

AR 43.2

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Julius Buehwalder Collection

[1960s]

The Creator

## THE CREATOR

Modern science assumes that the Universe is expanding. It deducts this from the appearance of a region far out in space which seems to be approaching the speed of light.

Let us suppose that we are witnesses to what is going on beyond that region where our telescopic lenses cannot penetrate. It may well be that astronomers did not yet discover the real nature of this phenomén.

Out there - we have a galaxy - or what's left of it, traveling an average of better than 98% the speed of light. There are within that galaxy two immense double stars, Mirri and Mari, revolving around each other every 30 years or so. Hundreds of planets are circling them, and between them are several hundred more located, following capricious courses, once nearing one sun, then the other. Several of the planets are inhabited by intelligent beings, and, for the sake of simplicity, let us suppose that these beings look and act like humans, and use terms of reference which we are used to.

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The mailman in his characteristic uniform delivered the pile of letters to the observatory, and its youthful assistant director proceeded to open them. He wore a jacket with his scientific insignia.

None on this planet wore anything but uniform. The King of the Mails directed his army of mail clerks, and the King of Scientists ruled over engineers, mathematicians, stronomers and the like. These, and all the other kingdoms were hereditary, and the Council of Kings ruled the planet. The King of Scientists was a somewhat less important uler; he had to be subsidized by the various kings of industry.

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Trembal Sarkas studied carefully the letters and telegrams. He had sent out a secret questionnaire to other observatories, and most answers were on hand.

"..... Your observations fully confirmed. Believe best, keeping things to ourselves. Avoid creating panic. "

"..... Fully aware of danger. Doubtful, if facts can be concealed any longer. "

"..... Let the inevitable happen without creating a madhouse. "  
And on and on it went.

He took the pile and went to the director's study, who sat there deeply in thought, hardly taking any notice of Trembal's entrance.

He flung the letters on the desk.

I know what's in them. What can they say ? Let me think how we should break the news. We are in a delicate situation. We cannot hide the truth much longer from the people. But, we must take the matter to the Council first, and that needs the co-operation of our fellow scientists.

What then, if we invite the directors of the observatories for a preliminary talk?

Agreed. Set the date some day next week. And cable for the King's permission, I cannot do without it. Cable an urgent request, and then start to prepare for the meeting.

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In the palace of the King of Transportation his young daughter Timioara played ball in the courtyard with her cousin Enardi, the son of the School King. Mirri and Mari were both high at the time, and it was really hot. There was rarely one day like the other on the planet. Daylight was present most of the time, and real night was experienced only for a few hours at long intervals. There was continuous Spring on the entire surface of this world. People fixed their sleeping and waking hours by an arbitrary time System, thought to be the most healthful for the human body.

Timioara played well today, and the two shadows her body created on the ball court were moving rapidly over the glaring surface.

It's getting too hot, said Enardi, a little subdued, let's turn in.

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A picked group of astronomers and mathematicians faced the Council in secret session. Scientists were not allowed to follow any personal ambitions for discovery. This was a caste society, and everything had to be subordinated to the wishes of the Kings.

One of the astronomers took the dais.

Your eminent Highnesses ! We dared to approach you in a vital matter involving all of us. I will present the facts as we see and are able to interpret them, and leave the wisdom of decision to you Sirs.

Almost 500 years ago space travel was banned by the Council, and no foreign ships were allowed to land. May I prompt you to recall the reason for these measures ? News was then brought from sister planets which had a more advanced scientific establishment than ours that a disturbing development in our galaxy had developed. It was then served that the speed of our star system had increased to 90% the velocity of light at an ever accelerating pace.



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To save words, I have to tell the Assembly that we have now established beyond doubt that this speed has increased to almost 99%.

What does all that mean, asked the King of the Press ?

Your Royal Highness ! At 100% velocity matter disintegrates, that's the meaning. We are cut off from intelligence with other planets, but during the few hours of darkness our observatories discovered many more disturbing signs. Half of our galaxy has disappeared. Every star is headed in the same direction, just to vanish at a certain point in space. Opposite this point stars are coming towards us at almost twice the speed of light - that means - we are moving at each other at the same rate of speed. They are coming towards that station in space from all directions, and seem to be hurling themselves at this target for instant extinction.

To make a long story short. Within five years Mirri will be sucked up by this force, and our own world will follow suit just 25 minutes later.

With these words he sat down. The Council broke out into a tumultuous droning of voices. The small body of scientists sat in icy quiet and isolation.

Finally, the King of Police banged his gavel several times, till he had restored some semblance of order. He was the mightiest of them, and controlled 5 votes in their council. He recognized the Housing King as speaker though many hands were up in the air.

Has the chairman had any previous knowledge of this madness ? Why have we been summoned to listen to such phantastic thrash ?

The chairman banged his gavel again.

We are fully aware of what would be the forecast of the scientists. Gentlemen ! 500 years ago my ancestors eliminated traffic with other planets in our inner star system in order to avoid a panic of the general population which could only have led to the overthrow of our society. The scientists' forecasts are based on

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facts, and the secret of all our impending extermination has been faithfully preserved in our family.

He banged his gavel again..... We have to accept facts. What we are here for is to discuss the matter, and vote on measures to meet the inevitable crisis during the next and last five years.

A deep silence had now settled over the 200 or so members of the Council. One stood up : May I ask the scientists, how all this vast conglomeration of stars can just simply vanish ?

The speaker got up again. He looked around , and took a deep breath. My Lords ! Everything I have to explain on this subject is speculative theory and hard to put into understandable language. We do not know all the answers, and we may be wrong in some assumptions. But the end result , as compounded before, will be the same : Extermination.

The Universe we regard as infinite, and it may once have been completely at rest. It was composed entirely of a thin, homogenous concentration of Hydrogen atoms, the lowest possible form of matter. It may have been so since time infinite, and for space infinite.

Matter as we know it by our senses, does not exist. If we compressed all the atoms of our planet so that they touched each other, they might not occupy more space than this building. If these atoms were completely smashed and their components again compressed to the touching point, they would probably represent not more than a pinhead. Electric forces, which we do not know, keep the parts of the atoms, and the atoms themselves at huge distances from each other, control their movements, and prevent them from exploding or collapsing.

Right at the point in space for which we have headed, a kind of blown fuse, or whatever it was, smashed one such Hydrogen atom. This atom became the creator of our whole living Universe. The released matter of that one atom was converted into a cosmic ray, exploded, hit neighboring atoms, and induced them to stream into the

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gap, and these, for reason of the unexplained electrical disturbance, suffered the same fate. This process went on and on like a whirlpool. New cosmic rays thus developed, traveled with the velocity of light, radiating in all directions, creating upheavals in the Hydrogen pattern, whirlpools, and finally myriads of stars, billions of lightyears out in space. The rays are still traveling, and the Universe is growing bigger, almost with the speed of light, despite the sucking up movement, or what we call implosion, in its center.

This movement towards what I called the CREATOR converts the largest star masses instantaneously into cosmic ray, which we believe to be atom kerns, robbed of their electrical balances, and they are flung out into space again. The sections of the Universe which come nearer to it increase their speed progressively, until they reach the speed of light at the moment of impact. The process is infinite and irresistible. What the creator creates, it will once, in an ever widening space of time recall for more distant re-creation, and so forth. Everything emanates from him, and returns to him.

The speaker now proceeded to sit down again, when a voice was raised from the Council.

How about space travel? Can't we get away from this thing?

We may have a few machines still in storage. I don't know how serviceable or obsolete they are, since production of space craft has been prohibited for the last five centuries. But one thing is certain: No craft can be built which can escape the gravity belt of Mirri and Mari, and, by historic accounts, noone has ever reached any of the outer planets, to break through this barrier. And, even if that would happen, one would travel many years in a cramped space ship, fraught with hazards and inconvenience, in order to save 30 minutes of one's life.



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Nobody motioned to speak, and the chairman rose. It is obvious that the news has upset the Council, and that it would be preferable to discuss matters of security at a later meeting. I again remind members that every word of this meeting is secret, and that anybody will find himself under arrest whose tongue should be loose. The scientists will be held in protective custody until we have come to a decision.

The meeting adjourned, and a flow of police was let into the chamber.

---

Trembal had been lodged in a house that was surrounded by red security police. The sergeant shared a room with him, as every scientist was kept under constant surveillance.

He was a rather chatty fellow, and bothered Trembal with many questions. It developed that he was a nature lover, and liked to look at the stars during the few short hours of darkness.

You know that familiar constellation of the Great Dog? I can't puzzle it out. The Dog's head has all disappeared, and I see other stars instead which I never saw before. Truthfully, I wasn't drunk. What do you astronomers say about it?

Trembal grunted something, and the sergeant looked peeved. You think I am not educated enough to be told how it happened? I have read every book on astronomy that has been permitted in the libraries.

I don't know, said Trembal. Something gone wrong, up there? Maybe... But the Dog's head was only 8 lightyears away from us. What if we disappear too? Into what hole should we fall? countered Trembal. Don't know... Don't know either, sergeant.

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Meanwhile, the rumors were flying in the Capital. The general guess was: a plot by the scientists, to wrest control from the ruling clique. The Council's secret session, and their following detention could not remain unnoticed. Everybody talked only to his most intimate friends and relatives, as any political talk was forbidden and severely punished. Nevertheless, the news of the event went from mouth to mouth, and made the round all over town.

The Council of Kings had been established 1000 years ago, and no citizen had any doubt concerning their just and proper rule. The people didn't feel any limitations in their freedom of thought or action, because centuries of indoctrination had made them accept everything in life as given by the Kings. They didn't know themselves, that they were running the affairs of the world, and that their Kings were mere parasites. For them, they were the Gods on Earth, and everybody belonged to a particular god.

The scientists were almost forgotten men. The development of science had been halted 500 years ago, and what had been its resources and theories had to be retained forever. The planet managed with the discoveries of 500 years ago, and every sense of enterprise, research or improvement had been lost. This made science something to be learned from ancient books, and the students mere imitators of tradition, keeping machines running, checking data, copying blueprints and using formulas.

Considering the state of mind to which the population was conditioned, there was little sympathy to be found for them and their imagined cause. Everything, evryday was going its smooth course, science was something out of the way, something to be frightened about.

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The Council of Kings had been established 1000 years ago, and no citizen had any doubt concerning their just and proper rule. The people didn't feel any limitations in their freedom of thought or action, because centuries of indoctrination had made them accept everything in life as given by the Kings. They didn't know themselves, that they were running the affairs of the world, and that their Kings were mere parasites. For them, they were the Gods on Earth, and everybody belonged to a particular god.

The scientists were almost forgotten men. The development of science had been halted 500 years ago, and what had been its resources and theories had to be retained forever. The planet managed with the discoveries of 500 years ago, and every sense of enterprise, research or improvement had been lost. This made science something to be learned from ancient books, and the students mere imitators of tradition, keeping machines running, checking data, copying blueprints and using formulas.

Considering the state of mind to which the population was conditioned, there was little sympathy to be found for them and their imagined cause. Everything, evryday was going its smooth course, science was something out of the way, something to be frightened about.

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That day, the planet's rulers went into the shadows of their own homes, and took counsel with their families. The facts shook every household. Gloom and indecision marked the deliberations. No one would be spared, and the next best concern on the agenda was the prevention of a mass hysteria.

The King of Transportation was locked with his immediate family, his wife Terrar, his daughter Timioara, and his sons Tragarth and Tellum. His children ranged in age from Timioara's sweet 17 to Tellum's 23.

He had explained everything he knew about the events. All were downcast, unbelieving, trying to think. As ever in such crises they were remembering other things. Terrar saw herself when she took the oath of marriage, and her life flashed by without order or sequence. Timioara only saw the ball bouncing off the wall at all angles, and herself driving marvelous shots all the time. Tragarth felt a void in his body, and he tried again and again to muster his thoughts, and repress the alarming beat of his heart. Tellum, the Crown Prince, felt impulses and ideas overpowering him like a whirlwind. He tried to speak, but a sore feeling in his throat let only a snorting sound come out of his chest.

Take it easy son, we are all in the same boat. Terrar suddenly fell into hysterics, and her screams and tears made them gather around her, trying to calm her down. They laid her on a couch, and after a while she lapsed into state of semiconsciousness, broken infrequently by a few short sobs.

Is all this fixed and irrevocable, asked Tellum ?

They seem to be absolutely sure about it, replied the father.

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Whoever may have asked that question about space travel, I have an idea about it. Couldn't we send a few ships to neighboring planets to find out what they know about the situation? They may be technically more advanced than we are. We still have about a dozen of the old machines in secret storage in the caves at Gollupi, and our engineers might be able to make some of them ready for a flight.

This might be a good idea, but it will not go unnoticed, and the population will slowly find out what's going on.

We ought to tell them by all means, instead of letting them find out, and tell them that we are making every effort to clarify our situation; hence the traveling to other planets, and that the cause of mankind is in good hands.

Why not tell them, said Tragarth, that the end is, say, seven years ahead instead of five. This would avoid a panic preceding the time of disaster.

---

Busy hands were clearing the caves at Gollupi. Ten monsters stood there in semi-darkness, and groups of engineers went from machine to machine to inspect their serviceability. They carried ancient textbooks on space travel, and examined the descriptions, comparing them to the real ships. The craft were covered with a heavy crust of lacquer-like preservative which showed cracks in many places. They picked one out that seemed to be in almost perfect condition, and, with the help of bulldozers it was wheeled into the open.

A large section of the surrounding country side was heavily fenced off, and a small army of security police protected the place and preserved order.

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A large section of the surrounding country side was heavily fenced off, and a small army of security police protected the place and preserved order.

The people had been told in small doses of the expected disaster, and momentarily the terror stricken minds of the masses had been guided into their usual preoccupations, accepting with a dulled impulse of fatalism their doom. The space craft experiment had been widely publicised as a means for diversion.

The lacquer was peeled off, the machinery checked, instruments renewed, the hull reinforced, and ultimately an atomic furnace was placed in its predestined hold. This took several weeks, after which the craft made a slow cruise around the globe.

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The day for the take off was at hand. Trembal accompanied his superior, the director of the observatory to the site. He had been chosen to attend the flight as astronomical expert. Various technicians, scientists, linguists and other personnel were to attend the journey, and the King of Transportation had insisted to go with them as head of his realm. His wife would not let him go alone either, so both of them were to undertake the journey.

There was a large gathering in front of the vehicle. Every member of the expedition was introduced to the King and Queen, who graciously greeted them. The King's family was there too, and his sons mingled with the scientists, asking endless questions.

The director introduced Trembal, explaining that he was to be his substitute in the observatory while he was away.

Yes, to make sure everything will be going smoothly, I have also appointed my eldest son as the temporary ruler of my Empire.

Tellem and Timicara stood just by, and she glanced shyly at Trembal. He had made his bow to the royal couple, and, looking up found himself staring straight into her wide open eyes, as she had slipped between her parents.

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The observatory must be a wonderful place, she said. Seeing

all the mysteries unraveled before one's eyes.

Your Grace : seeing is the last thing one does in the observatory.

Photo lenses do most of the viewing for us, and much more correctly.

Observation, comparison, deduction and prediction take most of our

time in the form of mathematical problems fed to computers.

I would love to look through the telescopes, and to see all

those mysterious calculations.

This can easily be arranged. If your grace will kindly telephone

before your arrival, I will have everything prepared for your inspection.

It might be equally interesting to observe periods of dead night,

twilight, or of planetary interferences with our sun. I will keep

you informed on any interesting events.

Thank you, I am looking forward to a visit. She smiled at him.

In the interval her parents and the rest of the party had moved on.

He offered her his arm. If you consent, I will guide you around this

place. She accepted willingly. He explained to her this and that, and

she nestled closely to him.

Do you think, this voyage may be dangerous ?

That is a difficult question to answer. According to past

experience, the history of which you certainly are aware of, the

hazards are small. Almost every ship that was built during the last

300 years of space travel got through to its destination. Yet, there

are a couple of circumstances that may influence the efficiency of

this machine. It is obviously five centuries old, and some defects

may appear in the stress of the take off. There just wasn't time to

build another ship. Then, there is the question of cosmic radiation.

Normally, the special coating applied to ships would absorb nearly all

of this radiation, making the ship's interior safe. We have doubled

this coating, but we don't know how effective this guard will be now,

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Do you think, this voyage may be dangerous ?

That is a difficult question to answer. According to past experience, the history of which you certainly are aware of, the hazards are small. Almost every ship that was built during the last 200 years of space travel got through to its destination. Yet, there are a couple of circumstances that may influence the efficiency of this machine. It is obviously five centuries old, and some defects may appear in the stress of the take off. There just wasn't time to build another ship. Then, there is the question of cosmic radiation. Normally, the special coating applied to ships would absorb nearly all of this radiation, making the ship's interior safe. We have doubled this coating, but we don't know how effective this guard will be now, when cosmic ray particles have increased enormously. We don't know

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what a large amount of these particles , hitting the plutonium reactor might do to it. Even our atmosphere is being increasingly drenched with these particles. Photographic equipment may soon become useless, radio communications jammed, and power stations endangered. The human body may react in building up cancerous tissue, but that will take longer to develop than we have got time left to live.

She felt frightened once again. Do my parents know the hazards of this flight ?

They have been told, and they are taking the risk. Nothing much matters any more. It seems better to die dangerously , than to linger endlessly.

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The time for the take off had almost arrived , and people began to board the craft. The director called Trembal.

If anything should go wrong, there is only one more thing that can be tried. He took from his bag one of those ancient books, one which Trembal had never seen. Its title read : Methods of radar contact and communication with other planets.

I never heard of that, said Trembal.

It was suppressed immediately after publication, and our experimental station dismantled. This book will tell you what to do. You will have all the assistance of the Council to build a new station.

I hope, I won't have to use it. Best of luck. They shook hands, and the director was the last one boarding the ship. The engines began a terrific noise, and the craft began to rise steadily and slowly until it was only a tiny speck over their heads.

The loudspeaker - which was hooked up to a world wide audience, described their ascent.

We turn you now to the ship's radio station.

This is physicist Brandol reporting. We are now nearly ten miles high. In a few seconds the atomic rocket exhaust will be released, which

what a large amount of these particles , hitting the plutonium reactor might do to it. Even our atmosphere is being increasingly drenched with these particles. Photographic equipment may soon become useless, radio communications jammed, and power stations endangered. The human body may react in building up cancerous tissue, but that will take longer to develop than we have got time left to live.

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We turn you now to the ship's radio station.

This is physicist Brandel reporting. We are now nearly ten miles high. In a few seconds the atomic rocket exhaust will be released, which

will carry the ship with incredible speed beyond the gravity field of our planet. The exhaust can only be released at this height, otherwise atmospheric resistance would wreck the hull.

Wait a second, our technician says that the cosmic ray count inside the ship is higher than anticipated.

We are just releasing the exhaust, Here we go. 30 miles; 50 miles; 90 miles; Cosmic ray count going up rapidly. Nuclear reactor is near danger point. We will have to turn back. Difficult maneuver at such speed. Craft is slowly tilting to side for a turn. 290 miles up. We are turning back. Reactor at danger point. Too much radiation inside the ship. Still increasing. 150 miles. Count increasing. Increasing.

Suddenly, there was a blinding flash in the sky, and the crackling broadcast had stopped.

The announcer from the ground came on again. In a shaky voice he said a few words.

The space craft has exploded. The atomic reactor was hit by cosmic radiation, and an atomic fission burst seems to have occurred. We observed a bright flash of intense greenish light in the sky. We are now turning you over to the Capital Station.

---

Trembal had chosen his co-workers for the radar project. The Council also granted permission for the employment of a large labor force. The transmitter was to be erected near the observatory, on an escarpment below it, affording a minimum of wave interference, and a maximum of easy communications with the main building.

It was almost three months since the work had begun, and it was nearing completion. The scientists' minds, sent off to a large degree their own paths of intuition, had bloomed overnight into startling invention. The old concept of radar communications was outdated the moment they laid their hands on the blueprints. An imposing array of



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constructional monsters had been built, and a square mile area was dotted with installations.

That day, Trembal received a call from the capital which he had not anticipated. It was Timioara's voice.

Thank you for the reports you have been sending me. I would like to fly out today, and have a look at things. I won't stand in your way, or take your precious time, I just want to look.

You are welcome indeed. I will manage a few minutes to show you some of the more important installations, and I will introduce you to the workers who handle them.

She arrived a couple of hours later, and when her small helioplane had set down on the miniature airfield in front of the entrance, Trembal helped her to the floor.

I am immensely glad you came. She just smiled, and held out her hand. This looks like a giant's collection of toys. I can't wait to see it. Are you very busy?

He didn't answer. He just led her to a small railroad terminal, from where tiny cars were taking people round. After a steep ride down they busied themselves looking at all those strange machines.

---

The radio crackled as ever those last months, as they turned it on when they came back to Trembal's office.

Stand by, stand by : Armed bands have attacked Capital City; street fighting is raging. The garrisons of all neighboring provinces are ordered at once to converge on the city. Capital City Radio, we repeat : stand by, stand -

Trembal shut off the radio. Timioara was trembling, and there was a long interval of silence.

At last he took the telephone and dialled the transportation

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building.

You may want to talk to your brothers.

She took the receiver, and talked sparsely for a few minutes. Her face was pale. Suddenly the receiver clicked, and the connection could not be established again.

What's going on?

Part of the police has gone over to the mob. They are burning and plundering buildings. They shout : death to the Kings, and kill everybody in their path.

She started crying, and he went over to her and tried to soothe her.

You will stay here for a few days, till it is safe to go back. She was sobbing, and he left the room gently, closing the door behind him.

---

The Capital was burned to the ground, and the rule of the Kings was at an end. A Revolutionary Council was formed, and five representatives of each major trade were appointed to sit in.

The scientists' project was completely forgotten, and the workmen left the place one by one. The project was almost finished, and the scientists rolled up their sleeves to give it the final touches.

Timioara never heard again from her brothers. She made herself useful in the observatory, doing little services, and there was no question that it was impossible for her to leave the vicinity. Her royal blood had become dangerous, and only in the isolation of this project could she find a measure of safety. They had made up a little room for her, and Trembal let it be known that she was a new assistant of his.

At last their radar station was ready for broadcasting, and the technicians beamed their waves to three neighboring planets, using the international code system.

Icy silence greeted them. They switched to other planets, and

building.

You may want to talk to your brothers.

She took the receiver, and talked sparsely for a few minutes. Her face was pale. Suddenly the receiver clicked, and the connection could not be established again.

What's going on ?

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the sender was working continuously for a period of months.

At long last there was a message. As the receiver clicked, everybody present rushed to the tape, typing out the reply.

This is planet Paros. You are lucky to find me still alive. I am 92 years old, and the last scientist left on this planet. There are only 18 people left here, all over 90 years old. The situation on other planets is the same. Pro-creation has been halted by law 90 years ago in our inner star system. Your world may be the only exception. It is now only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years until doomsday. Unless you fools don't already know it. I must finish now. I am tired. Very tired. Good bye.

---

The scientists sent an appeal to the Revolutionary Council, asking for funds and fresh supplies. It was almost half a year now, since the rule of the Kings had been overthrown, and their station as well as all the other scientific installations on the planet were running out of everything. Sources of supply were virtually cut off, and their islands of learning as good as forgotten. Even schoolteaching had been halted as completely useless, and the youngsters, told to enjoy their life, were running wild. Only the essential services for food production were still managing to fill the demands of the population.

Trembal and Timioara were married. As there were no registrars to record marriages, the ceremony was carried out by fellow workers, and their bond was respected as legal by the community. For both of them the events were a blessing in disguise, since in old times she could, as a King's daughter, never have married a commoner. They were happy, and meant to use the short years ahead of them to their last breath.

Presently, three men arrived from the provisional capital. They were representatives of the Council, and looked a bit strange. All wore gray uniforms. Everybody outside wore them now, as a sign of equality.



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They were led into the conference room, and Trembal, with a number of co-workers received them. Their leader took the word.

You people are asking for supplies, even for funds. Something that has become very scarce nowadays. Now I have to ask you : of what use is this work you are doing here for the general population ?

First of all, Trembal said, we are working on ray-proof materials to protect our power stations until the last. Without this, they would blow up in less than a year from now, And I don't have to tell you what devastation and desolation would lie ahead of us. Secondly, we are working on poison capsules for the entire world population which, taken by mouth, will kill instantaneously, and spare all of us any unpleasantries that may be in store for us.

I will report this to the Council, Comrade Sarkas. Then, there is another matter I have to take up which is shedding a rather unfavorable light on your own establishment. It has been reliably reported to us that the daughter of the Transportation King escaped with her helioplane just before the revolution started. And this is the place she was proposed to go. Where is she, why was not her presence reported, and why was she not delivered to the Council for the good of the revolution ?

Trembal's face reddened. Comrade Frindal, that's your name, I understand ? If you are talking of my wife, you will be so kind as to drop the subject. Was this revolution made in order to chop off the heads of some kings' daughters or in order to make them our equals ? Kindly tell the Council that my wife is none of their business. And further let them have this: All work, engineering, maintenance, direction of communications, power supply, broadcasting and so on, will be stopped within 24 hours , if our demands are not met. We also demand the immediate resumption of the compulsory school system, re-employment of

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previous teachers, and the cessation of political persecutions.

With this he got up and walked briskly out of the room.

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The strike was on. There was not heat or light, transportation broke down, and there was barely any food. Stores were plundered and burned, and the police forces joined in or just vanished.

The Council tried to send forces against some of the redoubts of the scientists. Those that did get as far fell prey to their latest weapons of destruction - always so ingeniously contrived in short order by ingenious minds. There were controlled nuclear rays, electric shock waves, paralyzing concussion waves, vacuum bombs and circling rockets, spraying death. Faced with the chaos, the Council resigned.

At last, the revolution burned itself out. The scientists' technicians took over broadcasting, and order was restored under their guidance.

The months and years went by in peace until a few weeks before the great tragedy was to pass.

Suddenly, radar contact was established with moving objects, thousands of miles out in space.

Calling to land, calling to land! 8 ships, each 1500 feet in diameter, can land straight down with 5% margin of error. Direct calls to ships numbered from 1 to 8, direct each to landing site. We will circle around your planet until your arrangements are completed. Please, confirm message.

Various operators had picked up the message, and a plan was worked out in short time, giving these huge ships level spaces to land on.

The first one appeared slowly, and was directed to a landing near the site of the intra-terrestrial radar installations. The others were sent near other scientific establishments wherever the ground permitted.

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As Trembal was riding down the little railroad, the gigantic hull of the spacecraft dropped down slowly and safely. It was shaped like a flattened balloon, and its top was just high enough to appear over the escarpment, on a level with the observatory grounds.

They waited in front of the ship, more or less uncertain from where the beings inside would emerge, how they would look, behave, and what kind of language they might speak.

Then, on one side a square plate began to move slowly, slanting downwards, till it reached the floor. There were steps on it, and they were moving like an escalator. There appeared beings on it, and they seemed more or less human from a distance.

They met head on. It was a delegation of six men. They were a good two foot taller than average, their heads were completely bald and of enormous proportions. They talked to each other in a undiscernible language, but their leader had brought with him a wooden sounding instrument which he tapped with a metal stick in the international sound language.

He was politeness himself, apologizing for all the inconvenience caused. Trembal felt embarrassed, as he had no means of answering. He tapped with one finger on the other to show his lack of a medium. Immediately, the fellow handed him his wooden pipe with a slight bow, and Trembal invited them up to the observatory for further talks.

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We have come, said their leader, from far away. Our planet is the only one circling Mari; it is 18 times the diameter of your planet, and there live 60 billion people on it. At times we are in the cycle opposite Mirri, which is only a small dot on our horizon. Then we are able to pick up radar signals from the inner planet system, and, having deciphered those messages long ago, we have a working knowledge of your international radar signals.

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All these explanations were rapidly tapped out on a writer which Trembal had put in front of the men, and its transcript came ready typed from the machine.

We have come here on a mission. Our civilization is perhaps one of the most advanced the Universe has ever seen, and the impending catastrophe for our star system has been recognized by our ancestors tens of thousands of years ago. All our research and enterprise since then has gone into the task of destroying the all - devouring void, recognizing its nature, and build the means of its elimination.

In the ships we have brought here, we have built in powerful cyclotrons, able to create matter and focus it far out into space. We have landed such ships on five other planets, forming an ark opposite the void. By focussing our combined rays of a certain part of matter towards the void, we hope to wipe it out, and halt the inevitable.

Trembal made a sign that he wanted to speak, but the man tapped on.

Let me finish my story first. We have travelled a hundred years to reach your planet. Our families are on the ship, and we are the third generation since we left the planet.

We have chosen this line of attack, since it will save our world from disintegration after Mirri has been sucked up. Most of the planets of the inner star system will then explode and disintegrate from the initial shock of the disappearance of the gravitational pull.

We could not get past Mirri, because we could not build machines which could pull beyond his gravitational field. So we can not save Mirri. When Mirri disintegrates the cosmic particles flung out will be so powerful that our reactors would blow up in outer space. This is why we have to be stationed on planets with atmospheres which will be able to protect our ships. As I said, your planet will break up, so we will have to alight again and stay in the proximity of about 50 miles to avoid both evils.

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We have landed to ask you for fresh provisions, which we might not be able to get for another hundred years, provided there will ever be a trip back. As a gesture of good will we are ready to take with us a limited number of your people which you may select from your community. I have ended.

Trembal stared at the man, and his colleagues seemed as lost as he was. Are you aware that in order to save your planet you are endangering the rhythm of the whole Universe? Its very life? We do not call this the void, we call it the Creator. Without Him, the Universe dies, slowly, but just a flick of time in relation to its eons of epochs and myriads of galaxies.

We have had these arguments before. The excursion was condemned by the Cleric. Religion was against us, ethical societies were against us, and nearly everybody except scientists.

What do you mean by religion? I never heard the word. Our cult and prayers were destined for the Kings, but since their overthrow, we have not had any worshipping.

Well, ancestors of ours worshipped Marip. When they found out that there were more stars, and bigger ones than Mari, they worshipped the infinite Universe. Then, slowly a cult developed which prayed to something that could not be seen, heard or felt, and they called it God. Some of us believe in it, some don't. Everybody as he pleases.

But, is not this void as you call it, the real Godlike power in the Universe?

We hope to prove that it is not.

Let us then go to practical questions. Even, if we objected to your purposes, we must let you have your way. Resistance against your technical superiority would be useless anyway.

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It was one hour before the destruction of the world. the eight machines had taken off without a purr, and were hovering as tiny dots over their heads. They had taken on several hundred of the planet's population.

Trembal and his wife had declined the invitation, and they were now sitting on a bench in front of the observatory, looking at the sky, and looking at each other. They held their poison capsules ready, and they drew close together. A quiet satisfaction had overcome them that at last the end was close, and the fight finished. They had lived the last years exactly as they had planned, lived to a last climax.

The minutes were ticking away. Mirri was growing bigger. And bigger. He was now covering all the Eastern sky, and it was getting unbearably hot. They bit on their pills and breathed out their lives in each others' arms.

Mirri now looked purplish, tongues lashed out, the substance of his body was whirled around fantastically, and shrunk rapidly till the last sign of light had gone out of him. It became pitch dark, the mountain burst, and the power station blew up, accentuating a grizzly picture.

Up in the sky the eight circling dots erupted into hellish ball of fire. The Creator had defied the puny efforts of man as He had done since time immemorial.

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It was one hour before the destruction of the world. the eight machines had taken off without a purr, and were hovering as tiny dots over their heads. They had taken on several hundred of the planet's population.

Trembal and his wife had declined the invitation, and they were now sitting on a bench in front of the observatory, looking at the sky, and looking at each other. They held their poison capsules ready, and they drew close together. A quiet satisfaction had overcome them that at last the end was close, and the fight finished. They had lived the last years exactly as they had planned, lived to a last climax.

The minutes were ticking away. Mirri was growing bigger. And bigger. He was now covering all the Eastern sky, and it was getting unbearably hot. They bit on their pills and breathed out their lives in each others' arms.

Mirri now looked purplish, tongues lashed out, the substance of his body was whirled around fantastically, and shrunk rapidly till the last sign of light had gone out of him. It became pitch dark, the mountain burst, and the power station blew up, accentuating a grizzly picture.

Up in the sky the eight circling dots erupted into hellish ball of fire. The Creator had defied the puny efforts of man as He had done since time immemorial.

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We have landed to ask you for fresh provisions, which we might not be able to get for another hundred years, provided there will ever be a trip back. As a gesture of good will we are ready to take with us a limited number of your people which you may select from your community. I have ended.

Trembal stared at the man, and his colleagues seemed as lost as he was. Are you aware that in order to save your planet you are endangering the rhythm of the whole Universe? Its very life? We do not call this the void, we call it the Creator. Without Him, the Universe dies, slowly, but just a flick of time in relation to its eons of epochs and myriads of galaxies.

We have had these arguments before. The excursion was condemned by the Cleric. Religion was against us, ethical societies were against us, and nearly everybody except scientists.

What do you mean by religion? I never heard the word. Our cult and prayers were destined for the Kings, but since their overthrow, we have not had any worshipping.

Well, ancestors of ours worshipped Mari. When they found out that there were more stars, and bigger ones than Mari, they worshipped the infinite Universe. Then, slowly a cult developed which prayed to something that could not be seen, heard or felt, and they called it God. Some of us believe in it, some don't. Everybody as he pleases.

But, is not this void as you call it, the real Godlike power in the Universe?

We hope to prove that it is not.

Let us then go to practical questions. Even, if we objected to your purposes, we must let you have your way. Resistance against your technical superiority would be useless anyway.

---

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THE CREATOR

JULIUS BUCHWALD  
25-37, 83rd STREET,  
JACKSON HEIGHTS  
NEW YORK CITY

1

Modern science assumes that the Universe is expanding. It deducts this from the appearance of a region far out in space which seems to be approaching the speed of light.

Let us suppose that we are witnesses to what is going on beyond that region where our telescopic lenses cannot penetrate. It may well be that astronomers did not yet discover the real nature of this phenomenon.

Out there - we have a galaxy - or what's left of it, traveling an average of better than 98% the speed of light. There are within that galaxy two immense double stars, Mirri and Mari, revolving around each other every 30 years or so. Hundreds of planets are circling them, and between them are several hundred more located, following capricious courses, once nearing one sun, then the other. Several of the planets are inhabited by intelligent beings, and, for the sake of simplicity, let us suppose that these beings look and act like humans, and use terms of reference which we are used to.

---

The mailman in his characteristic uniform delivered the pile of letters to the observatory, and its youthful assistant director proceeded to open them. He wore a jacket with his scientific insignia.

None on this planet wore anything but uniform. The King of the Mails directed his army of mail clerks, and the King of Scientists ruled over engineers, mathematicians, astronomers and the like. These, and all the other kingdoms were hereditary, and the Council of Kings ruled the planet. The King of Scientists was a somewhat less important ruler; he had to be subsidized by the various kings of industry.

Trembal Sarkas studied carefully the letters and telegrams. He had sent out a secret questionnaire to other observatories, and most answers were on hand.

"..... Your observations fully confirmed. Believe best, keeping things to ourselves. Avoid creating panic. "

"..... Fully aware of danger. Doubtful, if facts can be concealed any longer. "

"..... Let the inevitable happen without creating a madhouse. "  
And on and on it went.

He took the pile and went to the director's study, who sat there deeply in thought, hardly taking any notice of Trembal's entrance.

He flung the letters on the desk.

I know what's in them. What can they say ? Let me think how we should break the news. We are in a delicate situation. We cannot hide the truth much longer from the people. But, we must take the matter to the Council first, and that needs the co-operation of our fellow scientists.

What then, if we invite the directors of the observatories for a preliminary talk?

Agreed. Set the date some day next week. And cable for the King's permission, I cannot do without it. Cable an urgent request, and then start to prepare for the meeting.

---

In the palace of the King of Transportation his young daughter Timioara played ball in the courtyard with her cousin Enardi, the son of the School King. Mirri and Mari were both high at the time, and it was really hot. There was rarely one day like the other on the planet. Daylight was present most of the time, and real night was experienced only for a few hours at long intervals. There was continuous Spring on the entire surface of this world. People fixed their sleeping and waking hours by an arbitrary time System, thought to be the most healthful for the human body.

Timioara played well today, and the two shadows her body created on the ball court were moving rapidly over the glaring surface.

It's getting too hot, said Enardi, a little subdued, let's turn in.

---

A picked group of astronomers and mathematicians faced the Council in secret session. Scientists were not allowed to follow any personal ambitions for discovery. This was a caste society, and everything had to be subordinated to the wishes of the Kings.

One of the astronomers took the dais.

Your eminent Highnesses ! We dared to approach you in a vital matter involving all of us. I will present the facts as we see and are able to interpret them, and leave the wisdom of decision to you Sirs.

Almost 500 years ago space travel was banned by the Council, and no foreign ships were allowed to land. May I prompt you to recall the reason for these measures ? News was then brought from sister planets which had a more advanced scientific establishment than ours that a disturbing development in our galaxy had developed. It was then observed that the speed of our star system had increased to 90% the velocity of light at an ever accelerating pace.

To save words, I have to tell the Assembly that we have now established beyond doubt that this speed has increased to almost 99%.

What does all that mean, asked the King of the Press ?

Your Royal Highness ! At 100% velocity matter disintegrates, that's the meaning. We are cut off from intelligence with other planets, but during the few hours of darkness our observatories discovered many more disturbing signs. Half of our galaxy has disappeared. Every star is headed in the same direction, just to vanish at a certain point in space. Opposite this point stars are coming towards us at almost twice the speed of light - that means - we are moving at each other at the same rate of speed. They are coming towards that station in space from all directions, and seem to be hurling themselves at this target for instant extinction.

To make a long story short. Within five years Mirri will be sucked up by this force, and our own world will follow suit just 25 minutes later.

With these words he sat down. The Council broke out into a tumultuous droning of voices. The small body of scientists sat in icy quiet and isolation.

Finally, the King of Police banged his gavel several times, till he had restored some semblance of order. He was the mightiest of them, and controlled 5 votes in their council. He recognized the Housing King as speaker though many hands were up in the air.

Has the chairman had any previous knowledge of this madness ? Why have we been summoned to listen to such phantastic thrash ?

The chairman banged his gavel again.

We are fully aware of what would be the forecast of the scientists. Gentlemen ! 500 years ago my ancestors eliminated traffic with other planets in our inner star system in order to avoid a panic of the general population which could only have led to the overthrow of our society. The scientists' forecasts are based on



facts, and the secret of all our impending extermination has been faithfully preserved in our family.

He banged his gavel again..... We have to accept facts. What we are here for is to discuss the matter, and vote on measures to meet the inevitable crisis during the next and last five years.

A deep silence had now settled over the 200 or so members of the Council. One stood up : May I ask the scientists, how all this vast conglomeration of stars can just simply vanish ?

The speaker got up again. He looked around , and took a deep breath. My Lords ! Everything I have to explain on this subject is speculative theory and hard to put into understandable language. We do not know all the answers, and we may be wrong in some assumptions. But the end result , as compounded before, will be the same : Extermination.

The Universe we regard as infinite, and it may once have been completely at rest. It was composed entirely of a thin, homogenous concentration of Hydrogen atoms, the lowest possible form of matter. It may have been so since time infinite, and for space infinite.

Matter as we know it by our senses, does not exist. If we compressed all the atoms of our planet so that they touched each other, they might not occupy more space than this building. If these atoms were completely smashed and their components again compressed to the touching point, they would probably represent not more than a pinhead. Electric forces, which we do not know, keep the parts of the atoms, and the atoms themselves at huge distances from each other, control their movements, and prevent them from exploding or collapsing.

Right at the point in space for which we are headed, a kind of blown fuse, or whatever it was, smashed one such Hydrogen atom. This atom became the creator of our whole living Universe. The released matter of that one atom was converted into a cosmic ray, exploded, hit neighboring atoms, and induced them to stream into the

gap, and these, for reason of the unexplained electrical disturbance, suffered the same fate. This process went on and on like a whirlpool. New cosmic rays thus developed, traveled with the velocity of light, radiating in all directions, creating upheavals in the Hydrogen pattern, whirlpools, and finally myriads of stars, billions of lightyears out in space. The rays are still traveling, and the Universe is growing bigger, almost with the speed of light, despite the sucking up movement, or what we call implosion, in its center.

This movement towards what I called the CREATOR converts the largest star masses instantaneously into cosmic ray, which we believe to be atom kerns, robbed of their electrical balances, and they are flung out into space again. The sections of the Universe which come nearer to it increase their speed progressively, until they reach the speed of light at the moment of impact. The process is infinite and irresistible. What the creator creates, it will once, in an ever widening space of time recall for more distant re-creation, and so forth. Everything emanates from him, and returns to him.

The speaker now proceeded to sit down again, when a voice was raised from the Council.

How about space travel? Can't we get away from this thing?

We may have a few machines still in storage. I don't know how serviceable or obsolete they are, since production of space craft has been prohibited for the last five centuries. But one thing is certain: No craft can be built which can escape the gravity belt of Mirri and Mari, and, by historic accounts, noone has ever reached any of the outer planets, to break through this barrier. And, even if that should happen, one would travel many years in a cramped space ship, fraught with hazards and inconvenience, in order to save 30 minutes of one's life.

Nobody motioned to speak, and the chairman rose. It is obvious that the news has upset the Council, and that it would be preferable to discuss matters of security at a later meeting. I again remind members that every word of this meeting is secret, and that anybody will find himself under arrest whose tongue should be loose. The scientists will be held in protective custody until we have come to a decision.

The meeting adjourned, and a flow of police was let into the chamber.

---

Trembal had been lodged in a house that was surrounded by red security police. The sergeant shared a room with him, as every scientist was kept under constant surveillance.

He was a rather chatty fellow, and bothered Trembal with many questions. It developed that he was a nature lover, and liked to look at the stars during the few short hours of darkness.

You know that familiar constellation of the Great Dog? I can't puzzle it out. The Dog's head has all disappeared, and I see other stars instead which I never saw before. Truthfully, I wasn't drunk. What do you astronomers say about it?

Trembal grunted something, and the sergeant looked peeved. You think I am not educated enough to be told how it happened? I have read every book on astronomy that has been permitted in the libraries.

I don't know, said Trembal. Something gone wrong, up there? Maybe... But the Dog's head was only 8 lightyears away from us. What if we disappear too? Into what hole should we fall? countered Trembal. Don't know... Don't know either, sergeant.

---

Meanwhile, the rumors were flying in the Capital. The general guess was: a plot by the scientists, to wrest control from the ruling clique. The Council's secret session, and their following detention could not remain unnoticed. Everybody talked only to his most intimate friends and relatives, as any political talk was forbidden and severely punished. Nevertheless, the news of the event went from mouth to mouth, and made the round all over town.

The Council of Kings had been established 1000 years ago, and no citizen had any doubt concerning their just and proper rule. The people didn't feel any limitations in their freedom of thought or action, because centuries of indoctrination had made them accept everything in life as given by the Kings. They didn't know themselves, that they were running the affairs of the world, and that their Kings were mere parasites. For them, they were the Gods on Earth, and everybody belonged to a particular god.

The scientists were almost forgotten men. The development of science had been halted 500 years ago, and what had been its resources and theories had to be retained forever. The planet managed with the discoveries of 500 years ago, and every sense of enterprise, research or improvement had been lost. This made science something to be learned from ancient books, and the students mere imitators of tradition, keeping machines running, checking data, copying blueprints and using formulas.

Considering the state of mind to which the population was conditioned, there was little sympathy to be found for them and their imagined cause. Everything, every day was going its smooth course, science was something out of the way, something to be frightened about.

---

That day, the planet's rulers went into the shadows of their own homes, and took counsel with their families. The facts shook every household. Gloom and indecision marked the deliberations. Noone would be spared, and the next best concern on the agenda was the prevention of a mass hysteria.

The King of Transportation was locked with his immediate family, his wife Terrar, his daughter Timioara, and his sons Tragarth and Tellum. His children ranged in age from Timioara's sweet 17 to Tellum's 23.

He had explained everything he knew about the events. All were downcast, unbelieving, trying to think. As ever in such crises they were remembering other things. Terrar saw herself when she took the oath of marriage, and her life flashed by without order or sequence. Timioara only saw the ball bouncing off the wall at all angles, and herself driving marvelous shots all the time. Tragarth felt a void in his body, and he tried again and again to muster his thoughts, and repress the alarming beat of his heart. Tellum, the Crown Prince, felt impulses and ideas overpowering him like a whirlwind. He tried to speak, but a sore feeling in his throat let only a snorting sound come out of his chest.

Take it easy son, we are all in the same boat. Terrar suddenly fell into hysterics, and her screams and tears made them gather around her, trying to calm her down. They laid her on a couch, and after a while she lapsed into state of semiconsciousness, broken infrequently by a few short sobs.

Is all this fixed and irrevocable, asked Tellum ?

They seem to be absolutely sure about it, replied the father.

Whoever may have asked that question about space travel, I have an idea about it. Couldn't we send a few ships to neighboring planets to find out what they know about the situation? They may be technically more advanced than we are. We still have about a dozen of the old machines in secret storage in the caves at Gollupi, and our engineers might be able to make some of them ready for a flight.

This might be a good idea, but it will not go unnoticed, and the population will slowly find out what's going on.

We ought to tell them by all means, instead of letting them find out, and tell them that we are making every effort to clarify our situation; hence the traveling to other planets, and that the cause of mankind is in good hands.

Why not tell them, said Tragarth, that the end is, say, seven years ahead instead of five. This would avoid a panic preceding the time of disaster.

---

Busy hands were clearing the caves at Gollupi. Ten monsters stood there in semi-darkness, and groups of engineers went from machine to machine to inspect their serviceability. They carried ancient textbooks on space travel, and examined the descriptions, comparing them to the real ships. The craft were covered with a heavy crust of lacquer-like preservative which showed cracks in many places. They picked one out that seemed to be in almost perfect condition, and, with the help of bulldozers it was wheeled into the open.

A large section of the surrounding country side was heavily fenced off, and a small army of security police protected the place and preserved order.

The people had been told in small doses of the expected disaster, and momentarily the terror stricken minds of the masses had been guided into their usual preoccupations, accepting with a dulled impulse of fatalism their doom. The space craft experiment had been widely publicised as a means for diversion.

The lacquer was peeled off, the machinery checked, instruments renewed, the hull reinforced, and ultimately an atomic furnace was placed in its predestined hold. This took several weeks, after which the craft made a slow cruise around the globe.

---

The day for the take off was at hand. Trembal accompanied his superior, the director of the observatory to the site. He had been chosen to attend the flight as astronomical expert. Various technicians, scientists, linguists and other personnel were to attend the journey, and the King of Transportation had insisted to go with them as head of his realm. His wife would not let him go alone either, so both of them were to undertake the journey.

There was a large gathering in front of the vehicle. Every member of the expedition was introduced to the King and Queen, who graciously greeted them. The King's family was there too, and his sons mingled with the scientists, asking endless questions.

The director introduced Trembal, explaining that he was to be his substitute in the observatory while he was away.

Yes, to make sure everything will be going smoothly, I have also appointed my eldest son as the temporary ruler of my Empire.

Tellem and Timicara stood just by, and she glanced shyly at Trembal. He had made his bow to the royal couple, and, looking up found himself staring straight into her wide open eyes, as she had slipped between her parents.

The observatory must be a wonderful place, she said. Seeing all the mysteries unraveled before one's eyes.

Your Grace : seeing is the last thing one does in the observatory. Photo lenses do most of the viewing for us, and much more correctly. Observation, comparison, deduction and prediction take most of our time in the form of mathematical problems fed to computers.

I would love to look through the telescopes, and to see all those mysterious calculations.

This can easily be arranged. If your grace will kindly telephone before your arrival, I will have everything prepared for your inspection. It might be equally interesting to observe periods of dead night, twilight, or of planetary interferences with our sun. I will keep you informed on any interesting events.

Thank you, I am looking forward to a visit. She smiled at him. In the interval her parents and the rest of the party had moved on. He offered her his arm. If you consent, I will guide you around this place. She accepted willingly. He explained to her this and that, and she nestled closely to him.

Do you think, this voyage may be dangerous ?

That is a difficult question to answer. According to past experience, the history of which you certainly are aware of, the hazards are small. Almost every ship that was built during the last 200 years of space travel got through to its destination. Yet, there are a couple of circumstances that may influence the efficiency of this machine. It is obviously five centuries old, and some defects may appear in the stress of the take off. There just wasn't time to build another ship. Then, there is the question of cosmic radiation. Normally, the special coating applied to ships would absorb nearly all of this radiation, making the ship's interior safe. We have doubled this coating, but we don't know how effective this guard will be now, when cosmic ray particles have increased enormously. We don't know



what a large amount of these particles , hitting the plutonium reactor might do to it. Even our atmosphere is being increasingly drenched with these particles. Photographic equipment may soon become useless, radio communications jammed, and power stations endangered. The human body may react in building up cancerous tissue, but that will take longer to develop than we have got time left to live.

She felt frightened once again. Do my parents know the hazards of this flight ?

They have been told, and they are taking the risk. Nothing much matters any more. It seems better to die dangerously , than to linger endlessly.

---

The time for the take off had almost arrived , and people began to board the craft. The director called Trembal.

If anything should go wrong, there is only one more thing that can be tried. He took from his bag one of those ancient books, one which Trembal had never seen. Its title read : Methods of radar contact and communication with other planets.

I never heard of that, said Trembal.

It was suppressed immediately after publication, and our experimental station dismantled. This book will tell you what to do. You will have all the assistance of the Council to build a new station.

I hope, I won't have to use it. Best of luck. They shook hands, and the director was the last one boarding the ship. The engines began a terrific noise, and the craft began to rise steadily and slowly until it was only a tiny speck over their heads.

The loudspeaker - which was hooked up to a world wide audience, described their ascent.

We turn you now to the ship's radio station.

This is physicist Brandol reporting. We are now nearly ten miles high. In a few seconds the atomic rocket exhaust will be released, which

will carry the ship with incredible speed beyond the gravity field of our planet. The exhaust can only be released at this height, otherwise atmospheric resistance would wreck the hull.

Wait a second, our technician says that the cosmic ray count inside the ship is higher than anticipated.

We are just releasing the exhaust, Here we go. 30 miles; 50 miles; 90 miles; Cosmic ray count going up rapidly. Nuclear reactor is near danger point. We will have to turn back. Difficult maneuver at such speed. Craft is slowly tilting to side for a turn. 290 miles up. We are turning back. Reactor at danger point. Too much radiation inside the ship. Still increasing. 150 miles. Count increasing. Increasing.

Suddenly, there was a blinding flash in the sky, and the crackling broadcast had stopped.

The announcer from the ground came on again. In a shaky voice he said a few words.

The space craft has exploded. The atomic reactor was hit by cosmic radiation, and an atomic fission burst seems to have occurred. We observed a bright flash of intense greenish light in the sky. We are now turning you over to the Capital Station.

---

Trembal had chosen his co-workers for the radar project. The Council also granted permission for the employment of a large labor force. The transmitter was to be erected near the observatory, on an escarpment below it, affording a minimum of wave interference, and a maximum of easy communications with the main building.

It was almost three months since the work had begun, and it was nearing completion. The scientists' minds, sent off to a large degree on their own paths of intuition, had bloomed overnight into startling creation. The old concept of radar communications was outdated the moment they laid their hands on the blueprints. An imposing array of

constructional monsters had been built, and a square mile area was dotted with installations.

That day, Trembal received a call from the capital which he had not anticipated. It was Timioara's voice.

Thank you for the reports you have been sending me. I would like to fly out today, and have a look at things. I won't stand in your way, or take your precious time, I just want to look.

You are welcome indeed. I will manage a few minutes to show you some of the more important installations, and I will introduce you to the workers who handle them.

She arrived a couple of hours later, and when her small helioplane had set down on the miniature airfield in front of the entrance, Trembal helped her to the floor.

I am immensely glad you came. She just smiled, and held out her hand. This looks like a giant's collection of toys. I can't wait to see it. Are you very busy?

He didn't answer. He just led her to a small railroad terminal, from where tiny cars were taking people round. After a steep ride down they busied themselves looking at all those strange machines.

---

The radio crackled as ever those last months, as they turned it on when they came back to Trembal's office.

Stand by, stand by : Armed bands have attacked Capital City; street fighting is raging. The garrisons of all neighboring provinces are ordered at once to converge on the city. Capital City Radio, we repeat : stand by, stand -

Trembal shut off the radio. Timioara was trembling, and there was a long interval of silence.

At last he took the telephone and dialled the transportation

the sender was working continuously for a period of months.

At long last there was a message. As the receiver clicked, everybody present rushed to the tape, typing out the reply.

This is planet Paros. You are lucky to find me still alive. I am 92 years old, and the last scientist left on this planet. There are only 18 people left here, all over 90 years old. The situation on other planets is the same. Pro-creation has been halted by law 90 years ago in our inner star system. Your world may be the only exception. It is now only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years until doomsday. Unless you fools don't already know it. I must finish now. I am tired. Very tired. Good bye.

---

The scientists sent an appeal to the Revolutionary Council, asking for funds and fresh supplies. It was almost half a year now, since the rule of the Kings had been overthrown, and their station as well as all the other scientific installations on the planet were running out of everything. Sources of supply were virtually cut off, and their islands of learning as good as forgotten. Even schoolteaching had been halted as completely useless, and the youngsters, told to enjoy their life, were running wild. Only the essential services for food production were still managing to fill the demands of the population.

Trembal and Timioara were married. As there were no registrars to record marriages, the ceremony was carried out by fellow workers, and their bond was respected as legal by the community. For both of them the events were a blessing in disguise, since in old times she could, as a King's daughter, never have married a commoner. They were happy, and meant to use the short years ahead of them to their last breath.

Presently, three men arrived from the provisional capital. They were representatives of the Council, and looked a bit strange. All wore gray uniforms. Everybody outside wore them now, as a sign of equality.

They were led into the conference room, and Trembal, with a number of co-workers received them. Their leader took the word.

You people are asking for supplies, even for funds. Something that has become very scarce nowadays. Now I have to ask you : of what use is this work you are doing here for the general population ?

First of all, Trembal said, we are working on ray-proof materials to protect our power stations until the last. Without this, they would blow up in less than a year from now, And I don't have to tell you what devastation and desolation would lie ahead of us. Secondly, we are working on poison capsules for the entire world population which, taken by mouth, will kill instantaneously, and spare all of us any unpleasanties that may be in store for us.

I will report this to the Council, Comrade Sarkas. Then, there is another matter I have to take up which is shedding a rather unfavorable light on your own establishment. It has been reliably reported to us that the daughter of the Transportation King escaped with her helioplane just before the revolution started. And this is the place she was proposed to go. Where is she, why was not her presence reported, and why was she not delivered to the Council for the good of the revolution ?

Trembal's face reddened. Comrade Frindal, that's your name, I understand ? If you are talking of my wife, you will be so kind as to drop the subject. Was this revolution made in order to chop off the heads of some kings' daughters or in order to make them our equals ? Kindly tell the Council that my wife is none of their business. And further let them have this: All work, engineering, maintenance, direction of communications, power supply, broadcasting and so on, will be stopped within 24 hours, if our demands are not met. We also demand the immediate resumption of the compulsory school system, re-employment of

previous teachers, and the cessation of political persecutions.

With this he got up and walked briskly out of the room.

---

The strike was on. There was not heat or light, transportation broke down, and there was barely any food. Stores were plundered and burned, and the police forces joined in or just vanished.

The Council tried to send forces against some of the redoubts of the scientists. Those that did get as far fell prey to their latest weapons of destruction - always so ingeniously contrived in short order by ingenious minds. There were controlled nuclear rays, electric shock waves, paralyzing concussion waves, vacuum bombs and circling rockets, spraying death. Faced with the chaos, the Council resigned.

At last, the revolution burned itself out. The scientists' technicians took over broadcasting, and order was restored under their guidance.

The months and years went by in peace until a few weeks before the great tragedy was to pass.

Suddenly, radar contact was established with moving objects, thousands of miles out in space.

Calling to land, calling to land! 8 ships, each 1500 feet in diameter, can land straight down with 5% margin of error. Direct calls to ships numbered from 1 to 8, direct each to landing site. We will circle around your planet until your arrangements are completed. Please, confirm message.

Various operators had picked up the message, and a plan was worked out in short time, giving these huge ships level spaces to land on.

The first one appeared slowly, and was directed to a landing near the site of the intra-terrestrial radar installations. The others were sent near other scientific establishments wherever the ground permitted.

As Trembal was riding down the little railroad, the gigantic hull of the spacecraft dropped down slowly and safely. It was shaped like a flattened balloon, and its top was just high enough to appear over the escarpment, on a level with the observatory grounds.

They waited in front of the ship, more or less uncertain from where the beings inside would emerge, how they would look, behave, and what kind of language they might speak.

Then, on one side a square plate began to move slowly, slanting downwards, till it reached the floor. There were steps on it, and they were moving like an escalator. There appeared beings on it, and they seemed more or less human from a distance.

They met head on. It was a delegation of six men. They were a good two foot taller than average, their heads were completely bald and of enormous proportions. They talked to each other in a undiscernible language, but their leader had brought with him a wooden sounding instrument which he tapped with a metal stick in the international sound language.

He was politeness himself, apologizing for all the inconvenience caused. Trembal felt embarrassed, as he had no means of answering. He tapped with one finger on the other to show his lack of a medium. Immediately, the fellow handed him his wooden pipe with a slight bow, and Trembal invited them up to the observatory for further talks.

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We have come, said their leader, from far away. Our planet is the only one circling Mari; it is 18 times the diameter of your planet, and there live 60 billion people on it. At times we are in the cycle opposite Mirri, which is only a small dot on our horizon. Then we are able to pick up radar signals from the inner planet system, and, having deciphered those messages long ago, we have a working knowledge of your international radar signals.

All these explanations were rapidly tapped out on a writer which Trembal had put in front of the men, and its transcript came ready typed from the machine.

We have come here on a mission. Our civilization is perhaps one of the most advanced the Universe has ever seen, and the impending catastrophe for our star system has been recognized by our ancestors tens of thousands of years ago. All our research and enterprise since then has gone into the task of destroying the all - devouring void, recognizing its nature, and build the means of its elimination.

In the ships we have brought here, we have built in powerful cyclotrons, able to create matter and focus it far out into space. We have landed such ships on five other planets, forming an ark opposite the void. By focussing our combined rays of a certain part of matter towards the void, we hope to wipe it out, and halt the inevitable.

Trembal made a sign that he wanted to speak, but the man tapped on.

Let me finish my story first. We have travelled a hundred years to reach your planet. Our families are on the ship, and we are the third generation since we left the planet.

We have chosen this line of attack, since it will save our world from disintegration after Mirri has been sucked up. Most of the planets of the inner star system will then explode and disintegrate from the initial shock of the disappearance of the gravitational pull.

We could not get past Mirri, because we could not build machines which could pull beyond his gravitational field. So we can not save Mirri. When Mirri disintegrates the cosmic particles flung out will be so powerful that our reactors would blow up in outer space. This is why we have to be stationed on planets with atmospheres which will be able to protect our ships. As I said, your planet will break up, so we will have to alight again and stay in the proximity of about 50 miles to avoid both evils.



We have landed to ask you for fresh provisions, which we might not be able to get for another hundred years, provided there will ever be a trip back. As a gesture of good will we are ready to take with us a limited number of your people which you may select from your community. I have ended.

Trembal stared at the man, and his colleagues seemed as lost as he was. Are you aware that in order to save your planet you are endangering the rhythm of the whole Universe? Its very life? We do not call this the void, we call it the Creator. Without Him, the Universe dies, slowly, but just a flick of time in relation to its eons of epochs and myriads of galaxies.

We have had these arguments before. The excursion was condemned by the Cleric. Religion was against us, ethical societies were against us, and nearly everybody except scientists.

What do you mean by religion? I never heard the word. Our cult and prayers were destined for the Kings, but since their overthrow, we have not had any worshipping.

Well, ancestors of ours worshipped Mari. When they found out that there were more stars, and bigger ones than Mari, they worshipped the infinite Universe. Then, slowly a cult developed which prayed to something that could not be seen, heard or felt, and they called it God. Some of us believe in it, some don't. Everybody as he pleases.

But, is not this void as you call it, the real Godlike power in the Universe?

We hope to prove that it is not.

Let us then go to practical questions. Even, if we objected to your purposes, we must let you have your way. Resistance against your technical superiority would be useless anyway.

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It was one hour before the destruction of the world. the eight machines had taken off without a purr, and were hovering as tiny dots over their heads. They had taken on several hundred of the planet's population.

Trembal and his wife had declined the invitation, and they were now sitting on a bench in front of the observatory, looking at the sky, and looking at each other. They held their poison capsules ready, and they drew close together. A quiet satisfaction had overcome them that at last the end was close, and the fight finished. They had lived the last years exactly as they had planned, lived to a last climax.

The minutes were ticking away. Mirri was growing bigger. And bigger. He was now covering all the Eastern sky, and it was getting unbearably hot. They bit on their pills and breathed out their lives in each others' arms.

Mirri now looked purplish, tongues lashed out, the substance of his body was whirled around fantastically, and shrunk rapidly till the last sign of light had gone out of him. It became pitch dark, the mountain burst, and the power station blew up, accentuating a grizzly picture.

Up in the sky the eight circling dots erupted into hellish ball of fire. The Creator had defied the puny efforts of man as He had done since time immemorial.

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