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"We're sorry. We meant no harm. But we're lonely. Pure thought is wonderful. There's no limit to it. But we're so near the limit, though we hadn't believed it

existed. And we're lonely. Lonely. Lonely."

The fires died out of the crystals like fireflies drowned in the mist. Darkness, black and unbroken and cold, followed. And there was silence, utter and complete. The whispering had stopped for all time. MacDougal stirred and opened his eyes. They were wide and dazed, but the madness was gone from them.

"I heard," he whispered. "Somehow, I heard. Thank God!" Garth turned away. He had no right to watch another man's soul being released from hell.

Far away he could make out the dim

glow of the Twilight Belt. They could make it now, without madness dogging them. He could semaphore the relay ship and get a stay of Alice's execution. Brent's testimony would change things. Alice would be free, and he, too!

Brent could come back to claim his Yttrium. MacDougal was free of his demons. And Darkside was no longer a death-trap, except for the magnetic currents, which man's engineering genius could soon overcome.

The dark, lonely plain spread around him. He could feel it, though he was blind with the darkness. For just an instant, he could feel the black eternities of flight through frigid space, the silence,

the desolation, the terror of a Universe coming to its end.

"I'm sorry," he whispered to the voice-crystal. "So very sorry" Then, quite loudly, he yelled to the others: "Come on. Our air won't last forever. Let's go!"