templefinger smiled a gracious smile.

"No, Jacques," she whispered. "Not the police."

Still smiling, she sat down again, nodded to the violinist. The chain fell from her fingers, almost as if she had forgotten the jewels, almost as if a cool half million dollars' worth of jewellery didn't matter.

The violinist swept the bow across the strings again.

Cabot Bond rose and tiptoed softly from the room. Suddenly it had occurred to him there was something he must do - phone his editor, tell him to play down any more stories the wires might carry

on the Rosetta scroll of Mars.

Harrison Kemp, head of the Solar Research Bureau on Pluto, straightened from the microscope, expelling his breath slowly.

His voice was husky with excitement. "Johnny, I really believe you've got it! After all these years . . . after —"

He stopped and stared a stricken stare.

For Johnny Gardner had not heard him. Was not even looking at him. The man sat hunched on his stool, faint starlight from the laboratory port falling across his face, a face that had suddenly relaxed, hung loose and slack, a tired, wan face with haggard eyes and drooping jowls.

Kemp tried to speak, but his lips were dry and his tongue thick and terror dried up his words before they came. From somewhere behind him came the slow drip-drip of precious water. Outside, the black spires of Plutonian granite speared up into the inky, starry sky.

And before the port, the hunched figure of a man whose gaze went out into the alien wilderness, yet did not see the jumbled tangle that was Pluto's surface.

"Johnny!" Kemp whispered, and the whisper frightened him as it seemed to scamper like a frightened rat around the room.

Gardner did not answer, did not move. One hand lay loosely in his lap, the other dangled at his side. One foot

slipped off the rung of the stool and, just failing to reach the floor, swung slowly to and fro like a ghastly pendulum.

Kemp took a step forward, reaching out a hand that stopped short of Gardner's shoulder.

There was no use, he knew, of trying to do anything. Johnny Gardner was gone. The hulking body still sat on the stool, but the mind, that keen, clear-cut, knifelike mind, was gone. Gone like a dusty mummy falling in upon itself. One moment a mind that could probe to the very depth of life itself- the next moment a mind that was no more than a darkening cavern filled with the hollow hooting of already half-forgotten knowledge.

Fumbling in the darkness, Kemp found another stool, perched wearily on it. Perched and stared at Gardner, while he felt the nameless horror of an alien planet and an alien happening slowly circle over him, like dark wings beating in the starlight.

A small cone of brilliance hung above the workbench, lighting up the electronic microscope. And under the microscope, Kemp knew, was something that came close to being the raw material, the constituent element of life. Something that he and Johnny Gardner and Victor Findlay had sought - for how many years? To Kemp, sitting there in the darkness, it seemed eternity.

An eternity of research, of compiling

notes, of seeming triumph, always followed by the blackest of defeat.

"And," said Harrison Kemp, speaking to himself and the silent room and the madman at the port, "here we are again!"

It would be futile, Kemp knew, to try to pick up where Gardner had left off. For Gardner had worked swiftly, had been forced to work swiftly, in those last few minutes. Since there had been no time to jot it down, he had tucked away that final crucial data in his brain. Even under the near-zero conditions to which the protoplasmic molecules had been subjected, they still would be unstable. They would have changed now, would have been rendered useless for further observation - would either have become

more complex life or no life at all, having lost that tiny spark that set them off from other molecules.

Kemp knew he and Findlay would have to start over again. Johnny's notes would help them to a certain point - up to that point where he had ceased to write them down, had stored them in his brain. From that point onward they would have to go alone, have to feel their way along the path Johnny Gardner had taken, try to duplicate what he had done. For whatever was in Johnny's brain was lost now - lost completely, gone like a whiff of rocket gas hurled into the maw of space.

A door creaked open and Kemp got to his feet, turning slowly to face the man

silhouetted against the light from the room beyond.

"Why so quiet?" asked Findlay. "What are you fellows —"

His voice ran down and stopped. He stood rigidly, staring at the star-lighted face of Johnny Gardner.

"It just happened, Vic," said Kemp. "He called me to show me something in the 'scope and while I looked it happened to him. When I looked up again and spoke to him, he was sitting there, just like he is now. He was all right before, just a few seconds before."

"It hits them like that," said Findlay. He stepped into the room, walked close to Kemp. "We should know," he said. "We've seen it happen to enough of them,

you and I. Sometimes I have a dream, with you and me the only sane men left in the entire System. Everybody cracking, leaving just the two of us."

"I should have taken your advice," Kemp declared bitterly. "I should have sent him back on the last ship. But he looked all right. He acted OK. And we needed him. He hung out for a long time. I thought maybe he would last."

"Don't blame yourself, chief," said Findlay. "There was no way for you to know."

"But you knew Vic! You warned me. You said he'd crack. How did you know? Tell me, how did —"

"Take it easy," cautioned Findlay. "I didn't know. Nothing definite, at least."

Just a feeling I had. A hunch, I guess you'd call it."

They stood together, shoulder to shoulder, as if by standing thus they might beat back the sense of doom, the air of utter human futility that seemed to well within themselves.

"It won't always be like this," said Kemp. "Some day we'll be able to keep men's minds from going haywire. We'll find a way to help the mind keep pace with man's ambitions, to fall in step with progress."

Findlay nodded toward Gardner. "He was on the right track. He took the first long step. Before we even try to study the mind as it should be studied, scientifically, we must know what life

is.

Before, we've always started in the middle and stumbled back, trying to find the Lord knows what. We can't afford to do that any longer. We have to have a basis, a basic understanding of life to understand ourselves."

Kemp nodded. "You're right, Vic. He took the first long step. And now . . . now, he goes to Sanctuary."

They helped Johnny Gardner from the stool and across the room. He walked like a blind man, stumblingly, muscles uncertain. His eyes stared straight ahead, as if he were watching something no one else could see.

"Thank heaven," said Findlay, "he went this way. Not like Smith."

Kemp shuddered, remembering. Smith had been violent. He had mouthed obscenities, had screamed and shouted, wrecked the laboratory. They had tried to calm him, to reason with him. When he charged Findlay with a steel bar, Kemp had shot him.

Although even that hadn't been any worse than Lempke. Lempke had committed suicide by walking out of the dome into the almost non-existent atmosphere of frigid Pluto without benefit of space gear.

Dr Daniel Monk laid the pencil aside, read once again the laborious lines of translation:

This is the story of... who visited the fifth planet from the central sun; not the

first to go there, but the first to discover the life that lived thereon, a curious form of life that because of its ... had not previously been recognised as life—

Outside the thin night wind of Mars had risen and was sweeping the city of Sandebar, whining and moaning among the cornices and columns of the museum. Drift sand pecked with tiny fingers against the windows and the brilliant Martian starlight painted frosty squares on the floor as it came tumbling through the casement.

This is the story of—

Dr Monk frowned at that. The story of whom? Probably, he told himself, he would never know, for the vocabulary made available by the Rosetta scroll did

not extend to personal names.

With a wry smile he picked up his pencil again, wrote 'John Doe' in the blank. That was as good as any name.

This is the story of John Doe—

But that didn't answer another question. It didn't tell why the life of the fifth planet had not been recognised as life.

The fifth planet, without a doubt, was the planet which in another eon had travelled an orbit between Mars and Jupiter -the planet now represented by the Asteroid Belt, a maelstrom of planetary debris. It would have been the planet, it and the Earth, most accessible to Mars. It was natural the Martians should have gone there. And that they

had known the planet before its disruption gave a breathtaking clue to the incredible antiquity of the scroll from which the passage had been translated.

Perhaps, Monk told himself, one of the other scrolls might tell of the actual breakup of the fifth planet, might give a clue or state a cause for its destruction. There were thousands of other scrolls, the loot of years from the ruins of Martian cities. But until this moment they had been voiceless, mute testimony the Martians had possessed a written language, but telling nothing of that language, revealing none of the vast store of information they held.

A curious form of life that because of its—

Because of its what? What form could life take, what trick could it devise to hide its being? Invisibility? Some variant of protective coloration? But one couldn't write 'invisible' into the text as one had written 'John Doe'.

Perhaps some day, Monk told himself, he might find the answer, might be able to write in that missing word. But not now. Not yet. The Rosetta scroll, for all its importance, still left much to be desired. It necessarily had to leave much to be desired, for it dealt in a language that sprang from a different source than Terrestrial language, developed along alien lines, represented thought processes that could have been - must have been - poles apart from the thoughts

of Earth.

All that the Martian language held in common with Earthian language was that both represented thought symbols. That was all; there was very little similarity in the way they went about doing that same thing.

Monk reached out and lifted the heavy metal cylinder from the desk before him. Carefully, almost reverentially, he flipped open the lock that released one end of the cylinder, drew out the heavy, lengthy scroll that had provided the key to the thoughts, the works, the ways of the ancient race of Mars.

He unrolled it slowly, gently, squinting at the faded characters, faint with a million years or more of being

buried in the sands of Mars.

A dictionary once - a dictionary again, but in a different way.

Monk wondered what sort of a long-dead personality had penned that dictionary. Scholar, seeking no more than the ways of truth? Businessman, seeking to facilitate a better lingual understanding, therefore a better commercial understanding, between the race of Mars and the now decadent races of the Jovian moons? Statesmen, trying to bring about a good-neighbour policy?

The Martian, however, whoever he might have been, had not understood that Jovian language too well, for some of the words and idioms didn't check with the Jovian language as Earthmen knew it.

Or it might have been that the language itself had changed. Perhaps in that long-gone day when the scroll was written the moon men of Jupiter had not been decadent.

On that point, Monk knew, the Jovians themselves could throw little light. There were ruins, of course, and legends, but the legends were utterly crazy and the ruins held no traditional sentiment for the tribes of Europa or Ganymede. Unlike most peoples, they held no racial memories of a more glorious past, of a forgotten golden age.

It was a roundabout way, a long way, an awkward way to read the language of Mars, Monk reflected. Martian to Jovian to Earthian. But it was better than no

way at all.

The clock on the manuscript cabinet chimed briefly, apologetically. Monk glanced at it and started in surprise. Midnight. He had not realised it was that late. Suddenly he knew that he was tired and hungry, needed a drink and a smoke.

He rose and walked to a table, found a bottle and glass, poured himself a drink. From somewhere, far in another part of the vast building, came the ghostly sound of a watchman's tread making his rounds. The sand talked and hissed against the window.

Back at his desk, Monk sipped at his drink, staring at the metallic tube, thinking of the faint scrawling on the scroll inside.

A Rosetta stone - the Rosetta stone of Mars. Brought in off the desert by a man who might just as easily have passed it by. Uncovered by shifting sand that in the next hour might just as well have covered it again for all eternity.

Monk lifted his glass to the weathered cylinder.

"To destiny," he said, and drank before he realised how silly it sounded.

Or was it silly? Might there not really be such a thing as destiny? An actual force moving to offset the haphazard course of a vagrant universe? Sometimes it seemed so. Sometimes—

Monk emptied the glass, set it on the desk, dug into his pocket for cigarettes. His fingers closed on a small package

and he drew it out wonderingly, brow wrinkled. Then, quickly, he remembered. It had been in his mail box that morning. He had meant to open it later, had forgotten it until now.

He examined it curiously. It bore no return address and his own was laboriously printed by hand. He ripped the fastening tapes with his fingernails, unwrapped the paper.

A jewel box! Monk snapped up the lid and stiffened in surprise.

In its bed of rich velvet lay the gleaming roundness of an Asteroid jewel. It glowed softly under the desk lamp, colours flowing and changing within its heart, almost as if the jewel itself might be in motion.

There was no card. Nothing to indicate who had sent the jewel or, more important, why it had been sent. Asteroid jewels, Monk knew, weren't something to be just sent around to anyone for no reason at all. The stone before him, he realised, had a value that ran close to five figures.

Almost fearfully, he lifted the gem between thumb and forefinger, held it to the light and caught his breath in wonder as it blazed with soul-stirring beauty.

With a feeling that approached awe, he replaced it, sat quietly in his chair watching it.

Queer things, the Asteroid jewels, queer in more ways than one.

No one knew just what they were. No

Asteroid jewel had ever been analysed. Spectrographically, they were like nothing science had ever known. They could be broken down chemically, of course, but even then they were impossible of analysis. Something there to analyse, naturally, but with certain baffling characteristics no chemist had yet been able to tie down and catalogue.

Found nowhere else in the Solar System, they were the magic that drove men to lives of bitter privation in the Belt, searching among the debris of dead planet for that tiny gleam in the jumbled rocks that would spell riches. Most of them, as could be expected, died without ever finding a single jewel; died in one of a vast variety of horrible, lonely ways

a man can die among the Asteroids.

Monk found a cigarette and lighted it, listening to the pelting of the sand against the window. But there was a strange sound, too. Something that was not sand tapping on the panes, nor yet the shrill keening of the savage wind that moaned against the building. A faint whining that bore a pattern of melody, the sobbing of music - music that sneaked in and out of the wind blasts until one wondered if it was really there or was just imagination.

Monk sat stiffly, poised, cigarette drooping, ears straining.

It came again, the cry of strings, the breath of lilting cadence, until it was a thing apart from the wind and the patter

of the sand.

A violin! Someone playing a violin inside the museum!

Monk leaped to his feet and suddenly the violin screamed in singing agony.

And even as that melodic scream ran full-voiced through the hall outside, a sharp bell of warning clanged inside Monk's brain.

Acting on impulse, his hand shot down and snatched up the Asteroid jewel. Clutching it savagely, he hurled it viciously against the metallic side of the manuscript cabinet.

It flashed for a moment in the light as it exploded into tiny bits of glowing dust. And even as it splashed to shards, it changed - or tried to change. For just a

moment it was not a jewel, but something else, a fairylike thing - but a crippled fairy. A fairy with humped back and crooked spine and other curious deformities.

Then there was no twisted fairy, but only jewel dust twinkling on the floor and the sound of running feet far down the corridor.

Monk did not try to give chase to the man outside. Instead, he stood as if frozen, listening to the wind and the sand dance on the window, staring at the sparkle on the floor.

He slowly closed and opened his right hand, trying to remember just how the jewel had felt at the instant he had clutched it. Almost as if it might have

been alive, were struggling to get out of his clutches, fighting to attain some end, to carry out some destiny.

His eyes still were upon the floor.

"Now," he said aloud, amazement in his words, "I wonder why I did that?"

Standing in front of Spencer Chambers's desk, Harrison Kemp was assailed by doubt, found that in this moment he could not reconcile himself to the belief he had done the right thing. If he were wrong, he had deserted a post he should have kept. Even if he were right, what good could his action do?

"I remember you very well," he heard Chambers say. "You have been out on Pluto. Life research. Some real achievements in that direction."

"We have failed too often," Kemp told him flatly.

Chambers matched his fingers on the desk in front of him. "We all fail too often," Chambers said. "And yet, some day, some one of us will succeed, and then it will be as if all of us succeeded. We can write off the wasted years."

Kemp stood stiff and straight. "Perhaps you wonder why I'm here."

Chambers smiled a little. "Perhaps I do. And yet, why should I? You have been gone from Earth for a long time. Perhaps you wanted to see the planet once again."

"It wasn't that," Kemp told him. "It's something else. I came because I am about to go insane."

Chambers gasped involuntarily.

"Say that again," he whispered. "Say it slowly. Very slow- ly."

"You heard me," said Kemp. "I came because I'm going to crack. I came here first. Then I'm going out to Sanctuary. But I thought you'd like to know - well, know that a man can tell it in advance."

"Yes," said Chambers, "I want to know. But even more than that. I want to know how you can tell."

"I couldn't myself," Kempt told him. "It was Findlay who knew."

"Findlay?"

"A man who worked with me on Pluto. And he didn't really know. What I mean is he had no actual evidence. But he had a hunch."

"A hunch?" asked Spencer Chambers.
"Just a hunch? That's all?"

"He's had them before," Kemp declared. "And they're usually right. He had one about Johnny Gardner before Johnny cracked up. Told me I should send him back. I didn't. Johnny cracked."

"Only about Johnny Gardner?"

"No, about other things as well. About ways to go about our research, ways that aren't orthodox. But they usually bring results. And about what will happen the next day or the day after that. Just little inconsequential things. Has a feeling, he says - a feeling for the future."

Chambers stirred uneasily. "You've been thinking about this?" he asked.
"Trying to puzzle it out. Trying to

explain it."

"Perhaps I have," admitted Kemp, "but not in the way you mean. I'm not crazy yet. May not be tomorrow or next week or even next month. But I've watched myself and I'm pretty sure Findlay was right. Small things that point the way. Things most men would just pass by, never give a second thought. Laugh and say they were growing old or getting clumsy."

"Like what?" asked Chambers.

"Like forgetting things I should know. Elemental facts, even. Having to think before I can tell you what seven times eight equals. Facts that should be second nature. Trying to recall certain laws and fumbling around with them. Having to

concentrate too hard upon laboratory technique. Getting it all eventually, even quickly, but with a split-second lag."

Chambers nodded. "I see what you mean. Maybe the psychologists could help —"

"It wouldn't work," declared Kemp. "The lag isn't so great but a man could cover up. And if he knew someone was watching he would cover up. That would be instinctive. When it becomes noticeable to someone other than yourself it's gone too far. It's the brain running down, tiring out, beginning to get fuzzy. The first danger signals."

"That's right," said Chambers. "There is another answer, too. The psychologists, themselves, would go

insane."

He lifted his head, appeared to stare at Kemp.

"Why don't you sit down?" he asked.

"Thank you," said Kemp. He sank into a chair. On the desk the spidery little statue moved with a scuttling shamble and Kemp jumped in momentary fright.

Chambers laughed quietly. "That's only Hannibal."

Kemp stared at Hannibal and Hannibal stared back, reached out a tentative claw.

"He likes you," said Chambers in surprise. "You should consider that a compliment, Kemp. Usually he simply ignores people."

Kemp stared stonily at Hannibal,

fascinated by him. "How do you know he likes me?"

"I have ways of knowing," Chambers said.

Kemp extended a cautious finger and for a moment Hannibal's claw closed about it tightly, but gently. Then the grotesque little being drew away, squatted down, became a statue once again.

"What is he?" Kemp asked.

Chambers shook his head. "No one knows. No one can even guess. A strange form of life. You are interested in life, aren't you, Kemp?"

"Naturally," said Kemp. "I've lived with it for years, wondering what it is, trying to find out."

Chambers reached out and picked up Hannibal, put him on his shoulder. Then he lifted a sheaf of papers from his desk, shuffled through them, picked out half a dozen sheets.

"I have something here that should interest you," he said. "You've heard of Dr Monk?"

Kemp nodded. "The man who found the Rosetta scroll of Mars."

"Ever meet him?"

Kemp shook his head.

"Interesting chap," said Chambers. "Buried neck-deep in his beloved Martian manuscripts. Practically slavering in anticipation, but getting just a bit afraid."

He rustled the sheets. "I heard from

him last week. Tells me he has found evidence that life, a rather queer form of life, once existed on the fifth planet before it disrupted to form the Asteroids. The Martians wrote that this life was able to encyst itself, live over long periods in suspended animation. Not the mechanically induced suspended animation the human race has tried from time to time, but a natural encystation, a variation of protective coloration."

"Interesting," said Kemp, "but a bit out of my line. It suggests many possibilities. Shows the almost endless flexibility of life as such."

Chambers nodded. "I thought maybe you would have that reaction. It was mine, too, but I'm not an expert on that

sort of thing. Monk hints that life form may still exist. Hints at other things, too. He seemed to be upset when he wrote the letter. Almost as if he were on the verge of a discovery he himself couldn't quite believe. A little frightened at it, even. Not wanting to say too much, you see, until he was absolutely sure."

"Why should something like that upset him?" demanded Kemp. "It's information out of the past. Surely something he finds in those old scrolls can't reach out —"

Chambers lifted his hand. "You haven't heard it all. The Martians were afraid of that life on the fifth planet, Kemp. Deathly afraid of it! So afraid of it they blew up the planet, blasted it, destroyed it, thinking that in doing so

they would wipe out the life it bore."

Chambers's face did not change. He did not stir.

"Monk believes they failed," he said.

The room swam in almost frightened silence. Hannibal stirred uneasily on his perch on Chambers's shoulder.

"Can you imagine —" Chambers's voice was almost a whisper. "Can you imagine a fear so great that a race would blow up, destroy another planet to rid themselves of it?"

Kemp shook his head. "It seems rather hard, and yet, given a fear great enough —"

He stopped and shot a sudden look at Chambers. "Why have you bothered to tell me this?" he asked.

"Why, don't you see?" said Chambers smoothly. "Here might be a new kind of life - a different kind of life, developed millions of years ago under another environment. It might have followed a divergent quirk of development, just some tiny, subtle difference that would provide a key."

"I see what you're driving at," said Kemp. "But not me. Findlay is your man. I haven't got the time. I'm living on borrowed sanity. And, to start with, you haven't even got that life. You hardly would know what to look for. An encysted form of life. That could be anything. Send a million men out into the Asteroids to hunt for it and it might take a thousand years.

"The idea is sound, of course. We've followed it in other instances, without success. The moon men of Jupiter were no help. Neither were the Venusians. The Martians, of course, were out of the picture to start with. We don't even know what they were like. Not even a skeleton of them has been found. Maybe the race they were afraid of got them after all - did away with them completely."

Chambers smiled bleakly. "I should have known it was no use."

"I'm sorry," said Kemp. "I have to go to Sanctuary. I've seen some others when it happened to them. Johnny Gardner and Smith and Lempke. It's not going to happen to me that way if I can help it."

Chambers matched his fingers carefully. "You've been in the service a long time, Kemp."

"Ten years," said Kemp.

"During those ten years you have worked with scarcely a thought of yourself," said Chambers quietly. "There is no need to be modest. I know your record. You have held a certain ideal. An ideal for a better Solar System, a better human life. You would have given your right arm to have done something that would actually have contributed to the betterment of mankind. Like finding out what life is, for example. You came here now because you thought what you had to tell might help."

Kemp sat without speaking.

"Isn't that it?" insisted Chambers.

"Perhaps it is," admitted Kemp. "I've never thought of it in just those words. To me it was a job."

"Would you do another job?" asked Chambers. "Another job for mankind? Without knowing why you did it? Without asking any questions?"

Kemp leaped to his feet. "I've told you I was going to Sanctuary," he shouted. "I have done what I can, all I can. You can't ask me to wait around for —"

"You will go to Sanctuary," said Chambers sharply.

"But this job —"

"When you go to Santuary I want you to take Hannibal along."

Kemp gasped. "Hannibal?"

"Exactly," said Chambers. "Without asking me why."

Kemp opened his mouth to speak, closed it.

"Now?" he finally asked.

"Now," said Chambers. He rose, lifted Hannibal from his shoulder. Kemp felt the sharp claws digging through his clothing, into his flesh, felt one tiny arm pawing at his neck, seeking a hold.

Chambers patted Hannibal on the head. Tears welled out of his sightless eyes behind the large dark glasses.

Sanctuary was a place of beauty, a beauty that gripped one by the throat and held him, as if against a wall.

Once, a few years ago, Kemp realised, it had been a barren hunk of

rock, five miles across at most, tumbling through space on an eccentric orbit. No air, no water - nothing but stark stone that glinted dully when the feeble rays of the distant sun chanced to fall across its surface.

But now it was a garden with lacy waterfalls and singing streams arched by feathery trees in whose branches flitted warbling birds. Cleverly concealed lighting held the black of space at bay and invested the tiny planetoid with a perpetual just-before-dusk, a soft and radiant light that dimmed to purple shadows where the path of flagging ran up the jagged hill crowned by a classic building of shining white plastic.

A garden built by blasting

disintegrators that shaped the face of the rock to an architect's blueprint, that gouged deep wells for the gravity apparatus, that chewed the residue of its labour into the basis for the soil in which the trees and other vegetation grew. A garden made livable by machines that manufactured air and water, that screened out the lashing radiations that move through naked space - and yet no less beautiful because it was man and machine-made.

Kemp hesitated beside a deep, still pool just below a stretch of white-sprayed, singing water crossed by a rustic bridge and drank in the scene that ran up the crags before him. A scene that whispered with a silence made up of

little sounds. And as he stood there a deep peace fell upon him, a peace he could almost feel, feel it seeping into his brain, wrapping his body -almost as if it were something he could reach and grasp.

It was almost as if he had always lived here, as if he knew and loved this place from long association. The many black years on Pluto were dimmed into a distant memory and it seemed as if weight had fallen from his shoulders, from the shoulders of his soul.

A bird twittered sleepily and the water splashed on stones. A tiny breeze brought the swishing of the waterfall that feathered down the cliff and a breath of fragrance from some blooming thing. Far

off, a bell chimed softly, like a liquid note running on the scented air.

Something scurried in the bushes and scuttled up the path and, looking down, Kemp saw Hannibal and at the sight of the grinning face of the little creature his thoughts were jerked back into pattern again.

"Thank goodness you decided to show up." said Kemp. "Where you been? What's the idea of hiding out on me?"

Hannibal grimaced at him.

Well, thought Kemp, that was something less to worry about now. Hannibal was in Sanctuary and technically that carried out the request Chambers had made of him. He remembered the minute of wild panic

when, landing at Sanctuary spaceport, he had been unable to find the creature. Search of the tiny one-man ship in which he had come to Sanctuary failed to locate the missing Hannibal, and Kemp had finally given up, convinced that somehow during the past few hours, Chambers's pet had escaped into space, although that had seemed impossible.

"So you hid out somewhere," Kemp said. "Scared they'd find you, maybe, and refuse to let you in. You needn't have worried, though, for they didn't pay any attention to me or to the ship. Just gave me a parking ticket and pointed out the path."

He stooped and reached for Hannibal, but the creature backed away into the

bushes.

"What's the matter with you?" snapped Kemp. "You were chummy enough until just —"

His voice fell off, bewildered. He was talking to nothing. Hannibal was gone.

For a moment Kemp stood on the path, then turned slowly and started up the hill. And as he followed the winding trail that skirted the crags, he felt the peace of the place take hold of him again and it was as if he walked an old remembered way, as if he begrudged every footstep for the beauty that he left behind, but moved on to a newer beauty just ahead.

He met the old man halfway up the

hill and stood aside because there was not room for both to keep the path. For some reason the man's brown robe reaching to his ankles and his bare feet padding in the little patches of dust that lay among the stones, even his flowing white beard did not seem strange but something that fitted in the picture.

"Peace be on you," the old man said, and then stood before him quietly, looking at him out of calm blue eyes.

"I welcome you to Sanctuary," the old man said. "I have something for you."

He thrust his hand into a pocket of his robe and brought out a gleaming stone, held it toward Kemp.

Kemp stared at it.

"For you, my friend," the old man

insisted.

Kemp stammered. "But it's . . . it's an Asteroid jewel."

"It is more than that, Harrison Kemp," declared the oldster. "It is much more than that."

"But even —"

The other spoke smoothly, unhurriedly. "You still react as you did on Earth - out in the old worlds, but here you are in a new world. Here values are different, standards of life are not the same. We do not hate, for one thing. Nor do we question kindness, rather we expect it - and give it. We are not suspicious of motives."

"But this is a sanatorium," Kemp blurted out. "I came here to be treated.

Treated for insanity."

A smile flicked at the old man's lips. "You are wondering where you'll find the office and make arrangements for treatment."

"Exactly," said Kemp.

"The treatment," declared the oldster, "has already started. Somewhere along this path you found peace - a greater, deeper peace than you've ever known before. Don't fight that peace. Don't tell yourself it's wrong for you to feel it. Accept it and hold it close. The insanity of your worlds is a product of your lives, your way of life. We offer you a new life. That is our treatment."

Hesitantly, Kemp reached out and took the jewel. "And this is a part of that

new way of life?"

The old man nodded. "Another part is a little chapel you will find along the way. Stop there for a moment. Step inside and look at the painting you will find there."

"Just look at a painting?"

"That's right. Just look at it."

"And it will help me?"

"It may."

The old man stepped down the path. "Peace go with you," he said and paced slowly down the hill.

Kemp stared at the jewel in his palm, saw the slow wash of colour stir within its heart.

"Stage setting," he told himself, although he didn't say it quite aloud.

A pastoral scene of enchanting beauty, a man who wore a brown robe and a long white beard, the classic white lines of the building on the plateau, the chapel with a painting. Of course a man would find peace here. How could a man help but find peace here? It was designed and built for the purpose - this scene. Just as an architect would design and an engineer would build a spaceship. Only a spaceship was meant to travel across the void, and this place, this garden, was meant to bring peace to troubled men, men with souls so troubled that they were insane.

Kemp stared at a flowering crab-apple tree that clung to the rocks above him, and even as he watched a slight

breeze shook the tree and a shower of petals cascaded down toward him. Dimly, Kemp wondered if that tree kept on blooming over and over again. Perhaps it did. Perhaps it never bore an apple, perhaps it just kept on flowering. For its function here in Sanctuary was to flower, not to fruit. Blossoms had more psychological value as a stage setting than apples - therefore, perhaps, the tree kept on blossoming and blossoming.

Peace, of course. But how could they make it stick? How could the men who ran Sanctuary make peace stay with a man? Did the painting or the Asteroid jewel have something to do with it? And could peace alone provide the answer to the twisted brains that came here?

Doubt jabbed at him with tiny spears, doubt and skepticism - the old skepticism he had brought with him from the dusty old worlds, the frigid old worlds, the bitter old worlds that lay outside the pale of Sanctuary.

And yet doubt, even skepticism, quailed before the beauty of the place, faltered when he remembered the convincing sincerity of the old man in the brown robe, when he remembered those calm blue eyes and the majesty of the long white beard. It was hard to think, Kemp told himself, that all of this could be no more than mere psychological trappings.

He shook his head, bewildered, brushed clinging apple blossoms from

his shoulder and resumed his climb, Asteroid jewel still clutched tightly in his hand. The path narrowed until it was scarcely wide enough to walk upon, with the sheer wall on his right knifing up toward the plateau, the precipice to his left dropping abruptly into a little valley where the brook gurgled and laughed beneath the waterfall that loomed just ahead.

At the second turn he came upon the chapel. A little place, it stood close to the path, recessed a little into the wall of rock. The door stood ajar, as if inviting him.

Hesitating for a moment, Kemp stepped into the recess, pushed gently on the door and stepped inside. Stepped

inside and halted, frozen by the painting that confronted him. Set in a rocky alcove in the wall, it was lighted by a beam that speared down from the ceiling just above the door.

As if it were a scene one came upon through an open window rather than one caught upon a canvas, the city stood framed within the flare of light - a weird, fantastic city sprawled on some outer world. Bizarre architecture rearing against an outlandish background; towers leaping upward and fading into nothing, showing no clear-cut line where they left off; spidery sky bridges coiling and looping among the spires and domes that somehow were not the way spires and domes should be - the city looked

like the impassioned chisellings of some mad sculptor.

And as Kemp stood transfixed before the city in the wall, a bell clanged far above him, one sharp clear note that lanced into his brain and shook him like an angry fist.

Something stirred within his hand, something that came to life and grew and wanted to be free. With a wild exclamation, Kemp jerked his hand in front of him, shaking it to free it of the thing that moved within it - repugnance choking him, an instinctive gesture born in the human race by spiders in dark caves, by crawling things that dropped off jungle leaves and bit.

But it was no spider, no crawling

thing. Instead it was a light, a little point of light that slipped from between his fingers and rose and swiftly faded into nothing. And even as it faded, Kemp felt cool fingers on his jumping nerves, fingers that soothed them and quieted them until he felt peace flow toward him once again, but this time a deeper, calmer, vaster peace that took in all the universe, that left him breathless with the very thought of it.

Claws rustled on the floor behind him and a dark form sailed through the air to land upon his shoulder.

"Hannibal!" yelled the startled Kemp.

But, even as he yelled, Hannibal launched himself into the air again, straight from Kemp's shoulder into

empty air, striking viciously at something that was there, something that fought back, but something Kemp could not see at all.

"Hannibal!" Kemp shrieked again, and the shriek was raw and vicious as he realised that his new-found peace had been stripped from him as one might strip a cloak, leaving him naked in the chill of sudden fear.

Hannibal was fighting something, of that there was no doubt. An invisible something that struggled to get free. But Hannibal had a death grip. His savage jaws were closed upon something that had substance, his terrible claws raked at it, tore at it.

Kemp backed away until he felt the

stone wall at his back, then stood and stared with unbelieving eyes.

Hannibal was winning out, was dragging the thing in the air down to the ground. As if he were performing slow-motion acrobatics, he twisted and turned in the air, was slowly sinking toward the floor. And never for a moment were those scythe-like claws idle. They raked and slashed and tore and the thing that fought them was weakening, dropped faster and faster.

Just before they reached the floor, Hannibal relaxed his grip for a moment, twisted in mid-air like a cat and pounced again. For a fleeting second Kemp saw the shape of the thing Hannibal held between his jaws, the thing he shook and

shook, then cast contemptuously aside - a shimmery, fairy-like thing with dragging wings and a moth-like body. Just a glimpse, that was all.

"Hannibal," gasped Kemp. "Hannibal, what have you done?"

Hannibal stood on bowed legs and stared back at him, with eyes in which Kemp saw the smoky shine of triumph. Like a cat might look when it has caught a bird, like a man might look when he kills a mortal enemy.

"It gave me peace," said Kemp.
"Whatever it was, it gave me peace. And now —"

He took a slow step forward and Hannibal backed away.

But Kemp stopped as a swift thought

struck him.

The Asteroid jewel!

Slowly he lifted his two hands and looked at them and found them empty. The jewel, he remembered, had been clutched in his right hand and it had been from that hand that the shining thing arose.

He caught his breath, still staring at his hands.

An Asteroid jewel one moment, and the next, when the bell chimed, a spot of glowing light - then nothing. And yet something, for Hannibal had killed something, a thing that had a moth-like body and still could not have been a moth, for a man can see a moth.

Kemp's anger at Hannibal faded and

in its place came a subtle fear, a fear that swept his brain and left it chisel-sharp and cold with the almost certain knowledge that here he faced an alien threat, a siren threat, a threat that was a lure.

Chambers had told him about a life that could encyst itself, could live in suspended animation; had voiced a fear that the old Martians, who had tried to sweep that life away, had failed.

Could it be that the Asteroid jewels were the encysted life?

Kemp remembered things about the jewels. They never had been analysed. They were found nowhere else except upon the Asteroids.

The bell might have been the signal

for them to awake, a musical note that broke up the encystation, that returned the sleeping entity to its original form.

Entities that could cure the twisted brains of men, probably by some subtle change of outlook, by the introduction of some mental factor that man had never known before.

Kemp remembered, with a sudden surge of longing, a stinging sense of loss, the mental peace that had reached out to him - for a fleeting moment felt a deep and sharp regret that it had been taken from him.

But despite that ability to give peace the Martians had feared them, feared them with a deep and devastating fear - a fear so great they had destroyed a planet

to rid the System of them. And the Martians were an old race and a wise race.

If the Martians had feared them, there was at least good grounds to suspect Earthmen should fear them, too.

And as he stood there, the horror of the situation seeped into Kemp's brain. A sanatorium that cured mental cases by the simple process of turning those mental cases over to an alien life which had the power to impose upon the mind its own philosophy, to shape the human mind as it willed it should be shaped. A philosophy that started out with the concept of mental peace and ended - where?

But that was something one couldn't

figure out, Kemp knew

- something there was no way to figure out. It could lead anywhere. Especially since one had no way of knowing what sort of mental concepts the aliens of the fifth planet might hold. Concepts that might be good or ill for the human race, but concepts that certainly would not be entirely human.

Clever! So clever that Kemp wondered now why he had not suspected sooner, why he had not smelled a certain rottenness. First the garden to lull one into receptiveness - that odd feeling one had always known this place, making him feel that he was at home so he would put his guard down. Then the painting

- meant, undoubtedly to establish an almost hypnotic state, designed to hold a man transfixed in rapt attention until it was too late to escape the attention of the reawakened life. If, in fact, anyone would have wanted to escape.

That was the insidious part of it - they gave a man what he wanted, what he longed for, something he missed out in the older worlds of struggle and progress. Like a drug—

Claws rattled on the floor.

"Hannibal!" yelled Kemp. But Hannibal didn't stop.

Kemp plunged toward the door, still calling. "Hannibal! Hannibal, come back here!"

Far up the slope there was a rustle in

the bushes. A tiny pebble came tapping down the hill.

"Peace be on you," said a familiar voice, and Kemp spun round. The old man with the brown robe and the long white whiskers stood in the narrow path.

"Is there anything wrong?" asked the oldster.

"No," said Kemp. "Not yet. But there's going to be!"

"I do not —"

"Get out of my way," snapped Kemp. "I'm going back!"

The blue eyes were as calm as ever, the words as unhurried. "No one ever goes back, son."

"Gramp," warned Kemp grimly, "if you don't get out of my way so I can go

down the path —"

The old man's hands moved quickly, plunging into the pockets of his robe. Even as Kemp started forward they came out again, tossed something upward and for one breathless instant Kemp saw a dozen or more gleaming Asteroid jewels shimmering in the air, a shower of flashing brilliance.

Bells were clamouring, bells all over the Asteroid, chiming out endlessly that one clear note, time after time, stabbing at Kemp's brain with the clarity of their tones - turning those sparkling jewels into things that would grasp his mind and give him peace and make him something that wasn't quite human.

With a bellow of baffled rage, Kemp

charged. He saw the old man's face in front of him, mouth open, those calm eyes now deep pools of hatred, tinged with a touch of fear. Kemp's fist smacked out, straight into the face, white whiskers and all. The face disappeared and a scream rang out as the oldster toppled off the ledge and plunged toward the rocks below.

Cool fingers touched Kemp's brain, but he plunged on, almost blindly, down the path. The fingers slipped away and others came and for a moment the peace rolled over him once again. With the last dregs of willpower he fought it off, screaming like a tortured man, keeping his legs working like pistons. The wind brought the scent of apple blossoms to

him and he wanted to stop beside the brook and take off his shoes and know the feel of soft green grass beneath his feet.

But that, one cold corner of his brain told him, was the way they wanted him to feel, the very thing Sanctuary wanted him to do. Staggering, he ran, reeling drunkenly.

He staggered, and as he fell his hand struck something hard and he picked it up. It was a branch, a dead branch fallen from some tree. Grimly, he tested it and found it hard and strong, gripped it in one hand and stumbled down the path.

The club gave him something - some strange psychological advantage - a weapon that he whirled around his head

when he screamed at the things that would have seized his mind.

Then there was hard ground beneath his feet - the spaceport. Men ran toward him, yelling at him, and he sprinted forward to meet them, a man that might have been jerked from the caves of Europe half a million years before - a maddened, frothing man with a club in hand, with a savage gleam in his eyes, hair tousled, shirt ripped off.

The club swished and a man slumped to the ground. Another man charged in and the club swished and Harrison Kemp screamed in killing triumph.

The men broke and ran, and Kemp, roaring, chased them down the field.

Somehow he found his ship and spun

the lock.

Inside, he shoved the throttle up the rack, forgetting about the niceties of take-off, whipping out into the maw of space with a jerk that almost broke his neck, that gouged deep furrows in the port and crumpled one end of the hangar.

Kemp glanced back just once at the glowing spot that was Sanctuary. After that he kept his face straight ahead. The knotted club still lay beside his chair.

Dr Daniel Monk ran his finger around the inside of his collar, seemed about to choke.

"But you told me," he stammered.
"You sent for me —"

"Yes," agreed Spencer Chambers, "I did tell you I had a Martian. But I haven't

got him now. I sent him away."

Monk stared blankly.

"I had need of him elsewhere," Chambers explained.

"I don't understand," Monk declared weakly. "Perhaps he will be coming back."

Chambers shook his head. "I had hoped so, but now I am afraid . . . afraid —"

"But you don't realise what a Martian would mean to us!" Monk blurted.

"Yes, I do," declared Chambers. "He could read the manuscripts. Much more easily, much more accurately than they can be translated. That was why I sent for you. That, in fact, was how I knew he was a Martian in the first place. He read

some of the photostatic copies of the manuscripts you sent me."

Monk straightened in his chair. "He read them! You mean you could talk with him!"

Chambers grinned. "Not exactly talk with him, Monk. That is, he didn't make sounds like you and I do."

The chairman of the Solar Control Board leaned across the desk.

"Look at me," he commanded. "Look closely. Can you see anything wrong?"

Monk stammered. "Why, no. Nothing wrong. Those glasses, but a lot of people wear them."

"I know," said Chambers. "A lot of people wear them for effect. Because they think it's smart. But I don't. I wear

mine to hide my eyes."

"Your eyes!" whispered Monk. "You mean there's something —"

"I'm blind," said Chambers. "Very few people know it. I've kept it a careful secret. I haven't wanted the world's pity. I don't want the knowledge I can't see hampering my work. People wouldn't trust me."

Monk started to speak, but his words dribbled into silence.

"Don't feel sorry for me," snapped Chambers. "That's the very thing I've been afraid of. That's why no one knows. I wouldn't have told you except I had to tell to explain about Hannibal."

"Hannibal?"

"Hannibal," said Chambers, "is the

Martian. People thought he was my pet. Something I carried around with me because of vanity. Because I wanted something different. Something to catch the headlines. But he was more than a pet. He was a Seeing-eye dog. He was my eyes. With Hannibal around I could see. Better than I could see with my own eyes. Much better."

Monk started forward, then settled back. "You mean Hannibal was telepathic?"

Chambers nodded. "Naturally telepathic. Perhaps it was the way the Martians talked. The only way they could talk. He telepathed perfect visual images of everything he saw and in my mind I could see as clearly, as perfectly

as if I had seen with my own eyes. Better even, for Hannibal had powers of sight a human does not have."

Monk tapped his fingers on the chair arm, staring out of the window at the pines that marched along the hill.

"Hannibal was found out in the Asteroids, wasn't he?" Monk asked suddenly.

"He was," said Chambers. "Until a few days ago I didn't know what he was. No one knew what he was. He was just a thing that saw for me. I tried to talk with him and couldn't. There seemed no way in which to establish a communication of ideas. Almost as if he didn't know there were such things as ideas. He read the newspapers for me.

That is, he looked at the page, and in my mind I saw the page and read it. But I was the one that had to do the reading. All Hannibal did was telepath the picture of the paper to me and my mind would do the work. But when I picked up the manuscript photostats it was Hannibal who read. To me they meant nothing - just funny marks. But Hannibal knew. He read them to me. He made me see the things they said. I knew then he was a Martian. No one else but a Martian, or Dr Monk, could read that stuff."

He matched his fingers carefully. "I've wondered how, since he was a Martian, he got into the Belt. How he could have managed to survive. When we first found

him there was no reason to suspect he was a Martian. After all, we didn't know what a Martian was. They left no description of themselves. No paintings, no sculptures."

"The Martians," said Monk, "didn't run to art. They were practical, deadly serious, a race without emotion."

He drummed his fingers along the chair arm again. "There's just one thing. Hannibal was your eyes. You needed him. In such a case I can't imagine why you would have parted with him."

"I needed to see," said Chambers, "in a place I couldn't go."

"You . . . you. What was that?"

"Exactly what I said. There was a place I had to see. A place I had to know

about. For various reasons it was closed to me. I could not, dare not, go there. So I sent Hannibal. I sent my eyes there for me."

"And you saw?"

"I did."

"You mean you could send him far away —"

"I sent him to the Asteroids," said Chambers. "To be precise, to Sanctuary. Millions of miles. And I saw what he saw. Still see what he sees, in fact. I can't see you because I'm blind. But I see what's happening on Sanctuary this very moment. Distance has no relation to telepathy. Even the first human experiments in it demonstrated that."

The phone on Chambers's desk buzzed

softly. He groped for the receiver, finally found it, lifted it. "Hello," he said.

"This is Moses Allen," said the voice on the other end. "Reports are just starting to come in. My men are rounding up the Asteroid jewels. Got bushels of them so far. Putting them under locks you'd have to use atomics to get open."

Worry edged Chambers's voice. "You made sure there was no slip? No way anyone could get wind of what we're doing and hide out some of them."

Allen chuckled. "I got thousands of men on the job. All of them hit at the same minute. First we checked records of all sales. To be sure we knew just who had them and how many. We

haven't got a few of them yet, but we know who's got them. Some of the owners are a little stubborn, but we'll sweat it out of them. We know they've got them cached away somewhere."

He laughed. "One funny thing, chief. Old Lady Templefinger - the society dame, you know - had a rope of them, some of the finest in the world. We can't find them. She claims they disappeared. Into thin air, just like that. One night at a concert. But we —"

"Wait a second," snapped Chambers. "A concert, you said?"

"Sure, a concert. Recital, I guess, is a better name for it. Some long-haired violinist."

"Allen," rapped Chambers, "check up

on that recital. Find out who was there. Drag them in. Hold them on some technical charge. Anything at all, just so you hold them. Treat them just as if they were people who had been cured by Sanctuary. Grab on to them and don't let them go."

"Gripes, chief," protested the Secret Service man, "we might run into a barrel of trouble. The old lady would've had some big shots —"

"Don't argue," shouted Chambers. "Get going. Pick them up. And anyone else who was around when any other jewels evaporated. Check up on all strange jewel disappearances. No matter how far back. Don't quit until you're sure in every case. And hang onto everybody."

Everyone who's ever had anything to do with Sanctuary."

"OK," agreed Allen. "I don't know what you're aiming at, but we'll do —"

"Another thing," said Chambers.

"How about the whispering campaign?"

"We've got it started," Allen said.

"And it's a lulu, chief. I got busy-bodies tearing around all over the Solar System. Spreading the word. Nothing definite. Just whispers. Something wrong with Sanctuary. Can't trust them. Can't tell what happens to you when you go there. Why, I heard about a guy just the other day —"

"That's the idea," approved Chambers. "We simply can't tell the real story, but we have to do something to

stop people from going there. Frighten them a bit, make them wonder."

"Come morning," said Allen, "and the whole System will be full of stories. Some of them probably even better than those we started with. Sanctuary will starve to death waiting for business after we get through with them."

"That," said Chambers, "is just exactly what we want."

He hung up the phone, fumbling awkwardly, then turned his head toward Monk.

"You heard?" he asked.

"Enough," said Monk. "If it's something I should forget—"

"It's nothing you should forget," Chambers told him. "You're in this with

me. Clear up to the hilt."

"I've guessed some of it," said Monk. "A lot of it, in fact. Found some of it from hints in the manuscripts. Some from what I've heard you say. I've been sitting here, trying to straighten it out, trying to make all the factors fall together. The Asteroid jewels, of course, are the encysted life form from the fifth planet and someone on Sanctuary is using them to do to us just what they planned to do to the Martian race - may have done to the Martian race."

"The man out on Sanctuary," said Chambers, "is Jan Nichols, but I doubt if he is using the asterites. More probably they are using him. Some years ago he headed an expedition into the Belt and

disappeared. When he came to light again he was the head of Sanctuary. Somehow, while he was out there, he must have come under control of the asterites. Maybe someone played a violin, struck just the right note when he had an Asteroid jewel on his person. Or it might have happened some other way. There's no way of knowing. The worst of it is that now he probably is convinced he is engaged in a great crusade. That's the most dangerous thing about the asterites or the fifth-planet people or whatever you want to call them. Their propaganda is effective because once one is exposed to them he becomes one of them, in philosophy if not in fact and, after all, it's the

philosophy, the way of thinking that counts."

Chambers shuddered, as if a cold wind might be sweeping through the room. "It's a beautiful philosophy, Monk. At least, on the surface. God knows what it is underneath. I gained a glimpse of it, several times, through Hannibal. It was that strong, strong enough even to force its way through the veil of hatred that he held for them, powerful enough to reach through the vengeance in his mind. The vengeance that's driving him out there now."

"Vengeance?" asked Monk.

"He's killing them," said Chambers. "As you and I might kill vermin. He's berserk, killing mad. I've tried to call

him back. Tried to get him to hide so we can rescue him without the certainty of losing every man we sent out. For some reason, perhaps because he knows them better, hates them more, Hannibal can stand against them. But a man couldn't, a man wouldn't have a chance. Sanctuary is stirred up like a nest of maddened bees."

Chambers's faced sagged. "But I can't call him back. I can't even reach him any more. I still see the things he sees. He still keeps contact with me, probably because he wants me to observe, through his mind, as long as possible. Hoping, perhaps, that the human race will take up where he left off- if he leaves off."

"Hannibal is carrying out his destiny,"

Monk said gravely. "I can patch it together now. Things I didn't understand before. Things I found in the manuscripts. Hannibal slept through time for this very day."

Chambers snapped his head erect, questioningly.

"That's right," said Monk. "The Martians, in their last days, perfected a fairly safe method of suspended animation. Perhaps they used principles they stole from the fifth planet, perhaps not. It doesn't matter. They placed a number of their people in suspended animation. How many, I don't know. The number's there, but I can't read it. It might be a hundred or a thousand. Anyway, it was a lot of them. And they

scattered them all over the Solar System. They took some to the Asteroids, some to Earth, some to the Jovian moons, some even out to Pluto. They left them everywhere. They left them in those different places and then the rest of the race went home to die. I wondered why they did it. The symbol was there to tell me, but I couldn't read the symbol."

Chambers nodded. "You have to fill in too many things, the translation leaves too many blanks."

"I had a hunch," Monk said. "It might have been an attempt to preserve the race. A wild throw, you know. A desperate people will try almost anything. Where there's life, there's hope. Hang on long enough and

something's bound to happen.

"But I was wrong. I can see that now. They did it for revenge. It ties in with the other things we know about the Martians. Perhaps the asterites had destroyed them. They had tried to destroy the asterites, were sure that they had failed. So they left behind a mop-up squad. The rest of them died, but the mop-up squad slept on against a distant day, playing the million-to-one chance. In Hannibal's case, the long shot paid out. He's doing some mopping-up out in Sanctuary now. It's the last brave gesture of a race that's dead these million years."

"But there are others," said Chambers. "There are —"

"Don't get your hopes up," Monk warned. "Remember the odds. Hannibal carried out his destiny. Even that was more than could have been logically expected. The others —"

"I'm not doing any hoping," Chambers declared. "Not on my own account, anyhow. There's a job to do. We have to do it the best we can. We must guard against the human race going down before the philosophy of these other people. We must keep the human race - human.

"The asterites' creed, on the surface, is beautiful, admittedly. What it is beneath the surface, of course, we cannot know. But admitting that it is all that it appears and nothing more, it is not a

human creed. It's not the old hell-for-leather creed that has taken man up the ladder, that will continue to take him up the ladder if he hangs onto it. It would wipe out all the harsher emotions and we need those harsher emotions to keep climbing. We can't lie in the sun, we can't stand still, we can't, not yet, even take the time to stand off and admire the things that we have done.

"Peace, the deeper concept of peace, is not for the human race, never was meant for the human race. Conflict is our meat. The desire to beat the other fellow to it, the hankering for glorification, the tendency to heave out one's chest and say, 'I'm the guy that done it,' the satisfaction of tackling a hard job and

doing it, even looking for a hard job just for the hell of doing it."

A springtime breeze blew softly through the window. A bird sang and a hushed clock ticked.

There were faces in the blackness that loomed before the speeding spaceship. Faces that swirled in the blacknesss and shouted. All sorts effaces. Old men and babies. Well-dressed man-about-town and tramp in tattered rags. Women, too. Women with flying hair and tear-streaked cheeks. All shouting, hooked hands raised in anger.

Faces that protested. Faces that pleaded. Faces that damned and called down curses.

Harrison Kemp passed a hand slowly

across his eyes and when he took it away the faces were gone. Only space leered back at him.

But he couldn't shake from his mind the things those mouths had said, the words the tongues had shaped.

"What have you done? You have taken Sanctuary from us!"

Sanctuary! Something the race had leaned upon, had counted on, the assurance of a cure, a refuge from the mental mania that ranged up and down the worlds.

Something that was almost God. Something that was the people's friend - a steadying hand in the darkness. It was something that was there, always would be there, a shining light in a troubled

world, a comforter, something that would never change, something one could tie to.

And now?

Kemp shuddered at the thought.

One word and he could bring all that structure tumbling down about their ears. With one blow he could take away their faith and their assurance. With one breath he could blow Sanctuary into a flimsy house of cards.

For him, he knew, Sanctuary was gone forever. Knowing what he knew, he never could go back. But what about those others? What about the ones who still believed? Might it not be better that he left them their belief? Even if it led down a dangerous road. Even if it were

a trap.

But was it a trap? That was a thing, of course, that he could not know. Perhaps, rather, it was the way to a better life.

Perhaps he had been wrong. Perhaps he should have stayed and accepted what Sanctuary offered.

If a human being, as a human being, could not carry out his own destiny, if the race were doomed to madness, if evolution had erred in bringing man along the path he followed what then? If the human way of life were basically at fault, would it not be better to accept a change before it was too late? On what basis, after all, could mankind judge?

In years to come, working through several generations, Sanctuary might

mould mankind to its pattern, might change the trend of human thought and action, point out a different road to travel.

And if that were so, who could say that it was wrong?

Bells were ringing. Not the bells he had heard back on Sanctuary, nor yet the bells he remembered of a Sunday morning in his own home town, but bells that came hauntingly from space. Bells that tolled and blotted out his thoughts.

Madness. Madness stalking the worlds. And yet, need there be madness? Findlay wasn't mad - probably never would go mad.

Kemp's brain suddenly buzzed with a crazy-quilt of distorted thought:

Sanctuary . . . Pluto . . . Johnny
Gardner . . . what is life . . . we'll try
again—

Unsteadily he reached out for the instrument board, but his fingers were all thumbs. His mind blurred and for one wild moment of panic he could not recognise the panel before him -for one long instant it was merely a curious object with coloured lights and many unfamiliar mechanisms.

His brain cleared momentarily and a thought coursed through it - an urgent thought. Man need not go mad!

Spencer Chambers! Spencer
Chambers had to know!

He reached for the radio and his fingers wouldn't work. They wouldn't go

where he wanted them to go.

Kemp set his teeth and fought his hand, fought it out to the radio-control knobs, made his fingers do the job his brain wanted them to do, made them work the dials, forced his mouth to say the things that must be said.

"Kemp calling Earth. Kemp calling Earth. Kemp calling —"

A voice said, "Earth. Go ahead, Kemp."

His tongue refused to move. His hand fell from the set, swayed limply at his side.

"Go ahead, Kemp," the voice urged.
"Go ahead Kemp. Go ahead, Kemp."

Kemp grappled with the greyness that was dropping over him, fought it back by

concentrating on the simple mechanics of making his lips and tongue move as they had to move.

"Spencer Chambers," he croaked.

"You should have stayed in Sanctuary," blared a voice in his head. "You should have stayed. You should have —"

"Spencer Chambers speaking," said a voice out of the radio. "What is it, Kemp?"

Kemp tried to answer, couldn't.

"Kemp!" yelled Chambers. "Kemp, where are you? What's the matter? Kemp —"

Words came from Kemp's mouth, distorted words, taking a long time to say, jerky —

"No time . . . one thing. Hunch. That's it. Chambers . . . hunch —"

"What do you mean, lad?" yelled Chambers.

"Hunches. Have to play . . . hunches. Everyone hasn't . . . got . . . them. Find . . . those . . . who . . . have —"

There was silence. Chambers was waiting. A wave of greyness blotted out the ship, blotted out space - then light came again.

Kemp gripped the side of his chair with one hand while the other swayed limply at his side. What had he been saying? Where was he? One word buzzed in his brain. What was that word?

Out of the past came a snatch of

memory.

"Findlay," he said.

"Yes, what about Findaly?"

"Hunches like . . . instinct. See . . . into . . . future —"

The radio bleated at him. "Kemp! What's the matter? Go on. Do you mean hunches are a new instinct? Tell me. Kemp!"

Harrison Kemp heard nothing. The greyness had come again, blotting out everything. He sat in his chair and his hands hung dangling. His vacant eyes stared into space.

The ship drove on.

On the floor lay a stick, a club Harrison Kemp had picked up on Sanctuary.

The intercommunications set buzzed. Fumbling, Chambers snapped up the tumbler.

"Mr Allen is here," said the secretary's voice.

"Send him in," said Chambers.

Allen came in, flung his hat on the floor beside a chair, sat down.

"Boys just reported they found Kemp's ship," he said. "Easy to trace it. Radio was wide open."

"Yes?" asked Chambers.

"Loony," said Allen.

Chambers's thin lips pressed together. "I was afraid so. He sounded like it. Like he was fighting it off. And he did fight it off. Long enough, at least, to tell us what he wanted us to know."

"It's queer," Monk said, "that we never thought of it. That someone didn't think of it. It had to wait until a man on the verge of insanity could think of it."

"It may not work," said Chambers, "but it's worth a try. Hunches, he said, are instinct - a new instinct, the kind we need in the sort of world we live in. Once, long ago, we had instinct the same as animals, but we got rid of it, we got civilised and lost it. We didn't need it any longer. We substituted things for it. Like law and order, houses and other safeguards against weather and hunger and fear.

"Now we face new dangers. Dangers that accompany the kind of civilisation we have wrought. We need new instinct

to protect us against those dangers. Maybe we have it in hunches or premonition or intuition or whatever name you want to hang on it. Something we've been developing for a long time, for the past ten thousand years, perhaps, never realising that he had it."

"All of us probably haven't got it," Monk reminded him. "It would be more pronounced in some of us than others."

"We'll find the ones who have it," declared Chambers. "We'll place them in key positions. The psychologists will develop tests for it. We'll see if we can't improve it, develop it. Help it along."

"You have it, Monk. It saved you when the astefites tried to get you that night in Sandebar. Something told you to

heave that jewel against the manuscript case. You did it, instinctively, wondering why. You said that afterward you even speculated on why you did it, couldn't find an answer. And yet it was the proper thing to do.

"Findlay out on Pluto has it. Calls it a feeling for the future, the ability to look just a little way ahead. That looking just a way ahead will help us keep one jump beyond our problems.

"Allen has it. He investigated Sanctuary on a hunch, even felt ashamed of himself for doing it, but he went ahead and played his hunch."

"Just a second, chief," Allen interrupted. "Before you go any further there's something to be done. We got to

go out and bring in Hannibal. Even if it takes the whole fleet —"

"There's no use," said Chambers.

He rose and faced them.

"Hannibal," he said, "died half an hour ago. They killed him."

Slowly he walked around the desk, felt his way across the room toward the window. Once he stumbled on a rug, once he ran into a chair.