

IT was snowing again, blue this time. Pulcher paid the cab driver and ran up the steps of the courthouse. As he reached for the door, he caught sight of three air fish solemnly swimming around the corner of the building toward him. Even in his hurry, he paused to glance at them.

It was past three, but the judge had not yet entered the courtroom. There were no spectators, but the six defendants were already in their seats, a bailiff lounging next to them. Counsel's table was occupied by — Pulcher squinted — oh, by Donley. Pulcher knew the other lawyer slightly. He was a youngster, with good political connections — that explained the court's appointing him for the fee when Pulcher didn't show up — but without much to recommend him otherwise.

Madeleine Gaultry looked up as Pulcher approached, then looked away. One of the boys caught sight of him, scowled, whispered to the others. Their collective expressions were enough to sear his spirit.

Pulcher sat at the table beside Donley. "Hello. Mind if I join you?"

Donley twisted his head. "Oh, hello, Charley. Sure. I didn't expect to see you here." He laughed. "Say, that eye's pretty bad. I guess—"

He stopped.

Something happened in Donley's face. The soft young cheeks became harder, older, more worried-looking. Donley clamped his lips shut.

Pulcher was puzzled. "What's the matter? Are you wondering where I was?"

Donley said stiffly: "Well, you can't blame me for that."

"I couldn't help it, Donley. I was renting. I was trying to gather evidence — not that that helps much now. I found one thing out, though. Even a lawyer can goof in reading a contract. Did you know the Tourist Agency has the right to retain a body for up to forty-five days, regardless of the original agreement? It's in their contract. I was lucky, I guess. They only kept me an extra five."

Donley's face did not relax. "That's interesting," he said non-committally.

The man's attitude was most peculiar. Pulcher could understand being needled by Donley — could even understand this coldness if it had been from someone else — but it wasn't like Donley to take mere negligence so seriously.

But before he could try to pin down exactly what was wrong, the other lawyer stood up. "On your feet, Pulcher," he said in a stage whisper. "Here comes the judge!"

Pulcher jumped up.

He could feel Judge Pegrim's eyes rake over him. They scratched like diamond-tipped drills. In an ordinarily political, reasonably corrupt community, Judge Pegrim was one man who took his job seriously and expected the same from those around him.

"Mr. Pulcher," he purred, "We're honored to have you with us."

Pulcher began an explanation, but the judge waved it away. "Mr. Pulcher, you do know, don't you, that an attorney is an officer of the court? And, as such, is expected to know his duties — and to fulfill them?"

"Well, Your Honor, I thought I was fulfilling them. I—"

"I'll discuss it with you at another time, Mr. Pulcher," the judge said. "Right now we have a rather disagreeable task to get through. Bailiff! Let's get started."

Donley made a couple of routine motions, but there was no question about what would happen. It happened. Each of the defendants drew a ten-year sentence. The judge pronounced it distastefully, adjourned the court and left. He did not look at Milo Pulcher.

Pulcher tried for a moment to catch Madeleine's eye. Then he succeeded. Shaken, he turned away, bumping into Donley.

"I don't understand it," he mumbled.

"What don't you understand?"

"Well, don't you think that's a pretty stiff sentence?"

Donley shrugged. He wasn't very interested. Pulcher scanned the masklike young face. There was no sympathy there. It was weird in a way. This was a face of flint; the plight of six young people, each doomed to spend a decade of their lives in prison, did not move him at all.

Pulcher said dispiritedly: "I think I'll go see Dickon."

"Do that," said Donley curtly, and turned away.

**B**UT Pulcher couldn't find Dickon. He wasn't at his office, wasn't at the club.

"Nope," said the garrulous retired police lieutenant who was the club president — and used the club headquarters as a checker salon. "I haven't seen him in a couple of days. Be at the dinner tonight, though. You'll see him there."

It wasn't a question, whether Pulcher would be at the dinner or not; Pop Craig knew he would. After all, Dickon had passed the word out. *Everybody* would be there.

Pulcher went back to his apartment.

It was the first time he had surveyed his body since reclaiming it. The bathroom mirror told him that he had a gorgeous shiner indeed. Also certain twinges made

him strip and examine his back. It looked, he thought gloomily, staring over his shoulder into the mirror, as though whoever had rented his body had had a perfectly marvelous time. He made a mental note to get a complete checkup someday soon, just in case. Then he showered, shaved, talcumed around the black eye without much success, and dressed.

He sat down, poured himself a drink and promptly forgot it was there. Something was trying to reach the surface of his mind. Something perfectly obvious that he all the same couldn't quite put his finger on. It was annoying.

He found himself drowsily thinking of air fish.

Damn, he thought grouchy, his body's late tenant hadn't even troubled to give it a decent night's sleep! But he didn't want to sleep, not now. It was still only early evening. He supposed the Chester A. Arthur Day dinner was still a must, but there were hours yet before that.

He got up, poured the untasted drink into the sink and set out. There was one thing he could try to help Madeleine. It probably wouldn't work. But nothing else would either, so that was no reason for not trying it.

**T**HE mayor's mansion was ablaze with light; something was going on.

Pulcher trudged up the long, circling driveway in slush that kept splattering his ankles. He tapped gingerly on the door.

The butler took his name doubtfully and isolated Pulcher in a contagion-free sitting room while he went off to see if the mayor would care to admit such a person. He came back looking incredulous. The mayor would.

Mayor Swinburne was a healthy lean man of medium height, showing only by his thinning hair that he was in his middle forties.

Pulcher said: "Mr. Mayor, I guess you know who I am. I represent the six kids who were accused of kidnapping your son."

"Not accused, Mr. Pulcher. Convicted. And I didn't know you still represented them."

"I see you know the score. All right. Maybe, in a legal sense, I don't represent them any more. But I'd like to make some representations on their behalf to you tonight — entirely unofficially." He gave the mayor a crisply worded, brief outline of what had happened in the case, how he had rented, what he had found as a renter, why he had missed the hearing. "You see, sir, the Tourist Agency doesn't give its renters even ordinary courtesy. They're just bodies, nothing else. I can't blame those kids. Now that I've rented myself, I'll have to say that I wouldn't blame anybody who did *anything* to avoid it."

The mayor said dangerously: "Mr. Pulcher, I don't have to remind you that what's left of our economy depends heavily on the Tourist Agency for income. Also that some of our finest citizens are among its shareholders."

"Including yourself, Mr. Mayor. Right." Pulcher nodded. "But the management may not be reflecting your wishes. I'll go further. I think, sir, that every contract the Tourist Agency holds with a renter ought to be voided as against public policy. Renting out one's body for a purpose which well may be in violation of law — which, going by experience, nine times out of ten *does* involve a violation of law — is the same thing as contracting to perform any other illegal act. The contract simply cannot be enforced. The common law gives us a great many precedents on this point, and—"

"Please, Mr. Pulcher. I'm not a judge. If you feel so strongly, why not take it to court?"

**P**ULCHER sank back into his chair, deflated. "There isn't time," he admitted. "Besides, it's too late for that to help the six persons I'm interested in. They've already been driven into an even more illegal act in order to escape renting. I'm only trying to explain it to you, sir, because you are their only hope. You can pardon them."

The mayor's face turned beet

red. "Executive clemency from me — for *them*?"

"They didn't hurt your boy."

"No, they did not," the mayor agreed. "And I'm sure that Mrs. Gaultry, at least, would not willingly have done so. But can you say the same of the others? Could she have prevented it?" He stood up. "I'm sorry, Mr. Pulcher. The answer is no. Now you must excuse me."

Pulcher hesitated, then accepted the dismissal. There wasn't anything else to do.

He walked somberly down the hall toward the entrance, hardly noticing that guests were beginning to arrive. Apparently the mayor was offering cocktails to a select few. He recognized some of the faces — Lew Yoder, the county tax assessor for one; probably the mayor was having some of the white-collared politicians in for drinks before making the obligatory appearance at Dickon's fund-raising dinner. Pulcher looked up long enough to nod grayly at Yoder and walked on.

"Charley Dickon! What the devil are you doing here like that?"

Pulcher jerked upright. Dickon here? He looked around.

But Dickon was not in sight. Only Yoder was coming down the corridor toward him, was looking straight at him! And it had been Yoder's voice.

Yoder's face froze.

The expression on Yoder's face was a peculiar one, but not unfamiliar to Milo Pulcher. He had seen it once before, that day. It was the identical expression he had seen on the face of that young squirt who had replaced him in court, Donley.

Yoder said awkwardly: "Oh, Milo, it's you. I, uh, thought you were Charley Dickon."

Pulcher felt the hairs at the back of his neck tingle. Something was odd here. Very odd.

"It's a perfectly natural mistake," he said. "I'm six feet tall and Charley's five feet seven. I'm thirty-one years old and he's fifty. I'm dark and he's almost bald. I don't know how anybody ever tells us apart."

"What the devil are you talking about?" Yoder blustered.

Pulcher looked at him thoughtfully for a second. "I'm not sure. Are you?" Yoder spun and walked angrily away.

## V

**S**OME things never change.

Across the entrance to the New Metropolitan Cafe & Men's Grille, a long scarlet banner carried the words: **VOTE THE STRAIGHT TICKET!** Big poster portraits of the mayor and Committeeman Dickon flanked the door itself. A squat little sound truck parked outside the door blared ancient marches of the sort that political

conventions had suffered through for more than two centuries back on Earth.

It was an absolutely conventional political fund-raising dinner. It would have the absolutely conventional embalmed roast beef, the one conventionally free watery Manhattan at each place and the conventionally boring after-dinner speeches. (Except for one.)

Milo Pulcher, stamping about in the slush outside the entrance, looked up at the constellations visible from Altair Nine and wondered if those same stars were looking down on just such another thousand dinners all over the Galaxy. Politics went on wherever you were. The constellations would be different, to be sure; the Squirrel and the Nut were local stars and would have no shape at all from any other solar system. But . . .

He caught sight of the tall, thin figure he was waiting for and stepped out into the stream of small-time political workers, ignoring their greetings. "Judge. I'm glad you came."

Judge Pegrim said frostily: "I gave you my word, Milo. But you've got a lot to answer for if this is a false alarm. I don't ordinarily attend partisan political affairs."

"It isn't an ordinary affair, Judge."

Pulcher conducted him into the room and sat him at the table he had prepared. Once it had held

place cards for four election-board workers from the warehouse district, who now buzzed from table to table angrily; Pulcher had filched their cards.

The judge was grumbling: "It doesn't comport well with the bench to attend this sort of thing, Milo. I don't like it."

"I know, Judge. You're an honest man. That's why I wanted you here."

"Mmm."

Pulcher left him before the *Mmm* could develop into a question. He had fended off enough questions since the thoughtful half-hour he had spent pacing back and forth in front of the mayor's mansion. He didn't want to fend off any more. As he skirted the tables, heading for the private room where he had left his special guests, Dickon caught his arm.

"Hey, Milo! I see you got the judge out. Good boy! He's just what we needed to make this dinner complete."

"Complete—yes, I hope so," said Pulcher and went on. He didn't look back. There was another fine potential question-source; and the committeeman's would be even more difficult to answer than the judge's. Besides, he wanted to see Madeleine.

The girl and her five accomplices were where he had left them. The private bar where they were sitting was never used for affairs like this.

You couldn't see the floor from it. Still, you could hear well enough, and that was more important.

The boys were showing nervousness in their different ways. Although they had been convicted hardly more than a day, had been sentenced only a few hours, they had fallen quickly into the convict habit. Being out on bail so abruptly was a surprise. They hadn't expected it. It made them edgy. Young Foltis was jittering about to himself. The Hopgood boy was slumped despondently in a corner, blowing smoke rings. Jimmy Lasser was making a castle out of sugar cubes.

Only Madeleine was relaxed.

As Pulcher came in, she looked up calmly.

"Is everything all right?"

He crossed his fingers and nodded.

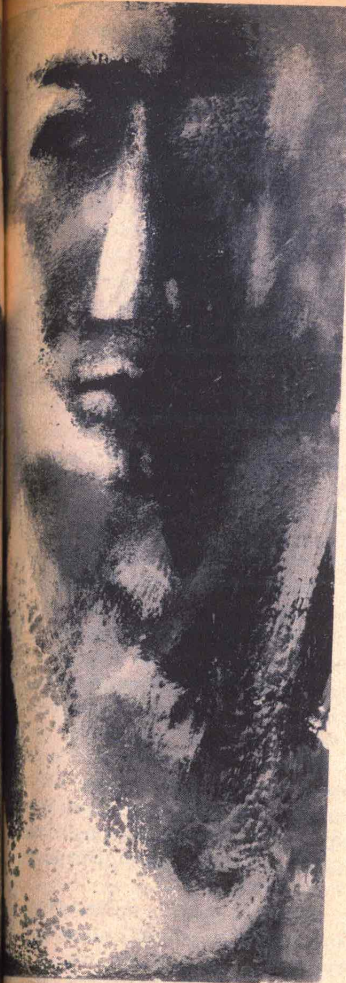
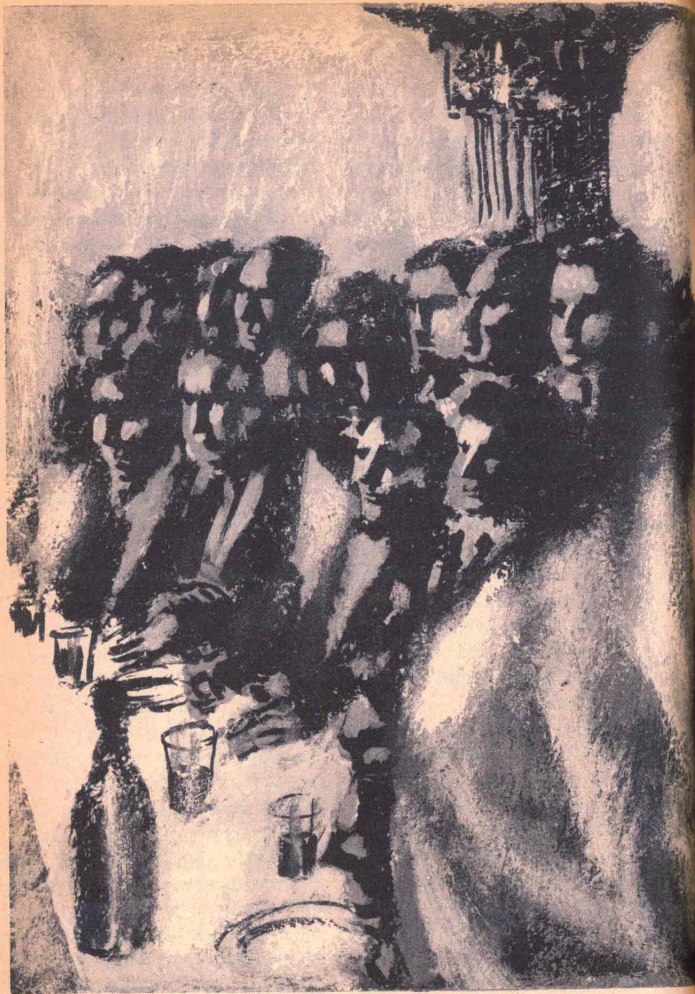
"Don't worry," she said.

Pulcher blinked. *Don't worry.* It should have been he who was saying that to her, not the other way around. It came to him that there was only one possible reason for her quiet confidence.

She trusted him.

**B**UT he couldn't stay. The ballroom was full now, and irritable banquet waiters were crashing plates down in front of the loyal Party workers. He had a couple of last-minute things to attend to. He carefully avoided the

THE DAY THE ICICLE WORKS CLOSED



eye of Judge Pegrim, militantly alone at the table by the speaker's dais and walked quickly across the room to Jimmy Lasser's father.

He said without preamble: "Do you want to help your son?"

Phil Lasser snarled: "You cheap shyster! You wouldn't even show up for the trial! Where do you get the nerve to ask me a question like that?"

"Shut up. Do you or don't you?"

Lasser hesitated, then read something in Pulcher's eyes. "Well, of course I do," he grumbled.

"Then tell me something. It won't sound important, but it is. How many rifles did you sell in the past year?"

Lasser looked puzzled, but he said. "Not many. Maybe half a dozen. Business is lousy all over, you know, since the Icicle Works closed."

"And in a normal year?"

"Oh, three or four hundred. It's a big tourist item. You see, they need cold-shot rifles for hunting the air fish. A regular bullet'll set them on fire—touches off the hydrogen. I'm the only sporting-goods merchant in town that carries them and — say, what does that have to do with Jimmy?"

Pulcher took a deep breath. "Stick around and you'll find out. Meanwhile, think about what you just told me. If rifles are a tourist item, why did closing the Icicle Works hurt your sales?"

He left.

But not quickly enough. Dickon scuttled over and clutched his arm, his face furious. "Milo, what the hell! I just heard from Sam Apfel — the bondsman — that you got that whole bunch out of jail again on bail. How come?"

"They're my clients."

"Don't give me that! How could you get them out when they're convicted, anyway?"

"I'm going to appeal the case," Pulcher said.

"You don't have a leg to stand on! Why would Pegrim grant bail?"

Pulcher pointed to Judge Pegrim's solitary table. "Ask him," he invited, and broke away.

He was burning a great many bridges behind him, he knew. It was an exhilarating feeling. Chancy but tingly; he decided he liked it. There was just one job to do. As soon as he was clear of the committeeman, he walked by a circular route to the dais. Dickon was walking back to his table, turned away from the dais; Pulcher's chance would never be better.

"Hello, Pop," he said.

Pop Craig looked up over his glasses. "Oh, Milo. I've been going over the list. You think I got everybody? Dickon wanted me to introduce all the block captains and anybody else important. You know anybody important that ain't on this list?"

"That's what I wanted to tell you, Pop. Dickon said for you to give me a few minutes. I want to say a few words."

Craig said agitatedly: "Aw, Milo, if you make a speech, they're all gonna want to make speeches! What do you want to make a speech for? You're no candidate."

Pulcher winked mysteriously. "What about next year?" he asked archly, with a lying inference.

"Oh. Oh-ho." Pop Craig nodded and returned to his list, mumbling. "Well. In *that* case, I guess I can fit you in after the block captains, or maybe after the man from the Sheriff's office—"

But Pulcher wasn't listening. He was already on his way back to the little private bar.

MAN had conquered all of space within nearly fifty light-years of dull, yellow old Sol, but out in that main ballroom political hacks were talking of long-dead heads of almost forgotten countries centuries in the past. Pulcher was content to listen — to allow the sounds to vibrate his eardrums, at least, for the words made little sense to him. If, indeed, there was any content of sense to a political speech in the first place. But they were soothing.

Also they kept his six fledglings from bothering him with questions. Madeleine sat quietly by his shoulder, quite relaxed still and

smelling faintly, pleasantly, of some floral aroma. It was, all in all, as pleasant a place to be as Pulcher could remember in his recent past. It was too bad that he would have to go out of it soon.

Very soon.

The Featured Guest had droned through his platitudes. The Visiting Celebrities had said their few words each.

Pop Craig's voluminous old voice took over again. "And now I want to introduce some of the fine Party workers from our local districts. There's Keith Ciccarelli from the Hillside area. Keith, stand up and take a bow!" Dutiful applause. "And here's Mary Beth Whitehurst, head of the Women's Club from Riverview!" Dutiful applause — and a whistle. Surely the whistle was sardonic; Mary Beth was fat and would never again see fifty. There were more names.

Pulcher felt it coming. He was on his way to the dais even before Craig droned out: "That fine young attorney and loyal Party man — the kind of young fellow our Party needs — Milo Pulcher!"

Dutiful applause again. That was habit, but Pulcher felt the whispering question that fluttered around the room.

He didn't give the question a chance to grow. He glanced once at the five hundred loyal Party faces staring up at him and began to speak.

"Mr. President. Mr. Mayor. Justice Pegrim. Honored Guests. Ladies and gentlemen." That was protocol. He paused. "What I have to say to you tonight is in the way of a compliment. It's a surprise for an old friend, sitting right here. That old friend is — Charles Dickon." He threw the name at them. It was a special political sort of delivery, a tone of voice that commanded: *Clap now*.

They clapped. That was important, because it made it difficult for Charley to think of an excuse to interrupt him — as soon as Charley realized he ought to, which would be shortly.

"Way out here, on the bleak frontier of interstellar space, we live isolated lives, ladies and gentlemen."

There were whispers; he could hear them. The words were more or less right, but he didn't have the right political accent; the audience knew there was something wrong. The true politician would have said: *This fine, growing frontier in the midst of interstellar space's greatest constellations*. He couldn't help it; he would have to rely on velocity now to get him through.

"How isolated, we sometimes need to reflect. We have trade relations through the Icicle Works — now closed. We have tourists in both directions, through the Tourist Agency. We have ultra-wave messages — also through

the Tourist Agency. And that's about all.

"That's a very thin link, ladies and gentlemen. *Very thin.* And I'm here to tell you tonight that it would be even thinner if it weren't for my old friend there — yes, Committeeman Charley Dickon"

**H**E punched the name again and got the applause — but it was puzzled and died away early.

"The fact of the matter, ladies and gentlemen, is that just about every tourist that's come to Altair Nine this past year is the personal responsibility of Charley Dickon. Who have these tourists been? They haven't been businessmen — there's no business. They haven't been hunters — ask Phil Lasser over there; he hasn't sold enough fishing equipment to put in your eye. Ask yourselves, for that matter. How many of you have seen air fish right over the city? Do you know why? Because they aren't being hunted any more! There aren't any tourists to hunt them."

The time had come to give it to them straight. "The fact of the matter, ladies and gentlemen, is that the tourists we've had haven't been tourists at all. They've been from right here on Altair Nine. Some of them are in this room! I know that because I rented myself for a few days — and do you know who took my body? Why, Charley Dickon did. Charley

Dickon himself rented my body!"

He was watching Lew Yoder out of the corner of his eye. The assessor's face turned gray; he seemed to shrink. Pulcher enjoyed the sight, though he had a certain debt to Lew Yoder; it was Yoder's slip of the tongue that had finally started him thinking on the right track.

He went on hastily: "And what it all adds up to, ladies and gentlemen, is that Charley Dickon and a handful of his friends in high places — most of them right here in this room — have cut off communication between Altair Nine and the rest of the Galaxy!"

There were yells, and the loudest yell came from Charley Dickon. "Throw him out! Arrest him! Craig, get the sergeant-at-arms! I don't have to sit here and listen to this maniac!"

"*And I say you do!*" said the cold courtroom voice of Judge Pegrin. The judge stood up. "Go on, Pulcher!" he ordered. "I came here tonight to hear what you have to say. It may be wrong. It may be right. I propose to hear all of it before I make up my mind."

Thank heaven for the cold old judge! Pulcher cut right in before Dickon could find a new point of attack; there wasn't much left to say anyway. "The story is simple, ladies and gentlemen. The Icicle Works was the most profitable corporation in the Galaxy. We all

know that. Probably everybody in this room had shares of stock. Dickon had plenty.

"But he wanted more. And he didn't want to pay for them. So he used his connection with the Tourist Agency to cut off communication between Nine and the rest of the Galaxy. He spread the word that Altamycin was worthless now because some fictitious character had invented a cheap new substitute. He closed down the Icicle Works. And for the last twelve months he's been picking up stock for a penny on the dollar, while the rest of us starve and the Altamycin that the rest of the Galaxy needs stays right here on Altair Nine and—"

He stopped, not because he had run out of words but because no one could hear them any longer. The noises the crowd was making were no longer puzzled, they were ferocious. It figured. Apart from Dickon's immediate gang of manipulators, there was hardly a man in the room who hadn't taken a serious loss in the past year from the collapse of the Works.

It was time for the police to come rushing in, as per the phone call Judge Pegrin had made, protestingly, when Pulcher urged him to attend the dinner. They did — barely in time. They weren't needed to arrest Dickon so much as keeping him from being lynched.

**M**UCH later, escorting Madeleine home, Milo was still bubbling over. "I was worried about the mayor! I couldn't make up my mind whether he was in it with Dickon or not. I'm glad he wasn't, because he said he owed me a favor, and I told him how he could pay it. Executive clemency. The six of you will be free in the morning."

Madeleine said sleepily: "I'm free enough now."

"And the Tourist Agency won't be able to enforce those rental contracts any more. I talked it over with Judge — Madeleine, you're not listening."

She yawned apologetically. "It's been an exhausting day, Milo. Anyway, you can tell me all about it later. We'll have plenty of time."

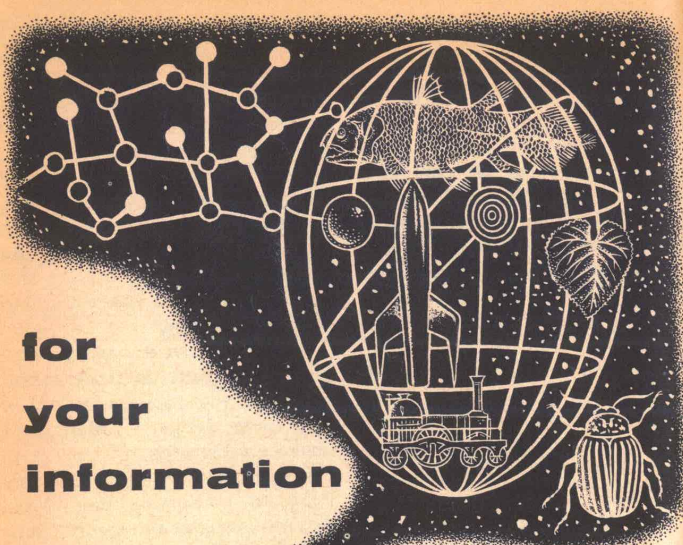
"Years and years," he promised.

He stopped talking. Peeking over his shoulder at them, the cab driver grinned sentimentally. Youth, he thought. Love. He stiffened, slammed on the brakes, leaped out and raced shouting to a cab rank, where a machine-driven cab stood with its motor quaking.

It seemed like no time before there were a dozen human drivers threatening the machine, and the racket of their retribution was deafening, but Madeleine never noticed. And neither did the happiest man on Altair Nine.

— FREDERIK POHL

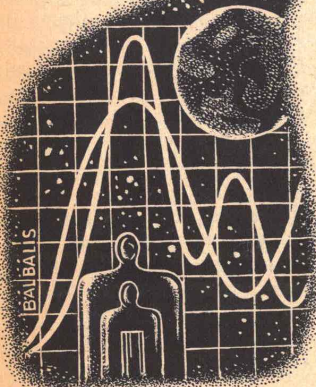
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BY WILLY LEY

ONE PLANET, ONE LANGUAGE

**I** REMEMBER a time in the history of science fiction when it was taken for granted that in the near future the United Peoples of Earth would all talk one language. More, since all Earthmen would speak the same language, they would spread it through the Galaxy, or at least through our solar system. Maybe the Martian villains still whispered to each other in "low Martian" (again the same assumption: all Mars would speak one language), but when it came



to discussing business with Earthmen and Venusians, they all spoke the Earthman's language.

Of course there is no "Earth language," but many people still feel that it would be nice if there were. And some wonder whether there will be. Well, if past history is any guide, the answer is a resounding no. Even if past history had been different, the answer would still be no.

Let us take the Roman Empire as an example. From the north shore of Africa to the *Limes* in West Germany and to the "Wall" in England, there was (approximately) one set of laws. There was one system of measurements. The silver denarius and the gold solidus were accepted all over and bought the same goods everywhere, except that the big cities were naturally somewhat more expensive to live in. One empire, one law, one system of weights and measures, one coinage. If they had progressed to postage stamps, then it would also have been the same. But one language? Don't be silly.

The Egyptians spoke Egyptian and the Greeks spoke Greek. Palestine spoke Hebrew and Aramaic. The Germanic tribes growled their own dialects, and while I don't know what was spoken on the Iberian peninsula, I am certain that it was not Latin. The upper crust of the Empire, in Rome itself, spoke *-Greek!* After all, one couldn't just

talk Latin like any gladiator in the arena!

**M**AYBE it is the example of the Roman Empire that gave us a poor start. But what might have happened if the Roman Empire had continued? Chances are that the number of spoken languages would not have decreased. But all printed matter, all written language, would have been reduced not to one, but to two, Latin and Greek, in the confines of that imaginary continued Roman Empire. There would have been no reason for the Chinese to give up their own language(s) and switch to Latin and Greek, which probably would have seemed insipid and lacking in flavor to them.

India would not have converted either.

The only later empire which could match the Roman Imperium in area was the one inefficiently ruled by the Czar of all the Russias. All the Russians spoke Russian, to be sure, but that does not mean that the Russian Empire did. To begin with, the Ukrainians had their own version of Russian which, in their opinion, was far superior. The Polish section of the Russian Empire spoke Polish. The Caucasus had its own language. And virtually every place else. And in the capital of the empire, St. Petersburg, you did not climb very high if, in addition to impeccable Rus-

sian (with St. Petersburg pronunciation, substituting a "V" for an "L" whenever possible), you did not speak equally impeccable French and German.

But now times have changed. People travel more. We have rapid communications. And all of the North American continent speaks the same language with the exception of Mexico and the French section of Canada, comparatively small areas compared to the whole.

Correct.

I am the first to acknowledge that this is so. But that is no reason for "extrapolating" an English-speaking Earth. At this moment probably more people speak English than speak Russian, but both together do not even match the number of people who speak Chinese.

And in spite of much and easy travel and rapid communications, the number of languages has actually *increased*. Maybe it would have been easier for the Republic of Eire to continue to speak English. For strong psychological reasons, they elected not to do so. Weird as it may sound, if "simplicity" alone counted, the language of Israel should be German. Many thousands of the immigrants spoke German since birth and many thousands more spoke the closely related Yiddish. But obviously the adoption of German as the official language was an im-

possibility for Israel, and Hebrew is now back as a living tongue.

At this point somebody is likely to repeat a reasoning that has been offered before. People are evidently reluctant to give up their own language in favor of somebody else's. There should be no such psychological objection to a language which is not somebody else's language, though, but one which has been constructed for the purpose.

**J. M. SCHLEYER** thought so in 1880 and published a "universal language" called Volapük. It died around 1890. In 1897 L.L. Zamenhof published another one called Esperanto. Twenty years later Louis de Beaufront published an improved version of Esperanto which was called Ido. Of these early attempts — no Esperantist would admit, of course, that Ido was an "improved" Esperanto — only Esperanto had some success. The Esperantists themselves say that it is spoken by 1,500,000 people.

If I suddenly announced at home that I was going to learn Finnish, my wife would probably inform me that good translations of the *Kalevala* into other languages are available. Some of my friends would either keep politely quiet or point out that educated Finns are likely to speak German, English, French or Russian. But if I did

learn Finnish, I could still talk to three times as many people than if I learned Esperanto. (Besides, most of them can probably speak something else that I can understand.)

To put it plainly and simply (and at the risk of making a few enemies), artificial languages do not work. Some twenty years ago I started reading a journal in Esperanto. I could not finish it; it looked and sounded too silly. Very recently I thought that linguistics, like any other science, must certainly have advanced since 1887 and maybe one of the more recent creations in this field would be better.

I read through the "vocabulary" of Basic English. If I had to express myself in that vocabulary, I'd be a wreck because of frustration. (After that, using Basic English, I could not even say that I was a wreck. That word is missing as unimportant.) Ah, now, maybe I'm just prejudiced. We have, for scientific purposes, the new creation of Interlingua which is advertised as follows: "You can read *Interlingua* if you had no more than one semester of high school French or Spanish or Latin and flunked it." After due consideration I would reword this as reading that you can read *Interlingua* **ONLY** if you flunked. If you didn't you get a toothache first.

Let me prove that. In an issue of

*Science News Letter* which is lying around on my desk there is one page of *Interlingua*. It begins with a section on *Physica Atomica*. My eyes already hurt. If you have *Physica* it is darned obvious that the second word must be *Atomica*. But no, adding this esthetically necessary "a" would be "grammar" and that is supposed to frighten people. Another paragraph begins with the words *Le oceanos es vaste reservoirs . . .* and my eye is immediately insulted by having what is decidedly a singular article in front of a word which is just as decidedly a plural.

Yes, English does well without having a plural article (and Latin and Russian manage without any articles), but why pick the one which everybody knows as the French masculine singular article? Why not one which is neutral-looking, if the introduction of a plural article is deemed too much?

Then I read *Le Statos Unite ha sex submarinos atomic in servicio e 27 alteres in preparation*.

This is not a language — this is hash! If the six are in *servicio*, why aren't the other 27 in *preparatio*?

**I KNOW** that the very name "United States" offers certain linguistic problems, because if we want to say that something is of or belongs to the United States, we have to say that it is "American." And there are, geographically



speaking, many "Americans" who are not of the United States. But I find this problem, misleading as it might be under certain conditions, superior to the Interlingua "solution" of talking about the U.S. Academy of Sciences as the — believe it or not — *statounitese Academia National de Scientia*.

Since artificial languages are likely to be repulsive to the linguist and won't be learned by those who are not, the artificial language is obviously no answer at all. It cannot compete with a real language, which may have some difficulties but makes up for them in tradition and versatility and the fact that it is alive. A marble statue of Miss Universe cannot compete with the living original.

Well, we cannot all agree on somebody else's living language and cannot possibly construct a satisfactory artificial language, so how about a dead language? With nobody actually speaking Latin nowadays, nobody can have feelings of jealousy or envy, not for nationalistic reasons and not for the reason once stated by an Austrian diplomat to his Russian mistress: "You should thank God every morning that you grew up speaking Russian — you don't have to learn it."

The only candidate would be Latin, since Greek, which might otherwise compete, has a different alphabet. And for many centuries

Latin came close to being what is called an "international language," one used by many people in many nations. I have often wondered why Latin came into disuse; it was such a simple expedient for international science.

The answer, given by an English linguist and philosopher whose name I can't remember right now, is that Latin, even when it was in international use, was just a "male" language.

The man who had just finished writing a long letter in Latin to a colleague in another country would ask his wife in Dutch, French, German or English what they would have for supper or whether the tailor had delivered his new cloak. Likewise he would speak to his children (at least to his daughters) in their "native" tongue. In other words, Latin, while it was in international use, but was no longer spoken by a people, had acquired a certain artificiality. It lacked the flaws of the constructed languages, yet it was not one in which you would argue with your wife about the grocery bill.

Well, what's the answer?

I don't think there is one. English is doing fine as an "international language" nowadays, and is probably doing better than its political competitor, Russian, because the latter has the handicap of an alphabet of its own. But English will not replace any other language.

It can only be a secondary means of international communication.

Nobody will ever speak "Ter-ran." even when on Mars.

#### THE EXTINCTION OF THE DINOSAURS

THE question of why the dinosaurs finally became extinct, after having been the ruling group of animal life on Earth for more than a hundred million years, is about as perennial a question as the one about the cause of the Ice Age.

Unfortunately there is no simple answer, at least not an answer of the type which might be written on the back of a postage stamp. It is very much a case like that of the downfall of the Roman Empire — no single cause can be found, but you can easily write 500 pages on the various causes and reasons which for once worked in the same direction, instead of canceling each other out.

For certain types of dinosaurs and other large reptiles of the past — I hope you remember from a former column that not every big reptile which ever lived was a dinosaur — the reasons have been known for quite some time. The marine reptiles, for example, which are collectively called ichthyosaurs, gradually shed their teeth; the customary explanation is that their main food was, or became, soft octopi, and that the ichthyosaurs, in order

to obtain their food, needed speed rather than armament. But then other large marine animals came into existence — the mosasaurians, the ancestors of the whales of today, and several gigantic sharks — which were big, hungry, well-toothed and presumably fast enough to take off after the ichthyosaurs.

The extinction of some types of land-dwelling dinosaurs has been blamed on other much smaller saurians who made a diet of the eggs of the bigger ones. Finally there is the rather generally accepted theory of the "heat death."

Reptiles can stand cold weather fairly well, much better than the layman is likely to believe. The worst that cold will normally do to a reptile is immobilize it. But since reptiles have no sweat glands, they overheat easily and literally die of heat stroke. The desert reptiles of today are forever burrowing in the sand or else seeking cracks in the rocks. If there is enough water around, they simply stay in the water, like any contemporary alligator.

Applied to the dinosaurs, this theory of the "heat death" makes the Sun responsible for the extinction of just the largest types. They lived in shallow waters of endless marshes and swamps. They moved around in forests. If something happened that drained the swamps or the forests died of drought, the