THEY TOLD ME TO EXPECT THE WORST — TO IMAGINE THE MOST HORRIBLE CARNAGE I COULD CONCEIVE OF — THEN SQUARE IT!

BUT THIS — THIS WAS SO MUCH WORSE THAN ANYTHING I COULD HAVE VISUALIZED! NOTHING HAD CHANGED! THE STREETS WERE THE SAME — THE HOUSES — THE TREES...

ALMOST I COULD IMAGINE WHEN I TURNED THE CORNER, THERE WOULD BE MOM AND DAD SITTING ON THE VERANDA, DAVID WAITING PATIENTLY NEAR BY, DEAR OLD GABRIEL BOUNDING OUT TO MEET ME — JUST A NORMAL A NORMAL...
THEN CAME THE ACTUAL WORST PART: TURNING THAT CORNER AND DRAWING TO A HALT BEFORE MY PARENT'S HOUSE – THE SAME HOUSE I HAD LEFT TEN YEARS AGO...


HOW LONG DID I STAND THERE, AFRAID TO ENTER – AFRAID TO SHATTER THE DREAM? I DO NOT KNOW.

BUT WHEN NEXT I BECAME AWARE OF MY SURROUNDINGS, THE VERANDA DOOR HAD MELTED TO MY KEY...

...AND I STOOD IN THE MIDST OF MEMORIES MADE SUDDENLY REAL – THE FRONT PORCH, THE FLOORS AND WINDOWS CLEAN, THE WOOD POLISHED.

EVEN MY FATHER'S Balsa-Wood Ship Model, Standing Unfinished As It Had For As Long As I Could Remember.

THE INNER DOOR, AS EVER, WAS UNLOCKED. SWALLOWING BACK A SUDDENLY DISPLACED HEART, I ENTERED...
_safe enough to get out of my suit in a few minutes— but I think I'll check out this floor first.

_ding my best to ignore the flood of memories evoked by every thing around me, I made my way to the rear of the house.

_and a sudden whirr of hidden machinery, plus the swift appearance of a gleaming metallic shape, confirmed my guess…

_The house was still fully operational…

_JOB AT HAND? DON'T GET LOST IN MOONING! RADIATION CHECK.

NO! MUSTN'T EVEN THINK IT! HE COULDN'T HAVE TURNED ON US! NOT HIM! NOT OUR DAVID.

SAFELY INTO THE GREEN

WHERE I FOUND A PLACE HAD BEEN SET FOR ME AT THE KITCHEN TABLE...

WHAT...?

DON'T TELL ME THE SERVO-BOTS ARE STILL ACTIVE...?

CLUMSY IN MY HEAVY RADIATION SUIT GLOVES MY HAND, REACHING FOR THE POWER SWITCH, KNOCKING A VASE FLYING~
ALL ALONE! HOW MANY PEOPLE USE
-USED- THAT PHRASE WITH NO REAL
UNDERSTANDING. WATCHING THE
"GOT REMOVE THE TRACKS OF MY
CLUMSINESS," I UNDERSTOOD...

OUTSIDE THE GARDEN WAS IMMACULATE,
AS ALWAYS, CONJURING IMAGES OF SUMMER
DRESSES, LEMONADE IN THE SHADE, NITES
DANCING OVERHEAD. MY MOTHER SMUSHING
MY FATHER AS HE CURSED A STUBBORN FAN...

MEMORIES OF A LIFE
I LEFT BEHIND FULY
A DECADE AGO...

ONE OF MY WORST FEARs
AT LEAST, WAS NOT THEN
REALIZED....

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM I PONDERED
AS I REMOVED MY CLUMSINESS
HELMET, A PRECURSOR TO HEADING
UPSTAIRS. PONDERED WHAT WAS
FAST BECOMING A FIRST-CLASS
MYSTERY. THE RENEGADES WOULD
NOT HAVE HURT DAVID, BUT,
WHERE WAS HE?

PLS, IF GABRIEL WAS NOT IN HIS
RENNEL, POSSIBLY HE WAS
STILL ALIVE. IF SO, MIGHT NOT
MY PARENTS BE, TOO? BUT,
IF THAT WAS SO, THEN
WHERE WERE THEY?

GABRIEL

GABRIEL'S POOL HOUSE
YAWED AS EMPTY AS
MY HEART....

UPSTAIRS, PAUSING AGAIN
TO MEET ANOTHER FLOOD
OF MEMORIES... THAT
SHORT, DIM-LIT HALLWAY,
DAVID'S ROOM "AT THE
FAR END....

THEN I NOTICED THERE WAS
SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT
THE DOOR TO MY PARENTS'
BEDROOM...
Tape! Heavy surgical tape all around the seams of the door, effectively sealing the room! Not only that, but deep, clearly canine scratches, painted over of course, by the Rottweiler's coat, but still discernable...

Half in fear of what I might find, I set about carefully peeling away the tape...

...and there were my parents, lying nestle in each other's arms, in the cool obscurity of the darkened room.

I managed almost forty seconds before the fetor of that room overcame me.

They had been lying there...

...for more than a year...
WELL, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE RELIEVED ALL THAT'S OUT OF MY SYSTEM. IT'S BEEN BUILDING UP FOR A LONG TIME.

MIGHT AS WELL GET OUT OF MY SUIT NOW, FOR THAT MATTER, WHAT RADIOACTIVITY I BROUGHT IN WITH ME SHOULD HAVE DISSIPATED.

AND THERE'S NO REASON TO ASSUME ANYTHING ELSE IS DANGEROUS, HERE.

I'LL FINISH CHECKING THE HOUSE, THEN...

WELL—CROSS THAT BRIDGE SOON ENOUGH.

MY MIRROR...

NOT THE FIRST TIME IN ALL THESE YEARS THAT I HAD SLEPT AT MY REFLECTION, CERTAINLY!

YET, IN THOSE FAMILIAR, REMEMBERED SURROUNDINGS, HOW STRANGELY ALIEN MY OWN FEATURES SEEMED!

WHAT HAD BEEN MY ROOM NOW JUST AN ROOM LEFT IT...

AN EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL HAD JUST GLANCED INTO THAT GLASS: YOUNG AND NAIVE, AND NOW BEYOND THE SUPERFICIALITY OF THE ADDED YEARS. BEYOND THE OBVIOUS MATURITY. A... A LONGING.

AND I WEPT THEN, LONG AND PAINFULLY AS THE FULL IMPACT OF THAT SANK HOME AT LAST.
COME ON, YOU CLOTS! OPEN UP!

I'VE BEEN ON MY OWN FOR WEEKS! EVEN SMITTY'S UGLY MUG WOULD BE WELCOME!

NOTHING! OKAY, ANDREA MY GIRL, DOPE IT OUT. WHY DON'T THEY ANSWER? NO WAY THEY'RE NOT RECEIVING.

NOT AT THIS RANGE.

UNLESS THEY'VE SHUT DOWN THE TRANSPONDER TO AVOID DETECTION.

COULD BE, THERE'S A WAR MACHINE IN THE VICINITY...

MAYBE I'LL JUST HOP UP THAT SLOPE AND FOUND ON ONE OF THE EMERGENCY EXITS...

UMPH! "HOP" MAY WELL HAVE BEEN A SOMEWHAT UNAPPROPRIATE WORD TO...

IT'S GONE!

EVERYTHING!

THE BAG...

...SMITTY...

...ABRAMOVICH...

...WIPED OUT TO THE LAST MAN!
THE LAST MAN ON EARTH!

HMPH! GUESS NO ONE EVER CHECKED THE FINE PRINT!

COME RIGHT DOWN TO IT, I SUPPOSE IT'S EVEN MORE LOGICAL THAT THE SOLE SURVIVOR SHOULD BE A WOMAN! WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN NUMBERED THE MEN...

BUT UH, THAT'S SOMETHING, FOR HISTORIANS OF THE FUTURE TO PIERCE OUT... IF THERE EVER ARE ANY! IMPOSSIBLE! WE SENT OUT ENOUGH SLEEPER-SHIPS BEFORE THE WAR. THERE MUST BE FIVE THOUSAND HUMANS COLONIZING PLANETS OF THE NEAR STARS.

MAYBE SOMEONE SOME OF 'EM WILL COME BACK...

I REMEMBER HOW MY FATHER SCOTCHED WHEN I INSISTED ON DOING UP THE OLD, TINY NURSERY AS A STUDY FOR DAVID...

GOOD JOB I WAS-AH-PRECIOUS AS A TEENAGER! MY OLD CLOTHES STILL FIT!

NOW THEN! LET'S HAVE A PEEK IN DAVID'S ROOM.

I'M NOT TOO BAD!

EVEN DAVID HIMSELF HAD TRIED DISRUPTING ME. IT ADOPTS, MIST. I NEED ONLY SOMEONE TO SERVE...

NOW MY HARD-WON VICTORY BORE FRUIT. DAVID HAD LEFT A CASSette MESSAGE FOR ME...
STAR ANGEL
"I MUST HURRY. ONLY A FEW HOURS SEPARATE'S THESE POOR CREATURES FROM THEIR DEATH. NOT MUCH TIME."

"THE MACHINES MUST WIPE OUT THE PARASITAL SPORES THAT INFESTED THIS PLANET."

"WHY DOES THAT BASTARD WATCH US LIKE THAT? AND WHERE DID HE COME FROM?"

"THAT FREAK'S GETTING ON SOME A' OUR NERVES. HE COULD BE DOIN' ANY THING UP THERE IN THAT DOME."

"WHY YOU SO QUIET? IT WASN'T THAT BAD, WAS IT?"

"HUUH? OH... NO, I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT OUR FRIEND UP ON TH' HILL."

"WHY DO YOU THINK THEY'RE HUGGING EACH OTHER LIKE THAT?"

"IT JUST SEEMS LIKE THEY'RE HAVING A LOT OF TROUBLE."

"IT'S JUST A HUMAN REACTION TO THEIR CONDITION."

"I HOPE THEY'RE NOT HAVING ANY TROUBLE."
EVER SINCE HE LANDED THAT DOME UP THERE, OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN IN A STATE OF CONFUSION...

...WONDERING WHO HE IS AND WHY HE CAME. I'M GONNA TALK TO THE OTHERS.

WELL WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT HIM?

WE CANNOT HAVE OUR LIVES IN DANGER ANY LONGER - HE MUST BE DESTROYED.
"During the last few time-cycles, the inhabitants have begun the construction of a strange machine in which I have never seen the like. 4 min. 47 sec."

"The machines will be ready for activation in three minutes..."

Quickly scanning the mechanized "legs" of the huge dome, the invaders arrive inside the protective curvature through its intricate underside. 2 min. 38 sec.

"It's purpose is unknown to me."

...and spy their unwary prey."
THE NATIVES WANTED TO GET THE STRANGER IF IT KILLED THEM...

...AND IT DID.
PROLOGUE: The Year 2093...

Wake, man! It is time!

You may rest in peace no more...

You have slept for ten centuries, as was the prediction!

Look for no others... They are gone! Only I remain to watch over you—And soon even I will be gone...

...And you will be alone!

And lo and behold, on this day was born a child of God... of God... of God...
The elevator had went 109 floors, straight up—and then opened on ground level...

Debris cluttered the streets outside... Quar, for the first time...

Felt the utter hopelessness of his situation, and then he heard the voice... Down in the west Texas town of El Paso...

The voice was unmistakingly singing in English... and its speaker was undoubtedly as drunk as a frog on the Fourth of July... but a voice meant people—and people meant hope... maybe...

Chapter 1

Quar

Hullo, yerself, me boy! Got anything ta drink?

Hey! Whut's wrong? You look like yuv seen a ghosty!

...oh my God...

Art and Script: Gene Day
Editor: George Bred
Adapted from the text novelet
MY GOD, BOY! JUST CAUSE YUN AIN'T GOT Yuh ISH NO REASON TO GET YOURSELF UPSET...

HIC

COME ON, BOY... LET'S GO GET ONE AND QUICK!

WHO'RE YOU, A NYWAY? AIN'T NEVER SEEN YOU AROUND HERE BEFORE!

I'M QUAR! YOU'VE HEARD OF ME, OF COURSE?

NEVER!

WHERE'RE YOU FROM ANYWAY?

I'M-- I'M A WANDERER. NEVER SETTLED DOWN ANYWHERE, REALLY... I COME FROM CHICAGO...

WHERE?

CHICAGO!

NEVER HEARD OF THE PLACE! WELL, LET ME BE THE FIRST TO WELCOME YOU TO NOWHERE!

NOWHERE, DAMMIT! NOWHERE, HERE! SINII!! YOU HAVE HEARD OF HERE, AIN'T YA?

...I GUESS YA AIN'T...

TO HELL WITH IT-- WELCOME TO NOWHERE! THIS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, YOUR IN-- HERE, THAT'S DRINK ON YUH, THE BURG OF NOWHERE! SO HOWDY, QUAR-- MY NAME IS SLEAZY JOE!

PLEAS'D TO MEET YOU, JOE! TELL ME, HOW COME THERE AIN'T MANY-- NOMADIES-- IN NOWHERE?

SO YOUR A NOMADY, EH? NEVER MET ONE BEFORE -- NOT MANY OF YOU COME HERE TO NOWHERE... AND NONE OF 'EM LOOKS AS UGLY AS YOU!
WHY, BECAUSE DUKE SATAN HAS EVERYTHING SEWED UP TIGHT, AND HE HATES NOMADIES. OLD DUKE'S A MEAN ONE... SOME SAY IT WAS THE PLAGUE THAT CAUSED THE OLD WORLD!

NOW I KNOW ABOUT THE PLAGUE AND HOW IT KILLED DAMN NEAR ALL OF THE OLD ONES -- AND GAVE US NEW ONES OUR FORM AND THOUGHT... SO I WON'T GO INTO THAT... ANYWAY... GETTIN' BACK TO MY POINT -- DUKE SATAN IS NUMBER ONE -- AND THOSE OF US WHO DON'T LIKE IT... CAN GET LUMPE'D!!

WELL I'LL BE DAMNED!

YOU AIN'T GOT NO SWORD!

WHHEW. THOUGHT YOU WERE SOME SORT OF WEIRDO... NO MATTER -- WE'LL GET YOU A NEW ONE WHEN WE REACH A BAR!

I HAVE ENTERED A WORLD GONE MAD!" THE THOUGHT ROARS WITHIN QUAR'S BRAIN AS THE LIZARD-THING AT HIS SIDE ENTERS ONCE MORE, INTO A DRUNKEN SONG -- "A WORLD GONE MAD!"

I -- I HAD IT STOLEN BEFORE I CAME TO THE CITY!

NEXT: THE BANSHEE'S TOOTH!
LIFE SUIT...

Why? Why do I live? Why won't this damned suit let me die? It's been years since the ship blew up... How long have I been drifting, Life Suit?...

And how much time until my oxygen supply runs out?

At the present rate of consumption: five years; two weeks; five days...

Why won't you let me die, Life Suit?

Extra vehicular total elapsed time: fifteen years; five days approx...

Major changes in Life Suit program must be approved by the parent ship's captain or navigator.
Damn this suit! It won't even let me go crazy! Whenever I have a nervous breakdown, the helmet just tinkers with the appropriate area of my brain and "emotional balance" is "restored"...

Five years left of oxygen supplies...

...and so, I wait five years...

...wait for my time to die.
WHERE ARE WE, LIFE SUIT?

WE LANDED ON AN OXYGEN RICH PLANET WHILE YOU SLEPT.

GOD--IT'S BEAUTIFUL! WHAT A FANTASTIC PLACE ...!

I CAN STAY HERE FOREVER ... THIS IS BETTER THAN HOME EVER WAS ... THE ODDS ON FINDING A PLACE LIKE THIS MUST BE A MILLION-TO-ONE!
DAMMIT!
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME, LIFE SUIT? I'VE DECIDED TO STAY HERE...

THEN CHANGE THE DAMN PROGRAM!

OH GOD... FIVE MORE YEARS!

RETURNING TO COURSE OF .75 C DIVERGENT FROM LAST LOCATION OF PARENT SHIP, REMAINING WOULD BE A MAJOR CHANGE IN PROGRAM...

MAJOR CHANGES IN LIFE SUIT PROGRAM MUST BE APPROVED BY PARENT SHIP'S CAPTAIN OR NAV...

CORRECTION, OXYGEN TANKS WERE REFILLED DURING STOPOVER. AT PRESENT RATE OF CONSUMPTION, THE SUPPLY IS ESTIMATED TO LAST THIRTY-FIVE YEARS TWO WEEKS...
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